

CHAPTER 2

THE END OF ISOLATION: 1800-1860

Despite the dynastic decline, when China entered the nineteenth century, there was little reason for any Chinese to imagine that within a few decades their traditional polity would be shaken to its very roots and never recover from the shock. During 2,000 years of its imperial history, China had perfected one of the world's most durable political systems. And China had indeed developed a unique civilization that had not only deeply influenced the culture of the peripheral countries but also drawn them into a China-centered international order. The success of the system and its self-sufficiency had engendered such a sense of superiority among the Chinese that they evinced little interest in the affairs of the "barbarians" who dwelled outside greater China.

As mentioned earlier, despite the Qing ban on overseas trade, Chinese maritime commerce with Manila and southeast Asia had grown considerably; and as the Qing dynasty felt secure in its rule, official restrictions on Chinese junk trade became less harsh and inflexible though the government continued to appoint official superintendents to supervise merchant shipping.

Chinese sea-going merchants had made certain ports in southeast China the center of their operations and when the European traders first entered the Chinese waters in the seventeenth century they, naturally, patron-

ized these ports. However, in 1759, Emperor Qian-long (ruled 1736-1799) ordered that all Western traders were restricted to the single port of Canton (Guangzhou). In the context of global history, this semi-isolationist policy came at a totally wrong time: Qian-long was unaware that a new and potentially dangerous dynamism was emerging in the Occident that was bound to affect China and the Chinese world order. A revolution in science and technology led by Britain was transforming the Western nations into competitors in the global arena for markets, raw materials, and colonies. It was only a matter of time until the expansive, aggressive West, incapable of being contained within the Chinese international system of "tribute and trade" (discussed below), would shatter the isolationist walls raised by China. China's ignorance of the West was colossal, and although it is not suggested that better knowledge would have kept China from being defeated in war, it may have helped China to have been better prepared for the onslaught.

CHINA'S WORLD ORDER AND FOREIGN TRADE

The Chinese international structure was totally different from any that had evolved in other parts of the world. First, it was premised

on the belief (not novel in itself because many other societies have tended to think of themselves in the same way) that China was the cultural center of the universe and that all non-Chinese were "uncivilized" barbarians. This belief was reflected in the Chinese name for their country, *Zhongguo*, which can be translated as "The Central Kingdom" or "The Middle Kingdom."

Second, since the Chinese ruler, "the Son of Heaven," was considered the ruler of all humankind, all other "barbarian" rulers were mere local chieftains owing allegiance to Beijing. There could be no Western-style diplomatic relations. Countries wanting to trade with China had to send "tribute" missions that legitimized Chinese suzerainty, and in return they could trade for a specified number of days at border points designated by Beijing. When received at the Imperial court the tributary envoy had to *ke-tou* (kowtow) before the emperor. The ritual of kowtow, which consisted of three kneelings, each involving three prostrations, was not specially devised for the foreigners and was an everyday ceremony in China. The non-Chinese Asians accepted it without difficulty, but the Europeans found it disconcerting and debasing.

Regulations did not allow any alien to enter or live within China without imperial permission or any Chinese to travel abroad. Except for officially designated institutions, even teaching the Chinese language to a foreigner was an act punishable under the law.

Since Asian states wanting to trade with China continued to pay regular tribute to Beijing, there was little reason for the Chinese to doubt their predominance in their world order. Even the Europeans, who had first entered the Chinese waters as early as the sixteenth century, had submitted to trade within the highly restrictive Chinese system.

The tribute system of international relations was, however, not so uniform as ideology would have it. Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet, although outside China proper, were considered within the pale, and Beijing had the right to post agents and armed forces there. Korea, the Ryukyu Islands, Annam

(present-day Vietnam), Siam (Thailand), Burma (new name Myanmar), and Nepal were "tributary states," which sent regular tribute missions. The Europeans in Guangzhou, the "ocean barbarians," were considered to have come from too far to send regular tribute missions, but by recording their embassies as "tributary missions," the fiction was maintained that they, too, came from tributary states.

Russia fell into a different category altogether. Russian expansion into East Asia brought St. Petersburg into confrontation with China. The Manchus, themselves "barbarians" who had conquered China in 1644 and were not yet totally blinded by Confucian ideology, signed the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) and the Treaty of Kiakhta (1727) on the basis of equality. These treaties delimited borders, established trading points, allowed the Russians limited caravan trade with Beijing, and granted the Russians facilities to establish a church in Beijing and permission to send ecclesiastical missions that would include students of Chinese language. Much has been made of these treaties by historians wanting to show that China had a precedent for not pushing the idea of the universal rule of the Son of Heaven too far when the Anglo-Chinese crisis arose in the 1830s. The fact is that Beijing viewed the Russians as a Central Asian state, and there were precedents in Chinese history for dealing in a similar fashion with Central Asian rulers whose power China had reasons to fear.

Furthermore, with the passage of time the Sino-Russian arrangement lost the original sense of equality that may have marked the treaties. The Russians in Beijing were locally isolated, led an impoverished intellectual and physical existence, and performed no diplomatic function and hardly any ecclesiastical one. By the end of the eighteenth century Beijing had begun to use the language of superiority in its notes to the Russians.

Things were, however, about to change drastically for China. Not only was its world order about to collapse, but China would also soon find itself humiliated and degraded to the rank of a third-rate power in the new

West-centered world order. It all began in Guangzhou (Canton), the one southern port to which the trade of all European maritime powers was limited.

THE GUANGZHOU SYSTEM OF TRADE AND ITS COLLAPSE

The foreign trade system in Guangzhou reflected the Chinese government's attitude that trade was secondary to the maintenance of the Chinese world and internal order. The governor general in charge of the two provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, and the governor of Guangdong, both posted at Guangzhou, headed the local government and were responsible for local law and order. A Chinese commissioner for customs at Guangzhou (the Hoppo), directly appointed by Beijing but lower in rank than the other two officials, was in immediate charge of the guild of Chinese merchants, the Cohong, who had a monopoly of trade with the European merchants. The Cohong merchants were jointly responsible to the officials.

The 12 or 13 members of the Cohong, also known as the security merchants because they "secured," or guaranteed, every ship that came to Guangzhou, were responsible for selling the inbound cargo, procuring the Chinese goods sought by the foreign trader, and collecting all duties and other dues and transferring them to the office of the Hoppo. They were also responsible for looking after the needs of the captain and the crew of the foreign ship and were held liable if the foreigners broke any of the regulations governing their stay in Guangzhou.

The foreign traders could not communicate with the officials directly but had to send their "petitions" (a "letter" would have meant an assumption of equality) through the Cohong. In case of any infraction of the law, the foreigners were held jointly responsible. For example, in 1821 an American sailor on board the U.S. ship *Emily* accidentally killed a Chinese woman plying a small boat at the side of the ship. The Chinese demanded that the sailor be handed over for execution.

The Americans, knowing that under the Chinese legal system the sailor would not get a fair trial, refused to surrender him, with the result that the Chinese threatened to stop all trade. Thereupon the Americans reluctantly complied, and the sailor was duly strangled publicly.

This and other similar incidents gave ample evidence that the Westerners, however dissatisfied with their circumstances, were willing to accept this type of humiliating treatment because they were loath to give up their highly profitable China trade. Indeed, the adverse conditions under which trade was carried on were clearly spelled out by an imperial edict. It stipulated that the Westerners could come to Guangzhou only for the duration of the trading season, not leave the limits of the factory grounds (residence and offices of the foreign "factors") outside the city of Guangzhou, never enter the city, never row on the river, never bring their families or any females with them, and never deal with any Chinese other than those officially permitted. The foreigners could not ride in a sedan chair (a mark of respectability in a privilege-conscious society) or even hire Chinese servants as a right (they did get them by connivance). When the summer trading months came to an end, the foreigners were expected to close their operations in Guangzhou and repair to the peninsula of Macao, where the Portuguese had been given an enclave for residence since the middle of the sixteenth century.

It should be recognized that by conforming to the conditions imposed on them and by accepting their inferior position, the Westerners strengthened the Chinese belief in the preeminence of the Middle Kingdom and in the tributary system of foreign relations. In a manner of speaking, the British East India Company, which dominated the trade at Guangzhou, was an ideal collaborator. Like the Cohong, it had a virtual monopoly of foreign trade, and again like the Cohong, it was a merchant organization. Its officers, although they may have been irritated by the system, did not consider it an unpardonable insult that they were not

allowed to communicate directly with the Chinese officials. The head of the British East India Company (the taipan) could speak on behalf of the foreign merchants, be held responsible for their actions, and deal with his counterpart in the Cohong on equal terms.

But some irritants soon became a cause of more serious Sino-British trouble. Apart from the unsatisfactory personal conditions under which trade was carried on and the abhorrent Chinese legal practices, the conditions of trade itself left much to be desired. The foreigners were kept ignorant of the tariff schedules and were often charged many times the official rates. Not being able to complain or take their case to any higher agency, they were at the mercy of the Cohong. They were constantly subjected to demands for bribes and illicit commissions, called "customary dues," which had to be paid to customs officials, interpreters, river pilots, and so forth. If a Cohong merchant who had taken a loan or an advance to purchase next year's goods went bankrupt or reneged on the debt, no legal machinery could help the foreign merchant recover the money.

If the Chinese had not been so self-absorbed and so intent on keeping their country as closed off as possible, they might have at least realized that the Guangzhou system of trade was collapsing and that if it did collapse, the tribute system would go down with it. The relationship between tribute and trade was established by China as an instrument for controlling the barbarian. For the Chinese tribute was far more important than the trade element in the equation; for the Westerner, in contrast, the compelling motive for being in China was trade. If this tribute business got in the way, it would have to be eliminated as a totally unacceptable hindrance.

By the time the eighteenth century came to a close, British trade with China had expanded tremendously. The exports of tea alone rose from c. 400,000 pounds in 1725 to c. 26 million pounds in 1808. The number of Westerners who gathered for trade at

Guangzhou began to make the fiction that the ocean barbarians came from too far to be asked for regular tribute missions sound hollow.

This trade was one-sided in the beginning because the Chinese agrarian-based economy was relatively self-sufficient, and there was almost no demand for European goods in China. The British therefore had to pay in silver for the teas, silks, porcelain, lacquerware, and nankeen (a cotton fabric made in Nanking). Gradually the deficits were redressed by the development of what is known as "country trade" between India and Guangzhou. The country traders were mostly private English merchants who brought raw cotton, cotton piece goods, and opium from India. As the demand for these goods, particularly opium (from c. 150,000 pounds in 1767 to c. 6 million pounds in 1838), increased in China, the trade balance reversed in favor of Britain.

The private merchants became a major factor in undermining the Guangzhou system because they circumvented the control of the East India Company (which was not officially allowed to trade in opium, an illegal commodity), and that of the Cohong, too, by establishing illicit contacts with Chinese smugglers who were, naturally, working outside the imperial system. These free traders grew in number, enlarged their arena of commercial activities, and decried the Guangzhou system, which, they felt, kept the Chinese market from being opened further. In their endeavors, they received help from an unexpected source—the Americans. America entered the China trade in 1784 but soon became the second most important trading partner of China. The Chinese tried to get the Americans to organize themselves into a group, like the East India Company, and appoint one person who would be responsible for the others, but they failed in the endeavor because the Americans were ardent believers in individualism and free trade.

