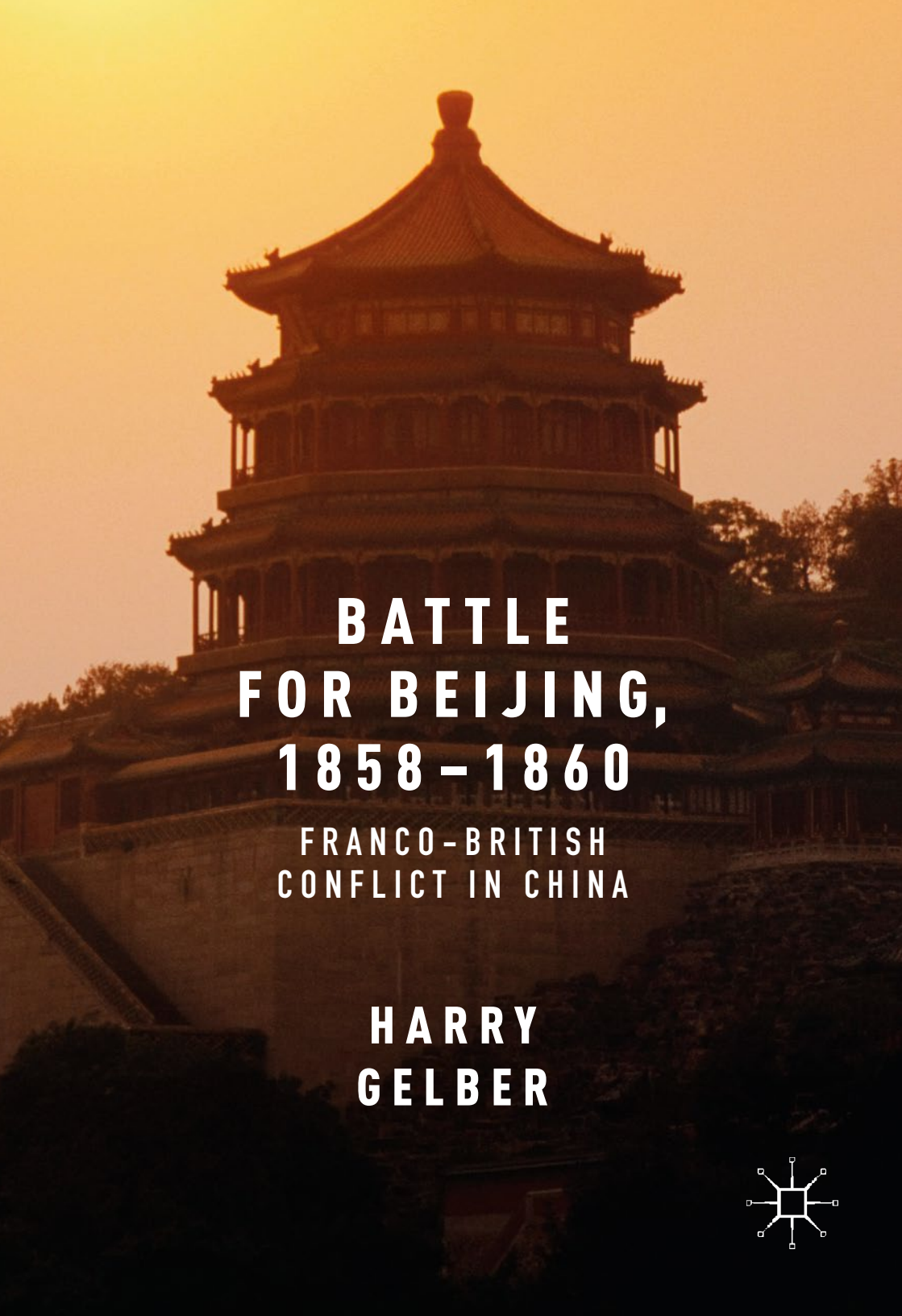

BATTLE FOR BEIJING, 1858–1860

FRANCO-BRITISH CONFLICT IN CHINA

HARRY GELBER

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To the memory of my parents

Preface

Battle for Beijing

The rise of China over the last half-century is one of the more remarkable phenomena of world politics. By general consent, it is changing not only the balance of power in East Asia but arguably the design of the entire world order. Nor is the scope of that change entirely unexpected. As Napoleon Bonaparte famously remarked at the start of the nineteenth century: 'Let China sleep, for when she wakes the world will tremble.'

When the change did come, it was quite sudden, for the story of China from the eighteenth to the twentieth century has been one of almost unbroken difficulties and decline. At the heart of that decline were four linked changes: major population increases, popular unrest and rebellion, foreign demands and the increasing inability of the imperial administration to cope with all three. Throughout that period, the empire was ruled by the last of the great imperial dynasties, the Qing. They had come to the throne in 1644, but their rule was not helped by the fact that they were not properly Chinese: they were, and remained, Manchus from the North. The last of their greatest rulers, Qianlong, died in 1799.

Perhaps it was inevitable that, in addition to domestic difficulties, there would in time be frictions between China and the major foreign powers, two in particular. First there was Russia, on the other side of the empire's long and indistinct northern frontiers, but pushing southwards as well as eastwards towards what is now Siberia. In China's southern regions were groups of foreigners, largely traders from Europe and headed by the world's greatest sea power, the British. It was a setting for a true clash of

cultures between the Chinese, long accustomed to seeing themselves as the self-sufficient centre of civilisation, and the English, who saw themselves, especially after their victories over Napoleon's empire, as a leading world power. It was a relationship ripe for misunderstandings between two sides that knew almost nothing about each other. The Chinese were accustomed to having foreigners bring tribute to the emperor and accept a formally subordinate position. They also wanted, as far as possible, to limit foreign influences lest they disturb the tranquility of Chinese life. The English, on the other hand, and especially after their victories over Napoleon on sea and land, wanted at least equality of status between governments and trading access to China's riches. The tensions led not just to failed English missions to China but to armed conflict in the period 1840–1842 and again in 1858–1860. Both have been called Opium Wars, designed by the English to force opium consumption on the Chinese.

This book strongly challenges that view. It considers the wars as a result of mismanagement or misinterpretations on both sides. It is true that the emperor wanted to prohibit growing opium imports being promoted by many private English merchants at Canton and encouraged and pursued by his own officials. But it is also true that the English had no laws against opium or any police, courts or judicial officers in China to control their own traders. Trouble arose not so much because English authorities wanted to resist Chinese prohibitions as because British officials on location unwisely made the Crown responsible for compensating British merchants for the very large cost of 'trading goods', which the Chinese confiscated and destroyed. Trouble between the two powers continued because, in the British view, the Chinese conspicuously failed to keep to their various previous agreements and refused to reconsider the previously agreed texts.

This book focuses strongly on the last part of these conflicts, the 1858–1860 war and the Franco–English campaign of 1860 that brought allied troops to Beijing. It is seen less through the concerns and suspicions of the Chinese, who worried that the allies might be trying to seize provinces in the south, and especially through the eyes of the British and French governments of the time, and the views and behaviour of the French and English commanders of the 1860 campaign and their civilian staffs.

It concludes by considering the campaign not just in terms of its effects on China but as the impetus for large-scale British army reforms; the opening of a whole series of British imperial campaigns in Africa, Asia and elsewhere; and a series of defeats of China by various European and

other powers. It culminated in the 1900 Boxer Rebellion, which ended with 20,000 foreign troops from America, England, France, Austria, Italy and others, including Germany and Japan, occupying Beijing. The longer-term effects of that 1860 Franco–English campaign can therefore also be seen as merely the start of an intersecting series of conflicts for both sides: for the Chinese, the start of a half-century of defeat and decline with domestic conflict and foreign wars; and for the English and French, growing problems in how to manage their own empires and Europe's post-1815 relationships in the face of the rising powers of Russia, the USA and, most immediately, Germany.

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Harry G. Gelber is Emeritus Professor at the University of Tasmania in Australia—where he was Head of the Department of Politics from 1975 to 1989. He is an internationally renowned scholar of history and political science. He has served as Foundation Chairman of the Pacific Institute in Melbourne and been a member of the Australian government's Universities Council dealing with the administration of the country's university system. He has also spent some years in teaching at Harvard and the London School of Economics, and served at Boston University as a member of the University Professors' group. He has also served as an adviser to a number of Australian and American government bodies. He is the author of some 16 books and 150 or so articles as well as papers.

CHAPTER 1

Prologue

The roots of the Sino-British clashes went back for over two centuries to the beginnings of Sino-West European trade. Direct maritime exchanges between Europe and China began with the Portuguese in the 16th century and Chinese permission to build a permanent foreign trading post at Macao in 1557[1]. Other visitors soon followed; and from 1565 growing amounts of silver came into the Asian trade network, brought by the annual "Manila Galleon" from Spanish mines in the Americas. Much of it was used meet European demands for Chinese ceramics, silks, and, not least, the increasing English demand for tea. Together with the silver, the Spanish empire also sold maize, tobacco, opium and other products to the Chinese. British ships started to appear in China around the 1630s and, though there were no formal relations with China, were at first allowed to trade at Xiamen, Zoushan and Canton[2]. They quickly began to dominate China's non-coastal maritime trade.

Official English trade in the East was conducted through the East India Company (EIC), which was based in London and Calcutta, and granted a royal charter by Queen Elizabeth Ist in December 1599. That gave the Company a monopoly of all English trade in the East Indies[3]; indeed, it became a state within a state, governing India as a kind of colony of the Company. But the Chinese, in part with traditional Confucian disdain for trade,[4] set up a tight control and Customs system that turned out to encourage the purchasing of monopolies and allowing various forms of corruption, in the process enriching the administering officials.[5] Foreigners were given, or retained, the status of tributaries, their activities

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limited at the will of the Chinese authorities. So the imbalances between England and China, whether in trade or mutual understanding, went on growing. On the one hand, throughout the 17th century and beyond there was a growing European admiration and demand for Chinese art and products, especially silks and porcelain. Many grand country houses in England and elsewhere decorated special rooms in "Chinese style". The Empress Catherine of Russia even had a "Chinese" village built for her. And Chinese rulers like the emperor Kangxi showed great interest in Western science, especially mathematics and astronomy. Commercially even more important, at least for Britain and British India, was of course tea. By the late 18th and early 19th centuries that had become a staple drink in England, requiring large and increasing purchases from a China which was the only supplier. Indeed, by 1800 or so the EIC was investing some four million pounds Sterling per annum in the China trade and tea and the practice had become a major source of revenue not only for the Company but for the government in London. On the other hand, and perhaps especially in England, not all the information about China was favourable. To be sure, the first English expedition, under Captain John Weddell, reached Canton as early as 1637[6] and in 1685 the emperor granted permission for foreign commerce, including EIC vessels, to call at Southern Chinese ports. But sixty years later, in 1742–44 came the visit to Macao of Commodore George Anson,[7] whom the Chinese at first suspected of being just another pirate. On his return to England he gave a scathing account of the way he and his ship had been treated by the Chinese in general and their merchants in particular.

By 1756 the Chinese authorities restricted foreign trade to a single port, Canton (now Guangzhou), where the proper collection of duties was supervised by the imperial appointment of a Guangdong customs supervisor and guaranteed by the Cohong group of local merchants who were charged with supervising the foreigners. So that from 1760 to 1833 (and the end of the EIC monopoly) foreign trade took place solely at Canton. By the late 18th century the foreign traders were confined to their "factories" – sets of buildings outside Canton proper that served as both residences and places of business – and forbidden to bring wives or dependents closer than Macao. They were not even allowed to communicate directly with imperial officials, but could only communicate through the Cohong, and by way of humble "petitions" that these merchants could, but need not, forward to the Canton mandarins.

There were other and even more important difficulties. The tea and ceramics that the traders wanted had to be paid for in silver (and even more of it was needed later on for British civil and military spending in China). But where and how could British sales earn enough silver to pay for so much of these precious goods and meet other Far Eastern needs? In London it seemed irritatingly self-evident that the Chinese empire was huge and wealthy; and if only foreign traders could be allowed to trade with all of it, instead of being confined to a single port in China's South, trade and earnings could be vastly increased. Everybody would benefit, the Chinese as much as the British (and, for that matter, the Americans). In this period, which was perhaps the high point of free trade enthusiasm following the work of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham in England, moral convictions were in play as much as economic ones. So, of course were political and balance-of-power considerations. British interests in the decades that followed the 1815 Congress of Vienna that was inevitably centred on Europe and its new balance of power, in which France was no longer the central player. But the British Empire as a whole grew quickly to become the largest and most successful trading bloc in history, with a cycle of commerce that linked the other continents not just to Britain but to each other. Not that trade was the sole issue. Finance was of at least equal interest and London quite quickly became a central hub for global finance. What had begun as lively financial dealings between London, India and Canton, developed by the early years of the 19th century into exchanges that strongly involved the newly independent United States. Indeed, financial dominance became a key objective of Britain's foreign policy, though moral considerations were never far below the surface. As Sir John Bowring, a friend of Bentham and a Governor of Hong Kong in the 1850s rather grandiloquently put it: "Free Trade is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is Free Trade."[8]

Fortunately or unfortunately, it turned out that almost the only thing the Chinese public really wanted to buy from the British, and in steadily increasing quantities, was Indian opium. There was not much demand even for foreign tobacco, and it quickly emerged that English woollens and cottons could not compete with China's own cloth manufactures. Of course, opium was an entirely legal product both in the British Isles[9] and in India, where growing it quite quickly became a matter of great economic importance. It could be grown, sold and shipped quite legally to various markets, including the Netherlands East Indies and England

itself, although China remained much the largest market. In fact, over time opium probably became the most valuable commercial crop in the world. In China it had been known for many centuries for its medicinal qualities but in time the Chinese emperors, understandably worried about the financial, social and medical consequences of the traffic, banned the sale and smoking of opium in 1729, reinstated and strengthened the ban in 1799 and more strongly still in 1810[10]. Yet in this period Chinese consumption grew by leaps and bounds, as hundreds of local people, gangs and even officials took to smuggling it in, a process that the Chinese authorities proved neither able nor willing to stop. Jonathan Spence has suggested that between 1800 and 1832 the supply of East India Company chests of opium to China grew from 4570 to 23,570, rising to 40,000 by 1838.[11]

The causes of this rapid growth have never been entirely established. But some suggestions seem plausible. For one thing, China's population roughly tripled, from 150 millions to 450 millions, from the time of the emperor Kangxi around 1760 to the mid-1800s. Since land was normally divided among the land-holder's sons, individual land-holdings became smaller, causing one among many reasons for growing social discontent. Another was that the corps of mandarins that provided the empire's most senior officialdom did not increase in proportion to the total population. The result was that the quality and grip of the central administration declined as that mandarinate tried to cope with the increasing population numbers. That, in turn, helped to produce growing social unrest, multiple local or provincial rebellions and an effective drain of local authority from that imperial mandarinate to the local gentry. In addition, during the previous decades the fundamental distrust between the Chinese (Han) population and their essentially foreign Manchu rulers did not decrease. The unrest caused by these and other social difficulties seems very likely to have contributed not just to increased opium imports by way of smuggling, but to increased opium growing within China itself.

There is also the point that, during the opening decades of the 19th century, there were significant changes in the way in which opium was used. As part of its long history as an accepted medication and pain killer – and an entirely proper and comforting personal and social relaxant, especially among the higher social classes – opium had been smoked in a tobacco pipe, with shredded leaves dipped in opium solution. But by 1800 smokers had begun to put small balls of pure opium into a pipe, inhaling a heated water and opium vapour over it. That change in consumption gave

the smoker not just 0.2 % but perhaps up to 9–10 % morphine. At the same time, and in spite of the social condemnations of opium heard then and later, from missionaries in China and Members of Parliament in England, it is not at all clear that its use had solely harmful effects. Moderate use was often beneficial and the offer of an opium pipe was often, and remained, a sign of social hospitality in many sectors of Chinese society.

It was, however, creating serious fiscal and taxation problems. Not many decades earlier China had earned large quantities of silver from its exports of ceramics, silks and tea etc to Europeans. But now China needed increasing quantities of silver to buy opium and, as silver became scarce, its price rose in relation to copper. But since peasants had to use copper cash for their day-to-day purchases while paying their taxes in silver, that increase in the domestic price of silver meant effectively higher taxes[12]. That kind of tax increase was bound to cause unrest, and underlined the empire's attempts to rein in opium imports.[13]

But the outflow of silver to pay for opium was not easily stopped. It has been estimated that in the decade of the 1830s China had to pay 34 million silver dollars not only in bribery to officialdom but in effectively servicing EIC debts and forming one sixth of the revenue of the government in London.[14] Matters were not helped by the deep misunderstandings of the Chinese and the English of one another. China was and very largely remains – as a senior scholar remarked as late as the 1960s – "an empire of theatre and presumption. It is a construct both of domestic repression and international aspiration. Its arsenal of weapons includes secrecy, deception and a sense of history that enables it to take a long view of China's interests and ambitions".[15] Its driving force has almost always come from above and not from its people below. It continues, even now, to see itself as the guardian of truth; with all compromises with other powers being ultimately only tactical. In principle, barbarians who had their own values were guilty of "resisting heaven's way" but were judged "sincere" if they followed the emperor's way. Altogether, 19th century China was a country of complacency, ignorance and rigidity and total absence of curiosity about lands far away from China, not to mention profound public ignorance about China's history of invasion and slaughter among its neighbours.

To be sure, the senior mandarins in charge at Canton or, later, at Shanghai or other places, were invariably men of high intelligence and had little difficulty in understanding the motives and intentions of English or other foreign traders in their regions. They could also use advice from

Chinese merchants, western newssheets etc. But as members of the court at Beijing, and the emperor's senior advisers showed, there was virtually no interest in the government or political structure of Britain or of its empire. Their advice often suffered accordingly. It is, for instance, significant that China had no overseas embassy whatever until sometime after the 1860 conflict and under personal pressure from Prince Gong, the brother of the then emperor and chief Chinese negotiator with the British.

Matters were very different on the British side. Senior British merchants from Canton had a ready hearing in London, not just from the directors of the East India Company but from members of Parliament and even of the Government. Indeed, several such merchants, after becoming wealthy in China and returning to England, themselves found seats in the House of Commons. In 1793 London sent a high-powered mission (financed by the East India Company) to Beijing. It was headed by Lord George Macartney, a highly intelligent and experienced diplomat. He was given two particular tasks. Firstly, to secure for British trade the opening of more Chinese ports, and therefore commercial access to larger segments of the empire. Secondly, to secure permission to station at the imperial capital an ambassador who could circumvent provincial officials and talk directly, on equal terms, to the highest authorities of the empire. Both requests were flatly rejected.[16] The emperor indicated that China was self-sufficient and had no need to obtain what he saw as Western trinkets. The second request was even more unacceptable implying, as it did, nothing less than a wholly improper idea of equality between the foreigners and the imperial court.[17] Beyond that, though, there was also the issue of Chinese Court ceremonial. In fact, most of the discussions between Macartney and the imperial officialdom concentrated on protocol. In particular, there was the kow-tow,[18] the ceremonial obeisance to the emperor from which no-one, including royal princes, was exempt but which Macartney refused to accept as being too humiliating and far beyond the bent knee he would accord to his own king. That caused great offence to the Chinese and while the emperor was willing to see Macartney in private at his summer residence, the English envoy was refused a formal presentation. The whole thing was a major disappointment for the English mission.

What none of that could do, however, was to prevent Macartney from keeping a detailed diary and from letting both him and his colleagues take careful note of the country – they had weeks of travelling overland from Canton to Beijing and return – its people, their social arrangements, and

the life of villages and towns. That included detailed observations of the Chinese government on one side and the utter poverty, misery and wretchedness of much of the peasantry on the other.[19] There were, of course, other problems for the observers, for example those stemming from the insistence of the Chinese, then and later, that discussions be held in their own language. That fact alone almost mandated misunderstandings,[20] as Macartney saw clearly enough. He confided to his journal: "We…almost entirely depend on the good faith and good nature of the few Chinese whom we employ, and by whom we can be but imperfectly understood in the broken gibberish we talk to them."[21]

Even so, Macartney was much impressed by the relations between the Chinese and their rulers, the Manchus. "…They are both subject to the most absolute authority that can be vested in a prince, but with this distinction, that to the Chinese it is a foreign tyranny; to the Tartars (Manchus and Mongols) a domestic despotism." or again "…Although the Emperor, as the father of his people, affects and professes impartiality, and wishes to have it understood that he makes no distinction between Tartars and Chinese, neither Tartars nor Chinese are imposed upon by the pretence…". He then comments on the enormous difficulties for any single ruler in governing so vast and varied an empire. There must be endless "…vigilance and toil; and yet it is a task that has hitherto been performed with wonderful ability and unparalleled success…. through a succession of four princes for upwards of a century and a half. Imperial successions have (so far) been unexceptionably fortunate. Kangxi proved as great a prince as his father; Yung-cheng (Yongzheng) was inferior to neither, and Qianlong surpasses the glory of all his predecessors." On the other hand, "… it cannot be concealed that the nation in general is far from being easy or contented. The frequent insurrections in the distant provinces are unambiguous oracles of the real sentiments and temper of the people." Macartney also noted the presence in every province of secret societies "… who are known to be disaffected, …brood over recent injuries, and meditate revenge". He added that he would not be surprised by revolution and summed up his views in a quotation that became quite famous:

> The Empire of China is an old, crazy, first-rate Man of War, which a fortunate succession of vigilant officers have contrived to keep afloat for these hundred and fifty years past, and to overawe their neighbours merely by her bulk and appearance. But whenever an insufficient man happens to have the command on deck, adieu to the discipline and safety of the ship. 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.[22]

Whatever London may have made of his report, its conclusions seemed confirmed by a second official mission to Beijing, headed by Lord Amherst, which was rejected even more ignominiously in 1815. So matters rested for the best part of four decades, as England fought its land and naval wars against Napoleon and, after his defeat in 1815, took a leading part in the rearrangement of Europe produced by the Congress of Vienna and its aftermath.

By the late 1820s and especially the early '30s things had changed in both Britain and China. The victors of Trafalgar and Waterloo were even less inclined than before to be patient with foreign difficulties and obstacles, especially from this rich but obviously rather ramshackle empire at the end of the world. Moreover, European-style diplomacy saw the formal equality of legitimate states as axiomatic. For all major European powers, including Russia, and even the brand-new United States, equality of status among modern states was natural. (Monarchs even addressed each other as "cousin" and often were.) The rulers of China, on the other hand, saw their empire in principle as they had always done: the centre of Civilization, a unique and incomparable polity, whose civilisation was inherently superior to everyone else. To accept diplomatic – and therefore also political – "equality" with others remained inconceivable.

Matters began to come to a head in 1834. Before that, the group of foreign merchants at Canton had been headed by a senior trader who found no excessive difficulty in accepting the restrictions and formalities imposed by the Chinese. Still, traders accused the Chinese government of violating the law of nations as well as natural law. They harped on the principle that "All men ought to find on earth the things they stand in need of…The introduction of dominion and property could not deprive men of so essential a right".[23] Another comment lamented that the traders were finding themselves merely insulted "when they come…with the most friendly and most beneficent intentions".[24]

These various difficulties looked, and were, cumbersome but had not seriously hampered fruitful trade. Many people, in London and elsewhere, maintained that it would be improper to engage in a "show of force" in China. But in 1834 the authorities in London ended the Canton trading monopoly of the East India Company and placed the Canton traders under

the superintendence of a British government official. That changed things decisively. A superintendent who was himself a merchant might have no difficulty in accepting Chinese assertions of superiority, but a British official with a royal appointment was another matter entirely. Especially in the case of the first of these officials, Lord Napier, who was not just, as a naval Captain, a senior officer in the world's greatest navy, but a former shipmate and friend of his own king, William IVth. He was much less likely to accept procedures under which he was not just prevented from directly contacting the senior mandarinate at Beijing but compelled to address even local officials by writing humble "petitions". His difficulties were accentuated by small but significant differences between his written orders from London and the procedures laid down by Beijing.[25] In addition, there were divisions within the British merchant community. Napier's resistance to Chinese constraints solved nothing, and in the end he was forced to withdraw to Macao in humiliating circumstances and died there.

British opinion was understandably alarmed. As one contributor to the "Canton Register" put it: "Considering all the nations of the earth as one family, we see no reason why one of them, because it has remained for ages, occupying so large a portion of common soil, in a state of moral and political idiocy, shall not only deny to the surrounding members all the advantages that may be derived from an interchange of its various productions, but also to insult them when they come with the most friendly and the most beneficent intentions. We think that we have made out a strong case, showing that no delicacy should be used towards the celestials; and if it be expedient to use power to compel them to our and their own goods, we ought not for a moment hesitate to use it….But the Chinese are too wise ever to give us the pretence; if we have recourse to force we have only to exhibit, not to employ it…the very loudness of their bullying in all their edicts betrays the magnitude of their fears…".[26]

Other opinions were much the same. One contributor to the "Chinese Repository" thought that "…the government affords but imperfect security for the property of the people. In a word, it acknowledges no rights in its subjects. Such is the unnatural, the unreasonable and the unrighteous condition in which the monarch of this empire holds his subjects; he robs them of the liberty of conscience; annihilates their personal rights; and guaranties (sic) to them no security."[27] A much more senior and thoughtful comment came on 1st March 1836 from Mr Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, who had served as a senior EIC official at Canton since 1820 and now

wrote directly to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston. The Chinese, Hamilton wrote, "…were predetermined to insult him (i.e. Napier)," and "no moderation on his part would have procured for him a fitting reception". Their treacherous conduct to him after he placed himself in their power, on their solemn assurance of a safe conduct to Macao when on a bed of sickness "…affords perhaps the strongest grounds for resentment which the Chinese have ever given…" Lindsay then suggested two alternative modes of action for the government in London: "1. a direct armed interference to demand redress for past injuries and security for the future" and "2. withdrawal of all political relations from a country which obstinately refuses to acknowledge such (an envoy)without insult."…In the latter case, all British officials should immediately be withdrawn from China, a procedure that would be "highly embarrassing" to the Chinese, who would "anxiously enquire why no UK authority now existed". London could then reply: "when we sent one, you treated him with insult" and no representative of our sovereign should be so treated. And none would be sent now until you "promise him 'proper reception and treatment.'" The British demand should be "a commercial treaty on terms of equality". In addition, a small British naval force should be deployed off China's coasts, where costal traffic was of huge importance to China, but without using force. Lindsay ended by pointing out that he existing trade with China was already "of equal if not greater importance than that with any other nation in the world" and was "capable of almost unlimited increase."[28]

Both the British and Chinese sides continued to wrestle with the other major Canton problem, which had by now become the opium trade. For the British there were several difficulties. To be sure, after the imperial bans, the East India Company ceased trading opium into China and no British official, from Napier onwards, encouraged or countenanced the traffic. On the other hand, no Superintendent had legal jurisdiction over British, let alone Chinese, subjects; there were no British officials in China with the right to charge or arrest any of them; and there was no British court in or near Canton. Nor was there any way in which British officials could or would enforce Chinese laws on British citizens. On the other hand, the Chinese stuck to their established practice of expecting the "head man" of any foreign community on Chinese soil to look after, and control, his own people. That was all very well, but Chinese insults offered to a representative of the British crown were not acceptable. Perhaps the best response would indeed be to withdraw all British political establishments from China entirely?[29] However, while stricter Chinese prohibitions

had begun to bite, traders could still buy opium legally in Calcutta, could, equally legally, ship it in private, non-EIC vessels, to depot ships anchored at Lintin, on the Pearl River estuary but beyond the effective reach of the Chinese coastal protection services.[30] Private Chinese buyers could easily purchase and collect it from there, and smuggle it into any inlet or river they wished. The Chinese authorities, for their part, tried with indifferent success to discourage opium use and, with no success at all, to stop the smuggling. The emperor received contradictory advice about how to deal with the whole business.[31] Some officials urged him to stamp out opium use by increasingly severe anti-opium measures. Others urged him, on the contrary, to legalise, control and tax the traffic. In the end, he chose repression, together with pleas to the British to stop a trade which was not only legal outside China but included those opium sales in the Dutch East Indies and England's own, admittedly minor, opium imports. He appointed a brilliant young official, Lin Zexu, as new Commissioner at Canton, with the mission of ending the opium trade. Yet it was obvious that the British, even had they wanted to eliminate the opium trade by controlling China's coasts, entirely lacked either the legal authority or the naval means to do so.

In 1839 there was an even more important clash as matters came to a head between Lin and the English Superintendent of trade. By now that was Captain Charles Elliot, another ex-Royal Navy officer acting as the British Chief Superintendent at Canton. He was a much more careful and even subtle officer than Napier. Lin stopped all trade, and placed the foreign residents under virtual siege. He surrounded the "factories" with Chinese troops and appeared to threaten the safety of the entire British (and American) trading community. Elliot promised the merchants to have London reimburse them for the value of their "trading goods" – which was, after all, what the opium was – if only they agreed to surrender the opium stock. They did so and Lin destroyed it. But he also demanded promises about trading in future. The merchants and their families had to flee to Macao to escape Chinese law; but Lin forced the Portuguese to expel them. They took refuge on British merchant ships but Lin refused to let them land and they were unable to buy water or food. Messages reaching London suggested (perhaps wrongly) that the lives of British women and children were being wantonly endangered by the Chinese.

Matters were made still more acute when a Chinese citizen was killed ashore in a drunken brawl involving several British sailors. Lin demanded that the killer be handed over to him. Elliot proved quite unable to iden-

tify the culprit, though he put several sailors on trial by an ad hoc tribunal aboard a British ship (chaired by himself) and gave them prison sentences.[32] London was appalled not only by the danger to British lives but by Elliot's promise to reimburse the merchants for their opium, the cost of which was estimated at around Two Million Sterling. It seemed more reasonable to expect the Chinese to pay for the "trading goods" they had chosen to sequestrate and destroy. Royal Navy ships were sent out to protect British and American lives and there were clashes between them and the Chinese in which several Chinese ships were sunk.

The matter now came into the hands of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, one of England's greatest 19th century holders of that office. He was clever and both personally and officially assertive, while the fact that his Viscountcy was Irish allowed him to stay in the House of Commons instead of being obliged to move to the House of Lords. As a young man he had been conspicuously good-looking and wide-ranging in his *amours*. Even at the age of 79 he was to be cited in a divorce case, an affair that made him more widely popular than ever.[33] Yet long before this he had become allied with Lady Cowper and, when her husband obligingly died, married her. She was the sister of Lord Melbourne, who was not just Prime Minister but the closest political and even social confidante of new, assertive young Queen Victoria. None of that did any harm to Palmerston's social or political standing.

He was in any case inclined to share much of the disillusionment with China that had resulted from the Macartney mission's reports of its ossified governmental system and the utter misery of the ordinary peasantry. He also shared the natural sense of ethnic and cultural superiority of the England of his day. In addition, he shared the blend of timidity, opportunism and assertiveness of British policy at this period, not to mention the deep unpopularity of any suggestion that the British government should pay two million pounds sterling to meet the indemnity promised to Canton traders by Captain Elliot. As John Darwin has argued[34]: "Palmerston's intervention in 1839 was not the result of matured policy but a hasty response to the threatened destruction of British trade at Canton." When he was challenged in Parliament about this legal, but by no means everywhere reputable, business of opium, his answer was threefold. First, noone seemed able to stop all smuggling, not even England with its great Navy. (He did not trouble to point out that even during the Napoleonic wars French brandy had found its way into England). Second, he asked, did Parliament seriously propose to replace, from new British taxation, the

very large income that the wholly legal opium trade was currently bringing to the economy of British India? And thirdly, if the Chinese were really unable to control their own coasts, should the English tax-payer be asked to fund the maintenance of a fresh Royal Navy squadron to control China's coasts, and prevent its people from buying goods they evidently wanted? He won his vote in the Commons.

Another issue – one of long standing – proved altogether more difficult. It concerned the long-established Canton trading arrangements under which British people were being treated as second-class international citizens by a quaint and, as all reports kept saying, ramshackle empire at the end of the world. It was simply not good enough to be unable to talk to senior officials in Beijing, and to be treated like some distant tribe bearing tribute to the emperor. Not to mention being embroiled in a notably cumbersome and time-wasting procedure that produced endless opportunities for official delay and obstruction.

Chinese pressure and British resistance on these issues led to conflict and the "First Opium War" of 1840–42. Opinions about its justification have differed ever since. In the House of Commons the young William Gladstone said at the time that he had never heard of a more unjust war. In America, however, John Quincy Adams commented, accurately enough, that opium was "a mere incident to the dispute…the cause of the war is the kow-tow – the arrogant and insupportable pretensions of China that she will hold commercial intercourse with the rest of mankind not upon terms of equal reciprocity, but upon the insulting and degrading forms of the relations between lord and vassal."[35]

Elliot himself had previously served in Africa and the Caribbean and so had wide colonial experience. On the matter of opium, he wrote to Lord Palmerston in 1839: "No man entertains a deeper detestation of the disgrace and sin of this forced traffic on the coast of China".[36] After the war with China began, he negotiated terms with Chinese Commissioner Qishan and managed to conclude the January 1841 Convention of Chuenpi (Chuenbi). But neither Palmerston nor the Chinese emperor would accept it. Indeed, Qishan was accused of disobeying his instructions and sacked. So was Elliot, who was replaced by Henry Pottinger,[37] who ended the conflict very much on Britain's terms, with a Treaty of Nanjing. That was concluded in August 1842 when Pottinger's army was on the brink of bombarding and invading China's ancient capital of Nanjing itself. The treaty improved and extended trade to several more ports. It did so, importantly, through a "Most Favoured Nation" clause,

which meant that any trading advantage gained by anyone (in this case, the British) would automatically extend to American, French, Russian and other countries as well. The Treaty also provided for Chinese reparation payments to the English for wrongs done and debts incurred, and acceptance of the stationing of British consuls at trading ports. The consuls would also have the right to try their own nationals. The treaty did not mention opium; (though the British, privately and repeatedly, suggested legalisation leading to control by the Chinese authorities).

In the event, then, the war settled very little for either side. For the Chinese, the settlement provided formally for foreign consular jurisdiction over foreign nationals – that old Chinese practice – direct foreign contacts with the customs collectors, a moderate tariff and most favoured nation treatment. Overall, its essential provisions could hardly be described onerous, for they tallied comfortably with other arrangements that China had negotiated a few years earlier, in 1835, at Kokand on the Central Asian border (now Eastern Uzbekistan).[38] In time, the British – and other foreigners – found, perhaps inevitably, that some wrinkles in the new arrangements had to be ironed out, but the Chinese flatly refused to tamper in any way with the agreed texts. Most importantly, while the treaty had accepted foreign access to Canton proper, the Chinese refused to allow it anyway, probably so as not to irritate the virulently anti-British local population. British annoyance about that was compounded by the fact that the denial of Canton meant having to stay down-river in Hong Kong, which was notoriously unhealthy. The British had taken that island when it was just a barren rock, so as to have a base of their own. But by the summer of 1843, for instance, Hong Kong fever killed nearly a quarter of the garrison. After the English 59th Regiment had been on Hong Kong garrison duty for ten years, of the original arrivals the regiment only had ten men left alive. At the same time, by the 1840s Hong Kong was a stronghold for murderous pirates, over whom the British had no direct jurisdiction. In fact, the whole Chinese southern coast was fast becoming a byword fort Wild West-style criminality. These local facts drew the Royal Navy into some highly successful anti-pirate actions, for which imperial officials were sincerely grateful. Indeed, as time went by, some mandarins went on anti-pirate actions in British warships and kept on doing so even when Britain and the Chinese empire were officially at war. It was neither the first nor the last time that the British (and, later, the French) came to the aid of the imperial cause.

To be sure, Canton and its anti-British feelings were special. Things were very different elsewhere, for instance at Shanghai. There the British Consul was Rutherford Alcock, a tall, courageous and eccentric former army surgeon. When talking to the Chinese he was apt to put on his most colourful coat, complete with a row of Spanish and Portuguese medals, earned in service with the British marine brigade that had been sent, back in the 1830s, to the Basque country.[39] By 1848 he reported that no less than twenty-four foreign merchant houses were now established at Shanghai, three of them American; (It was also reported a few years later, in 1853, that more US than British tonnage was entering Shanghai's port).

In 1850 matters went from bad to worse. In Beijing the old emperor Daoguang died and was succeeded by Xianfeng (meaning "Universal Prosperity"). Xianfeng was 19 when he mounted the throne in 1850, just before the start of the huge Taiping rebellion. This was a quasi-Protestant and strongly anti-Manchu movement which, over the next fifteen years, devastated China's richest provinces, caused at least twenty million deaths and proved much the most dangerous and powerful threat to the dragon throne itself. Several Moslem rebellions also began in 1855 in China's Southwest. All of which left the empire and the imperial throne in constant and very great difficulties. Xianfeng himself had some competence in administration and a good literary education but he had neither the administrative drive nor the energy – nor, to be fair, the robust health – to cope with the multiple difficulties he encountered during his relatively short reign. But he proved to be altogether more anti-foreigner than his father.

At first, Europeans were as attracted by the Taipings' seemingly Christian leanings as by their effectiveness. But by 1853, the rebels had established themselves in China's ancient capital, Nanjing, and were able to threaten Shanghai as well as Northern China and Beijing itself. Furthermore, the Taipings showed signs of wanting to modernise China: industry was concentrated in state workshops and industrial policy in Nanjing. There was an approach to sexual equality. In April 1853 the Canton superintendent of trade and governor of Hong Kong, Sir George Bonham, sailed up the Yangzi to see the Taipings for himself and assure them of British neutrality in their battle with the empire. But it soon emerged that the Taipings were exclusive, authoritarian and, except in the field and in battle, hopeless administrators and planners. So any faint western hopes that they might

become a more efficient Chinese government were dropped. A year later the US Commissioner, Robert McLane also decided against *de facto* recognition of the Taiping, as did Sir John Bowring in Hong Kong.

However, the imperial government continued to ignore or refuse almost all foreign approaches about negotiations on local grievances, let alone any variation of existing arrangements, whether for trade or formal inter-governmental relations. Few became more impatient than Lord Palmerston who, whether in or out of office, pressed for a strong hand in dealing with Chinese pretensions. By the middle 1850s he was England's Prime Minister.

At that point, Chinese affairs took a back seat in both Britain and France while they, and the Ottoman Empire, fought the 1853–56 Crimean War against Russia. Once that was over, the complaints of the British merchants in China, and of their friends in London, became even louder. In this mood of growing irritation with China, 1856 produced three developments that were to be the proverbial straws that broke the camel's back of Western patience. They led to a combined Anglo-French campaign which, ultimately, brought their armies to Beijing.

In the first place, the Chinese commissioner at Canton, and therefore in charge of negotiating with the barbarians, was still Ye Mingchen, who had been there since the 1840s. Stout, highly intelligent, shrewd, cruel and implacable, he openly encouraged anti-foreign feelings, and enjoyed making the foreigners "lose face" in minor and not so minor ways. He was conspicuously unhelpful to the foreigners throughout his period of office and especially unyielding about foreign access to Canton. He consistently refused to receive, or even to speak to, British or other Western officials. Protests, and arguments about details or revisions of existing treaties, were simply ignored. To be fair, Ye's duties were not confined to Canton. He was also Viceroy for two provinces, Guangzhou and Guangxi. His chief concerns were therefore the merciless suppression of all rebels, of whatever sect. He was willing to behead literally thousands of actual or suspected members who fell into his hands, and once boasted of having beheaded 100,000 of them.

The second and third events provoking conflict with the West were, on the face of it, almost absurdly insignificant. One was the judicial murder of a French missionary at Silin, in Northwestern Guangxi. Back in 1844 and 46, imperial edicts had promised toleration to Christian missionaries. Accordingly, the French Catholic authorities set up a new apostolic prefecture for Guangdong and Guangxi and sent a priest, Father Auguste

Chapdelaine, to Silin. But a new mandarin took office there in 1856 and began a violently anti-Christian campaign. Chapdelaine himself was put on trial, ordered to confess his crime of preaching Christianity, flogged, placed in a cangue and apparently had already died by the time his head was cut off. His remains were reported to have been mutilated.[40] It is true that a number of Western missionaries were working in parts of China well beyond the bounds set by the 1842–44 treaties. Indeed, Rutherford Alcock wrote that the only surprise was that of the dozens of Western missionaries by then working in China, only one had been killed. That idea was unlikely to satisfy the French. On 25 July the French chargé d'affaires wrote to Ye saying that the trial of Chapdelaine had been a breach of the 1842 Franco-Chinese Treaty that had followed the "Opium War". Under this, a French national accused of a crime had to be tried by his own consul at the nearest Treaty port. The French demanded reparations. Ye replied that he was too busy to discuss the matter.

Back in Paris, emperor Napoleon III would not let things rest. He wished the world to see him as protector of Catholic missionaries and anyway he wanted to continue the Anglo-French cooperation of the Crimean war, partly to assuage British suspicions of his expansionism in Italy and worries that having a Frenchman, de Lesseps, build the Suez canal might come to endanger the quite critical imperial communications links between England and India. In September the British Ambassador in Paris warned London that the French were going to deal with the Chapdelaine issue energetically. In the following month the French Ambassador in London discussed matters with the Foreign Secretary, now Lord Clarendon. The government decided that if the French were going into China, the British certainly wanted to be there, too, and obtain whatever advantages might be gained. It was therefore agreed that an Anglo-French expedition should be sent to secure reparations for Chapdelaine's death, redress for hostile actions at Canton and elsewhere, and to secure revisions of the existing Sino-Western treaties. The Americans, by contrast, showed no interest whatever in any joint action in, or against, China, whether on trade or anything else.

Almost immediately, matters were made still more acute by the third event: an incident on the Pearl River at Canton. Trivial in itself, in an overcharged atmosphere, and accentuated by the high-handed response of British officials on the spot, the incident, known as the "*Arrow*" affair, promptly led to fresh conflict. The *Arrow* was a small vessel owned by a Chinese merchant, with a Chinese crew, but with a British master, a

registration at Hong Kong (which had, in fact, expired. But the Chinese provincial authorities did not know that at the time) and a British flag. She anchored in the Pearl River, and on 8 October 1856 was boarded by Chinese mandarins and several dozen soldiers. Her flags were hauled down and a dozen crew members arrested with the suggestion that one of them was a pirate. Her master, Thomas Kennedy, protested but was ignored.

The raid was immediately reported to the new British Consul, Harry Parkes. Here was another of those energetic and able young men who so largely figure in the British role in China at this time – indeed in the entire construction and maintenance of the British Empire. Parkes had arrived in China as a 13-year old small, fair-haired orphan at Macao, been given a post as clerk to the son of a Protestant missionary and set to learn Chinese, in which he was soon fluent. He quickly became a firm favourite of Sir Henry Pottinger, who was running the final stages of the 1842 China war and its concluding negotiations at Nanjing. Parkes went on to be promoted several times and became one of the best-known British officials in the East, with important personal connections. In 1850 he spent a long leave back in England during which Palmerston received him for a briefing on China matters, in which Parkes declared that the central issue in China was the access of English people to Canton, which was being denied. From the age of 22 he also reported privately to Edmund Hammond, the powerful and long-serving Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign Office. On another occasion, when Parkes was sent to England to present a letter from the King of Siam to Queen Victoria, he also took the opportunity to marry the daughter of a former Master of the Rolls (senior judge). That provided him not only with a beautiful and agreeable wife, but with a father-in-law who held a deeply influential position in the legal and political worlds of London.

By the time of the *Arrow* affair, Parkes was clearly a man who would not take lightly what he saw as an insult to the British flag. He went aboard the war junk that had boarded the *Arrow* and in fluent mandarin upbraided the Chinese officers for the "gross violations" they had committed. One of them (or possibly a boatman) slapped his face. He went ashore to see the local officials and demanded the return of the *Arrow*'s crew, arguing that under existing Treaties the crew should have been examined at the British Consulate. The mandarins, as Parkes later reported to London "laughed at me and the treaty, which they said they knew nothing about" – not a tale likely to persuade Lord Palmerston to moderation.

Other arguments bounced to and fro between Parkes, his superior in Hong Kong, Sir John Bowring, and Commissioner Ye. The Commissioner refused satisfaction, or even the appointment of an official to discuss matters. But Bowring was no more likely than Parkes to submit to Ye's snubs. He had been a well-known literary radical in London, a former Secretary of the Peace Society, with friends like the radical liberal statesman Richard Cobden and Jeremy Bentham, whose collected works Bowring had edited. Bowring was also deeply involved in the Evangelical movement as well as a fervent free trader. He had served in Parliament but by 1848 lost his money and Palmerston appointed him as Consul at Canton. From there he was promoted in 1852 to be Governor of Hong Kong.

Further written communications between these various people settled nothing. Two weeks after the boarding of the *Arrow*, Bowring and the local British naval commander agreed that stronger measures were needed. Rear-Admiral Sir Michael Seymour was a stolid, cautious and unimaginative officer who had lost an eye in the Crimean war. He was certainly not given to haste, but Bowring persuaded him, and the Royal Navy began to occupy various Chinese forts on the Pearl river. The British also started to insist not just on the release of the *Arrow* and her crew, but also on the access to Canton that the old 1842 Treaties had promised. So British ships fired round shot into Canton. Ye countered by offering a reward of $30 for the head of every Englishman and by using fire-rafts and night attacks on British vessels.

The Americans became involved, too. Commodore Armstrong, commanding the US Navy on the China station, who was in the area to observe things, was persuaded to remove from Canton both US citizens and the Marines guarding them. On 15th November a boat from the US corvette *Portsmouth* went up the river, displaying the US flag, but was fired on by Chinese batteries. On 5th December Ye apologized but by then Commodore Armstrong, who felt strongly about anyone firing on the American flag, had already acted. On 16th November he sent Commander A.H. Foote, with *Portsmouth* and a sister corvette to take on the Chinese forts. After several days of gunnery, and a landing in which five Americans were killed, the forts and their guns were captured.

None of this seems to have worried Ye, who was mainly concerned with the British.

Provocations on both sides continued. The British seized and fortified various spots. The Chinese refused supplies, kidnapped a few people and went on sending fire-rafts down the river towards British ships. In mid-

December they burned the foreign trading "factories" to the ground, just outside Canton itself. And at the end of the month disguised Chinese soldiers seized the postal steamer *Thistle*, killed all eleven Europeans on board and carried off their heads, probably to earn Ye's rising bounty of $100 per head.

This sort of thing went on for several weeks, presumably confirming Chinese views of British and European weakness. Bowring wrote to London that Canton had to be captured before there could be any hope of treaty revision. It might take 5,000 men to do it.

Not surprisingly, by early 1857 the problems in China had begun to attract serious political attention in England.

Appendix: On the Importance of Linguistic Misunderstandings Much of what we know rests on the voluminous collection of letters and memoranda sent to and fro between the British and the Chinese authorities that has been preserved in the British Foreign Office. These documents have been meticulously arranged, annotated and commented on by Dr J.Y. Wong.[41] He points out that the diplomatic language used by the Chinese and the British in these and later years was invariably Beijing Chinese. For one thing, the Chinese refused to train their own interpreters – perhaps in part as a piece of diplomatic "one-upmanship" and to impress the foreigners, yet again, with China's uniqueness as the central society of human civilization. That left translation in the hands of the British (and French) official translators, whether in the office of the "Chinese Secretary" in the British Establishment or, later, the role of one or two of Lord Elgin's assistants like Harry Parkes and T. F. Wade.

However, they and others who followed them "were pioneer interpreters whose proficiency in the Chinese language was, to say the least, not perfect." Moreover, many of them were "as often as not, hard at work in H.M.Plenipotentiary's office copying despatches" rather than translating. There were also "native Chinese scribes. They risked capital punishment for helping the barbarians to read and write Chinese. Consequently the recruits were often second rate 'scholars' whose calligraphy and literary style were quite inadequate….Not surprisingly, the British despatches inspired little respect from the high mandarins. The language they themselves used "polished the language employed in conveying the British conditions for peace or conditions for doing…a favour". Otherwise, "they simply amused themselves by replying in highly sophisticated bureaucratic

language….[In any case,] The standard of British despatches improved very little during the twenty-two years under review".[42]

> Mistranslations and misunderstandings may well have been critical in guiding the reactions and responses of both sides.

A further, and perhaps equally important point is that China was, and remains, a collection of several dozen cultural and linguistic groups whose local languages are often mutually unintelligible. A century later, Mao Zedong tried hard to unify the whole population on, or around, Mandarin; but his efforts were, at best, only partially successful. To this day there are many of tales of groups of, say, Cantonese or men from Qinghai, chatting happily together in their own language. When "the man from Beijing" turns up they turn solemnly to Mandarin. The moment he vanishes they go back to their own language.

CHAPTER 2

The Opium Issue

For the British government, the China issue was nothing if not complicated. Coming as it did in the wake of the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny and a number of previous difficulties in and around Central Asia, not to mention spats with Chinese authorities, the issues were delicate. Of course, the China trade had to be maintained and, if possible, expanded. But the issues went much further. London and Canton had become, as mentioned earlier, key links in what was nothing less than global trade and finance. The Chinese populace clearly wanted opium from Bengal – and in growing quantities. At the same time, the cotton mills of Lancashire needed the cotton from the (southern) United States, while London – and much of Europe – badly needed Chinese silks, ceramics and, in Britain's case, especially tea. At the same time, the China trade, and London, needed Mexican silver. And so on. Meanwhile, the payments and exchange system on which this increasingly complex system depended had come to be, almost imperceptibly, centred on London, which had, for a variety of reasons, by the later 1700s become a major centre – perhaps THE major centre – of international financial dealings. One recent assessment argues that 'London stood at the center of a well-developed network of international services and these were destined to expand rapidly as world trade increased…Even before 1850, financial flows from the City were a major determinant of the rhythm of development in the colonies.'[1] One former governor-general of India, Lord Ellenborough, who knew a great deal about the China situation, explained matters in London, pointing out

H. Gelber, *Battle for Beijing, 1858–1860*,
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that Canton was not just the centre of the highly important trade between Britain and China, but a key junction for Britain's entire global network of trade and finance[2]:

> The cotton of America, the staple of our greatest manufacture (i.e. cotton cloth), is paid for by bills upon England. Those bills are taken by Americans to Canton, where they are paid away for tea. The Chinese give them to the opium merchants, by whom they are taken to India, there exchanged for other commodities, and they furnish ultimately the money remittances (i.e. to London) of private fortunes and the funds for carrying on the Indian government at home.

In addition to all that, Britain's standing as one of Europe's great powers and the victor of Trafalgar and Waterloo had to be maintained *vis-à-vis* the other European powers and recognised by Beijing, without actions that might seriously damage a government of China, whose own standing could be essential to prevent a further expansion of Russian power.

Later, and throughout the twentieth century and beyond, the single most widely touted Chinese complaint, and the one most unquestioningly accepted in the West, was one about China having suffered from a 'century of Western imperialism' throughout the nineteenth century (not to mention by the Americans, who began importing opium into China from Smyrna, in Turkey, as early as 1804). Chinese youngsters of all ages had impressed on them that it was only Mao Zedong and the Communists who finally rescued China after taking power in 1949.

A major, indeed central, element of this 'imperialism' has been the story of British iniquity in forcing opium on the Chinese. It was this that Chairman Mao's regime drummed into the heads of all students in Chinese schools and universities and gave the clashes between 1840 and 1860 the unforgettable name of Opium War. But there have been accusers in the West, too, ranging from British politicians and some Western missionaries and observers to serious scholars. Perhaps the greatest of modern Western China scholars was the late John K. Fairbank of Harvard, who wrote that the opium trade was the 'most long-continued and systematic international crime of modern times', which 'provided the life-blood of the early British invasion of China'.[3] What is oddest about this and many other accusations is that so few of them are supported by the facts. To begin with, opium had been known and used in China for many centuries, and long before British traders first appeared in Chinese waters, as a strong painkiller and for medication. It was first introduced to China between the

fourth and seventh centuries by Arab traders and was duly cultivated for centuries before the British East India Company (EIC) was even formed. It was also used to cure diarrhoea, induce sleep or reduce the pain of diseases like dysentery and cholera. It was used for many centuries, too, as an excellent aphrodisiac.

It also seems to be the case that by the end of the eighteenth century there were significant changes in the way opium was being used. By then it had had a long history as an accepted medication and painkiller – or even as a convenient and painless way of committing suicide – and in any case an entirely proper and comforting personal and social relaxant, especially among the higher social classes. Thus, as mentioned earlier, opium was smoked in tobacco pipes with shredded leaves dipped in opium solution. The smoke seems to have contained around 0.2 % opium. However, by 1800 or so, smokers began to put small balls of pure opium into their pipes, inhaling a heated water and opium vapour over it that contained perhaps 9–10 % morphine. Yet it is not at all clear that its use had solely harmful effects. Moderate use was often beneficial, and, as was also mentioned earlier, the offer of an opium pipe was often, and remained, a sign of social hospitality in many sectors of Chinese society.[4] It is, of course, also true that opium was not always used with care and in moderation, and in any case, people who were deprived of the drug often found themselves driven to use cocaine or heroin by way of substitute. It also became clear by the later 1820s that, in a period when social unrest and disturbance were on the rise, drug consumption was affecting not just the general population and especially the poor and wretched, but the imperial bureaucracy, the military and even palace eunuchs in Beijing.

What made opium especially irresistible was its long and welcome association with sex, especially at the higher social levels. It was believed to 'aid masculinity, strengthen sperm' and enhance 'the art of alchemists, sex and court ladies'.[5] These various uses were, it seems, most welcome to Chinese literati and officials; and 'opium smoking accompanied by sex recreation on leisure boats was well established in Canton by 1793'.[6] Indeed, smoking accompanied by sex and poetry appreciation was seen as the acme of pleasure. Not only was opium indispensable in the sex industry but it took over the business of general relaxation that had given it a firm hold 'on China over the past five hundred years'.[7] It was, in fact, 'the participation of lower classes (that) made opium smoking visible as a socio-economic problem in the 1830s'. As Yangwen Zheng has summed up: 'Opium was a luxury for the upper and upper middle classes, an aphrodisiac for cour-

tesans and prostitutes, a livelihood for the lower classes and a "pain killer" for those who chose to end their pains.'[8] No wonder demand was great and suppression difficult to the point of impossibility.

There was, however, a very different and serious kind of problem that affected the opium traffic and raised major concerns at the imperial court and in senior official circles. A few decades earlier, China had amassed large quantities of silver from its exports of ceramics, silks and especially tea to Europe in general and Great Britain in particular. But from 1820 onwards China began to need increasing quantities of silver to meet the cost of China's own growing demands for Indian opium. As the inflow of silver turned to an outflow, silver became scarcer and its price accordingly increased, especially in relation to the everyday Chinese currency of copper cash. Worse still, the outflow of silver to pay for opium was not easily stopped. The estimate for the decade of the 1830s is that China had to pay no less than some 34 million silver dollars not just in bribery to officialdom but for the purpose of effectively servicing EIC debts and payments that formed one-sixth of the revenue of the government in London.[9] Furthermore, since Chinese taxpayers were required to pay their taxes in silver, dearer silver effectively meant higher taxes.[10] The result was that, while 1000 in copper cash had been roughly equivalent to one tael of silver[11] during Qianlong's reign, by the time Daoguang sat on the throne around 1830, one tael cost around 2700 copper cash. Such an effective tax increase was bound to cause unrest and underline the empire's attempt to rein in opium imports.[12] Attempts at suppression were all too likely to increase rather than diminish those social disturbances. Two senior American economists have recently examined the statistical evidence and concluded that 'China's opium prohibition had a minimal impact on opium consumption' and 'China's legalization of opium in 1858 was not associated with a perceptible increase in opium consumption'. In any case, '…there is little evidence that the Chinese expended substantial resources enforcing opium prohibition'.[13] If those calculations are correct, it seems clear that opium consumption in China was the result of Chinese demand, and not due to British or other Western inducements, let alone any 'forcible' supply.

