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TIENTSIN CHINA IN 1900

by

Glen Shagren

Report No. 2 submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

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in

History

Plan B

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The city of Tientsin is situated in northern China at the junction of the Peiho (River) and the Yuho (the Grand Canal). Its latitude is approximately 39 degrees north with a longitude of about 117 degrees east.¹ The unique thing about Tientsin in 1900 was that it was actually two totally separate cities. Tientsin City, or the Native City, was surrounded by a large wall built in 1405. The wall was about thirty feet thick and about twenty-five feet high. The sides of it were faced with brick work four to five feet thick and the center was filled with dirt. A brick parapet about five feet high capped the wall, and gates were situated in the center of each side. Over these gates and in the four corners were built two storied buildings which served as look-out stations and added a very ornamental effect. Buildings inside the Native City were very close together. The streets were narrow, and transit and public utilities were very poor.² Outside the walls of the

¹Noah F. Drake, "Map and Short Description of Tientsin," (unpublished printed booklet, in Stanford University Library), p. 1. H. B. Morse in The International Relations of the Chinese Empire, 3 vols. (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1918), 1:241, on map lists the river as the Haiho.

²Gordon Casserly, The Land of the Boxers; Or China Under the Allies (London: Green and Company, 1903), p. 17.

Native City were extensive suburbs in which a large part of the native population lived. Surrounding the suburbs of the Native City was a mud wall which had been constructed in 1858 as a defense against foreigners.³

Two miles down the Peiho was situated the Tientsin Foreign City. It resembled a European town rather than an alien settlement in the heart of the Chinese Empire. It had wide roads and well kept streets, large offices and huge warehouses. It also had good public buildings and comfortable villas, a horse racing track and a polo ground. The city hall, known as Gordon Hall, named for General Charles Gordon who laid out the British Concession, was the leading architectural structure in the foreign city. Victoria Park was a beautiful area which had been developed within a treeless, marshy, alkaline area of the foreign city. Most of the buildings in the area were located in those parts of the concession closest to the river. In 1900 only the British, French, Japanese and Germans had concessions in Tientsin.⁴ Most of the banks and offices of the largest merchants were located in the British concession.⁵

By 1900 Tientsin had approximately one million people and because it was a center for trade, it had become an important city to China, both politically and economically. Its growth to political importance

³Henry Neil, Startling Experiences in the Three Wars; in China, the Philippines, South Africa (Chicago: Marshall Everett, 1900), pp. 85-86.

⁴Drake, "Map and Short Description of Tientsin," pp. 2-3.

⁵Casserly, The Land of the Boxers, p. 17.

apparently dates back to the first year of the reign of the Ming emperor Yung-lo, in 1403. At that time it became a wei, or fortified post. In the third year of Yung Ching, 1726, it became a chou, or sub-perfectoral city, six years later becoming a fu, or capital city of the province of Chihli.⁶ Economically, the city had been important as a trade center for over a thousand years.

It was not until 1863 that the area was opened to foreign trade, the British becoming the first foreign power to become active there. From that time on foreign activity in the area increased. In 1900 that influence was to be seriously challenged by a Chinese anti-foreign movement known as the Boxers. It is the purpose of this paper to analyze the influence of the foreigners in Tientsin, show how this influence added to the Boxers' anti-foreign feeling, and narrate the events that occurred as a result of this collision of two cultures. The sources for this paper are English language materials written by foreigners, and thereby, run the risk of being partial to foreign interests. Even with this in mind, it will be made clear that the integrity of the Chinese and the respect which they deserved from the foreign intruders was almost totally ignored during and after the Boxer uprising. The fight by the armed forces of the powers to put down the Boxers gave the foreigners a ready excuse to further their influence around Tientsin. This imperialistic lack of respect shown by the powers for China and the Chinese becomes the principal theme of this paper.

⁶ Drake, "Map and Short Description of Tientsin," p. 1.

CHAPTER II

FOREIGN INFLUENCE IN TIENTSIN, 1900

The biggest foreign influence in and around the city of Tientsin was in the area of trade. Tientsin, because of its geographic location had for years been a major trading center in China. This was due to the system of navigable waterways branching from Tientsin, especially the Grand Canal, built over 1300 years ago. At an early date Tientsin had become a flourishing trade center, with the transferring of cargoes the most frequent form of employment of the people in the city.¹ The fact that it was the port city of Peking helped contribute to the volume of trade. From about March 10 to about November 20, when the waterways froze over, Tientsin was a bustling city, the trade outlet for the whole of the northwestern provinces of China. The ten to twelve miles of waterway within the city were filled with riverboats, with thousands of Chinese filling the walkways of the trading area, carrying bundles of commerce to and from boats.²

It was this potential for trade that made the Tientsin area especially enticing to the greedy foreign merchants, who were by 1900 a major influence in the area. The first foreign concessions were not granted, however, until after the ratifying of the Treaty of Tientsin in 1860. In accordance with the terms of the treaty, the Chinese

¹ Drake, "Map and Short Description of Tientsin," p. 1.