In England, too, the British "free traders" and industrial manufacturers, who upheld the new philosophy of capitalism and

laissez-faire, pressured the British government to end the age of mercantilism by abolishing the East India Company's monopoly. To these merchants free trade was a birthright that could be denied neither by Britain nor by China. With the company out of the way and the Guangzhou system demolished, the rising class of British industrialists would surely find a ready market for their woolens and cotton textiles with China's population of 300 million.

The East India Company's monopoly finally ended in 1834. This was an event of great local importance because the taipan, representing a mercantile company, was now replaced by an officer commissioned by the British government "not only as a protector of [British] subjects and an overseer of their commercial activities but as a political and diplomatic representative" of the Crown.¹ Surely a representative of His Britannic Majesty could not be expected to deal with the Chinese officials through the Cohong merchants. The stage was set therefore for the confrontation that contributed to the first Anglo-Chinese War of 1839-1842 (also known as the Opium War), which "opened" China and forced it onto the tortuous path of modernization it has since followed.

BRITAIN'S ATTEMPT TO OPEN CHINA DIPLOMATICALLY

Even before the East India Company's monopoly had ended, the pressures on the British government to help expand overseas markets resulted in three official missions to Beijing to negotiate a more acceptable framework for trade and establish some form of treaty relations. The first embassy set out in 1787 but never reached Beijing because the envoy, Colonel Charles Cathcart, died on the way. The second and third embassies, 1793 and 1816, headed by Lord Macartney and Lord Amherst, respectively, succeeded in reaching Beijing but totally failed to achieve any of their goals.

Macartney's instructions clearly reflected the concerns of the free traders and the

industrialists of Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham. He was to ask for three new ports to be opened, one of them as far north as Tianjin (i.e., open China to foreign trade); a reduction in the duties; a published tariff (a commercial treaty); one or more island depots "near to the tea and silk-producing and woolen-consuming areas, where the English traders might reside and where English jurisdiction might be exercised" (cessions of territory); the accreditation of a British minister to the court at Beijing (Western-style diplomatic relations); and the freedom to propagate Christianity. He was also given samples of British woolens to distribute in China to help create a taste for British products.²

But Macartney, with all his resplendent embroidered velvet dress; his mantle of the Order of the Bath; his entourage of some 95 persons in uniforms of scarlet, green, and gold; and his 600 packages of presents failed to impress Emperor Qian-long. The only concession he received was permission to pay homage to the Son of Heaven on bended knee instead of kowtowing. The embassy was recorded as a "tribute-bearing mission" and the gifts as "tribute." The emperor had allowed him to kneel instead of kowtow because the barbarian was too ignorant to learn proper behavior (although in the official record it was said that Macartney had kowtowed). Ignorance was also proved by the inclusion, among the presents, of an elegant, well-sprung carriage, which though more comfortable than the ones the emperor used, had the coachman's seat elevated above that of the emperor!³ Even worse, the embassy had used the services of 12-year-old George Staunton (his father was an aide of Lord Macartney) to copy diplomatic papers in Chinese (a language the young boy had picked up on the voyage out) because the person who made the original translation was afraid he would be recognized by his calligraphy and consequently be punished for helping the barbarians. One can imagine what impression this made on the Chinese officials, who laid such great store on the art of writing.

Emperor Qian-long must have been a bit nonplussed by Lord Macartney's requests, but in his several exhaustive mandates (replies) to George III, Qian-long made the Chinese position absolutely clear. The first edict opened with this statement:

You, O king, live beyond the confines of many seas, nevertheless, impelled by your humble desire to partake of the benefits of our civilisation, you have dispatched a mission respectfully bearing your memorial (a memorial is submitted by a subordinate official to the emperor).... To show your devotion, you have also sent offerings of your country's produce.

and concluded with this admonition:

I confer upon you, O King, valuable presents.... Do you reverently receive them and take note of my tender goodwill toward you! A special mandate!⁴

To the British request that more ports be opened so that trade could expand, Qian-long's response was:

Our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated unto every country under Heaven, and Kings of all nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea. As your Ambassador can see for himself, we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures. . . .

[As for opening more ports] I decree that your request is refused and that the trade shall be limited to [Guangzhou].

It appears that the proposal that Qian-long found most difficult to comprehend was the British "entreaty to send one of [her] nationals to be accredited to [the] Celestial Court." His explanation for why this request was wholly unacceptable shows how wide the gap was between the Chinese and British views of international relations and trade.

First, wrote the emperor, no foreigners were allowed to reside at the capital. There were a handful of Jesuit missionaries at the court, but they offered no precedent because these Europeans were in the service of China. As such they were "compelled to adopt Chi-

nese dress," their movements were restricted, they could not correspond with anyone in their own country, and they were "never permitted to return home."

It is interesting to note that Qian-long makes it a point to mention that the Russians had once been allowed to trade in Beijing but were "compelled to withdraw" after Kiakhta was opened for trade; he does not refer to the presence of the Russian "embassy" in Beijing. Indeed, Lord Macartney inquired about it but was told by the Chinese government that the Russians owed their presence in Beijing "to a peculiar history in which England, as yet, had no part."⁵

A second reason given by Qian-long against establishing embassies in Beijing was that foreign tributary envoys were "provided for" by the Chinese government. How was Britain going to look after its envoy in Beijing? Indeed, according to the Chinese system, from the day a tribute mission entered Chinese territory to the day it departed, the Office for Tributary States was responsible for all aspects of transportation, housing, and food connected with the mission. Consider, for example, Lord Macartney's mission itself. Certain high officials and hundreds of lower-ranking mandarins received Macartney and accompanied him throughout his stay. He was wined and dined by them, and his entourage was given "120 sheep, 120 hogs, 100 fowls, 100 ducks, 20 bullocks, 14 boxes of Tartar bread, 400 melons, 22 boxes of dried peaches . . . vegetables, candies, red rice, tea, wine" on the day they landed on Chinese soil as the first of an ongoing series of "gifts." The mission was provided with junks, sailors, and coolies to transport it upriver and 3,000 porters, carters, coolies, and guards, along with horses, wagons, carts, carriages, and sedan chairs to help it on the road journey.⁶ How was Britain expected to make such arrangements in China, a country so tightly organized that a foreigner could not even hire a single Chinese without official permission?

Third, asked Qian-long, how was the British representative expected to exercise control over British trade from Beijing, which was so far (1,200 miles) from Guangzhou!

To bring home the absurdity of the request, the emperor further pointed out that the problems would be magnified many times over because he would have to allow envoys from all other European nations to reside in Beijing, too. "How can our dynasty alter its whole procedure and system of etiquette . . . in order to meet your individual views?"

As far as the other demands were concerned, the emperor rejected them one by one, giving a variety of reasons, all reinforcing the obvious conclusion that the foreigners must work within the Guangzhou system. He was incensed with the proposal that he cede territory for British residence. "Consider, moreover, that England is not the only barbarian land that wishes to establish relations with our civilisation and trade with our Empire: supposing that other nations were all to imitate your evil example and beseech me to present them each and all with a site for trading purposes, how could I possibly comply? This also is a flagrant infringement of the usage of my Empire and cannot possibly be entertained." As for the dissemination of Christianity, Qian-long found the request "utterly unreasonable."⁷

Qian-long sent such a detailed reply because he wanted to clarify, once and for all, the ordinances that applied to foreigners and foreign trade. "It may be, O king, that the above proposals have been wantonly made by your ambassador on his own responsibility, or per adventure you yourself are ignorant of our dynastic regulations and had no intention of transgressing them when you expressed all these wild ideas and hopes."⁸

The British mission ended in failure, but Lord Macartney's perceptive analysis of China is worth recording: "The Empire of China is an old, crazy first rate Man of War . . . She may, perhaps, not sink outright; she may drift some time as a wreck, and will then be dashed to pieces on the shore; but she can never be rebuilt on the old bottom. . . ."⁹

Macartney's failure and Emperor Qian-long's rebuke did not keep the British from trying the diplomatic path once more in 1816, when they were much better prepared for sending a mission. Unlike 1793, when the

British had to hunt all over the continent for an interpreter, Lord Amherst had the help of George Staunton (who from the small beginnings mentioned above became a proficient Chinese linguist, took on work with the East India Company, and by 1816 had become the president of the Select Committee) and of the Reverend Robert Morrison (a Presbyterian missionary who was working for the company as a Chinese translator), both well recognized as China experts.

The only change on the Chinese side, however, was that the reigning emperor, the Jia-ting emperor (ruled 1799–1820), was not inclined to be as lax over the question of the kowtow as his father had been. The Chinese officials in charge of the mission could not get Lord Amherst to agree to perform the kowtow, and they dared not inform the emperor of their failure. When Lord Amherst, who had been traveling all night and did not have his official dress with him, refused to be rushed into an audience, the Chinese officials heaved a sigh of relief. The emperor was informed that the ambassador was sick with diarrhea. When ordered to bring in the deputies of Lord Amherst, the emperor was told that they, too, were sick. Later, on learning the real truth about Lord Amherst's refusal to perform the kowtow ceremony, Jia-ting remarked, "The Middle Kingdom is the common sovereign of all nations under Heaven. How can We suffer such an insult due to [British] pride and arrogance?"¹⁰

The incensed emperor expelled the embassy but did give Amherst an edict to carry back to the king of England in which he stated that since Lord Amherst had "failed to carry out his mission in proper form and to accord us proof of your genuine loyalty," the memorial sent by London could not be accepted and was being returned with the ambassador. The edict noted that Lord Macartney, too, at first, "not being accustomed to our good manners," had not followed "our etiquette which required him to kowtow," but on instruction from high Chinese officials, "your ambassador performed the etiquette both of kneel-

ing and kowtowing according to Our ceremonies." The virtuous Son of Heaven, knowingly or unknowingly (he may have been guided by the written record of Macartney's visit), had presented an untruthful version but one that upheld Confucian China's view of the world.

Emperor Jia-ting then gave a list of the presents he was "bestowing" on the king of England and added that no more attempts need be made to send missions to Beijing:

Your ambassadors are ignorant of our Chinese etiquette. Though we have repeatedly instructed them, they pay no heed.... There is no need for you to send an embassy on this long and tiring journey. If you will remain sincerely loyal to us, then your ambassadors need not come to Our Court. We regard this as your inclination toward our civilization. We hope you will always observe this edict. Thus We have decreed.¹¹

On their return journey Lord Amherst and his party were treated very shabbily. "There were now no soldiers to clear the way, no guides with lanterns to light up the road; and the animosity of the mandarins was amply displayed next morning when a beggar, standing up as Lord Amherst passed by, was instantly ordered to sit down again."¹²

The Chinese, who obviously considered this embassy of little consequence and probably felt that they had put an end to future missions and the irritation they caused, did not realize that in England more and more people were coming to the conclusion that since all civil attempts to establish fair relations with China only resulted in insults to Britain, China would have to be dealt with in a more forceful fashion. The Opium War took place within a decade and a half of the Amherst embassy.