The story of 'British imperialism' forcing opium on China seems odd for other reasons. During the 18th and 19th centuries, Britain itself imported the drug, and its use, while it was not very widespread, was regular. It was also used in Royal Navy ships to disinfect foul drinking water. Then and later, some of India's toughest troops in British service regularly drank

opium without ill effects. Although there was some social disapproval of the drug in England by the 1830s and 1840s, there was no major groundswell of public opinion against it, and even if there had been, it is not clear that the growers of opium in Bengal or the traders of opium in India or Canton would have been much moved by that. There were no anti-drug laws of any kind in Britain, let alone the United States, until the end of the 1860s or later. Nor did any such laws exist in British India. At the same time, Indian opium was, as we have seen, one of the few trading goods for which there was serious demand in China and which could be sold there in exchange for the silver needed to pay for what Britain wanted in the way of silks and, above all, the tea for which China was, for the time being, the only source. To be sure, after the imperial Chinese prohibitions were published, all officers of the British Crown scrupulously refrained from making arrangements for it, or giving official encouragement to opium sales in China. The EIC itself carefully refrained from sending opium to China in its own ships or formally trying to sell opium on the Chinese market. But there was obviously no prohibition against growing it in Bengal or on continuing sales or auctions in Calcutta (now Kolkata). Indeed, the company's traditional ways of harvesting and packing the drug in wooden chests continued as before, all the more so as the company's chests and lists of contents bearing the company's own stamp continued to be accepted everywhere, including at Canton, as an assurance of quantity and quality. At the same time, it was clearly no business of any private seller to police the number of Chinese, including officials, who participated in, or connived at, buying it or smuggling it ashore. Least of all was there any vast pressure of public opinion in England to stop a traffic that brought such welcome income to the country. As late as 1870 a Sir Wilfred Lawson put a motion in the House of Commons condemning India's reliance on opium for income. It was Prime Minister William Gladstone himself, the very man who, a quarter of a century earlier, and as a lively young MP, had launched fierce verbal assaults against the opium traffic, who now defeated Lawson's motion by pointing out that the only viable replacement for India's opium earnings would be Britain's own taxation income.[14]

British officials were of course aware of the enormous economic importance of the Canton trade, including large quantities of opium, not just for India but for Britain's overall global trading and banking network. This is no doubt largely why, at various points, some of them advised the Chinese privately – just as high Chinese officials themselves had advised the emperor before 1839 – that since the empire was obviously unable or

unwilling to stop the smuggling, it would make sense to legalise, control and tax opium imports. After that was finally done, in the 1858/1860 arrangements, China's domestic opium production grew sharply while imports, after an initial surge of a couple of decades,[15] declined. Indeed, by 1879–1880, opium production within China may have been over three times as much as imports and by1900 eight times as much. Nor does there seem to be any evidence that either prohibition or control, let alone any particular level of imports, did much to affect the scale and incidence of opium use in China, whether before or after the republican revolution of 1911. Indeed, in many areas the use of opium grew to the point where it was itself used to pay taxes and became an important weapon of war used by Communists against Chinese nationalists and Japanese, while foreigners, following Mao Zedong's Long March of 1934/1935, could write that opium poppies could be seen growing 'as far as the eye could see'.[16]

The notion of Britain forcing opium on the Chinese seems even odder. To begin with, how could civilian British merchants living on the China coast, for most of the period 1830–1860 entirely unprotected by non-Chinese naval or military power or even armed police, have forced opium onto Chinese citizens in their own country? To be sure, supply can create demand; but demand is always reflected in price, and as trading records make clear, the opium merchants were price-takers at least as often as they were price-makers.

Nor does it seem reasonable to blame British merchants for concentrating on the trading conditions before their eyes rather than on verbal imperial prohibitions that dozens and hundreds of Chinese citizens, including senior officials, were visibly and regularly ignoring. Even Lord Clarendon, foreign secretary at the time, and in his first instructions to the English envoy to China, Lord Elgin, remarked in April 1857 in an aside that legalising the opium trade would make very little practical difference: '…Whether the legalization of the trade would tend to augment trade may be doubtful; as it seems now to be carried on to the full extent of the demand in China, with the sanction and connivance of the local authorities. But there would be obvious advantages in placing the trade upon a legal footing by the imposition of a duty, instead of its being carried on in the present irregular manner.'[17]

Quite apart from that, there was no British court system in China, nor, as noted earlier, did any British officer there have powers of criminal jurisdiction even in matters of British law. Still less did he have the power to enforce Chinese laws on British citizens on foreign soil. Least of all was

there any system of British law on Chinese soil that could have hoped to survive repeated appeals to London by one party or another, over communication systems requiring many months for a single message sent in either direction to reach its destination. It is true that, as time went by, the tasks of the British consuls in China expanded, though they never extended to dealing with Chinese citizens. Furthermore, the British consistently refused to tolerate, and the Chinese were reluctant to accept, the notion that British persons should be made subject to China's entirely different systems of criminal jurisdiction, which were in British eyes entirely unfair, arbitrary and unjust to the individual concerned. As Harry Parkes explained much later, when foreigners had their own Chinese national so-called concessions: 'The Consul acted as police magistrate hearing disputes between masters and seamen, cases of assault and serious crimes among the foreign community; he dealt as a judge in common law cases; granted probates; sat as coroner; and generally conducted the legal affairs of the port.'[18]

In any case, it would always be much more convenient, politically and otherwise, for the Chinese to blame foreigners than to do anything effective – except of course during Commissioner Lin's period of office at Canton from 1839 – to contain, let alone reduce, domestic demand in China. It is a situation strikingly reminiscent of the twenty-first-century drug problems in the USA, UK and the West generally, which continue to blame foreign drug suppliers but pay very little effective attention to a reduction in domestic demand and consumption.

CHAPTER 3

Canton

Whatever the political or opium issues at Canton may have been, the Cabinet in London could not overlook the special difficulties. Quiet acceptance of Chinese rebuffs was out of the question, yet trade with China and political balances had to be maintained. So the government decided to send a senior-level official to deal with the situation. It was the Earl of Elgin who was selected as special plenipotentiary and high commissioner and to whom Lord Clarendon's instructions were duly sent.

He was, at this point, a few months short of his 46th birthday, stocky, with prematurely white hair and sometimes tetchy. When young, he had taken a First in Greats (Classics) at Oxford and been elected a Fellow of Merton College. He was also pious in the intense, high Anglican style that was widespread in his class and station, and he tended to think that politics should be conducted on Christian rather than business principles. In 1841 he became a Member of Parliament for Southampton, but quickly lost his seat when he succeeded to his father's peerage and was therefore confined to the House of Lords instead of the House of Commons. His father had almost wrecked the family's finances in acquiring and bringing home from Greece the famous sculptures now known as the Elgin Marbles.[1] So Elgin now needed a paid job, and in 1842, at the age of 31, was appointed governor of Jamaica, at which post he proved successful.

Five years later, in 1847, he took up the governor-generalship of Canada, after marrying his second wife, Mary Lambton, daughter of the first Earl Durham and the niece of Earl Grey. Conveniently, Grey was colonial secretary in the British Cabinet and Durham the author of a famous

H. Gelber, *Battle for Beijing, 1858–1860*,
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report that had shown the way to self-government for Canada and was to have a profound influence on the whole of British colonial policy. In Canada, Elgin was once again successful – he even polished his command of French – and in 1855 returned to private life in Britain.

His rank, connections and achievements overseas might well have led to a successful political life back home. However, although at Oxford he had been at Christ Church with men like Lord Canning and William Gladstone, he had been away too long to maintain the close personal relations that were at this time normal among senior politicians. Anyway, he still needed a paying job, and in 1857 the prime minister, by now Lord Palmerston, offered Elgin the post of plenipotentiary to deal with the confused state of affairs between Britain and China. Elgin accepted.

Immediately he ran into complications. In China, not just senior officials like Bowring, Parkes and Admiral Seymour but the entire British merchant community, thought to a man that the key to Britain's China problem was Canton. Dealing with Commissioner Ye and occupying the city was the only thing, they all thought, that would salvage British prestige and concentrate Chinese minds on the need to comply with the existing treaties, let alone agree to any amendments.

London, though, could see that the underlying issues were vastly more complex. Senior ministers, and especially the foreign secretary, disagreed entirely with Bowring's one-eyed focus on conquering Canton. They could see that Canton was a secondary issue. What mattered was to keep the general trade and exchanges going while getting the emperor to recognise the British government as an equal. That would happen only if and when a British representative was rightfully established in Beijing, able to deal directly with the imperial government. All this was embodied in Elgin's instructions, laid down in a despatch handed to him shortly before he left London.[2]

They were careful and detailed. The high commissioner was told to sail from the British base at Hong Kong to the mouth of the Haihe River, which leads from the sea, via Tianjin, to Beijing. There he should open negotiations with a representative of the emperor. He should ask that henceforth all existing treaties should be punctiliously observed and reparations paid for the injuries recently suffered by the British. If this was refused, Elgin could use force.

But in addition – and, by implication, without any necessary use of force – he should seek Chinese acceptance of a resident British minister or of visits by such an official to Beijing when necessary; furthermore, he

should be allowed to communicate directly and in writing with the highest levels of the Chinese government. Also, more Chinese ports should be opened to foreign trade. Even leaving aside questions of prestige, the point was obvious. Confining foreign dealings to Canton was merely a Chinese way of creating a buffer between the foreigners and the court and central administration. If everything had to be referred to Beijing for decision, there would be endless delays – just communicating back and forth between Beijing and Canton would take at least 15 days each way – and endless possibilities for misunderstandings, misinterpretations and procrastination.

If the use of force did become necessary, Elgin was told that the British should try to stick to naval actions. He should not occupy Canton unless that became essential. The British government wanted no unnecessary destruction of life or property and no interruption of friendly relations with the general population at any of the treaty ports. It was also assumed, as a matter of course, that under most favoured nations arrangements, and just as in the case of the old 1842 treaty, any trading benefits would become available to other nations and not merely to the British.

To achieve that, Elgin would clearly have to have military and naval forces to command the respect of the Chinese. Back in January, Bowring and Seymour had said that 5000 men would be needed. Elgin was now promised that England would send 1500 men, with another 1000 made available from various garrisons, especially Singapore. Lieutenant General Thomas Ashburnham would command the military while Seymour remained in charge of the Navy. Elgin was also told that while it would be up to him to decide whether or when to use force, it would be Seymour and Ashburnham who would decide on any actual operations. The first troops left England in March, Elgin a month later.

By this time, Palmerston's China policies had caused political turmoil in London. Many ministers thought Parkes' actions and Seymour's bombardment of Canton had been legally and morally wrong. In the Commons, Liberals strongly attacked the government's policy in a censure debate. Palmerston counter-attacked that Cobden, as a leading Liberal, was showing 'an anti-English feeling, an abnegation of all those ties which bind men to their country and to their fellow-countrymen, which I should hardly have expected from the lips of any member of this House. Everything that was English was wrong, and everything that was hostile to England was right.' The government lost the vote, and Palmerston called the 1857 election. He fought it on the grounds of threats to British people in China,

Chinese arrogance and, not least, insults to the British flag and crown. By 30 April Palmerston had a huge majority, over all his opponents, of 85 seats in the House of Commons.

So British policy continued to rest on two major pillars: an insistence on the diplomatic status and equality of sovereign states and an opening of China to foreign people and trade. Even in retrospect, the first demand has an air of inevitability about it. Given the way in which global communications and relations between major states were developing by the mid-nineteenth century, China could not seriously hope to remain in splendid isolation. If the British had not insisted on more modern interstate dealings, others would surely have done so before long – and enforced changes.

The second demand, for increased trading opportunities, was a different matter. Modern writers – especially ones who dislike empires on principle – often attribute it to simple commercial greed, but that is a mistake. While it is true that the British merchants in China had powerful friends in London and that trade had become very important to Britain and British India, larger issues were at stake. For one thing, the quasi-religious ideology of free trade, derived from Adam Smith and his successors, had become dominant. Sir John Bowring's famous remark about Jesus Christ being, in effect, free trade also makes the point. Moreover, not just Elgin but the major opium traders at Hong Kong still thought that freer trade would benefit no one more than the Chinese themselves. So a new treaty that opened up the potentially vast Chinese market would benefit everybody. Hence the British insistence at every point from the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing onwards that what they were seeking was no merely selfish benefit but greater opportunities for all.

Here was the framework into which Britain had to fit the Canton trade. There was no serious dispute about the fact that this trade had huge significance. *The Times* remarked that, by 1857, Chinese exports of tea and silk were worth some £15 million. But sales to China included opium at some £7 million, Indian cottons at £1.5 million and British manufactures at £2 million, so that the rest, some £4.5 million, had to be paid for in silver. Not only that, but by this time trade at Canton had become a nodal point in a virtually global network, not just of trade in cottons, cloth, opium, rice, ceramics, tea, silk and anything else that came to hand, but of associated credit and banking patterns of the most far-reaching importance. For instance, Canton credit arrangements involved cotton from the USA, which by this time was producing up to three-quarters of the entire world

supply of cotton cloth. It is not too much to say that this network touched upon the entire industrialisation process in both Britain and the USA.

At the same time, the government also took some care not to offend either the Chinese or, for that matter, the Americans, who were the second largest trading group at Canton. That inevitably involved the opium trade, which both the Chinese and Americans officially opposed, but unofficially practiced. The instructions that London gave to its treaty port consuls were that it was no part of their duties to help opium smugglers, but neither could they help the Chinese authorities enforce Chinese anti-opium laws against British subjects. That obviously left the British merchants with a good deal of leeway. Anyway, as everyone knew, nothing the British government could do would have much effect. Even Foreign Secretary Clarendon, in his first instructions to Elgin in April 1857, had remarked in an aside that legalising the opium trade in China would make very little practical difference.

In fact, even leaving opium aside, the whole idea of vast and lucrative trading opportunities that would arise if only the Chinese would open up more of their empire to trade, was an illusion. As long ago as 1852, a British official at Canton named Mitchell had written a report pointing out the awkward realities. British exports to China would grow only slowly, if at all, simply because British textiles could not compete with Chinese products in China. In any case, the economies of China's northern provinces were largely complementary with the economies of the South, so that the empire as a whole was very largely self-sufficient. The Chinese would go on buying some goods from Britain just because they wanted to continue selling their own tea. Mitchell's conclusions had been so awkward that the report was pigeonholed. Elgin did not even discover its existence until his arrival in Hong Kong and sent it on to the Foreign Office with his own approval. But as he prophesied, with trade barriers removed, 'the machine-manufacturing West will be in presence of a population the most universally and laboriously manufacturing of any on the earth'.[3] A few years later Lord Elgin himself, after travelling peacefully around large parts of China, echoed Mitchell: 'British manufacturers will have to exert themselves to the utmost if they intend to supplant, to any considerable extent, in the native market, the fabrics produced in their leisure hours, and at intervals of rest from agricultural labour, by this industrious, frugal, and sober population. It is a pleasing but pernicious fallacy to imagine that the influence of an intriguing mandarin is to be presumed whenever a buyer shows a preference for native over foreign calico.'[4]

Nor was that all. As Bowring had explained to London back in November 1855, for all the quasi-divine nature of the emperor, China was not truly centralised under an absolute monarchy. Officials were always subject to pressure from the literati and the local gentry, and local politics could and did put pressures on the centre; and the centre could not always get what it wanted.[5] Linguistic particularities did not help. In any case, there was, then and later, the perennial, subtle but profound problem that neither side really understood the other. Before, during and after all these episodes, Anglo–French relations with China were bedeviled by various kinds of mutual misunderstanding. The point is of huge importance. It is impossible in retrospect to be certain just what a negotiator understood his counterpart to be saying. We only know what was laid down in official correspondence or written, often well after the fact, in various memoirs.

Moreover, again as usual, the misunderstandings did not affect both sides equally. The British had the advantage of real information from their China merchants, who had long experience of matters Chinese. As for the Chinese side, while no mere foreigner could properly fathom the intricacies of court politics in Beijing, that court laboured under the crudest misunderstandings of Britain and its politics. As long ago as 1840 the Mandarin in charge at Canton, Commissioner Lin, had taken it upon himself to write a letter to Queen Victoria asking her to prohibit the China opium trade. The letter not only assumed, quite wrongly, that opium was legally prohibited in England, but also that the Queen personally ran British foreign and trading affairs, in much the same way as the Chinese emperor ran his. Even many years later, after the 1860 clashes, the situation was no better. As late as the 1860 conflict, the emperor's advisers dismissed England as just 'a handful of stones in the western sea'; and Prince Gong, the emperor's brother, told Elgin after the campaign that not only had the Chinese not known that the British ruled India, but they thought that this lonely island at the end of the world, on which the English lived, was so small, and its population so large, 'that the greater half of the people had to live afloat'.[6]

In any event, having accepted the China appointment, Elgin's first port of call was Paris. British China policy was usually conducted in consultation with the French and the Americans. After all, both of them had – diplomatically and commercially speaking – sailed in Britain's wake during and after the First Opium War of 1840–1842 and secured their own separate China treaties in similar terms. As for the Americans, from the British point of view, little could be expected from them. True, their mer-

chants wanted to see US support for the British on the China coast. But Washington wanted no diplomatic or military imbroglio in China. Indeed, in the very month that Elgin left for China, the incoming president, James Buchanan, appointed a new US representative, William B. Reed. He was told to cooperate with the British and French but to have nothing to do with the use of force. For one thing, the president told him, commerce itself would help transform and civilise China, while contact with the rest of the world would wean China away from isolation. (Exactly 100 years later a Frenchman, Jean Monnet, would use precisely the same arguments, about freer commerce inevitably producing political and social integration, to help found the European Common Market.) In the meantime, and though the president did not say so, the Americans could happily pocket any general gains the British had fought and paid for.

In any case, from Palmerston's point of view, Napoleon III was the nearest thing to a liberal-minded figure among the rulers of Europe and a possible ally in promoting that larger international cause. Napoleon's reaction to the Chapdelaine affair pointed towards Anglo–French cooperation, and that might just be the best way to limit French ambitions, not just in Europe, but for any expansion from their Indo–Chinese acquisitions into China itself. So Elgin presented himself to Napoleon, who appointed a highly reluctant Baron Jean Gros as France's representative in China and Elgin's colleague. Elgin met briefly with both Gros and the foreign minister, Count Alexander Walewski,[7] who hoped that the Western powers would not push the Chinese too hard.

Elgin and Gros had to travel to China separately since Gros proposed to sail round Africa, while Elgin could move more quickly and communicate rather better. The electric telegraph now ran from London to Alexandria and across India from Bombay (Mumbai) to Rangoon (Yangon). As for transporting people and goods, by early May Elgin was already in Egypt and on the first-ever railway train to carry passengers across the desert to Suez, where he caught a P&O steamer for Singapore. But on board it was hot. It was boring. There was not even enough champagne. Elgin was miserable.

When the ship put in at Galle, in Ceylon, on 27 May 1857, they picked up General Ashburnham, who was coming from Bombay. From him Elgin heard for the first time that a mutiny had broken out on 10 May among the Indian army regiments at Meerut. Elgin's immediate reaction was to press on and try to complete his China mission, so that troops from there could be available for India. In the meantime he read some of the official

documentation on China, which gave him to think intensely about the matter. Britain, he wrote in his diary, had often acted very unjustly towards the Chinese. Indeed, the whole *Arrow* business was 'a scandal to us', even though Chinese 'treachery and cruelty' would have justified almost any reaction.

They reached Singapore on 3 June. There, Elgin had to wait 3 weeks for the arrival of the frigate *Shannon*, which was to be his own flagship in China. She had also had to travel around Africa since the Suez canal did not yet exist. While he was waiting, it became clear that the mutiny in India was no small affair. Elgin received a letter from his old fellow-student of Oxford days, Lord Canning, now governor-general of India. It had been written on 19 May and asked Elgin to divert the troops intended for China to deal with the Indian emergency. This had started in reaction to a rumour that the cartridges for the new muzzle-loading Enfield rifle, with which Indian soldiers were being equipped, had to be greased with pork or beef fat, untouchable for Moslems and Hindus alike. This had evidently united large numbers of both religions in cultural and religious fury. But the mutiny was far from universal. The British presence in India, and its armies, were divided into three so-called presidencies: Madras, Bombay and Bengal. The Madras army remained untouched by the mutiny, and only two of the Bombay units were affected. But in the Bengal army no less than 64 regiments mutinied or were pre-emptively disarmed as the mutiny gathered pace.

It was, however, now clear that the mutiny had developed into a major rebellion that threatened the entire British empire in India and all other holdings and possessions that hinged on it. Indeed, the stakes being played for were not just India, or even China. Its implications would affect Britain's position in the whole balance of power as the news reached Europe. Other powers sympathised with London; but as Douglas Hurd, himself a former British Foreign Secretary, has written, '…Clarendon had already learned that the politeness with which an overwhelmingly superior Power is generally received turns quickly to malice as soon as it receives a check.'[8]

It was immediately obvious to everyone that while the China affair could wait for some weeks or even months, India could not. It was clear, too, that if Elgin tried to consult London, it would be many weeks of slow communications before he could expect a reply. So he did not hesitate but on his own initiative sent two regiments to Calcutta: the 5th (Northumberland) Regiment of Foot, due in from Mauritius, and the 90th Regiment (Perthshire Volunteers) Light Infantry, en route from England, with some 1700 men between them.

A further three regiments, still on their way from England to join Elgin, were similarly diverted by the governor of the Cape Colony, acting on his own responsibility. All of which left Elgin with just the *Shannon* and her crew, together with the inadequate forces already available to Admiral Seymour and Sir John Bowring at Hong Kong.

Elgin finally arrived there on 2 July to find that local law and order was an erratic business (which would help to persuade almost half the Chinese population of the island to move before the end of the year to the gold rushes of California or Australia). More important, at least for London politics, was the Hong Kong panic in mid-January, when 400 Europeans were taken ill after eating bread found to have contained arsenic. No one died, and no poisoner was discovered, but the moral effect was severe and the impression of Chinese treachery lasting.

As for negotiating with the Chinese, Elgin found, without surprise, that no one thought Ye would bend to a British plenipotentiary who did not have a military force at his disposal or could even say when the diverted regiments might finally reach China. It was true that Seymour had managed to set up a blockade of Canton and burn quite a few junks and that there were tiny British garrisons along the Pearl River, but these actions did little except raise morale in the Royal Navy and engender patriotic headlines back home. As far as the Chinese could see, all that mattered was that the barbarians had been driven from the trading 'factories', and nothing was in sight to worry Commissioner Ye.

Bowring and Seymour continued to argue that action at Canton was essential and the merchants strongly urged 'the complete humiliation of the Cantonese…' When Elgin asked Ashburnham and Seymour what forces would be needed for an attack on Canton, Seymour again said 5000 and Ashburnham 4000. But the only forces actually available were less than 1500 at Hong Kong, over 200 of whom were sick, quite apart from which, Elgin detested the thought of casualties on either side and remained convinced that any lasting settlement must mean negotiating with government officials at Beijing.

Yet he could hardly sail north, to Beijing's approaches, without an escort force that would make the Chinese take him seriously. In any case, he had to await the arrival of Baron Gros, who was still making his leisurely way around the cape of Good Hope. But there was another way out of the endless arguments with Bowring and a dreary stay in Hong Kong. On 14 July a ship arrived from Calcutta with news that the mutiny was going from bad to worse. So Elgin decided to sail to Calcutta himself and bring a naval brigade to Canning's support. It would be made up partly from

the crews of the *Shannon* herself and a corvette that Seymour had agreed to release, plus 300 marines who had just arrived from England. Within a couple of days, Elgin, Ashburnham and the troops set sail and, after coaling at Singapore, arrived on 8 August at Calcutta, where they had a great reception, the greater, perhaps, because the locals were badly frightened.

Unfortunately, once the naval brigade had marched out, there was nothing else for Elgin to do. Calcutta and its society bored him as much as his harping on Chinese issues bored even the kindest of his hosts, before whose eyes were the smoke and blood of fighting not far from the city gates. In any case, he was deeply shocked – as were quite a few people in London – by the virulent hatreds that the mutiny and its massacres had unleashed.[9] He confided to his diary: 'Can I do anything to prevent England from calling down on herself God's curse for brutalities committed on another feeble Oriental race?'[10] And to his wife he wrote that he could see no sign of kindness or mercy: 'I have seldom from man or woman since I came to the East heard a sentence that was reconcilable with the hypothesis that Christianity had come into the world. Detestation, contempt, ferocity, vengeance, whether Chinamen or Indians be the object.' That was surely not unfair. On the British side, the fears and hatreds aroused by the killings of British people, even women and children, were greatly enhanced by rage at their betrayal by troops who had sworn loyalty to their officers and regiments.

In short order, therefore, Elgin, with nothing to do except attend dreary colonial parties, quite understandably decided to go back to Hong Kong in a P&O steamer. He arrived in late September and found that there was nothing much he could do there either, since neither fresh troops nor the French high commissioner had yet arrived. He still had only 1150 or so soldiers, 20 % of them sick. Back in Calcutta, he had had a letter promising that 1500 additional marines would be sent to replace the men he had sent to India, but it was bound to take, at best, a couple of months before any of them arrived. It became clearer by the day that if he was to do anything before the end of the year, it could only be an action at Canton.

A fortnight after his return Elgin received a despatch from London telling him that, if he had not yet been able to sail north, he could use force locally to bring Ye to terms. Two days later Baron Gros finally arrived, was greeted with a 29-gun salute and carried in a palanquin borne by five Chinese porters to see Sir John Bowring, who subjected him to a 4-hour lecture. Aged 65, Gros was slow, cautious and experienced. A professional diplomat, he had seen service in Latin America, Greece and

London, and Elgin learned to value his calm judgment, while his properly French addiction to comforts and cuisine was another helpfully civilising influence. He had an artistic side, too, having been one of the first-ever daguerrotypists – many of his images became famous, including some of the Acropolis – and he headed the first photographic society in the world, La Societé Héliographique, founded in France in 1851.

His formal instructions, like Elgin's, also meant going to the Haihe River, but he was converted by the now unanimous British view about concentrating on Canton, and probably exhausted by Bowring's hectoring. In any case, it was now too late in the year to try anything serious in the North. It was also clear that while for Bowring and Seymour the capture of Canton was an end in itself, for Elgin and Gros it was only a step towards a larger settlement with the Chinese.

During November two other foreign ambassadors arrived at Hong Kong, not to take any active part in the British-led campaign but to give moral support, keep an eye on things and perhaps to pick up any unconsidered diplomatic or political trifles. One was the American minister, William Reed, who arrived in the 50-gun steam frigate *Minnesota* and, though his instructions said the allied objectives in China were 'just and expedient', was still under instructions to stay neutral while looking after US interests. He thought the British cause unworthy but agreed that the Chinese were behaving in ways that kept putting them in the wrong.

Commissioner Ye refused to meet him.

The other envoy was the Russian Vice-Admiral Count Euphemius V. Poutiatine. A veteran of the Crimean War, he would later become governor of Amur province. But now he arrived in a tiny paddle-steamer called the *Amerika*. She had been built in the USA and sent to Russia during the Crimean War in an effort to strengthen the Russian navy. Poutiatine, who was to prove the subtlest and perhaps most skilled of the four ambassadors, had already been to China's northern coast and had asked to be received by the emperor. The reply had been that he could not be received at present, but if he were to be received at all, the kowtow would be obligatory. Poutiatine did not persist. He also brought to Hong Kong, as his interpreter, a priest from the Russian Orthodox mission that had long been established at the Russian hostel in Beijing and, at the latest by the 1820s, was regarded by both its priests and the Russian government as a branch of the St Petersburg foreign office.[11] It helped the Russians, while professing friendship to Elgin and Gros, to be able to pretend in Beijing to be China's sole friend in its travails with the West. Russia's rewards were

to be substantial. Poutiatine also had something of a monopoly on serious intelligence from the imperial capital but took care to stay as a guest in the American merchant house of Russell and Co. He strongly agreed with the view that serious issues could only be settled in the North, at Beijing, and not at Canton, and advised Elgin and Seymour that as many gunboats of light draught as they could muster should be taken along, to make it possible to cross the sandbank-guarded entrance to the Haihe River and sail upriver towards Beijing.

As planning progressed, Elgin continued to insist that if there was to be military action at Canton, it should be done with the least possible casualties or loss of property. In any case, the city must be fairly administered until a new agreement with the imperial government could be put in place. Gros entirely concurred. In any event, by early December and with Elgin already in Macao, General Ashburnham was replaced by Major-General Sir Charles van Straubenzee, and the forces available to Elgin started to grow. Five hundred of the promised marines arrived at the end of October. On 1 December, more men returned from Calcutta, as did another 1500 in various detachments plus around 1000 French. In addition, the army began to recruit local coolies, many of them ethnically Hakka who, being from the same ethnic group as the original Taiping rebels, had no great love for the largest ethnic group, the Han Chinese. It was the beginning of the so-called Canton Coolie Corps that – for all its violence towards local Chinese inhabitants – performed outstanding service for the allies throughout the campaign, whether as carriers, in the commissariat or in the medical service.

On the 10th the newly arrived French admiral, Rigault de Genouilly, said he was now ready for a joint attack on Canton. Two days later Gros and Elgin sent separate letters to Ye laying down their ultimata. Gros' was transmitted by Rigault's aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Ribout, Elgin's by the secretary and interpreter Tom Wade. They made only two demands: that all existing treaty arrangements be observed, including free access by British citizens to Canton, and that the Chinese pay compensation for the losses sustained in the various disturbances. If Ye accepted these demands (as well as a French demand for an indemnity to the family of the dead abbé Chapdelaine), the allied blockade of Canton would be lifted, though many of the small forts on the Pearl River would be held until an overall settlement was reached between the allied and Chinese governments. Ye's replies seemed to both Elgin and Gros entirely inadequate. Ye even asserted to Gros that Chapdelaine had tried to foment rebellion,

while Elgin thought Ye seemed to be 'at his wits' end' and was exposing himself 'to the worst consequences without making any preparations…for resistance.'[12]

In fact, Ye remained complacent. Perhaps he relied on keeping out the allies by simply using Canton's six miles of strong walls. These were twenty feet wide and twenty-five feet high and housed a garrison of some 30,000 men, including Manchu troops, which, on past showing, were likely to be suicidally brave. The garrison had also fortified several temples and other points outside the city, and the Chinese had some 20 pieces of artillery nearby. Also, to be fair, Ye had much more serious issues to think about than the British and French near Canton. Large parts of his two provinces remained overrun by rebels, and he was busy having heads cut off as many prisoners as he could lay his hands on. So he cheered himself up by beheading another 400 rebel prisoners and displaying their heads on the city walls. His various replies to Elgin and Gros remained unyielding.

On 15 December the allied fleets moved upriver, and posts were set up on the bank opposite Canton. Harry Parkes – by now Elgin's assistant and translator – busied himself putting up proclamations on Cantons' river front, advising the population of the city to leave during the forthcoming allied bombardment, but none of the citizens seemed to care. The British brought up four steam sloops, four gunboats and a steam tender. The French had four gunboats as well. The larger French vessels had to be left behind, at anchor, though their crews came upriver equipped as infantry.

So the allies had roughly 5700 troops available, some 4000 of them marines plus a naval brigade. That left them vastly inferior to the Chinese in numbers, but they had, then and later, three enormous advantages: in weaponry, in drill and discipline, and in the quality and experience of their officers and commanders. The allies had two other great advantages. Almost all operations would be conducted not just with the support of artillery batteries newly established on some of the islands in the river, but mostly with the support of the British and French gunboats. And the army had some properly mobile artillery.

On the 17th Elgin himself moved upriver. Four days later he and Gros met with the two admirals, Seymour and Rigault, and the British general, van Straubenzee, and control of the military and naval actions was formally handed over to them.

Although hundreds of Chinese boats and junks hurriedly left the scene as the naval squadrons moved up, there was no sign of particularly strengthened defenses, and most of the local Chinese population of Canton

seemed quite unconcerned. Some 670 members of the Chinese Coolie Corps, though recruited in Hong Kong, supported the allied attack and went on cheerfully doing their job even under the fire of Canton's Chinese defenders.

Further Anglo–French ultimata were again ignored, and on 27 December the allies began a bombardment of Canton's walls and the Chinese forts. The firing was intended to be slow – so as to get Ye to give way and cause fewer Chinese casualties – and with no more than 60 rounds from each gun to be fired during the first 24 hours. The main force of British and French troops then landed and advanced without difficulty. They went forward between rice fields and spent the night on the grounds of the cemetery reserved for criminals outside the city walls, with 'the space between the graves affording excellent shelter'. As well, it was a good place for lunch the next day, which van Straubenzee and the two admirals took in comfort, sitting at a table in one of the graves.

At dawn on the 29th the troops noted that many thousands of Chinese could be seen crowding nearby higher ground, in clear sight of the action. They had evidently come, not to fight, but to watch (very much as, barely three years later, in July 1861, the *beau monde* of Washington, DC, was to sally forth, equipped with parasols and top hats, to watch the first battle at Bull Run of the American Civil War). The army moved against Canton's east wall. Chinese fire failed to stop them, and in short order the French, led by Admiral Rigault in person, were first up the wall and showed their flag. The British quickly followed, and there was little further resistance. By the afternoon the allies were in possession of the entire wall, as well as of the forts on a nearby hill.

The British had lost 100 men, killed and wounded, and the French 33, while the Chinese losses were 450 plus some 200 killed in the city by the allied artillery bombardment. It also became embarrassingly clear how unequal the fight had been, given the wretched equipment, let alone leadership, of the Chinese. Thousands of them, carrying ancient breastplates, bows and arrows (much as their predecessors had done in war 20 or 100 years earlier) and in some cases ancient long muskets and cartridge boxes, scurried away in flight from the city. No wonder Elgin thought them a 'contemptible foe'. In the days that followed, the Chinese showed no wish to go on fighting and the allied troops no wish to enter the city. The governor of Guangdong, Bo Gui (whom the British soldiers, inevitably, christened 'Pickwick' to allow for the local usage of 'Pih-kuai') let

it be known that he had opposed the policies of Ye who, as viceroy of the two provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, was his immediate superior.

Elgin seems to have been sad or annoyed with practically everybody throughout the affair, though he reserved most of his real comments for his diary. On Christmas Day he noted his fear that the city might be doomed 'to destruction, from the folly of its own rulers and the vanity and levity of ours'.[13] Next day had 'a second letter from Ye, which is even more twaddling than the first'. On 29 December, he recorded his melancholy when 'we were…destroying the prestige of a place which had been, for so many centuries, intact and undefiled by the stranger, and exercising our valour against so contemptible a foe'. Worse still, the French and English sailors were 'very imperfectly manageable on shore'. And a few days later, on 6 January, he noted that 'my whole efforts have been directed to preserve the Cantonese from the evils of a military occupation; but their stupid, apathetic arrogance makes it almost impossible to effect this…'

When he went ashore on New Year's Day 1858, he came away again convinced that proper arrangements to run Canton had to be taken at once because allied soldiers were starting to loot while bands of local Chinese were pillaging and raping with enthusiasm. In fact, although no Chinese had actually surrendered Canton, it was obvious that the place would have to be held pending general arrangements with the Chinese government. In the meantime, it would have to be run by the existing Chinese authorities. As early as 1 and 2 January, deputations of Chinese merchants came to ask for some kind of city government that would put down the growing disorder. They even asked, now that Ye's authority had disappeared, for the allies themselves to punish any robbers they might arrest.[14] Though they may not have said so, it was now also clear that if the allies did not occupy Canton themselves, it might even be seized by some Chinese rebel group.

So allied patrols, and a force of some 3000, moved into the city. Some Royal Marines made for the imperial treasury and its 120 boxes of silver, as well as packets of ingots, which were carried off to HMS *Calcutta*. A group of sailors, headed by Harry Parkes, managed to capture Pickwick and the Manchu commander, as well as Ye himself who, in a poor disguise, was hoping to escape over a wall. He was humiliatingly led away by a navy coxswain who twisted Ye's pigtail round his fist and led him safely away to a sedan chair and to imprisonment aboard a British sloop. Perhaps more important for the future of Anglo–Chinese relations, Ye's archives were discovered in a 'Management of Barbarian Affairs Yellow Chest', seized and taken away to be translated.

Elgin and Gros quickly decided that they should appoint Bo Gui governor of the city, assisted by three allied officers who would have to approve all of his proclamations and try any cases involving foreigners. No one commented on how odd it was for the governor of Canton to be accepting office at the hands of two barbarian chiefs. The governing body would include Harry Parkes, who, with his knowledge of China and the Chinese, became its moving spirit. A joint allied–Chinese police force was duly organised. It was badly needed: all the riff-raff of Canton used the allied presence to run riot with robbery and looting. In addition, Pickwick lent 17 war junks, commanded by a mandarin, to Admiral Seymour to help on the Pearl River, especially by putting down pirates, which was a major and continuing problem everywhere in Chinese waters. Inside the city all went well. Reed, the American minister, even sent Elgin a note of congratulations on the great allied success that was mainly due to his, Elgin's, 'gentle and discreet counsels'.[15]

The Beijing government accepted the unavoidable. At the end of January came an imperial edict dismissing Ye for 'inefficiency',[16] appointing a new viceroy and announcing that Bo Gui would take charge pending the new man's arrival. That new man secured the lifting of Admiral Seymour's blockade. Which made exporting bulk tea from Canton possible again, to the great delight of the merchants. But Parkes used his private line of communication to the Foreign Office to say that the Chinese were taking Elgin's leniency as weakness. In London, Clarendon thought the same.

None of the leniency stopped secret messages from Beijing reaching Bo Gui and urging that the people be mobilised to engage in what the twenty-first century would call harassing or guerilla warfare. A secret imperial edict of 27 January 1858 was sent telling him to mobilise the soldiers and militia to fight the allies. Another edict of 15 February struck the same note, and yet a third sent secretly to Bo Gui instructed him 'to consult about arousing the village irregulars…' Quite soon trouble did indeed start with people from the villages around Canton. By March, Parkes was warning everyone: 'Pih-kuai (Bo Gui) is playing off (the local militias) and villages against us – no one is safe within one mile of the city.'[17]

In any case, occupying the city did not solve the problem of what to do with Ye. His very presence worried those Cantonese who thought that the viceroy, who boasted of having executed 100,000 rebels, might yet return to office. If he remained on the spot in the meantime, he might become a focus of resistance. After all, he was not just a member of the

empire's highest administrative elite; he was also a Hunanese, and therefore came from a province whose people were known throughout China for their strong provincial and national pride. Not for nothing was it from Hunan that a flood of anti-foreign literature emerged in the next couple of decades. So Elgin and Gros decided to send him to Calcutta, where he was well housed and cared for, but showed little interest in local or Western affairs, with the exception of Chinese translations, especially from *The Times*, of Parliamentary debates in London. The story goes that on one occasion, when the lieutenant governor in Calcutta invited Ye to a ball, he declined on the grounds that, as he understood it, men spent their time embracing each others' wives and standing, first on one leg and then the other. He died after little more than a year. When the British proposed to bury him in the Calcutta Chinese cemetery, the local Chinese objected that the other ghosts might not like it, so his body was duly sent back to China. When it arrived, the Cantonese showed little interest.

CHAPTER 4

Tianjin

Capturing Canton and disposing of Ye was all very well and good, but the larger and much more important China problems remained unresolved, especially regarding how to get an embassy installed at Beijing. As Elgin wrote to London: 'I am confident that so long as the system of entrusting (China's) conduct of foreign affairs to a Provincial Government endures, there can be no security for the maintenance of pacific relations with this country.'[1] So he would have to go north to Tianjin to put pressure directly on the court.

He also secured a promise of cooperation not only from his French colleague Gros, but from both Reed and Poutiatine. Between them they would create a kind of entente to settle the entire China problem with the Beijing authorities.[2] So the four ambassadors, neutrals as well as belligerents, agreed to write separate letters to the Chinese government proposing that serious negotiations begin at Shanghai, the great trading city at the mouth of the Yangzi. Elgin's note proposed the points a new treaty should cover and asked that Beijing send a negotiator with full powers to settle matters. But he also reserved the right to take further action if no proper negotiator turned up by the end of March. Gros wrote in similar terms. The American and Russian notes, while stressing their neutrality, said they agreed with the Anglo–French aims. The Russian missive even pointed out the obvious: that the current troubles could easily have been avoided if the foreigners had been allowed to communicate directly with the governing group at Beijing.[3]

H. Gelber, *Battle for Beijing, 1858–1860*,
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Elgin himself, after spending a fortnight in Hong Kong, started to sail slowly north along the Chinese coast. At the beginning of March he landed at Shantou, where business seemed largely to consist of opium trading – foreign merchants even paid their local taxes to the mandarins in opium – and the so-called pig trade, in which wretched coolies were recruited, or kidnapped, to be sent, in ships little better than the old Atlantic slavers, to the Americas, the Caribbean and Australia. Most Western merchants seemed to be agents of the two great opium houses Jardine and Dent. Elgin, who stayed on board the *Furious*, thought the population looked quite well, 'some of the women [being] not quite hideous'. He took a constant interest in the countryside, nature, animals, architecture, gardens and the state of the population. He also took an interest in the Western missionaries he came across, clearly distinguishing between the Roman Catholic habit of adapting to the lifestyle of the locals and converts and the more clearly Western, wealthy and foreign habits of the Protestants. By 8 March they were at Fuzhou, 'the seat of beauty and fashion in the empire'. There, as in the villages, the foreigners could walk around in complete freedom and safety. By 18 March Elgin was in Ningpo and by the 21st on the 'charming' island of Zoushan. He paused only to express disapproval of the destruction of Chinese idols 'in the plundering expeditions which we Christians dignify with the name of war…"[4] and was at Shanghai by 29 March. The other envoys followed in short order. Shanghai, they all noted, seemed quite European. Even the police were uniformed like Londoners. There were even, and had been for many centuries, bath-houses where anyone could get steam-bathed and a cup of tea, all for a penny. So much for what England thought was a very recent European invention. Elgin also took the opportunity to warn the foreign merchants again.[5] The old idea about vast opportunities, that is, that 'all the mills of Lancashire could not make enough stocking-stuff for one of [China's] provinces', had signally failed. If England really wanted to try again, its machinery would compete with 'a population the most universally and laboriously manufacturing of any on earth'.

Shortly afterwards, the four envoys received Beijing's replies to their letters, which effectively ignored everything that had happened since the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, and calmly tried to revert to the traditional Chinese habits in dealing with foreigners. Elgin and Gros were simply told that Ye, having mismanaged things, had been demoted. The senior secretary of state also noted that, since Chinese ministers were prohibited by law from having anything to do with foreigners, the envoys should return

to Canton and there talk with the proper person to handle foreign affairs, Ye's successor as viceroy, Huang Zonghan. This kind of thing helped to convince even the American Reed that the Chinese would only give way to force. In any case, Elgin refused to accept this reply and set about sailing on northwards to the Haihe River. He merely wrote to Beijing that he would at once sail northwards 'in order that he might place himself in more immediate communication with the High Officers of the Imperial Government at the capital'. He could not delay anyway, for Poutiatine had convinced him – wrongly, as it turned out – that summer was an impossible campaigning season in North China. Between 9 and 15 April all four envoys left Shanghai for the Pechihli Gulf and the Haihe River flowing into it.

Elgin continued to have difficulties, not only in the North but back at Canton. However, the arrival of more troops there made it not only easier to deal with unrest in the areas around the city but possible as well to detach the 59th British Regiment to go north. Interestingly, given the recent experience of the Indian mutiny, the new arrivals at Canton were mainly Punjabis and Sikhs, but there were also some units of Bengalis, mostly volunteers like the 47th Bengal Native Infantry (of the Bengal Army), that would shortly be renamed the 7th Bengal Native Infantry.

In view of the new insecurities in the villages and areas outside Canton, and in spite of the presence of some 3000 regulars plus 1500 British and French sailors, their commander had allowed them simply to be pinned down within the city. Clearly, Major-General van Straubenzee, affectionately known to his soldiers as Old Strawberry Jam, was not the man to cope with any kind of guerrilla warfare in the field. Yet uncertainties about the security of the main British base were obviously worrisome.

Meanwhile, in North China itself, the possibility of armed action obviously did present itself. However, no British troops had ever campaigned there, and the local seas, rivers and general topography were unknown and uncharted. Not even the Admiralty in London had charts of the China coast, and there was no Royal Navy 'China Station' whose experience could be drawn on. No wonder that the government in London, and Palmerston himself, relied so heavily on the advice of William Jardine, the most important and experienced Western merchant on the China coast. It was, of course, known that the Chinese had built a number of forts at Dagu, the entrance of the river leading to Tianjin, which was in turn connected to Beijing by water as well as by road. These forts were protected by a sand bar, some five miles from shore, which only shallow-draught

vessels could cross, as Poutiatine had warned, and which therefore protected the river mouth from regular Western warships. However, the canal between Tianjin and Beijing carried considerable amounts of traffic, especially in spring. It was particularly important as a conduit for rice and corn since the normal Grand Canal route from the South had been cut off by the Taiping rebels. The British therefore thought that by threatening to cut off Beijing's rice supplies, they might force the imperial government to come to terms, even without fighting. In fact, that calculation was largely mistaken. Beijing could not be starved out merely by interrupting its rice supplies. Though rice was in regular demand by the upper classes, most of the population lived not on rice but on corn and beans.

On the other hand, Poutiatine's point about the need for shallow-draught gunboats was essential, and Elgin absorbed the lesson at once. As early as the beginning of March he asked Admiral Seymour to collect a force of shallow-draught gunboats at Shanghai for service in North China. The admiral promised to act immediately, but when March ended and, except for one gunboat, neither the admiral nor any other gunboats had arrived at Shanghai, Elgin kept his temper in public and poured the fury into his diary.

As it was, he left Shanghai on 10 April and, pending Seymour's arrival, took along the senior local naval commander, Captain Sir Frederick Nicolson. Four days later his ship, the *Furious*, reached the bar guarding the Dagu forts. Land was not even in sight. Life on board was deadly dull. The winds were fierce. Elgin found he could do nothing to intercept the rice boats that continued to sail quietly into the river. On the other hand, the tiny allied squadron managed to commandeer a few empty junks to lighten the warships of any surplus load or coal; their Chinese crews seemed content enough when they were partially paid, in advance, for the hire of their boats, and put ashore. Needless to say, they tended to come back at night to try to steal their junks back.

A week later, Baron Gros arrived in the gulf, the last of the four plenipotentiaries. They all decided to send separate letters to the court once more. These were despatched on 24 April and prompted, once again, prevaricating replies. Seymour also finally arrived on his flagship the *Calcutta* but brought along only one other vessel capable of crossing the bar, though the French also had two shallow-draught gunboats. Elgin suspected Seymour of incompetence and laziness, but the fact seems to have been that Seymour understood, as Elgin did not, the difficulties of getting smaller and more vulnerable ships not only from South China to

the North through stormy seas, but in such a way that they would arrive in serviceable condition.

Some did arrive by early May, but Elgin's temper remained sour. It cannot have been improved by the fact that, shortly before this, the Palmerston administration in London had fallen and been replaced by the Conservatives under Lord Derby, who had strongly attacked the whole business of the China war. For all that Elgin knew, the new foreign secretary, Lord Malmesbury, might already have sent him a letter – which would now be on the high seas – flatly contradicting everything that he, Elgin, was attempting to do. It was also reasonably obvious that the Chinese would not negotiate seriously at Dagu if they had already refused the Anglo–French demands at Shanghai. Nevertheless, Elgin indicated that he would negotiate with any Chinese minister who appeared within six days and was properly authorised by the emperor. The governor general of Chihli province offered his services, but said he was only authorised to receive the ambassadors and then report to the throne, which would once more create the obvious danger that, once any negotiation was started and everything had to be referred back to Beijing, the talks could be spun out endlessly. The situation was all the more annoying since Count Poutiatine, in his tiny steamer, had pushed across the bar and was living on the waters of the Haihe River, in daily communication with the Chinese. By late April, Elgin was still sitting outside the sand bar at the Haihe mouth watching Chinese boats sailing normally in and out and being furious with Seymour for not getting more gunboats to the scene. Nor was it reassuring that crowds of Chinese labourers could be seen every day strengthening the Dagu fortifications, dragging more guns in and getting everything ready for troop reinforcements.

By early May Elgin and Gros were tired of prevarication and anxious about the impending hot weather, but their fleet did receive reinforcements. Even then, the admirals said they had too few ships to attack the Dagu forts. On the Chinese side there were intimations that most of the envoys' demands could perhaps be met, but there were two sticking points. One was the notion that the envoy should be granted an audience with the emperor but without the entirely normal ceremony, that is, with the envoy performing the kowtow.[6] The other was, once again, the idea that Western envoys should be allowed to live in Beijing. That was still a demand, with all its implications for equality of status for states and their rules, which the emperor flatly refused. As Beijing put it, the whole idea of a resident minister is 'incompatible with, or unprecedented in, the funda-

mental principles of the regime'.[7] It was once more the basic worry about how to maintain the prestige of an already weakened dynasty.

Nor was it obvious that the Chinese were much concerned about a Franco–British use of force. Both before and after this Sino–Western imbroglio, Western liberal opinion was constantly astonished by the Chinese indifference to human losses when state interests were at issue. One French report to Paris said that when Poutiatine urged the court to give way in order to save innocent lives, the Chinese official merely smiled and said, 'They are only Chinese lives.'[8] A little over a century later, in the late 1970s, the Chinese fought a small border war against Vietnam. Afterwards, when a senior British official tried to commiserate with a Chinese minister on the loss of some 20,000 young men's lives, the minister just laughed: 'We have a lot more where those came from.' Similar tales are not rare.

By May, however, even the admirals were ready, and they agreed to attack the Dagu forts and open the some 200 yards-wide navigable channel into the Haihe. Almost ninety Chinese guns were now visible, and there were 50 more further up the river. Several camps of their troops could be seen, too, and more units were arriving all the time from Beijing. The allied plan was that taking the Dagu forts would be left to the British and French, but then all four ambassadors would proceed up the river. Count Poutiatine had fortunately arranged for a senior man from the Russian College in Beijing, the Archimandrite Palladius, to come down to the fleet. The Chinese had allowed him to travel in a closed vehicle, but he was able to report on what he had glimpsed from the sides. So the admirals had fair intelligence on the thousands of Chinese soldiers barring the way from Dagu to the capital and the various barrages of the Haihe River that the Chinese had arranged with junks and booms.

On 2 May the allied gunboats smashed through the booms guarding the river entrance. The *Cormorant* and two French boats, the *Mitraille* and *Fusée*, attacked the two northern forts, while the *Nimrod*, together with the *Avalanche* and *Dragonne*, attacked the south bank ones, and the *Leven* and *Possum* towed French landing parties.

As it happened, these Dagu defences collapsed quite easily. Though there was an artillery duel for over an hour with the Chinese shore-batteries, most of the Chinese shots flew high, possibly because the guns had had their trajectories fixed to deal with allied boats at high tide, whereas Admirals Rigault and Seymour sent their boats across well before the tide was at its peak. The Chinese were also discovered to have used hollow shot and canister copied from British models.

In any case, little damage was done by the time the French and British landing parties came ashore and started wading through the sticky estuary mud. Long before they reached the forts, large numbers of Chinese could be seen fleeing them. By the end of the day, all the forts and Dagu village were in allied hands, as were large quantities of assorted Chinese artillery and stores. The only Chinese counter-attack was to send a number of fire-ships – junks filled with straw – down the river, but they mostly ran aground before reaching the allied ships and burned out harmlessly. The commander of the Dagu forts cut his own throat in the Temple of the Sea God, and the viceroy of Chihli (roughly modern Hebei) was punished by exile to the northern frontiers. The whole action had cost the British 5 men killed and seventeen wounded and the French 6 killed and sixty-one wounded. Elgin had already confided acerbically to his diary that 'twenty-four determined men with revolvers and a sufficient number of cartridges might walk through China from one end to another'.[9]

Three days later the two allied admirals started up the Haihe with eight gunboats, while the ambassadors stayed at Dagu. Progress was slow. The river was crowded with junks that had been unable to leave because of the allied fleet. Furthermore, the uncharted river was so difficult to navigate that allied boats not infrequently ran aground and had to be towed off. However, the mud villages along the way were friendly enough. Crowds of peasants looked on, awestruck, offered provisions and mostly thought that what they were seeing was just another foreign dynasty coming in to chase the equally foreign Manchus away. On 26 May the gunboats reached Tianjin and were welcomed by a deputation of merchants and gentry – with no officials in sight – also treating the Europeans as new, incoming rulers, offering more provisions and expecting the gunboats to be full of trading goods, including, they vainly hoped, opium. Four days later Elgin himself arrived, and soon afterwards Count Poutiatine and Mr Reed came in the little *Amerika*. They immediately issued a proclamation emphasizing their own entirely peaceful intentions.

Elgin, Gros and their staffs spent four weeks in the Temple of Supreme Felicity – which had, once upon a time, been a summer palace for the great emperor Qianlong – that the city authorities handed to them and was also close to the protecting allied gunboats moored by the shore. Meat and fresh fruit, even ice, were available to everybody. On 29 May an imperial decree nominated two very senior officials to negotiate with the four ambassadors. Guiliang was seventy-four years old, a senior grand secretary and captain-general of the plain white banner of the Manchu

division of China's armed forces. Hwashana was a fifty-three-year-old Mongol, president of the Board of Civil Office and captain-general of the blue banner with borders of the Chinese division. Laurence Oliphant, Elgin's secretary, describes Guiliang as '…a venerable man, of placid and benevolent expression, with a countenance full of intelligence…His manners were polished and dignified, and his whole bearing that of a perfect gentleman'.[10]

The site for negotiations was the Temple of Oceanic Influences, southwest of the city, and on 4 June, Elgin made his way there escorted by fifty scarlet-coated marines and the band of HMS *Calcutta*. The two sides exchanged documents of authority, and this time it was indeed found that the Chinese commissioners had been given full powers to negotiate. Unsurprisingly, it soon became clear that what these commissioners were most concerned about was resisting the demands that foreigners should be able to travel freely throughout China and, especially, that that there should be a resident foreign ambassador in Beijing.

Nevertheless, Elgin wanted to make a point and used the absence of a particular seal of authority in the Chinese documents as an excuse to leave abruptly and with discourteous haste. He had, in fact, been told by the young men who understood the Chinese better than he did that rudeness and hectoring would bring swift results. He therefore left the actual negotiations in the hands of his younger brother, Frederick Bruce, and two much brighter and stronger men. They were Thomas Wade and Horatio Nelson Lay, a young man who had, oddly, been the first inspector general of the Imperial Chinese Customs Service before becoming one of Elgin's interpreters. He made a particular practice of shouting and threatening the Chinese, implying that the British, if provoked, might just march up to Beijing itself. Later Chinese behaviour strongly suggested that they remembered the old Confucian maxim that 'This was a forced oath: the spirits do not hear such.' No doubt that translated, many decades later, into complaints about 'unequal treaties'.