² Ibid., p. 2.

superintendent of Northern Trade laid out three tracts of land. These tracts were to be for the use of British, French and American residents.³ The British concession was the first to have its boundaries laid, that taking place in December 1860. The French concession was granted in June 1861. It was located just above the British concession. The United States never did take active jurisdiction over the area set aside for it, though some Americans bought property within the area directly from Chinese owners.⁴ On October 12, 1880 the area was relegated to its former status, "with the understanding that if at some future time it shall become desirable to establish suitable municipal regulations therein it shall be competent for the consular authority to do so." On June 25, 1896 the United States officially abandoned all rights to any jurisdiction in Tientsin, an act that was later to be regretted.⁵

Whatever disdain shown by the United States for gaining land in China previous to 1900 was made up for by Britain, France and later Germany and Japan. Britain gained control of additional land on March 31, 1897, the new territory becoming known as the "extra concession." The term extra-concession was somewhat a misnomer since the new area

³ Inspectorate General of Customs, Decennial Reports on the Trade, Navigation, Industries, etc., of the Ports Open to Foreign Commerce in China and Corea, and on the Condition and Development of the Treaty Port Provinces, 1892-1901 (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1902).

⁴ Ibid., p. 575.

⁵ U. S. Department of State, U. S. Foreign Relations, 1901 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), p. 50.

was not granted in perpetuity such as was acquired in the original concession. The old American concession was also turned over to Britain and became known as the "British Southern Extension."⁶ In April 1896 a movement was started by France to expand the area of its concession. Two problems faced agreement to the expansion. One, France had to convince the Chinese to agree to it. Two, British subjects lived within the area desired by France, and Britain sought to protect the rights of these citizens. Action was not taken on this until after the Boxer troubles.⁷

The original German concession was not made until an agreement was reached with the Chinese on October 30, 1895. It skirts the Peiho south of the British Southern Extension. The terms of the lease were the usual lease in perpetuity, subject only to the payment of a land tax, as was the case in the other concessions.⁸ The Japanese had the only other concession open before 1900. In the protocol signed between Japan and China at Peking October 19, 1896, authority was given for settlements for the exclusive use of Japan in all the Chinese Treaty ports. In accordance with this provision, a strip of land was set aside for the Japanese.⁹

Thus a rather large portion of area in the immediate vicinity of Tientsin was under the control of foreign powers. Other countries such

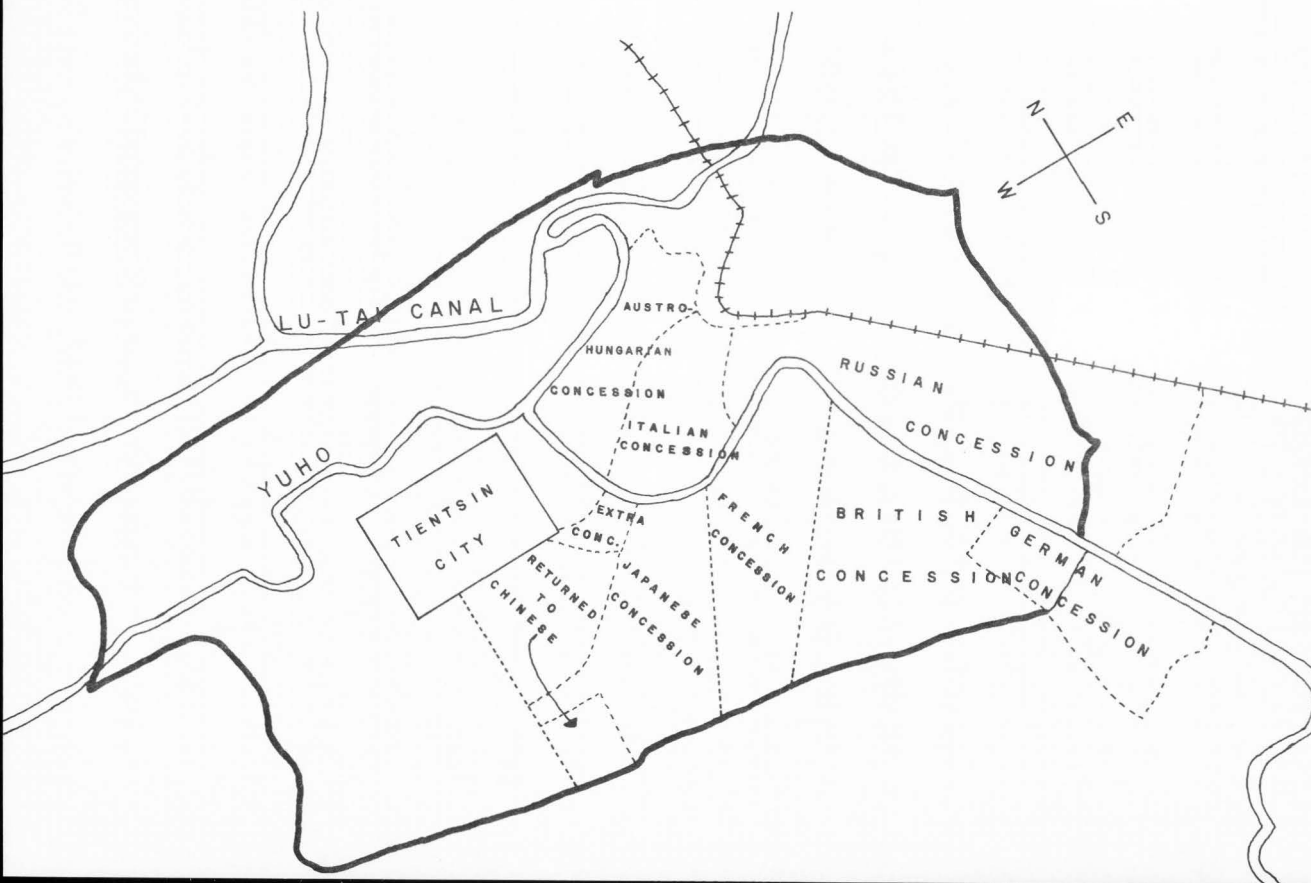
⁶ Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 574.