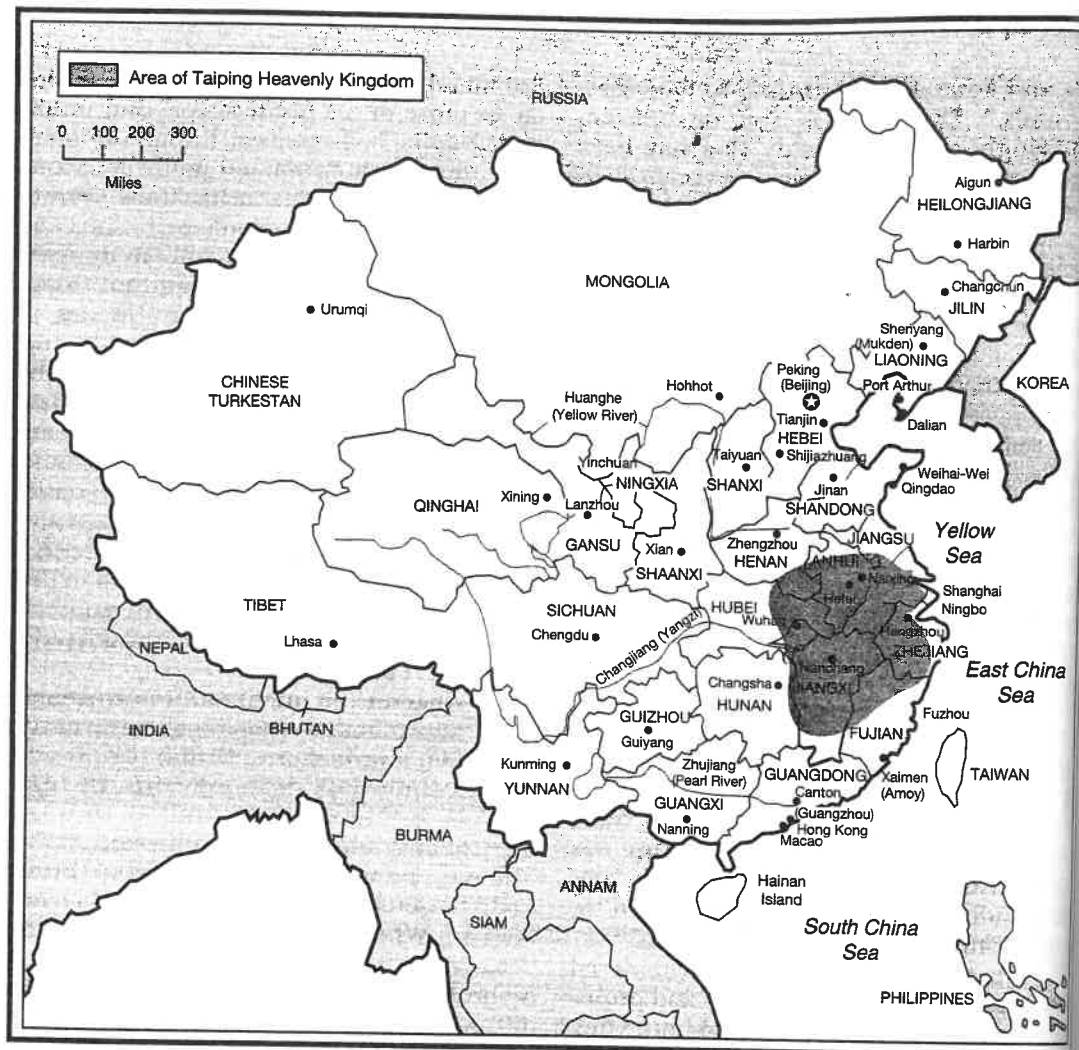
WAR AS AN EXTENSION OF DIPLOMACY

The first serious instance of friction between China and Britain occurred in 1834 when Lord Napier arrived to replace the taipan of the now-defunct East India Company. His title, chief superintendent of trade at Canton, and his duties, to protect the interests of Eng-

lish merchants and English trade, were similar to those of his predecessor. But, unlike him, Napier had received his appointment from the British crown and not from a commercial company. His instructions were to respect the laws and prejudices of China and to behave in a reasonable and circumspect manner, to be conciliatory, and not to use menacing language. However, he was to announce his arrival to the viceroy of Guangdong "by letter," and he could call on the help of the Royal Navy in an "extreme case" of emergency. The situation was by no means clear-cut. In the absence of proper diplomatic relations Lord Napier could not be considered a full-fledged diplomatic representative of Britain in a proper consular post (indeed, no advance information had been sent to Beijing or Guangzhou regarding his appointment), but neither could he be considered a merchant representative.

Whatever the intent of his instructions, Lord Napier looked upon himself as an envoy of Britain, a protector of British dignity and honor, who would deal only with the high officials of China directly and not through the Cohong, who would not be soft on the Chinese, and who would help expand British trade by getting more ports opened to commerce. When Napier left Macao for Guangzhou and sent his letter to the viceroy, he broke several important regulations. He did not apply for permission to go to Guangzhou, he had no customs permit to reside in the Guangzhou factory, he sent his communication to the viceroy not as a humble "petition" from an inferior to a superior but as a "letter" to an equal, the letter was in Chinese and not in English, and he tried to get the letter delivered directly and not through the Cohong merchants.

From the Chinese point of view this was highly unacceptable behavior, and the most charitable interpretation was that the barbarian was totally ignorant of the civilized laws of China. Napier's letter was not accepted by the mandarin at the city gate. It was noted, with horror, that it had "the form and style of equality." The viceroy promptly sent a communication to the Cohong, meant to be conveyed to Napier, which said in part,



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The object of the said barbarian headman [here Lord Napier's name is transliterated by characters that may be translated as "Laboriously Vile"] in coming to Canton is for commercial business. The Celestial Empire appoints officials—civilian to rule the people, military to intimidate the wicked; but the petty affairs of commerce are to be directed by the merchants themselves. The officials are not concerned with such matters. In the trade of the said barbarians, if there are any changes to be made in regulations, in all cases the Hong merchants are to consult together, and make a joint statement to the superintendent of customs and to my office, and

they will then be informed officially whether the proposals are to be allowed or disallowed. . . .

The great ministers of the Celestial Empire are not permitted to have private intercourse by letter with outside barbarians. . . .

To sum up the whole matter: the nation has its laws; it is so everywhere. Even England has its laws; how much more the Celestial Empire! How flaming bright are its great laws and ordinances! More terrible than the awful thunderbolt!¹³

A Chinese official, however high, could not sanction a change in the Guangzhou system

tem without prior approval of the emperor. And in any case, there was no reason for the Chinese even to think of changing a system that had worked so well for so long. The only bothersome element was Napier because he did not fit into the system.

After various further acts of mutual irritation, when Napier realized that the viceroy might order the cessation of trade, Napier did the most foolish thing possible: He circulated a proclamation, written in Chinese, attacking the "obstinacy" of the viceroy for not receiving his letter and the "perversity" of the Chinese government, which by suspending trade, would bring immense suffering to the hard-working Chinese, who depended on trade with Britain. Napier incorrectly presumed that the common Chinese hated their government and that they shared a common interest with the British. Napier had, indeed, interfered in the internal affairs of China. The viceroy, in keeping with Chinese traditional practice, issued a special edict prohibiting all further commercial transactions between the Chinese and the British as long as Napier stayed on in Guangzhou.

Lord Napier, true to character, responded by ordering two frigates of the Royal Navy to sail upriver to Guangzhou. The time had come for a show of force. Chinese forts protecting the river fired on the frigates, and though not much damage was inflicted, Napier warned the viceroy that it was a "very serious offence to fire upon or otherwise insult the British flag," that the viceroy had "opened the preliminaries of war," and that his (Britannic) Majesty would not let such folly go unpunished. "Therefore tremble, Viceroy Loo, intensely tremble."¹⁴ The tables had been turned. The British had begun using the language reserved by the Chinese for the barbarians. The British government, although it failed to provide Lord Napier with well-defined instructions, had never wanted him to act in this manner and had in no way encouraged him in his rash behavior. Most of the British merchants, too, were unhappy at the developments because, instead of serving their interests, Napier had undermined them. Ill and frustrated, Napier

finally gave in to Chinese pressure and retired to Macao, where he died a few days later.

The entire crisis had lasted only a little over two months, and since the superintendents of trade who succeeded Napier made no attempt to open direct intercourse with the viceroy, the next few years were a quiescent period. However, the "Napier fizzle" left an impression behind that shaped future Western policy in China: The only way to negotiate with China was under the threat of military force. As Lord Napier wrote to Lord Grey, "I feel satisfied your Lordship will see the urgent necessity of negotiating with such a government, having in your hands at the same time the means of compulsion; to negotiate with them otherwise would be an idle waste of time."¹⁵

On the Chinese side during the crisis, Beijing had admonished the viceroy for having failed in his duties and had punished him by depriving him of his rank (restored when Napier left Guangzhou); the viceroy, in turn, had punished the Cohong merchants for having failed in their duty to control the barbarian. When the crisis ended, the Chinese had succeeded in reaffirming the Chinese system of trade and tribute and in reconfirming China's superiority over the trade-hungry barbarians. Another irritation had been satisfactorily dealt with from the Chinese point of view.

The second stage for open conflict was set by Chinese action to suppress the opium traffic.

THE FIRST OPIUM WAR: 1839-1842

The quiescent policy followed by the superintendents of trade came to an end with the appointment of Captain Charles Elliot to this post in December 1836. With far more subtlety than Napier had shown, Captain Elliot tried, once again, to force the viceroy to accept direct communication from him. At the same time he requested London to send naval units from India to the China coast so that the Chinese might be pres-

THE OPIUM PROBLEM

Though opium had been used occasionally by the Chinese as a medicinal drug for centuries, its importation was extremely limited until the eighteenth century, when the opium-smoking habit began to spread throughout the country. By the early decades of the nineteenth century, opium became the major item of British imports into China, more than balancing the tea, silk, and porcelain exports from China. Starting with fewer than 1,000 chests (approximately 135 pounds to a chest) at the end of the eighteenth century, the amount of opium unloaded in China stood at 5,000 chests in 1821, 22,000 chests in 1831, and 35,000 chests in 1837.

Although the British were the biggest suppliers of opium, almost all the other merchants from the United States and Europe were also involved in the nefarious traffic. Since China had prohibited the import, sale, or consumption of opium, trade in the drug was totally illegal, so opium had to be smuggled into China. The British did not create the opium habit in China, but surely Britain cannot avoid being condemned for ruthlessly and callously exploiting this demand, helping it to grow by ensuring increased supplies of opium from its base in India. Technically, the East India Company in Guangzhou was not involved in the drug trade, but the Company in India monopolized both its manufacture in India and its sale to private "country traders," who smuggled it into China. The British government in India earned about 10 percent of its total revenues from taxes on opium.

The question of the opium trade had been debated heatedly in the British press and in Parliament, and though condemned by many as immoral, a parliamentary committee had declared, in 1832, that it was "inadvisable to abandon so important a [source of] revenue." There is no question that the British government was deeply involved in this disgraceful trade.