Then, on 9 June, there suddenly appeared the old Chinese statesman Qiying, who had negotiated long ago with the British in the 1842 Nanjing Treaty talks and achieved a remarkable personal accord with the then British commissioner, Sir Henry Pottinger. There, Qiying had been friendly and helpful before being recalled in disgrace. Now he was seventy-two, virtually blind, and had apparently been recalled just to join the two other commissioners and persuade the British to soften their stance. That was hopeless, and Wade and Lay decided to undermine him. One of the

documents discovered in Commissioner Ye's chest at Canton was written by Qiying back in 1850. In it he argued that the only way of keeping the French, British and Americans quiet was to concede in small matters and accept the appearance of state equality.[11]

For the British, this only showed how hypocritical Qiying had been all along and how determined he, like all other Chinese officials, had been to preserve the substance of China's claim to superiority. Now Lay showed the incriminating paper to the two senior Chinese negotiators and insisted on solid proof that they were, and would continue to be, sincere in anything they now signed. Qiying was also allowed to read the paper and seems to have been shattered upon seeing it. That evening he left for Beijing. On the way he was ordered to return to Tianjin, but he pressed on, saying he had an urgent proposal to put before the emperor. But when he reached Beijing, he was thrown into prison and condemned to death for disobeying orders. As a measure of clemency he was spared a public execution and allowed to commit suicide, probably by drinking poison or possibly by hanging himself.

The Chinese negotiators now tried a different tack. They complained to the American and Russian ambassadors about British attitudes (while at the same time making Horatio Nelson Lay a present of a horse and saddle as a token of their respect). The American, Reed, spoke directly to Elgin and was sent away with a flea in his ear. He was, however, deeply shocked when the British showed him some of the documents they had seized in Canton. Those dealing with previous Sino–American talks or negotiations were, Reed could see, deeply misleading. Poutiatine was more subtle and spoke to Gros, asking him to put in a good word, but said nothing to Elgin himself. As Gros told Paris, he did not like the means employed by Elgin's people, but he could hardly complain if they produced useful results. Nevertheless, he remonstrated gently with Elgin, pointing out that 'it would be impossible for him to take part in negotiations of so threatening a character, especially when the threats were employed by an officer of low rank against the highest dignitaries of the empire'.[12] But nothing changed Elgin's mind, especially after 29 May (a mere week after he had started worrying about the intentions of the new government in London), when he received a letter from the now new foreign secretary, Malmesbury, telling him to use whatever means he chose to get 'this Chinese business' settled quickly and, if at all possible, without a war.[13]

The upshot of all this was that each of the four ambassadors negotiated his own treaty with the Chinese while keeping his colleagues more or less

informed. The first and easiest treaty to conclude was the Russian one, which Poutiatine and the Chinese signed on 13 June. This treaty had a certain history. Between 1854 and 1858 the Russian governor of Eastern Siberia, Count Muraviev, had sent three expeditions down the Amur River, the Russo–Chinese border, effectively bringing the north bank of the Amur under Russian control. In 1858 Muraviev led a fourth expedition down the river as far as the border town of Aigun. There, on 28 May 1858, he and Ishan, the local Chinese military governor, signed the Treaty of Aigun, under which China ceded to Russia the north bank of the Amur River and agreed to joint Sino–Russian control of all the land between the (north–south) Ussuri River and the sea. Beijing accepted the treaty. The whole affair emphasised Chinese weakness, in the North of the empire as well as the South. By the Treaty of Aigun they had now recognised the region on the north bank of the Amur as Russian, while that on the south bank as far east as the Ussuri River remained Chinese. The large region between the Ussuri and the sea also was to be held jointly for the time being. So, barely a fortnight after the signature of the Treaty of Aigun, Poutiatine and the Chinese signed yet another agreement, the Treaty of Tianjin, which called for the ratification and confirmation of the Treaty of Aigun within a year. The two sides had in effect signed a new and very far-reaching border agreement that gave Russia huge territorial gains in China's North. Poutiatine's treaty also said simply that Christianity should in future be tolerated in China, that Russians should be free to trade at the five existing treaty ports as well as at Hainan Island and Formosa, and that a Russian envoy could be sent to Beijing on special occasions.

Curiously, the first news, not only of these but of the subsequent Anglo–French successes, seems actually to have reached London, Paris and Washington via a Russian officer, who carried a copy of his own treaty to St Petersburg, whence word was sent on by cable. The officer, Colonel Martynov, left Tianjin on 15 June carrying the Russian treaty document and reached St Petersburg after an extraordinarily fast journey on 7 August. From there, word about the Tianjin arrangements was sent on to London and Paris by cable. In addition, the news was one of the first messages to be transmitted via the then-brand new transatlantic cable to Washington.

The American treaty was next. Signed on 18 June, it said similar things about trade, and both the Russians and Americans were careful to include a most favoured nations clause, which meant that in future they, too, would benefit from any concessions the British and French might obtain, including ones resulting from Lay's bullying tactics. At the same time,

both Poutiatine and Reed were by now conscious of the need to avoid by excessive demands any possible collapse of the empire and of the entire Chinese governmental system, and they pressed that conclusion on Elgin and Gros. After all, if the system collapsed, who might form a government and with whom could anyone deal about anything? That was, indeed, to be the central concern of Western and very much of British China policies for the next several decades. In any event, the treaty was forwarded to Washington, accepted without difficulty by the US Senate and signed by President Buchanan a week after John E. Ward of Georgia was appointed to succeed Reed as minister to China.

The next and most important treaty to be signed, following the American one, was that with Britain. Its negotiation had been difficult, but agreement was almost reached by the 24th, though at the last minute the Chinese balked, once again, over two issues. One was the right of foreign traders to travel freely beyond the treaty ports. But the other was that old sticking point: the business of foreign residence in Beijing. From Elgin's point of view, it remained an unalterable truth that as long as the Chinese could deal with foreigners in some provincial city distant from Beijing, they would continue to see foreigners as inferior. State equality would only be achieved when an ambassador was, and was seen to be, resident in Beijing itself with direct access to the highest imperial officials. However, as things progressed, it became clearer than ever that the very basis of imperial authority, and therefore of the very cohesion of the empire, was the moral authority of the emperor and his administrative structure. If that was undermined, as it might very well be if senior foreign officials were installed at Beijing, chaos was likely to ensue. However, Elgin was unyielding and in the end had to threaten to finish negotiating and march directly on Beijing. The ploy worked. On the evening of 26 June, Elgin was brought back to the Temple of Oceanic Influences, escorted by 400 men and the military band, to sign the Treaty of Tianjin.

It included the major provisions of the earlier 1842 treaty and provided that Britain (as well as the other three Western powers) would have the right to establish diplomatic legations in Beijing. Eleven more ports would be opened to foreign trade.[14] Foreign ships could travel freely on the Yangzi River. Foreigners would be allowed to travel in China's interior, and China would pay the originally agreed compensation to Britain and to British merchants for Commissioner Lin's destruction of their trading goods – that is, opium. There would also be an agreement on rules of trade, whose details would be settled later. When the British returned

to the river and their headquarters, the French flagship greeted them by playing 'God Save the Queen'.

Throughout, Elgin remained convinced that however tough the negotiating tactics might have been, the treaty was incalculably in China's own interests as well as those of the West. He confided to his diary: 'Though I have been forced to act almost brutally, I am China's friend in all this.'[15] He was sadly mistaken; the Chinese did not forget the Confucian dictum about forced oaths. In any event, Guiliang wrote to the emperor, making it clear that 'At present, the treaties of peace with Britain and France cannot be taken as real. These few sheets of paper are simply a means to get (foreign) troops and warships to leave the coast. In future, if Your Majesty desires to break these agreements and the peace, Your Majesty need only punish your slave (Guiliang) for mismanagement. [The treaties] can then be treated as rubbish.'[16]

On the following day, the 27th, the French signed their own treaty. It had in fact been ready before the British one, but Gros had felt able to wait, loyally, for his British ally to get to the wire, even though, at the last minute, he had to threaten to go it alone if Elgin prolonged the delays.

Both the British and the French treaties provided that some commercial, tariff and other details should be left for later discussion by experts. This turned out to mean that Elgin himself, Gros and the two senior Chinese negotiators, Hwashana and Guiliang, would meet in Shanghai in September 1858 for supplementary talks. In the meantime, Elgin had time for a pleasant visit to Japan. He had originally wanted to go to Beijing in person, both for the treaty ratification and in order to deliver to the emperor, in person, a letter from Queen Victoria that he had carried from England. But there was now some urgency about withdrawing the British troops from North China back to Canton, where van Straubenzee had got himself into an absurd amount of trouble by failing to deal with the guerrilla tactics of the villagers around the city. Once the troops had left the North, it might not be safe for Elgin to go to Beijing, so he abandoned his original travel plans.

In the meantime, the Chinese played the kind of game to which, by now, the allies were accustomed. Elgin and Gros wanted official confirmation that the emperor had approved the treaties. The Chinese, all smiles, produced an imperial decree that said the emperor had 'noted' the treaties' contents. That formula, which said nothing about approving anything, would obviously open the way to endless prevarication, so Elgin and Gros insisted on formal approval. To reinforce insistence, Elgin

ordered the 59th Regiment (the 2nd Nottinghamshires) who had helped to occupy Canton, up from Dagu to Tianjin, whereupon the right kind of imperial decree was promptly forthcoming, and the 59th were, equally promptly, sent back to Hong Kong. Elgin also paid a private visit to the Chinese commissioners in which he quietly raised the question whether it might not also be a good idea to send a Chinese ambassador to London. In any event, on 6 July, Elgin and Gros left Tianjin, by now laden with Chinese gifts. The treaty document was handed to Elgin's younger brother, Frederick Bruce, for him to take to London. It was, however, agreed that the treaty should be ratified by both sides, in Beijing, within twelve months.

In a broader sense the treaty, as now agreed, fulfilled the aims Britain had pursued for the two decades since 1840. It finally provided for diplomatic representation in Beijing. It opened more ports to trade – some eleven of them. Foreigners would be allowed to travel to China's interior (despite the dangers that might pose for civil peace and social stability in the empire; on this point the worries of the old emperors, dating back to the early 1700s, turned out to be only too justified). Christianity could be promoted and preached by missionaries. China would pay four million taels of silver as indemnity to cover the costs of the British military expedition and the losses that British persons had suffered at Canton.[17] It was agreed that British consuls at the treaty ports would have jurisdiction over British subjects. That had been a ticklish subject for decades. The British, accustomed to trial by jury and with guilt or innocence determined for an accused individual, would have nothing to do with a Chinese system liable to deal summarily with any member of a group – a family, say, or ships' company – any one of whom might be taken to suffer for the offence.

As to the remaining details on tariffs, Elgin returned to Shanghai in mid-September. The Chinese commissioners failed to appear. Elgin waited for some time before writing to suggest pointedly that perhaps he and his military escort should return to Tianjin to spare them the tedium of the journey south. The Chinese commissioners promptly turned up, and talks began in October. On the British side, details this time were handled by Thomas Wade and Elgin's secretary, Laurence Oliphant.

In fact, the talks dealt with more important matters than regular trade tariffs. Those were settled easily enough, at five per cent on both Chinese imports and exports. But the Chinese also, and finally, settled the matter of opium. As long ago as 1842 the British had gently suggested to the Chinese authorities that their existing opium prohibitions appeared to be

unenforceable. If they were unable to stop opium smuggling on their own coast or trading inland, as they clearly were, might it not be more sensible to control the opium trade by legalising, taxing and containing it? After all the difficulties and controversies of the intervening years, the official prohibition on opium imports was now, and finally, withdrawn in 1858. Even the violently anti-drug American minister William Reed had earlier begun to accept that, if opium use was to be limited at all, that could only be done through controls made possible and necessary by legalisation.[18] Consequently, opium ceased to be much of a factor in Anglo–Chinese relations, as distinct from the growing agitation about it in Western liberal opinion over the next half-century or more. The agitation helped to continue, throughout the twentieth century and beyond, the absurd policies in countries like Britain and the USA in futile attempts to cut off drug supplies without any serious or sustained, let alone effective, attempt to reduce consumer demand.

But the kernel of the Shanghai talks turned out to be much more serious. It became clear that Beijing sought nothing less than cancellation of four clauses of the Sino–British treaty: the idea of having a foreign envoy permanently in residence in Beijing, the opening of the great Yangzi River to trade, permission to the British to travel in China's interior, and indemnification for the military expenses incurred by the British in the occupation of Canton.[19] The Chinese explained, more urgently than ever, that the British insistence on the right of residence at Beijing would do nothing less than undermine the authority of the imperial government in the eyes of China's citizens, producing untold dangers and difficulties for all concerned. 'In the present critical and troublous state of our country', Guiliang wrote to Elgin, 'this incident would generate, we fear, a loss of respect for their government in the eyes of her people.'[20] Since the new treaty actually provided for the possibility that a British representative might live elsewhere and only visit Beijing as often as needed for the conduct of business, could Elgin not agree that that should be the normal usage?

There were strong arguments for doing so anyway. Elgin could see that nothing less than the authority of China's central government might be at stake. In such a matter, the aura of power and moral authority of a semi-divine emperor – in addressing him even his highest officials referred to themselves as 'your slave' – would matter incomparably more than the clout of even the most ruthless top official or bureaucrat.[21] That would matter critically if the fruitful trade that Britain was so anxious to secure

with the Chinese empire was to continue and grow. Arguably even more important was the danger that, if the government collapsed, China might fall apart politically. In which case the consequences, for instance in further Russian expansion in Asia, could be hugely damaging to the whole East and Central Asian balance of power. Elgin also thought that, since the Treaty of Tianjin had been exacted by force, it would be as well for the future of Anglo–Chinese relations if the British behaved with moderation and civility, even if, quite obviously, Guiliang achieved China's central diplomatic and reputational gain in preventing so-called foreign ambassadors from living in Beijing. Paradoxically, the whole reluctant Chinese admission of deep structural weakness might turn out to be a trump card in the empire's negotiations with the Europeans. So Elgin agreed, though many observers, then and later, criticized him for it.[22]

On 2 May the foreign secretary duly wrote to say that Britain 'would not insist upon the residence of her Majesty's Minister being permanently fixed at Beijing', and on 9 August Malmesbury himself told Elgin that 'Peking would be a rat trap for the envoy if the Chinese meant mischief',[23] especially once British and allied troops had left North China. Gros, too, was against permanent residence in the capital.

In any event, Elgin was able to leave Shanghai in early November 1858 and, by agreement with the imperial authorities, to travel up the Yangzi as far as Hankow before returning once more to Shanghai. On the way he stopped off at Nanjing, again the capital of the Taiping rebels, and concluded that the people regarded them 'with feelings akin to those with which they would have regarded earthquake or pestilence.'[24] He went on to Hong Kong and left for England in early March 1859.

The London government had originally decided that the new resident ambassador to Beijing should be a very senior official. The French thought the same and offered their appointment to Baron Gros. He declined, on the sensible grounds that the Chinese emperor would hardly wish to receive in person people who had forced such revolutionary concessions on him at the point of the bayonet.[25] But when it became clear that Elgin had, in effect, agreed not to exercise the right of permanent residence, Paris and London decided to appoint persons of lesser rank as ministers, rather than as full ambassadors. By mid-January 1859, it was decided to send Frederick Bruce out to China again to exchange those necessary ratification documents for the 1858 treaty and then to assume the post of non-resident minister plenipotentiary at the Chinese court. However, the government continued to insist that ratification proper must take place

in Beijing, though Bruce could see the emperor privately rather than in a public ratification ceremony.

In addition, Bruce was told to relieve Sir John Bowring as superintendent of trade, though Bowring could continue as governor of the Hong Kong colony. Bruce himself should be established at Shanghai, as the base both for his Beijing mission and for the superintendency of trade. Frederick Bruce promptly left London and crossed paths briefly in Ceylon with his brother Elgin, who was now on his way home.

While he was on his way, there was more trouble at Canton. Ye's successor as viceroy instructed his people to 'Go forth in your myriads… and take vengeance on the enemy of your sovereign'. By now, too, the Russians had promised to supply the Chinese with 10,000 rifles and 50 cannon. Meanwhile, in February 1859, van Straubenzee at Canton had finally decided to do something about the guerrilla nuisance. He led a column to destroy a guerrilla fort some seven miles outside the city. Later, when some Chinese set an ambush for a party of military police doing their rounds, and killed seven of them, the general retaliated by demolishing the entire street where the ambush had happened. There was no more trouble. Hope Grant, the general who would command the British force a year later, said afterwards that his wife and Lady Straubenzee 'were carried in sedan chairs through the crowded streets and by-lanes without meeting with any incivility'.[26]

Bruce stayed only briefly in Hong Kong before sailing on to Shanghai, now accompanied by his new and fiery little French colleague, Count Alphonse de Bourboulon, the new French minister to China. The Frenchman was a lively professional diplomat, one of whose distinctions was to have married the tall, slim and statuesque Catherine Fanny McLeod during a posting in the USA. The social position of the de Bourboulons was much enhanced by Catherine's claim that her family was connected with royalty. In any event, Bruce and de Bourboulon arrived at Shanghai in early June 1859, just as the political cycle in London was turning again to bring Palmerston back as prime minister, this time with Lord John Russell as foreign secretary.

Before leaving Hong Kong to sail north, Bruce learned that the emperor was so angry about the Tianjin Treaty that no envoy would be received in any kind of audience. He also heard that military preparations were going ahead not only at Tianjin and Beijing but also at the river's mouth at Dagu, where new cannon were being cast,[27] and that the task of preventing any foreign armies from approaching Beijing had been

entrusted to one of China's most eminent soldiers, who also seemed to have headed the pro-war party at court. This was the renowned Mongol cavalry general, Prince Sangkolinsin (naturally the cheeky British soldiery promptly translated that to 'Sam Collinson' and started a rumour that, far from being a Chinese prince, he was a rebellious Irish marine). He brought some 4000 elite Mongolian cavalry with him and was later said to have, altogether, some 50,000 Manchu and Mongol troops under his command. Sangkolinsin came from the Horqin Left Black Banner of Inner Mongolia that traced its ancestry back to the founding Mongol emperor Genghis Khan. In 1825 he became a Chinese imperial prince of the second degree. He also became adjutant-general under the old Daoguang emperor, who was his patron. After Daoguang's death, he became in 1853/1854 a national hero when he and his Mongol cavalry pushed back a Taiping rebel drive into North China and captured one of its leaders. Two years later still he became a prince of the first degree. As the Anglo–French campaign loomed, he was appointed imperial commissioner to lead the campaign against the invaders.

He was very ready to sound warlike but was also a realist. Two of his memorials to the throne, presented back in 1858, were pessimistic about the defences between Tianjin and Beijing and stressed the low morale of his soldiers. All the same, it remained fairly obvious to the allies that, given Chinese preparations, the Franco–British mission would need to be backed by an adequate force if it was to make an impression. Not only that, but the news about Prince Sang only strengthened Bruce's determination to insist on sailing upriver to Tianjin and showing the flag there, if only because 'on the Mongol prince in charge of the works, the hopes of the war party (at Beijing) repose, and if he is defeated in his attempt to keep us out of the river, pacific counsels will prevail'.[28] Moreover, Bruce was helped by the fact that, even before leaving China, Elgin, who knew how dilatory Seymour could be, had told the admiral to collect some shallow-draught gunboats to escort his brother to the mouth of the Haihe.

At Shanghai, Bruce and de Bourboulon were told that the two senior Chinese commissioners who had negotiated the 1858 treaty had arrived and wanted to discuss a few points. The allies responded much as the Chinese had responded in previous years to allied pleas to tweak the texts of previous treaties: the texts were the texts and there was nothing to talk about. So now Bruce replied, with de Bourboulon's agreement, that there was nothing to discuss until the treaty had been properly ratified at Beijing. When the two Chinese commissioners tried to argue, Bruce

and de Bourboulon simply sailed north without seeing them and arrived at the mouth of the Haihe, but beyond the sand bar, on 18 June. This time, the allies had 16 warships in place, including one ship of the line, all commanded by Rear Admiral Sir James Hope, a Scot who had succeeded Admiral Seymour a couple of months earlier. Hope had joined the navy at age fifteen and reached the rank of captain by the age of thirty. The French had only two small ships present since most of the French navy in the East, and a force of some 4000 under Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, was now busy in Indo-China, in operations against Annam.[29]

On arriving at Dagu, it was at once clear that the forts had indeed been greatly strengthened since the allies had so easily occupied them the year before. There were many more guns and men in place, and chains and heavy bamboo trunks had been installed as booms across the river entrance.

Here was obviously a foretaste of trouble. But, contrary to various later conspiracy theories, it was not, it turned out, that the Chinese necessarily wanted to bar all access to Beijing. It was true that the court still hoped to deal with ratification of the 1858 treaty at Shanghai, but it was willing to let the negotiators come to Beijing. On the other hand, the Chinese did want the embassies, if they had to come to the capital, to go to there by road after landing at Beitang, a small coastal town about ten miles up the coast from Dagu, not just because they wanted the details of the new Dagu defence arrangements kept secret, but for overriding reasons of national politics and morale. (Also, did the very idea of a British fleet of sixteen warships sailing up the Haihe seem too much like a victory parade?) In any case, on 18 June the Grand Council ordered that three buildings be prepared as residences at Beijing for the British, French and American ministers 'in conformity with the precedents of various tribute-bearing barbarians'.[30] So the buildings were outside the eastern gate of the capital.

The new American minister, John Ward, did as the Chinese demanded. He had also arrived at Dagu on his way to the capital for the ratification of his treaty and was also invited to go, with an escort, via Beitang. He did. He was left to cool his heels at the small port for some three weeks. Then, on the first stage of their 160-mile journey to Beijing, the Americans were taken along the Haihe River in large sampans and then by some rough carts pulled by mules – a normal mode of transport for subject peoples and tribute-bearers – over some very stony roads. The carts were so uncomfortable, having no springs, seats or cushions, that for the last stretch of the week-long journey the Americans chose to walk. By now, of

course, they were entirely in the hands of the Chinese without any support or protection of their own. They entered Beijing on 27 July before a crowd eager to see the vanquished enemy make his submission – after all, had not the Americans had a hand in the Dagu battle? Ward's group was accommodated in large, comfortable houses and given servants and food. But they were not allowed to fly their own flag and were prevented from moving around the city or from contacting the Russians (who had already ratified their own 1858 Treaty of Tianjin with the Chinese; this had been done on 24 April by the Russian representative and Sushun, the president of the Board of Revenue). Ward wanted to hand over President Buchanan's letter of credence personally to the emperor, in the manner normal in the West. But that immediately ran into the problem of the kowtow. The Chinese explained that though the emperor regarded the US president as quite his equal, the formalities would have to be maintained. They had to insist on having the envoy at least bow and kneel. And if the formalities of an imperial reception for the minister had to be omitted, the normal formalities of handing the president's letter to the emperor would have to be omitted as well. The American refused to kneel, so talks broke off, Buchanan's letter was handed to Guiliang for transmission to the emperor and the American delegation returned to Beitang. There, on 16 August, the ratification ceremony was held with Guiliang and the governor of the province, and the Americans left to sail home. In effect, the Chinese had skilfully managed to fit the American approach to Beijing into the traditional manner in which tributary princes and delegations normally approached the throne, which was precisely what the British insisted on avoiding. The minister, deeply conscious that his mission had ended poorly, submitted to the president a request allowing him to retire.

However, President Buchanan professed himself entirely content with this outcome. He put it this way to Congress:

> On the arrival of Mr Ward at Peking he requested an audience of the Emperor to present his letter of credence. This he did not obtain, in consequence of his very proper refusal to submit to the humiliating ceremonies required by the etiquette of this strange people…Nevertheless, the interviews on this question were conducted in the most friendly spirit and with all due regard to his personal feelings and the honor of his country. When a presentation to His Majesty was found to be impossible, the letter of credence from the President was received with peculiar honors by Guiliang 'the Emperor's prime minister and the second man in the Empire…' The ratifications of the

> treaty were afterwards, on the 16th of August, exchanged in proper form at Beitang (Pehtang)…It is but simple justice to the Chinese authorities to observe that throughout the whole transaction they appear to have acted in good faith and in a friendly spirit toward the United States…The conduct of our minister…has received my entire approbation.[31]

The British envoy, Bruce, was, of course, from the start very conscious of the overriding political importance of the style and manner of his approach to Beijing. The foreign secretary had given firm instructions that he should approach Beijing by travelling via Tianjin 'in a British ship of war'.[32] Lord Malmesbury had not only told Bruce to beware of possible Chinese treachery but warned that every detail of his visit to Beijing, being the first mission of its kind to the Chinese capital, would inevitably be taken by the Chinese as a precedent for the future.

Admiral Hope therefore requested peaceful passage up the Haihe River. He asked that the Chinese barriers be removed so that the emissaries could sail through. Nothing happened, so on 21 June Bruce and de Bourboulon gave formal permission to the admirals to clear the obstacles. Four days later Bruce received a letter from the local viceroy, Heng Fu, suggesting that he make his way to Beijing, not via Dagu but through Beitang. For the usual reasons, the Chinese also wanted the allies to use a more indirect, modest and quasi-tributary way of getting to the capital. There were additional reasons for Bruce to find Heng Fu's note unhelpful. Among other things, in the Chinese note the name of Queen Victoria had been written at a lower level than that of the emperor – in Chinese usage a not very subtle assertion of superiority, even dominance. In any case, Malmesbury had already stipulated that Bruce should go to Tianjin in a warship. That was not just to make a demonstration. Only if Tianjin was threatened by the guns of a British warship was a British envoy likely to be properly treated by, and in, Beijing. Conversely, if Bruce did go via Beitang and travel overland, with his gunboats still outside Dagu, his chances of success at Beijing itself would obviously be greatly reduced.

However, by the time Bruce saw Heng Fu's letter he could in any case no longer communicate with Admiral Hope, who was on the verge of launching his attack on the Dagu forts. Hope therefore went ahead. But his movements were slow and, reflecting a confidence in British superiority, undertaken virtually without proper reconnaissance. Only after 2 p.m. did one of the British boats, the *Opossum*, start to cut a passage. Only when she, followed by three other gunboats, got to the second barrier

did some thirty to forty Chinese guns open an uncomfortably accurate fire. Within a few minutes the gunboats were heavily damaged and had to retreat behind the first boom. Admiral Hope himself, on board the *Plover*, was twice severely wounded and fell down. His own gunboat was left with only nine men left standing out of a crew of forty. The artillery duel continued but had died down towards evening, by which time 6 of the 11 British gunboats were out of action, most of them with heavy casualties and some even aground.

The American naval contingent on the scene, there to observe events but remain neutral, also got involved. Its colourful commander, Commodore Josiah Tatnall, had been appointed flag officer of the US Asiatic station in the previous October. Shortly before the allied action began he found his own flagship aground and having to be towed off by the English. Later, when he rowed over, through Chinese fire, to see his wounded friend, Admiral Hope, he could not stand the sight. A good many of his American sailors seem actually to have helped to man British guns during the fighting. He even ordered his own steamer to tow several launches filled with British marines into action and others, filled with wounded, away from the fire. Later, when pressed on all this, he famously replied (since the English were, after all, cousins) that 'blood is thicker than water' and found himself backed by public opinion and the government back home. When the American civil war broke out shortly afterwards, Tatnall resigned his commission and became a captain in the Confederate Navy and commander of naval defences in South Carolina and Georgia.

In any case, by 6 p.m. it was clear that if the Dagu forts were to be taken that day, the storming parties would have to go ashore at once. It would be risky because some of the Chinese guns were still in action and it was clear that behind the walls of the forts were lots of Chinese troops with infantry weapons. On the other hand, a British withdrawal and resumption of the attack next day would mean simply abandoning the four gunboats now aground within easy reach of the forts. Withdrawal would therefore mean rescuing the crews but not the ships. With Admiral Hope being too badly wounded to make a sensible decision, his number two, Captain Charles Shadwell, made it, deciding to press the attack.

By now, though, the tide was out and the landing boats had to leave the marines to wade across deep mud to reach land, with ammunition and weapons often soaked and no protection from heavy Chinese fire for the 150 or so men who landed. Some fifty of the landing party managed to reach the wall of the southern forts but were pinned down there.

Eventually they were ordered to withdraw, with their wounded, and the evacuation was completed at 1:30 in the morning. Altogether, the British lost 519 soldiers and sailors killed and 456 wounded out of the 1100 engaged. Some of the men who were veterans of the Crimean War were heard to mutter that they would rather fight the Battle of Balaclava again three times over than have another go at the Dagu forts. (Later, Palmerston even thought that the Chinese guns had been so effective that they must have been manned by Russians.)

In the next few days Admiral Hope recovered and managed to make all his boats seaworthy again – except three. By 1 July he acknowledged to Bruce that he could not tackle the forts again. It was clear that everyone would have to move back to Shanghai, where there were no signs of any Chinese wish to open a new 'front' against the allies, whose governments were anyway happy to think that there was no need to expand the war, especially to places where peaceful trading with the Chinese was still possible. Indeed, Lord John Russell, the new foreign secretary, took care to tell Bruce later that, whatever might have happened at Dagu, 'there are no reasons for interrupting friendly relations with the Chinese at Shanghai, Canton and elsewhere'.[33]

Among the allies, both in China and back home, the Dagu defeat was so entirely unexpected that a series of conspiracy theories were immediately concocted to account for it, including stories that the Chinese had indeed been helped by Russians. The most important theory was that the Chinese had never intended to ratify the Treaty of Tianjin but had simply laid a trap for the peaceful British negotiators: the Chinese had wantonly attacked the British, who were trying, peacefully, to go about their diplomatic business by sailing upriver. Tom Wade, thinking it over once he was back in Shanghai, had an only slightly less complicated explanation. As he wrote on 14 July: 'The Chinese knew we were coming to Peking. If the Government had said, you don't go by such or such a route, which is closed for military reasons, I don't see how, professing peace, we could have forced the door; but they carefully kept all officials out of the way. The villagers who met our marines at Taku (Dagu) maintained that none were near, and that the works were all the work of the people for the exclusion of pirates etc. I am much puzzled and believe that pride, vindictiveness, treachery, and yet great cowardice are all jumbled together in the producing causes of the collisions…'.[34]

CHAPTER 5

Recovery

The news of Hope's defeat at Dagu did not reach London until mid-September 1859. By that time, ministers were on holiday at various country houses and estates, which gave Edmund Hammond, Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office, plenty of time and room to sway Cabinet opinion in bilateral correspondence with the various ministers, who were at best lukewarm about the whole thing. But Hammond's strong view was that the British on the spot must be supported and an expeditionary force sent out to show the Chinese the error of their ways. *The Times* said the Chinese were 'perfidious hordes' whose behaviour had been 'faithless, barbarous and treacherous'. Indeed, Bruce himself and his advisers, who had gone back to Shanghai and reflected on what had happened, were more and more persuaded, or persuaded themselves, that there had simply been a conspiracy against him that no diplomacy could have foiled.

When the London Cabinet met on 17 September 1859, it agreed to send a strong expedition, but ministers still shied away from forcible action. That was hardly a sustainable position, and in the end both Palmerston and Foreign Secretary Lord John Russell accepted that shilly-shallying would be interpreted as weakness by all and sundry. That would not only damage the China trade but have effects on the politics of Europe itself. The case for strong action was further underlined when details emerged of how the visit to Beijing of the American envoy, Ward, had been treated, and news came that the Chinese emperor had formally approved what had been done in his name at Dagu. As officialdom briefly recorded later: 'As soon as the British Government had assured themselves that the repulse

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at the Taku [Dagu] fort had been ordered and approved by the Emperor of China, and that no apology was forthcoming, they decided on sending out 10,000 troops under Sir Hope Grant…'.[1]

In the meantime, Palmerston had recruited Elgin, on his return to England, into the government, where he became postmaster general.[2] He now found himself, to his considerable annoyance, lectured by Hammond, who suggested that, by giving way on the matter of ambassadorial residence in Beijing (as distinct from rights of access by visit), he had merely encouraged the Chinese to look for further concessions. That had actually helped to produce recent events and the British defeat. The cabinet found itself so divided that Lord John had to confine himself to oracular obscurity when communicating with Bruce. The government, he wrote on 26 September, could not judge what Bruce should have done on the spot, but nothing had happened 'to diminish the confidence which they repose in you'.[3] That attitude would not last.

In any case, the British hand was once again being forced by the French. The views of the action party in London were reinforced by evidence that the French emperor was determined to react fiercely to the China defeat and go it alone if necessary. It became clear that Napoleon, who was in any case hankering after military glory to emulate his famous uncle, was collecting troops. No one was quite sure what French plans actually were, but it was suggested that perhaps some 12,000 French infantry, plus 20 small gunboats, half a dozen artillery batteries and some cavalry might be sent out. When Napoleon was warned by his ambassador that London was not keen to be really tough with the Chinese, he put a burr under British saddles by gently suggesting that if Britain did not want to send an expedition to match the French one, perhaps they would help by providing transport. Palmerston and Lord John promptly insisted on sending a British force at least equal to that of the French.

Elgin was now worried. Back at Shanghai he had given way to Chinese pleas that the empire might collapse into chaos if he insisted on sending an ambassador to live in Beijing. That surely set limits on what could usefully be done. As he explained, rather helplessly, while harping on England's direct economic interests: 'If you humiliate the Emperor beyond measure, if you seriously impair his influence over his own subjects, you kill the golden goose that lays the golden eggs, throw the country into confusion and impair the most lucrative trade you have in the world.'[4] All he could now think of was to write a paper for the Cabinet, arguing that all the allies needed to do was to seal up the Gulf of Pechili, thereby stopping the

traffic of junks that brought rice to Beijing from the South. Once deprived of essential food, the Chinese would probably come to terms without a single allied soldier having to land. Even if a military expedition had to be sent, it should try to achieve its aims without moving to Beijing but stop short, possibly at Tianjin. The Secretary of State for War, Sidney Herbert, was even more explicit about the limitations of British expectations. '… our quarrel is not with the people but with the Government', he wrote on 26 November in a long and detailed letter to the commander of the allied army, Sir James Hope Grant.

> At the ports where we trade, our peaceful relations have remained unimpaired. Our object in going to China is to trade; and they trade with us uninterruptedly, though the central Government fires on our ships, and arrests the progress of our ambassador. It is important to maintain, if possible, this good understanding with the Chinese people at the trading ports. The pressure, therefore, whatever it be, should be as far as possible confined to the central Government…our object is to get our peace ratified without being obliged to have recourse to an advance (i.e. on Beijing itself). An early termination of our Chinese difficulty is therefore most desirable….[5]

Just to reinforce his view, he wrote on 10 November to Lord Canning, the Viceroy of India. After all, British foreign policy was very largely a matter for the Admiralty, the government of India and a motley collection of "men on the spot".[6] His note to Canning was blunt: '…we don't want to upset the dynasty nor to ruin the Government, as on their stability and prosperity depends all our trade, which, after all…is the sole or at least the first, object for which we go to China at all'.[7] He was, in fact, more or less echoing much of what Elgin had written to his wife on 15 July and 8 September: '…the problem we have to solve here is a very difficult one: for while we are up here for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on the Emperor, as a means of placing our relations with China on a proper footing, we have news from the South (i.e. Shanghai) which looks as if the Government of the Empire was about to pass out of his feeble hands into those of the rebels…'. And two months later:

> I am at war again! My idiotic Chinamen have taken to playing tricks, which give an excellent excuse for carrying the army to Pekin….I am sure from what has come to pass during the last few days, that we must get nearer Pekin before the Government there comes to its senses. The blockheads have gone on negotiating with me just long enough to enable Grant to bring

> all his army up to this point. Here we are, then, with our base established in the heart of the country, in a capital climate, with abundance around us, our army in excellent health and these stupid people give me a snub, which obliges me to break with them. No one knows whether our progress is to be a fight or an ovation, for in this country nothing can be foreseen. I think it better that an olive-branch should advance with the sword…[8]

On 15 September, after despatching Parkes and Wade to the Chinese to settle final details, he added: 'It is arranged now that the General and the bulk of the force proceed to-morrow on their way to the point at which (if the Chinese Plenipotentiaries come into all our terms) we are to stay the progress of the main body, going from that point with an escort of 1,000 men (i.e. to Beijing itself)…and so I hope to effect my pacific entry into Peking…'.[9]

In the meantime, the two allied commissioners in Shanghai *en poste* received fresh instructions from their governments, but they were not identical. De Bourboulon was told he should seek a further indemnity, going beyond that demanded by the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin. Bruce received Russell's letter of 29 October telling him to give the Chinese a thirty-day ultimatum demanding an apology for the action at Dagu, an indemnity for the losses and damage of that clash, and a quick ratification of the earlier Treaty of Tianjin. But things were not so easy. No one in London understood that parts of Elgin's argument were fallacious since Beijing did not need to rely on southern rice supplies. But young Wade knew enough to point out, finally, that stopping the rice junks, even if it were done, would resolve nothing. Nor had London understood China's climate and weather. Bruce's instructions were to send an ultimatum immediately, which would mean in January, and to start a blockade if that was rejected. But the rice junks in any case did not sail before March, and the admiral could not promise to provide enough gunboats for action before April. So Bruce was allowed to delay, and it was only on 8 March 1860 that he and de Bourboulon presented their ultimatums to the Chinese. Bruce now demanded an apology for the Dagu affair, the return of the ships and guns the Chinese had captured, and ratification of the Treaty of Tianjin at Beijing by ambassadors, who would travel there via Dagu as originally planned. There would also have to be immediate payment of the indemnity due under the 1858 treaty, and the Chinese were warned that there might have to be a further indemnity if their reply to the ultimatum was unsatisfactory. However, Bruce was as keen as his elder brother to invoke humanitarian as well as economic reasons to get the China business

settled. When he wrote to Hope Grant from Shanghai in April, he made the point that both of them would surely '…willingly see the question terminated with as little effusion of blood, and as little disturbance of peaceful relations with the industrious classes of China, as possible…'.[10]

Prince Sangkolinsin, the hero of the Dagu victory, had already explained to the emperor back in July that the British clearly wanted to exact much more than the provisions of the 1858 treaty. So at the end of the first week of April 1860 there came a Chinese reply to Bruce that was entirely uncompromising. The British version of the Dagu events was rejected, and Bruce was invited to proceed to Beitang and exchange ratification documents there – just as, the Chinese pointed out, the Americans had already done. Once there, they could also discuss any further matters with an imperial commissioner. The emperor added sarcastically that it was most odd of the allies to claim an indemnity for invading China, since the empire had never had the slightest intention of inviting them to come; and if their own 'absurd pretensions', which had led them to send an army to the Haihe the previous year, had strained their finances, that was their own business.

Bruce and de Bourboulon met with the British and French commanders-in-chief to discuss further action. Sensibly and predictably, it was again agreed not to extend the war to the Yangzi basin and Shanghai, but to confine operations to the North, starting with the Beitang Gulf. On 21 April allied forces made the first move of the new campaign by occupying the island of Zoushan, off the mouth of the Yangzi. It had been important in the earlier 1842 war and had some potential strategic importance. It could certainly form a base to support the defence of allied (and imperial) interests in Shanghai. In addition, it could be used as a depot for the push to the North. Moreover, the government in London decided, once again, that it wanted to have a man of greater political standing in command, and a highly reluctant Elgin was persuaded to go out again. At about the same time as Elgin started on his second journey to China, Bruce was told that he would be superseded by his brother. Lord John simply wrote to him that the Chinese might find it more difficult to make concessions to Bruce and his people, the very men the imperial forces had chased away the year before.

The general outlook and expectation of the British government was outlined clearly enough by Secretary of State for War, Sidney Herbert, in his letter of 26 November 1859.[11] It was, after all, addressed to the general who was running the campaign. It began by making the obvious point

that 'the deplorable mishap at the mouth of the Hai he' (in other words the costly repulse the allies had suffered) made retaliation unavoidable. But it also repeated that

> … our quarrel is not with the people, but with the Government. At the ports where we trade our peaceful relations have remained unimpaired. Our object in going to China is to trade; and they trade with us uninterruptedly, though the central Government fires on our ships, and arrests the progress of our ambassador. It is important to maintain, if possible, this good understanding with the Chinese people at the trading ports…the pressure… should as far as possible be confined to the central Government…
>
> Our object is to get our peace [i.e. the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin] ratified without being obliged to have recourse to an advance on Pekin itself. With the numbers which the Chinese Government have at their command, the advance of what…is but a handful of men into an enormous capital is hazardous; and the operation, if successful, might possibly, in the present disorganized state of the Chinese empire, end in upsetting the existing dynasty, and throwing the whole country into a state of anarchy…
>
> An early termination of our Chinese difficulty is therefore most desirable. Our allies probably have different views...the stability of the Chinese empire is not important to them…
>
> Herbert also noted, in the same letter, that 'I trust you will prove right in the hopes you entertain of a bloodless termination to all our preparations, and that the Chinese, who have rejected rather contumeliously the ultimatum of a distant enemy, will yield to a visible force appearing off Taku [Dagu]', though he, Herbert, thought it more likely that the Chinese would hold out.

Elgin himself was given fresh formal instructions before he left England. The foreign secretary, Lord Russell, wrote officially to him on 17 April 1860. England's objective, Elgin was told, was to 'employ every means calculated to establish peace' with China.[12] He was told to go to Beijing, together with his French colleague, and to insist on being received there with all honour. He should also insist on an apology for the Dagu business and an indemnity for the losses, and, of course, he should see the 1958 Treaty of Tianjin ratified at last. It was up to him whether he should, after all that, still insist on having a British minister permanently in Beijing. He should also, if it could be done without the French making difficulties, annex the Jiulong (Kowloon) peninsula opposite Hong Kong. Furthermore, he was reminded that, as he himself had pointed out to the Cabinet, there was some danger that the Chinese empire might dissolve

into chaos, especially if the emperor retired from the capital. Gros received a similar warning from Paris, which was one reason for him to want to avoid any direct attack on Beijing.[13]

Elgin's first stop was once again Paris, where he went to see Emperor Napoleon, who said very little. He also saw his old companion Baron Gros, who was quite as sorry as Elgin himself about having to go to China again.

It was not that China was the only problem. There was also the matter of general alliance politics. Alliances, especially in wartime, are rarely free of tension, and the Anglo–French alliance was no exception. Of course, it remained basically firm and reliable throughout the campaign. But by 1860 general relations between the allies were not quite as trusting as they had been. As Sidney Herbert put it in the same letter: 'Although the two governments are on perfectly friendly terms, it is impossible to deny that there exists between the two nations an uneasy feeling'. As both Gros and Elgin could also see, there was much more here than issues to do with the East and China. Some of it related, still or again, to French expansionism in Italy, the Franco–Sardinian war against Austria and problems in North Africa. Perhaps more important were naval issues. One part of this was England's naval scare: the appalled public realisation that, in the dawning age of steam and ironclads, most of the wooden sailing ships of the Royal Navy were now entirely obsolete, which meant that not only the entire naval underpinnings of the empire but the very security of the British Isles themselves might be in question. Some people even went into hysterics, wondering whether perhaps the French might take the opportunity to invade England. Conversely, not much later the French were worrying about British naval modernisation, and with it the notion that perhaps the British would effectively wipe out the entire French navy in a quick coup. Nor did suspicions of that kind fade quickly. Less than 40 years later, at the time of the so-called Fashoda Incident of 1898, the French worried that the British might eliminate the entire French navy in an afternoon. (And, of course, forty years later still – albeit in the totally changed circumstances of July 1940 – the British did indeed demolish the French fleet at Mers el Kebir in North Africa, in order to keep it out of the hands of Adolf Hitler's Germany.)

Then there was the Suez canal, being built in Egypt by the retired French diplomat, the Vicomte Ferdinand de Lesseps. That looked to London like a threat to England's communications with, and position in, India, that jewel in the crown of the entire empire. There were other and

more real imperial rivalries, including ones with a foretaste of the African rivalries that came to a head forty or fifty years later. Or again, in Paris, even sensible people had from the start worried that the British might have ulterior motives in the East, perhaps including unspecified territorial gains in China; while the British, for their part, wondered whether the French might not quietly grab Kowloon, next to Hong Kong. Given the worries about the stability and cohesion of the Chinese empire, some French planners even worried about what, if the Chinese empire did indeed disintegrate, a new Chinese government might look like. Even so sensible a man as Gros would in due course be worried by a casual remark of Elgin's to the effect that, since a new China war was unpopular in England, it might perhaps be better to help the virtually Protestant Taipings become rulers of China.

In any event, Elgin's gloom did not lift very much when he was back at sea, travelling this time in company with the correspondent of *The Times*, Thomas William Bowlby, who was destined to suffer an unpleasant death at the hands of the Chinese. Passing through Egypt, the two inspected the Sphinx, and Elgin spent time tearing up old correspondence, reading Tennyson's poems and the tracts of Adolphe Thiers, the former French Prime Minister and historian, and being furious about English brutalities inflicted on Indians during the suppression of the Indian Mutiny. 'Can I do anything', he asked in a letter, 'to prevent England from calling down on herself God's curse for the brutalities committed on another feeble oriental race? Or are all my exertions to result only in the extension of the area over which Englishmen are to exhibit how hollow and superficial are both their civilization and their Christianity?'[14] He also continued to be worried about the huge – and, in his view, excessive – scope and cost of the entire China operation.[15]

Just as Elgin and Gros, travelling onward from Ceylon in the P&O steamer *Malabar*, left the island, they struck a rock and nearly went to the bottom. The captain managed to beach the ship, but most of the luggage of the two ambassadors, including Elgin's instructions and other papers, finished up under water, and many documents became illegible. It took a couple of weeks for the divers to fish their things out. Seawater had made Baron Gros' letters of instructions virtually illegible. But the captain told Elgin and Gros that their unruffled behaviour while the ship was in trouble had done much to calm the passengers and crew.

While Elgin and Gros were still on their way, allied forces were slowly assembling at Hong Kong, where everyone had a most agree-

able springtime stay. The governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, made himself pleasant to everybody, and Lady Robinson, a charming hostess, was especially helpful by holding delightful *soirées* and making other social arrangements for the British, French, American and other officials and officers. Everyone's stay was enlivened by watching the Indian irregular cavalry, in their colourful uniforms of light blue jackets, white pantaloons and red cummerbunds, plus red or blue turbans depending on the regiment, at their exercises on Kowloon, especially the 'tent-pegging' with bamboo lances or cutting oranges with sabers, each done at full gallop. Or one could look over the new Armstrong guns that would play an important part in the China campaign, while the admirals were hard at work hashing out its details.

They could plan the deployment of a significant force. The British, having undertaken to supply 10,000 men, brought much more. Altogether, they managed to deploy something like 18,000 men, British and Indian, in various parts of China, though not all at the same time. That meant some 10,500 for the advance to Beijing, with the rest deployed variously at places like Canton, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Zoushan.[16] They were excellently equipped and supplied. Even their medical services were very good, now that the British army had learnt the hard lessons of gross medical mismanagement taught by the Crimean campaign.

The French force was smaller. Though Paris had originally hinted at numbers in the region of 10,000–12,000, only a little over 7,000 turned up. Of those, the force available for the main advance was a maximum of 6,300.[17] While the British tended to concentrate at Hong Kong, the French did so at Shanghai.[18]

Troops apart, both allies once again recruited Chinese coolies for logistic support. The French recruited some 500 from Shanghai, the British some 2,500 for L1/17/6 per month plus rations and two suits of clothes. In Hong Kong recruitment proved especially difficult, since the Chinese persuaded themselves that uniforms and drill meant the coolies were meant to do the fighting. In the end, though, the terms offered were attractive enough, especially to the local criminal and underclasses, and the recruits served punctually and faithfully throughout the campaign. They were rapacious, cruel and lawless with the Chinese population, especially the womenfolk; but in Hong Kong people remarked that with the departure of the army's coolies, local thefts and robberies had fallen virtually to zero.[19] In any event, British officers found them strong, cheerful and entirely manageable. So much so that while they were commanded

by British or French officers, the coolies had their own coolie corporals and sergeants. All of which may also say a good deal about the sense of national pride and cohesion of Chinese society at this time.

One of the best and most promising officers of the British army, of whom very much more was to be heard, was Lt Colonel Garnet Wolseley, who remarked later that any one coolie was worth more than any three baggage animals. He himself was a man of driving ambition, born near Dublin. At the age of 18, without the money to buy a commission but after his mother appealed directly to the Duke of Wellington, Wolseley was appointed ensign in the army. Nine years later he had served with distinction in four campaigns, including Burma, where he was severely wounded, in the Crimea, where he lost at eye, and in the Indian Mutiny. He had also been mentioned in despatches nine times before rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. He now served as deputy assistant quartermaster-general on the staff of the commanding general, Sir James Hope Grant, under whom he had already served in India and whom he much admired. More importantly, he was in charge of drawing maps of the so far unknown territory through which the army would have to march.

So the expedition was well organised. 'England has never before opened a campaign with such a well organized or more efficient force', as Wolseley also remarked.[20] However, there were some serious problems. Notably, there was no room for so many men, and their equipment, horses and other items, on the tiny island of Hong Kong. The answer to the shortage of land, including training grounds – as well as the need to scotch any possible French designs on Kowloon – was to have Harry Parkes, then consul at Canton, talk to the Chinese viceroy there about acquiring Kowloon for the British. After all, it would be ideal as an exercise and training ground for the assembling force. The upshot was that on 18 March Parkes arranged a lease in perpetuity for a couple of square miles on Kowloon, and secured the British anchorage as well, for 500 taels of silver, or some £160 at the time. Colonel McMahon took a detachment of his 44th Regiment over to take charge. Sidney Herbert thought it was quite an extraordinary business that senior Chinese officials should cheerfully lease a bit of Chinese land to an army that was attacking the emperor of China. 'The Chinese are certainly the most extraordinary people on the face of the earth.'[21]

The commanders of the British and French armies were both cavalrymen. The British command had gone to Lieutenant General Sir James Hope Grant, a tall, thin, weather-beaten Scot with excellent social

connections in England. Among other things, his elder brother was the famous society portraitist Sir Francis Grant, who became the only Scottish President of the Royal Academy, and another brother married Lady Lucy Bruce, Elgin's sister. The general was certainly no intellectual: his reading was virtually confined to the Bible, for he was a sincere Christian. He was also distinctly inarticulate, often could not find the words to say what he wanted, even sometimes saying the wrong thing. His writing was apt to be unintelligible, and he could not read a map or even tell the points of the compass. But book learning is not always the highest attainment. Hope Grant was also pellucidly honourable, personally courageous and an able campaigner, a clever tactician and an extremely able strategist. Not least, he cared for and looked after his soldiers, and many officers loved and respected him. That applied to the Indians as much as to the English and Scots. At one point Elgin noted: 'I am particularly struck by the grin of delight with which the men of a regiment of Sikhs (infantry) who were with him at Lucknow greet him.' When Elgin mentioned it, Hope Grant just said: 'Oh, we were always good friends, I used to visit them when they were sick…Their wives used to come in numbers and walk over the house where Lady Grant and I lived.'[22]

Hope Grant had begun as cornet in the 9th Lancers and served as brigade-major to Major-General Lord Saltoun in the 1842 China campaign – selected, it was said, largely because he and his cello could accompany Saltoun, who loved his violin. He fought in several campaigns in India, becoming especially popular with the Sikhs, with whom he served for three years at Lucknow. He was advanced to the command of his own regiment before becoming a brigadier of cavalry and senior commander in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny. By its end he had been promoted again and in 1859 was appointed, as lieutenant general, to lead the British army in China as well as to the overall command of the Franco–British force. His violoncello went with him. So did his wife. He landed at Hong Kong in mid-March and the steamer *Grenada* brought both Hope Grants on 6 April to Shanghai, where Lady Grant would stay during the forthcoming northern operations.

Grant's French colleague, who had arrived in Shanghai a few weeks before him, on 11 March, was a heavy-set officer of 63, General Charles Cousin- Montauban. Equipped with the obligatory luxuriant moustache, he now arrived accompanied by his chief of staff, Lt Col Schmitz and his artillery commander, Col de Bentzmann. His own military career had begun in July 1814 as a young volunteer in the Life Guards of Napoleon

Bonaparte's successor, the returning Bourbon King Louis XVIII. Then, six months after the battle of Waterloo, he had become a regular second lieutenant in the 3rd Cuirassiers. He spent time at the cavalry school at Saumur, went to the General Staff College and served on the staff of the 1st Mounted Grenadiers Regiment of the royal Life Guards. He went on to serve with considerable distinction in North Africa with the Spahis – the famous North African light horse – especially in the conquest of Algeria in the 1840s; and in 1859 he was nominated to the command of the French expeditionary corps for China. He was clearly destined to go on to higher things.

It was, however, evident from the start that the military as well as the diplomatic leadership of the entire expedition would be in British hands. They knew more about China and also had far superior lins of communication to Europe. Nor could anyone in the French camp equal Harry Parkes and Tom Wade in knowledge about China, the Chinese or the Chinese language. Moreover, the British force was much greater and more potent than that of the French. And, quite apart from numbers of men on the ground, the French quite lacked the logistical capabilities for independent operations, nor did their commanders have the standing and experience of their British colleagues. So it was the British commanding general who became, inevitably, the effective military head of the allied force.

On the Chinese side there was much more confusion. Quite soon after China's 1859 victory at Dagu, Beijing had begun to worry about the likely Anglo–French reaction; and there was even more reason to be concerned than the Chinese fully understood. They had not expected or intended to have a military victory on quite the Dagu scale. They expected some British reaction but were now alarmed by news of fresh British and French military preparations.

In fact, the empire was woefully ill prepared in almost every aspect of military, intelligence or diplomatic preparations. To begin with, there were serious questions about its central administration. The lynchpin of imperial government had always been the emperor's person, whose wish, even whim, was law. But the Xianfeng emperor, who was not yet 30, presided over an empire that was increasingly difficult to govern. Almost from the beginning of his reign he had to cope with the devastating Taiping Rebellion that originated in the South among the Hakka people. This reflected both structural instabilities and the continuing mutual hostilities, between the ruling groups of the Manchus and the mass of Han Chinese,

as well as other minorities. Nor was that the only unrest. Several Muslim rebellions in the south-west part of the country began in 1855, all of them testifying to the internal instabilities of the empire. Xianfeng himself, though intelligent and well schooled in the classics, was not cut out to be the empire's central administrator. He was self-indulgent and not physically strong, and was ailing well before his later retreat from Beijing to his summer palace in the North, in the face of the advancing Anglo–French armies. He was not mentally robust either, as his dithering about decisions shows, not to mention his many uncertainties when faced later with a likely Anglo–French entry to Beijing. Though he had highly intelligent and competent senior officials around him, none could replace an uncertain and indecisive emperor. In addition, his Grand Council was composed of elderly men whose lives had been spent in the closed world of orderly and senior Chinese officialdom and none of whom had any serious experience of Western political or military structures or conduct.

As for military preparedness, the empire had not fought a major campaign, let alone one against a modern enemy, for well over a century. True, it had fought and lost a small campaign against the British in 1840–1842, but that had posed no serious threat to the imperial structure as a whole. In any event, neither the Chinese military nor the imperial government had studied the lessons and deeper implications of that small war in any depth, though improvements in many kinds of weapons were achieved. Indeed, the empire had a strong tendency – which was to be demonstrated again as late as the 1894/95 war with Japan – to handle such conflicts as mere border wars, to be conducted less by any central and combined imperial effort than as an affair to be looked after by provincial officials acting on generalised orders from a distant centre.