⁷ Ibid., p. 576.

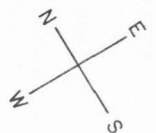
⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 577.

Figure 1. Foreign Concession in Tientsin.



LU-TAI CANAL



YUHO

TIENTSIN
CITY

AUSTRO-
HUNGARIAN
CONCESSION

ITALIAN
CONCESSION

RUSSIAN
CONCESSION

FRENCH
CONCESSION

BRITISH
CONCESSION

GERMAN
CONCESSION

EXTRA
CONC.
JAPANESE
CONCESSION

RETURNED
TO
CHINESE

as Belgium, Austria, Russia and Italy were showing increased interest in obtaining a piece of the action for themselves. The United States, though not holding control of land, had a commercial representative at Tientsin. With the growing importance of the interests of the various foreign powers in Tientsin, several of the home governments took steps to recognize the development of trade by raising the status of their consuls in Tientsin from the position of consulate to consulate general.¹⁰

Because trade was by far the largest influence foreigners had in Tientsin, a brief summary of the most important goods for trade is in order here. By 1900, cotton piece goods had become the largest article of foreign import into Tientsin. England and the United States led in amounts imported, with the United States representing about half of this branch of the trade.¹¹ Japan and India also sold cotton in Tientsin, with United States (U. S.) goods considered to be superior to all others. Chinese preferred them to all others because they dyed better. Also, because freight from New York was usually cheaper than charges from England on similar goods, U. S. cloth was less expensive to the Chinese. Yet another factor was the advancement of U. S. technology which had developed what was known as the Northrup Automatic Loom. This made it possible for American factories to use only one man per twenty looms while in England it was a one man to four loom ratio.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 572-73.

¹¹ U. S. Congress, House, Commercial Relations of the United States with Foreign Countries during the year 1899, H. Doc. 481, pt 1, 56th Cong., 1st sess., p. 854.

¹² Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 533.

Thus the American manufacturer in competition with his English counterpart saved much in the amount spent for wages.

Kerosene and sugar were also important imports into Tientsin. These came mostly from the United States and Russia.¹³ The most important sundries imported were sugar, matches (mostly from Japan), wines and liquors, cigarettes, needles and hardware.¹⁴ A large percentage of goods coming to Tientsin from the United States were not brought directly, but came to China at Shanghai and Hong Kong, and were then brought to Tientsin. There was a great competition among the foreign countries in the import trade. United States Consul James W. Ragsdale called for his country to improve its trade. He said this could be done only "... by sending good, live and responsible Americans," to handle the trade instead of relying on foreign agents. He pointed out that Germany was preparing to send her own agents, and was also preparing to publish a paper in the Chinese language to advertise their product.¹⁶ Ragsdale also pointed out that United States manufactured goods were constantly being counterfeited. Such items as Fairbanks scales and Columbia bicycles were being made by the Japanese and sold in China for about half the price of the genuine article. Germany also

¹³U. S. Congress, Commercial Relations 1899, p. 855.

¹⁴Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 533.

¹⁵U. S. Congress, House, Consular Reports, September 1898, H. Doc 565, pt., 1, 55th Cong., 2d sess, Vol. LVIII, No. 216, p. 554.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 555.

got into the counterfeiting act by making a graphophone and selling it in Tientsin as a genuine Edison. Consul Ragsdale described it as "... indeed a poor imitation."¹⁷

Although the import trade was large and important, the export business was distinctly the most significant and characteristic of Tientsin. From 1891 to 1900 the export trade from Tientsin had doubled, despite some very unfavorable conditions. In 1900, the seven leading exports were: 1) sheep's wool, 2) goat skins, 3) straw braid, 4) coal, 5) bristles, 6) skin rugs of goat, sheep and lamb, and 7) ground nuts.¹⁸ Most of these goods came from the province of Lanchau, on the borders of Tibet, and the province of Hsi-Ning, further to the northeast. The goods came down the Yellow River, and through the Khaupingkhau and Nankhou passes, both of which were dominated from Peking.¹⁹ In the native city of Tientsin could be found such items as choice silks, or rich furs from Manchuria and Korea.²⁰

Thus it was trade that was the biggest interest to foreigners and their governments, and trade that brought most foreigners to Tientsin. As could be expected, those outsiders who invaded China after 1860 were not content simply to engage in activities related to trade. Foreign influence in Tientsin by 1900 was being felt in many other ways. Some of this influence was of a positive nature in that it tended to improve

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 553.