But regardless of the differing public positions on the opium question, on one point British public opinion was reaching a consensus. Even those who were strongly against the trade felt at one with the hawks, that the Chinese had to be

taught some kind of a lesson for their overbearing and insulting behavior in foreign relations. Not surprisingly, the most vocal of the warmongers were the opium traders, like William Jardine and James Matheson, whose profits were often as high as \$1,000 per chest, and who returned with their millions to England to enter Parliament or receive a knighthood and settle down as highly respected citizens.

The Chinese government's first edict prohibiting transactions in opium had been issued in 1729, the second in 1780, and the third in 1796. From that year to 1839 over 40 edicts were issued by two emperors and their viceroys, which reconfirmed the prohibition and increased the punishments to be meted out to opium addicts, sellers of opium, merchants smuggling opium, and officials conniving in the trade. The number and frequency of these edicts only proved that though the government was fully aware of the gravity of the situation, it was ineffective in stamping out the traffic in "foreign mud." Too many corrupt officials were colluding with the foreign merchants. Opium was being off-loaded up the coast as far as Tianjin.

The rapid growth of the opium-smoking habit in China is difficult to explain, but its deleterious effects can be readily analyzed. First, it corroded the morals and the health of the millions who were addicted to it: Addicts ranged from princes in the Forbidden City and officials in the bureaucracy to soldiers, merchants, artisans, coolies, and city riffraff. The degeneration of the army, where the habit was extremely widespread, was of particular concern to the government. The use of the narcotic also led to greater demands for bribes and increased corruption among the bureaucracy, and of course, it led to an increase of all types of crimes at the lower levels of society.

Second, the opium traffic had serious economic repercussions. A large percentage of the addicts belonged to the poorer sections of society, and since they had limited purchasing power the regular market in consumer goods became depressed. Much more important, as the balance of trade shifted to favor the British, there began

an outflow of silver. According to one estimate, one-fifth of all silver in circulation in China left the country between 1821 and 1840. Thus the value of silver appreciated in terms of the Chinese copper currency with devastating effects on the poor Chinese peasant masses, who had to pay taxes in silver. For example, the exchange rate in the province of Shandong rose from 1,450 to 1,650 copper cash for 1 silver tael in 1800 to 2,700 in 1830. Not all provinces were affected as badly as Shandong, but the situation had become critical nationwide.

In the 1830s concerned high officials began to write memorials to the emperor suggesting various means for the suppression of the opium traffic. Some suggested that if the trade were legalized, smuggling would stop and foreign trade would once again be restricted to the one port of Guangzhou; the government could increase its revenues by imposing a duty on opium and also control the distribution of the drug within the country. Others proposed that

Source: See Hsin-pao Chang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 96.

sured to legalize the opium trade and release it "from its actual condition of stagnation."¹⁶ The forces requested arrived in Chinese waters in mid-1838. However, by this time it had become amply clear that the Chinese government was determined to suppress rather than legalize the opium trade.

In 1839, after making a thorough investigation of the opium problem in Guangzhou, Commissioner Lin concluded that action had to be taken against the foreign merchants involved in the trade. Lin's position was in no way antagonistic to the interests of foreign merchants carrying on legitimate trade. Unfortunately for Lin, however, so many merchants were involved in both the legitimate and the contraband trade that he had to confront virtually the entire foreign community. He ordered the traders to hand over their stocks of opium for destruction and to sign a bond guaranteeing that they would never again smuggle

the immoral traffic in the drug had to be totally eradicated within the country by harsher punishments of those involved. This would halt the degeneration of society, stem the outflow of silver, and make it unattractive for foreigners to bring opium to China.

The emperor finally sided with the prohibitionists and appointed Lin Ze-xu as imperial commissioner at Guangzhou to carry out the new policies. Lin had said in his memorial that if the traffic in opium was not eradicated, "a few decades from now we shall not only be without soldiers to resist the enemy, but also in want of silver to provide an army." Lin arrived in Guangzhou in 1839 to find that the viceroy in Guangzhou had already taken several vigorous measures to stamp out the sale and use of opium in the city and the surrounding areas. Although the viceroy's demand that the leading foreign opium dealers should leave China had been contemptuously ignored, the opium trade already had begun to languish.

opium in their ships. His stand was moral and legal.

Lin presumed that the British government was not a party to this illegal trade, as is apparent in his letter to the "ruler of England," in which he appealed to him (Lin did not know that Queen Victoria was the reigning monarch) to "check your wicked and sift your vicious people before they come to China":

The wealth of China is used to profit the barbarians [through legitimate trade]. . . . By what right do they in return use the poisonous drug to injure the Chinese people? . . . Since [opium] is not permitted to do harm to your own country, then even less should you let it be passed on to the harm of other countries—how much less to China? Of all that China exports to foreign countries, there is not a single thing that is not beneficial to people . . . Take tea and rhubarb, for example; the foreign countries cannot get along a single day without them . . .

Indeed you, O King, can eradicate the opium plant in [India], hoe over the fields entirely, and sow in its stead the five grains . . .

Suppose a man of another country comes to England to trade, he still has to obey the English laws; how much more should he obey the laws of the Celestial Dynasty?¹⁷

Believing that Elliot might not forward the letter to the English ruler, Commissioner Lin sent it with the captain of an ordinary ship sailing to England. The letter never reached her Britannic Majesty. So much for the Chinese style of international relations and for Lin's understanding of Britain. The naivete displayed in Lin's letter also underlay his belief that the Royal Navy would not intervene on behalf of the barbarian lawbreakers.

Lin was correct, but only to a point. To force the merchants to hand over their opium stocks, Lin suspended trade, blockaded the foreign factories, ordered all Chinese (cooks, servants, compradors, etc.) to withdraw, and confined the entire merchant community to this open prison for 47 days. Lin had used the time-honored techniques of controlling the barbarians. When the opium was surrendered, Lin had succeeded in his goal and the traditional techniques had been reconfirmed.

However, when Elliot, "in the name and on behalf of her Britannic majesty's government," collected the 20,283 chests of opium (guaranteeing indemnity for all stocks handed over to him) and surrendered them to Lin, the matter had been raised to the level of an international issue. Lin did not realize that there was a crucial difference, from the Western point of view, between his confiscating contraband from individual merchants and his seizing it from the representative of the British government, who had acted under duress to protect "British life, liberty, and property." The Chinese had unwittingly insulted British dignity and rendered themselves liable to the British government.

Even after Lin had destroyed the seized opium, trade was still denied to British mer-

chants. Under advice from Elliot, they had refused to sign the bond guaranteeing that there would be no more smuggling of opium. The ostensible reason for this stand was the fear that even if one sailor secretly smuggled in some opium, the entire crew would be punished under Chinese law. Elliot, who had skillfully prepared the ground for intervention by the British government, withdrew to Macao along with the British merchant community. Meanwhile, opium smuggling had resumed with heightened vigor, and the British merchants managed to carry on their legitimate trade by using American ships. The Americans had signed the necessary bond.

At this stage the main issue became complicated when a party of drunken British sailors killed a Chinese citizen in a brawl in Kowloon. Elliot held a trial but could not identify the person responsible. He punished some of the sailors and compensated the family of the victim. Lin, however, in keeping with Chinese legal practice, demanded that an Englishman be handed over for punishment, which in this case meant death. When the Portuguese authorities in Macao declined to shield the British from Chinese pressure, the British withdrew in their ships to the waters around Hong Kong and made the sparsely populated rocky island their headquarters. War broke out in November 1839.

From the Chinese point of view the Celestial Empire was chastening foreign barbarians who had failed to follow Chinese regulations and laws. Lin's action was influenced by several popular misconceptions: The Europeans could not survive without rhubarb and tea (their food habits made them constipated and blocked their bladders—they needed rhubarb and tea to relieve themselves); the profit motive was so strong among the foreigners that they could be controlled by the threat that trade would be denied to them (this had worked in the past); the power of the British warships was overrated and they were unwieldy in shallow waters; British soldiers were buttoned up so tight that once knocked over they could not get up again. Information about the West in official litera-

ture was no less confused: For example, Portugal and France (supposed to be located near Malacca) were considered to be one and the same country, as were England and Holland. Nobody, obviously, had bothered to look at the globe presented to the emperor by Lord Macartney.

Theoretically, from the British point of view, unless China accepted the independence and equality of other nations and realized that it was obligated to open the country to commercial intercourse, the relations between China and the West could never be satisfactory. In fact, it would be a truer estimation of the situation to say that the British wanted to force China to become a subservient and pliant state that would willingly accept European supremacy. Opium was only a part of the problem. Of much greater importance was the issue of British manufactures; the industrial capitalists in England were consumed by the desire to open (what they considered to be) the vast Chinese market for their goods.

War began in earnest in mid-1840, after the arrival of a British expeditionary force with instructions to help Captain Elliot deliver a letter from Lord Palmerston, British foreign minister, to a responsible Chinese official for onward transmission to the emperor. The naval force went up the coast, reducing coastal defenses on the way; it occupied Dinghai and finally reached Tianjin before the emperor decided to send officials to receive the communication from Palmerston and deal with Elliot. Negotiations were opened outside Guangzhou between Elliot and the Manchu grandee, Qi-shan, in January 1841. By the resulting Chuenpi (Chuan-bi) Convention, China was to cede Hong Kong to Britain, pay an indemnity, accept the principle of diplomatic equality, and reopen Guangzhou for trade. But neither Beijing nor London was pleased with the settlement: One side felt that too much had been conceded; the other, that too little had been gained. Qi-shan was dismissed and Elliot was recalled.

The British decided that they had to prove their military capability once again

before the Chinese would surrender to their demands. So the British destroyed the Chinese southern fleet; Guangzhou was held to ransom; the coastal port cities of Xiamen, Dinghai, Ningbo, and Shanghai were occupied. When the squadron occupied Chenjiang, at the junction of the Grand Canal and the Yangtze River and began to sail upriver to Nanjing, the British threatened to cut off Beijing from the rich and fertile provinces of South China, which were its main source of food and revenue. By now the emperor, who at the beginning of the war had been getting many false reports of military successes, was convinced that the British could not be subdued by force. He agreed to negotiate without preconditions. Negotiations were opened in Nanjing and resulted in the first unequal treaty with the West, the Treaty of Nanjing (August 1842).

The view of Communist Chinese historians today is that the war was lost because the "reactionary, feudal" Manchu government could not afford to harness the militant spirit of the masses, who were, supposedly, ready and willing to fight the enemy. The data provided to prove this thesis are superficial and weak. The facts appear to be that the Manchu forces lacked national coordination; that the officers showed poor command of strategy and tactics; and that the soldiers were poorly trained, poorly equipped, and often highly demoralized. In some places the Manchu forces, outnumbered and outgunned, fought and died bravely, but by and large they were a cowardly lot. Except for one or two incidents, the general populace watched the battles with cynical indifference. Those who had to flee the battle areas and lost their property as a result of the war looked on it as a blight; others looked on it as an opportunity to loot the abandoned shops and the houses of the wealthy. It must be added that the victorious British forces did not distinguish themselves by their discipline and humanity. Looting, burning, and indiscriminate killing made the war more brutal than it need have been.