True also, though the empire had suffered, and continued to suffer, from the massive and hugely destructive Taiping Rebellion, few thought that it called for massive reforms in the imperial military or diplomatic arrangements. The Taiping armies, for all their destructive power, consisted almost wholly of infantry units of men and women, fired by zeal, harbouring strongly anti-Manchu resentments and fiercely disciplined to obey their commanders, but mostly armed with weapons like bows and arrows, swords, shields and pikes. Only a minority of soldiers were armed with muskets or perhaps some flintlocks. They had no artillery, no cavalry and above all no grand strategy worth mentioning. When, after their initial conquest of Nanjing, they tried major advances, the one towards Shanghai was stopped by tiny cohorts of

Western troops and artillery; and when they did try to advance northwards, towards Beijing, they were pushed back by Prince Sangkolinsin and his brave and skilful Manchu and Mongol horsemen, with whom the Taiping infantry could not cope. For the rest, containment of the Taiping was managed rather more by local imperial gentry commanding their own local militias than by the often feeble imperial infantry formations commanded, more often than not, by Confucian scholars rather than experienced soldiers.

Prince Sang himself was quite frank in pointing out that even some of his special so-called banner forces, and certainly the general army of the Green Standard, were entirely ineffective against the Taiping, and the empire therefore had to rely on regional armies. Such depressing advice did not stop the court from rejecting an allied ultimatum of 8 March 1860. As noted earlier, this demanded a letter of apology for the Dagu affair of the previous year, assurances that the allied envoys would have unrestricted massage to Tianjin and Beijing, and assurances that Beijing was now willing to ratify the 1858 Tianjin Treaty and that China would pay an indemnity to cover the costs of the expedition. Not only did Beijing take on board Prince Sang's advice but, while the allies were sailing north from Shanghai to the gulf, he was repeatedly warned not to provoke armed conflict but to seize any opportunity for negotiation.

Altogether, confronted by an Anglo–French enemy who meant business, the empire was deficient in most categories of defence. To start with, it had no reliable diplomatic or information services either for judging hostile intentions or for influencing foreign decisions. Indeed, no Chinese ambassador was posted anywhere abroad until a decade or so after the war ended. Nor were there many Chinese officials who could speak, let alone write, any European language. That was bound to lead to misunderstandings amid the subtleties of negotiations. The empire was, of course, also handicapped by its own deep-rooted determination not to have formal diplomatic (as distinct from tributary) relations with other states. The fact remained that while channels of information about foreigners were of course available – reports from provinces and ports, merchants, foreign newspapers and so on – throughout the conflict, the French and British, with access to experienced traders and their local information networks, tended to be rather better informed about the Chinese – except for the internal affairs and shadowy machinations of the court – than the Chinese were about them and especially about their home governments and politics.

Nor had China any way of adequately defending its coasts, whether against pirates or against invasion. The empire had not been a significant sea power for five centuries, since the early 1430s. Now, as in the earlier war of 1840–1842, China was not short of courageous officers and sailors. But the junks they commanded were not even a close match for the corvettes and gunboats of the Royal Navy or the French, whether in seaworthiness, manoeuvrability or the effectiveness of their gunnery. The Fatshan Creek affair near Canton had demonstrated that quite early on. (This was an action on 1 June 1957 in which a small group of British gunboats destroyed or dispersed a large squadron of armed Chinese junks.) Essentially, China had no serious coastal defence.

At first glance, that seems to be contradicted by the Chinese victory in defending the entrance to the Haihe the previous year, and the forts at Dagu had certainly been further strengthened in the intervening months. But appearances can be deceptive. To be sure, the forts were well constructed, with powerful artillery and a plentiful supply of mostly courageous infantry to man them, many of whom fought to the death. But Chinese commanders had forgotten what China's great military thinkers, from Sun Tzu onwards, had taught over the previous two and a half millennia: that relying mainly on siege warfare simply deprives one of the initiative. Forts are rarely sufficient if the defender does not also command, or at least can challenge for command, the surrounding area and when he has no reliable and protected lines of communication and supply. None of the forts that the Franco–British expeditionary forces would now engage could deny them freedom of manoeuvre in the surrounding countryside or in their preparations for an assault.

The land forces that China could deploy had similarly decisive deficiencies. China could, and did, deploy huge numbers of men, possibly in the not unjustified belief, shared by Chinese rulers until at least the end of the twentieth century, that masses of men and indifference to casualties would overcome most hostile forces. Many of them, gunners in various forts, Manchu and Mongol cavalry and so on, were brave, often impressively so. But the troops, and especially the Chinese infantry, were wretchedly armed and worse led. Later in the campaign, when one grizzled Indian cavalryman was asked what he thought of the Chinese troops, he said they were like birds: difficult to catch and harmless when caught. The bulk of the Chinese forces had bows, arrows, swords, pikes and shields, even body armour, some muskets but more often matchlocks and gingalls: heavy smooth-bore matchlock muskets from six to fourteen feet long, weighing

up to twenty pounds, fired from a swivel and served by three men. In comparison, the allied infantry usually carried smooth-bore rifles, mostly muzzle loaders but often with percussion firing, and bayonets.

It is also true that Prince Sang commanded large numbers of brave and determined cavalry who should, in theory, have been able to interrupt any allied supply lines and cope with allied infantry on the battlefield. But it turned out that these horsemen were woefully armed and highly vulnerable to allied cavalry, not to mention artillery. Even the cavalry were usually, rather like the infantry, armed with nothing more than bows and arrows, swords and perhaps spears, while the accompanying infantry had some gingalls. While the cavalry was indeed numerous and the Mongols in particular impressively brave, the other horsemen were not always well drilled or enthusiastic, and the tough ponies of the Chinese cavalry were no match in close combat for the few but powerful troop horses of the allies.

The disparities were arguably even greater in artillery, an arm that was to be of special importance in the coming campaign. The many Chinese guns, apart from a few captured ones, were mostly smooth-bore muzzle loaders, not very well made and often not very accurate. They were also relatively immobile. Guns were almost always used in prepared emplacements and behind walls. If troops ranged away from these emplacements, they were out of range and beyond the cover of their guns. Most importantly, therefore, the Chinese had nothing to match the Anglo–French use, especially of field artillery but also of siege guns, rifled artillery and steam gunboats.

Particularly important turned out to be the new British Armstrong gun: a rifled and breech-loading field piece, thought likely to be useful against massed enemy troops. That was in addition to some much larger siege guns and other guns of various calibres. The French had a rather similar, but less modern, gun, the so-called rifled Napoleon gun, which was a converted bronze muzzle loader that had already been proved in battle against the Austrians in Italy.

The French had something else, too: prefabricated metal gunboats originally built for use on Italian lakes. Each had fifteen component pieces. Once everything was bolted together in three watertight compartments sealed with rubber, each proved to be an ugly gunboat, seventy-eight feet long but drawing only five feet of water. It was therefore ideal for working on rivers. It also carried a 60-pounder gun. On the other hand, the artillery train aggravated, for both the British and the

French, the problem of transport. Horses were almost impossible to get in China, and few were available, even in Manila or Japan. For those that could be bought, fodder was a constant problem and mostly had to be imported. In the end, the army had to use horses, bullocks, mules and anything else they could find, with drivers from the Philippines, India and China itself.

Another, and possibly even more important, allied advantage was in drill and discipline in the field. To be sure, discipline in the allied armies broke down several times when it came to rampaging through a town, or looting. Nevertheless, throughout the 1858–1860 campaign, and for all the undoubted courage of some of the Chinese and Manchu formations, there was nothing on the Chinese side that could remotely compare with the taut discipline, on the march or in the field, and especially the manoeuvring capabilities in battle, of the intensively drilled and practised regular British, French and Indian battalions or squadrons, or the élan that came with it. There was little sign of Chinese units moving in disciplined formations or working in drilled deployments. In contrast, the allied commanders had studied war and knew that it was discipline rather than numbers that had won wars from Julius Caesar through Genghis Khan, Cromwell's Ironsides and Frederick the Great to Napoleon's Old Guard. Not for nothing had even George Washington once remarked that 'discipline is the soul of an army'. It was the same story in China now.

That was only one facet of another key disparity: generalship and strategic insight. In the French and British armies every single commander, down to the level of commanding officers of battalions, or even companies or squadrons, had many years of experience and training on campaigns and in fighting. For the French, that had meant fighting in North Africa and the Crimean War, for the British the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny. No Chinese commander, even Prince Sang, could boast of any similar experience. Chinese officers were often brave. But with the exception of their commander in chief, the professional Prince Sang, they were more often than not mandarin figures and Confucian-trained scholars, in a society where military affairs were generally looked down upon by the elites.

That is not to say that the allied army was free of difficulties. For one thing, the British and French forces often had attitudes that were very different about the tactics and strategy of the campaign, as we shall see shortly. For another, there was a constant, if minor, sense of competition and backbiting between the allies, ranging from disputes about which side had been first in planting a flag on the wall of a conquered fort, to

rather more serious differences about the proper strategic objectives of some particular engagement. The British often thought the French much too keen on needless heroics, while French accounts of the campaign are replete with remarks about the British 'coming up late, as usual'. (That was a complaint about British army operations heard quite frequently in nineteenth- and twentieth-century wars, from China in 1860 to France in 1914–1915 to the North African and Arnhem campaigns of World War II.) Indeed, the French, and especially Montauban himself, were all too apt to find themselves offended by some real or imagined slight. On the other hand, there was never any serious question about the overall command of the campaign being in British hands, nor was there at any point the slightest danger that the alliance would break up or that its operations would be seriously disrupted. What both the British and French did have considerable difficulties with was their Chinese coolies. Extraordinarily brave and willing in battle, they were almost uncontrollably villainous in pillage and rape in captured villages and towns, with the Indian and North African troops behaving almost as badly with Chinese civilians when not closely supervised.

In fact, only one weapon remained in Chinese hands and that acquired greater and greater potency as the allied march towards Beijing continued: their political and diplomatic subtlety and skill. As noted earlier, it was a card that could be, and was, played from weakness. It was the Chinese threat that, if the Westerners came to Beijing, the emperor and the entire structure of the empire might be undermined, and the empire could collapse and be left in chaos. As Elgin well understood, there would be no middle way between the existing imperial structure and utter confusion. If so, as no one was likely to forget, who would govern China? With whom could any agreement be made on anything? And what would happen to trade? In the end, that was to prove critically important in trying to achieve China's principal war aim: to prevent the intrusion of Anglo–French troops into China's central metropolitan area and prevent damage to Beijing itself. Moreover, as the events of the next half-century were to demonstrate, the threat was by no means an empty bluff.

In the event, then, the allied move towards the Haihe started with the occupation of Zoushan Island, both to control the entrance to the Yangzi and its population and to serve as a base of operations further north. The allies left some 2500 troops there and made sure to destroy a Chinese pirate base, together with its fleet of ships.

Then, once Elgin and Gros had also reached Shanghai, the question was once again what to do next, and on 16 June the two ambassadors and their military commanders met to decide on their further plans. Since the Chinese had already, back in April, rejected the allied demands, there was clearly no point in restarting negotiations with the Chinese, at least until allied forces were at Tianjin. But how to get there? No one wanted to try another frontal attack on the Dagu forts. It was therefore decided to seize the mouth of the Haihe River with a pincer attack. As it happened, one of Prince Sang's spies, sent on a reconnaissance mission, had reported quite accurately to him that the allies would try to land at Beitang (Pehtang) so as to take the Dagu forts from the rear. The Chinese command tried to react by turning some of the several hundred Dagu guns to cope with the expected new direction of attack.

The allies also understood that, as Chinese friends pointed out, there was usually a good deal of rain at the beginning of August, and it would be impossible to cross the great mud flats around the Dagu forts and the Haihe unless the ground had been dried hard by the sun. So it would be necessary to make a landing before August, with the French – whom the Russians had supplied with some maps of the proposed invasion coast – landing south of the Dagu forts and the British landing at Beitang to their north and east. Either way, the forts could then be outflanked and taken in the rear. For the final preparations, the allies moved north to the Pechili Gulf in mid-May. They tried to seal the entrance and exit from the gulf to the open sea, after which the French set up a forward base at Zhifu (Chefoo) on the Shandong coast, where they had no difficulty buying meat and vegetables from the surrounding villages. The Zhifu harbour was surrounded by mountains enclosing a rich plain and its villages. There was an abundance of crops, even vines grown in the open. On the other hand, the French had difficulties. The long journey from France, and the absence of any base of operations akin to Hong Kong or India, had left them very short of animals, including draught animals for their artillery. So they had to send agents to Japan and Manila to try to buy ponies and mules, not always with great success. Meanwhile, the British, having left a mixed force of some 2500 men behind to protect Hong Kong and another 3000–3500 at Canton, as well as an Indian regiment at Zoushan, made their base across the gulf at Talienwan, close to the Korean coast and to what would soon become Russia's Port Arthur. When they got there, they found that the countryside was neat and cared for, with plenty of fruit,

vegetables and grain, though the cavalry found foraging especially difficult. But the coolies seemed to have no difficulty in finding opium. The officers managed to console themselves with some delicious oysters from the shoreline as well as their own champagne reserves, while the French tried to sort out their transport problems. Those meant, Montauban insisted, that moving forwards could not start before 15 June.

A Note on the Indian Army

Before the 1857 Indian Mutiny,[25] British forces in India were recruited, paid, organised and commanded by the East India Company. After the Mutiny, the company's rule in India was abolished and the government of India transferred to the British Crown. (In 1877 Queen Victoria became Empress of India.) Though the system of three so-called Indian presidencies (Bengal, Madras and Bombay) was at first retained, control of the company's European forces was transferred to the crown, and within the Indian army the number of British soldiers relative to Indians was increased.

Yet ending the mutiny was one thing, restoring the old trust between English and Indians, even within the army, was quite another. During the mutiny itself the great majority of the Bengal sepoy (native soldiers) units, where they had not themselves mutinied, had been forced aside or disarmed. Now it would be a long time before English commanders could once again feel able to trust the Bengalis fully. The whole Indian army was reorganised so that it would need its British elements in order for it to be effective. For instance, control of artillery was kept firmly in British hands, and Indian soldiers were issued guns that were not as good as those issued to British regiments.

A habit also grew up of brigading one British battalion with two Indian ones or, more often, two British with one Indian, and even for British units going on Sunday church parade to bring rifles and bayonets with them, in case fresh trouble should start. In the immediate aftermath of the Indian Mutiny there were, of course, quite a few units available from India. But for the China campaign now, the Bengali brigade serving at Canton was sent home and replaced by the 3rd and 5th Regiments of the Bombay Native Infantry and the 21st from Madras. Even then, on the way to China one Punjab infantry regiment, still sensitive to the possibilities of ritual pollution, objected to having their drinking water served through a leather pipe. So the regiment, instead of being used in the march to Beijing, was sent to Shanghai to help defend it against the Taiping rebels.[26]

The relative numbers of Indian and British troops in all three Indian presidencies after the mutiny speak for themselves. According to the War Office in London, the troop strengths in January/February 1859 were as follows: in Bengal, 58,639 British troops, 48,544 locals and 34,143 Punjabis; in Madras, 15,290 British, 67,141 local and no Punjabis; and in Bombay: 23,161 British, 46,415 local and no Punjabis.[27]

None of that diminished the British liking for, and admiration of, the martial tribes of north-western India and the borderlands of Afghanistan and Persia. Indeed, the Indian regiments chosen for the main drive towards Tianjin and Beijing were, almost without exception, from regions unaffected by the mutiny, especially Sikhs and Punjabis from the North. They included excellent and admirable light cavalry drawn from the north-west, like Probyn's Horse, named after Dighton Probyn, who had won a Victoria Cross fighting with the 2nd Punjab Cavalry during the Indian Mutiny([28]). By 1860 in China, the regiment had become the First Sikh Irregular Cavalry but shortly afterwards became the 11th Regiment of Bengal Cavalry. It went through various other name changes but retained the soubriquet Probyn's Horse into the twentieth century. Or there was Fane's Horse, another regiment of irregular Indian cavalry raised by Lt Fane of the Madras Native Infantry at Cawnpore (now Kanpur) in 1860 specially to fight in China. It had to be newly raised, as caste rules tended to disbar many men from travelling across water and many Hindu castes were anyway not keen on overseas service. The recruits were taken from regiments being disbanded after the mutiny, primarily from the 3rd Skinner's Horse, and the make-up was largely Sikhs, Pathans and Punjabi Muslims. It was later renamed the 19th (King George's Own) Lancers in the Indian army.

Appendix: A Note on the British and French Armies for the March from Pehtang to Beijing (Excluding garrisons left behind, for example in Canton, Hong Kong or Zoushan)

The allied armies deployed to China were a surprisingly polyglot grouping in which the Indians were brigaded with English units.

British army: the commander in chief was Lt General Sir James Hope Grant.

The army had a cavalry brigade commanded by acting Brigadier General Thomas Pattle and comprising a detachment of the 1st Kings Dragoon Guards (KDG), the 1st Sikh Cavalry (Probyn's Horse), Fane's Horse,

and Stirling's battery of artillery. All three cavalry regiments brought their horses with them from India, and in good condition. That was fortunate, given the difficulties in obtaining good horses in China. The 339 heavy troop horses of the KDG were to be particularly valuable in action.

The 1st Division, under Major General Sir John Michel, was organised into two brigades. The 1st Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Charles Staveley, included the 2/1st Foot (the Royal Scots), the 31st (Huntingdonshire) Foot (later the East Surrey Regiment), the largest regiment of the entire British force with 30 officers and 970 other ranks, and the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs.

The 2nd Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Sutton, included the 1/2nd Foot (Queens Royal Regiment), the 2/60th (Kings Royal Rifles), and the 15th Punjab Native Infantry, plus a company of royal engineers and Desborough's battery of artillery.

The 2nd Division, under Major General Sir Robert Napier, was similarly organised.

The 3rd Brigade, under Brigadier General Jephson, was composed of the 1/3rd Foot (the Buffs), the 44th Foot (East Essex Regiment) and the 8th Punjab Native Infantry.

The 4th Brigade, under Brigadier General Reeves, had the 67th (South Hampshire) Foot, the 99th (Wiltshire) Foot and the 19th Punjab Native Infantry.

The French force was under the command of General of Division (i.e. Major General) Charles Cousin-Montauban. His chief of general staff was Lt Col Schmitz.[23]

The force had small detachments of cavalry: some 50 *Chasseurs d'Afrique* and some Spahi cavalry from the 2nd Regiment.[24]

The 1st Infantry Brigade was under the command of Brigadier General Jamin, who also functioned as General Montauban's deputy. The brigade included the second battalion of *chasseurs à pied* (light infantry), comprising eight companies and under the command of Commandant de la Poterie; the 101st Infantry Regiment under Colonel Pouget, comprising two infantry battalions of six companies each; and two companies of engineers.

The 2nd Brigade was under the command of Brigadier General Édouard Collineau, who had joined the army at an early age, fought in Africa and commanded with distinction a regiment of Zouaves in the Crimea. It included the 102nd Infantry Regiment under Colonel O'Malley, also comprising two battalions of six companies apiece, a regiment of two battalions

of marine infantry under Colonel de Vassoigne, and three field batteries and one battery of mountain guns under Colonel de Bentzmann and Lt Colonel Foulon de Grandchamps. There were also some support troops.

In addition, the French were accompanied by a small scientific mission, much as Napoleon had brought a number of explorers and scientists along for his Egyptian campaign in 1789. This mission was headed by Pierre Henri Stanislas Comte d'Escayrac de Lauture, one of France's best known explorers.

CHAPTER 6

Interlude in Shanghai

In the meantime, on 25 May, news had come of a fresh offensive by the Taiping rebels that threatened, among other areas, Shanghai. They had, in fact, just captured Suzhou (Soochow), only some twenty miles from the city, in a move clearly designed to coincide with the Anglo–French drive towards Tianjin. London's Secretary of State for War, Sydney Herbert had been even more perceptive than he knew when he commented that the Chinese were the most remarkable people on earth. For, whatever might happen on the approaches to Beijing, the taotai (intendant) of Shanghai now had no hesitation in appealing to the allies for help. And Hope Grant's field force did indeed detach some infantry and the Ludhiana Sikhs (later augmented by detachments of the English 44th Infantry) to go and help defend Shanghai.

The Western presence there had a long and chequered history. The first Westerners to deal with the city were the Jesuits, in the person of the famous Father Matteo Ricci, in the sixteenth century. Much later, as one of the so-called trading ports mentioned in the treaties that followed the 1840–1842 war, it was opened to trade on 17 November 1843 by the British consul, Captain G. Butler,[1] with the first official American one following a few months later, in February 1854, and the first French one, M. de Montigny, in January 1847. Unlike the arrangements in Canton, the consuls, merchants and missionaries were all housed within Shanghai's walls. The site for a new British consulate was not acquired until November 1845, by the first agreement between the Shanghai taotai and the British about where the foreigners might settle down and acquire property. Then

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came the first land regulations for an enclave on Chinese soil. Two subsequent conventions, in September 1846 and November 1848, were signed by consul Rutherford Alcock. A month later the peculiar international status of Shanghai was settled.[2] A year after that, in April 1849, an area for a French settlement was also determined between the taotai and M. de Montigny. Its area was gradually expanded by a kind of usurpation – partly having to do with the defence of Shanghai against the Taiping rebels – and became known as the French concession.

Soon these settlements began to flourish, not least as a consequence of technical progress, especially in steam communications. In August 1850 mail from London to Shanghai took seventy-eight days, and from New York ninety-five days. By August 1859 it was taking fifty-nine days from London and seventy from New York. In 1850 there were 141 (foreign) male adult civilians in Shanghai, five years later there were 408. According to the French, by 1855 Shanghai had 340 Europeans, 68 merchant firms, 35 missionaries and 8 consulates,[3] though English numbers for that year were 111 English trading firms and 23 American ones. By that time the nature of Western controls in Shanghai had been substantially changed by the establishment, and later expansion, of municipal and land regulations from July 1854. Agreed between the British, American and French consuls on one side and the taotai on the other, they created the basis for the later autonomous government of the Shanghai international settlement and, beyond that, delegated China's sovereign authority over the persons and properties of the foreigners to the consuls, including powers of taxation and policing their own communities.

By 1854 Alcock also suggested that these foreign settlements should run their affairs jointly. The French chose to stand aside, but the British and American ones created what became known as the International Settlement. Much later, following the agreements of the later 1880s, and given the economic importance and commercial dominance of the Yangzi basin, as well as the efficient administration of the Western enclaves, the Shanghai trading centres began to flourish quite dramatically.

But the Taiping Rebellion, begun in 1850 in Guangxi province, soon began to spread northwards to the Yangzi region, an expansion that had culminated in March 1853 in the establishment of the Taiping capital at Nanjing, not too far from Shanghai itself. The military organisation, and especially the morale, of the Taiping army served for a long time to make them seem invincible. Indeed, the organisational pattern of squads of 25, companies of 100, battalions of 400, regiments of 1600

and divisions of 6400 seems remarkably similar to the basic organisation of many modern Western armies. Although the major Taiping thrust towards Beijing and the North was eventually repulsed – not least by Prince Sang's Mongol and Manchu cavalry, which the Taipings could not match – their campaigns further south continued, while attempts by imperial forces to besiege Nanjing, and deal with the Taiping capital and army bases, came to nothing. The Taiping leader, who styled himself Tien Wang, or Prince of Heaven, surrounded himself with devoted followers who, with few exceptions, remained entirely loyal to him in victory and defeat.

After foreigners, like Sir George Bonham, decided that the Taipings were destructive and widely unpopular even in the regions they dominated, they became less interesting to the West. They certainly began to be regarded abroad as undesirable and improbable candidates for the task of governing China. A policy of European neutrality in this Chinese civil war therefore seemed warranted, even though the Chinese governor of Shanghai had suggested, as early as 1853, that the Westerners should lend him a warship for local use. In South and Central China imperial officials, beset by unrest, even started to claim to their people that the English were allies of the emperor and their renowned armies would come to the emperor's aid if necessary. Later, the Western desire for neutrality and the continuation of normal trade was reinforced when, from 1856/1857 onwards, the foreign powers, with Britain in the lead, again found themselves at odds with the imperial government.

In any event, there remained the question of how Shanghai and its foreign settlements could be defended if or when they should be attacked. In early and mid-April 1853 the foreign community held a meeting that was chaired by the English Consul Rutherford Alcock, and attended by the consuls and local naval commanders of the treaty powers: England, America and France. It was decided to adopt a policy, not just of neutrality in the various Chinese domestic disturbances, but of a neutrality that needed to be defended. The Shanghai Volunteer Corps was formed, to be headed by Captain Tronson of the Bengal army. It would, of course, cooperate with the foreign naval forces (at that moment one US frigate, one French steamer and two British sloops).

As it happened, it was not the Taipings themselves from whom the first danger came, but from a rising of the so-called Small Sword society, an offshoot of the local triads, that rose up in early September 1853 and seized the governor, his residence and the city, but without molesting the

foreigners. The Small Swords claimed to be affiliated with the Taipings who, however, disowned them for their 'immoral habits'. The foreigners insisted on their neutrality both to the Small Swords and the imperial authorities, and there was some attempt to prevent sales of arms to either side, which did not really prevent a clandestine European trade in weapons and ammunition to both sides simultaneously.

The imperial forces trying to deal with the Small Swords achieved nothing. But as the months passed, and the imperial army concentrated over 20,000 men near Shanghai and its Small Swords garrison, groups of Chinese soldiers increasingly meandered into the foreign settlement or attacked residents. There was also some danger from cross fire between triads and imperial soldiers. This finally produced action. Requests to local and military authorities to deal with the situation proved futile. So in April 1854 Alcock sent an ultimatum to the imperial commander demanding that his troops be moved to another side of the Chinese city. The Chinese wanted to delay, so a force of some 380 men, composed of 250 English and about 100 Americans, assembled, the English commanded by Captain O'Callaghan, Royal Navy, of the *Encounter*, and the Americans by Captain Kelly of the USS *Plymouth*. As soon as they opened fire on the imperialists they found themselves willy-nilly supported by Small Swords soldiers from the city who came to join the fun. The skirmish made the imperialists move their camp but otherwise achieved nothing, with the rebels remaining in command of the Chinese city.

Next it was the French who took action, in December 1854, with Admiral Laguerre, in consultation with his consul, seeking to dislodge a new artillery battery being raised by the armed Small Swords mob. He set up a battery in his own settlement and began to fire at the rebels in the city. He even sent some 400 French sailors and marines, in some vague coordination with an attack by the imperial soldiers, to assault some Small Swords earthworks. But the Small Swords won. The imperialists fled and the French attackers withdrew with heavy casualties. Some months later, however, it was the imperialists who managed to cut off the rebel-held areas from supplies, and the Small Swords evacuated the city in February 1855, after having occupied it for some seventeen months. Most of them managed to cut their way through the imperialist lines, but some 300 surrendered to the imperial commander and promptly had their heads cut off. In addition, when the imperial troops occupied the city, they decapitated all other real or alleged rebels. There were even reports of soldiers opening up coffins and decapitating the dead.[4]

By now, imports into Shanghai had obviously suffered badly – except for a sharp increase in the import of opium. On the other hand, exports increased considerably, both in tea and in silks, since the Yangzi region disturbances meant that the silk producers of Suzhou and Hangzhou (Hangchow) had to seek foreign even more than domestic markets. But once imperial authority broke down in Shanghai itself, the taotai lost the machinery for collecting customs dues, which were a significant part of total imperial revenues. The British and American consuls worried about allowing the Chinese imperial government to be so casually deprived of its proper income, so they agreed to have their traders give guarantees – promissory notes – to their own consuls for the customs payment normally due. The notes were cashed in 1855, once things had settled down. The French and others did not join this scheme.

Given these difficulties, there were pressures to treat Shanghai just as a free port. But Alcock devised a scheme, after consultations with the Chinese governor, to place Chinese customs themselves under foreign supervision. A tripartite foreign directorate was set up with members of the British, American and French consular staffs to look after things. A new customs house was set up in July 1854, served by foreign customs inspectors. It was the start of the hugely important Imperial Maritime Customs Service, later extended throughout China with critical benefits for the imperial exchequer. From 1863 its inspector-general was the very able Irishman Robert (later Sir Robert) Hart, who became the trusted servant of the imperial house until its collapse in 1908.

Though the Taiping Rebellion continued to simmer, there were no other serious threats to Shanghai until 1860, when a fresh Taiping threat to the Yangzi estuary erupted. There were various reasons for the new Taiping advance, but the major one was probably the sheer difficulty of bringing supplies into their capital at Nanjing and the attractions of the hitherto unravaged Yangzi delta region. But the drive specifically towards Shanghai may also have been timed to coincide with the new allied campaign in North China, which was certain to weaken the empire and its forces. The imperial authorities tried once more, and ruthlessly, to suppress any sign of rebellion in the threatened towns. In Shanghai a number of rebels, captured in arms, were decapitated and their heads, dangling from their long queues, were hung from the fortification walls. In one week another forty-odd had their heads displayed on the bridges.[5] But on 19 March the Taiping forces occupied Hangzhou, and though they withdrew after barely a week, they left behind them many thousands of dead,

not just of the Manchu garrison – the Taipings regularly slaughtered all the Manchus they could lay their hands on – but of the civilian population. By 2 June the Taipings had moved forward – often beheading peasants on the way just to discourage any resistance – and taken Suzhou. When Elgin and Gros arrived at Shanghai, they were told that the imperial troops defending Suzhou, after offering slight resistance, had joined the rebels in attacking the city and slaughtering the inhabitants. Indeed, in many places imperial troops who had been raised in the provinces made common cause with the plundering rebels.

On 23 May the taotai of Shanghai, now Wu Hsü, made an official request to the British and French to help undertake the defence of Shanghai. The request was referred to the two envoys who, knowing about the slaughter that had happened at Hangzhou, issued a proclamation to say they would protect the Chinese city and the foreign settlements against attack.[6] In fact, the French also posted a force to protect the Roman Catholic cathedral. Numbers of Chinese Catholic converts sought refuge there for themselves and many of their valuables. That, in turn, obviously created the danger of plunder by any group that might pretend the cathedral was being attacked by the Taipings. General Montauban had wanted to go further and send 1500 men to protect Suzhou and its Christians, provided only that the British would contribute by sending 400 men of their own. Perhaps he was partly moved by the thought that the rebels seemed to be more or less Protestant and should therefore be discouraged. However, even then the British insisted on confining themselves to defensive actions and would have nothing to do with active campaigning against the Taipings. The local rebel commander, the Chung Wang ('Loyal Prince'), naturally encouraged that approach, assuring the Europeans that, although he was about to attack Shanghai himself, the foreign settlements would not be touched if they remained neutral.

That was hardly reassuring to the locals. So the foreign volunteer corps, which had fallen into decay, was reorganised, and a mixed force, later to be known as the Ever-Victorious Army, was organised by an American freebooter, Frederick T. Ward.

By 25 May word of a new Taiping offensive reached Shanghai. It had evidently been timed to coincide with the Anglo–French move to the North. Shanghai's fears increased sharply with the fall of Suzhou on 24 May, a mere twenty miles from Shanghai itself. In early June, after the rebels had captured it with the usual massive bloodshed, the local imperial viceroy came to Shanghai to confer with Frederick Bruce. He wanted to

try to settle the general Sino–allied differences that had led to the allied China campaign in the first place, but also to persuade the allies to use their forces to pacify the entire region, with its general commercial importance. However, the French now agreed with Bruce that, while Shanghai should be defended if there was a Taiping attack – a four and a half mile radius around the city would be protected, although Suzhou housed some 13,000 Chinese Roman Catholics – beyond that the allies should stick to policies of neutrality in domestic Chinese quarrels. But to make protection work, Shanghai repaired its brick walls, ditches around the city were deepened and Royal Marines posted to command the approaches to the Chinese city and, especially, the foreign settlements, while the French held the most exposed city gate. Guns were mounted so as to be able to fire grapeshot down city streets in case parts of the population should rise in support of the Tapings. Baskets were hung from the battlements containing the chopped-off heads of prisoners.

A couple of months later the Taipings advanced further from Suzhou, and Shanghai's defenders could see the smoke and flames of burning villages in the west. Then the Taipings took the Jesuit college and church at a spot called Zicawei (Sicawei) and made it their local headquarters. From there they attacked a Manchu fort and moved forwards towards the west gate of Shanghai itself. Not unnaturally, thousands of Chinese sought refuge in the foreign settlements, whose Chinese population may have increased to as much as 300,000. Not only that, but real estate prices soared: land originally bought for £46–74 per acre was now sold for £8,000–12,000 per acre.

The imperial troops fled at first contact. The Taipings advanced through the suburbs and closer to the city proper, managing in the process to burn down the French quarter. As their advance continued, they found to their surprise British and French flags flying on the city walls, which were manned not only by some volunteers but by detachments of allied troops, the British under Captain Budd of the Royal Marines and the French under Captain Faure. There was also support from the guns of allied warships on the Yangzi estuary. Rifle fire from the French, British and Indian soldiers of the garrison, together with some canister discharges, kept Taiping heads down. At the same time, observation towers inside the city itself kept a sharp eye on any possible Taiping sympathisers in the streets.

The attackers were eventually driven back by the combination of guns from the city walls and the allied gunboats. The defenders followed up by sending parties out at night to set fire to some of the suburbs in which the

attackers sheltered while they were engaging in pillage and massacre. After that, the Taiping army withdrew back towards Zicawei, leaving behind many dead, including the bodies of a number of foreign volunteers, mostly American and British, who had come to fight with the rebels.[7]

By September, irrespective of events in the North and the progress of Hope Grant's army, which by then had almost fought its way to Beijing, the Chinese authorities once again appealed for the help of allied forces in the Yangzi basin.

It was an extraordinary situation and a remarkable story. Here were two European allies actively preparing and conducting a military campaign in North China and an advance on the emperor's capital. At the same time, those allies were engaging themselves in defence of that very ruler's major city against domestic rebellion, and even safeguarding his income from foreign trade. They went further. Once the allied military expedition had taken the forts at the entrance to the Haihe River, and was on its way to Tianjin – as discussed later – General Hope Grant detached Brigadier Jephson of the 2nd Division, with the 44th (East Essex) Regiment, plus some French mountain guns and two companies of French infantry, and sent them down the coast to reinforce Shanghai's defences. By the time they arrived, the Taiping attack on the city had been repelled, but the soldiers stayed on.

Not only that, but England sent out a large granite cross in memory of the British who had lost their lives as captives in Chinese prisons during the 1859/1860 campaign.[8] There were difficulties with putting the cross up in Beijing, so it was erected in Shanghai, originally in front of the British consulate.

Of course, Shanghai was defended by a much greater variety of groups than the Anglo–French soldiery or even armed Shanghai citizens. In the confused state of affairs in that part of China, there was certainly a place for freebooters and mercenaries of every sort.

Probably the most famous of them was the mixed force commanded by the adventurous Frederick Townsend Ward. Born in 1831 in Salem, Massachusetts, he had become a mercenary in Mexico by the age of twenty-two. A year later, in 1854, he enlisted in the French army for the Crimean War but had to resign a year later for insubordination. He arrived in Shanghai on an armed river steamer, designed and equipped for suppressing pirates. This was at the very time when the Taiping buildup near the city was gathering pace. His courageous service on that steamer was noticed, and he was employed to create and lead a force of foreign mer-

cenaries to defend the city. Ward scoured the harbour sides and wharves of Shanghai for every Westerner who could shoot, drunk or sober. It was the birth of the Shanghai Foreign Arms Corps. By June 1860 he had a hundred men under arms, trained to use handguns. They were defeated when trying to assault a Taiping-occupied city but went on campaigning, sometimes with very heavy losses, and finally retreated to Shanghai to recruit more soldiers and get some artillery. But when the Taipings sent some 20,000 troops towards Shanghai, the tiny Foreign Arms Corps was defeated again, and Ward was badly injured.

This was far from the end of Ward's role in Shanghai.

He recovered enough to work with Chinese troops and to gather the remnants of the Foreign Arms Corps, training them to follow verbal commands and giving them Western-style uniforms, not to mention better rations. By January 1862 he had some 1000 Chinese soldiers trained and ready and used them successfully as a kind of hit-and-run column against the Taipings. By this time some 30,000 Taipings, with 200 foreigners in their ranks, began to advance from Woosung towards Shanghai. They came close to the British consulate but withdrew when they found they were opposed by Ward's volunteers and a battalion of Indian troops. In February a combined force of British and French sailors, led by Admiral Hope, together with 700 of Ward's men, attacked the Taipings. By March 1862 Ward had been so successful that his force was officially named the Ever Victorious Army, while Ward himself was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in the Chinese army and made a third-rank mandarin.

He continued to be highly successful, both on land and on water, and by September 1862 his Ever Victorious Army numbered some 5000 men. But late that September, in an attack on a Taiping-held town, coordinated with some British and French troops, Ward was severely wounded and died the next day.

Soon afterwards the remnants of the Ever Victorious Army came under the command of an even more colourful foreigner, a British officer named Charles Gordon. A passionate Christian fundamentalist, he had piercing blue eyes and total self-assurance and became a legend of perfection to many. The enthusiasm of British merchants made him a hero back home and gave him the nickname 'Chinese' Gordon. Years later, General Gordon would go on to suffer a legendary martyr's death at Khartoum in the Sudan.

In the meantime, in March 1864, Harry Parkes, who had returned from North China, played a role in dealing with problems at Shanghai. In

particular, Parkes had a plan for dealing with the Chinese population on the settlement (of Shanghai) with foreigners who were unrepresented by consuls and were apt to form a rowdy class. For the former he called in the judicial authority of the Chinese officials, while for the latter he established a court

> for the trial of foreigners who have no consuls and who have hitherto been allowed to commit iniquity with impunity in consequence. I insist upon the Chinese authorities proceeding against these men, who are of course amenable to Chinese law as they belong to nations who have not made treaties with China; but as Chinese procedure is conducted in a manner repugnant to foreign ideas. I guard against this by requiring the mandarins to sit with consular officers as assessors. The mandarins decide and pass sentence, but if the assessors consider that the sentence is unjust or too severe, they protest and the sentence is not carried out until the case is referred to Peking…[8]

Two years after Ward's death the Taiping capital, Nanjing, finally fell to imperial forces, who had in the meantime been re-equipped with Western weapons they had bought. No quarter was asked or given, and 100,000 Taipings chose death rather than surrender. One of the greatest of the imperialist leaders, the Hunanese official Zeng Guofan, wrote in amazement to the emperor: 'Not one of the 100,000 rebels in Nanjing surrendered themselves when the city was taken but in many cases gathered together and burned themselves and passed away without repentance. Such a formidable band of rebels has been rarely known from ancient times to the present.'[9] What the Taipings did leave behind, though, were romantic and heroic legends about a movement inspired by egalitarian dreams.

CHAPTER 7

Dagu and Tianjin Again

While the British and French were making preparations, the Russian and American emissaries also found their way to the gulf and the Haihe and, in the case of the Russians, Beijing. Both were under instructions from their governments to keep a watch on what the allies were up to but to remain neutral in the war. Naturally, that did not prevent them from giving moral or diplomatic support. The American was now Reed's successor, John E. Ward, from Georgia. He had been mayor of Savannah and speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives before being appointed US minister to China. However, once the American Civil War began, his portrait would begin to appear on the Confederate $10 bills. The Russians also sent a new man, Count Nikolai Pavlovich Ignatiev, a shrewd and amiable fellow who, after service in the Russian Guards, had begun a career as a professional diplomat by serving as military attaché in London. He had also led a notable mission to Central Asia.

Ignatiev was perhaps the most interesting – and probably, once again, the most skilled and subtle – of the four Western ambassadors and ministers. Ever since his arrival at Beijing in June 1859 he had tried to get the Chinese to revive and confirm the border rectification clauses of the Treaty of Aigun, under which the Russians had acquired not only the north bank of the Amur River but also the entire territory between the Ussuri River and the sea. He now found himself meeting strong Chinese resistance. So, starting early in 1860, he began to hint gently that in some circumstances the Russians might join the forthcoming Anglo–French war in China. However, if the Chinese met Russian demands, he and his master

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would persuade the British and French not to send their military expedition north towards Bejing at all. Throughout the Anglo–French campaign he continued to press the Chinese and, in the end, secured for his country and his czar much the most important gains from the entire China War by playing the allies off against the Chinese. He was accompanied to Beijing by the commander of the Russian Pacific naval squadron, Admiral Likhachev.

Ignatiev also gave the allies his own account of political opinion in Beijing. In the minds of the Chinese upper classes, England was associated with all the problems and disturbances that had afflicted the empire for many years, especially since the end of the 1842 war and the indemnity then imposed. The ordinary people, on the other hand, felt much more friendly towards the allies, for instance because of Elgin's refusal to interrupt the grain shipments on which the people of the capital depended.

In any event, the British and French did formally declare war on China on 26 June 1860, and shortly afterwards, on 6 July, Elgin and Gros came up to join the allied army. The British force assembled at Dalian (Talienwan) Bay, on the northern side of the gulf, while the French camped at Yantai (Chefoo), on the southern side; three days later Elgin visited his own army, being welcomed by Hope Grant, to whom he was, of course, anyway related by marriage. He found the troops in excellent shape, well supplied by locals with all kinds of fruits and vegetables, not to mention sheep, goats and bullocks. In mid-July, however, when the allies received some helpful maps and advice from Ignatiev about landing sites and terrain, there was a further hold-up. French reconnaissance discovered that the strip of coast on which they had planned to land, south of the Dagu entrance and from which they would attack its forts, was so waterlogged that troops would have to wade through as much as two miles of mud to reach solid ground. Not only that, but it would be most risky for the French, without cavalry of their own, to attempt such a march, because they might find themselves surrounded by Prince Sang's Mongol horsemen. At a last-minute conference, it was agreed that they would land instead at Beitang, like the British. On 26 July the British force left Dalian, and on the 31st the fleet carrying the entire force and its supplies sailed the 180 miles or so to stand in three lines across the small bay leading to Beitang. It looked, said someone, like a town afloat.

The allies found the entrance of the Beitang River guarded by a strong fort and some earthworks. But the orders for disembarkation were punctilious and detailed,[1] and on 1 August 1860 the allies landed about 2000 yards

south of the fort, each ally with a column of some 1000 men. Most of these men were brought ashore by ships' boats, towed by gunboats, with everyone then heading into the sea of mud surrounding Beitang. There was no opposition of any kind. The French came ashore with around 750 soldiers of the 2nd Chasseurs and some 250 of the 101st Infantry Regiment,[2] every man with six days' rations, including, naturally, a portion of wine or spirits. Montauban himself was the first man ashore, or rather into knee-high water that immediately filled his boots.

The British landing led with the 1st Division, followed by the cavalry brigade. (The fact that all three British cavalry regiments had brought their own horses from India, especially the 339 heavy troop horses of the KDG,[3] was to be of considerable importance on the battlefield.) The first ashore was Brigadier General Sutton's brigade, but many of the men were seasick and every man was carrying, or supposed to be carrying, three days' rations and fifty-six rounds of ammunition.

The outcome was hilarious. Sutton and his men had to wade through mud – over half a kilometre of it. That made nonsense of their orders, which would have had every man heavily laden with his gear. So the small, bandy-legged Brigadier General Sutton, at the head of his brigade, simply ignored orders and waded through the mud having 'taken off his trousers, boots and socks, and slung them over his brass scabbarded sword, which he carried over one shoulder. Picture a somewhat fierce and ugly bandy-legged little man thus accoutred in a big white helmet, clothed in a dirty jacket of red serge, below which a very short slate-coloured flannel shirt extended a few inches, cursing and swearing loudly…at everybody and everything…'.[4] His troops naturally followed his example. Hope Grant himself, like a good commander, did the same. He 'took off my boots and stockings, tucked up my trousers, and pushed forward at the head of my men towards a raised causeway…'[5] Later, after the troops had busied themselves building piers and jetties, the sailors 'landed the horses of the cavalry, brought in by gunboat, with whips and slings on their little fore-yards. A horse fully accoutred was hoisted up, swung over the jetty, and dropped ashore on its legs before it knew what was being done to it'.

The first task was to secure the causeway that led inland from Beitang, which turned out to have no defences. The allies' opponent, still the experienced Prince Sang, had made no move to oppose the landing. No Chinese troops, apart from one or two small cavalry patrols, were in sight, and there was no attempt to interfere during the inevitably vulnerable process of disembarkation. Given the relative absence of evidence, it is

not easy to analyse Sang's strategic plan. In his correspondence with the emperor, he was predictably optimistic and confident. But beyond promising victory, his plans are not clear. It seems most likely, though, that since he had seen at first hand the power of British and French naval gunnery, he wanted to draw the allies inland, beyond the reach of those terrible guns, and then use his sizeable superiority in cavalry, and especially his crack Mongol and Manchu horsemen, to encircle and destroy the enemy ground forces.

In any event, even the Beitang fort, which should have been in the French sector but was at first yielded to the British to accommodate their cavalry,[6] was empty, except for some flags and imitation cannon made of wood, and except for some buried mines – perhaps a kind of early version of modern improvised explosive devices – meant to catch the invading troops, until an elderly local pointed out where they were and the British sappers cleared them. They turned out to be large shells filled with gunpowder, ten of them in each of two mines. Empty or not, the first French colonel to enter the fort concocted a tricolour from a red and blue belt to which he fastened a white handkerchief – which earned him a mention in despatches. The only serious snag from the French point of view was that, since the ships had not yet been fully unloaded, the troops ashore found themselves without food and, worse still, without as much as a single bottle of wine, while having to get up again at 3 a.m. Not that the British cavalry, in this case Probyn's Sikh troops, had much joy from the place. For all their efforts, their fine Arab horses found themselves picketed hoof-deep in slush. In the end, the Union Jack was set to fly from the fort's left "cavalier" (i.e. a raised bastion) and the tricolour from the right-hand one, each cavalier with embrasures for three guns. The fort's parapet turned out to be some sixteen feet high and eleven feet thick.

The allies found that Beitang was indeed a miserable place. It was densely populated but a sordid, muddy mess, full of dirt and filth of every kind, including the carcasses of cats and dogs. Its inhabitants claimed to have suffered a good deal from the Tartar soldiers who, someone kindly told Harry Parkes, stink 'even more than you English do'. Its surroundings were worse. The land was poor: hard, dry and unfruitful, though the rain that poured down within a day or two turned the ground into ankle-deep mud. Most of the houses were mud hovels, though even they were better than sitting outside in the downpour.

Things went from bad to worse as the allies found it necessary to lodge the men of both armies in the town by simply expelling the Chinese inhab-

itants. Yet 'the occupation of this town was fraught with the most fearful risks it has ever fallen to my lot to encounter', wrote Hope Grant.[7] When full, it was crowded with 11,000 English and Indian and 6,700 French, plus some 4,000 horses, mules and ponies, all in houses along narrow lanes. The houses were mostly thatched with 'fires burning, dinners cooking and men smoking'. If a single spark had reached the thatch, 'Probably almost all our fine horses and ponies would have been destroyed', and many of the men would not have escaped the narrow lanes.[8] Things became almost worse when the rains came and the streets 'became almost impassable from the mud, filth and dead animals', and with that, the danger of disease.

In any event, once they were in Beitang, the troops, and especially the coolies, went wild. Hope Grant himself recorded that '…the Chinese coolies….were for the most part atrocious villains…in the first instance, when they could be comparatively but little controlled, the robberies and crimes they committed in town were fearful…'.[9] There was wholesale rape and looting. There were pitiful tales of local men fleeing and whole families committing suicide including, according to Parkes, some forty to fifty local women who killed themselves to escape being raped. Hope Grant recorded that 'some French soldiers were removing a box out of a house to increase the available space when on opening it, there were discovered the bodies of two young girls of about fourteen and fifteen years old, who, there was reason to suppose, had been strangled by their relations…'.[10] Some women drowned themselves in water butts or took opium, others just cut their own throats to escape the ravages. The death toll included the two daughters of the old man who had been so helpful in pointing out the buried mines. There were large-scale lootings, too, despite efforts of the newly appointed provost marshal, Captain Con of the 3rd Buffs. According to Swinhoe 'the very provost-sergeants whose duty it was to suppress looting were greater plunderers than most others'. The worst, once again, were the Hong Kong coolies who, as even Hope Grant had to admit, were indeed 'for the most part, atrocious villains'. They also made a point of stealing all the opium they could lay their hands on. (The allies quickly found that trying to control their coolies' opium consumption was a lost cause. So much for the earlier imperial prohibitions.) The Punjabi sepoys were only slightly less bad. One of the more notable buildings in the village was the local pawnshop, where the 15th Punjabis were quartered and where they had good pickings among the silks and fur coats. A number of local women tried to avoid rape by seeking refuge from the pursuing Indians in the French camp. The soldiers even had to

shoot to protect them, wounding one Indian in the process. And when it came to looting – also for food – the French soldiers joined in lustily. In the early stages, the British may have been somewhat more restrained by their officers and anyway had their hands full building roads and wharves and landing stores. But the French also remarked, like Swinhoe, that the English military police were even worse than the soldiers. It took some days, during steady rain, to restore order in the combined army, and the allies, especially at regimental levels, continued to be critical and suspicious of each other.

Meanwhile, Montauban, quite apart from problems of army discipline, found that his people were hampered, especially by a shortage of food that produced a hunt for every Beitang resource, not just pigs but even dogs and cats, to make stews and soups. So Montauban insisted that he could do no more until his stores were unloaded. It was a process that took a number of days because there was no jetty, they could find few boats and the French had too few horses and mules. Altogether, the French were wholly dependent on the British for supply and transport almost throughout the campaign, not to mention for keeping the roads clear and, in most cases, leaving garrisons at intermediate stops. As it was, the steady rain turned roads into still deeper mud and, in the cramped conditions of Beitang, allied soldiers simply requisitioned local houses, leaving the unhappy inhabitants to fend for themselves. Locals, even ones who had tried to be helpful, had to suffer endless brutalities to themselves, their families and their possessions. Loch writes of one old man who had kindly given him, and others, some tea, that 'he too fell a victim, like many others, his kindness and confidence in our protection having proved of no avail'.[11] He added that, once more, the people whom the local Chinese most dreaded were the Canton coolies.

After the landings, the next allied move would have to be a march of some seven or eight miles to the Haihe River itself, so that the major Dagu forts could be taken from the flank and rear. The first stop would be the village of Xinhe (Sinho), very close to the shore of the Haihe River. The trouble was that much of the ground between Beitang and Xinhe was once again swampy, and the single elevated and paved stone causeway could easily be barred. On 3 August the army sent a reconnaissance party in force along it. The column was headed by 1000 French, supported by a party of engineers and two 3-pounder mountain guns, and commanded by another of those experienced French colonial officers, the colourful and flamboyantly courageous Brigadier General

Édouard Collineau. He was very much a soldier's soldier, having left France at the age of twenty-one, gone to Algeria and joined the Foreign Legion as a private. He had fought in North Africa and Italy and in the early 1850s had become commanding officer of the 1st Zouaves in the Crimean War. He led them in one of the key actions of the campaign, the storming of the Russian Fort Malakoff in September 1855. The Zouaves were, of course, among France's most famous troops. By 1860 they were entirely European, though they still wore the colourful uniforms and baggy trousers of the original Zouaoua, the tough North African hill fighters who had first become French army auxiliaries. US Army Captain George McClellan, destined to be commander in chief of the Union army in the early part of the US Civil War, observed them in 1855 and wrote that they were 'the finest light infantry that Europe can produce…'. Now Collineau was serving as brigadier general in China. The French were followed by 1000 British troops, drawn mainly from the 2nd and 60th Regiments and including some of the 15th Punjabis. They were once again commanded by Brigadier General Sutton.

The allies found that on each side of the causeway there was swampy land made even more difficult by continual rain and made virtually impassable for artillery. It was all rather depressing. After marching for some kilometres through the night, they found themselves at dawn facing a wall and Chinese redoubts built across the roadway with Prince Sang's troops, guns and cavalry behind them. Chinese gingalls began to cause allied casualties with their capability to fire two-pound balls at some 1,000 yards, and soon the Chinese and Tartar horsemen started to move around the flanks of the allied troops in a clear attempt to encircle their enemies. The allied commanders, without cavalry of their own, decided not to risk a frontal attack on the redoubts that might needlessly hand a victory to the Chinese. It would be better to retire, even though the Chinese horsemen were poorly armed, with spears and bows, as well as gingalls. The Chinese, perhaps inevitably, took the allied withdrawal as a token of a significant Chinese victory, which was to influence subsequent Chinese tactics.

While all this was going on, there was yet another incident to suggest that this was a most unusual kind of war. The allies found that Beitang was seriously short of clean and fresh water for the army, so Admiral Hope sent a gunboat up the Beitang River, on the allies' right flank, to get some. But the gunboat and some patrols found themselves harassed by small parties of Tartars. Admiral Hope sent his interpreter to explain to the Tartar commanding officer that they only wanted some water. The interpreter also

explained that if they did not shoot at the allies, the allies would not shoot at them, and he handed over some small white flags of truce, with Chinese characters on them, and explained their use. There was no more trouble.[12]

A few days after the Chinese had stopped the allies at their redoubt, Hengfu, the governor of Zhihli province, wrote to Elgin and Gros to point out that he had heard of the arrival of the ambassadors to exchange ratifications and that they had already given signs of amicable intentions. He entirely reciprocated these, since it was obviously 'ridiculous to suppose that any necessity for hostilities existed'. He, Hengfu, was commissioned to discuss any points at issue with the ambassadors and to settle them.[13] In any case, since they could have no hope of prevailing over the 'innumerable' troops of the empire, discussions were needed. It was one of many – even daily – missives of that kind. But the allies were well aware that the Chinese were likely to try to gain time, since within a few weeks the weather would prevent the allied army from trying to advance to Beijing. They therefore had already agreed between themselves not to enter into negotiations until they had reached Tianjin, so Elgin refused those discussions with the Chinese. In any case, the route of advance had yet to be reconnoitered. On 9 August, Hope Grant sent out a reconnaissance party of cavalry, including a hundred from the King's Dragoon Guards (KDG) and another hundred from Probyn's Horse, the whole under Lt Col Wolseley of the quartermaster general's staff. To his and the army's great relief, he discovered that by veering north of the Beitang–Xinhe causeway, he could find a passage of more or less hard ground, even with pools of clear water for men and horses, all quite suitable for infantry, cavalry and even artillery. Intriguingly, they also discovered a burial ground in which, given the waterlogged state of the ground, coffins had been placed on covered mounds above ground level. At a distance, it looked like a tented encampment.

Three days later the army was ready to move away from the stinks of Beitang. Although Montauban had wanted more time, Grant forced matters by threatening to move on 12 August whether or not the French came along. Thus, on that day the advance resumed. Allied tactics were not complicated. Reconnaissance had shown that Xinhe was connected to the next fortified village, Tanggu (Tangku), by another causeway, some thirty feet at its base and eight feet above the surrounding land, which would only become passable for artillery once its mud and salt marshes and small canals had been suitably bridged. In the meantime, a large portion of the Chinese army – possibly 20,000 men – was apparently con-

centrated around Xinhe, a large component being Mongol cavalry. It was for them that the causeway from Beitang to Xinhe had been blocked by a succession of earthworks and entrenchments.