¹⁹ H. Thompson, China and the Powers, A Narrative of the Outbreak of 1900 (London: Longmans and Green and Co., 1902), p. 141.

²⁰ Casserly, Land of the Boxers, p. 18.

living conditions. For the most part, however, any improvements that were made were in the area of the Tientsin foreign city, and were certainly of no real value to the Chinese themselves, unless, of course, they were employed in the foreign city and were able to take advantage of any convenience afforded them because of where they worked. An example of modern improvements in 1900 was the construction of a new water system, the pipes being sent to Tientsin from New York. Also a new gas works was constructed.²¹ Both of these served mainly the area around the foreign settlements. Further improvements included the planting of trees and the improving of streets.

Foreign influence and pressure was especially strong regarding the problem of silting in the waterways near Tientsin. Volume of water in the Peiko had been decreasing since 1890. The river had been deep, with a rapid current, and ocean going steamers were able to come right up to the foreign settlements to unload their cargoes.²² But because of factors of geology and extensive canal and irrigation projects, built mostly after 1890, the river's volume was steadily decreasing. Geology was a factor in that the rivers of northern China contain large deposits of sediments, which rapidly fill the Gulf of Pechili into which the Peiho flows. This causes a natural lessening in depth of water which caused problems to larger ships traveling the area. With the advent of new canals and irrigation works, the water levels were further diminished.²³ By 1900, the larger vessels were forced to stay

²¹ U. S. Congress, Consular Reports 1898, p. 551.

²² Ibid.

²³ Drake, "Map and Short Description of Tientsin," p. 1.

outside of the shallow bar at Taku, 13 miles out to sea. The goods of these ships had to be unloaded onto tugs and barges, so as to make the trip up to Tinetsin, creating much more expense for shippers. In 1898, foreign shippers began demanding that consular officials lead a movement to gain access to the necessary funds to do something about the problem. It was determined that \$162,500 would be necessary to improve the waterways. Of this amount, the Viceroy of Chihli agreed to provide \$65,000, and the consular bodies secured the remainder by means of a loan which was to be repaid from monies received from a newly levied landing tax, by authority of the French and English municipalities. The scheme had the approval of the diplomatic body of Peking.²⁴

Schools in and around Tientsin were definitely under foreign influence. In the 1880's, Commissioner of Customs at Tientsin, Gustav Detring, persuaded Viceroy Li Hung-chang to give his sanction for the acquisition of a tract of land below the foreign settlement for the purpose of building a university. Funds were contributed by Chinese officials and Europeans, and in 1887 the main building of what became known as Tientsin University was erected.²⁵ But, Viceroy Li had a change of heart and refused to let the university open. It thus stood vacant for eight years and became known as "Detring's folly."

²⁴

U. S. Congress, Consular Reports, 1898, p. 551.

²⁵

From Charles D. Tenney, "The Government Schools of Chihli Province," quoted in Decennial Reports 1892-1901, p. 566.

Dr. Charles D. Tenney, who had been a United States Vice-consul to Tientsin, and who had organized a private school for Chinese youths, became president of the new university 1895, after the war with Japan had changed the minds of Chinese officials. Thus Tientsin University began its operation.²⁶

The curriculum at the new university was based totally on European concepts. Four years of preparatory English and mathematics were required. After those four years, the student advanced to the collegiate level or advanced study. The last three years study, the students could choose to specialize in either European law or in a branch of engineering. The students were admitted to the various departments by competitive examinations. In each area of specialization a foreign professor was in charge, assisted by Chinese professors. The government of the university was solely in the hands of the president and two Chinese directors. Total budget of the university in 1898 was \$39,000, all of which was paid by the Chinese government. In 1898, 250 students attended the university.²⁷ The Chinese rejected until after 1900 a scheme to open foreign influenced preparatory schools in the surrounding area. It would have been the purpose of these schools to get students ready to attend Tientsin University. The influence of foreigners in the educational system near Tientsin was to be of supreme importance in the coming of the Boxer uprising, for it attacked the very fiber of

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 556-57. Also discussed in Consular Reports, 1898, p. 551.

²⁷ Discussed in both Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 569 and Consular Reports, 1898, pp. 551-52.

traditional Chinese culture. Charles Tenney himself said that "When the Boxers took charge of affairs in Chihli, they gave out as their programme at Tientsin, first, the destruction of the railway station, and, second, that of the University."²⁸

Had it not been for the foreign influence, railroads would not even have been in China in 1900. The double line of track between Tientsin and Peking had just been completed in 1899 (actually the line stopped at Machaipu, just outside the walls of the capital). On the seaward side of Tientsin were twenty-seven miles of single track reaching as far as Tangku, almost due east. This line was extremely important as a trade route because of the problem of low water in the river routes.²⁹ Thus Tientsin was an important railroad center. Although the Chinese government controlled the management of the main lines, it was the foreigners who were responsible for their presence in China, since it was from the outside that capital and know how was gained to build the railroads. The railroads became a symbol of foreign exploitation to the Boxers.³⁰ It was for this reason that some of the earliest Boxer activities near Tientsin were aimed at the railroad lines and stations.