Under the Treaty of Nanjing and the supplementary treaties signed in 1843,

Britain gained the following rights and privileges, many of which were first officially sought by Lord Macartney:

1. The cession of the island of Hong Kong to England.
2. An indemnity of 21 million Mexican silver dollars as compensation for the confiscated opium, war expenses, and debts owed by the Cohong merchants to British merchants. This sum did not include the \$6 million received as ransom for Guangzhou.
3. The opening of the ports of Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai for residence and trade.
4. The abolition of the Cohong and the establishment of a fixed tariff, which was 5 percent ad valorem on most important items. China could not alter the tariff without British consent.
5. The appointment of consuls at the treaty ports who could communicate directly with Chinese officials of equal rank.
6. Consular jurisdiction over British subjects involved in disputes with Chinese citizens, which meant that the British citizen would be tried, by the consul, under British law, and the Chinese would be judged according to the laws of China. The principle of extraterritoriality was extended to both civil and criminal cases. This provision violated China's judicial powers and gave the lowliest British citizen a privileged status higher than that of the highest Chinese official.
7. The "most favored nation" status, which meant that Britain would, automatically, receive any privilege that China might later extend to any other nation.

Other Western powers naturally took advantage of the British victory and also entered into treaty relations with China. The Chinese, on their own, had decided to give the other powers the same privileges accorded to the British, so that these powers would feel beholden to China rather than to Britain. The treaties with other Western powers, therefore, covered the same ground as those with Britain. They also had a few extra elements, which under the "most favored nation" clause, were immediately shared by everyone.

The American Treaty of Wanghia (Wangxia), 1844, made the right of extraterritoriality ("extrality" for short) more explicit, put American commercial vessels in Chinese waters under the jurisdiction of the American consuls, and allowed the Americans to build their own churches in the treaty ports. The French Treaty of Whampoa (Huangbu), 1844, granted the French the right to build cemeteries and Roman Catholic churches in the treaty ports and made it obligatory for the Chinese government to punish trespassers in these places. The French also pressed the Chinese government to rescind the ban on Roman Catholicism, which Beijing did in early 1846.

The treaties were subject to revision in 12 years, which meant in 1854, as far as the British were concerned. Two issues not touched on in the first set of treaties would then be taken up: legalizing the opium trade and opening Beijing to foreign embassies.

Although neither the Chinese nor the foreign powers realized this immediately, these treaties (and those obtained subsequently in the same aggressive fashion) had a serious impact on future Chinese polity. The treaties, originally intended to force China to recognize that foreign powers were "equal" to China, impaired its sovereignty and made it less than equal. The historian H.B. Morse has rightly categorized the period 1834-1860 as one of "conflict," 1861-1893 as one of "submission," and 1894-1911 as one of "subjection." The government of China gradually became a tool in the hands of the foreign powers, useful for the exploitation of China.

Of course, all this did not happen overnight. The encroachment of the foreign powers increased from decade to decade because of the unsatisfied Western appetite for trade or competition among Western states for control of foreign markets. Also missionaries had to be backed in their demand that the Chinese stop interfering with their "right" to work freely in the interior.

To the Chinese the 1840 war had been irksome, but it had not conclusively proved

that their civilization was not, indeed, superior or that their emperor was not a universal ruler. The Westerners were still not allowed into the country as a whole and were isolated in the five treaty ports. No diplomatic representation had been permitted in the capital. The biggest danger to the empire was not perceived, at this time, to come from external aggression but from internal rebellion and domestic crisis.

INTERNAL DECAY

The critical Confucian values that held state and society together had begun to erode by the opening decades of the nineteenth century. A population explosion; natural disasters; declining rural economy; massive corruption in the bureaucracy; and ineffectual, incompetent leadership in Beijing presaged the end of the dynasty. If there had been no Western intrusion, it is possible that the Qing dynasty would soon have collapsed, giving place to a new, more vigorous dynasty that would have revived Confucian values, reintroduced efficiency into the government, and given a further lease on life to Chinese tradition.

But the Western presence made it impossible for either the internal antidynastic developments or the imperial attempts at crisis handling to follow purely traditional formulas or have a purely traditional content. This interplay between internal and external causes for the disintegration of the dynasty is extremely complex and does not lend itself to a simple analysis.

The Opium War had not only revealed the military weakness of the Manchu dynasty (thus encouraging would-be rebels) but also increased the financial hardship of the peasantry. First, the war had made it possible for opium smuggling to be carried on more brazenly, without further fears of punitive action. Consequently, the import of opium increased to 70,000 chests a year in the 1850s, and after legalization in 1858, imports of the drug touched the high-point of 81,000 chests in 1884. The resulting outflow of silver steady-

ly raised its value in terms of copper cash and exacerbated the problems of taxpaying peasants.

Second, this war and subsequent internal and external conflicts increased the fiscal problems of the state and drove it to bankruptcy. Not counting the cost of various military operations, Beijing, at the end of the Opium War, was forced to pay 23 million silver dollars (Mexican) as indemnity to the Western powers, and then another 16 million silver taels (1 tael was 70 U.S. cents in local value) at the end of the 1860 war (the Second Opium War). The imperial financial reserves disappeared in 1860. After that China was continually in debt until the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949. Beijing imposed several additional levies, hoping to relieve the exchequer, but these further impoverished the already suffering peasantry.

Third, the Western presence had brought zealous, dedicated Christian missionaries to China's shores. Even before they were allowed into the interior, they had begun to undermine the traditional order (explained later in the text).

Fourth, although this affected only small areas adjacent to the treaty ports, the import of foreign cloth and yarn caused a certain amount of decline in the native handicraft textile industry.

Last, the war contributed to social disorder. The opening of Shanghai as a new center for trade brought the foreign merchants closer to the tea and silk production areas, which meant that thousands of coolies and boatmen, who earlier had been employed in transporting these commodities to Guangzhou, were thrown out of work. Coastal pirates, cleared from the high seas by the British navy, invaded the river systems of Guangdong and Guangxi to harass and pillage. The ranks of the lawless were further swelled by the soldiers discharged from local militias after the conclusion of the war.

It was under these internal and external circumstances that large-scale peasant rebellions arose to threaten the Qing dynasty. The greatest and best organized of

these antidynastic insurrections was, without doubt, the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). This uprising, which covered the whole of South China, was accompanied or followed by several others: the Nian Rebellion in Anhui and Shandong (1853-1868); the Southwest Muslim Rebellion in Yunnan (1855-1873); and the Northwest Muslim Rebellion in Gansu, Shaanxi, and Chinese Turkestan (1862-1877).

The Taiping Insurrection

There were over a hundred armed uprisings in China between 1840 and 1850. Most of them were led by the dozens of traditional secret societies that had surfaced in these troubled times; many of the more significant ones called for the overthrow of the Manchus and the return of a native regime.

The Taiping insurrection (called a "rebellion" by traditional Chinese historians, a "revolution" by many others) was significantly different from the other uprisings, for it was influenced by Christianity. It was not Roman Catholicism (which had existed in China in restricted form since the sixteenth century) that tintured the ideology of the Taiping movement but Protestant fundamentalism, which had seeped in from Guangzhou even before the Opium War.

Hong Xiu-quan (1814-1864), the founder and leader of the Taiping movement, was born to a respected, though by no means affluent, Hakka farmer in a village near Guangzhou. The family made sacrifices to get Xiu-quan, the brightest of the children, through school. Hong went to Guangzhou in 1836 and 1837 to take the civil service examinations but failed on both occasions. After the second attempt he fell seriously ill. In his deliriums he saw himself in the palace of an aged heavenly king, who gave him a sword to go forth and kill the devils pestering his countrymen. In the palace he also met a younger man, whom he addressed as "Elder Brother."

On recovering from his illness Hong became a teacher in a village school. Six years later, in 1843, he happened to read a

book propagating Christianity. This book had been given to him during his first visit to Guangzhou (1836) by a Chinese Protestant, Liang A-fa (an assistant of the British missionary Robert Morrison), who had used the occasion of the examinations to hand out Christian propaganda literature to the students. Hong had, obviously, taken the literature home but forgotten all about it for seven years. When Hong did read the book, *Good Words for Exhorting the Age*, which consisted of translations of sections from the Bible and some sermons, his earlier visions suddenly made sense. Hong had met God, his father, and Jesus Christ, his elder brother, and he had been given a heavenly mandate to destroy the Manchu scourge. Incidentally, 1843 was the last year that Hong attempted the official examinations, again without any success.

For the next several years Hong and his close associates propagated their form of Christianity, established a Society for the Worship of God, made converts among the local elements declassé, and prepared the nucleus of an armed militia that was to challenge not only the Manchu authority but also traditional Confucian beliefs.

Hong's creed included a mixture of Judaic monotheism and iconoclasm; Protestant egalitarianism and equality between the sexes; an ancient Confucian ideal of equal distribution of land; and an ancient Chinese vision of the "Great Harmony," which called for communal ownership of all property. In 1847, Hong returned to Guangzhou to receive instruction from the American missionary Issachar J. Roberts, but Roberts found it difficult to baptize this Chinese Christian. Hong left after two months to carry on his ministry in his own way.

Hong's rebellion began in 1850. By 1853 the Taiping army, now over a million strong, had advanced from its base in Guangxi, overrun Hunan and Hubei, defeated Manchu armies in Anhui and the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, and established the capital of Taiping Tianguo (The Heavenly Kingdom of the Great Peace) at Nanjing.

Taiping influence extended over six of the richest provinces of China. Hong installed himself as the Heavenly King.

China now had two dynasties, two kingdoms, vying for total control of the country. The Taiping government, however, lacked the stable underpinnings of the traditional Confucian state that served the Qing, and Taiping leadership lacked unity and the organizational capacity that might have tilted the final outcome in its favor. The Taiping uprising attained the high point of its success and power by 1856; thereafter the movement lost its vigor and the upstart dynasty was liquidated in 1864.

Although comparatively short-lived, this vast upheaval left its mark on the country. The Chinese state that emerged from this bloodletting (around 30 million persons lost their lives in the civil war) was in many significant ways different from what it had been in 1850, 14 years earlier.

The Revolutionary Aspect of the Taiping Movement

The ideology and goals of the Taiping leaders had many elements that can be called revolutionary, but to evaluate their true worth one must analyze the source of each and, furthermore, view them in the context of Taiping practice.

In the political arena the Taiping attack on the Manchus as foreign, barbarian rulers who were exploiting the Han Chinese is considered by some to represent the beginning of modern nationalism, and therefore, as revolutionary. This is not necessarily true. The Taiping anti-Manchuism was in consonance with the aims of most of the Chinese secret societies, whose goals were represented by such slogans as "Overthrow the Qing, Restore the Ming." Although Hong rejected the idea of a Ming restoration, he nevertheless did establish his capital in Nanjing, which had been the Ming capital, and revive the Ming style of court dress. He also built a lavish imperial palace (well stocked with concubines) and set up the traditional Six Min-

istries, although his bureaucracy was recruited through examinations that tested students on the basis of Christian texts rather than Confucian classics. But since the Taiping never came to establish a firm central hold over the lands they had occupied, their ideas of a revolutionary civil and military local government were never translated into practice.