So, while the English 99th Regiment was left to safeguard Beitang, Grant and Montauban agreed to take turns on leading the advance, and for the moment it was the turn of the British. So the 1st British Division and the French marched along the causeway to tackle the entrenched Chinese camp head on. Meanwhile, Napier's two brigades of infantry, together with the cavalry brigade of the KGB and Probyn's and Fane's Irregulars, and with some of Milward's new battery of Armstrong guns and Sterling's battery of six-pounders, moved off an hour before the rest. They marched on a northerly sweep, avoiding some of the swampy area and going over the passage that Wolseley had discovered, so as to outflank the Chinese causeway barrier. Even then, guns had to be dragged through mud up to their axles.[14] Some of the Punjabis, especially, found the deep mud such a nuisance that – perhaps in imitation of Brigadier Sutton – they threw away their boots, rolled up their trousers and once again trudged along barefoot. It took them two hours to cross the first two miles of mud, but once they got through, they found themselves confronted by some 3000 to 4000 Tartar cavalry that tried to surround the allied column. But their attempts to charge the allies were disrupted by gunfire – especially from the Armstrongs, whose range and accuracy, reported General Napier, 'excited the admiration of the force'.[15] Both Napier and Hope Grant conceded that these Tartars 'bore unflinchingly for a considerable time such fire as would have tried any troops in the world'.[16] Wolseley, too, judged the Tartars to be admirably brave, even though they were deployed as an 'ill-armed mob'. But, he added, 'under better rulers [they] would make excellent troops',[17] and that in spite of the fact that they were armed almost solely with bows and spears. As a matter of fact, the Tartars did no better when, in the end, they did tangle with the allied cavalry who – especially the Sikh irregulars – inflicted, according to Hope Grant, several dozen casualties on them.

Of course, the allies could see, but surely not judge, the causes of one of the major weaknesses of the Chinese cavalry. When the Tartar cavalry were first summoned from their stations in and around Beijing, it was found that they had scarcely any horses, since their commander had stolen the funds originally meant to buy animals for them. Instead, commanders had found that they could weather periodic inspections more cheaply by borrowing or hiring horses when the time came for a parade. Such

cavalry mounts had naturally to be bought, or requisitioned, wherever they could be found. When the allies first landed at Beitang, a fresh review was suddenly ordered and the cavalry commander once more paraded his men, in their fur-edged caps, on borrowed animals. But a whisper of these proceedings must have reached Prince Sang, who took the opportunity to order his cavalry, immediately after the parade, to move by forced marches to the sea-coast defences. Unsurprisingly, the cavalry that eventually rode against the allies had many poor, wretchedly trained horses and ponies. Not only that, but many of the shaggy Tartar ponies were uncommonly thin and half-starved. Now, brave or not, the riders were compelled to retire, not only by the guns but by charges of the much better equipped British, Indian and French cavalry. It was a defeat for Prince Sang's first line of defence.

On the causeway itself, Sir John Michel's 1st Division led the way. The British moved forward, still on the causeway proper, with some Armstrong 25-pounder guns in the van, but protected from the enemy cavalry by detachments of the Buffs regiment. Much was expected of these guns, and several observers – especially Tom Bowlby of *The Times* – continued to be much impressed when they saw them in action; though several senior officers were much more dubious about them.[18] They were followed by General Jamin's brigade of 1000 French (Collineau had stayed behind at Beitang) and they, together with Michel's second brigade, confronted the prepared Chinese positions. After half an hour's exchanges, it turned out that the Chinese walls and emplacements were much too flimsy to withstand the allied artillery fire, while the Chinese cavalry were not able to withstand the fire of the Armstrong guns either. So the Chinese troops evacuated their position. They retreated to the armed encampment and village of Tanggu, on the banks of the Haihe River and on the road to the Dagu forts, leaving the small town of Xinhe itself undefended.

Montauban and Collineau, not content with the 'trifling affair' of the morning, wanted to continue the advance on Tanggu immediately, but Hope Grant demurred on the grounds that the terrain was too difficult, especially for artillery. In the end, Montauban and the French, supported by some of the 60th Rifles and 15th Punjabis, did try to advance along the three miles of causeway towards Tanggu but had to give up and return to Xinhe, which meant that the French had lost a chance to score an independent victory. To prevent much drunkenness in Xinhe, the two generals sent small parties under non-commissioned officers to destroy all existing stocks of rice-wine as well as to collect grain. Xinhe itself, it turned out,

was as delightful as Beitang had been miserable, even though many of the houses had been broken into.

On the day after their arrival, the British discovered a much better approach from Xinhe to Tanggu, one that would let troops and even guns move close to the banks of the Haihe river instead of via the existing three-mile-long Xinhe–Tanggu causeway. A day later again, on the 14th, the British and French were indeed able to deploy before Tanggu itself, with its long semicircular wall. The attacking force was stationed with the British First Division on the right and the French on the left, attacking straight up the existing causeway. At the same time, the allies had, on the night before the attack, dug trenches to within 700 yards of the Chinese wall, so as to give cover to allied riflemen and sharpshooters who were keeping down the heads of the Chinese defenders. The allied artillery was in front of the line, six batteries in front of the English and eighteen guns in front of the French. These guns also silenced some Chinese guns firing from the further distant southern bank of the river, after which Admiral Hope's Flag Captain, Captain Willes, crossed the Haihe River with some men to spike those guns. As for the Tanggu defences themselves, here, too, artillery fire from the allied guns knocked the Chinese walls and entrenchments to pieces. Some companies of the English 1st Royals and the 60th Rifles then managed to force their way in, with the French under Colonel Schmitz scaling the walls at about the same time. The Chinese abandoned their works and fled, except for some of the gunners, apparently belonging to the general from Zhili province[19] and who, Swinhoe maintained, had been tied by the legs to their guns.[20] That was almost certainly a misinterpretation of the habit of Chinese gunners to use rope-yarn, tied to their wrists, as fuses for firing their guns. The allied generals thought the Chinese force had numbered somewhere between 2000 and 6000 men and had suffered a number of casualties. The victorious allied regiments and detachments were allocated houses in the township.

They were now within striking range of the first of the major Chinese forts on the north bank of the Haihe, and Hope Grant, with keen tactical sense, could see that, because of its position in relation to the other forts of the Dagu complex, capturing this one would compel the surrender of all the rest of the defences. All the forts seemed to be built on the same principle. They had thick and heavily armed ramparts on their sea front, with casemated batteries of guns. All the forts had at least one cavalier – one even had three – rising some thirty feet from the ground and usually with guns of large calibre. Everywhere there could be found piles of

shot of various sizes, baskets of powder, and bullets for matchlocks. There were also gingalls, matchlocks, bows and arrows, self-loading crossbows and spears. And the approach to each fort was defended by two or three ditches and wooden spikes.

A pause now followed, because of Chinese resistance as well as the need to build up an allied forward base at Xinhe. The British also insisted on rest and food for the troops – in spite of complaints from some of the allied civilians, who understood very little about campaigning. The result was a five-day pause to get logistics and base arrangements in order. In any case, Xinhe was a pleasant place. Unlike Beitang, it had great varieties of food on offer. It was full of orchards and hedges, the orchards carrying watermelons, peaches, gooseberries and apricots, some said to belong to the emperor himself. There were all kinds of vegetables as well, and there was rich foraging: and hens and pigs were there for the taking. Yet many Chinese women, children and old people once more found it necessary to seek refuge, this time on junks on the river. And here, too, as in Beitang, many Chinese families decided to commit suicide. As one French officer observed: if these Chinese were so afraid of the allies that they killed themselves, 'what would they do with us?'[21] The allies would find out soon enough. Apart from which, the allies found themselves trying, often in vain, to care for terrified civilians of all ages, not to mention infants, old people and the sick of the town.

In capturing the town, the allies had obviously also captured the encampment of their opponents, including their tents and their breakfasts, not to mention twenty-four guns of various calibres. There were also files of documents from the Chinese high command. Some were letters from Beijing, including from a clearly frightened emperor, imploring Prince Sang to resist and vanquish the foreigners. Others were highly coloured letters from Sangkolinsin to Beijing trying to dress up defeats as victories. But there were also letters from the Prince to the Great Council of State, forecasting the allied moves quite accurately, from a landing at Beitang to the march down to the Haihe River, the difficulties they would encounter and his plans for dealing with them. So the allies' pause also gave them time to study captured Chinese documents. They included lists of the prices that Chinese leaders had put on the heads of Elgin and his senior officers. There was also time for Hengfu to send them more messages, which were once again ignored.

The allied advance also created one of the popular but entirely meretricious legends of the campaign. The truth seems to have been that a

sergeant of the 44th and a private of the Buffs, together with two Madras sappers, left Beitang with grog for the troops, carried by sixteen Cantonese coolies. They lost their way and, after getting some sleep, they ran into some Tartars, who they initially assumed were Sikhs. When the two groups clashed, the private and two coolies were killed and one escaped. All the others were taken to Tianjin as prisoners, one of the Madrassis being killed en route. The two remaining Europeans and the coolies were also taken to Tianjin and beaten, before being brought back to Dagu and returned to the allied army. The story that reached England was different. It was that an Irish sergeant and a private soldier of the Buffs had led a party of Chinese coolies who were handling carts carrying the 2nd Division's rum rations. The two had too much to drink, lost their way and fell into the hands of some Manchu cavalry. A week later the sergeant returned to his unit and told how the captives had been brought before a Chinese mandarin who had ordered them, on pain of instant execution, to kowtow. Everyone had done so except the private, a young Kentish lad named Moyse, whose head was promptly cut off. The story lost nothing in the telling and caused a considerable patriotic stir back home.[22] No one paid much attention, though, when it turned out that Moyse, far from being a brave but innocent Kentish lad, was a tough Scot aged thirty-two with a record of insubordination[23] who might just possibly have been too drunk to obey the Chinese command.

More importantly, for the commanders there was the strategic question of what to do next. What came to the surface again were differences in two dimensions: between the British and the French, and among the French themselves. With the appointment of Vice-Admiral Charner as French naval commander in chief in the Far East, Montauban's position as overall commander of French forces had become somewhat more delicate. On the British side, Hope Grant's authority had, similarly, to cater to the sensitivities of the naval commander, Admiral Sir James Hope. Running coalitions is never easy, and here, too, the result, at least according to some of their subordinates, was much confusion. Collineau offered an acerbic summary:

> The campaign has been nothing but a never-ending series of procrastinations and discussions with our allies that blow hot and cold. This has resulted in errors and mistakes. There are four commanders, all independent and free to act in the fullness of their powers: on the French side, General Montauban, commander in chief of the army, and Admiral Charner, commander in chief

> of the naval forces; on the English side, General Grant and Admiral Hope. Even the smallest decision (requires) the concordance of these four wills. It is grotesque and dispiriting.[24]

More immediately and urgently, there was a fundamental disagreement between the British and French commanders about how the entire campaign should be run. Montauban wanted the army to cross to the south bank of the Haihe River and attack the main forts on that southern bank. The allied gunboats beyond the mouth of the river would be able to give powerful artillery support to such a move, while the Chinese, once both sides of the river were in allied hands, would have no line of retreat towards Tianjin and so would face destruction or surrender. From the point of view of senior French officers, such a strategy dovetailed not only with their general thirst for military glory but with their strong view that the object of a campaign was to crush the enemy and celebrate as complete a victory as possible.

Some local factors pointed in the same direction. Command of the river would necessarily depend on being able to move between both of its banks. But the only floating bridge had been destroyed on the day of the fall of Tanggu. A number of barge-like boats were available, and work on a new bridge was begun. On the 18th Colonel Lévy of the French engineers took 300 men to the south bank to secure that end of the new bridge, but they found themselves in a fight with Tartars and had to send to Montauban for reinforcements before they could secure that southern bank position and get Jamin's brigade to take proper command of both sides of the river. That bridge would probably have given the French first place in any full-scale allied attack on the south bank forts.

Hope Grant, on the other hand, saw that attacking the south bank forts would mean putting the Haihe River between the army and its supply base at Beitang, while the 'mud flat' defences of these very powerful forts would require a formal siege of many weeks, even months. Furthermore, he never lost sight of the fact that the basic objectives of the campaign were the ratification of the 1858 treaty and the installation of a British ambassador at Beijing. Those were not aims that could be usefully promoted by killing, or even capturing, lots of Chinese (who would, at any rate, then have to be fed). He was therefore much less interested in destroying the Chinese army than in capturing the forts as quickly as possible and with few losses. As Robert Swinhoe, the interpreter, fairly wrote, 'Our object was not to subdue the country, but merely to open the way for negotia-

tions with its Government, and at the less cost of life this was achieved the better for our country'.[25] Furthermore, Hope Grant understood, as did Elgin and the Cabinet in London, that too dramatic a victory might not just crush the Chinese army but destabilise the Chinese state. Gros himself sent Montauban a letter pointing out that the allies did not want to overthrow the dynasty and did not even want 'unduly energetic' military action that might frighten the Chinese emperor into personally taking flight into 'Northern Tartary'.[26]

Other local and tactical factors pointed in the same direction. One of the army's finest commanders, Sir Robert Napier (formerly of the Bengal Engineers), argued that that he would only need two or three days to bring the siege guns and mortars to within a few hundred metres of the nearest north bank fort. More generally, he was as convinced as Grant himself that this nearest northern bank fort was also the weakest of the four Chinese Dagu forts, being the least strongly defended. Like the others, it had been designed to repel an attack from the sea. It was much less well defended against an attack from the rear and had deployed only some twenty guns in that direction. Furthermore, its position, by an error of Chinese planning, did indeed control all the other Dagu forts. In addition, he agreed that the allied army needed to use its resources not only to attack but to ensure the security of the new forward depot at Xinhe and of the supply lines back to Beitang. The various difficulties would be compounded if the French plans were followed and lines of communication had to be extended beyond a Haihe River crossing, and in the presence of large numbers of swift-moving Mongol and Manchu cavalry. In the end, Montauban accepted Grant's plans, though only after a formal exchange of detailed letters, with the French general insisting on making a formal written protest about Hope Grant's strategy. He also wrote to Hope Grant that 'the object of my observations is, above all, to free myself from military responsibility with reference to my own government...'.[27]

Harry Parkes, though hardly an unprejudiced witness, also gave vent privately to British frustrations. On 25 July he wrote his wife:

> The French require a good deal of keeping in order, and until Baron Gros arrived, their naval and military commanders ranked above M. de Bourboulon who…could do little…to restrain their acts and opinions, which were and are often very ill judged. This dreadful alliance is a very, very great reason for our devoutly desiring a speedy settlement of the question. They do us no good, and act, in fact, in every respect just like a drag

> upon our coach. They use our stores, get in our way at all points, and retard all our movements.[28]

So it was finally agreed that there would be an attack on the nearest northern bank fort. Seizing it would make it easier to attack the second one, lower down on the left bank of the river, and with the aid of allied gunboats. Once the entire left (northern) bank was occupied, it would be easier to clear the river of obstacles and to allow the gunboats to give further support to the troops. This nearest northern fort was a strongly built square of some hundred metres on each side, with plenty of artillery in place and troops to man the walls, and approaches to it were awkward and difficult. The allies faced a series of ditches, some filled with water, others with sharpened stakes. The assault would have to cope, successively, with a deep dry ditch, an open space that had been blocked with entanglements, a wet ditch, some ground covered with pointed bamboo stakes, another wet ditch, another space with stakes and, finally, a brick wall with loopholes for defending infantry weapons. The terrain was altogether a major problem, given the swampland, stretches of mud and deep water courses obstructing the approach. All this quite apart from the guns of the fort itself. At times the very headquarters of the British 1st Division was under a foot of water. Fortunately, the army had Napier's engineering skills to cope with most of the obstacles; Royal Engineers and Madras sappers, with the help of parties of the 67th Regiment, worked to bridge the obstacles. As Hope Grant calmly said, 'It is simply a matter of the degree of filth our men must traverse.'

Beyond these difficulties, the Chinese made no attempt to interfere with the allied approach march. Possibly Prince Sang, encouraged by his Dagu victory of the previous year and noting the defeat of his cavalry in the allied advance on Xinhe, decided to rely on the strength of his fortifications, even if unsupported by cavalry or infantry in the field. The bulk of the crack Manchu and Mongol cavalry force, it now appeared, had withdrawn across the Haihe to its southern side. The next day Napier sent an advance party, including artillery, to the edge of the canals protecting the fort and made a lodgment within some 800 yards of it. They now faced Chinese artillery fire, not all of it accurate, both from the fort itself and from the south side of the river. But this only meant that the locations of the Chinese batteries could be more clearly identified and the allies could position guns to cover both their own right flank, lying on the river, and beyond, the Chinese guns on the south bank.

By 6 a.m. on the morning of 20 August, allied preparations were complete. Skirmishers were in position some 300 yards from the enemy, and rifle fire from the fresh allied trenches could help to keep heads down on the Chinese walls. But it was the artillery that was once again decisive. The allies were able to deploy some thirty-six guns. A French 24-pounder battery and three English guns were placed to take on the nearest south bank fort and keep down fire from there into the right flank of the allied assault. The others, including 8-inch mortars, a couple of 32-pounders and four 24-pounders as well as smaller guns were dragged through the deep mud to within comfortable range of the target. Some of the heavier guns needed teams of six horses to pull them. In addition, four British gunboats stationed off the Dagu shore, together with two French boats, were detailed to engage the strong south bank forts and distract these southern guns from engaging the allied troops on the north bank.

Harry Parkes and Major Graham of the Royal Engineers approached the fort to offer terms of surrender to its commander, but to no avail. So the assault would have to come the next day, the 21st.[29]

For the assault itself, the 2500 infantry of the British 1st Division was stationed on the left flank, with the French further right, next to the river. The attack began at daybreak. The British assault force, led by Brigadier General Reeves, consisted of detachments of the 44th (Essex) and 67th (Hampshire) Regiments, under Lt Cols McMahon and Thomas respectively, with Royal Marines, some of them carrying a pontoon bridge for crossing ditches and some engineers. The French, led by General Collineau, had 1000 infantry and some rifled cannon and were deployed between the riverbank and the British right. (One British observer put it less carefully when he wrote that the northern fort was entered by a Col Knox of the 67th and 'three companies of French marine infantry'.)[30] The artillery and mortars, including six Armstrongs, were variously placed so as to cover, not just the fort under attack, but the nearest south bank fort, whose guns would try to support the defenders and, as well, take on the French detachments on the allied right. In addition, the allied attack had the support of four English and four French gunboats entering the river with the morning tide. Lord Elgin and *The Times* correspondent Tom Bowlby remained on the roof of the Tanggu temple to watch the proceedings.

The fort was stoutly defended, not only with its ditches and canals and the various obstacles, but with gingalls and artillery that even included two English 32-pounders, taken the year before from the British gunboats

sunk by the Chinese. Unfortunately for the defenders, many of the guns again fired too high. In any case, the allied artillery gradually silenced most of them. Eventually, a lucky shot, probably from an offshore allied gunboat, exploded a Chinese powder magazine, followed shortly by a second explosion. Still, the – much less effective – Chinese musket and gingall fire continued. After some hours the allies were ready to storm the walls still, or again, with the 44th and 67th Regiments on the left and the French on the right. The army's coolies gave notable support. Many insisted on holding ladders against the wall for soldiers to climb, and some even joined in the attack armed with pointed sticks. In the case of the French, coolies stood in the water up to their necks holding ladders over their shoulders to make living bridges, able to carry the soldiers over canals and ditches to launch a bayonet charge. In the end, the British and French troops found their way in, either over or through the substantial walls. There was, of course, a certain amount of rivalry between them, sometimes friendly, about who had been first to get into the fort. The first Britons to enter it were Lieutenant Burslem of the 67th and Lt Rogers of the 44th, each of whom received a Victoria Cross, the newly created highest decoration for valour, then and ever since, in the British forces. It also seems that one of the British guns had been manhandled close enough to be able to knock a breach into the wall. Once through, two British officers – Major Anson, Hope Grant's aide-de-camp, and Lt Col Mann of the Royal Engineers – used their swords to cut the ropes holding up the drawbridge so that their infantry could charge across it, again with fixed bayonets. Furthermore, the coolies behaved so well that Hope Grant later gave them an extra month's wages. According to the British, it was a young officer of the 67th, Chaplin, who planted the British standard 'on the highest part of the works'.[31] As against that, the French insisted that some of their men were the first to climb the wall and that it was their drummer, Fachard, who first planted the French flag. The French, indeed, claimed that it was their marines, commanded by Major Jaureguiberry, and their battalion of *chasseurs à pied* who had carried the walls, with the British following on.[32] No doubt the French commanders were displeased when Napier, in his after-battle report, merely thanked General Collineau's troops for having given 'material assistance' to the capture of the fort.

About the Chinese, Napier reported: 'foot by foot the brave garrison disputed the ground'; partly, perhaps, because there was no exit for them, except over the rear wall and across their own stakes and ditches, all under heavy allied fire that caused severe losses. More interesting was the fact

that a number of the dead Chinese gunners were once more alleged to have had their legs tied to the guns – which was very likely not true – but many others also died at their posts. In any case, the fighting did not cease before the Chinese had suffered heavy casualties.[33] That included a general who was a red button mandarin decorated with a peacock's feather and commander of all northern forts. He refused to surrender and was shot by Captain Prynne of the Royal Marines. He was probably a brother of Prince Sang. The last defenders fled, and Hope Grant's official report simply stated that 'the ground outside the fort was literally strewn with the enemy's dead and wounded'. But in the opinion of some allied officers, the Chinese had fought even more bravely than either the British or the French.[34] Elgin himself told London about the 'heroic bravery' of the Chinese.[35] And Napier testified later that the Chinese 'made a noble and vigorous resistance' – except that their artillery was not very accurate and often shot too high.

Each of the allies lost around 200 men killed and wounded, and the English won no less than six Victoria Crosses. A seventh went to a 15-year-old hospital apprentice of the Indian service troops attached to the Hampshires. The Chinese may have lost as many as 2000 dead. Of course, the number of Chinese dead may have been increased by the very thoroughness of their defensive measures, which, in making it very difficult for the allies to enter the fort, made it equally difficult for the defenders to get out. In any case, the allied soldiers, callous after the hard fighting, often simply dragged the Chinese corpses by their pigtails and pushed them into craters caused by their own artillery fire and sent dead cats and dogs to join them.

Shortly after the fight, the allies, in this case the 3rd Buffs and the 8th Punjabis, plus Collineau's Frenchmen, pressed on to the other north bank fort, some two kilometres further on. But they found themselves confronted by white flags and silence. Hope Grant sent Parkes to demand surrender but got a haughty reply. Then, while Hope Grant placed artillery into position for an attack, some of the French infantry were able to climb into the fort. Not only was there no resistance, but the allies found some 2000 or 3000 men who had surrendered to General Collineau and, on their knees, were pleading for their lives. In China and elsewhere, the practice of killing the defeated enemy was very old. It was even accepted by the defeated themselves. One of the most significant and able leaders of the Taiping Rebellion, after being captured by imperialist troops, was asked whether, in the interests of history and the completeness of the

records, he would agree to write a history of the Taipings and of his own campaign. He readily agreed and spent some time writing a coherent and lucid account before going with apparent good will to have his own head cut off. So now, at Dagu, the defeated were totally astonished to find that Collineau simply disarmed them and told them to get lost.

Hope Grant promptly sent Parkes and his secretary, Henry Loch, across the river under flags of truce to talk to Hengfu and to demand the surrender of the two major right bank forts as well, together with their guns and equipment. Five days earlier, even before the capture of the smaller Tanggu fort, a despatch from Elgin had reached Hope Grant, urging speed.[36] In it, Elgin said he was being pressed by the Chinese towards negotiations, but he did not want to begin talks until all the Dagu forts were in allied hands and the river to Tianjin had been opened. 'I shall do what I can to keep things going until you are ready…but it becomes every day more difficult for me to do so…'. The implications were obvious. So now, Parkes and Loch reached the official residence of the Chinese governor general after a long and wearisome march through a sea of mud, but they were civilly received. The discussions with Hengfu went on for four hours, interrupted by Chinese uncertainty about who was now in command of their forces following the death of the general who had commanded the northern forts. But then Parkes asked whether all the inhabitants of Dagu had been evacuated. Hengfu was surprised. 'What for?' he asked. Parkes pointed out that once fighting began again, there would be such a volume of fire that no one would emerge alive. The allies had no wish to harm civilian women, children and old people while they were disposing of soldiers and mandarins. That did the trick: Hengfu agreed to surrender the south bank forts on condition that the civilian population would be protected. He had a letter drafted, with his own seal, confirming the surrender. He also asked that the body of the northern forts commander, whose death had so discouraged the garrisons of the other forts, should be found and handed over.

So flags of truce appeared on the south bank[37] and the allies occupied all these forts without further fighting. The Chinese forces evacuated them, leaving behind some 600 cannon and vast quantities of equipment. In addition, some Chinese officers were sent to the forts to offer information – remembering the buried explosives that had been found at Beitang – on powder magazines and any traps or mines they might contain. One of the other major prizes of the victory was the discovery, in Prince Sang's headquarters, of his maps and papers. They included much of interest,

including a despatch from Beijing mentioning Russian aid in arms and munitions. Prince Sang himself withdrew towards the North, escorted by some 150 of his horsemen. From the point of view of the allies, the road not just to Tianjin but through Tianjin to Beijing was effectively open. So quite a few people, both British and French, thought the war was for all practical purposes over. Lieutenant Colonel Wolseley was not the only man to write home, exultantly, that with the war over, they would all soon be home.

The first step was to clear the Haihe River entrance so that the allies could get to Tianjin. That turned out to mean removing a row of heavy, sharp-pointed iron stakes, weighing several tons, that had been fixed to the river bottom. Behind that came a large boom, floating in earthen water jars, followed in turn by more iron stakes and then a row of boats filled with tinder material; this was followed by a second large boom. But by 22 August the river was open, and it was clearly important for the allies to move to Tianjin as quickly as possible.

However, since there had been reports of artillery and several forts being sited at various points on its banks, Admiral Hope took some gunboats up the Haihe River to make sure there would be no surprises. (The French once again sensed a major slight and complained that Hope had sailed 'in violation of his instructions', without the French and without notice.) The allied boats found crowds of locals lining the banks, not only offering no signs of hostility but offering all kinds of provisions for purchase. As Loch acerbically noted: 'Their sole thought seemed to be to profit as much as possible by the happy chance that had sent so many "barbarians" amongst them, who paid twenty times the proper value for everything.'[38] Tianjin itself also proved to be undefended, Chinese troops and guns having apparently withdrawn further north. Hope Grant promptly sent forward the 1st Foot (the Royals), the 67th Regiment and an Armstrong battery, all under the command of Brigadier Staveley to take possession of the town, while Hope Grant himself followed next day, the 24th. On the same day, in response to news from Shanghai that the Taiping rebels intended to attack the city, he sent some troops of the 44th, under Brigadier Jephson, to strengthen the Shanghai defences.

As soon as the admiral and Harry Parkes anchored, on 25 August, Hengfu appeared again and affably tried to treat Admiral Hope as his guest. But Parkes and the admiral made it very clear that the allies were now imposing a military occupation of Tianjin and had allied flags raised on the walls. There was no question of the viceroy remaining the supreme

head of the city, although, just as in Canton, the civil authorities would be left to run it. Parkes, who took over control of the city for the time being, found the local officials cooperative and the people quiet.[39] Meanwhile, Elgin again took note of Chinese 'military weakness and disorganization',[40] and Gros also arrived in Tianjin in the gunboat *Grenada*. Two British battalions and a battery of guns similarly went up to the city by boat. The rest marched up along the river bank, while the cavalry moved up along the opposite northern bank. The 3rd Buffs were left behind to garrison Dagu, and the 60th Rifles did the same for the Xinhe bridge, while Jephson, with the 44th, two companies of French infantry and half a battery of French mountain guns, was, as already mentioned, detached and sent down to Shanghai to reinforce the several hundred British and 400 French already there. Lord Elgin and the remaining allied forces also moved up to Tianjin.

Fortunately, here too there was fresh food of all kinds to be had aplenty – and, no less important, lots of ice! The troops could even dine on iced grapes, and the sailors were said to have lumps of ice for their grog.[41] The local Chinese, from merchants to peasants, seemed quite pleased that the non-Chinese Manchus and Mongols of Sangkolinsin's army had been defeated. They were therefore mostly friendly, at worst indifferent and certainly not disposed to refuse supply, the more so since the allied troops were billeted outside the city and under strict instructions to behave themselves and to pay for their food and other supplies. People like Wolseley could also go sightseeing in and around palaces and, especially, some lovely Chinese gardens.

While Elgin and Gros installed themselves in Tianjin, in a large house belonging to the Chinese salt commissioner, they found themselves reading a letter from Guiliang saying that he now had full authority to negotiate. So Parkes was sent off once again to confront the senior Chinese commissioners with the larger allied demands.

Those demands were as follows: an apology for the 1859 Dagu affair, an indemnity for the losses the allies had suffered and, finally, the ratification of the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin. It was also agreed that the allied army should move forwards as far as the small town of Tongzhou, not far from Beijing itself, and acceptance was sought for the idea that the emperor would receive the ambassadors in audience. Once again there was niggling about the terms, for instance over the size of the military escort permitted to the ambassadors when they came to Beijing. The Chinese wanted numbers to be kept as low – and inconspicuous – as possible, while Elgin

wanted to be demonstrative. In the end it was agreed that the ambassadors, when calling on the emperor, should be escorted by 1000 British and 1000 French troops of all arms (but without artillery).

By 2 September it did indeed seem that the allied campaign had succeeded: the imperial commissioners, including Guiliang, gave a positive assurance that the terms of the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin should be properly observed and that all the allied demands made to date would be conceded in full. A draft convention was therefore prepared. By this time almost everyone seemed delighted to think that the war was effectively over. On 3 September and again on the 7th, Hope Grant sent notes to Elgin suggesting that he instruct India to stop sending any more supplies to the army in China. On the 7th he even wrote, in great delight at the prospect of ending the campaign and going home, that 'I have the honour to inform your Excellency that the recent operations in the North of China having terminated successfully, peace is about to be concluded with the Chinese government. I should be much obliged, therefore, by your ordering all further supplies of every kind for the army in China, that have not yet left India, to be stopped. Orders have been sent to Singapore to send back everything that has not.'[42] Montauban even started to issue special scarves for the troops who were expected to escort the ambassadors to Beijing. Many people, especially including the diplomats, were actually convinced that the war was effectively over. In any case, London kept leaning on the army to get things settled quickly. Secretary of State for War Sidney Herbert wrote to Hope Grant to repeat that '…our quarrel is not with the people but with the Government. At the ports where we trade, our peaceful relations have remained unimpaired. Our object in going to China is to trade…It is important to maintain, if possible, this good understanding with the Chinese people at the trading ports…Our object is to get our peace ratified without being obliged to have recourse to an advance. An early termination of our Chinese difficulty is therefore most desirable…'[43] But Parkes, among others and especially the soldiers, was not impressed. 'All our diplomats throughout this war', he wrote later, 'were too sanguine, and their overconfidence in the near approach of peace, with a less determined general at the head of our army, might have led to our destruction.'[44]

The reality was that the Chinese were becoming increasingly alarmed and insistent on trying to keep the allies away from the capital. After all, long experience told senior officials, not to mention the common people, that foreign armies approaching the capital could only mean that the

dynasty was about to be overthrown. On 3 September a letter from the Chinese commissioners arrived, stating their total acceptance of the allied ultimatum; everyone should immediately stop hostilities and re-establish peace.[45] But three days later Parkes and Wade discovered on closer inspection that the imperial commissioners' documents did not, after all, carry the power to sign a definitive agreement, and therefore Guiliang did not, after all, have full negotiating power. In any case, it turned out, later still, that the emperor simply disowned and rejected any agreement on such points as paying an indemnity and allowing the ambassadors to be escorted by 2000 troops to Beijing. What this meant was that, when it came to the point, Guiliang and his colleagues had no authority to sign anything without reference to Beijing. What they were really doing was going back to their favourite delaying tactics, most probably still as a way of keeping talks going until October and the onset of the cold North China winter, when the weather would surely compel the allies to withdraw anyway. Indeed, the suspicion grew that the entire business of talks was just becoming a Chinese ploy to gain time, perhaps even just to lure Elgin himself to Beijing, where he could be at the mercy of the Chinese.

Elgin and Gros immediately broke off the talks and decided that they would at once march on to Tongzhou, close to Beijing, and would not negotiate further until they got there.[46] Elgin himself was almost in despair about the stupidity of this Chinese prevarication, which almost forced him to put matters once more into the hands of the soldiers and to start the march of the allied army on towards Beijing – the one prospect the Chinese professed to fear most. He lamented to his diary that

> My idiotical Chinamen have taken to playing tricks, which give me an excellent excuse for carrying the army on to Pekin [*sic*]…we must get nearer Pekin before the Government there comes to its senses. The blockheads have gone on negotiating with me just long enough to enable Grant to bring all his army up to this point…and these stupid people give me a snub, which obliges me to break with them.[47]

He might have been even more unhappy had he known the kind of thing that Guiliang had already, long before at the time of the Tianjin treaty signature, written to the emperor about the treaty being no more than '… these few sheets of paper that could be…treated as rubbish'.[48]

The allied army, on the other hand, which had always been much more sceptical about 'diplomatic naiveté', could scarcely forbear to laugh and

mutter ‘we told you so’. But it also carefully noted that the Chinese tactics had actually secured a week’s delay in the allied advance, and therefore more time for Prince Sang to reorganise and prepare his army for the defence of the capital. As against that, the soldiers were greatly cheered by the prospect of sampling the wonders of mysterious Beijing: now only some 70 miles away upriver.

CHAPTER 8

Final Battles

When the army began to move, with the cavalry once again in the van, Napier's division was left in Tianjin to guard communications. The advance was circumspect: it was, after all, a move into unknown territory. There was, for instance, only one map, a simple one provided by Ambassador Ignatiev. The terrain, as reconnaissance and the march gradually revealed, was full of potential hazards and opportunities for a Chinese ambush.[1] Elgin himself discovered, during a pleasant early morning ride, that they were going through 'a succession of crops of millet; a stiff, reedy stem, some twelve or fourteen feet high',[2] which meant that the Tartar cavalry could hardly charge through to get at the allies; but on the other hand, the place lent itself to ambushes. There were also some suggestions that a large army was being collected, under the leadership of Prince Sang himself, at Tongzhou, where Elgin had already told the Chinese that he would consider signing a new treaty. As for the flow of the Haihe River, that might have lent itself to severe disruption of the allies' critical waterborne supply line, whether by fire-ships or by floating explosives (though in the event, the Chinese gave no sign of trying either). The river was flanked by high embankments to prevent flooding during the rainy season. They might have been used either to ambush the advancing allied troops or, if the water levels were right, to flood them. The road itself might have been mined, as the Beitang fort had been. On the other hand, for the opening stages of the march, the country was flat and featureless and, not least important, the army had no difficulty in living off the land with its gardens

H. Gelber, *Battle for Beijing, 1858–1860*,
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and large fields of corn and millet, though the millet obviously grew so tall that even a man on a horse might not see further than twenty yards. There were even worse possibilities: where the millet was cut, it left sharp stalks in the ground that were liable to injure the cavalry mounts.

The allied advance was by various detachments moving in stages out from the town. Elgin himself, on horseback, accompanied the forward detachment, and Gros also accompanied the troops. Both ambassadors wanted, among other things, to keep an eye on the soldiers.

The advance of the English 1st Division began early on 8 September, followed the next day by the French and – through a street named Everlasting Prosperity – by Wolseley's topographical detail mapping the roads.[3] One of the difficulties was to discover the names of rivers, since in Chinese usage, various portions of a river used to be given their own names. The next day the advance guard camped on an open plain. But heavy rain started to fall in the afternoon, and by the morning of the 11th, the column's Chinese drivers had gone disappeared, most of them with their ponies and mules. Almost certainly they were following orders from Tianjin, reinforced by threats against their families if they did not obey (which implied an uncomfortable measure of continuing Chinese local authority). Not everybody was affected, of course. There was Garnet Wolseley, who had his roving mapping and reconnaissance mission, which made him semi-independent of the main body of the army. He was someone who managed to keep all his own mules and drivers. When he asked his hard-bitten Indian cavalry dafadar (sergeant), the dafadar grinned and said, 'You told me, sahib, you would hold me responsible for the mules and drivers, so at nightfall I collected the drivers in my tent, tied all their pigtails together and fastened the knot they formed to my tent pole, beside which I slept.' When the army started to move again on the 12th, many of the carts had to be driven by members of the embassy, army officers or sailors. At the same time, food and supplies mysteriously disappeared from Tianjin shops. The people left in charge in the city also found difficulties in dealing with its prefect and chief magistrate. General Napier solved that problem by 'inviting' the man, under strong guard, to come to the British camp, where he was lodged in a tent next to Napier's own, with a sentry at the door. Goods and supplies promptly reappeared. And after a few days the prefect began to express astonishment, not just at the arms and equipment of the army and the excellence of their horses, but at the discipline of their soldiers. Even the soldiers guarding him had not stirred from their posts! How on earth did the allies manage to inculcate such discipline?

The next stage, on the 13th, was a twelve-mile march to Hexiwu, where the soil became more sandy. Large numbers of its citizens had deserted, but the remainder found themselves in great danger from gangs of robbers made up of their own countrymen. Hope Grant and the staff were put up at a brightly painted Confucian temple, but also had the streets patrolled to keep some sort of order. Meanwhile, the Navy managed to seize some sixty or seventy junks on the river, on which equipment, baggage and stores could be moved and which proved to be invaluable for moving the artillery. The arrangement was that each junk was commanded by a British officer or petty officer, and for the rest, the Chinese crews served willingly enough. Water transport was a great help, though the water flow was starting to run low in places. It was particularly useful as it became obvious that, while the roads were now hard, they might become impassable mud once the rains came again.

During the entire march it was clearly time for the Chinese to go back, yet again, to defence by diplomacy. Another series of Chinese letters arrived, asking the allies to turn back. On 11 September a cousin of the emperor, Prince Zaiyuan, who was a captain general of the Imperial Guard, and together with the president of the Board of War replaced Guiliang in the negotiations, wrote that the allied demands had, in fact, been agreed and would the allied commissioners please wait at Tianjin, where two Chinese, with complete powers to treat, were on their way to conclude an agreement. Why would the allies push on, incurring the danger of fresh fighting instead of a peace agreement? There was speculation among the allies that this might turn out to be an interesting comment on the limits of the civilians' control of Prince Sang and the military. So this time the two allied ambassadors wrote back to the Chinese accepting their assurance about powers to treat. However, Elgin, tired of Chinese manoeuvres, also made it clear that by now he would sign no agreement until the army had marched to Tongzhou, very close to Beijing itself. In the meantime, there came another Chinese letter suggesting a modification: the army should stop earlier, at Hexiwu, about halfway between Tianjin and Beijing, while the English and French delegates themselves should go ahead to Tongzhou.

That was actually quite convenient since Hope Grant, like a good commanding general, was worrying about supply lines again. He probably had not read what has been called the greatest military textbook of the nineteenth century, by the Swiss Baron de Jomini, which spoke, among other things, of staff responsibilities as including 'the preparation of all material

of war; the drawing up of orders for alternative contingencies; the ordering of all troop movements; the collection of intelligence; the organization of supply and transport; the establishment of camps, depots and magazines; the organization of medical and signal services; and the provision of reinforcements…'.[4] But he had obviously absorbed its essence. So Hope Grant told Elgin that he needed a week at Hexiwu to set up a depot, a supply base, a place to park the heavy guns and set up some hospital facilities. A halt would also make it possible to bring the various detachments and wings of the army together again as a single command. In the meantime, the army had finally been joined by the 99th (Wiltshire) Regiment, which had left Calcutta back in February and now came up from Beitang. General Michel also arrived from Tianjin, bringing with him the Buffs, the 15th Punjab Native Infantry, the Sikhs of Probyn's Horse and a battery of guns. That raised the British force to 2300 infantry, a company and a half of engineers, three batteries of artillery and the entire cavalry. The French, with 1200 men, marched in a day later.[5] Moreover, when the army reached Hexiwu, it was found that the town could supply plenty of excellent fruits and vegetables and the locals were very willing to sell chickens and meat of various kinds. There were problems, though. Here, as elsewhere, the army had to deal with Chinese thieves who came at night to rob local shops, especially the pawnbrokers who, as always, held expensive goods. Eventually, it was found that there was no remedy to this guerilla war of thievery except to expel the entire Chinese population from the town.

Elgin was not pleased about the Hexiwu delay, but he had to accept it. Since there had to be a stop there, he decided to send Parkes and Wade to see Prince Zaiyuan and his colleague at Tongzhou. The two young men set out on 14 September to work out an understanding of some aspects of the proposed agreements, like details of Elgin's and Gros' entry into Beijing, with an escort of a thousand soldiers each, for the ceremonies dealing with the ratification of the Treaty of Tianjin. Parkes and Wade returned the following day, the 15th, with unexpected news: terms for a convention had definitely been agreed. The allied armies would remain encamped at a place called Five-Li point, within a dozen miles of Tongzhou. This was the place where Elgin had at any rate expected to sign a new convention, while Parkes and others would go back to Tongzhou to finalise details of Elgin's and Gros' reception as well as administrative details for the army's stay at Five-Li point. There would also be arrangements for the ambassadors, with their escorts, to proceed to Beijing.

Meanwhile, the locals were muttering to some of the Chinese staffers and servants of the army about the way in which Prince Sang was baiting a trap and preparing to cut the allied army to pieces. He had, it seemed, sworn that none of the Europeans should return to Tianjin alive. Other stories circulated of large numbers of Tartar cavalry – many of them quite poorly disciplined, having very recently been in the vicinity and robbed villagers. Parkes and the others paid little attention to such gossip.

The letters of the two ambassadors to the Chinese also had to be safely delivered. On the 17th, Gros' letter was transmitted by the secretary of the embassy, Count Leon de Bastard, and the interpreter, M. de Meritens. Simultaneously Montauban and his force left Hexiwu to establish themselves that evening only a few leagues from Tongzhou. The Chinese reception of de Bastard did not go smoothly. His subsequent report to Montauban noted that when they asked Prince Zaiyuan whether he did indeed have full powers (to which the answer was yes), the prince displayed great annoyance that he, who had never told a lie in his life and whose signature carried as much authority as that of the emperor himself, should be confronted with such a question. Much more importantly, M. de Bastard also reported that on 18 September he had seen large numbers of Chinese infantry and cavalry occupying the very ground that the allied troops were to occupy and where they were meant to camp.[6] Meanwhile, Parkes had taken a letter from Elgin to Prince Zaiyuan, who had gone back to Tongzhou to confirm the various agreements and clear up a few ancillary points, such as precisely where the allied army should camp and how the camp would be provisioned. Parkes also asked whether Elgin would be able to deliver to the emperor, in person, the letter he carried from Queen Victoria, a request that caused fresh consternation and confusion on the Chinese side since it raised more issues about the precise conditions under which the emperor might (or might not) receive Elgin.

Riding back to Tongzhou under a flag of truce, Parkes was accompanied by Elgin's private secretary Henry Loch, *The Times* correspondent Thomas Bowlby, who had been Elgin's shipboard companion on the journey to China, de Normann, one of Frederick Bruce's people who had come north with Elgin, the assistant quartermaster general of the cavalry Lieutenant Colonel Walker of the Queen's Bays (the quartermaster general of the cavalry brigade and, much later, General Sir Bauchamp Walker), Assistant Commissary Thompson and an escort of half a dozen dragoons and twenty Sikhs under the command of Lieutenant Robert B. Anderson

of Fane's Horse, who had originally been loaned from his parent regiment, the 22nd Bengal Native Infantry. The French sent out their own team, also under a flag of truce. It consisted of Colonel de Grandchamps of the artillery, Captain Chanoine from the staff, Caïd Osman, Sub-Lieutenant of Spahis, M. Dubut of the Intendancy, embassy Secretary M. de Bastard, M. de Meritens, the Comte d'Escayrac, the missionary Abbé de Luc and two administration officials, Messrs. Ader and Gagey.[7]

It was a cheerful morning ride through high-standing corn, and though they saw signs of the recent presence of large bodies of Chinese cavalry, the parties reached Tongzhou without difficulty. On the way, passing through Changkiwan, they were even greeted in friendly and soldierly fashion by a Chinese general who had been demoted following the battle of Xinhe. After lunch Parkes and Loch called on the Chinese commissioners, headed by Prince Zaiyuan. It was a difficult eight-hour meeting. The Prince began by refusing to discuss any of the terms of the convention, which had already been agreed, until the allies should abandon the demand that the ambassadors' letters of credence be delivered personally to the emperor. The prince also tried once again to raise matters that had previously been settled. It was evening before there was even any agreement on just where the allied army should make camp. A proclamation was drafted to tell the people that peace had now been established between China and the allies. So the British and French parties spent the night at a house in Tongzhou, expecting to spend the following day shopping for curios and choosing residences for Elgin and Gros.

At dawn the next morning, 18 September, Parkes, Loch, Thompson and Colonel Walker started off early to ride back to the army to report and point out the now agreed-upon camping area, while intending to return to Tongzhou to select a building for the ambassadors. The others waited at Tongzhou itself, expecting them to return that evening, after which the group would form the whole advance party, getting things ready for Elgin's arrival.

But as Parkes' party moved closer to the allied army, they saw units of Chinese cavalry and infantry, with gingall parties, marching in the same direction. There were substantial bodies of troops in the Changkiwan area itself. There were fields of millet that might have hidden a large force. In one watercourse alone, Loch found over a thousand dismounted cavalry. Everyone was manoeuvring in unexpected and alarming ways. Field positions were being prepared. There were even massive and masked gun sites. On the plain where the allied army was supposed to camp were six

or seven thousand Mongol and Manchu cavalry. They themselves would clearly have to ride through a major Chinese army to reach Hope Grant's columns. So Parkes' group stopped, consulted and decided to split up. It was a decision much criticised later by British officers who thought it had been wildly imprudent to scatter, given that they were dealing with 'a nation so notoriously deceitful as the Chinese' who were 'as cruel as they are false and treacherous'.[8] However, it was decided that Loch and two Sikhs would now head for the army and advise the generals that instead of moving peacefully into a camp, they might be marching into a Chinese military trap. So Thompson, Walker and five dragoons would stay where they now were and observe, in the middle of what looked like the formation of a Chinese army battle position. Meanwhile, Parkes himself, with one Sikh carrying their flag of truce and Private Phipps of the Dragoon Guards, would ride back to Tongzhou, see the Chinese commissioners and demand an explanation.

On the French side, similarly, Captain Chanoine, Caïd Osman and two Spahis, de Bastard, de Méritens and Ader and Gagey hurried to report back to Montauban on these unexpected deployments, which looked very much like Chinese treachery and the preparation of an ambush for the allies, while everyone else was returning to Tongzhou, together with Parkes.

In the meantime, by 6 a.m. Hope Grant's units had already begun to move forward, this time with the British in the lead. The force that left Hexiwu, under the command of Major General Michel, consisted of the Cavalry Brigade, that is to say the King's Dragoon Guards (KDG), Fane's Horse and Probyn's Sikhs; two brigades containing the 2nd Queen's Regiment. Royal Marines, the 99th Regiment and the 15th Punjabis, together with two field batteries, a detachment of Royal Engineers and, from the French, the 2nd Chasseurs de Vincennes and a battery of field guns. They expected Colonel Walker to meet them and direct them to the camping grounds, as agreed with the Chinese. But they, too, saw ominous signs. For the first couple of miles the march lay through fields of standing corn. After that, everything had been cut down – creating open fields of view and, therefore, of fire. Moreover, the advance guard came up to a Tartar cavalry patrol that fled on their approach. Further on, when leaving the next village, the allies found themselves confronting a large Chinese army, in positions some five miles wide, with large groups of Tartar cavalry moving in on the flanks of the allied army and infantry pouring into new positions obviously equipped with very substantial artillery

batteries. Hope Grant sent out a cavalry squadron to the right and left flanks to keep watch and stationed a battery of 9-pounders on some higher ground on the right flank. Clearly, the allies were not just in the process of being surrounded by enemy cavalry; they were being invited onto ground commanded by enemy guns. In fact, as the allies learned much later, Prince Sang had brought at least 20,000 troops to the area, vowing again that the allies would never return south to Tianjin alive. His preferred tactic of using cavalry to surround an enemy may well have been – especially for a Mongol general – a tradition harking back to the days of Genghis Khan's Mongol empire. It had once been a ferociously effective tactic copied from hunting practice. Earlier Mongol princes had been given to throwing a cordon round an area of land and drawing it gradually tighter to drive game (or enemies) into a small circle where they could be killed with bow and arrow, quickly, efficiently and without pointless heroics. Now Hope Grant halted the army and ordered that its baggage be collected at a spot close to the rear, protected by the rearguard against enemy cavalry. Gros stayed with them. He, too, was disturbed by the numbers of Chinese troops he could see milling about. He thought there must be at least 80,000 of them – surely a serious overestimate.

Shortly after the halt, Loch galloped into the allied lines, accompanied by not two but three sowars (troopers) of Indian cavalry, bringing some earlier notes from Parkes saying that everything had been arranged with the Chinese commissioners, but naturally with no information on what the new Chinese deployments might mean. On their way from Tongzhou, Loch had certainly seen large bodies of troops and many guns in prepared emplacements. The army concluded, reasonably enough, that it was indeed faced with a plot to get it to camp on ground controlled by Chinese artillery and surrounded by Chinese troops.

There was, however, the question of waiting for a couple of hours to give Parkes time either to show the Chinese the error of their ways and to report back or else to give Loch time to bring back the rest of the party waiting in Tungchow. Loch therefore requested, and was given, permission to ride back to the town through the assembling Chinese soldiery and bring back everyone who was still there. Captain Luke Brabazon of the Royal Artillery was allowed to accompany him, to find a place for the allied cavalry. So were two Indian troopers carrying a flag of truce. Brabazon would not survive the trip.

These arrangements, by pure chance, probably saved the life of one of the British army's brightest soldiers. For the man who apparently should

have gone with Parkes was Garnet Wolseley. But on this occasion Wolseley, who was still in charge of surveying the army's route, was not there. He had stayed further back, surveying and sketching again. So it was Brabazon who rode off with Loch.

It was only by missing this trip that Wolseley survived to fight in so many of Britain's imperial wars, big and small, through the second half of the nineteenth century. Even so, he was not exactly safe now. Punctiliously doing his survey of the road that ran between fields of maize and millet – even to the point of pacing out distances – he had fallen some four miles behind the army. But a Sikh officer came to warn him that a body of Tartar cavalry was nearby, circling round the army's position. Tent poles were quickly packed up and Wolseley's sketches put away. Wolseley himself remained on foot, next to his horse and with sword drawn, ready and determined that they would not surrender. When his officers raised eyebrows, he just said, 'We can't leave the dismounted men.' The officers stayed with him, noting his 'quiet calculating courage'.[9] Luckily, the party was largely hidden behind the tall corn of the fields, so the Tartars did not notice them. Soon the Tartars left and Wolseley's men and their carts were able, moving at top speed, to rejoin the rear of the army

As for Colonel Walker's tiny party, the whole army, now halted, could soon see their red coats as they made their way back through the grey-clad Chinese soldiery. As they moved, they came upon a wounded French officer – probably Ader – surrounded by Chinese soldiers. His batman, the chasseur à pied Ousouf, stood over him defending him with his bayonet, with Walker trying to rescue him, without success but at the cost of receiving a few cuts of his own. Ousouf's defence allowed Walker to get away. He and his five men cut their way through the Chinese and, under a hail of Chinese fire by matchlocks and gingalls, returned to the allied army, who were duly warned by the noise of firing. None were killed, though several were wounded (which also says something about the level of Chinese weapons drill). Walker later told the French that Ousouf, if he survived, should be given every conceivable medal and deserved a public memorial.[10]

In the meantime, Brabazon and Loch, who had asked Hope Grant for two hours' grace to give the negotiators a chance, got back to Tongzhou, after some difficulty in passing through increasingly impressive bodies of Chinese troops. There they found that Parkes was out but had been told by the prince that until the business of the letters of credence was settled, 'there could be no peace, there must be war'. Once the entire

party, including Bowlby, de Normann and the cavalry escort headed by Lt. Anderson, was together again, they all rode off towards the allied lines. Since they had some ten miles to cover, and the large Chinese army to pass through, there was obviously little hope of joining Hope Grant before the end of the original two-hour grace period. As it happened, no sooner had they passed Changkiwan and reached the middle of the Chinese position than allied guns began to fire.

A Chinese general, seeing their flag of truce, undertook to get Parkes and Loch a *laissez-passer* from the commander-in-chief at headquarters, where they found themselves confronted by no less a figure than Prince Sangkolinsin himself. He met Parkes with a torrent of abuse and was clearly very angry. He had reason to be. Whatever he may have written to Beijing, he must have been very conscious of the fact that the allies had defeated him several times already. His artillery was largely immobile. Much of his cavalry had poor mounts. His only hope of keeping the foreign army away from Beijing was to tempt it to move to ground he had fully prepared and on which he might be able to surprise it. But now, Prince Zaiyuan had allowed the foreigners to move north prematurely and to points where they could see his own fresh field works and other preparations. As Parkes later wrote to his wife, he had been sent on the 17th 'to notify the Prince that Lord Elgin accepted the terms they had themselves proposed at…a meeting on the 14th…I now believe that after making those proposals they either wished or were instructed to modify them…and the famous Sangkolinsin was directed to try the issue of another engagement. This, however, they kept secret from me…' It also became clear that 'the Commissioners would not order their troops to withdraw because no peace was yet settled and the audience question [i.e. the question whether Lord Elgin would be granted an audience with the emperor] remained unsettled.' In consequence, when Parkes was taken to Sangkolinsin, 'I was seized by his attendants and hurled down before him because I had not instantly obeyed their order to kneel…'.[11]

Furthermore, like most of the Chinese officials, Sang regarded Parkes as Elgin's alter ego and a moving spirit behind British policies. So now, he said, Parkes was the cause of all the difficulties and troubles that had arisen. Parkes and Loch were bound, forced to their knees and Parkes' head pushed onto the ground in imitation of the kowtow. Prince Sang ordered Parkes to make the allied army pull back, something that Parkes said he had no power to do. Sang ordered both men to be taken to Prince Zaiyuan, but he could not be found. As the firing intensified, and since

Prince Sang had a whole army to run, the two men were taken to be interrogated by another general for a while. But Prince Sang's orders had been that they, and their sowar escort, were to be taken to the prince, so they were dumped into a common country cart, in which they also found two French soldiers, and driven off. Following an excruciatingly painful drive, they found themselves at Palikao Bridge, the key point of the entire Chinese defensive position on the Tianjin–Beijing canal, and in the tent of Juilin, a different army commander. They were questioned and then left in a small nearby temple. That was followed by more questioning, and they were again kicked and cuffed. Both men thought they were about to lose their heads.

In fact, they were bound and taken in another rough and exquisitely painful wooden cart to Beijing, where they landed separately in prison at the much-feared Board of Punishments. Each of them was kept in chains, and Parkes was interrogated several times. According to his own subsequent report, he was made to kneel on the ground, still in chains, and to kowtow before any official. He was threatened with torture and had his hair and ears pulled, especially if his interrogators were not pleased with an answer he gave.