The realm of foreign influence that was the initial spark in setting off the Boxer movement were the Christian missionary activities

²⁸ From Tenney, "Government Schools," quoted in Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 567.

²⁹ U. S. Congress, Commercial Relations, 1899, p. 867.

³⁰ Chester C. Tan, The Boxer Catastrophe (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 55.

in China. Missionary activity was prominent in and around Tientsin. As an example, a new Roman Catholic cathedral had been completed in the native city of Tientsin in 1897. A large Methodist Episcopal church had been built in the foreign city of Tientsin.³¹ Jesuit and Lazarist missionaries owned much of the property within the French sector of the foreign city.³² Although much of the mission activity and resulting violence took place in the outlying areas of Shantung and Chihli provinces, there is no doubt that the negative influences were felt within Tientsin. A notice written by the Boxers and widely distributed in Tientsin clearly shows the attitude of the Boxers towards the Christian religion as applied to the Chinese culture. It read as follows:

On account of the protestant and Catholic religions, the Buddhist gods are oppressed, and our sages thrust into the background. The law of Buddha is no longer respected and the five relationships are disregarded. The anger of Heaven and Earth has been aroused and the timely rain has been consequently withheld from us. But heaven is now sending down eight millions of spiritual soldiers to extirpate these foreign religions, and when this is done there will be a timely rain. In a short time there will be an encounter of weapons, and the soldiers and people will suffer calamity. People ought to hasten to join the Buddhist faith as soon as possible. The Yi Ho Tuan can protect the government and give peace and protection to the people, and parents and people having seen this notice must make it known to others and thus avoid calamity to their families. Those who fail to publish it will suffer. If the foreign religions are not destroyed there will be no rain.³³

³¹ Frederick Brown, From Tientsin to Peking with the Allied Forces (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1902), p. 45.

³² Thompson, China and The Powers, p. 136.

³³ Peking and Tientsin Times, March 3, 1900, p. 2.

It is obvious from this that the missionary movement of the Catholic and Protestant churches were considered to be the worst enemy by the Boxers. And Tientsin itself was influenced by the foreign religions.

It is apparent that Tientsin came under the spell of the foreigners in many ways. It should not be surprising, therefore, that Tientsin should be the scene of some of the fiercest and most violent occurrences during the so-called Boxer uprising. It was this foreign influence that brought about the general uprising by the Chinese against the foreign intruders. And Tientsin was to play a major and significant part in the events that took place in 1900.

CHAPTER III

SEIGE: THE BOXERS IN TIENTSIN

The first reports of the I Ho Ch'üan, known as the Boxers to Westerners, were in 1898. Most of the disturbances created by the Boxers were in the area of the southern border between Shantung and Chihli provinces.¹ From there the movement spread eventually to the very confines of Tientsin itself. As early as December, 1899, the United States Consul to Tientsin, J. W. Ragsdale, had been in touch with Yu Lu, Viceroy of Chihli, concerning the Boxers. When Boxer activity increased in Chihli, Ragsdale demanded that Yu Lu do something to suppress that activity. Yu Lu immediately issued a proclamation ordering the Boxers to stop causing problems, but these were immediately torn down.² Ragsdale was unhappy because he felt the detachments sent to carry out Yu Lu's proclamation were too small. At any rate, the detachments were quite ineffectual, and the Boxers were able to continue to cause problems.³

The Boxer movement continued to grow and on December 5, 1899, the North China Daily News ran an article which predicted that unless something was done, terror and threat to foreign lives would continue.

¹Tan, The Boxer Catastrophe, p. 52.

²U. S. Congress, House, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States with the Annual Message of the President, H. Doc. 1, 76th Cong., 2d sess., p. 268.

³Ibid.

It also called for stronger action in dealing with the Boxers and said, "There is but one method of successfully dealing with such risings, which is to put them out before they have made headway."⁴ By January the Tientsin and Peking Times reported that a serious Boxer outbreak had occurred in Chinghai, only twenty-five miles from Tientsin. It also reported that it had learned that the Boxers were organizing within the confines of Tientsin Native City.⁵ A week later the paper was calling for the sending of gunboats to North China by the Western powers to combat the Boxers. The press was severely critical of the Chinese Government, which it accused of not doing enough to control the situation.⁶

The foreigners living in the outlying districts of Tientsin were continually bombarding the consular officials with demands to do something. Despite pleas by officials the violence continued. However, the foreign ministers were themselves subject to criticism. Francis Lister Hawkes Pott, a missionary to northern China, claimed that the foreign officials were "... too dazzled by the glamour of an Oriental court, and have never shown the least indication of having grasped the situation."⁷ Feelings were running high, and members of the foreign

⁴ North China Daily News, 5 December 1899, p. 1.