The details of the civil and military local government and the new society it was to oversee were spelled out in the "Land System of the Celestial Dynasty," promulgated in 1853. The system was premised on the belief that "the empire is like a large family of the Heavenly Father, Supreme Lord, and Almighty God; no one is selfish, and everything is turned over to the Supreme Lord, so that he will have goods at his disposal,"¹⁸ which in actuality meant that the state was to have total control over all land, goods, and life.

The Taiping state, theocratic in theory, had a strong military character, reflecting the obvious insecurity of the state and the paramount need to keep the army well supplied. From the Heavenly King down to the local level, all administrators had civil and military functions. The organization of the military into armies, divisions, brigades, companies, and platoons, with a strict segregation of the sexes (women were also enrolled in combat units), was projected into civil institutions.

According to the new land system, all land was to be distributed equally among the people, regardless of the sex of the recipient, except that those under 16 received only half a share; the size of a lot depended on its productive capacity. Every 25 families were to form a basic unit with its own church and treasury. Each family was to provide one soldier for a local platoon; the platoon leader was to be the local army officer who administered the unit. Successively bigger administrative units, paralleling the military structure, finally resulted in a unit of 13,156 families under the control of an "army" commander. Rural families were to work on the land but not own it. After their basic needs had been met, their surplus production was to go into

the communal treasury. Thus political, economic, civil, and military functions were to be unified under army officers, who were to ensure that land, food, clothing, and money were shared equally by all. The heavenly land system was, however, never implemented on any wide scale.

The thrust of the Taiping movement was not only egalitarian and "socialistic"; it also had strong puritanical and feminist elements. The banning of adultery, slavery, prostitution, opium smoking, and gambling were Taiping goals that China would achieve only a century later under communism, although they were pushed vigorously for some time by Hong's followers. The most revolutionary act of the Taipings was, no doubt, the emancipation of women. Women, whose lowly status in society was written into the Confucian doctrine, now fought alongside men as their equals and became officers in the army and administration. Footbinding, concubinage, and arranged marriages were abolished.

Although the program and the policies of the Taiping appear to have elements that can be associated with modern revolutions, it must not be forgotten that they were also rooted in China's popular culture. Taiping egalitarianism can be traced to *Zhou-li* (Rites of Zhou), a work produced in the pre-Christian era, which presents a vivid picture of a socialistic society. Similarly, equal land distribution can be traced to Mencius and the various experiments of imperial dynasties through the Tang era. Paramilitary social organization also had historical precedent, as had female armies. Hong as reincarnation of the Christian God had parallels in the so-called appearance of Maitreya Buddhas as leaders of rebellious secret societies.

If there was any real attempt to learn from the West and transform China into a modern state, it came with the appointment of Hong Ren-gan (1822-1864) as prime minister in 1859. Until 1850 Ren-gan's career had duplicated that of his cousin, Hong Xiu-quan: He had failed the imperial examinations, taken up a teaching career, and converted to Christianity. Ren-gan was deeply influenced by Xiu-quan but for various rea-

sons did not join the Taiping campaign. Instead, he spent nearly six years in Hong Kong and Shanghai gaining Western knowledge from his Christian mentors and employers in the London Missionary Society and the American Baptist Church. When he finally did get to Nanjing in 1859, he was promptly given the high office of prime minister.

Hong Ren-gan elaborated his political program in a work entitled *New Guide to Government*. He advocated Western-style institutions for centralizing power and ending factional politics, which had been plaguing Nanjing; cleaning up the bureaucracy to eliminate corruption; introducing a rational accounting system, a reform of the penal code; and the development of public opinion through the establishment of newspapers. He emphasized the need for modern transportation and communications (railways, highways, steamer service, postal service); new-style schools and hospitals; and modern banking, insurance, and technology.

In foreign relations Hong Ren-gan favored opening China to trade and cultural relations with foreign nations on a basis of true equality: China would discard its superior attitude and stop calling foreigners "barbarians," and foreigners would not interfere in China's internal affairs.

Neither Hong Xiu-quan's land system nor Hong Ren-gan's new political and economic system had any real impact on the Taiping kingdom. Even before 1860 (when it faced not only the better-organized Qing forces but also the active intervention of the British and French on behalf of Beijing), it had lost its revolutionary ardor and become a faction-ridden military state in which the leaders fought one another for personal power and wealth. The peasants in this "utopian" state often found themselves exploited more ruthlessly than they had been by their Qing overlords.

Chinese Communist historians, although praising the "revolutionary" qualities of the Taiping ("its marvelous contribution to the forward march of history will last for ever"¹⁹), relate the failure of the movement to the class background of the leaders. With

what appears to be a bizarre sense of historical logic, they declare that the Taiping "was after all a peasant revolutionary movement . . . [and] could not benefit from the leadership of the Chinese working class and its Party."²⁰ Incidentally, Karl Marx called the Taiping a "greater scourge to the population than the older rulers" and saw its vocation as "destruction, in grotesque horrifying form, without any seeds for a renaissance."²¹ The Taiping government consistently had tried hard to gain the recognition and support of the foreign powers, their "Christian brothers," but the Westerners, who had rather callously exploited the civil war to make a war of their own on Beijing and gain a revision of the treaties in 1860, now decided that the time had come to give up their attitude of neutrality and help the Qing.

THE FIFTEEN CRITICAL YEARS: 1842-1857

The jubilation with which the foreigners in China had greeted the first set of treaties did not last long. It was soon felt that the "opening" of the five treaty ports was, in actual fact, no more than the "confining" of foreign trade and foreign traders to these port cities. Furthermore, it became apparent that of the five ports only Guangzhou and Shanghai had potential for growth. Even in these cities, particularly in Guangzhou, antagonistic officials and harassing bureaucratic practices continued to mock the spirit of the treaties.

To fulfill their great commercial expectations, which had not been realized by the opening of the five ports, the British merchants began to clamor for free access to other ports and to the presumed fabulous market that existed in the vast interior. Indeed, except for opium, China's import of British manufactures had declined in the decade following the Nanjing Treaty. The voices of these merchants were joined by those of Protestant missionaries who wanted the rights gained by the Catholic missionaries under the Sino-French treaty plus the right to move freely in the hinterland.

In the beginning the British government was not overly anxious to become militarily involved in China once again. It did not consider the pressures exerted by the merchants and the missionaries to be fully justified. However, the Chinese reluctance or incapacity to follow Western norms of international relations and allow for more open contact between Western diplomats and high Chinese officials, as spelled out in the treaties, led to an increasing number of diplomatic incidents and a spate of letters from the Crown's representatives in China, recommending that London take some kind of "strong" action against Beijing.

The basic trouble was that China had no institution that could handle "foreign relations," as the West understood the term. Until 1841 the Cohong merchants were the only contact point between the "ocean barbarians" and China. After signing the treaties, the foreign consuls in the treaty ports could deal directly with the local circuit intendant, and *dao-tai* (who, apart from being the intermediary in diplomatic intercourse, was also the superintendent of customs), and through the *dao-tai*, with the governor and governor-general (the viceroy, in Western terminology of the day) in charge of the province in which the treaty port was located. An imperial commissioner, posted at Guangzhou and especially appointed to handle foreign affairs, was the highest official in this hierarchy, and it was he who received the credentials of foreign heads of missions.

Therefore all serious correspondence and negotiations had to be carried on with the imperial commissioner in Guangzhou, over a thousand miles from Beijing. In Beijing no special office was established to handle Western foreign relations. Westerners expected some change after the Treaty of Nanjing, but none came because the idea of treating the barbarians as equals was still too abhorrent. The emperor, helped by the Grand Council, personally dealt with any issues brought to his notice through memorials from the imperial commissioner or other concerned officials. Since Western diplomats had no right to communicate directly with

the emperor, their cases were presented through such memorials. Of course, the memorialist could always distort the truth to suit his purpose.

With the passage of time it became apparent that Beijing had little intention of abiding by the diplomatic aspects of the treaties that it had conceded at gunpoint. For example, no attempt was made by the Chinese government to announce the contents of the treaties to the populace at large or even to the people in the port cities, where they were bound to come in contact with the foreigners. The original and ratified copies of the treaties were kept in Guangzhou and not even forwarded to Beijing. Yet, by and large, this lack of preparation for a new order did not affect the four new ports, where the population had not come in contact with the foreigners earlier and had no bitter feelings against them. But it did result in a worsening of relations at Guangzhou.

The British maintained that the treaties had given them the right to enter the walls of Guangzhou (a debatable issue because the Chinese version of the Treaty of Nanjing could not be so interpreted), but the imperial commissioners managed to keep postponing the date of entry on the grounds that it would take time to calm the unruly citizens of Guangzhou, who were violently hostile to the foreigners. It was, indeed, true that the people of Guangzhou showed a strong antiforeign disposition, but it was equally true that they were incited by the officials and the local gentry. In 1847, when the British sent gunboats upriver and destroyed the city's defenses in retaliation for the manhandling of two British sailors who had gone into the city, the imperial commissioner finally agreed to open Guangzhou in 1849. But when the time came to carry out the agreement, the imperial commissioner, Xu Guang-jin, and the governor, Ye Ming-chen, "incited the people of Canton [Guangzhou] to gather several ten thousands of militiamen to threaten Bonham (the British Superintendent of Trade and the Governor of Hong Kong)

when the latter was having a conference with Xu."²² Under the circumstances, Sir George Bonham reluctantly decided to postpone the issue to a still later date; this so pleased the emperor that both Xu and Ye were awarded higher titles. The emperor's edict is instructive: "The Central Empire [China] cannot oppose the people in order to yield to men from a distance."²³ The will of the people had suddenly become a convenient, although questionable, weapon in China's diplomatic armory. A few years later, when Guangzhou was occupied by the British in 1857, the Cantonese showed no sign of unruliness and foreigners could walk about unmolested, "without the slightest sign of resistance or animosity."²⁴

Although the imperial commissioners in Guangzhou were proving their capability in handling the Western barbarians by prevarication and equivocation, the Taiping uprising soon created a political situation that demanded careful assessment by the foreign powers. Was it likely that the Taipings would be the next government? Would it not be better to back the Taipings who were, after all, Christians and who might open the entire country to foreign trade and missionary activities? In any case, since the Taipings controlled the tea and silk producing areas, they should be made aware of Western interests and told to abide by the treaties.

In 1853, when Bonham led the first foreign mission to Nanjing, he found that the second Son of God was also the "Lord of the whole world," who demanded that the inferior foreigners kowtow before him. Although Bonham did not gain an interview with Hong, he did manage to make an agreement with the Taipings for the British to trade freely in Taiping territory. Bonham's recommendation to London was that Britain should maintain a neutral stand in the Chinese civil war but be prepared to defend its citizens in case they came under attack from the Taipings. Following Bonham, the French minister, deBourboulon, and the American minister, Robert McLane, also visited Nanjing

and came to conclusions more or less similar to those of Bonham.

The foreign merchants were not too unhappy with the situation because, despite the war, trade was not affected. The missionaries, however, were disillusioned with the Taipings: the Protestants because of the scandalous claims of Hong, the Catholics because the Taipings did not recognize them as legitimate Christians.