The remainder of the Parkes party and some French hostages were also seized and distributed to various prisons. Afterwards, some prisoners wrote accounts of their experiences, except Brabazon and the French Abbé de Luc, who had found themselves at Palikao in the hands of the local Chinese commander, General Bao.[12]

For Elgin, Gros and their army commanders there was, of course, the overriding question of what motives could have led to these totally unexpected Chinese actions. Lord Elgin's later report to the government in London suggested that Prince Sang may have thought the civilian negotiators had 'compromised his military position by allowing our army to establish itself so near his lines' at Changkiwan. The immediate reaction might have been that 'in the proceedings of the Chinese Plenipotentiaries and Commander-in-Chief in this instance, there was that mixture of stupidity, want of straightforwardness, suspicion, and bluster, which characterizes so generally the conduct of affairs in this country…'. Even so, the Chinese could not possibly have intended to bring on a conflict that they were quite likely to lose[13] That explanation seems rather inadequate. The emperor had already been urged to remember 'that the barbarians, who have come far from across the ocean, have hitherto shown that their object was merely to trade…[Their aim] was only to besiege the ports and not

to take possession of the country. Nor have they attempted any conquest of China. Even the point of entry into Pekin [*sic*] is one which might be satisfactorily disposed of…'.[14] Not only that, but, as Elgin and Gros well knew, allied policy so far had been strongly constrained by the need not to unsettle the entire empire and its fruitful trade, a consideration of which diplomats like Guiliang had already made full use. The chief allied objective, apart from reparations for the 1859 defeat at Dagu, had been the ratification of the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin. Elgin had been quite prepared to do so at Tianjin itself, provided only that Beijing sent officials with full powers to do their part. Failing Tianjin, he had been quite prepared to stop at Tongzhou to make the necessary arrangements and had already accepted the principle that the allied army would camp outside Beijing and not occupy the capital. He had even accepted limits on the military escort for himself and Gros when they ventured into the Chinese capital for the ratification and signature process. Most if not all of that now seemed set aside by the way in which Prince Sang and apparently Prince Zaiyuan had insisted on major battles, not to mention the imprisonment of the allied 'heralds'.

In fact, the Chinese decision-making process seems likely to have been far from clear. The emperor was evidently much offended by the allied ultimata. 'From of old it has been held a disgrace to make a treaty under your city wall…If Guiliang and his colleagues have so madly lost themselves as to presume their own authority…they have not only disobeyed our written commands, and shown fear of the barbarian, but they have simply taken up the empire and put it into his hands…we will at once vindicate the law by the execution of these ministers, and then fight it out with the barbarians…'.[15] Advice came to the emperor in many forms and from different officials. In addition, Prince Sang was obviously furious about, and personally insulted by, the repeated defeat of his troops by numerically far inferior allied forces that, not incidentally, flatly contradicted his own advice and recommendations to the emperor. He was clearly keen to try again, this time with overwhelming numbers. Nor was he alone. Prince Zaiyuan was equally furious and seems to have had no time for the kind of 'management' of the allies in which Guiliang and others had excelled. In other words, the combination of Sang's and Prince Zaiyuan's combativeness, the emperor's temper and the sidelining of Guiliang and the diplomats strongly suggests what the British army would, inelegantly but succinctly, call a decision-making 'cock-up'.

As for the prisoners, Loch managed to keep an account of his time in gaol, during the last ten days by writing in ink on the inside lining of his hat. Although he was now in chains, he found himself in the company of local criminals, many of them thieves and murderers, who seem to have dealt kindly with the newcomer. Once he had asserted his superior status and apart from the fact that three prisoners per day were detailed to control him, the prisoners gave him some food and water, and sometimes even a corner of a biscuit that a relative might have brought. But both he and Parkes (held in another prison) remained quite reasonably afraid that the wounds made by the chains on their wrists and necks would attract their prisons' myriad deadly vermin and maggots. Loch tried to attract Parkes' attention by singing 'God Save the Queen', naturally without success.

Meanwhile, the allied army of something over 3500 men was confronted by a force they later estimated at somewhere between 20,000 and 25,000 (though Ignatiev maintained later that the Chinese had had 50,000 to 55,000 in the field, 30,000 of them cavalry). Once again British and French accounts differ somewhat about who did what, where and when. Montauban wanted to attack immediately and push on to Tongzhou, but Hope Grant refused, for fear of the lives of the allied people there.[16] Both Montauban and Collineau tried to argue that, on the contrary, an immediate attack would be the best way to save them. In any event, it seems reasonably clear that with Loch and Brabazon gone for over two hours, Hope Grant could only assume that they had been detained at Tongzhou and he prepared to advance his main force, which was by now somewhat reduced.

Clearly the Chinese had decided to try once more to combine their best resources to stop the allies, this time with a combination of prepared entrenchments and barriers backed by infantry and guns, together with encirclement by massed cavalry. In response, the allies were deployed with the main British force on the left and 1000 French and an artillery battery on the right wing. As Walker rode to safety, the Chinese artillery opened fire all along the line. Quite soon General Montauban sent a message to say that he was about to advance on the Chinese works and the village to his front, from which he was taking fire and which was defended by Chinese infantry and some forty guns. These two villages on Montauban's front were dealt with by the 101st and 102nd Regiments of the line, under Colonel Poujot, together with a company of engineers. French artillery followed and established itself on a small rise on the Chinese flank, from which it could rake the enemy lines. Since the French had scarcely any cav-

alry of their own, Hope Grant had sent over a squadron of Fane's Horse to act under French orders. At one point the French guns, under Colonel de Bentzmann, seemed to be in some danger, but they were rescued by the British horsemen, which earned Lieutenant Cattley, of Fane's Horse, the French Legion of Honour. Montauban augmented that detachment with a handful of Spahis of his personal escort and ordered the cavalry, now under the overall command of Colonel Foley, a British officer attached to the French staff, to sweep round the right flank of the village while he himself joined the charge with the Spahis and his 2nd Chasseurs de Vincennes. The Chinese retreated.

This enemy movement backwards led Montauban, at the head of his escort of some eighty horsemen, to charge the enemy again. He also brought up one company of the 101st Regiment and one of the 102nd, as well as some guns, all of which drove back the Chinese who, once clear of the village, began simply to flee, only to run into the Indian and Spahi horsemen, together with the Chasseurs d'Afrique. That placed the French on the left wing of the entire Chinese army. As they occupied the two villages on their front and captured a large number of Chinese guns – probably some sixty or seventy – the British infantry finally appeared on their left. Lieutenant Colonel Dupin, who was there and wrote later under the name of Paul Varin, put the French view scathingly: the British 'extrème lenteur avait permis à notre armée de remplir sa tâche et la leur ([Their] extreme slowness had allowed our army to add their tasks to our own)'.[17] In that view, the French had 'almost alone' beaten a Chinese force of some 50,000 men. Meanwhile, the Chinese and Tartar horsemen had amassed on the allied left flank – the opposite flank to the French deployment – but found themselves effectively charged by Probyn's Horse supported by the KDG.

In the meantime, Hope Grant had placed a battery of 9-pounders on the British right, supported by a squadron of the KDG. The 99th (Wiltshire) Regiment, supported by two 9-pounders and together with the Ludhiana Sikhs, was ordered to take another village, directly to their front. At the same time, the 2nd (Buffs), with some Armstrong guns and the cavalry, including some Musbee Sikhs being tried out as irregulars, were deployed in a flanking movement on the allied left, followed by some Punjabi infantry. The artillery fire was especially effective, whether against Prince Sang's Manchu and Mongolian cavalry or the enemy's field works. So while the French on the allied right successfully took the village and works to their front, Probyn's Horse cleared the ground to

the far left. They were supported by the 2nd Queen's Regiment while Hope Grant came over with the Armstrongs, the Musbee Sikhs and a squadron of the Dragoon Guards. The Musbees advanced 'in a steady line carrying everything before them', and the British line went forward to occupy the town of Changkiwan – only to find that it had been abandoned – as well as a large Chinese camp a mile beyond.[18] Everywhere, as Wolseley wrote, the big cavalry horses of the KDG and the Sikhs 'went through and through them bowling them [the much smaller Tartar horses] over like ninepins'.[19] This was where one grizzled Indian trooper was heard, as noted earlier, describing the Chinese soldiery as birds, or fowl, 'very difficult to overtake and entirely harmless when caught'.[20] But once again the Sikhs, whom the Chinese called 'the dark-coloured princes', went around checking on Chinese casualties, and if someone was still alive, one of the Sikhs would get off his horse and saw the man's head off.[21] Once again, French and English casualties were astonishingly slight: the after-battle count suggested that the English suffered only two killed and twenty-nine wounded, and the French three dead and seventeen wounded, while Chinese casualties might have been at least two thousand. So the Chinese suffered severe casualties in this small battle, while the British and French lost only a handful each – including the loss of the French colonel commanding their cavalry – yet captured altogether over eighty Chinese guns.

After the fighting, the tired and hungry army took the little town of Changkiwan, short of Tongzhou, to rest and, even more importantly, to replenish the army's badly depleted ammunition supplies and bring up reinforcements from Tianjin. That included General Collineau's brigade, which, together with a battery of field artillery, arrived on 20 September to join Collineau himself, who was already at the front. That raised the total of the French force to 3000 men. At the same time, orders were sent to Napier to bring up two regiments from Hexiwu, one of them to be the 60th. At the same time, the flotilla of boats carrying commissariat stores had been brought up to Hosiwu from Tianjin. It was of course still necessary to disguise the army's temporary weaknesses from the enemy, which was one reason among others for renewing talks with the Chinese. As Baron Gros explained bluntly to his own Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Thouvenel: 'Nous avons déjà dû colorer plusieurs fois notre impuissance par un semblent de bon vouloir envers le gouvernment chinois…'.[22] ('We have already, several times, had to disguise our lack of power by displaying our apparent good will towards the Chinese government.') In the

meantime, and in punishment for Chinese prevarication and 'treachery', there was little restraint on looting. The army people had special disgust for the obtuseness of the diplomats, who had so easily allowed the army to fall into a Chinese trap. In any event, the town seemed to be a place that history had passed by. A crumbling 'city of the past', Swinhoe thought.[23] Once again, many of the locals were terrified, not just of losing their possessions but of worse things being done to them. As so often, it was the women who suffered the most. So, here, too, there were tales of women committing suicide, whether by drowning or taking overdoses of opium, and even grandmothers trying to strangle infants in sheer terror of the occupation. Then and afterwards the French and British, both troops and officers, tried to blame each other for the worst excesses. But the women's fears were not unjustified, for the place was abandoned to plunder not only by the allied soldiers but, even more so, by the corps of Chinese coolies and most especially by the populace of the surrounding countryside. So here, as throughout the campaign, the fiercest looting and, especially, rape were committed largely by the coolies, who were indispensable to the army but could not be brought under close military discipline. Lieutenant Colonel Wolseley recalled their 'being most lawless and cruel'.[24] Then and later, even harsh punishment did not always maintain discipline. On one occasion, some officers out for a stroll discovered three coolies raping a woman in a field. Hope Grant sentenced the main offender to be hanged and the other two to suffer a hundred lashes each, in front of all the assembled coolies. But almost equally bad robbers were the Indian sepoys, and even the European troops were far from innocent. After the affair Baron Gros reported to Paris his helpless horror at the vandalism he had been forced to witness.

At the same time, however, there was still no news of the fate of the British or French captives now in Chinese hands – in clear contravention of the previous practice on both sides of how to deal with flags of truce. So, perhaps more important than the casual or drunken violence of coolies or even troops, was the abrupt change of minds and perspectives at virtually all levels of the allied army, caused by the Chinese hostage-taking of men, who were heralds, riding under a white flag to arrange for peace. That the Chinese were subtle, unreliable and treacherous had been accepted as a given for quite some time. But for some days suspicions continued that the major ambush had been the decision of Prince Sang in person – the supposed head of the 'war party' in Beijing. But another imperial edict published on 20 September made it entirely clear that China's armed resis-

tance enjoyed imperial support. '...If [the allies] persevere in their revolt, let my people make every effort to annihilate them all…'.[25] That some of the men now captured might have been unduly trusting, or even careless, was also not in serious dispute. But what now ran through the ranks was real fury and disgust at the unpardonable and barbarous behaviour of the Chinese and a strong determination to secure the release of the prisoners whatever the cost. The army had to seek revenge, to punish the guilty and permit no deviation from the demands for political and diplomatic concessions and for compensation, which were at the heart of the allied war aims. That fury and that determination to punish Chinese treachery were a major reason for the sack of Changkiwan now and would be major factors in the conduct of the entire remainder of the allied campaign.

The same sense of vengefulness ran – and has run virtually ever since – through questions about just who was guilty. The main divide seems to have been between those who interpreted what had happened to the men who were now hostages, as in practice the victory of Beijing's pro-war 'faction' versus those who saw only the whims of Chinese commanders on the ground. The first seemed supported later by Harry Parkes' account of Prince Sang's behaviour. This confirmed that the prince had indeed been infuriated by the weakness of the Chinese diplomats in allowing the allied army to get so close to his own troops and their not yet fully prepared positions, and infuriated even more by the conviction that to seek any diplomatic accommodation with the allies was in any case futile. The second seemed to chime, for instance, with a note in Gros' diary that two Chinese priests had reported that the arrests had been ordered by Prince Zaiyuan, who had been deeply angered by Parkes' proud and discourteous behaviour in talks with the Chinese and his deliberate upsetting of a table full of porcelain pieces. As against that, there was also the notion that the Chinese had from the start set out to ambush the allied parties.

Nor can the position of the emperor himself have improved the coherence of Chinese decision-making. Although neither Elgin nor Parkes, nor anyone else on the allied side, knew it, for much of the previous month there had been a heated debate in the Chinese court as to what the emperor should do about the approach of foreign armies. The essential question was whether he should remain in Beijing. Prince Sang, no doubt worried about the dangers of having the sovereign anywhere near the front line, thought the emperor should remove himself by taking a 'hunting trip' to the North, to his gorgeous summer residence at Jehol. It lay north of the Great Wall, next to the town of Chengde. Like the Summer Palace at

Beijing, this palace was surrounded by a galaxy of temples, each with its staff of lamas. One of these had been built by the emperor Qianlong, in some imitation of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, for the visit of the Panchen Lama of Tibet back in 1779–1780. The palace itself was described by one visitor as a 'kingdom of dreams – willow pattern come to life, set in a semi-circle of little green hills.' But other advisers worried about the dangers to Chinese public morale if the emperor simply left. He himself suggested a silly compromise: he could announce that he would leave Beijing to take personal command of his armies, would indeed leave the capital, ostensibly for the field of action, but actually to travel North. Some senior officials made it clear what lunacy that would be. 'Will you', one of them wrote sarcastically, 'cast away the inheritance of your ancestors like a damaged shoe?'[26] In any case, the Chinese emperor seemed to have little confidence in any determined defence of Beijing and, as the allied advance continued, did finally leave for his so-called hunting trip in the North. He was never to set foot in his own capital again. So perhaps the best explanation is again what the British army inelegantly calls the 'cock-up theory': amid the confusions of the day, perhaps no coherent decisions were taken by anyone on the Chinese side.

Elgin, however, was determined to hold the 'captain of the ship', the emperor, personally responsible for the actions of his people. What was in any case clear was that the seizure of the hostages must put an end to delicate manoeuvrings and diplomatic illusions about the Chinese, and put matters once more into the hands of the soldiers. Elgin and Gros came up from Hexiwu to join the army, in which there was an almost palpable feeling of 'So now we have to clear up your diplomats' mess again.'

In the meantime, Hope Grant sent Thomas Wade to Tongzhou, again under a flag of truce, to demand that all English and French prisoners be returned forthwith, and if this demand were not met, the army would assault and occupy Beijing itself. But the mandarins pretended not to understand what was being demanded of them. 'The Europeans left Tongzhou some time before the battle and we do not know what has become of them.' The two allied generals concluded that the march to Beijing must continue and the first stage would be an attack on Palikao itself, the chief Chinese camp and key point of their defences of the canal, and its great stone bridge, and therefore of Beijing itself.

For the moment, it was Tongzhou that became a base and depot for the allied army and a source of supply, especially of food. The 19th and 20th were taken up with rest and preparations to move forward.

There was also, of course, some careful reconnaissance. The allies noted that so far they had dealt almost exclusively with Chinese infantry and guns. So where was the reputedly 'invincible' Tartar cavalry? The larger picture had further complexities. It quickly became clear that between the village and Beijing the country was starting to be cut up by deep ditches and sunken roads with steep banks that could form natural breastworks for a defender. It turned out also that the nearer the army got to Beijing, the more it would find wooded areas, walled villages, cemeteries and temples, all of which might offer opportunities to determined defenders. Not only that, but the country became more thickly populated, to the point that any advance might actually come to involve street fighting. Altogether, moving on from Tongzhou would bring the allies once more into a region of which they knew nothing and for which they had no maps or topographical assessments. Yet for Prince Sang, it was home territory. It was also evident that the allied advance would shortly come to the Tongzhou–Beijing canal, which was not only the last major obstacle on the way to Beijing, but from whose far side a paved highway led straight to the capital.

Reconnaissance also made it clear that Prince Sang had made most careful preparations to give battle in defence of the canal crossings and apparently assured the emperor that the allies could not escape being overwhelmed by his Chinese and Manchu forces. Very large Chinese cavalry concentrations could be detected on the allied side of the canal, and in defence of the two bridges across it. One was a more westerly wooden bridge, closer to Beijing and well suited to crossing by foot or even horse, but unable to carry guns. Further east, however, was the grand stone and marble arch of Palikao Bridge itself, with its lovely decorative marble ornaments, including statues that looked from a distance like men on the parapets. From there, the walls of Beijing itself could be seen in the distance. It was in front of these bridges that Prince Sang had evidently prepared himself to give battle, with his perhaps 30,000–50,000 men and some large-calibre guns in prepared positions, many of them masked. And, in reserve, some of his finest troops: the Manchu Imperial Guards in their black-bordered yellow robes.

At 5:30 a.m. on 21 September the allies began to move forward. It was a clear, fresh morning and a picture-book dawn. It was the French turn to lead the advance, and Hope Grant had agreed to form up with the French on the right, to advance directly on the great Palikao Bridge, which had to be the principal objective of the operation. The British–Indian troops were formed up to the left of the French, with the infantry to the right of

the Indians, the artillery in the centre and the cavalry in echelon formation on the left.

The allies found the Chinese and Manchu cavalry deployed on the plain covering the bridge approaches, in a five-kilometer arc with strengthened wings. That made the battle which followed quite largely a cavalry affair. Immediately in front of the bridge itself was a village offering a kind of anchor and stronghold to the defenders. Behind it lay massed infantry with more guns. The allied columns, French and British – with Elgin 'always on horseback when the guns were firing', as the French respectfully observed – found themselves facing the central segments of the Chinese line. The larger plan was for the allied cavalry to make a sweep to the far left flank, so as to partly force the Chinese to concentrate their men to, and on, the two bridges, making them excellent targets for the allied artillery. Indeed, one of the lessons that impressed itself on the minds of some allied officers was the relative ineffectiveness of small-arms fire, even massed fire, in dealing with opposing troops. The only really effective weapons, it seemed, was either artillery or cold steel. It was by no means the only nineteenth-century war in which that lesson had to be learned, and it helped to influence many kinds of military operations, in many places, as late as 1915.

In this case it was the British cavalry that spearheaded the attack on the left wing. According to Grant's report: 'The King's Dragoon Guards and Fane's Horse, with Probyn's regiment in support...advanced to the charge…and attacking the Tartars with the utmost vigour, instantly made them give way.' The KDG in particular, Grant wrote, after crossing a deep ditch, 'got well in among the Tartars, riding over ponies and men and knocking both down together like so many ninepins.' One member of the government, Sidney Herbert, wrote a private letter to the Queen saying the KDG had performed a 'most remarkable' feat of horsemanship. The Tartars gave way, suffering severely, and the entire enemy cavalry retreated, encouraged by some long shots from the Armstrong guns. The advance also captured a camping ground, perhaps of a Tartar general, for it was found to contain two yellow silk banners belonging to the Imperial Guard. The elite of that guard was drawn up in defence of the great Palikao Bridge and therefore faced the French. In the main infantry attack it was the French who headed for the bridge itself, and here was Montauban's chance to go for military glory on the battlefield. He moved forward in battle order, with Jamin's brigade and two artillery batteries on his right, and with Collineau and one battery in the centre, heading

straight for the bridge and with some British infantry and artillery meant to come up on his left. But the French soon found strong enemy cavalry forces advancing on them with bows and lances. Their subsequent accounts suggest two cavalry attacks of 10,000 to 12,000 men each, one towards Montauban and the other towards Collineau. One was met by the French advance guard under General Collineau himself, with its half battalion of chasseurs and some horse artillery; but Chinese numbers grew, especially on the French left, where the British were slow to arrive. So the French formed squares and positioned their guns. The Tartar horsemen came on forcefully and in complete silence, coming to within some fifty metres of the riflemen. It was noted that the Chinese commanded their units by flag signals, not unlike the Western naval custom of flag signals. Meanwhile, Jamin was also pressing forward with the remainder of the chasseurs, the 101st Infantry and a dozen guns; but he and Montauban also found themselves under heavy cavalry attack. In danger of encirclement, on the French right, Colonel Pouget's 101st Infantry hastily formed squares, while de Bentzmann's artillery took the attackers in the flank. So the Chinese cavalry was repulsed with rifle and bayonet and forced to retire, taking their dead and wounded with them. Their commanders, with exceptional courage, rode up and down 'almost under the bayonets of our men'[27] trying in vain to get their squadrons to resume the charge.

Finally, the British did come into line on the French and Collineau's left – 'toujours en retard [late as always]', as some of the French sourly observed. It was the KDG and Fane's Horse, again supported by Probyn's Horse, who dispersed the Chinese cavalry. Here, too, the Tartar ponies might have been hardy and quick, but they could not stand up to the KDG's great troop horses. As Wolseley wrote later, 'Our cavalry went straight at them, Fane's Horse and King's Dragoon Guards got well in amongst the Tartars, riding over ponies and men and knocking both down together….'.[28] Hope Grant followed up with three Armstrong guns, his Royal Marines and the Wiltshires, advancing over difficult ground and crossing their own wooden bridge, capturing Chinese encampments and guns on the way, with less and less Chinese resistance. The English horsemen, after chasing the Chinese for some miles, returned to their bridge to rejoin the rest of the 2nd Brigade. The Chinese encampments were promptly and thoroughly looted by the local Chinese peasantry. In fact, some of the locals also killed three of the marauding coolies.

In the meantime, while Jamin's brigade held firm in the face of Chinese artillery fire as well as assaults by cavalry, the Chinese and Tartar cav-

alry were starting to show signs of disorder and hesitation. Montauban sounded the charge to take advantage of that confusion. Collineau, wearing his usual huge straw hat, went from the canal bank straight towards the great bridge; and once the English attack on the left began to move, Montauban ordered General Jamin to proceed on the double, with his chasseurs and the 101st Regiment, to seize the positions in the village that anchored the Chinese line and that the Chinese were defending at every step. Soon the Chinese withdrew, with considerable losses, to the far side of the canal. That being their last strong line of defence on the road to Beijing, it deserved the strongest defensive tactics that the Chinese were still able to mount. The water obstacles of the canal, and the bridges themselves, were defended by some of China's best troops, including, as noted, the elite of the Imperial Guard and massive artillery including some ten guns on the bridge itself. In addition, clouds of cavalry harried the allies on their approach. But the Chinese cavalry had, once again, to give way before the attack of the numerically greatly inferior allied horsemen; Colonel de Bentzmann's guns engaged the canals' Chinese defenders of the bridge from the flank, silenced Chinese guns and killed many of the gunners, who died where they stood. Some of the Chinese displayed conspicuous and admirable courage, especially the Imperial Guards in their black-bordered yellow robes; as the French romantically put it 'their gorgeous costumes making them splendid targets for death.' They manned the bridge in the face of allied shot and shell, waving flags of command, and tried to persuade the mass of the Chinese army to attack. That effort failed, but not one of the guards fell back. Every man died at his post. Montauban even tried to save one conspicuously brave Chinese guardsman on the crown of the bridge, but just as he gave the order to save him, the man was blown away by an allied cannonball. Once enemy fire began to slacken, Collineau, at the head of a company of the 101st, stormed the bridge at the point of the bayonet.[29] The rest of the Chinese army fled, obviously completely demoralised.

The allies decided that the Chinese officers had been heroic, but notably incompetent in dealing with the situation. Even the numerous Chinese guns had been incompetently aimed and served and had done very little real damage to the allies. Collineau's own son, Captain Charles Collineau, noticed a pagoda, went in to see whether it could serve as French headquarters, and was met by a torrent of gunfire from hidden Chinese soldiers. Almost miraculously, nothing hit him, which once more says something about Chinese weapons training. The blind Chinese rejection of foreign

ideas and inventions, and the determination to use swords and shields when charging Western troops equipped with rifles and rifled cannon, had proved to be extraordinarily costly. Prince Sang himself simply withdrew to Beijing, abandoning his beaten troops in the process.

In none of these engagements did either side show much mercy. The Sikhs continued their habit of riding across the field after a cavalry clash and, seeing a man on the ground, pricking him with a lance to see whether he was still alive; if he groaned or squirmed, the Sikh soldier would dismount and saw the man's head off. Their opponents were no more humane. One Sikh trooper, for instance, lost control of his horse and was captured, only to have the Tartar cavalry gouge his eyes out and cut him into small pieces.

After the fight, Elgin rode over to give Montauban well-deserved congratulations. Indeed, over these last few days, Montauban himself had played a colourful and courageous part, and when his emperor advanced him to the nobility a year or two later, he chose the title of Count of Palikao (Comte de Palikao). The official report on the campaign, released in 1862, gave some not insubstantial numbers of casualties. It said the allied total came to 1200 dead and wounded, while total Chinese losses were estimated at between 20,000 and 25,000. But the first two of the Western hostages apparently also died. General Bao, defender of Palikao Bridge, was mortally wounded in the fighting and, before dying, gave orders to decapitate Captain Brabazon and Father de Luc. No reliable traces of them were later found, and it was assumed that their remains had been thrown into the canal.

After the battle, both allies found themselves with mountains of booty, not just spears, bows, arrows, cannon and so on, but clothes, food and equipment of every sort, including piles of matchlocks. They also found Prince Sang's imperial banner. They camped by the side of the canal, in the now abandoned Chinese tents, some of them with food already prepared and set out for the expected return of the Chinese victors. The bows and arrows served for several days as fuel for allied camp fires. But the allies also received a culinary reward: when they arrived, the canal was full of plump ducks. By the morning after the battle, few of the ducks had escaped English or French cooking pots. Two days later, fresh supplies came along, including coffee and wine, no doubt especially welcome to the French.

There was now no further serious barrier between Beijing and the allies – except, perhaps, the increasing number of banks and ditches as the

army neared the capital. But even the Palikao battle would not necessarily seal Beijing's fate. For one thing, the two battles and the marches had exhausted the food and ammunition supplies of the allies. The French infantry had no cartridges left and the artillery only a relatively few rounds. Furthermore, though the Chinese army had been defeated, there was no certainty that its many thousands of men could not be gathered, reorganised and brought into the field with fresh tactics and new determination. A strong reconnaissance party of Fane's Horse and Spahis, headed by Wolseley, rode as far as the walls of the Forbidden City. He discovered no Chinese cavalry – that seemed to have withdrawn back to the Summer Palace, the Yuenming Yuen, north-west of the city – but he could see with his telescope that the armed 'sentries' on Beijing's high city wall were just dummies. Nevertheless, it was clear that these walls were so massive that Hope Grant himself thought the light guns, with which he had marched up from Tianjin, would be quite unable to breach them, especially if there was a remotely serious defence. Hope Grant and Montauban agreed that nothing further could be done until reinforcements, ammunition, supplies and the heavy siege guns had been brought up by river from the Tianjin base. It was therefore decided to concentrate allied forces at Palikao until the army had had a rest and been brought up to strength. The halt lasted until 5 October.

By 29 September the siege guns and twenty-centimetre mortars arrived, as did the reserve forces. That brought not only General Napier and his staff but a battalion of the 60th Rifles, the 67th Regiment, the Royals and parts of the 99th Regiment and the 8th Punjabis. Only on 3 October did the allies, now some 10,000 strong, think it safe to start to advance across the canal and towards Beijing. There had also been various other and minor problems. One was that the troops, living in their bell tents, were uncomfortable in the hot September sun. Another was the number of bandits who made a nuisance of themselves along the lines of communication and supply until a party of the 8th Punjab Infantry was ordered to burn down one village and a notice was posted warning other individuals and groups to leave the allied army alone. In addition, one battalion of marines was left at Tongzhou to secure the town.

CHAPTER 9

Beijing, and Triumph

By now the allied commanders had a new official to face. He was the highest mandarin in the empire, the emperor's younger brother, Prince Gong. At some point before Gong assumed the leading role in the negotiations, Emperor Xianfeng had made his choice about whether to flee the capital. He and his entourage left Beijing for the Northern Palace of Jehol, allegedly to go on the annual imperial hunt. Though his effective authority inevitably declined, he could and did still issue orders, for example on how to deal with the allied captives in the capital. But the man who was now doing the detailed negotiating, Gong, had been born Yixin, the sixth son of the Daoguang emperor, though he would now became popularly known as 'devil number six' in recognition of his dealings with the 'foreign devils'.[1] On 22 September the allies received a note from him, dated the previous day, announcing that Prince Zaiyuan and his colleague had been dismissed as a result of their conduct. He, Gong, had himself been appointed high commissioner with full powers and wanted to come to terms with the allies. Elgin and Gros replied that there could be no negotiations until the allied captives were returned. Gong replied by asking for a suspension of hostilities and the resumption of talks.[2] The captives would be sent back only after the Dagu forts had been given back and the Haihe River evacuated by the allied fleet. Elgin responded that neither a ship nor a man would leave China until the provisions of the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin had been carried out. Unless the prisoners were returned to the allied camp within three days, and a pledge given that the Tianjin Treaty would be ratified, Beijing would be attacked. If the Chinese chose

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to break the law of nations with regard to flags of truce, they must abide by the consequences. But the prince's response was that any entry of allied forces into Beijing would mean immediate execution of the prisoners.[3] Exchanges continued, and on the 25th Gros and Elgin, losing patience, wrote to Gong that unless the Chinese accepted Western terms within three days, the allies would attack and, by unstated but clear implication, the dynasty would fall.

In the meantime, the army rested, while Wolseley went on carefully mapping out Beijing's surroundings. He even took a reconnaissance party of Indian cavalry and French Spahis once more to the walls of the Forbidden City, carefully noting its forty-feet-high walls – with those dummy soldiers on the battlements. On the 26th Elgin and Grant rode to Changkiwan to visit General Ignatiev. It turned out that the general had an excellent map of Beijing, on which every street and house of importance was shown. Mapping inside Beijing was, of course, officially forbidden, but the Russians did manage to produce a good map. It had apparently been drawn after the streets were measured by a cart from whose interior the street angles had been measured, while indicators were fixed to the wheels to count the number of revolutions, from which the distance covered could be calculated. That made it possible to give tangible help to the allies, since in the event of any attack on the city it would be helpful to have some idea of what or who – including the prisoners – was at what point of the city. Ignatiev allowed Hope Grant to copy that map in a photograph taken by the Italian freelance photographer, Felice Beato, who had accompanied the entire allied campaign. It also emerged that the north wall of Beijing was much less of an obstacle than the other three sides and was, anyway, only some four miles from the Summer Palace where some of Prince Sangkolinsin's troops might be found.

Gong's response to Elgin naturally made no reference to suggestions about the fall of the dynasty. He said Beijing would be defended to the death by its soldiers and there would be other battles. The allied prisoners had not so far been put to death and would be handed over as soon as the peace treaty had been ratified. Elgin and Gros thought the persistent Chinese refusal to hand them back was a good reason to fear the worst. By 3 October the allied army had moved a couple of miles closer to Beijing and its leaders found themselves lodged in a highly ornamented mosque. Three days later they left the mosque, and the army, in columns of regiments, advanced to within a mile and a half of the walls of the capital. Rumour now reached the allied command that the emperor had indeed left for the North.

In the meantime, Parkes, Loch and the other prisoners continued to languish in Chinese captivity, most of them in chains, on starvation rations and exposed to the deadly vermin and maggots that were in the process of killing several of them. Not until 29 September was there a sudden change, at least for Parkes and Loch, who were brought together by Heng Yi, who had once been Parkes' prisoner at Canton, where he had been well treated. He tried to get Parkes to write to Elgin, urging him to reduce allied demands. Eventually Parkes agreed to write, provided he was moved out of his prison as well as allowed to join Loch. On the same day both men were moved to a temple in northern Beijing, given an excellent meal and, above all, the blissful luxury of a bath. They were also joined by two of their former jailers, who were now to act as servants. Heng Yi had been hinting for some time that Prince Gong was the senior official at court who was in favour of ending the war (and, incidentally, was the son-in-law of Guiliang). At the same time, Heng Yi indicated that Parkes and Loch were actually in great danger since powerful voices at court, not least Yehonala, the mother of the emperor's only son, were urging that the prisoners be executed. Heng Yi and his colleagues also assured the two Englishmen that the first shot of any allied bombardment would trigger their own execution. But Prince Gong also sent them some of the tea grown especially for the imperial court, tea so delicious that certain officials sought any excuse to call on the prisoners for a social visit and a cup of tea.

So Parkes wrote Elgin – in Chinese but at Heng Yi's dictation – speaking well of Gong's intelligence and kindness and suggesting that the army should not advance further, pending a conference. But Loch managed to scribble at the foot of the letter, with English characters but in Hindustani, a note to say it had been written on the orders of the Chinese. There were other exchanges, too, between Elgin and the Chinese, but Parkes and Loch found, despairingly, that the Chinese refused to believe that Elgin might carry out his threat to attack Beijing: 'We feel sure', Loch wrote later, that 'an attack on Pekin will destroy the present Dynasty, and possibly plunge the Empire into anarchy for years'.[4] But the Chinese thought the British were just prevaricating, even when Heng Yi reproved his own people: '…I have some experience of the English, and they have a habit, and a very curious one, of speaking the truth'.[5] So the Chinese agreed to let the allied army send Loch and Parkes some fresh clothes; but on the edge of one of Loch's embroidered handkerchiefs came another note, once again in Hindustani, to say that the allied bombardment of Beijing would start in three days. Other and stilted exchanges continued.

By 30 September Montauban insisted that a council of war be held, to which he explained that the army was now rested and about to be resupplied with ammunition and food, while in his view the correspondence with Gong merely showed fresh delaying tactics, meant to allow Prince Sang to rally a fresh Chinese army at Beijing. Yet Gong sent another note on 1 October to say that Parkes should be used as a mediator and indicated that if the allies would return to Changkiwan (thereby affirming Beijing's inviolability), the Chinese would sign a treaty there; to which the ambassadors replied that they would listen to nothing until the prisoners were actually returned. On the 4th the Beijing merchants sent presents to Gros and Elgin, also asking that the allies not advance further. Still, Montauban continued to think, and Hope Grant did not dissent, that diplomatic dealings should be suspended and matters once again put into the hands of the military commanders. The ambassadors agreed. What they do not seem to have known was that the rebel army also approaching Beijing, which they thought were Taiping troops, was in fact bringing a quite different rebel army from Shensi province, led by local nobles and all infuriated by heavy war taxation. Prince Sang seems to have regarded this new rebel army as the greater danger and deployed much of his fine cavalry against this threat rather than against the Western allies, who, in any case, were still waiting for reinforcements. Montauban, for instance, was glad to receive them in the shape of the 102nd Infantry Regiment, a company of engineers and a battery of guns, in addition to some 270 marine infantrymen. That brought the total French contingent to approximately 4000 men, though several companies of both allied armies had to be left behind at various stages. The soldiers now fished and played games, the diplomats found friends in other missions, and Wolseley found more buildings and landscapes to admire. There were other and minor troubles, such as those provincial villagers who were attacking allied stragglers and messengers on the lines of communication.

However, the situation changed again, with a fresh letter from Gong indicating that if Beijing were attacked, the hostages would be executed. Not only that, but the weather began to change, with temperatures starting to fall by 1 October, warning that the weather would soon be much colder than the army was prepared for. On the next day the British 1st Division, which had been left behind at Tianjin, also joined the army by forced marches. And the great siege guns that Hope Grant had also left in Tianjin arrived, having been brought up on the river on pontoons. Thus, on 5 and 6 October the allies started to move, separately and slowly,

from Palikao towards Beijing, with every man carrying three days' rations. At one point Montauban came across three Spahis pillaging a house. He seized their booty and restored it to the astonished master of the home. The allies expected to meet Sang's army again, but no one confronted them, as the going became more difficult. So they finally arrived at the fabulous and mysterious city of Beijing itself, sacred to the Son of Heaven, which had so far figured only in their fairy tales. It was, for many of the men, an emotional arrival. The armies camped some five kilometres miles from Beijing's northeast corner. The two allied generals agreed that the Chinese army had apparently retreated and therefore the two of them should make for the imperial Summer Palace, where they would probably find the emperor or the chief government officials.[6]

At the same time, by 5 October, Loch and Parkes, still inside the city, were told that the allied demands would be rejected and they themselves would be executed that evening. Both were given paper on which to write their last letters. But in the event, they were simply left alone. In fact, they managed in another letter to indicate, again in code, the names of the temple in which they were held and of some of the surrounding streets.

On the 6th, Hope Grant sent a message to Montauban suggesting they separate and meet at the Summer Palace, which lay some six miles to the north-west of the city. The British therefore started to move around Beijing to the north-west, to attack 'Sankolinsin's army, which was supposed to be encamped directly to our front', as Hope Grant wrote in his report. Since, however, the countryside was evidently not particularly good for cavalry, and given the number of other difficulties such as hollow roads or trees, he 'dispatched the Cavalry Brigade, with two six pounders with mounted detachments, with orders…' to advance towards the Summer Palace 'and with a view to cutting off the enemy's retreat in that direction'. But the main British force was held up by Manchu cavalry, so they spent the night camped a few miles short of the palace, which did not make the soldiers kinder to local civilians. Some men were quite willing to disrupt funeral processions, for instance, confiscate the mules and throw the coffins they were carrying into the nearest ditch. Hope Grant's report added that 'the French, anxious to join us in our advance, struck off to their right, finished on the Summer Palace without meeting any opposition, and occupied it till about nightfall. The [British] Cavalry Brigade had reached the palace about two hours before this…'. Then 'General de Montauban offered to show [Brigadier] Pattle and his officers over the Summer Palace…'.

The story of the next two or three days – culminating in the sack and burning of the Summer Place – is not easy to piece together in detail, since French and British accounts differ so widely. And, perhaps not surprisingly, the British and French vigorously blamed each other afterwards for the looting and destruction of this treasure house of art, architecture, jewellery and loveliness in all its parts. The fact seems to be that, whatever the tales told afterwards, for a couple of days or so military discipline in the British and French armies simply collapsed. But the exact sequence of events is less clear. French writings[7] suggest that by the evening of the 6th the French crossed a 'magnificent bridge', marched along a road paved with granite and reached an esplanade with trees set in square patterns, at whose far end was the actual entrance to the Summer Palace. It was guarded by a solid wooden gate with a smaller entrance on each side. Fearing that a mass of Chinese troops might be hidden beyond the wall, Montauban sent two officers and a company of marine infantry to open the gate and reconnoitre.

With them went General Collineau, who disposed of the handful of ancient eunuchs who tearfully tried to dissuade the foreigners from invading the emperor's sacred precincts. He occupied the first court with part of his brigade and stayed there overnight to avoid the possible dangers of exploring further in darkness. The next morning, 7 September, Montauban, accompanied by Generals Collineau and Jamin, entered the palace building proper. (On the same morning of the 7th, Loch, in his prison, woke to the sound of artillery. He assumed that the assault on Beijing had started and that he and Parkes were therefore about to be executed. In fact, English guns were only being fired to tell the French where the English force had got to.) Montauban also records that, as he entered the palace, he placed sentinels at various points and appointed two of his artillery officers to see to security and take charge until the arrival of the British. 'The two captains', wrote d'Herrisson, 'perform their task scrupulously. Not a thing is stolen while their surveillance lasts.'

The main British force finally arrived at 11:30 on the morning of the 7th, and Elgin and Hope Grant 'found that the French had encamped near the entrance of the Great Audience Hall, and it was pitiful to see the way in which everything was being robbed'.[8] They entered the palace; the two French captains were relieved, and commissioners appointed to collect the most precious objects, with an equal share to be given to each army. The two allied chiefs made that division the same evening in the throne room. Some of the most remarkable pieces were kept for presentation to Queen Victoria and Napoleon III.

The British story is entirely different. According to Swinhoe, who was riding with Brigadier Pattle of the cavalry, they and some other cavalry officers visited the French at the Summer Palace very early on the 7th. They found the French encamped under trees in front of the palace entrance, where they had bivouacked after capturing the entrance. Yet according to Hope Grant's official report, the British cavalry brigade had reached the palace some two hours before the French 'and were there waiting for us (i.e. the main column) to join them'. Hope Grant also agreed that '…Montauban offered to show Brigadier Pattle and his officers over the Summer Palace', but added that 'they were astonished to see how thoroughly the French had looted the place'. In fact, Pattle and the others were amazed to find General Montauban assuring them that he had strictly forbidden any looting, since French soldiers had already barged their way through the doors of the main palace and started to loot. In fact, French officers were helping themselves, before the very eyes of the British and of Montauban himself, to valuables, pearls and precious stones and even more precious watches. The French general had indeed set aside some of the choicest curios for presentation to Napoleon III and Queen Victoria, not to mention the Chinese empress's immensely valuable jewel casket for himself. But in both the main building and the adjoining ones, Swinhoe writes, 'to our astonishment, the French officers commenced to *arracher* everything they took a fancy to'.[9]

By the time Hope Grant himself reached the palace, he found that the entire French army had already begun what was in truth an indiscriminate process of plunder of anything that might be carried away. Whatever anyone said later, there was a 'temporary insanity' of French looting. Wolseley noted that French soldiers were going into the palace empty-handed but emerging struggling under loads of treasure. As he wrote later, the soldiery were 'in body and soul absorbed in one pursuit, which was plunder, plunder'.[10] Montauban himself mentioned that he had found two 'staves of office' made of gold and green jade, one of which he would hand over to be given to Queen Victoria, the other going to the Emperor Napoleon. Lord Elgin, who arrived shortly afterwards, was deeply shocked at what he saw and protested even more strongly against the looting, saying 'I am not a thief'.[11]

Montauban had tried to order that the looting cease pending the arrival of the British, but all efforts by French officers to restore order and discipline proved utterly futile. Not that looting after a victorious war was *per se* illegitimate, but as one young French officer wrote home to his father, it was the thousand and one nights come to life when seeing the infinite

treasures of this place. He did not think anything like this destruction had been seen since the sack of Rome by the barbarians.[12] The French, who, the British thought, had arrived virtually without carts or wagons, are said to have left the ruined palace on 9 October with some 300 heavily laden carts crammed with loot. The official French campaign report later spoke, with somewhat excessive delicacy, of the removal of 'the collection of curiosities of the most precious nature', the intention of the organised looting being to have the most impressive objects despatched back to France and Britain.

On the other hand, some British officers also secured collections of valuable things. At one point Wolseley, who did not himself engage in looting, was accosted by a cheerful French soldier laden with loot who, smiling, said, 'Here's a little present for you, comrade', reached into his bag and simply handed the astonished colonel a tiny miniature in a gold setting. It turned out later, when Wolseley's wife had it sent to Paris for valuation, to be a present that King Louis XV had once upon a time sent to the emperor of China. But British troops did not loot much at first, for the simple reason that 'our men were carefully prevented from leaving camp'. However, within a day or so, anyone who could get away from camp could wander freely into the palace. Many men, of both armies, also began a wanton destruction of what they could not carry away. A British officer later commented that 'soldiers are nothing more than grown-up schoolboys' and 'the love of destruction is certainly inherent in man'.

What was not in dispute was that, as Montauban later wrote in his report, 'It is impossible to describe the magnificence of the numerous buildings that followed each other over a distance of four leagues, and which are called the Summer Palace; a succession of pagodas containing all the gods in gold, silver or bronze of gigantic dimensions. For instance, a single bronze divinity, a Buddha, is about seventy feet high, and all the rest in proportion – gardens, lakes and curiosities massed for centuries in buildings of white marble, covered with dazzling tiles – to which may be added views of an admirable extent of country.'

The whole thing was, in fact, an immense rectangular park, perhaps some fourteen kilometres in circumference and surrounded by walls. The throne room itself was some fifty yards long by twenty wide and fifteen high. In the oratory, the walls, ceilings, tables, seats and much else were of gold studded with precious stones. The rest was a fairyland of trees, flowers, ponds and streams, buildings of every kind, including libraries and pagodas on which Chinese emperors had lavished love and

unimaginable wealth in jewellery, silks, furs, jade and ornaments of all kinds. There was a great lake, with a jetty for the imperial bark as well as the emperor's own fishing boat. The many palaces included presents given to the emperors over the decades and centuries, many of them quite priceless. As Montauban wrote: '…nothing in Europe can give any idea of such luxury, and it is impossible for me to describe its splendours in these few lines, impressed as I am especially with the bewilderment caused by the sight of such marvels…'.[13] Or again: 'le rêve d'un mangeur de haschisch'[a hashish eater's dream].[14]

In the main palace there was a gorgeous Hall of Audience with a rosewood throne. Other buildings and halls had been built two centuries earlier by Jesuits based on European baroque designs, like the Trianon outside Paris. There were some Pekinese dogs, a breed reserved for the royal family. There were even, in one courtyard, eleven horses that had belonged to the Parkes party.

Perhaps more interesting than the list of lootings was the discovery of the emperor's correspondence and memorials, including, for instance, advice that he should not seek refuge at Jehol, in part because the roads would be infested by bandits and the emperor would need to be guarded by 4000 troops who could not be spared from Beijing's defence. He should instead stay in the capital, which, with reinforcements, might have 300,000 men protecting it and him, while his presence would give confidence to people and troops. Others urged that the Cantonese serving with the allies simply be bribed. In addition, there were archival documents of every sort, including the original of the treaty that Lord Elgin had negotiated in 1858. On examination, some of these documents proved to be immensely interesting, displaying the 'extraordinary…diplomatic ability' as well as the devious ruthlessness of the imperial regime in domestic as well as foreign affairs. A number of the papers confirmed what Elgin and his advisers had already concluded: that the imperial court had never had the slightest intention of conciliating the allies or of coming to terms, as distinct from securing postponement and delay, until the coming cold weather should bring an end to the allied campaign. The documents also confirmed that, as the various negotiations had already made reasonably clear, the most objectionable allied demands were two: the entry of allied troops into Beijing and the idea of allowing a foreign ambassador to reside in the capital. Either of these would undermine public confidence in the dynasty. Foreign troops in Beijing could even lead to further some, at present unknown, allied demands on China that would be hard to resist.

The searches continued next day, the 8th, and revealed, among other things, quantities of gold and silver bullion. Again, stories differ. The French account says this wealth was divided between the allies, and the French proportion distributed as prize money to the troops. The British account says that a room full of treasure, mostly in gold ingots, was discovered and a portion of it – worth possibly £8,000–9,000 – was reserved for the British state. Hope Grant had army prize agents appointed and ordered all his officers to send in everything they had taken. Hope Grant himself and the generals of the division, Michel and Napier, did the same. The 'general stock' of valuables was duly and publicly auctioned within the army. Items in particular demand included the large numbers of expensive fur coats that had been found or acquired from French soldiers and that would protect people from the coming cold weather. The total yield of the auction was also around £8,000 – surely an absurdly small sum for such treasure. One third was allocated for distribution among the officers and two thirds went to the non-commissioned officers and men, which meant each private soldier received some £4.

Until about this time, on the 8th and according to French accounts, military discipline had been more or less maintained. But then it was found that the allies were not alone in their looting. In short order, hundreds of Chinese from the surrounding towns and villages also rushed in to help themselves to whatever could be carried away. They may have been reacting, at least in part, to the very desecration of the imperial grounds that the Europeans had already inflicted. At any rate, they climbed into the palace and started their own plunder and even set fires. Even at the entrance gate itself, the crowds of peasants and soldiers proved irresistible. According to d'Herrison, 'With all his energy Montauban could no more prevent his troops from passing through the gate of the Summer Palace than Napoleon, for all his prestige as a demi-god, could have held his armies at the moment of sauve-qui-peut of Waterloo…'. He added: 'The English stole as the French did, but more methodically.'

Whatever the exact course of events – and, for later generations, especially for Chinese, responsibility – the palace was sacked and very largely ruined, a fact that was to become of considerable importance shortly afterwards. Meanwhile, Loch and Parkes were still waiting in their prison, by now well fed and comfortable but uncertain whether they might not, at any moment, be either released or executed. While they were waiting, Heng Yi had been lowered over the city wall in a basket – the defending soldiers refused to open the gate – to negotiate with Tom Wade, who

handed over a paper outlining the conditions for sparing Beijing from allied attack. The Chinese would have to give up one of the city gates to the allies. Given recent Chinese behaviour with heralds and flags of truce, command of a gate was obviously essential for the security of any British or French ambassador entering the capital. That condition was eventually accepted, but only with great reluctance.

In the meantime, still on the 8th, Heng Yi sat with Parkes and Loch, drinking tea and conversing on such fascinating topics as whether the sun revolved round the earth or the earth around the sun. Around midday he received a message and told the two prisoners that Prince Gong had ordered their release. Two hours later they were taken in a cart outside the city's northern gate, where they found other carts with four soldiers and one Sikh, as well as the French explorer Comte l'Escayrac de Lauture.[15] The count never recovered from what had been done to him in China, never went on travels again and died in 1868, at the early age of 42, at Fontainebleau. Two days after his release, on 10 October, Parkes took Hengi Yi to what was by then left of the Summer Palace, in the hope of finding out what had happened to its governor, an old friend of Heng Yi's by the name of Weng Fu. But it turned out that Weng, having failed to protect the royal palace as was his duty, had drowned himself in one of the ornamental lakes. Heng Yi sat down on the shore and wept. Much later, he explained that in Beijing he had had a private message to the effect that the emperor had given way to his tougher advisers and signed the order for the immediate beheading of Parkes and Loch (in the expectation that their execution would so frighten the allies that they would desist from an attack on the capital). He, Heng Yi, had been on tenterhooks during their tea-time conversation lest the imperial messenger, carrying the execution order, should reach Prince Gong before the precise time the prince had already specified for the two men's release. In fact, the messenger carrying the execution order with the emperor's seal had arrived a mere fifteen minutes or so after Parkes and Loch emerged from Beijing's walls. If he had arrived twenty minutes earlier, even Prince Gong would not have been able to save the two Englishmen.

Four days later, three more Frenchmen and eight Sikhs were sent to the allied camp, followed shortly afterwards by two more Sikhs. After a few more days the British camp also received coffins with the bodies of de Normann, Bowlby, Anderson, Private John Phipps and the remaining Sikhs, while the French also received the bodies of most of their missing men, including Colonel Grandchamps – whose body could only

be recognised by the stripes on his trousers – Messrs Ader and Dubut and three soldiers. Altogether, of the 26 British and 13 French negotiators who had become captives, only thirteen British and five Frenchmen returned alive.

From survivors' tales it emerged that the prisoners had been brought to Beijing and paraded through the streets, then brought to the Summer Palace and put into tents in some courtyard. Then their feet and hands were bound, they were split into four groups and taken to four different prisons outside the city. They were tied or chained, tortured and some of them left night and day in the open. Many were denied food and drink and forced to lie, without moving, on their backs and therefore with their whole weight resting on their own bound hands and wrists. Most of those who died did so in great agony, with infection, gangrene and maggots spreading from their bound and swollen arms, wrists and fingers. Tom Bowlby of *The Times*, for instance, 'died on the second day after we arrived from maggots forming in his wrist. He was dressed in a sort of grey suit. His body was left lying where it was for three days and on the fourth it was tied to a cross beam and thrown over the wall to be eaten by the dogs'.[16] For several of the men, the jailers had taken care repeatedly to wet their cords, so as to tighten them further. The captives were carried into a courtyard and left exposed to sun and rain for three days and nights without food or water. If they moved, they were kicked and beaten. When they pleaded for food, some dirt was forced into their mouths and they were kicked about the head. At the end of the third day, a little food was handed out and irons put on their hands and feet. Wolseley later commented, having seen the evidence, that 'up to the day of his [i.e. Phipps'] death, he never lost heart, and always endeavoured to cheer up those around him when any complained or bemoaned their cruel fate'.

Father de Luc and Garnet Wolseley's substitute, Captain Brabazon, had apparently been simply beheaded at Palikao on the day of the battle for the stone bridge. Evidently, as noted earlier, the Chinese commander there had indeed been mortally wounded during the engagement and, the reports said, had ordered their executions before his own death, and their bodies were most probably dumped into the canal. There were rumours later on that two headless bodies were seen floating in it, and several months later some Chinese pointed out a spot where they said the bodies had been buried. A search was made, and besides bones, a piece of cloth with a red stripe and a small piece of silk were found in the grave. These remnants were sent to England. The first was pronounced to be part of

an artillery officer's trousers and the second part of the dress of a French ecclesiastic. No heads or skulls were ever discovered.

The allies' coolies suffered, if anything, even worse treatment. Any caught by the Chinese were buried up to their necks and left to the dogs, who started by licking the victims' faces and went on to chew their heads off. No wonder that British and French troops clamoured for vengeance.

Apart from these horrors, Elgin and Gros were left with two closely linked problems. One was, of course, the fulfilment of the strategic purposes of the entire campaign, especially the ratification, at a public ceremony in Beijing itself, of the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin. The other was how to deal with the consequences, including, not least, the longer-term political consequences, of the Chinese treatment of those 39 allied prisoners. On 17 October Elgin wrote to Prince Gong explaining that the previous allied demands would have to be amended in light of the deceptive and barbarous treatment of the allied hostages, half of whom had been murdered despite the prince's own assurances about their safety. The Chinese may well have been astonished at the fuss the allies made about a handful of not especially distinguished men.

The allied demands would clearly also have to take account of the military situation. The Chinese army might have been defeated and withdrawn from Beijing, but it was by no means destroyed. Beijing itself and its walls were very strong. As the allied generals insisted, the army was much too small for any attempt at a full-scale siege, while its field artillery was by no means certain to make much of an impression on city walls that were sixty feet thick and forty feet high. The allies also had important advice from Ignatiev. In a note dated 25 September, the general described details of the Beijing wall and mentioned that inside it, just north-east of the mandarin quarter of the city, were the homes of some thousands of the 'royal Tartar Guard' with their families. So if allied forces tried to assault the city, there might be a good deal of street fighting.

Moreover, the allied force was now, as everyone knew, under very great time pressure. Beijing's looming winter was sure to be very severe, as usual. The army, as several of its commanders insisted, could not spend the winter at Beijing, either outside or even inside the city, for winter and icy rivers would cut off the flow of supplies from their bases at Tianjin, let alone from the ships at sea. In fact, the army would have to be back at Tianjin by the beginning of November, or it might get seriously caught by the winter snow and ice. Furthermore, fresh strains were arising between

the allies themselves. Elgin even worried privately whether the French and Russians might start to make common cause against Britain.[17]

The defenders of Beijing had their own concerns. Nothing much was heard from the emperor, who remained far away in the North; and even Prince Sang was distant and seemed to be quite inactive.

Elgin resolved the dilemmas by writing coldly to Prince Gong that he was still ready to make peace, but China would now have to pay an additional 300,000 taels of silver by 22 October, to be distributed to the allied victims of Chinese brutality or their families. In addition, the allied armies would destroy the remnants of the already ravaged Summer Palace, where some of the allied hostages had been held. The imperial government would also have to agree that a portion of the allied army would remain at Tianjin until the indemnities required by the convention had been paid. In addition, Elgin reminded Gong that it was, after all, the allies who, although they were engaged in the military occupation of Canton, continued to pay its entire customs revenue most honourably into the imperial treasury; that it had for some time been allied military forces who had been largely responsible for preventing Shanghai from falling to the Taiping rebels; and it had been the allied fleets that had afforded unmolested passage through allied-dominated seas and rivers to the junks carrying corn and tribute to Beijing. If peace were not promptly concluded, these concessions would cease. And if the allied demands were rejected, the allies would have to seek reparations by other means; indeed, only by accepting the allied demands could the Qing dynasty seriously hope to survive.