⁵ Tientsin and Peking Times, 13 January 1900, p. 182.

⁶ Tientsin and Peking Times, 20 January 1900, p. 189.

⁷ Francis Lister Pott, The Outbreak in China, Its Causes (New York: J. Pott and Co., 1900), p. 84.

establishment throughout northern China were becoming quite edgy and frightened. By the early part of March 1900, the Boxers were reported to be seen actively drilling inside the walls of the Native City. It was also reported that a large percentage of government officials were secretly encouraging the Boxers.⁸

By the end of May Consul Ragsdale had come to the conclusion that the Boxers were becoming a serious threat to the foreign settlements. The Native City was by this time seriously affected by Boxer activity. Ragsdale was so concerned that on May 27, 1900 he sent a message to United States Admiral Louis Kempff, who was Commander of the U. S. Flagship, Newark, requesting aid. The message was telegraphed to Tangku and from there sent to Taku by tug, reaching the admiral at 4 a.m., May 28. Contents of the message were as follows:

Sir: Part of the railway to Paoting fu destroyed by Boxers last evening. Three stations already burned. Destruction of main line to Peking threatened, workshops and several stations from Peking already destroyed. Boxers are in control and stations deserted by agents and employees. Viceroy promises to send troops tomorrow morning, but I have doubts as to their reliability. There is great uneasiness here amongst the foreigners, and their situation is most serious. Can't you land a force of marines with Maxim or quick firing guns? If so, bring by rail if permitted, otherwise by river.⁹

Admiral Kempff acted immediately and ordered 100 men to go to Tientsin under the command of Captain B. H. McCalla. These troops reached Tientsin at 10 p.m. May 28 and were the first group of foreign troop

⁸ Tientsin and Peking Times, 3 March 1900, p. 2.

⁹ U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 270.

reinforcements to arrive at the Foreign City. Ragsdale reported that the foreigners at Tientsin were so happy to see them that the entire foreign population of the city went out to greet them, complete with a brass band. Two days later 56 of the 100 were sent on to Peking to help protect that city from the Boxers.¹⁰

On June 8, Consul Ragsdale sent his native writer into the Native City to obtain some kind of idea of what was taking place there. On his return, the writer reported that there was much excitement within the Native City. He told of blacksmiths working around the clock to make spears, and that they were receiving three times the amount they usually received for them.¹¹ Consul Ragsdale interpreted his writer's report to be a signal of impending crisis. He therefore petitioned Admiral Kempff for more manpower, which was again granted. But due to the seriousness of the situation in Peking, it was decided to send 800 of the troops at Tientsin to Peking. This was done only after much controversy, for many of the foreign body at Tientsin saw a dire need for them to remain. These troops left Tientsin on July 10 under the command of Admiral Sir Edward Seymour of the British Naval force. The Seymour Expedition immediately aroused the Boxers who so successfully harrassed Seymour's troops that they never did reach Peking.¹²

Rumors and fears of an attack by the Boxers on the foreign establishments were very strong by the second week of June. The situation

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 268.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 270.

¹² Tan, The Boxer Catastrophe, p. 70.

was becoming so serious that the Chinese servants of the British concession had been gradually disappearing since the beginning of the month.¹³

At 3 o'clock on the morning of July 15, groups of Boxers made up of men and boys set fires in several places on the immediate outskirts of the foreign settlements. Groups of these men and boys could be seen in the moonlight carrying torches, shavings and oil. As they came near the foreign settlements, they tried to set fire to everything they could, the entire time yelling as hideously as possible.¹⁴ All the sailors and soldiers available in the foreign quarter went instantly into action. Even Consul Ragsdale and two of his sons, one of whom was only fifteen years old, took part in the first engagement.¹⁵ Most of the foreigners were equipped with rifles but in two places the Boxers were fired upon with machine guns. The Boxers made a concerted effort to raid the Tientsin railroad station which was only a short distance from the foreign settlements. The station was guarded at the time by a large group of Russians. William McLeish, a news reporter for the Tientsin-Peking Times, reported that the Russian gunners shot down the Boxers "like rabbits." When he dared venture out after the firing stopped, McLeish counted several "peaceful villagers" among the dead.

¹³ Letter from British Consul Carles to the British Foreign Office, 28 June 1900, in Great Britain Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Disturbances in China (London: Harrison and Sons, 1901), p. 91.

¹⁴ William McLeish, "Tientsin Beseiged and After the Siege: A Daily Record," (unpublished booklet in Hoover Library, Stanford University), p. 1.

¹⁵ U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 270.