By 1856 several developments had prepared the ground for the next major war that would finally destroy what was left of the self-imposed Chinese wall of isolation and open the whole of China to foreign penetration. First, Ye Ming-chen, who had been promoted to the rank of imperial commissioner at Guangzhou in 1852, had by his haughty and intransigent attitude annoyed all the foreign diplomats. He was an expert in delaying tactics and in making it impossible for Western diplomats to secure interviews with him. Consider, for example, the case of Humphrey Marshall, the American minister, who on arrival in China followed the prescribed procedure by going to Guangzhou to present his credentials to Commissioner Ye. He was told that Ye was busy with the local rebels and not available. Marshall then proceeded to Shanghai, hoping to present his credentials to the viceroy of Jiangsu through the good offices of the local *dao-tai*. The *dao-tai*, not empowered to act in this fashion, refused to help Marshall. Marshall then took the last recourse: He threatened to sail to Tianjin and seek redress from the court at Beijing. This threat brought prompt results, and he was asked to return to Guangzhou, where Ye would see him. Indeed, Ye did. But Marshall had hardly presented his credentials when he was replaced by Robert McLane. It comes as no surprise that McLane underwent exactly the same treatment as his predecessor.

Obviously, Ye was not acting in this recalcitrant fashion without the emperor's approval. Witness the pride with which he reported to the emperor in 1855: "First McLane came to Canton [Guangzhou] in the

middle of the month; in the latter part, Bowring (Sir John Bowring who had replaced Bonham), with several warships, also came to Canton, and sent a man to give notice and to fix a date for an interview, insisting that it be in the *yamen* to accord with propriety. Your official answered that he was really so desirous of a meeting that, no matter what the place, he should consent, but as the *yamen* was inside the city it was virtually impossible to agree. They stayed in Canton some three weeks but never came back to repeat the request."²⁵ The emperor, no doubt, was very pleased by this report.

Second, while Ye was trying to revive the traditional system of managing the barbarians, Beijing appears to have forgotten the treaty-revision clause. In 1854, the year the British treaties were due to come up for revision, Britain decided to act in concert with France and America. It was agreed among the powers that China should be asked to open the entire country to foreign trade, or at least allow free navigation in the Yangtze River; abolish internal duties; legalize the opium trade; agree to the establishment of embassies in Beijing or, failing this, the right of consuls to correspond with responsible officials of the Chinese government.

British, American, and French consuls approached Ye with these proposals, but he replied that his government felt that revisions were unnecessary. Bowring and McLane then did what was becoming the common diplomatic practice—they went to Shanghai and, gaining no response from Chinese officials in Shanghai, on to Tianjin to push for recognition of their claims. In Tianjin they were joined by the French representative. Not being accompanied by a military force, they were subjected to the usual delaying tactics and finally returned to Guangzhou, having accomplished nothing substantial. Although efforts at treaty revision in 1854 came to nought (partly because, from 1854 to 1856, Britain and France were preoccupied with the Crimean War), the attempt resulted in a greater awareness in Western capitals that only force would bring results.

Third, by 1856 it was becoming clear that the Taiping kingdom was itself experiencing internal difficulties and was perhaps disintegrating. The Western powers had little choice but to deal with the Qing government, compelling it to give in to their demands, while ensuring at the same time that it did not collapse.

THE SECOND OPIUM WAR: 1857-1860

The real cause of the Second Opium War was the continuing conflict between the Chinese and European views of international relations. The Chinese were aware of European expansion in Asia, particularly of the British occupation of India, but China was entrapped by its all-encompassing sociopolitical tradition. It was impossible to give up China's sense of superiority and world outlook to accept the "superiority" and "universality" of Western civilization or the validity of Western-style "international law." China had yet to learn the lesson that in the modern world "superiority" is allied to military power.

It is fascinating to note that both sides considered the other barbaric and inscrutable. The emperor was repeatedly informed that "what goes on in the (barbarian) mind is inscrutable."²⁶ (The Westerners were still referred to as barbarians in all official correspondence. The practice was stopped only after the 1860 war, on the insistence of the European powers.) On the British side, Lord Elgin, who headed the expedition to chastise China, viewed the people of the Middle Kingdom as "these incomprehensible Chinese."²⁷

Two incidents involving France and Britain served as the immediate cause of war. The first was the arrest and execution by the local Chinese authorities of a French Catholic missionary in February 1856. Auguste Chapdelaine had been traveling in the interior of Guangxi in contravention of the treaty regulations stipulating that foreigners could not go beyond the treaty ports. The French were incensed by the exe-

cutution; they called it a "judicial murder," in violation of France's extraterritorial rights.

The second cause was the notorious *Lorcha* (a ship with a European hull and Chinese rig) *Arrow* incident. The *Arrow* was owned by a Chinese and had a Chinese crew, but it was captained by a British subject. It was registered in Hong Kong and flew the British flag. On October 8, 1856, while lying at anchor in Guangzhou, it was boarded by Chinese officials, who arrested 12 of the crew of 14 on charges of an earlier act of piracy. The British consul at Guangzhou, Harry Parkes, who considered the reported hauling down of the British flag as an insulting act, protested to Commissioner Ye on the grounds that the crew was entitled to British protection. In fact, the boat's registry had expired in September, and it is questionable whether she was flying the British flag while she lay to, but these legalisms had little impact on the issue, which now became politically explosive. Parkes was a hardliner who would have used any pretense to create an "incident." Hong Kong backed Parkes' demand for an apology and further assurances. After a series of charges and countercharges, Ye first returned some of the prisoners and finally all of them. But since they were not accompanied by a Chinese officer of rank or an apology, Parkes refused to accept their release.

The British then went a step further. Their naval force bombarded the river forts, breached the city wall, lobbed shells into Ye's residence, and stood ready to seize the city but had no authorization from London to do so. When they withdrew, the Chinese burned down the foreign factories. Ye did not know it, but war had begun. Ye, in his ignorance of the larger world outside China and with his strange sense of logic, actually felt that he had won the battle. He sent a glowing report to the emperor, giving details of how the barbarians had lost their warships, how their troops had been massacred by the brave Chinese soldiers, and how their admiral Seymour had met his well-deserved and dishonorable end. The emperor was

pleased to record that "Yeh Ming-ch'en [Ye Ming-chen] understands barbarian affairs thoroughly and can certainly find means to control them."²⁸ The future of the Chinese imperial system, whose only source of intelligence was the high bureaucrats who were adept in weaving a tissue of falsehoods, had to be bleak.

Any feeling of optimism that Ye's self-confidence may have engendered in Beijing was shattered by the events that followed the arrival, in 1857, of a British expeditionary force under Lord Elgin and a French force under Baron Gros. The military forces, sent by the two powers to ensure the revision of the treaties, taught the Chinese a lesson that they would not forget as easily as they had forgotten the first war.

Military action began in Guangzhou in December after Ye refused to submit to the demands of the two plenipotentiaries. Guangzhou was seized in January 1858. It remained under foreign occupation and was ruled by an Anglo-French commission acting through Chinese officials until the end of the war in 1860. Imperial Commissioner Ye was taken prisoner and exiled to Calcutta, where he died in 1859. Ironically, it was Seymour (already "killed" in Ye's despatches) who arranged Ye's sea passage to India.

Whereas the first Opium War two decades earlier had been fought by the British alone, in this war not only were the British and the French allied against China but even the Americans and the Russians collaborated with Elgin and Gros. The four powers, by prearrangement, sent similar notes to the grand secretary ("The Senior Secretary of State at Beijing," as Elgin addressed him) in Beijing asking for the appointment of a responsible high-level official to negotiate with them in Shanghai; the British and French letters were more bellicose than those of the other two powers. When the grand secretary sent word that he could not, in all propriety, correspond with the foreigners and that they should go back to Guangzhou (the envoys were now in Shanghai) and deal with the imperial com-

missioner there (the Guangdong governor working under the Anglo-French commission was entitled to communicate with the emperor), the Anglo-French forces sailed north to the mouth of the Beihe in Zhili Bay. The American and the Russian representatives accompanied Elgin and Gros as "neutrals," deeply interested in the outcome of the operation and ready to act as intermediaries between the belligerent nations.

Forced to respond, Beijing appointed the viceroy of the metropolitan province to meet with the plenipotentiaries, but Elgin considered him to be lacking the power and authority to negotiate a treaty. Beijing prevaricated. On May 20 the Anglo-French naval forces opened fire on the four Dagou forts that guarded the mouth of the river. Within a few hours the British and French flags were flying from the forts, and the expeditionary force pushed on to Tianjin, fewer than 100 miles from Beijing.

Dismayed by the turn of events and further shocked to learn that the British had brought with them highly confidential imperial edicts and memorials dealing with "barbarian affairs," seized from Commissioner Ye's office when Guangzhou was occupied, Beijing felt humiliated but had no recourse but to yield to the Western powers. An Anglo-Chinese Treaty was signed on June 26, 1858, and it provided the general framework for similar treaties that were signed, in quick succession, with the other three powers.

The British treaty made it absolutely clear that Britain not only had the right to post a resident minister at Beijing but also that this gentleman, representing a nation equal to China, would not perform ceremonies like the kowtow. Of course, the Chinese also had the right to appoint their representative to the Court of St. James, but all diplomatic practice would follow the precedents laid down in Europe.

Apart from the opening of ten new treaty ports and the right of British ships to sail up the Yangtze, the treaty also gained the right for British subjects to travel to all parts of the interior under a passport issued

by their consul and countersigned by a Chinese official. China was also forced not only to grant toleration to Christianity but to provide official protection to the missionaries and their converts.

The definition of extraterritoriality was further clarified: Disputes between foreigners were to be handled by the foreign consuls concerned; a Chinese guilty of a crime against a foreigner was to be tried by the laws of China; a foreigner guilty of a crime in China was to be tried by the consul of his country according to the laws of his native land; cases between a Chinese and a foreigner were to be tried by a mixed court formed of a Chinese magistrate and a foreign consul.

Since foreigners (missionaries not excluded) enjoyed the right of extraterritoriality, the right to travel in the interior meant that they became a privileged class which could not be controlled by the local Chinese legal system.

The indemnity of 4 million taels of silver sought by Britain to cover the cost of the war in Guangzhou and the expedition north was seen by the Chinese as the least of the demands. From the Chinese point of view, the residence of an envoy in Beijing was the worst blow.

From Tianjin the foreign plenipotentiaries retired to Shanghai to carry on further negotiations regarding tariff readjustments, it having been agreed that they would return north in 1859 to ratify the treaties at Beijing. The treaties had been hurriedly accepted by China because Beijing was threatened by foreign forces; now that the threat had disappeared, the emperor and his advisers began to discuss ways of altering the treaties to eliminate the residence clause. There was even a suggestion made, in all seriousness, that Beijing would forgo all customs duties if the Westerners agreed to drop the demand to establish embassies in Beijing.

While in Shanghai, Elgin, whom the Chinese rightly considered the main culprit responsible for the new treaty system, was approached by the imperial commissioners with the request that the right of permanent residence of an ambassador to Beijing be changed to an "occasional" visit. The reason

given was "in her present crisis of domestic troubles" (the Taiping insurrection) the presence of foreign envoys in Beijing "would cause a loss of respect for their Government in the minds of her subjects."²⁹ Not wanting to undermine the authority of the emperor and in the interest of better relations, Elgin yielded; it was agreed that though the right would remain as a clause in the treaty, the British would not insist on immediate compliance. Under Chinese advice, the American and the Russian representatives had also recommended to Elgin that he not insist on the residency clause; the French did not favor the idea but went along with Elgin.