It was also formally agreed that the allied army would not take over Beijing but bivouac outside the walls. That catered, at one and the same time, to the repeated Chinese worries about domestic political stability, especially if Beijing was actually occupied, and also given the need to keep allied soldiers secure in their own camp and not exposed to whims or resentments of the huge Chinese population of the capital. Montauban actually composed a proclamation to the population of Beijing explaining that, although the city was now in the power of the allied troops, as a gesture of goodwill to the inhabitants, they would not occupy the city.

The ultimatum was presented to Prince Gong, ordering him to surrender the city's Anting Gate by noon on 12 October, so as to ensure the security of allied negotiators or ambassadors. Yet it was clear that if the walls were as stoutly defended as the Dagu forts and the Palikao Bridge had been, and if Prince Sang's Mongol cavalry was still free to harry the supply lines between Beijing and Tianjin, the army could easily find itself in

serious trouble. Even now, not everyone was confident that the army had the wherewithal to batter down the wall and gates if the Chinese refused to open them. These walls, which not only turned out to be some forty feet high and sixty-four feet wide at the top, were also sheathed with brick and contained a filling of earth. 'I knew too well', Wolseley wrote later, 'that with the number of rounds we had with us, no effective breach could be hoped for'.[18] A century later the ancient walls did indeed crumble under Comrade Mao Zedong's bulldozers, but for now the British guns might not be enough. Still, on the day before the ultimatum expired, 12 October, the allies published a proclamation for the benefit of the inhabitants of the capital, warning that if peace was not made by midday on the 13th, an allied attack on Beijing would commence. Apparently, the merchants of the city went in a body to Prince Gong to urge him to give up the Anting Gate. The prince seems to have replied that to comply with their wishes might cost him his life, but he would yield if they declared their united desire that he should do so. The allies were duly told that if the treaty were signed and the prisoners returned to the allies, the city would remain undamaged, and only those allied soldiers detailed to be escorts to Elgin aand Gros should enter Beijing.

The allies issued an order to their troops that there must be no destruction of property in Beijing and took care to post notices warning the people of Beijing of the impending attack on the capital. But Gong, after wavering, decided to have the northern Anting Gate duly opened to General Napier a few minutes before the noon deadline on the 13th, when the British 8-inch guns and lighter French pieces were due to start firing. The allies immediately sent detachments to take charge of the gate, as well as the wall of the city, which its inhabitants had always thought to be impregnable. The French marched in with drums beating and colours flying and took station to the left of the gate while Napier and the British 67th regiment, together with the 8th Punjabis and Desborough's artillery battery, did so on the right. Each of them posted a battery to command the approaches to the gate – from inside the city as well as outside. Interestingly, the citizens seemed to have no fear of the barbarians, for almost the first thing they did was to set up a small market to sell chickens, fruit and other goods to the soldiers.

Some hours after the surrender of the gate, eight more Sikhs and some Frenchmen were released by the Chinese, and two days later five carts arrived, each carrying a coffin and each coffin with a piece of paper with the name of the deceased. During the next two days the remaining coffins

arrived. Most of the contents were in such a state of decomposition that it was only by their garments that the remains of Tom Bowlby of *The Times*, Lt. Anderson, Private Phipps and eight Sikhs could be identified. It turned out that the Chinese had put quicklime into the coffins, which no doubt helped to account for the fact that their features could not be recognized.[19] De Normann was identified by his boots and a piece of the leather coat he always wore. Anderson was also recognised by his clothes, as were Phipps and Bowlby.

In the meantime, Ambassador Ignatiev tried to extend his mediation efforts to communications between Prince Gong and General Hope Grant. Ignatiev had, of course, acted for some time as a kind of adviser to the Chinese. He had even had a hand in formulating Chinese letters to the British and French, in an effort to pave the way for good solutions not only to the allied dilemmas but to the remaining Sino–Russian border differences.

For Elgin, there remained the huge issue of the mistreatment of the allied hostages and of what punishment should be inflicted. The Russian ambassador kindly offered the use of the Russian cemetery north of the city; the coffins of the British were buried there, starting on the 17th, with Montauban and several French officers also in attendance. The Sikh bodies were turned over to their comrades to be burned in accordance with their beliefs, with the ashes also left to their compatriots. The French followed with a somewhat more elaborate ceremony for their own people on 28 October in a Catholic cemetery. China had conceded it to Portuguese missionaries 200 years earlier, and it was now restored to its Catholic bishop, Monseigneur Mouly. In the funeral procession, with Hope Grant and his staff in attendance, each body was on an artillery wagon covered with black velvet and the band of the Rifles playing a slow march. The burial included a curious ceremony in which each French soldier in the procession marched past the grave and fired his rifle into it. By the end, the coffins were covered in cartridges or cartridge paper. A day later, the Beijing cathedral, originally built in 1657 and now restored by soldiers and Chinese Christians, saw its first service in the restored structure, with a military band in place of an organ. Mass was celebrated, and the service culminated in a Te Deum. Roman Catholics from the British army, especially the Irish, joined in.

Beyond that, Elgin was resolute about exacting punishment for the scandalous way in which his 'heralds' – the Parkes party riding under a white flag of truce – had been treated. Indeed his immediate reaction to the discovery

of the coffins and their contents was to write a note to Prince Gong to say he was too horrified to have further communication with a government guilty of such treachery until, by some great punishment inflicted on the emperor and the governing classes, he had made clear to the entire world how the allies detested such conduct.[20] There had also been an imperial edict offering a monetary reward for the heads of the foreigners. In fact, Elgin considered privately that it was not just the Chinese who were to blame: he thought his own army commanders had been much too dilatory in moving forward against Beijing. But some spectacular act of punishment for the atrocities was obviously called for. The emperor himself was beyond reach. Beijing could not reasonably be harmed, and in any case the point was to punish the emperor and the court, not the people of China, with whom Elgin did not think he was at war. An outright occupation of Beijing would simply be treated by the broad mass of Chinese as a final imperial defeat and the end of the dynasty. There was, of course, the emperor's major palace in Beijing itself, but, given its immediate governmental role, its destruction might deal a severe blow to the entire social and political structure of the empire. A further financial penalty could certainly be imposed, but the burden of that would only, in the end, have to be carried by the mass of the tax-paying people. Nor would it be helpful to ask that the directly guilty Chinese officials be surrendered: the Chinese would merely hand over a few helpless scapegoats. But there was the Summer Palace, where many of the prisoners had actually been held and which was already devastated by looting – not just by the allied soldiery but by the hordes of Chinese who had followed in their wake. The destruction of that already ruined palace would represent a great blow to the person and prestige of the ruler, without damaging the people of China.

The British generals liked Elgin's idea, but the French were horrified. As one French officer wrote, it was destruction just for the pleasure of destroying something. Both Montauban and Gros were shocked by the very idea of destroying the remnants of that lovely palace. Neither was willing to make a row about it, but the French refused to join in the work. Ignatiev, too, disapproved of the idea of destroying the Summer Palace, or even of exacting indemnities for the families of the dead. However, Elgin insisted, and Ignatiev and Montauban finally agreed that burning the wrecked Summer Palace might be the least bad option. Gros saw even further. He wrote to Montauban pointing out that in the eyes not only of the Chinese but of the peoples of Europe, France would be guiltless of what was being done to the Summer Palace. In any event, on 18 and 19 October, the British 1st Division

under Sir John Michel, together with some cavalry, moved slowly through the huge park, setting fire to its 200 or so buildings, which were mostly of wood and burned easily. He was personally not unaffected: he even spared one pagoda because of its 'simple beauty' as a work of art. Even so, what remained of the ravaged palace took three days to burn down. Whatever was left was further looted by the swarms of peasants from the surrounding countryside. A pall of smoke and ash drifted over Beijing. 'When we entered the gardens', wrote Garnet Wolseley mournfully, 'they reminded one of those magic grounds described in fairy tales; we marched from them upon the 19th October, leaving them a dreary waste of ruined nothings'.[21] When, shortly afterwards, some of China's highest officials were allowed to come and see what had been done, they simply sat down and wept. As against that, Sidney Herbert wrote again to the Queen privately to say that the peace treaty would never have been secure had the Summer Palace not been burnt down, and had the Chinese not been frightened by thinking of what else the allies might do.

One more small alarm was raised when it was discovered that a force of Tartar cavalry was found at no great distance from the British camp. So on the 22nd, Probyns and Fane's regiments were sent to find out what was going on. The officer in command of the Tartars explained that they were merely the garrison of the city that had been ordered to camp outside the walls. Hope Grant took due precautions, but there was no trouble.

Prince Gong, in spite of his many difficulties, accepted the final Elgin/Gros ultimatum, and the immediate and increased indemnity to the British was duly paid by 23 October, that to the French two days later.

*

Thus, on 24 October 1860, James Bruce, Eighth Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, the British plenipotentiary and high commissioner in China, sat himself in a green sedan chair with streaming tassels and was carried in procession by sixteen Chinese porters in scarlet livery[22] – the style normally reserved for the emperor of China – through Beijing's main avenue to the Hall of Ceremonies. He was escorted by 100 cavalry and 400 infantry marching with fixed bayonets. Some detachments headed the parade. They were followed by the British military commander, Lt General Sir James Hope Grant. Behind him came Elgin in person, flanked by members of his diplomatic staff and followed by his saddled horse. The rear of the procession was brought up by more British infantry. The processional route, through Beijing's main avenue to the Hall of Ceremonies, was lined

by more British troops: some 2000 soldiers of Sir John Napier's second division, who had been sent earlier to guard against any sudden Chinese assault and now kept back large crowds of curious Chinese. Earlier in the day, Lt Col Wolseley had personally inspected the hall and its grounds so as (remembering Beitang) to guard against any possibility of treacherously buried Chinese mines; and a battery of field guns was mounted on Beijing's city wall near the Anting Gate, aimed inwards, in case of trouble from the people of the capital. In the event, according to Loch, the crowds were well behaved and silent and showed neither fear nor hostility. Progress for the procession was slow, with many stops, partly because of the cumbersome manoeuvres of a grand total of 6000 to 8000 allied soldiers in the city, partly because of the crowds that had come to see the spectacle and partly because of the heavy dust raised by the procession itself over several miles.

As Elgin's chair was carried into the Hall of Ceremonies, his escort deployed to each side. He was received by the emperor's brother, Prince Gong, accompanied by a large number of mandarins, many in silk ceremonial robes. As Elgin entered, with the English officers lining up on the left and the mandarins on the right, a guard of honour presented arms and a military band played 'God Save the Queen'. Loch thought that Gong was duly terrified.

The prince was dressed for the occasion in a purple silk robe embroidered with dragons, yellow trousers and wearing a jade necklace. But he had already lost face through being kept waiting by Elgin for two and a half hours, not to mention arriving in a sedan chair carried by merely six porters. Gros thought it had been bad taste for Elgin to keep Prince Gong waiting for so long, and the prince had felt very hurt. In the hall, two tables were set, facing the courtyard, each with a chair. Elgin took his place on the left and Gong on a lower seat some fifteen feet to the right. There was another chair, close to Elgin's, for General Hope Grant and tables and chairs for other senior officers on the side. Protocol required that Elgin and Gong sit down simultaneously, a manoeuvre they managed successfully. They then signed a new Treaty of Beijing, which contained the provisions of the old Treaty of Tianjin that had been concluded back in 1858[23] plus the provisions of the allied ultimatum of March 1860. Two provisions had been added. In one, China ceded to Britain the peninsula of Kowloon, which Parkes had originally rented from the governor general of Canton. The other was to legalise the emigration of coolies. To record the proceedings, minutes were drawn up in duplicate, one for each side.

Elgin then explained that the terms of the treaty were more in China's interests than in Britain's and that, if Britain deigned to sign it, that was a demonstration of leniency towards China and a dynasty that, had they wished, they could have overthrown. The memory of the Chinese government's recent bad faith could only be expunged by China's paying strict attention in future to the terms of the new treaty, after which the prince offered a ceremonial banquet, which was coolly declined (partly for fear of poison).

All the pomp and circumstance was not just arrogance on the part of the victor. In fact, as one French diplomat shrewdly noted, Elgin's behaviour was meant to make a highly political point – especially after the reception accorded to Lords Macartney and Amherst (who had tried a Macartney-style visit in 1815/1816, with even less success) over the past century – that Britain was not so much signing a treaty of peace as a treaty of conquest. It was all meant to make a critically important point to the Chinese empire and its people. To rub it in, Elgin behaved throughout with studied formality and an air of superiority. Many of the British, Wolseley included, thought that the display of military power would have a highly beneficial influence on future Anglo–Chinese relations. Loch, in fact, noted that the whole affair meant the opening of an entirely new chapter, not just in the history of the Chinese empire, but for the entry of 400 million people into the 'concert of civilized nations'. He himself was at once sent off to London with a copy of the treaty. When he arrived, in the midst of continuing stories about the ordeals of the prisoners, he found himself lionised, even by royalty.

Furthermore, the British lingered in and around Beijing until a Chinese translation of the British and French treaties, carrying Prince Gong's signature, had been prepared and posted in the main streets for citizens to peruse. The populace did not seem to mind much. The allies had, after all, been victorious not only over the disliked Manchu mandarins who were, when all was said and done, themselves foreigners, but over an unworthy emperor who had already lost the 'mandate of heaven' in their eyes.

Matters were somewhat less severe the next day, on 25 October, when the French came to sign and ratify their own treaties. Fifteen mounted mandarins in full dress received the ambassador at the city gate and escorted him to the Tribunal of Rites. Prince Gong was again formally dressed, and the French commander, General Cousin-Montauban, was in full dress uniform. But the French plenipotentiary, Baron Jean Gros, had lost his court uniform in the shipwreck coming out to China, so he arrived

simply in a dark suit, though topped with a braided cap. Instead of British red coats and troopers, there were Spahis with scarlet mantles and new saddle cloths and African chasseurs with sky-blue turbans. There was also a squadron of mounted artillery, apparently – given the loss and damage done during transport in the long journey to China – in uniforms made by Chinese tailors in Shanghai. There were also the drums and bugles of the French army and the band of the 101st Regiment. Once again, the crowds did not show the least resentment during the long march of the procession through the city, which took, the French calculated, over an hour and a half. The treaty documents were first exchanged, so that the seals could be verified. Then the French copy was transcribed onto fine parchment and the Chinese one onto tablets of gilded wood, after which the two principals appended their signatures. This time, after the signing ceremony, Baron Gros gave the prince photos of Emperor Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie, together with a collection of French coins. This time, too, the refreshments offered by the Chinese were accepted.

Between them, the British and French documents and their signatories agreed that peace was now re-established between the three empires. The Chinese emperor expressed 'profound regret' about the clash with the allies at Dagu in June 1859. China would pay a war indemnity of eight million taels of silver (instead of the two million provided for in the old Tianjin Treaty). That was made up of two million for damages and six million for the cost to the allies of the war. This was in addition to the opening of many more ports to foreign trade, as had been previously agreed. The port and city of Tianjin would also become accessible. Those citizens of the signatory empires who carried consular passports would have freedom to travel and trade, and security of their property throughout China. China's own customs tariffs would be revised (including the legalisation and taxation of the opium traffic instead of importing it as contraband with the cooperation of so many Chinese officials). The allies would have the right to spend the winter in China and keep garrisons there until such time as the indemnities had been paid in full. And the ambassadors of the two allied nations would have the right of residence in Beijing and would be able to deal directly with the highest officials and ministers of the emperor.

In addition, not only did the British confirm their possession of Kowloon, opposite Hong Kong, but the allies agreed to evacuate the Zoushan islands – much to the disgust of Montauban, who had hoped they would give to France a China foothold equivalent to Hong Kong.

Also, of special interest to France and to French Catholics, China would give freedom of worship to Christian denominations and ministers of religion and return religious property that had previously been confiscated. But then, as Armand Lucy of Gros' staff sardonically noted, the British had fought for trade and the French only for a religious idea; the settlement had re-opened China's gates to opium, while France had only had them opened to Western religious missions. Indeed, later in the day of the French treaty ceremony, the new Roman Catholic bishop of Beijing was formally installed, and French troops withdrew from the city with only one battalion left to guard the diplomats.

With the formalities completed, the British, French, Russian and American envoys all received gifts from the Chinese. Gros, for example, received fifteen lacquered boxes with complete and exquisite meals, accompanied by all kinds of fruit. Montauban, on his return from the signing ceremony, found eight porters in Gong's livery carrying boxes of red lacquer with delicacies such as swallows' nests, shark fins and peewit eggs. Also, on 1 November, just before the French left Beijing, Gong paid a friendly visit to Gros. He was served a European-style collation, and the Chinese managed to pay ample attention to the foi gras and champagne.

Once the treaty documents were signed, allied officials and soldiers could at last wander round and explore Beijing, the city they had approached with such great expectations. For most of them it turned out to be a huge disappointment. Wolseley devoted a whole chapter of his book to saying how disappointed everyone had been. Before they got there, everyone had dreamed of the supposed marvels of this great city, allegedly the greatest and loveliest in the world. In fact, the visitors thought, there was a sad monotony to the streets and houses, even though, admittedly, the capital was a little cleaner and the air less sickening than the conditions apt to be found in other Chinese towns. Beyond that, though, Beijing proved to be far from impressive. Officers and soldiers had expected to see a great, mysterious and wonderful city. What they found was just a miserable and somewhat squalid one, with relatively few inhabitants, and everything covered in black dirt. One soldier of the French 102nd Regiment noted that there was nothing grand or beautiful or even interesting. The houses seemed poor and the city just dirty. Lieutenant Colonel Dupin saw moral and material decay everywhere, and others saw mostly filth and mud.

Some days later allied officials were invited on guided tours of the Forbidden City itself. They were allowed to see the courts and gardens of the emperor, but of course not the apartments of the imperial ladies. Here,

too, while the visitors were impressed by the beauty of statues and doorways, they were unimpressed by the dilapidated state of many of the buildings. Some thought the whole thing fairly ugly and disappointing: the imperial winter palace was just a ruin. It was all very different from the impressions that the Western public had derived from the Summer Palace riches.

As for the objects taken from the Summer Palace, in February 1861 many of them were brought back to France and exhibited at the Tuileries Palace. Some two years later the most precious items completed their travels at the Musée Chinois at Fontainebleau. The 1862 exhibition in London also had many items from the palace, including ones that had been presented to Queen Victoria and Emperor Napoleon III; and in March 1865 a private collection of Chinese gems and relics opened in London at the Crystal Palace. It seems likely that certain items in the Chinese collection of the modern British Museum may also have originated in the Summer Palace. China's own attempts to catalogue the items that the allied army removed from Beijing suggest that something like 1.5 million items can currently – in the twenty-first century – be found in some 2000 institutions in 47 countries.

After these Beijing visits, and in short order, an imperial edict was received confirming everything that Prince Gong had signed; and on 6 November large proclamations were posted all over Beijing informing all citizens of the terms of peace that had been agreed.

Yet when all is said and done, arguably the greatest triumph in Beijing was that secured by Ignatiev, who was back in Beijing by mid-October, still mediating between the allies and the Chinese. He managed to secure the Additional Treaty of Beijing, signed on 14 November 1860, that confirmed the agreements of Aigun and finally ceded to Russia the entire region between the Ussuri River and the Pacific Ocean, as well as Sakhalin.[24] These were, as noted earlier, huge territorial gains. Among other things, they finally provided Russia with access to warm water on the Pacific, and they promptly set about building the great port and naval base of Vladivostok.

Appendix: Note on the Fate of British and Indian Captives at Beijing (Evidence taken by the army from prisoners after release, in Loch, Personal Narrative, op. cit., pp. 163–165)

'Deposition of Bughel Sing, sowar, 1st Troop Fane's Horse; and also of Khan Sing, of the same regiment.

'The first day we stopped at a joss house on the side of the road to Pekin; we tied our horses up, and went inside. The Chinese then took them away but brought them back in the morning, and we again mounted. Here two gentlemen left us; we went through Pekin to the other side, and pulled up at a serai; here one of the Chinamen went to ask if we should dismount, and on his return we were taken to some tents. This place had barracks inside, and we went through a large doorway. We had been there half an hour when we were ordered out one by one to wash our hands and faces. They took out the gentlemen first, threw them down in the middle of the yard, tied our hands and feet behind, and threw us over on our backs. From this position, if we attempted to rest on our right or left side, they kicked and beat us. We remained in this position all night during which time they poured water on our bonds to tighten them. Mr De Normann spoke to one of the Chinese officers during the night and told him that we came to treat and not to fight, and they then gave us a little water and rice. The Hindoos would not eat it until Mr Anderson persuaded them to do so, when some of them did. The next day a white button mandarin came to see us. He had many orderlies with him, and took down in writing some answers to questions put by him to Mr De Normann. About two hours after he was gone we were loaded with irons; got nothing more to eat or drink for three days; Mr Anderson's hands were swollen to three times their proper size, and black as ink; the whole weight of his body – chains and all – was thrown on his hands, they looked ready to burst. As long as he was sensible he encouraged us, and rebuked us for calling out; when he became insensible he constantly called out Major Fane, Maclean and others; he became delirious when the chains were put on. On the afternoon of the third day from this, they took four of us away in carts, travelled all night, gave us no food or water, and beat us when we asked for any. Mr Bowlby's hands were not so much swollen; he spoke no Hindostanee, so we could not understand him; at 10 am next day we arrived at a fort, with a few buildings near it, there was no town. Another cart was with us containing duffadar Mahomed Bux, a French officer, very tall and stout, with a brown beard, and a dragoon named Pisa (Phipps). We were taken into the fort, and for three days were out in the open air in the cold. They then pulled us into an old kitchen and kept us there eight days; they never allowed us to stir for three or four days. Mr Bowlby died the second day after we arrived; he died from maggots forming in his wrists; he was dressed in a kind of grey check. His body remained there nearly three days, and the next day it was tied to a crossbeam and thrown

over the wall to be eaten by dogs and pigs. The next day the Frenchman died; he was wounded slightly on the head and hand, apparently by a sword. Maggots got into his ears, nose and mouth, and he became insensible. He had on a black coat, red trousers with black stripe – (Deponent does not give a clear account of dress); – he was tall as Major Probyn, but stouter. Two days after this Jawalla Sing (first Sikh) died; his hands burst from his rope wounds, maggots got into them and he died. Four days afterwards Phipps, King's Dragoon Guards, died; for ten days he encouraged us in every way he could, but one day his hands became swollen like Mr Anderson's, and maggots were generated the next – one maggot increased a thousandfold in a day. Mahomed Bux, duffadar, died ten days ago; he remained very well till then, and abused the Chinese for bringing him pig to eat. Maggots formed on him four days before his death, and his hands were completely eaten away. I should have died had not my chains been taken off.

The Chinaman who brought us here was very kind, he dressed our wounds and gave us what we wanted; when he was absent we got nothing.

The deponent has Mr Bowlby's stockings.'

CHAPTER 10

Departures

As promised to all concerned, not least the Chinese, once the Beijing ceremonies were over, the allied troops left the capital. The escort detachments deployed to ensure the safety of the British and French emissaries left immediately after the major ceremonies. The other troops continued, also as promised to Prince Gong and Guiliang, to bivouac outside Beijing, but they departed by early November. Not so in the rest of China. In fact, the end of the campaign was by no means the end of British or French military activities in the rest of China, especially those in defence of that imperial jewel of a trading port, Shanghai. None of these activities resembled an attempt at territorial or political domination. In fact, some of the units seem to have behaved like inveterate travellers.

The French left Beijing in particular haste, except for the one battalion that stayed on to protect the diplomats. Montauban and his men left on 1 November and arrived in Tianjin five days later. By then it was already very cold. They also found that the countryside through which they marched had been abandoned by its inhabitants. Indeed, it was often ruined by Chinese marauding gangs. They did not just pillage everywhere but burnt down several villages. Some places that the French army had left in a flourishing state were now ruined (and the population naturally blamed the French).

The two British divisions also left promptly, the 2nd on 7 November and the 1st two days later. There was a pause on 8 November with the arrival of Frederick Bruce, Elgin's bother, whom Elgin immediately presented to Prince Gong as the new British ambassador, while Gros presented

H. Gelber, *Battle for Beijing, 1858–1860*,
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de Bourboulon as Bruce's French counterpart. Immediately afterwards, Elgin, Gros and Bruce left with the army for Tianjin, not only for security reasons but so as not to provoke the so-called war party in China by their continued presence. Ignatiev, who had a treaty of his own to sign, did not leave for another fortnight. The last person of the main British party to leave the capital was Harry Parkes, who departed some hours after everyone else. In fact, the travellers were only just in time for a fairly untroubled march since, even as early as the Beijing ceremonies, snow had begun to appear on the Western hills. A week later, ice was starting to show itself on the river. By the end of the month, the greater part of the British force was still able to re-embark at Tianjin, with the cavalry re-embarking downstream at Dagu – but only after a forced march downstream from Tianjin, partly through the heavy snow that began falling on 23 November, by which time the Haihe River was fully frozen over. Still, before leaving, many officers and soldiers managed to sell, sometimes at huge profit, some of their Summer Palace curios to eager Chinese dealers. Meanwhile, Captain Hart Dunne of the 99th Regiment had returned to England and presented his own Summer Palace trophy to Queen Victoria, a Pekinese dog, with its heraldic lion's head. The Queen baptised it, with her customary good sense, as 'Lootie', and it lived on happily in Buckingham Palace, dying only in 1872.

Moreover, now that the China campaign was over and everyone had left Beijing, a number of people took holidays, whether in China itself or in Japan. Oliphant and Wolseley, for instance, journeyed pleasantly to Nanjing and Hankow. Wolseley was courteously received by the Taiping and took extensive notes about them. His conclusion, like that of others before him, was that they were a wretched and brutal lot and militarily weak. Their power stemmed, not from their own strength, but from the weakness of the imperial government. He finally left China in mid-March 1861 and never returned.

In the meantime, on 15 November, Hope Grant and Montauban met and agreed to leave 5000 men from the two armies in Tianjin for the winter, to honour the treaty provision that they would stay on until the Chinese had paid the agreed indemnity. They divided between them the fortifications on the two Tianjin river banks. The French left Collineau with his brigade of some 2700 men, including the 102nd Infantry and two artillery batteries. But Collineau was destined never to leave Tianjin again. He, who had for so long hoped to die as befitted a fighting soldier, sword in hand on some battlefield, died of smallpox in the city in mid-January

1861. Jamin, freshly promoted to General of Division (Major General) and given the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, left for Shanghai. Most of the remainder of the French left for Canton, expecting to join a forthcoming expedition to Cochin-China (Vietnam). Montauban himself left Tianjin on 22 November to visit Japan before returning to Shanghai. Hope Grant left a week later, but directly for Shanghai, together with Lady Grant, who had come up to join him.

The British detachment left at Tianjin was now a composite brigade under Brigadier General Staveley consisting of Fane's Horse, the 2nd Battalion 60th Rifles, the 67th Regiment, parts of the 31st and supporting elements. It was only about six months later, in July 1861, that it was decided that Fane's Horse, the 60th Rifles and the artillery should also leave the city. There was particular pressure to send the Indian troops back to India as soon as possible, as Sidney Herbert suggested in his letter of 10 January 1861: '…Whenever a reduction takes place, the Indian troops should, if possible, be sent home first, as their employment under us… is objected to by some on constitutional grounds…'.[1] Most of the rest of the troops had left for Hong Kong immediately following the Beijing ceremonies, and from there some would go to India and four regiments left for England. In the meantime, thievery and looting in Tianjin had become so common that the allied missions decided to appoint a Chinese agent for Dagu.

It was only a year later, in May 1862 and after a bad winter had brought much illness to the troops, that the headquarters of the 67th Regiment moved down to Shanghai, though even then some elements remained at Dagu until January 1864. The regiment did not leave China until July 1865, when it was posted to the Cape of Good Hope. Altogether, by April/May 1862 some 2800 British and Indian troops were stationed in Shanghai to protect the city and its surroundings, whose defences by imperial forces continued to be weak. Prince Sangkolinsin himself, trying to deal with the Taipings on behalf of the emperor and with some 8000 cavalry and large clouds of militia at his disposal, was so short of artillery that he had to ask the allies to give back some of their captured Chinese guns. Not incidentally, the presence of allied troops at Tianjin and Shanghai may well have helped to keep Chinese rebel forces in Shandong and Shansi in check and to avoid assaults on Beijing. The allied force at Shanghai itself included the British 31st, the 67th and the 99th Foot, as well as the 5th Bombay and the 22nd Punjab Native Infantry, together with some marines and naval landing parties. These defences were by then

under the command of Brigadier General Staveley, who had moved down from Tianjin. Casualties were light, but there was a good deal of sickness, mostly from the typhoid and cholera in the region. In April and May 1862 there were even some minor actions by Franco–British forces in the Shanghai area against the Taipings, in which one Aide de Camp (ADC) on the French side was the interesting Prince Wittgenstein of the 1st Prussian Lancer Guards, while the French Admiral Auguste Protet was killed. There was also some recruitment of local Chinese auxiliaries, including, (as mentioned and) in succession to the American adventurer Frederick Townsend Ward, the British Major Charles Gordon. He was so effective, and the grateful Shanghai merchants praised his services so loudly, that he became known to the newspapers as 'Chinese' Gordon. His life ended much later, famously and heroically, when he was 'martyred' at Khartoum in the Sudan by the forces of the local religious leader, the Mahdi.

The 31st Foot did not leave China until the end of June 1863, when they embarked for England. The 44th, who had arrived in China from Madras by March 1860 and been detached in September to Shanghai on anti-Taiping operations, were by November in Hong Kong, which they left in October 1861 to return to India. The 99th Regiment returned to Canton and later to Hong Kong, from where a detachment was sent to Shanghai where they took a nearby rebel camp in April 1862. Not until the end of February 1865 did the regiment complete its tour in China and sail for South Africa, with the exception of one company, which had left for the Dagu forts in October of the previous year and rejoined the regiment in South Africa only seven months later. The 67th and 99th Foot, who left in 1865, may have been the last English troops to leave China.

Elgin, on his circuitous way back to England, called at Hong Kong, where he was horrified once more by the brutal behaviour of the British towards the Chinese. He then returned home to London and to an enthusiastic reception, both in the government and in Parliament, where his contemporaries felt that he had done very well indeed. So did Queen Victoria. In fact, he found that he, like Loch, had become something of a national hero. Palmerston noted that no one had behaved better than Elgin. Sidney Herbert again wrote to him, this time to say that everyone was very satisfied with the way things had been done. The campaign had been managed with skill and firmness and been a signal success. No one seems to have had a word of criticism about the burning of the Summer Palace. More generally, almost everyone in England, as well as in the army, was full of admiration for the excellent way in which the campaign had

been run. Not only the actual fighting but the ancillary activities and services had been admirably handled. This time, supply and medical services had been as well managed as the technologies of the day permitted, and wounded soldiers were given excellent care on the hospital ships. Hope Grant and his subordinate commanders had seen carefully to baggage and supply of all kinds, whose crucial importance they had themselves experienced first hand, whether in the Crimea or in India.

Nor had the campaign been outrageously expensive. According to a later calculation by the War Office in London, the total number of troops in China from February to November 1860 had been some 14,000 at a total cost of £4,680,000. Of the 14,000 approximately three quarters had been British troops and one quarter Indian. And, the War Office remarked coolly, 'A French force of some 7,000 also cooperated.'[2]

Unsurprisingly, then, Elgin had not been a month at home when Lord Palmerston offered him the greatest prize he had always hoped for: the viceroyalty and governor-generalship of India. It had been his earliest and greatest ambition and meant he would now attain the post in which he could succeed his old college friend Earl Canning. By the time he reached India, much had already been done to reorganise the Indian administration, shattered as it had been by the 1857 mutiny. He carried on, with dignity and firmness, the sensible policies of his predecessor towards the British feudatories. He also did his best to check the aggression of the Dutch in Sumatra, which was contrary to existing treaties, and tried to deal, as his predecessors had also done with indifferent success, with the north-west frontier and turbulent locals in Afghanistan (rather as the American General David Petraeus would try, in the same country and with equally indifferent success, a century and a half later). Eventually, Elgin marched a force to the border to punish the tribes who had violated previous engagements. In the midst of this 'little war', and at the lovely hill station of Dharamsala, 'the place of piety', he died of a seizure on 10 November 1863. Neither on the frontier nor in Afghanistan did he leave any lessons very useful to his successors.

The victorious general Sir James Hope Grant was received by the Queen and given the gold and jade sceptre that had been taken from the Summer Palace. He also received the thanks of Parliament for his performance in China. In 1861 he was confirmed as lieutenant general and appointed commander-in-chief of the army of Madras. Three years later he was brought back to London and became Quartermaster General in the army's central administration, the Horse Guards. But in 1870 he

took up what may have become his most influential role: commanding the army depot and camp at Aldershot. After the Franco–Prussian War of 1870 he changed the British army's manoeuvring system for the exercises of 1871–1873. He also introduced military lectures and war games and, not surprisingly given his deep religious faith, warmly supported every institution for the social and religious welfare of everyone under his command. He was promoted to full general in 1872 and died three years later.

Wolseley continued to meet Napoleon's chief criterion when considering an officer for higher command: he was lucky. But there was more to him than luck. He continued to have a sharp tongue, deep-rooted prejudices about Britain's honour and the glory of the empire and a waspish view of his seniors. The commander-in-chief of the army was the Queen's cousin, the Duke of Cambridge. Yet to Wolseley he was 'the Royal George, the Great German Sausage'. Still, Wolseley saw active service in almost every war the empire fought in the second half of the nineteenth century. His service in Burma, India and the Crimea had shown him the serious weaknesses of the existing army system, and he became a strong supporter of the Cardwell Reforms of the British army. These were introduced between 1868 and 1874 by Edward Cardwell, the Secretary of State for War and protégé of William Gladstone. They centred on short-service enlistment, the creation of a trustworthy army reserve and an end to the selling and purchasing of officer commissions.

Not only did Wolseley become one of Cardwell's protégés but, once he reached senior rank, he enthusiastically supported other reforms. Everyone in London understood that, when Gilbert and Sullivan wrote their opera "Pirates of Penzance", it was Wolseley who was their 'very model of a Modern Major-General' (indeed, Disraeli once called him 'our only soldier'). He ended his service life as Field Marshal Lord Wolseley, Commander-in-Chief of the entire British army, in succession to the Duke of Cambridge.

As for Harry Parkes, he returned after the war to his post at Canton and a year later received his knighthood. In 1865 he was appointed minister to Japan, a post he held for eighteen years. In 1882 he was transferred to Beijing, where he died three years later of malarial fever.

French attitudes were very different. Napoleon III's foreign policy caused much dissatisfaction, especially his intervention in the Americas in 1861–1867, when he tried and failed to make the Austrian Archduke Maximilian the emperor of Mexico. The French economy worsened, and Napoleon's foreign failures strengthened opposition at home. In January

1870 he appointed Olivier-Émile Ollivier as a more liberal prime minister and tried to stop Prussian expansion into southern Germany, even to the point of declaring war. On 2 September, following the Battle of Sedan, he was forced to surrender to the victorious Prussians and was deposed.

French views on the China campaign were also rather different from those in England. Gros concluded that his mission and its results might have been a milestone in the history of humanity and, apart from a seat in the French senate, retired contentedly into obscurity. Charles Cousin-Montauban, on the other hand, returned to Paris as the hero of the China campaign. But general French opinion about the sack and destruction of the Summer Palace was hostile. The French did not forget the affair, which was widely regarded as a crime and a cultural disaster. Victor Hugo condemned it as the 'History of Two Bandits'. It was held against Montauban so badly that it helped to prevent his promotion to marshal, and when the emperor tried to get him an annual public grant of 50,000 francs, the deputies in Parliament would have none of it. Napoleon withdrew his proposal. Still – and this only became known in 1871, after the collapse of the French empire – he privately conferred some 600,000 francs on Montauban, possibly from Chinese indemnity payments. On the other hand, Emperor Napoleon III promoted him to the nobility with the title of Comte de Palikao (unkind tongues jeered that he might have become Duke of Beijing). In March 1861 he was made senator and went on to hold various staff and command appointments in the army.

More importantly, in April 1870 and at the age of 74, he was summoned to be Secretary of State for War in the Cabinet of Émile Ollivier, and when Ollivier resigned soon after the outbreak of the Franco–Prussian war of 1870, it was the hero of Palikao who, at the insistence of the empress who wanted the emperor to command his armies in person, was nominated president of the council (prime minister) and minister for war. In spite of some sterling efforts in the supply and management of that war, Palikao and the entire government were simply swept from power after the disaster of Sedan, when the major French army, as well as the emperor himself, surrendered to the Prussians. The empire disappeared. The empress was smuggled out of the Tuileries Palace and made her way to England. The new French Republic tried to continue the war, but without success and, after peace was made with the Germans, was itself overtaken by the Paris Revolution of 1871 that produced the "Commune". With the end of the empire, Palikao withdrew into private life and died at home in Paris in 1875.

Altogether, Paris opinion said that the China War had, after all, been a fairly obscure business. If anyone had gained from it, it was the British, not the French. There had been no great, dramatic battles, no massive casualties, not much demonstrated heroism. Worse still, the soldiers had even become rich. Altogether, it had been an easy and unremarkable victory and an unimportant war.

About that, at least, Paris was quite wrong.

CHAPTER 11

Hindsight: And Aftermath

Part 1: Britain

For the British, the larger role of this China campaign can be considered in several contexts. First are the immediate results with respect to domestic and foreign policies in London politics. Second is the campaign's role in the progress of British religious and trading links with China over the next half-century or more. Third is the campaign's role in the modernisation of British forces in the second half of the nineteenth century. Fourth is its role in setting the scene for the remarkable series of small wars that Britain fought in that half-century, in Africa, Asia, North America and elsewhere. That a man named Mao Zedong might, a century later, highlight the Opium War as a central factor in the 'imperial oppression' of China naturally occurred to no one.

For the government and political class in London, the outcome of the 1860/1861 China expedition was, in fact, entirely satisfactory. The manner as much as the fact of the allied victory, culminating in the formal military ceremonial of Elgin's and Gros' processions through Beijing, confirmed changes that the British had been wrestling with for over half a century. China was forced to accept Britain, through Elgin, as a kind of equal partner in political discussions; more generally, it had to move a long way towards the acceptance of Western principles of national sovereignty and the legal and diplomatic equality of states. More immediately, this led to the desired expansion of trade as well as new or revised treaty arrangements whose provisions the Chinese would actually carry out. Not only

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had trade been expanded but the arrangements for it were satisfactorily regulated,[1] and the rights of traders expanded, in fact very much in line with China's traditional ways of dealing with foreigners. Moreover, while these achievements were very satisfying, the costs of obtaining them, both financial and military, had been small. Britain also avoided any need to acquire territory in China, with the immediate exception of a rock called Hong Kong that was of little significance to the Chinese empire. The French and British had also begun the process of acquiring concessions on Chinese soil that brought obligations Harry Parkes later described as follows: '…The Consul acted as police magistrate hearing disputes between masters and seamen, cases of assault and serious crimes among the foreign community; he dealt as a judge in common law cases; granted probates; sat as a coroner; and generally conducted the legal affairs of the port…At Shanghai the judicial duties of the Consul became so heavy that it was at last found necessary to appoint a separate judge…'.[2] While Chinese armed forces had been humiliated in the field, China had not been damaged or divided, nor had its government been evidently undermined. No wonder that Elgin himself, as well as the senior military commanders, received handsome rewards.

Perhaps above all, China was not weakened, let alone fragmented, in a way that would have increased the reach of Russian power in East Asia and the Pacific. The weaknesses of Chinese society and the state had been clear enough since the Macartney mission to Bejing in 1793/1994. Macartney himself had, as noted earlier, foreseen major weaknesses in his well-known passage about the Chinese empire being '… an old, crazy first-rate Man of War' that now '… can never be rebuilt on the old bottom'.[3] As a consequence of the way in which the Anglo–French campaign had been conducted, therefore, the immediate balance of power in Central Asia remained unaffected. The long-term consequences were another matter. Bowring was not alone in finding that China had violated both natural law and the law of nations, especially in the matter of economic freedom. Others, too, relied on the principle that 'All men ought to find on earth the things they stand in need of…The introduction of dominion and property could not deprive men of so essential a right.'[4] In pursuit of such ideas, and as John Darwin has recently pointed out, 'The spread of British commercial activity was regarded as not only desirable in itself, but as a beneficent, civilizing agency.'[5] At the same time, as Bowring wrote to Foreign Secretary Lord Clarendon: 'It is no unusual characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race that they begin by trading and end in governing.' London

should beware of retelling 'the tale of British India over a vaster field…'. Even so, the Chinese authorities' most important source of revenue, the Maritime Customs Inspectorate, was staffed between 1854 and 1950 by some 5500 British nationals. The Royal Navy even had a fleet of specially constructed gunboats that, among other police actions, patrolled the Yangzi even after the 'leased territory' of Weihai was returned to Chinese rule in 1930. Though other states had their own interests in China, the international settlement was the residence of thousands of Britons, who were exempted from Chinese law, and was policed by British policemen. Hundreds of Catholic and Protestant priests and missionaries, many of them British, lived and worked beyond the cities. The British retained the greatest share of China's foreign trade until the First World War, and altogether the British presence in China remained the most prominent foreign presence until the Japanese invasion of 1931. Furthermore, not only did London play a critical role in developing the colonies in general, but it was now going to be the centre of a well-developed network of international services destined to expand as world trade grew during the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1860 other developments remained in the lap of the future, not least the dramatic rise of Japan following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, and especially the growth of Japanese military and naval power that would lead to the Anglo–Japanese treaty of 1902.

The China expedition also visibly absorbed the lessons of the Indian Mutiny and, no less importantly, of the Crimean War, in the excellent medical and supply arrangements that had supported the China expedition. At the same time, the strategic dominance of the Royal Navy made the campaign possible by its dominance of the China coast and Chinese waters, rendering possible movement at will round China's coasts, from Hong Kong to the Haihe River. Not only that, but the army's march up the Haihe to Tianjin and beyond, to Beijing, would have been far more difficult, if not impossible, but for the ability of the navy to seize and operate a number of junks to transport supplies, and even guns, along the flanks of the army's advance. Indeed, the Royal Navy's role went much further, both then and later, and not just in China but around the world. In China itself, the navy was responsible for transporting troops, horses, supplies and people to and between Hong Kong, the Canton estuary, various islands and Shanghai, and up the Haihe to Tianjin, not to mention the march by the army up to Beijing itself or the transmission of messages to and from the army and London.

Lord Elgin's conduct had been wise. He privately condemned both sides in the China war, sought justice in Sino–British dealings, and thought that he was acting 'as China's friend in all this'. Yet the London government's satisfaction with the conduct and eventual outcome of his campaign was made very clear when he was rewarded with the achievement of his life's ambition – his appointment as viceroy of India (though he died shortly after taking up that post).

What of England's and London's reactions to Elgin's senior commanders? Elgin's success had various consequences of long-term importance. The conduct of the campaign, and particularly the personal experiences of its senior officers, like Hope Grant himself, of Napier and, not least, of Garnet Wolseley, came to play a special role in the fundamental reforms of the British and Indian services in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Hope Grant himself went on to become full general in charge of the Aldershot Division from 1870 to 1875 and was then appointed to lead the reform of education and training systems generally for the forces. Perhaps no less important was the role of Wolseley in helping to promote the large reforms of Edward Cardwell, the secretary of state for war in 1870–1874. The reorganisation of the War Office included making the commander-in-chief no longer an independent potentate but a senior subordinate to the secretary of state. Even more importantly, perhaps, army enlistment 'for life' was replaced by enlistment for twelve years, part of it in the reserve. The purchase of army commissions was abolished, too, and replaced by promotion on merit. Flogging was abolished in both the army and the navy, and the breech-loading rifle became the main infantry weapon.

The 1860 China campaign proved to be highly significant for Britain in other ways, too, and for the longer term. It, and the lessons it brought and which its officers developed, helped to make possible the remarkable tally of small campaigns that the British fought in various far-flung parts of the world during the entire half-century from 1850 to around 1900. That had in turn been made possible by the growth of the empire, and of imperial power, especially in the decades that followed the American War of Independence. Central to it was not just the Royal Navy but the growth of virtually unchallenged British power in India after 1857, which gave London command over India's human and military resources. In India, and taking British and Indian troops together, the British came to have one of the world's largest regular armies to draw on. In the same period came the growth and collapse of Britain's major rival, the French

empire, at first through the French Revolution and then with the collapse of Napoleon Bonaparte's political and strategic edifice. In the same period came Britain's decisive naval victory at Trafalgar, in 1805, which confirmed her naval and commercial command for the time being of the world's major shipping routes. That, in turn, allowed the fast, sudden and often unexpected movement of troops to widely separated points along the coasts not only of India itself but of Africa, Burma and other regions, including China itself in the 1850s and 1860s. That gave the British virtually unchallenged mastery in many places. In the early 1800s it allowed the Royal Navy to ban most of the slave traffic from Africa to North America. It was essential in maintaining supplies during the Indian Mutiny and the Crimean War. It made Wolseley's own most famous and skilful campaigns possible, like the Ashanti War of 1873–1874 or the unexpected disembarkation at Ismailia that made it possible for him to defeat Arabi Pasha at Tel-el-Kebir in 1882 and conquer Egypt, or the Nile expedition of 1884 that sought – and failed – to relieve General Gordon who was being besieged at Khartoum. But it was that combination of command of the ocean, well-drilled and professional soldiers and officers and experience in the field, that gave to quite small British forces a remarkable superiority on many continents for the best part of half a century. It is significant that by 1900 Britain had no less than four viceroys in India and on the coasts of Africa: Lord Curzon in India, Lord Cromer in Egypt, Lord Milner in South Africa and Lord Lugard in West Africa. In 1902 the War Office in London totted up the cost of no less than fifteen principal British wars in the half-century to 1899.[6]

It was only after 1900 that new methods, from the deadly guerilla tactics of the Boer War to the appearance of new weapons, from steel-clad warships to machine guns, to barbed wire and greater varieties of artillery – first demonstrated, actually, in the American Civil War of 1861–1865 – showed how outdated had become the arrangements that Hope Grant and Wolseley had so successfully used in China and Africa a few decades earlier.

There were broader and even longer-term results stemming from Elgin's China campaign, including the now long-standing Chinese conviction that most if not all of China's ills between 1850 and 1950 were the fault of the rich Western powers and Japan and that the "Opium Wars", colonialism and so forth were mere Western aggression. Of course, treating the Chinese as mere objects and the Western powers as the sole actors in these events does scant justice to Chinese views, policies and actions,

let alone to the specifics and personality of Chinese society. The first point here is the skill of Chinese diplomacy and 'psychological warfare' that succeeded in linking British and, later, American political and strategic interests with vague, but often powerful, ideas about the moral obligations that the West 'owed' to China. Second, there was – and still is – the general tendency of the non-conformist conscience to find fault for a variety of social evils and difficulties in one's own shortcomings of work and effort. The fact is that the bulk of the Protestant missionaries in China around the end of the nineteenth century were non-conformists who were horrified – often all too justifiably – by the wretched condition of the Chinese masses and conveyed their views passionately to their home audience. It is hard, once again, not to find parallels in the continuing Western, and especially Anglo-Saxon, tendency to think that whatever goes wrong anywhere in the world seems to be one's own fault; and therefore to see problems of unrest or sickness or poverty in the so-called Third World or Developing World of the 21st century also as stemming from oppression or, at best, neglect by richer countries and requiring solutions by Western action or money. It is much more rarely remarked how largely the consequent demands for governmental and administrative reforms in these regions, and mechanisms to achieve them, merely echo the 'imperialist' motives of earlier periods or the easy latter-day assumptions about Western exploitation.

A third strand of explanation has to do with the rise of anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism that accompanied and followed the rise of the British empire in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and beyond. Here was a trend that not only sympathised with the 'oppressed' peoples of the empire but was apt to link this with the arguably even more urgent needs of the working classes at home. That had obvious links with other elements of changing opinions: the growing appeal of socialist and Marxist ideas to middle-class intellectuals. This was connected, largely simultaneously, with the rise of working-class organisations, notably trade unions. They were destined, by the end of the century and beyond, to produce not just reformist and even revolutionary fervour but, at a quite different level, organisations like the British Labour Party. Naturally the Chinese made excellent use, at home and abroad, of these trends, as did their admirers and defenders.

But other perspectives from and about the 1860 campaign also deserve to be remembered. Perhaps the best – if highly old-fashioned – expression comes from one of the more far-seeing British officers to have served with

Elgin in China and who never went back. It was, once again, Wolseley. He wrote about it forty years after the 1860 campaign, when he had retired, full of years and honours, as Field Marshal Lord Wolseley and commander-in-chief of the whole British army. The Chinese, he said,

> '…are the most remarkable race on earth and I have always thought and still believe them to be among the great coming rulers of the world. They only want a Chinese Peter the Great or Napoleon to make them so. They have every quality required for the good soldier and the good sailor, and in my idle speculation upon this world's future I have long selected them as the combatants on the one side at the great Battle of Armageddon, the people of the United States of America being their opponents...'.[7]

Such ideas have had a distinct resonance in the second decade of the 21st century.

Part 2: China

For the Chinese empire the consequences of the 1860 war were naturally much more far-reaching. It was arguably the first serious foreign (as distinct from domestic rebel) challenge to the 2000-year-old conviction of China's centrality in human affairs and its emperor's unique position as the link with heaven, and therefore his necessary superiority to any other ruler. From which it clearly followed that all other states and rulers were, in principle, China's inferiors and even, in most cases, tributaries. They certainly had no business interfering in China's domestic affairs or the arrangements that China might make in relation to foreign traders and other visitors. The victorious Anglo–French military processions through Beijing, together with the new treaties with the allies, their texts published in Beijing's streets, demonstrated irrefutably that here was the end of an era. For the average Chinese, watching Elgin and Gros processing through the capital, it simply looked like another dynasty coming to replace the worn-out Manchus, whose humiliation meant that they had lost the mandate of heaven. It all underlined the warnings of the old emperors two centuries earlier: that China should beware of letting the foreigners in at all, since they would be sure to disturb the empire's peace and stability. Not to mention its complicated internal structure of provinces and peoples.

On the other hand, the empire's diplomats used their skills with great success on allied susceptibilities. The threat that certain allied demands, for instance about the direct military occupation of Beijing, would lead to a total imperial collapse proved to be very powerful indeed. Imperial collapse, followed by domestic chaos in China, was the last thing the British and French were willing to contemplate, let alone be responsible for. There might be no government left with which to conduct negotiations on anything. Foreign trade would be wrecked and, with it, the highly valuable economic and banking links now running through Canton. Worse still, chaos in China might offer unprecedented opportunities for an even further expansion of Russian power anywhere from Central Asia to the Pacific Rim.

Nevertheless, it became increasingly clear to the Chinese governing classes that not merely the humiliating military defeats of 1842 and 1860 but China's growing general weaknesses as well stemmed from comprehensive shortcomings at every level: military, administrative and diplomatic, not to mention economic and industrial. The most immediately obvious weaknesses were the military ones, whether in weapons, organisation or administration. For all the courage of many of the imperial troops – especially Manchu and Mongol units – there was nothing in the army's organisation or discipline that could match the equivalent arrangements of the British, Indians or French. The strategies adopted by the Chinese commander in chief, Prince Sangkolinsin, turned out to have fundamental shortcomings, although the Chinese leadership was not wrong to think that the threat to the empire posed by the Taiping rebels was altogether more fundamental than that posed by the merely trade-seeking Westerners. After all, it could hardly be said to be a deadly conflict when the empire, facing repeated defeats by the allies on the Haihe River, was simultaneously being defended by British and French troops at Shanghai and elsewhere. Prince Sangkolinsin himself was demoted after the 1860 defeat, though he was later recalled to lead the fight against Nian rebels, who finally ambushed and killed him in 1865.

Behind the Military and Strategic Failings Lay Even Larger Problems. The first and most obvious was the Taiping Rebellion, which threatened the entire structure of the Chinese state and the Manchu dynasty. Chinese official nomenclature made the difference clear by classifying the rebels as an

'organic disease' while the Europeans were merely 'an affliction of the limbs'. It was entirely rational to appease the Westerners while not only devoting major resources and energies to dealing with the Taipings, but even enlisting Western help against these rebels. What was much less sensible was to allow the governing groups to remain in astonishing ignorance about their Western opponents. The emperor's advisers dismissed Britain as just 'a handful of stones in the Western ocean'. Prince Gong himself made that remark to Elgin about supposing that, because Britain must be so tiny, half of the British clearly had to live on ships. It was true that the mandarins had seen something of British diplomatic habits and military structures some twenty years earlier, in the campaign leading to the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing. They could obviously also learn something from merchants or Chinese servants dealing with the English, from having translators scan English-language newspapers, or from overheard conversations. But there was no serious effort at understanding contemporary Western military organisations, equipment or tactics, or to devise ways in which these might be more effectively countered. Still less was there any attempt to understand the British or French governmental and political systems, let alone the *arcana imperii* of Whitehall or, indeed, the governmental systems of any other Western nation that could have produced more effective ways of influencing the politics behind Western military efforts. What makes this even more odd is that senior Chinese officials were not short of subtle intelligence. On the contrary, as Wolseley remarked after looking through the Chinese documentation captured in 1860, some of these papers were 'very clever' and 'showed an extraordinary amount of diplomatic ability' entirely on a par with that of the great fifteenth-century European master of politics, Niccolò Machiavelli. But there was little thought given to influencing the powerful groups in London, mostly on the liberal side of politics, that were anyway disposed to be sympathetic to China.

So, as we have already noted, it was only after the war, in 1861, that China, under the guidance of Prince Gong, by then regent for the new child emperor, established the Zungli Yamen, China's first-ever embryonic foreign office, followed a year later by a foreign language school. Even then, these organisations were not very influential when it came to advising the ruling groups. Yet the reliance on China's weakness, and the threat that its government might collapse, could hardly serve as a longer-term basis for effective foreign policy. As it was, there was a short period of Chinese accommodation with the Western powers. Prince Gong himself concluded that 'if China kept her treaty obligations and treated for-

eigners with good-will and open-mindedness, giving them no cause for complaints, peace would abound'. Soon afterwards, in 1867/1868, there was a successful Chinese goodwill mission to Europe and America, headed by Anson Burlingame, an able and honest American working by then for the Chinese government.

Did the outcome of the war contribute, in any significant way, to the decline of the dynasty that culminated in the revolution of 1911? Quite possibly, though the general decline of both the dynasty and the empire might be said to have begun, at the latest, by 1850 with the death of the old Emperor Daoguang, the accession of the much less able Xianfeng and the outbreak of the Taiping and other, also largely anti-Manchu, rebellions. Xianfeng's authority was certainly weakened by his own ill health and, much more importantly, by his flight from the capital at the approach of allied troops. The spectacle shortly afterwards of foreign troops parading through Beijing – although, in response to Chinese warnings, they carefully bivouacked outside the walls – could not fail to weaken imperial authority further. What made matters worse was that there was not, and could not be, any alternative authority to give direction to China's war or to the government at large, while the emperor fell into depression after his withdrawal from Beijing and even showed signs of dementia. Hence, he left his brother, Prince of the First Rank Gong, to negotiate with the French and British.

Beyond that the emperor did, before his death in August 1861, manage to appoint eight regents for his five-year-old infant son, four of them members of the imperial line and the other four from among senior ministers. After Xianfeng's death, that infant became Emperor Tongzhi, with the eight regents serving as governing authority. But Tongzhi's mother, soon to become the Dowager Empress Cixi, would have none of this. She and Prince Gong, who commanded the troops in and around Beijing, staged a coup. The regents were disposed of and Cixi became dowager empress, at first ruling jointly with the late emperor's chief wife and with Gong named prince regent.