They had apparently ventured out to inquire about the disturbance and were caught in the fire.¹⁶

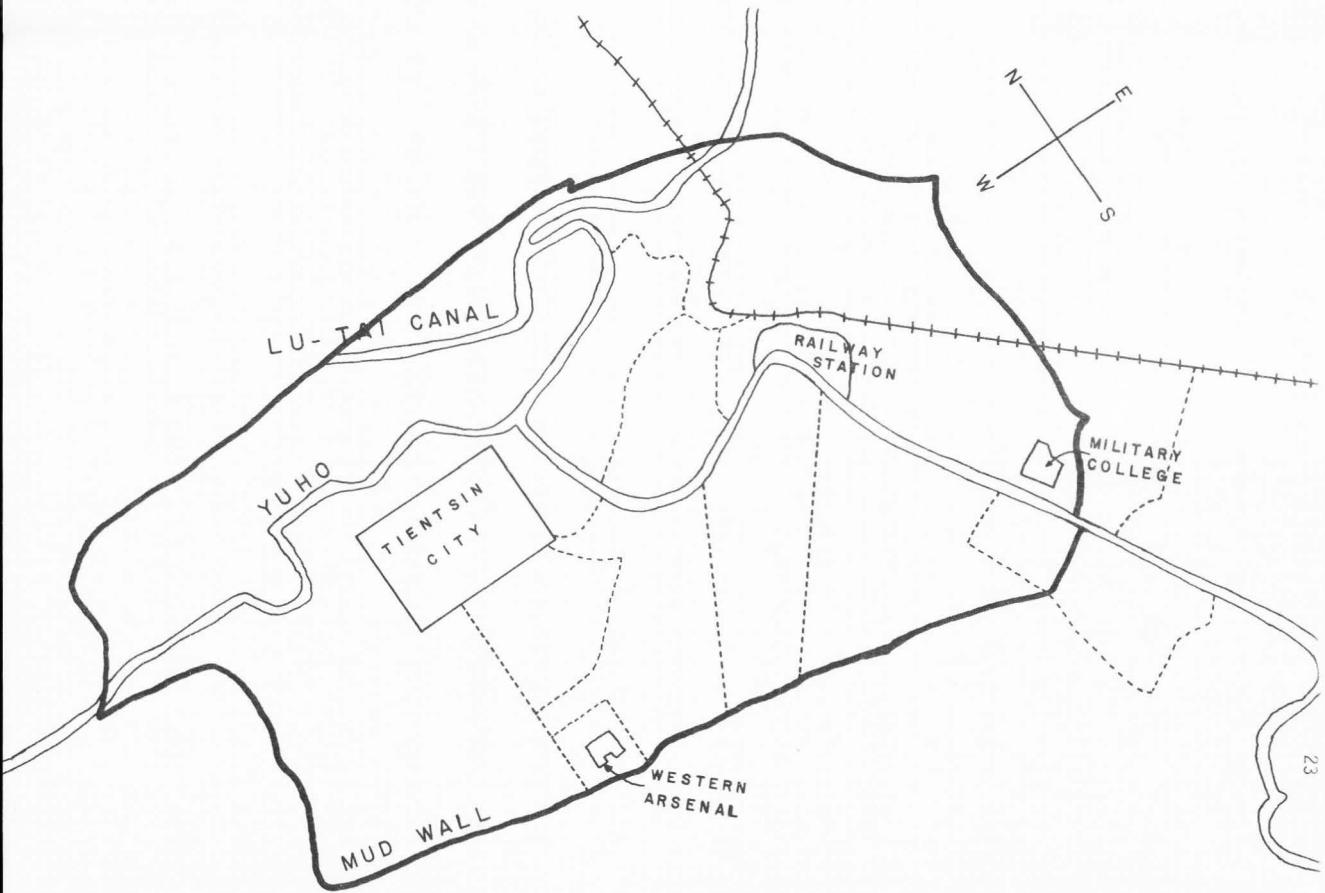
The events of June 15 certainly played a major role in the future action of the Boxers, and perhaps more important, the Chinese Imperial army. Prior to June 15, the Imperial troops were under orders to contain the violence of the Boxers. General Shih-ch'eng Nieh, whose army numbered 6,000 and who had been sent out to protect the railroad lines from destruction, was called back to Tientsin. His troops arrived just a few hours before the Boxers began their fires and rush on the foreign settlements.¹⁷ It was also known that Generals Yü-k'un Ma and Ch'ing Sung were in the area of Tientsin and commanded rather large numbers of Imperial troops. There was no evidence that any of these troops played active roles in the June 15 attack on the foreign settlements, but the killing of several Chinese citizens, several of whom were merely peaceful onlookers, adversely affected the attitude of the Chinese leaders toward the foreigners.

The very next night an event took place that was even more important in forming Chinese attitudes and policies toward the foreigners. For on the night of June 16, 1900 the foreign admirals at Taku made the decision to attack the forts off the Taku Bar. An excerpt from the minutes of the meeting held by the foreign admirals best typifies their attitude toward the entire Boxer situation. The minutes read in part:

¹⁶McLeish, "Tientsin Besieged and After the Siege," p. 2.

¹⁷U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 270.

Figure 2. General map of Tientsin.