Having thus satisfactorily settled the treaty problem and having also seen to the revision of the tariff and the legalization of the opium trade, Elgin sailed home. Everyone, including the Chinese, realized that since the opium trade could not be suppressed, it was better to legalize it because it would then, at least, yield considerable revenues for the impoverished Beijing government. Elgin had come to China with an open mind and in the beginning he had, indeed, felt that the responsibility for the poor relationship between China and the West lay more with the rapacious, arrogantly aggressive foreigners than with the Chinese. But by the time he left for England, he had become convinced that hawks like Parkes were right. The "stupid" Chinese yielded nothing except under fear, and Elgin had to play the role of "an uncontrollably fierce barbarian," even though this went against his grain.

For various, not very thoughtful reasons, Beijing recovered a certain sense of self-confidence during the months that preceded the ratification of the treaties and Beijing's preparations to receive the foreign envoys for that occasion were in keeping with its newly revived spirit. The Dagu forts were rearmed and the mouth of the river blocked with sunken barges and chains. This act was supposed to force the envoys to leave their ships behind and travel to Beijing by the land route north of Dagu. Instructions were issued that the envoys could not bring more than ten attendants each and that no one must bear

arms. The envoys would not be allowed to ride in sedan chairs; they must leave Beijing as soon as the treaties had been ratified.

In June 1859 Frederick Bruce (Lord Elgin's brother), deBourbolon, and John E. Ward—representing Britain, France, and America—sailed to Dagu, where they were instructed to proceed north to Beitang, from where they would be conveyed to Beijing by road. Ward accepted the instructions, but the Anglo-French envoys did not. Showing a certain lack of caution, presumably because all earlier military action in China had been comparatively easy, the British admiral approached the Dagu barrier to clear a passage upstream. Suddenly the Dagu guns opened heavy, and surprisingly accurate, fire; the allies suffered a heavy enough loss in men and boats that they were forced to withdraw to Shanghai. Since the British were the real leaders of the campaign and the prime challengers of the Chinese empire, this battle can be considered a humiliating defeat for the British.

Meanwhile, because of the Dagu success or perhaps just because of their ingrained sense of "propriety," the Chinese treated Ward in a rather shabby fashion. After a three-week delay in Beitang, Ward and his party were taken to Beijing in closed, unsprung carts of the type used to convey Korean tributary missions. There Ward learned that the Russian delegation had already arrived overland and had exchanged ratification, but he was not allowed to meet or communicate with the Russians. Held virtually as a prisoner, Ward was harangued about the need to perform the kowtow, or some ceremony that came near enough to it, when he was received in audience by the emperor. However, when the day of the audience arrived, it became clear that no deviation from the orthodox kowtow was possible. Ward was ordered to return to Beitang, and the ratification documents were exchanged there instead of at Beijing.

The news of the Dagu debacle was received with anger and dismay in England and France. The press and public were outraged. There was a cry for the governments to

avenge the honor of their countries and "the blood of our murdered soldiers." Finally, in 1860, the British and the French governments acting in concert dispatched the old Elgin and Gros team, backed by a suitable force.

Action began on August 1. The Dagu forts were taken without much difficulty, and the expeditionary force moved on to Tianjin and then on to a position 12 miles outside Beijing, defeating the imperial army in several engagements on the way. All negotiations en route were of no avail because the Chinese officials did not have the power to sign a convention. In mid-September, when it appeared that the Chinese were at last ready to negotiate in earnest, attitudes in Beijing suddenly hardened. The Chinese found Elgin's demands that he be allowed to enter Beijing with an armed escort and seek an audience with the emperor particularly unacceptable. The Anglo-French representatives, heading an advance party of 37 persons to confer under a flag of truce with the Chinese officials, were made prisoners. Although the concept of a flag of truce may not have been fully appreciated by the Chinese, there was no call for suddenly taking as hostages the representatives with whom they had been negotiating all along, nor for the brutality with which the prisoners were handled. Twenty of the prisoners were dead by the time the others were released.

Incensed by these developments, the allied forces now took the offensive and easily defeated the Chinese armies under the hard-line Mongol general Seng-ge-lin-chin, thus clearing the way for the occupation of Beijing. The emperor, and all other high officials who could do so, fled from Beijing. It was left to Prince Gong, the emperor's half-brother, who had been given the authority to deal with the enemy, to accept the terms of the humiliating surrender. Before that happened, however, Lord Elgin decided that the emperor needed to be taught a personal lesson, and so he ordered his troops to burn the Summer Palace, which stood just outside Beijing. The palace grounds extended over several hundred acres of land and were dotted with innu-

merable residences, temples, pagodas, landscaped gardens, fountains, artificial lakes, and hills. Before the palace was set to the torch, it was methodically looted by the British and the French forces.

The Beijing Convention confirmed the treaties of Tianjin, doubled the indemnities asked for in 1858, added Tianjin to the list of treaty ports, restored Catholic property confiscated since the banning of that religion, allowed priests to buy land and build churches in the interior (the clause was surreptitiously introduced by the French, but the right was naturally extended to the Protestants under the "most favored nation" principle), and ceded the Kowloon peninsula (opposite Hong Kong) to Britain in perpetuity.

Russian-Chinese Relations

China's special relations with Russia continued to operate until the opening of the nineteenth century when Russia began to focus greater attention on eastern Siberia. The Treaty of Nanjing and the advantages gained by the Western European naval powers in China increased Russian concern for protecting and developing its interests in the Russian Far East.

Russia was an Asian land power, so its concern was different from that of the maritime Western European nations. More than trade and missionary activity, Russia wanted to consolidate its hold over this remote part of its empire and ensure that Russian strategic interests there could not be undermined by European enemies. The attack on Petropavlovsk in Kamchatka by an Anglo-French fleet in 1854, during the Crimean War, had proved that Russian fears were not baseless.

In violation of the earlier Russo-Chinese treaties, the Russians began to explore the region of the Amur basin and look for suitable ports on the Pacific. After sending three expeditions down the entire length of the Amur River, by 1858 the Russians had effectively isolated the territory stretching from the northern bank of the river to the border delimited by the Treaty of Nerchinsk. The

island of Sakhalin had already been annexed in 1853.

In 1858 Russia sent Count Putiatin to China to ensure that Russia was not denied any of the rights that Britain and France would gain in their revision of the 1840 treaties. In June, Putiatin was one of the envoys who signed the Tianjin treaties. But, although gaining all the other rights, he could not get the Chinese to open the Amur question. Putiatin was not aware that Count Muraviev, the governor general of Eastern Siberia, had already confronted the Chinese frontier forces; Muraviev had in May 1858 signed a treaty at Aigun by which Russia had acquired all lands north of the Amur and the right to control jointly the territory lying between the Amur and the Ussuri rivers and the Pacific (the Maritime Province).

At the ratification of the Tianjin Treaty between Russia and China at Beijing in 1859, it became clear that the Chinese had repudiated the Aigun Treaty, particularly as far as the trans-Ussuri territory was concerned. However, in 1860, the Russian envoy, Major General Ignatiev, exploited the war situation by showing friendliness to both sides—giving information to Elgin and Gros and assuring Prince Gong that he would use his influence to get the allied armies out of Beijing. Prince Gong, not necessarily deceived by Ignatiev, felt it expedient to sign a convention which not only confirmed the Aigun and Tianjin treaties but also ceded the Maritime Province to Russia.

Although defeated by the Anglo-French forces, Prince Gong still felt that the real threat to China came not from the maritime powers but from Russia. As he wrote to the emperor, "in my opinion all the barbarians have the nature of brute beasts. The British are the most unruly, but the Russians are the most cunning. The rebels [the Taipings] menace our heart, the Russians our trunk, while the British are merely a threat to our limbs."³⁰

In any event, the result of the treaty system was that China was forced not only to discard its traditional world view and accept the Western international order but also to open

the country to Western trade, Western religions, and Western ideas. The Western nations had proved beyond any doubt that they had the "right" to conduct diplomatic relations along lines they were used to; the "right" to trade freely anywhere they chose; the "right" to protect their citizens, and the property of their citizens, with weapons of war and their national legal systems; and the "right" to propagate their civilization and their religion without let or hindrance. That they achieved this advantage by acts of high-handed imperialism, savagery, and vandalism was bound to leave lasting anger and hatred in the Chinese, a feeling that has tinged Chinese developments to this day.

The only "right" the Chinese government gained from the treaties was the right to protect foreign interests at the cost of their own. This is not to say that the Chinese government had no faults or was not responsible for its own downfall and degradation. The Chinese had wasted the 15 years between 1842 and 1857, learning nothing and forgetting nothing, hoping that somehow the new evil from across the ocean would disappear on its own, leaving no trace behind.

Communist historians trace all modern China's troubles to "imperialism" and see the Qing as "shamelessly" acceding "to all the rapacious demands of these foreign pirates, in order to secure in exchange their cooperation in the suppression of the people's revolution" (the Taipings, Nian, etc.).³¹ One need hardly pause to examine this simplistic distortion of history.

Some Western historians feel that the word *imperialism*, used as a blanket term to condemn all Western activity (*economic imperialism, cultural imperialism, political imperialism*) as aggressive and exploitative is meaningless because it overlooks the fact that China's traditional economic structure and the balance of internal supply and demand limited the economic exploitation of China, that imperialism had a positive impact in propelling China toward modernization, and that in the development of Western-Chinese relations

many philanthropic souls dedicated themselves to the welfare of China.

Such historians miss a basic point: Indeed, the forces of historical development have to be viewed with objectivity, but there is no reason not to exercise a value judgment where the people or governments involved with the historical process are concerned. Chenghis Khan's conquests brought Europe and Asia closer together and helped advance historical changes (e.g., the introduction of gunpowder and paper into Europe), but this does not mean that Chenghis cannot be condemned for the ruthlessness with which he destroyed peoples and cities that got in his way.

However, regardless of how one may view these developments, 1860 marks the beginning of the new order for China.

NOTES

1. C. Costin, *Great Britain and China, 1833-1860* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 21.
2. Earl H. Pritchard, *The Crucial Years of Anglo-Chinese Relations, 1750-1800* (Pullman: Washington State College, 1936), p. 307.
3. See Christopher Hibbert, *The Dragon Awakes: China and the West, 1793-1911* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 52.
4. Harley F. MacNair, *Modern Chinese History: Selected Readings* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1923), pp. 2-4.
5. See Eric Widmer, *The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking During the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 180.
6. Hibbert, *Dragon Awakes*, pp. 9-19.
7. MacNair, *Modern Chinese History*, p. 8.
8. Ibid.
9. Quoted in John King Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischawr, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: The Modern Transformation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 77.
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11. Ibid., p. 405.
12. Hibbert, *Dragon Awakes*, p. 66.
13. H. B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, vol. 1, 1834-1860 (London: Longmans Green, 1910), pp. 126-27.