Cixi was a remarkable woman.[8] Born into a moderately high-ranking Manchu family, she became one of Xianfeng's concubines at the age of 16. But when she gave birth to Xianfeng's only male heir, her position changed radically. When she became co-reigning empress after her husband's death, she proved to be a brilliant court politician and manipulator. Personally charming and with great presence, she set about consolidating an iron grip on government. Her principal, if not exclusive, aim was the maintenance

of the Manchu dynasty. In pursuit of that objective she was clever, entirely ruthless – murderous when necessary – and in any case deeply ignorant of the world beyond Beijing. Her firm command of court politics did little to increase her knowledge and sensitivities about foreign and even most domestic affairs. When Tongzhi died in 1875, probably of smallpox, the next in line was Cixi's nephew, who became Emperor Guangxu. But it was Cixi who guided all his decisions, undermined his frequently sensible proposals for reform and eventually imprisoned him on a tiny island in the middle of a lake in Beijing's Forbidden City. She did allow some innovations over time, including an overhaul of the bureaucracy (partly as a result, the imperial army was able to dispose of the Taiping rebels in 1864). But she could also prove to be a major impediment to the introduction of railways and the telegraph and other elements of modernity, lest they produce job losses or lead to excessive foreign influence. And in 1881 she even stopped a programme for sending children abroad to study, lest they come back with dangerous new ideas. (That may have become an even more interesting question in the 21st century, given the very large number of Chinese students at overseas – largely Western – institutions.) Yet, overall, she may have done more good than harm. At the end of the 1880s a foreign diplomat remarked that the foundations of modernisation had probably been laid and that '...it will not be denied by any one that the improvement and progress...are mainly due to the will and power of the empress regent'.

That is not the whole story. It is true that the deeply ingrained assumptions of the entire polity had to do with the Confucian inheritance and principles that were reflected, fundamentally, in the classic writings that formed the bedrock of learning for officials and scholars and from whose established guidance change could only mean decline. The empire had for long been run by a few thousand civil servants or mandarins who were intellectually brilliant but who were also often switched from one region to another to avoid having them become representatives rather than rulers – 'going native' in British imperial terminology. Wherever they were posted, each man – like Commissioner Ye at Canton – was in charge of everything: administration, law and order, the economy and so on. Yet this arrangement proved inadequate. For one thing, there were the effects of China's eighteenth-century population explosion that increased numbers from around 150 millions in 1700 to some 430 millions by 1850. But there was much more, not only because of the foreign incursions and demands but because of the domestic political changes caused by the

rebellions and, especially, the Taipings. As Frederic Wakeman has written: 'Behind the Confucian rhetoric of restoration (once the rebellions had been suppressed) and beneath the ante bellum face of civil administration, important social and political transformations had taken place…[The Tapings]…had failed to defeat the traditional order. But they had forced the regime to defend itself in ways that disturbed the old balance between local and central interests, civil and military wings, and foreign and native ruling elites.'[9] As the centre grew weaker and more ineffective, practical authority, both in military and even defence matters, in local administration and even taxation authority, tended to devolve onto the local gentry. The ordinary Green Standard forces, for instance, were clearly ineffective and had to be replaced by local militias commanded by local gentry. Even regional armies grew in importance. Cixi's bureaucratic changes could not compensate for that.

All in all, things went from bad to worse in the forty years after 1860, with growing domestic and foreign mayhem. Within the empire, the inherited principles and practices, together with the weaknesses of the administrative structure, weakened the fitful attempts at 'self-strengthening' in the 1870s and 1880s. There was no considered or steady acceptance, or imitation, of modern Western industrial ideas and practices or even much acceptance of foreign investments in coal mines, railways or, later, banking. Where the task of modernisation was pursued, it had to be divided among higher provincial officials. Even most wars had to be dealt with by provincial officials as 'border conflicts' in the traditional way. In the 1870s the great reformer Li Hongzhang began the task of building a modern Chinese navy. In the 1880s he bought steel cruisers from England and obtained British advisers and instructors. When the German firm Krupps outbid the British Armstrong, two larger Krupp vessels were added. But then Cixi (or her officials) decided to divert funds to build a new summer palace for the empress dowager. So, in September 1884, when war with France, and later Japan, loomed, it was found that 'they have no shells for the Krupps and no powder for the Armstrongs'.[10] To add insult to injury, some of the navy's shells were found to be full of sand. In any case, the only Chinese forces involved with the Japanese war, when it finally came, were the North China army and fleet, with the forces from Central and South China remaining uninvolved.

Quite contrary to many later assertions, it was not that foreigners were reluctant to help, especially merchants and industrialists interested in coal mining or railways. Nor was it just the British and Americans, though

they may have taken the lead. Others, for instance the Japanese, urged China to reform. Just before the decisive sea battle of the 1894/1895 Sino–Japanese War, a British launch brought a letter from the Japanese admiral to his former friend, the Chinese Admiral Ding. It said, among other things, 'The present situation of your country results from a system under which you [make appointments] solely on the basis of...literary knowledge. [That] has now become outdated...Your homeland, too, must adopt this new manner of living...If it does not, it will inevitably perish... Come to my country, there to await the moment when your homeland requests your participation in an enterprise of reform.'[11] Admiral Ding declined. When the battle led to a crushing Chinese defeat, Admiral Ding turned dutifully in the direction of Beijing and respectfully committed suicide. Or again, at the end of the war and when Li went to negotiate the Treaty of Shimonoseki with Prince Ito Hirobumi, they had a conversation that was recorded in English. Among other things, Li said, 'China and Japan are the closest neighbors and moreover have the same writing system. How can we be enemies?...We ought to establish perpetual peace and harmony...'. Ito replied: 'Ten years ago I talked with you about reform. Why is it...that not a single thing has been changed...?'[12]

Part of the trouble was that, whatever men like Li thought, popular resentment of foreigners and missionaries gathered pace. There were a number of attacks on them, often on the basis of sheer myth. In 1870, for example, rumours circulated in Tianjin that the foreigners were kidnapping children for use in witchcraft, perhaps even to eat them. An infuriated mob stormed a French Catholic orphanage[13] and killed twenty-one foreigners, including the French consul, two priests and ten sisters of charity. At the same time, the French government's expansionist policies in South-East Asia raised the possibility that France might expand, commercially and perhaps even territorially, into China proper. There was also a decade of trouble along the China–Tonkin border. It was perhaps not surprising that there followed a six-month Sino–French war in 1884/1885 that China lost. Ten years later came the disastrous war with the despised Japanese. Both conflicts were still largely fought, not under careful and central strategic command, but as border wars largely directed by local officials. A few years later again came the largely anti- foreigner Boxer Rebellion centred on Beijing, in which a popular movement, supported by Chinese nationalists (and Western liberals), led to a siege of the foreign legations in the capital. Although the president of the China Society of America declared that the rebellion was 'one of the most splendid exhibitions of patriotism wit-

nessed in modern times'[14], eyewitness accounts of notably callous Boxer behaviour, including the cruel beheadings of unarmed Christian men, women and children, gave a very different impression.[15] In any event, Cixi tried to maintain her position by supporting the Boxers. She even found herself declaring war on the Europeans and other foreigners, with the almost inevitable result that Beijing was occupied by a foreign multinational army of some 20,000 troops. From there things went steadily downhill, and she died in 1908. Exactly twenty years later, her rich and elaborate tomb was robbed by the army of a Republican Chinese general. With her the Manchu dynasty effectively died.

The fate of the Chinese state was a different matter. It is clearly the case that the aftermath of the 1860 campaign saw the start of nothing less than a painful and wrenching change in the Chinese polity from the concept of empire to that of a 'nation', living and operating in a political world of nation-states. There was, of course, no single point of transition. Later decades saw repeated assertions of Chinese nationalism and unity. Yet as late as 2013 an official Chinese tourist guide in Beijing told this author proudly that the Chinese nation was a grouping of fifty-six different nationalities. Repeatedly, foreign powers had to recognise, as Elgin had done in 1860, that not only was China much too big and varied for any outside power to try to govern successfully, but that excessive foreign demands might lead to its collapse, with very unfortunate geopolitical as well as commercial results. Chinese negotiators harped, with endless patience, on such fears that recurred repeatedly for the next half-century in negotiations with foreign powers.

But the Boxer affair, in flat contradiction to the wishes of the rebels, may also have encouraged foreign claims on China over trade and territorial matters. These had begun long before, with British, French, American and Russian demands for trading posts and the establishment of trading ports around the coast. That led to demands for the so-called concessions, also on the coast and the major trading cities. Each concession was, in effect, a kind of lease administered by the foreign power concerned. In each, the foreigners had the right, by Chinese tradition and confirmed by the 1858 treaty arrangements, to live freely and under their own laws. It is true that in 21st-century China, the concessions have come to be seen as humiliating examples of colonialism and have fuelled Chinese resentments towards foreigners. It is also true that, at first, Chinese were banned from these concessions. But the foreigners needed staff, and soon the attraction of stable and predictable Western laws, policing and administration, not to mention

modern attitudes towards trade, production and economic progress, as well as medical care, brought an increasingly massive inflow of Chinese people. Tens of thousands moved to live and trade in the properly run and policed concessions, secure from the combination of mandarin corruption, unreliable government and general turbulence apt to reign beyond. A prime example was Hong Kong, which as we know the British had leased when it was not much more than a bare rock inhabited by a handful of Chinese fishermen. It was originally acquired to become a base under British jurisdiction and administration, on which they could avoid trying to govern Chinese citizens or clashing with Chinese laws. In the event, the rock became something very different. Or again, the number of Chinese in the allied sectors of Shanghai, for instance, grew from 500 in 1850 to 72,000 in 1872[16], and by 2010–2015 perhaps to some 6 to 7 millions.

In any event, China's political and strategic weakness produced much larger problems having to do with the entire political balance of North-East Asia. For most of the nineteenth century, the dominant European countries with which China had to deal were Russia in the North and Britain on the southern and eastern coasts. Between 1860 and the Chinese revolution of 1911, British policy was concerned with four major issues, all of them going back to China's weakness and the legacy of the 1860 war. One was the absolute determination of successive British prime ministers – quite contrary to persistent Russian fears – that Britain must not be saddled with the task of looking after China. 'We certainly don't want another India' was the word in London. The second was to prevent a partition of China among competing foreign powers, which would undermine the entire East Asian balance of power.[17] The Western competition for 'spheres of influence' in China was indeed calculated to produce special trading zones for their holders but also, quite precisely, to avoid having areas of China under non-Chinese sovereignty. A third objective remained what it had been since the late eighteenth century: the maintenance of open trade for the benefit of everyone, including the Chinese themselves. This notion was revived[18] by the British – or, more specifically, by the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service – as the "Open Door" policy. It was immediately adopted by the USA, and especially Secretary of State John Hay, as a triumph of American diplomacy, designed to maintain the 'territorial and administrative integrity of China'.[19] This was itself an idea likely to produce more confusion than understanding by all concerned. Manchuria became another obvious instance. This was not, and had never been, a part of old China. Indeed, the mutual dislike between Han Chinese

and Manchus had long been notorious within the empire.[20] As recently as around 1900, Manchuria was what George Kennan described as 'a semi-developed frontier area' for both Russia and China,[21] where China had nominal sovereignty but Russia had great strategic interests, confirmed by the construction, in the 1890s, of a railway from Siberia to the Pacific Ocean. It was built by the Russians, with Chinese government consent. It also produced a geostrategic state of affairs that helped the formation of the Anglo–Japanese alliance of 1902, not to mention the Japanese ascendancy in Korea, which was to have further and large consequences.

Fourth, there was the attempt, intermittently and with indifferent success, to help China modernise and industrialise, especially with the development of coal mines and railways. These policies brought disillusionment in various ways. For one thing, the four decades after the 1860 treaty, a period in which a number of foreign concessions were established, only proved the wisdom of the old 1852 Mitchell memorandum[22] about China's essential self-sufficiency, that everyone in London had chosen to ignore. Nothing like the vast expansion of trade that Britain and others had hoped for actually occurred. Experience also demonstrated, yet again, the sheer conservatism of the Chinese government and the strong resistance to modernisation, not to mention the poverty of the masses.

In one very important sense, that proved to be a kind of delusion. For within the Chinese polity itself there began to appear stirrings for far-reaching change. This manifested itself in an ethnic and cultural pride deeply offended by the humiliations of 1842 and 1860, as well as by the casual assumptions of Western missionaries and modernisers about China's visible weaknesses. There was even greater resentment at the contrast between China's stumbling approach to modernity, as compared with the dramatic achievements of industrial, financial and military reform brought to Japan by the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Resentments came in the form of objections to intrusive and demanding foreigners, including missionaries, or, more generally, of foreign intrusions into China, and the associated 'unequal treaties'. However, resentments are not policy, and demands for domestic reforms quickly turned out to be incompatible with inherited social, political and economic systems. So discontent veered, as it often does, towards revolution. The first major leader of this trend turned out to be Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Guomindang, the party that more or less managed the Chinese Revolution of 1911. Himself Western-educated (beginning with Hawaii, where his brother paid the costs), he spent much of the earlier part of his life in exile for fear of arrest. But he

offered revolutionary ideas in speeches and writings. Apart from Sun Yat-sen himself, a growing number of his followers' revolutionary views were also influenced by other foreign ideas, most notably those of Marxism-Leninism, as well as by ideas from Britain and Japan about industrialisation or politics. On top of that came the spectacle of Japan's dramatic post-1868 modernisation drive and the comparison with China's all-too-evident weaknesses.

Few things in human affairs are more certain to produce resentment and hostility than a sense of victimhood. Hence, successful revolutions often rest, in large part, not only on resentment of domestic opponents but especially of foreign enemies. The historical record is unambiguous. It ranges from the defensive campaigns of revolutionary France after 1789 to the character of National Socialism in post-1918 Germany. Resentment was certainly present in China towards the end of the nineteenth century. In fact, it is difficult to imagine how a modernising Chinese revolution could have been carried through at all without the unifying and mobilising force of a wave of strong resentment of Western influences and, even more so, of the Western presence. The point is not whether that resentment was justified. It was real and based on beliefs, in connection with several issues that harked back, in one way or another, to 1842 and 1860: that foreign beliefs and ways were undermining the established principles and traditions of Chinese society; that unfair treaties had been forced on China; that the large number of foreigners on Chinese soil, and their rights there, were themselves an insult; and that the stream of opium supposedly forced on China had obviously been intended to weaken Chinese society in the interests of foreign profits.

The difficulties created by the intrusion of foreign beliefs and customs can be illustrated from opposite ends of the Chinese social spectrum. A great American scholar has pointed out the dilemmas faced by some young and inexperienced American missionaries in China. One such young man might try to express US-style egalitarianism by '...becoming great friends with the houseboy, the cook and the chair-coolie. This attack on the Chinese social hierarchy would naturally threaten the integrity of each servant's role, offend his self-respect, and showed that the American lacked a cultural sense of propriety, could not be respected, and so was fair game for deceit and manipulation'.[23] At the other end of the social spectrum were the views of Chinese mandarins and rural gentry. The educated foreigners, whether industrial experts or, even more importantly, missionaries clearly represented principles and practices fundamentally opposed to

beliefs and customs regarding Chinese life and administration. Not only that, but both the gentry and imperial officialdom discovered to their real horror that the missionaries were making converts, and not just among the illiterate poor. It was obvious that Christian teachings could not help but undermine the principles of Chinese society. For a senior mandarin, a colleague who actually succumbed to Christianity had been 'barbarised'. The tenets of industrial life were, similarly, incompatible with the maintenance of established Chinese social and even family life. Worst of all, these missionaries and other foreigners immediately formed a social group equated with, and therefore also challenging, the social position of the local gentry. One or two such people might be tolerated and treated with kindness. But there were now far too many of them, especially in the port cities and major towns.

That was not all. In a brilliant manipulation of both domestic and foreign opinion, the Chinese establishment taught the world that the series of treaties China had signed with foreign powers after 1840 or so had been *unequal treaties* (a term not used, or heard, before around 1923). Using it became doubly helpful. For modern Western people the inevitable implication of the term was that, being unequal, the arrangements were by definition unfair and unjust. On the other hand, for the Chinese themselves it was also redolent of the old Confucian principle that an agreement forced on a non-consenting, weaker party had no moral validity to which the weaker party owed obedience. Yet it is difficult to take that Chinese opinion seriously, given the long history of China imposing its own will on opponents defeated in war, as the British did, however moderately, in 1842 and 1860. The matter goes further. The British demand, on both occasions, for trading rights at Chinese ports, together with jurisdiction over their own (foreign) citizens, fitted in with Chinese practices going back to mediaeval times. The desire of Chinese rulers to have foreign 'head men' administering and judging 'their own' people was regular practice as far back as the Tang dynasty a thousand years before the British sailed into Chinese waters. Similarly, details of the new port and border arrangements had precedents in what the Chinese, as the then dominant party, had agreed to at Kokand in Central Asia (now eastern Uzbekistan) as recently as in the mid-1830s. Probably the most widely touted Chinese complaint, and one of the most unquestioningly accepted in the West, became the tale of bottomless British iniquity in forcing opium on the Chinese (like the Americans who, as we have seen, began importing opium into China from Smyrna, in modern Turkey, as early as 1804).

Other elements of the story may have been even more important than later Chinese complaints about opium or foreign concessions on Chinese soil. They have to do with the great importance that geography and demography, not to mention intellectual and diplomatic skill, have had in China over the last century. That has come together with the readiness, by the United States, Britain and the West generally, to accept *mea culpa* explanations for China's past difficulties. From the beguiling label of "Opium Wars" for the 1842 and 1860 conflicts, to colonialism for the concessions, the story has been the same: China's ills between 1850 and 1950 were very largely the fault of the rich Western powers, including Japan.

It is clear what the effect of the various feelings of resentment were within China. They contributed to the formation, and inflammation, of a modern nationalism, all the more powerful for being based on what were, and are, seen as legitimate grievances. That seems to have decisively influenced, and continues to influence, both China's internal affairs and foreign relations, not least at the opening of the 21st century under the leadership of President Xi Jinping.

At the same time, it is worth noting how many of the ideas and practices of the China of 1860 find strong echoes a century and a half later. At the risk of much oversimplification, one might start by noting the incomplete but interesting parallels between the structure of many of the major Chinese dynasties and the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in office. The history of the Qin, Tang, Ming and Qing dynasties, for instance, is in every case one of a dynasty starting with a ruler of overwhelming personality, power and command, but with a more or less progressive decline – for a variety of reasons – in the personality and command of their successors. The story of Communist rulers, from Mao Zedong onwards, has so far not been entirely dissimilar. Similar, too, has been the story of the relationship between strong political and governmental centralisation and the freedom of manoeuvre and decision that successive dynasties gave to strong regional governors – Ye at Canton, for instance – and that which modern Beijing finds it necessary to give to what one can call the great 'satrapies' that now govern state enterprises, the banking system and some other areas. Chinese officials often say that Western democracy is unsuitable for China, which may well be true as long as Chinese politics are structured as at present. But it is also true that the Marxism that formed, and forms, the basis of the CCP's rule is itself of European origin and development.

China also preserves in 2015–2017, as it did in 1860, and for that matter in 1794 for Lord Macartney, its governmental secrecy, self-sufficiency and sense of superiority. Now as then, for most Western governments the inner workings of China's government, and now the governing party, remain largely unfathomable. As one observer has remarked, the cadres of the Communist Chinese state actually resemble the 'father and mother of the people', officials of the imperial state.[24] Debates, in Beijing and elsewhere, about how to develop a Chinese theory of foreign policy instead of staying with the West's post-Westphalian model have to do with the rise of the 'civilisational' state and a system that would emphasise China's continuing moral and political centrality in the world. The development of 'Confucius institutes' that, among other things, spread China's so-called soft power around the world fits well into such a concept. Chinese external policies are often subtle, sometimes long-term, but always pragmatic.[25] At the same time, China retains its old diplomatic skills and a style of opaque courtesy but grows uneasy at any suggestion of external, let alone internal, instability. This view speaks of China as a 'nation' – as in the 'national humiliations' of the past – but retains many of the characteristics of empire in its domination of Tibet, Xinjiang and parts of Mongolia, as well, possibly, as other regions, not to mention its excessively wary views of groupings like Christians or the Falun Gong. Even the partial freeing of controls on the Chinese yuan means that this currency can now be used by other countries to pay for exports to China, to be returned in exchange for imports from China – all of which has unmistakable echoes of the days when others had to earn silver from China by selling goods that the Chinese were willing to buy, and use the silver to buy tea and silks in return. One of the better summaries of these conundrums was written several decades ago by the American scholar Benjamin Schwartz:

> To the extent that the Chinese government must live within the confines of an ongoing multistate world, it has gradually come to adjust itself on a day-to-day basis of this world, whatever may be its optimum transnational hopes. What is more, even these transnational hopes can hardly be identified with the traditional perception of world order. The government appeals to international law whenever it finds it to its advantage to do so. It often employs conventional power politics. It has accepted the whole machinery of international diplomacy often in a highly literal and extremely formalistic way…[26]

Western diplomats should pay heed.

Notes

Chapter 1 Prologue

1. Frederic Wakeman Jr., The Fall of Imperial China, New York, Free Press, 1975, p. 114.
2. Spence, Jonathan D, The Search for Modern China (2nd edn.) New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1999, p. 120.
3. Wakeman op.cit., p. 118.
4. Merchants had inferior status because commerce encouraged luxury and frivolity, distracting the farmer and peasant from his proper task.
5. Spence, ibid., pp. 57–58; also Fairbank, John K, Trade and Diplomacy on the China coast; the opening of the Treaty ports 1842–53, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press,1953, pp. 27–32.
6. Wakeman, op.cit., p. 129, fn 4.
7. Anson was to become First Lord of the Admiralty, the second time from 1757 to his death in 1762.
8. David Todd, John Bowring and the Global Dissemination of Free Trade, The Historical Journal, Vol. 51, 2008, p. 385.
9. See Thomas de Quincey's "Confessions of an Opium Eater", First published anonymously in 1821 in the *London Magazine*, Vol. IV, No xxi, pp. 293–312, and No xxii, pp. 353–79.
10. In that year the emperor issued a strong philippic against opium trading, which was obviously continuing in lively fashion and with the connivance of numbers of officials. Cf Fu Lo-shu (ed.), A Documentary Chronicle of Sino-Western Relations 1644–1820, Tucson, Az, University of Arizona, 1966, p. 380.

H. Gelber, *Battle for Beijing, 1858–1860*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-30584-4

11. Spence, Jonathan, The Search for Modern China, New York/London, W. W. Norton, 1990, pp. 129 (and fn 6), 149.
12. John K. Fairbank, The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985, NewYork, Harper and Row, 1986, pp. 67, 91–92.
13. For opium suppression efforts in the province of Fujian, see Joyce A. Madancy, The Troublesome Legacy of Commissioner Lin: The Opium Trade and Opium Suppression in Fujian Province, 1820s to 1920s, Harvard University Asia Center, Cambridge, MA, 2004.
14. Wakeman, op.cit., pp. 126–27.
15. Ross Terrill, The New Chinese Empire, Basic Books, 2003, p. 26.
16. The response seems to have been not just haughty but pre-determined. The emperor's formal response to the British was probably drafted many weeks, even months, before Macartney even set foot on Chinese soil.
17. After 1949 and in the period of Communist rule of China, young Chinese began to be relentlessly told that the entire period from 1830 to the advent of Mao Zedong had been a "century of national humiliation". Only in 1949 was China's sovereignty truly restored.
18. The "grand (or maximum) kowtow" involved kneeling from a standing position three times, and each time knocking one's forehead on the floor three times.
19. Lord George Macartney (ed. J.L. Cranmer-Byng), An Embassy to China, Being the Journal Kept by Lord Macartney during his Embassy to the Emperor Ch'ien-lung (Quianlong) 1793–1794, London, Longmans, 1962.
20. This problem continued to dog Sino-British exchanges for almost a century.
21. Macartney, Journal, op.cit., p. 210.
22. Robbins, Helen H. Our First Ambassador to China: An Account of the life of George, Earl of Macartney – With Extracts from His Letters, and the Narrative of his Experiences in China, as Told by Himself, London, John Murray, 1908; Macartney, Journal op.cit.; Spence, op.cit., p. 123; Cranmer-Byng J.L., Lord Macartney's Embassy to Peking in 1793, Hong Kong, Journal of Oriental Studies 1957–58, p. 181.
23. Vattel, quoted in J. Matheson, The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China; Together with an Outline of some leading Occurrences in its Past History, 1835 (reprinted by Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 34.
24. Canton Register, Vol. 8, No 39, 29/9/1835, p. 156.
25. See, for example, the "Supplement to Asiatic Intelligence" in "The Asiatic Journal" of March 1836, p. 287, quoting angry correspondence from the Emperor to Canton, regarding the habit of British merchants to roam around parts of the China coast without imperial permission.

26. Canton Register, Vol. 8, No 39, September 29, 1835, p. 156.
27. An anonymous writer to the Chinese Repository: "Universal peace; obstacles to it in the character and government of nations" Vol. III, No 11, March 1835, p. 527.
28. Lindsay letter to Viscount Palmerston on British relations with China, 1st March 1836, 19 pages, British Museum Library and Google Books.
29. That was certainly the view of Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, a key figure who had started working for the East India Company at Canton in1820. See his "Letter to the Right Honourable Viscount Palmerston on British Relations with China," 1836, p. 6.
30. See, for instance, John Richards, Opium and the British Indian Empire, Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 36, Issue 2, May 2002, pp. 375–420.
31. In a fashion strikingly reminiscent of similar debates in Britain and America towards the turn of the 20th/21st centuries.
32. Which were never carried out when London decided that the sentences had been imposed *ultra vires* – ie beyond the powers of the superintendent.
33. The affair involved a Mrs O'Kane, which produced the unkind *bon-mot* in London's Clubland: "She is Kane but is he Able?".
34. Darwin, English Historical Journal, June 1997. Also P.W.Fay, The Opium War 1840–42, Chapel Hill, 1975, pp. 193–94.
35. Adams' lecture of December 1841 to the Massachusetts Historical Society was published, in pamphlet form, by the Chinese Repository, (Macao) in December 1842. It was later reprinted in Chinese Repository, Vol. XI, 1942, pp. 274–89.
36. Additional Papers relating to China, 1840, London, printed by T.R.Harrison, p. 5.
37. Le Pichon, Alain (2006). *China Trade and Empire.* Oxford University Press. 2006, pp. 39–40.
38. Fairbank, The Great Chinese Revolution, op.cit., p. 93, quoting historian Joseph Fletcher.
39. They went there to support Don Carlos, the pretender to the Spanish throne, and to help the Miguelist campaigns in Portugal. The Prince's usurpation of the Portuguese throne in 1828, to reign as absolute king, triggered war between his supporters and the champions of Liberalism.
40. It seems that his head was cut off and thrown to the dogs. There were even rumours that that his heart was cut out, cooked and eaten
41. Dr`Wong's invaluable book is "Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism, and the Arrow War (1856–1860) in China", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
42. Wong, op.cit., pp. 10–12.

Chapter 2 The Opium Issue

1. P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, in *Economic History Review*, Nov. 1986, Vol. 39, Issue 4, pp. 501–525.
2. Quoted in Jack Beeching, The Chinese Opium Wars, New York, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovic, 1975, p. 228.
3. John K. Fairbank (ed.) The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 10, Late Ch'ing 1800–1911, Part I, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978, Chapter 5 by John K. Fairbank, 'The Creation of the Treaty System', p. 213.
4. See Frank Dikoetter, Lars Laamann, and Zhou Xun, A History of Drugs in China, London, Hurst and Co., 2004; and Yangwen Zheng, The Social Life of Opium in China 1483–1999, Modern Asian Studies Vol. 37, No. 1, February 2003, pp. 1–39.
5. Xu Boling, Yinjing Juan (12 vols., Taipei, 1971, Vol. 1, pp. 14–15 (cited in Yangwen Zheng, The Social Life of Opium in China 1483–1999, op. cit., p. 4.
6. Ibid., p. 12, 21.
7. Ibid., p. 37.
8. Ibid., p. 30.
9. Frederick Wakeman Jr., The Fall of Imperial China, New York, Free Press, 1975, pp. 126–127.
10. John K. Fairbank, The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985, New York, Harper and Row 1986, pp. 67, 91–92.
11. The tael was a measure of weight, with one tael of silver roughly equivalent to 1.3 ounces.
12. For opium suppression efforts in the province of Fujian, see Joyce A. Madancy, The Troublesome Legacy of Commissioner Lin: The Opium Trade and Opium Suppression in Fujian Province, 1820s to 1920s, Harvard University Asia Center, Cambridge, MA, 2004.
13. Chris Feige and Jeffrey A. Miron, The opium wars, opium legalization and opium consumption in China, *Applied Economic Letters*, 2008, Vol. 15, pp. 911–913. (Feige served at Boston's State Street Financial Center; Miron was Visiting Professor of Economics at Harvard.)
14. The debate can be found in Hansard, House of Commons, 10 May 1870, cols. 480–523.
15. Imports from India rose from around 58,000 chests of Indian opium in 1860 to some 105,500 in 1880.
16. Harrison E. Salisbury, The Long March: The Untold Story, New York/Cambridge, Harper and Row, 1985, p. 305.
17. Earl of Clarendon (Foreign Secretary) 2nd letter of 20/4/57, p. 2 in Correspondence Relative to the Earl of Elgin's Special Missions to China and Japan, Presented to the House of Lords by Command of Her Majesty in Great Britain, Foreign Office, 1859, Google eBook.

18. Stanley Lane-Poole, The Life of Sir Harry Parkes, Sometime Her Majesty's Minister to China and Japan, Vol. 1, Consul in China, London, Macmillan, 1894, pp. 70–71.

Chapter 3 Canton

1. The last family debts were only paid off in 1870, and ever since the end of World War II Anglo–Greek relations have been roiled from time to time over whether the Marbles should or should not be returned from the British Museum to Greece.
2. Elgin's instructions were dated 20.4.57.
3. Quoted in Nathan A. Pelcovits, Old China Hands and the Foreign Office, New York, Octagon Books, 1969 [c. 1948], p. 18 from Elgin's address at Shanghai, in FO 17/287.
4. Elgin's despatch of 5 January 1859 to London: Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., pp. 304–305.
5. Bowring to Foreign Secretary Clarendon 5.11.1855, W.C. Costin, Great Britain and China, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1937, pp. 19–20.
6. D.F. Rennie, The British Arms in North China and Japan, London, J. Murray, 1864, p. 184.
7. The result of Napoleon Bonaparte's informal union with the beautiful Polish Countess Marie Walewska.
8. Douglas Hurd, The Arrow War, London, Collins, 1967, p. 99. Hurd (now Lord Hurd) served as British foreign secretary from 1989–95. One is reminded of America's experience after the 2003 invasion of Iraq.
9. William Dalrymple has written colourfully about the brutalities committed by both sides in The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857, London, Bloomsbury, 2006.
10. Walrond, Letters and journals, *op. cit.*, p. 199; also quoted in Beeching, op. cit., p. 241.
11. The Russian ecclesiastical mission was limited to four Orthodox priests and six language students. It was under the jurisdiction of the Chinese Court of Dependencies, which managed tributary relations with the frontier tribes of China's North and West.
12. Note of 18 December in Walrond, Letters and Journals, *op. cit.*, p. 211.
13. Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., various diary entries for 25, 26 and 29 December and 6 January, pp. 214–217.
14. Elgin to Lord Clarendon 6.1.58 in corr. Rel Elgin mission p. 138.
15. Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., p. 222.
16. On 6 September came another edict that said Ye's 'obstinacy' had been in some measure a cause of the hostilities.
17. Beeching, op. cit., p. 255.

Chapter 4 Tianjin

1. Masataka Banno, China and the West 1858–1861, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1964, p. 251, note 12.
2. Walrond, ibid., pp. 223–24.
3. Cordier, Henri, L'expedition de Chine de 1857–1858, Paris, F. Alcan, 1905, p. 282.
4. Walrond, Letters and Journals, op.cit., p. 236.
5. Walrond, ibid., p. 240.
6. Cordier, l'Expedition 1857–1858, pp. 64–65.
7. IWSM:HF 23:10–13.
8. Quoted in Hurd, The Arrow War, op. cit., p. 147.
9. T. Walrond (ed.), Letters and Journals of James Bruce, 8th Earl of Elgin 1811–1863, London, John Murray, 1872 (23 May, p. 248).
10. Laurence Oliphant, Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's Mission to China and Japan (2 vols.), London, William Blackwood 1859, Vol. 1, pp. 345–346.
11. An English translation of Qiying's document is printed in Oliphant, Laurence, Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's Mission to China and Japan (2 vols.), London, William Blackwood, 1859, pp. 359–366.
12. Gros letter to Elgin in Cordier, L'expedition de China…, *op. cit.*, p. 401.
13. Walrond, ibid., p. 249.
14. Niuzhang, Dengzhou, Tainan, Chaozhao, Qiongzhou, Hankou, Jiujiang, Nanjing and ZhenJiang.
15. Walrond (ed.), Letters of the 8th Earl of Elgin, op. cit., p. 254.
16. Jia Zhen et al. (eds.), A complete account of the management of barbarian affairs under the Zianfeng regime, Beijing Zhonghua shujü 1979 3: 966, cited in Dong Wang, China's Unequal Treaties, Narrating national history, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2005, Ch. 1, fn 37.
17. The tael was a measure of weight, see Prologue, p. 5, fn 13.
18. Hurd, The Arrow War, op. cit., 176.
19. Immanuel C.Y. Hsü, China's Entrance into the Family of Nations: The Diplomatic Phase, 1858–1880, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1960, pp. 71–75.
20. Kuei-liang's note to Elgin of 28.10.58, cited in Banno, China and the West, op. cit., p. 52 and fn 154.
21. Not that such considerations applied solely to China. The growth and maintenance of the British empire, for instance, would be hard to explain without some reference to the small number of officials who governed with little more than their total and unquestioned self-confidence and belief in the justice of their cause.
22. P.P. Elgin's Missions, pp. 411–12; 484–85.
23. Hurd, The Arrow War, op. cit., p. 166.

24. Lord Elgin to Lord Malmesbury 5.1.59, Corr. Rel. Elgin's mission, p. 440.
25. Gros to Min. Aff. Étrangères 28.12.58, quoted in Cordier, " L'Expédition…" op. cit., Vol. ii, p. 35.
26. Grant, Sir James Hope, Incidents in the China War of 1860; comp. from the private journals of General Sir Hope Grant (ed.) Captain Henry Knollys, Edinburgh/London, W. Blackwood and Sons, 1975, Ch. I, p. 8.
27. Bruce to Malmesbury 4.5.59 (P.P. 1860, lxix, No. 2).
28. Bruce to Malmesbury 5.7.59, Corr with Mr Bruce, p. 16.
29. Bruce to Malmesbury 1.6.59 (FO 17/312).
30. Cited in Banno, op. cit., p. 258, note 69.
31. Buchanan, State of the Union address, 19 December 1859.
32. Malmesbury to Bruce 1.3.59 (P.P. 1860 lxix, No 1).
33. Russell to Bruce 10.10.59, Corr w. Mr Bruce, p. 41.
34. Stanley Lane-Poole, The Life of Sir Harry Parkes Sometime Her Majesty's Minister to China and Japan, Vol. 1, Consul in China, London, Macmillan, 1894, pp. 312–313.

Chapter 5 Recovery

1. Lane-Poole, The Life of Sir Harry Parkes, op. cit., p. 316.
2. He had an enthusiastic reception back home. Among other things he was given the freedom of the City of London and the students of Glasgow elected him Lord Rector of their university.
3. Hurd, The Arrow War, op. cit., p. 197.
4. Hurd, ibid., p. 198.
5. Henry Knollys, Incidents in the China War of 1860, compiled from the papers of General Sir Hope Grant GCB, London, William Blackwood and Sons 1875, pp. 139–140.
6. Brian Porter, British Foreign Policy in the Nineteenth Century, London, Historical Journal, 1980, Vol. 23, No 1, p. 195.
7. Arthur H. Stanmore (ed.) Sidney Herbert, Lord Herbert of Lea: A memoir, Vol. 2, London, John Murray, 1906, p. 304.
8. Elgin letters to Lady Elgin, op. cit., p. 199, 212.
9. Elgin letters to Lady Elgin, op. cit., p. 215.
10. Knollys, Incidents in the China War of 1860, op. cit., Ch. I, p. 26.
11. Knollys, Incidents, op. cit., pp. 138–141.
12. Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., p. 316. Also quoted in Banno, op. cit., p. 263, note 141.
13. Also the French government letter of 21.4.60 to Gros, Cordier, Henri, L'expedition de Chine de 1860: histoire diplomatique, notes et documents, Paris, F. Alcan, 1906, pp. 136–137.
14. Letter of 22.5.60 in Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., p. 325.

15. See, for instance, his letter of 1 July 1860 in Walrond, ibid., p. 332.
16. That seems to have been the state of affairs as of 11 July 1860, cf. Corr resp China 1859–1860, p. 83, cited in H.M. Morse, The International Relations of the Chinese Empire: The Period of Conflict 1834–1860, London/New York, Longmans Green, 1910, p. 589.
17. Cordier, l'Expedition de Chine 1860, p. 141 cited in Morse, ibid., p. 590.
18. The first French troops, some 1700 infantry, arrived on the *l'Interprenante* and the *La Garonne*, landed on 17 April at Hong Kong and left again almost immediately for the North.
19. Swinhoe, Robert, Narrative of the North China Campaign of 1860, London, Smith, Elder and Co., 1861, p. 4.
20. Hurd, The Arrow War, op. cit., p. 208.
21. Letter of 10 June 1860 to Hope Grant, printed in Hope Grant, Incidents, op. cit., pp. 148–149.
22. Walrond, ibid., p. 335.
23. The French order of battle is given in detail by Paul Varin, op. cit., pp. 21–25.
24. An exhaustive – and exhausting – list of army and naval units and personnel is printed in Mutrécy, Vol. II, pp. 261–298.
25. Indian nationalists now tend to refer to it as a War of National Independence, which seems odd considering that its aims, insofar as it had definable ones, were both religious and tending to restore the pre-British system of separate princely states and that the suppression of the mutiny was effected largely with the help of Indian troops.
26. The memoirs of the period make it abundantly clear that, in general, British officers had very little regard for the Bengalis, or even Madras troops, as compared with regiments drawn from the more martial peoples of the Punjab and the North.
27. War Office calculation dated 23.12.1902 compiled from Parliamentary Paper 1864, Accounts and Papers XXXII, 263.
28. He survived to a ripe old age, dying in 1924 as General Sir Dighton Probyn, notable among other things for a twin-forked long white beard down to his waist, all surmounted by a tall black top hat.

Chapter 6 Interlude in Shanghai

1. Later General Sir George Butler.
2. Chinese Repository, June 1849.
3. Mutrécy, Charles de, Journal de la campagne de Chine 1859–1860–1861 (2nd edn) Paris, Dentu Éditeur, 1862, p. 105.
4. Morse, International Relations of the Chinese Empire, op. cit., p. 462.
5. Mutrécy, Journal de la campagne de Chine, op. cit., p. 252.

6. Bruce to Lord John Russell 30.5.60, Corr. resp. China 1859–1860, p. 60.
7. It is hard not to remember that in very recent times British-born subjects and US-born citizens could be found to be 'fighting' their own countries as members of jihadist groups.
8. Parkes' letters to his wife, in Stanley Lane-Poole, The Life of Sir Henry Parkes, op. cit., pp. 482–483.
9. Franz Michael and Chang Chung-li, The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents, Vol. 1, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1966, pp. 168 and 174, cited in Spence, op. cit., p. 178.

CHAPTER 7 DAGU AND TIANJIN AGAIN

1. Swinhoe, by then attached to the British 2nd Division, has printed the British orders on pp. 48–52 of Robert Swinhoe, Narrative of the North China Campaign of 1860, London, Smith, Elder and Co., 1861.
2. Mutrécy, Charles de, Journal de la campagne de Chine 1859–1860–1861 (2 vols.) (2nd edn.) Paris, Dentu Éditeur, 1862, p. 329.
3. 'China War 1860', http://www.qdg.org.uk/pages/China-War-1860-115.php.
4. This delightful picture is from Wolseley, Field Marshal Viscount, The Story of a Soldier's Life (2 vols.), London, Constable, 1903, Vol. II, pp. 23–24; and the Hon J.W. Fortescue, A History of the British Army, London, Macmillan, 1930, Vol. XIII, Chap. LV, p. 408.
5. Henry Knollys, Incidents in the China War of 1860, compiled from the papers of General Sir Hope Grant GCB, London, William Blackwood and Sons 1875, p. 53.
6. Varin, Paul, Expedition de Chine, Paris, Michel Lévy Frères, 162, p. 103. Varin laments that the French always made concessions to the British, who condescended to the French; see also p. 16. (Varin was the pen name of Lt Col Dupin, who served in the French forces.)
7. Hope Grant, Incidents in China, op. cit., Chap. II, p. 59.
8. Ibid.
9. Knollys, Hope Grant papers, op. cit., p. 56.
10. Knollys, Hope Grant papers, op. cit., p. 57.
11. Loch, Henry Brougham (Lord Loch), Personal Narrative of Occurrences during Lord Elgin's Second Embassy to China in 1860 (3rd edn.), London, J. Murray, 1900, p. 29.
12. Swinhoe, Narrative of the North China campaign, op. cit., p 79.
13. Correspondence respecting China 1859–60, pp. 106–07.
14. General Napier's report of 24.8.60 to Captain Biddulph, Military Secretary to General Hope Grant. London, National Army Museum, archive item 7303–75.

15. Napier report of 24.8.60, ibid.
16. Napier, report of 24.8.60, ibid.
17. Wolseley, Lt Col G.J, Narrative of the war with China in 1860 (2 vols.) London, Longmans Green Longman and Roberts, 1862, p. 102. Indeed, he and others comment repeatedly on how ill-mounted, badly clothed and ill-equipped even the Tartar soldiers were, many having nothing but spears and bows.
18. A French military report on the Armstrong gun is printed in Mutrécy, Journal de la campagne de Chine, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 403 et seq.
19. In modern Hebei.
20. Swinhoe, p. 105.
21. D'Herisson, Comte Maurice, Journal d'un interprète en Chine (2 edn.) Paris, P. Ollendorf, 1886, pp. 173–174.
22. Bowlby's report on the affair appeared in *The Times* on 3 November.
23. Hurd, The Arrow War, op. cit., p. 213.
24. Original French in Raymond Bourgerie and Pierre Lesouef, Palikao, 1860: le sac du palais d'été et la prise de Pekin, Paris, Economica, 1995.
25. Swinhoe, The North China Campaign, op. cit., p. 123.
26. Baron Gros, Livre Jaune du Baron Gros, Paris, Librairie Militaire, 1864, pp. 56–57.
27. The correspondence is quoted in Hope Grant, Incidents, op. cit., Ch IV, pp. 82–85.
28. Letter of 25 July to his wife, cited in Lane Poole, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 346.
29. The storming of the Dagu forts is also covered in Garnet Wolseley, Narrative of the China War, op. cit., p. 132.
30. Rennie, p. 115.
31. Later Captain Chaplin VC of the 8th Hussars. Knollys, Hope Grant papers, op. cit., p. 89.
32. Gros, Livre jaune, op. cit., p. 32.
33. Swinhoe also has tales of old people and infants simply deserted by the fleeing population of the fort and its adjoining village, Narrative of the North China campaign, op. cit., pp. 111–113.
34. Wolseley, Narrative of the War with China, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 52.
35. Elgin letter of 26.8.1860 (postmarked Tianjin) to Foreign Secretary Lord John Russell.
36. Hope Grant, Incidents, op. cit., Ch III, p. 74.
37. Rennie, op. cit., p. 117.
38. Loch, Personal Narrative, op. cit., p. 73.
39. Parkes to Elgin, 26 August 60, Corr. Resp. China 59–60, p. 126.
40. Elgin letter of 26.8.60 to Russell, ibid.
41. Allgood, Major General George, China War, 1860; letters and journal by Major General G. Allgood, London, Longmans Green, 1861, p. 49.

42. Knollys, Hope Grant papers, op. cit., pp. 103–104; also the notes in Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., pp. 103–104.
43. Herbert, letter of 26.11.59 to Hope Grant, in Knollys, Incidents in the China War of 1860, op. cit., pp. 139–140.
44. Quoted in Wolseley, Narrative of the War with China, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 55.
45. Baron Gros, Livre Jaune, op. cit., p. 58.
46. Cordier, op. cit., p. 209, 308; Correspondence respect. China 1859–1860, p. 162, 165.
47. Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., p. 350.
48. Jia Zhen et al. (eds.), A complete account of the management of barbarian affairs under the Zianfeng regime , op. cit., in Chap. 4, fn 16 (Beijing Zhonghua shujü 1979 3: 966, cited in Dong Wang, China's Unequal Treaties, Narrating National History, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2005, Chap. 1, fn 37); also Hsü, The Rise of Modern China (4th edn.), New York/Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 210.

Chapter 8 Final Battles

1. Many of the topographical details here are taken from a careful account by the *New York Times* correspondent Robert G. Skerrett, who accompanied allied forces in China during the Boxer campaign in 1900 and were published by his paper on 5.8.1900. It seems reasonable to assume that the topography, vegetation and spread of villages had not greatly changed in the 40 years since 1860.
2. Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., p. 351.
3. It consisted of three people: Wolseley himself, Lt Harrison of the Engineers and the interpreter, Swinhoe – plus a guard detail of 11 Sikh troopers and, of course, servants.
4. See the comments on Jomini's *Précis de l'Art de la guerre* (*Brussels 1841*), in Professor Sir Michael Howard, Studies in War and Peace, London, Temple Smith 1970, esp. p. 32.
5. Hope Grant, Incidents, op. cit., p. 105.
6. Cordier, op. cit., p. 318.
7. De Mutrécy, Journal de la campagne de Chine, op. cit.,Vol. II, p. 3; Varin, l'Expedition de Chine, op. cit., p.188.
8. Wolseley, Narrative of the War with China in 1860, op. cit., p. 173, 181.
9. Harrison, Sir Richard, Recollections of a life in the British Army, London, Smith Elder, 1908, p. 87.
10. Varin, l'Expedition de Chine, op. cit., p. 197.
11. Lane-Poole, The Life or Sir Harry Parkes, op. cit., p. 380; also his official report to Lord Elgin, in Blue Book Parliamentary Papers 1861, pp. 226–

244; and Sir Henry Loch, Personal Narrative of Occurrences during Lord Elgin's Second Embassy to China, London, Murray, 1869, pp. 131–138.
12. After the events several prisoners wrote accounts of their capture. For the report of M. Gagey to Montauban, see de Mutrécy, Journal de la campagne de Chine, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 4–5.
13. Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., p. 357.
14. Memorial of 13 September to the emperor from Isinen King, President of the Board of Civil Office and 26 others (trans. T.Wade), printed in Hope Grant, Incidents, op. cit., pp. 182–183. Of course, this was only one of many different memorials.
15. Extracts from a fragment of a decree in the emperor's own vermilion pencil, dated 7 September found in the Summer Palace on 8 October (and probably not despatched), printed in Hope Grant, ibid., p. 174.
16. Varin, l'Expedition de Chine, op. cit., p. 192.
17. Varin, l'Expedition de Chine, op. cit., p. 193.
18. Hope Grant, Incidents op. cit., pp. 113–114. The Musbees, he noted, were 'a low caste of Sikh, really the sweeper caste'.
19. Wolseley, Life Vol. 2, pp. 68/69.
20. Swinhoe, p. 237.
21. Swinhoe, China campaign, p. 261.
22. Baron Gros letter of 3 October 1860 to M. Thouvenel, cited in H.B. Morse, The International Relations of the Chinese Empire; the period of Conflict 1834–1860, Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong and Yokohama, Kelly and Walsh, 1910, p. 603 fn 56.
23. Swinhoe, p. 243.
24. Wolseley, The War with China, op. cit., p. 196.
25. Quoted in Imbert de Saint Amand, Napoleon III at the Height of his Powers, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912, pp. 270–271.
26. Quoted in Hurd, op. cit., p. 219.
27. Varin, p. 205.
28. An account of the cavalry charges of 21 September, written by Colonel H.C. Wylly, appeared in the Cavalry Journal, No. 70, October 1928.
29. This account is taken from de Mutrécy, Journal de la campagne de Chine, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 15–17.

Chapter 9 Beijing, and Triumph

1. Popular gossip in Beijing.
2. FO682/1993/55b (Wong Listing), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983.
3. Walrond, Letters and Journals, op. cit., pp. 358–60; Hope Grant, Incidents, op.cit., pp. 118–121.

4. Loch, Henry Brougham (Lord Loch), Personal Narrative of Occurrences during Lord Elgin's Second Embassy to China in 1860 (3rd edn.) London, J. Murray, 1900, p. 132.
5. Loch, ibid., p. 130.
6. Hope Grant, Incidents, op. cit., p. 125.
7. Largely d'Herrisson and Imbert de Saint Amand; see also Montauban's reports.
8. Hope Grant, Incidents, op. cit., p. 128.
9. Swinhoe, p. 298. The remainder of the chapter outlines the splendour of the palace and its contents.
10. Wolseley, The Story of a Soldier's Life, Vol. II, op. cit
11. Swinhoe, China Campaign, p. 300.
12. Quoted in Hanes W. Travis III and Sanello Frank, The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another, Naperville, Illinois, Sourcebooks Inc., 2002, p. 276.
13. Letter cited in Cordier (l'Expedition de Chine), 1860, p. 353.
14. Montauban in his Souvenirs, quoted in Brizay, Le sac du Palais d'Été, p. 278.
15. His report on his captivity is printed in Mutrécy, Journal de la campagne de Chine, Vol. II, pp. 359–402.
16. Report by Private Charles Alfred Newman of the 1st Kings Dragoon Guards after his release
17. Walrond, letters, p. 337.
18. Wolseley, The Story of a Soldier's Life, Vol. II, p. 82.
19. Loch, op.cit., pp. 159–60.
20. Loch, ibid., p. 161.
21. Wolseley…, p. 280.
22. Oddly, eyewitness accounts differ on this. Swinhoe writes that Elgin sat in a green sedan chair, carried by 16 coolies in scarlet op.cit. Banno also writes that Elgin had sixteen bearers, but Gros said there were only 8. Banno, China and the West 1858–1861, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1964, p. 130, 203.
23. The text is printed as appendix in Lt-Colonel G.J.Wolseley, Narrative of the War with China in 1860, London, Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862 (reprint edition: Scholarly Resources, 1972).
24. Banno op. cit., p. 182, 319, note 65.

Chapter 10 Departures

1. Hope Grant, Incidents, op. cit., p. 163.
2. Compiled from Parliamentary Papers 1864. Accounts and Papers XXXII, 263. The War Office estimate is dated 23.12.1902.

Chapter 11 Hindsight: And Aftermath

1. How effective the new regulations might be was less clear.
2. Stanley Lane-Poole, The Life of Sir Henry Parkes Sometime Her Majesty's Minister to China and Japan, Vol. 1, Consul in China, London, Macmillan, 1894, pp. 70–72.
3. J.L. Cranmer-Byng (ed.) An Embassy to China. Being the Journal kept by Lord Macartney during his embassy to the emperor Ch'ienlung in 1793–1794, London, Longman, 1962.
4. A quote from Vattel, in J Matheson, The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China: Together with an outline of some leading occurrences in its past History, 1835, p. 34, reprinted by Cambridge University Press, 2012.
5. English Historical Journal, June 1997, p. 617.
6. TNA, WO 33/256, 'Cost of Principal British Wars', 23 December 1902, quoted in John Darwin, Unfinished Empire; the Global Expansion of Britain, London, Penguin Books, 2013, p. 117.
7. Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley, The Story of a Soldier's Life, Vol. II, London, Archibald Constable, 1903, pp. 2–3.
8. A very favourable biography of her is Jung Chang, Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine who launched Modern China, New York, Alfred Knopf, 2013.
9. Wakeman, op. cit., p. 163.
10. John Fairbank, Bruner and Matheson (eds.), The IG in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs 1868–1907 (2 vols.), Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, Letters 942 and 947.
11. Vice-Admiral Viscount Nagayo Ogasawara, Life of Admiral Togo (trans. Jukichi Inouye and Tozo Inouye, Saito Shorin Press, 1934, pp. 135–38.
12. Ss-u-yu Teng, John Fairbank et al., China's Response to the West: a documentary survey 1839–1923, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, document 35, cited in John K. Fairbank, The Great Chinese Revolution 1800–1985, New York, Harper and Row, 1986, p. 378.
13. A storm of protest from both Paris and the Vatican followed the killings. France demanded severe punishments; 16 Chinese were executed and China apologised to France.
14. Cited in Marilyn B. Young, The Quest for Empire, in Ernest R. May and James C. Thomson Jr, (eds.) American-East Asian Relations: A Survey, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1972, p. 139.
15. See, for instance, Harry G. Gelber, The Dragon and the Foreign Devils, London, Bloomsbury, 2007, pp. 235–36.
16. Harriet Sergeant, Shanghai: collision point of cultures 1918–1939, New York, Crown Publishers, 1990, p. 20.

17. Very similar ideas must have lain behind President Franklin Roosevelt's determination to treat Chiang Kai-shek's government as one of the 'Four Great Powers' during World War II.
18. In 1898 Arthur Balfour referred in the House of Commons to the 'Open Door' doctrine as 'that famous phrase that has been quoted and requoted almost ad nauseam'. Hansard 4th series 1898, 10 August.
19. The whole affair of John Hay's 'Open Door' is delightfully discussed by George Kennan in his American Diplomacy 1900–1950, London, Secker and Warburg 1952, Chapter 2: 'Mr. Hippisley and the Open Door.'
20. Lord Macartney's journal of 1793/1794 had already made special note of the marked differences between Chinese and Manchus: 'They are both subject to the most absolute authority that can be vested in a prince, but with this distinction, that to the Chinese it is a foreign tyranny; to the Tartars a domestic despotism.' He greatly admired the current emperor, Qianlong, but also noted that 'a century and a half [of Manchu rule has not] made Qianlong a Chinese. He remains at this hour, in all his maxims of policy, as true a Tartar as any of his ancestors.' Cranmer-Byng, An Embassy to China, op. cit., esp., pp. 221–242.
21. Kennan, ibid., p. 42.
22. See Chap. 2, p. 5 and footnote 3. Mr. Mitchell, a British agent at Canton, reported as follows to his superior, Sir George Bonham: 'Our Commercial Treaty with this country (China) has now (1852) been nearly ten years in full work, every presumed impediment has been removed, one thousand miles of new coast have been opened up to us, and four new marts established at the very thresholds of producing districts, and the best possible points upon the seaboard. And yet, what is the result as far as the promised increase in the consumption of our manufactures is concerned? Why, plainly this: That at the end of ten years the tables of the Board of Trade show us that Sir Henry Pottinger found a larger trade in existence when he signed the Supplementary Treaty in 1843 than his Treaty itself shows us at the end of 1850! – that is to say, as far as our home manufactures are concerned, which is the sole question we are now considering.' No one paid much attention at the time.
23. John K. Fairbank, America and China 1840–1860, in May and Thomson (eds.), American-East Asian Relations, op. cit., p. 33.
24. Ross Terrill, op. cit., p. 40.
25. Ibid.
26. Benjamin I. Schwartz, The Chinese Perception of World Order, Past and Present, in John King Fairbank (ed.), The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1968, p. 288.

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