The Allied Powers, since the beginning of the troubles, have, without opposition, sent detachments on land to protect their fellow-citizens and the diplomatic Corp against the rebels known as the Boxers. At first the representatives of the Imperial authority appeared to understand their duties and made evident efforts looking to the re-establishment of order; but now they clearly show their sympathy with the enemies of the Foreigners, in bringing troops toward the railway line and in mining the entrance to the Peiho. These acts prove that the Government is forgetting its solemn engagements vis-a-vis Foreigners; and as the commanders of the allied forces see the necessity of keeping in constant communication with the detachments on land, they have decided to occupy temporarily by consent or by force, the forts at Taku. The latest time for their delivery to the allied forces is fixed at two o'clock a.m. on the morning of the 17th. This shall be communicated to both the Viceroy at Tientsin and the Commander at the Forts.¹⁸

The commander of the forts answered that he was bound by the orders of his superiors. Just an hour before the time limit expired, the Chinese opened fire upon the allied gun boats. The allies answered this by sending six gun boats, manned by sailors and marines from Britain, Japan, Russia, Germany, Austria and Italy to attack the forts.¹⁹ The attack was a success and the allies took control of the Taku forts. This was of extreme significance, for now Chinese Imperial troops began to take an active role in the combat against the foreigners, whereas before they had for the most part out of active participation with the Boxers. As far as Tientsin was concerned, it was just a short time before Boxers and Chinese troops alike were attacking the city. In fact the first shell was fired into the foreign city the very day the Taku forts fell.

¹⁸ Quoted from Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 515.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 516.

Tientsin was the location of a relatively large military college, situated only 300 yards from the foreign settlements. In the college facilities were stored many arms and much ammunition. It was occupied by 200 Chinese military students.²⁰ Consul Ragsdale became particularly disturbed over the threat that the college might hold over the foreign settlements. Despite the fact that Generals Ma, Nieh and Sung had their troops situated near Tientsin, the allied commanders saw no apparent reason to take the college because Imperial troops had not previously acted against foreigners. The consular officials, however, were quite alarmed. Led by Consul Ragsdale, a meeting was held by the consuls and the commanders and it was decided that the military college was indeed a threat and must be captured at once. Thus, the order was given to begin attack on the college at 3 p. m., June 17. Before the attack could be made, however, a shell, which was the beginning of the seige of Tientsin, whistled into the foreign settlements. The attack on the college was promptly begun. Inside the college itself were fifty Chinese military students. They refused to surrender and were all killed.²¹ It is Consul Ragsdale's opinion, and perhaps rightfully so, that had the allies waited a mere hour to capture the college, the foreign settlement may have been riddled by the eight large Krupp guns located in the college.²²

²⁰U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 270.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

The taking of the college by no means meant that the foreign settlements were secure. In fact just the opposite was true. That first shell which dropped into the settlements at approximately 2:30 p.m., June 17 was just the first of many the Chinese were to fire into the beleaguered foreign quarters. Within a half-hour at least 100 more had burst on the houses and compounds which were the homes, offices and places of business of the many foreigners who had come to China to take part in the rich trade that abounded there. The population also included members of the various religious orders, many of whom had recently fled to Tientsin to take refuge from the Boxers. Also approximately 500 to 600 Chinese refugees who had been converted to Christianity and who were sure to be slaughtered if the Boxers had gotten hold of them, had come to Tientsin.²³ The entire population was dependent on the protection of only about 2,500 men, 17,000 of whom were Russians who had just arrived at Tientsin on June 17. These men had to maintain a defense line eight to ten miles in length.²⁴ A Russian, Colonel Wogack, outranked the other foreign officers and thus assumed command. American, Japanese, German, Russian, French and Italian troops accepted Wogack's command. Only the British, under the command of a naval officer, Captain C. W. Baily, were reluctant to follow the Russian's lead.²⁵

Herbert Hoover, who was in China as an engineer for foreign companies, and who happened to be in Tientsin when the first shells were

²³ Herbert Hoover, The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover, 3 vols. (New York: McMillan Co., 1951), 1:48.

²⁴ U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 270.

²⁵ Hoover, Memoirs, 1:49.

fired, was asked to organize the Christian Chinese refugees to aid in building barricades for protection. The only materials that could be found for this were the sacks of sugar, peanuts, rice and other grains located in the large warehouses in the foreign city. Approximately 1,000 Chinese Christians were enlisted by Hoover to pile up the sacks of material along exposed parts of the town and at cross streets.²⁶ The attack of the first day of the seige, June 17, only lasted until approximately 5 p. m. The Austrians, Italians, British and Americans kept the enemy at a distance on the southern and western sides of the city. The French easily drove back any enemy troops who came their way from the north. The wind was blowing in a southerly direction, so the French troops set fire to the Chinese suburban homes located between the Foreign and Native cities. The fire burned furiously all night and helped to clear the front of enemy troops.²⁷ Though the foreigners would naturally defend their action as being necessary to guarantee their protection, it was another of a long list of examples of complete disregard for the Chinese people. The entire scene on the north of the foreign settlements was described as truly an appalling sight. After dark, thousands of innocent, peaceful Chinese could be seen rushing from their burning houses "... in the last extremity of panic." Many were taking away their household goods in wheel barrows, many in full flight trying to flee shot and shell that was being played on them.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ McLeish, "Tientsin Beseiged and After the Seige," pp. 3-4.

Losses of the Chinese the first day of the seige were unknown, but there is no doubt that they were heavy among soldiers and the innocent were "sacrificed in hundreds if not thousands." The foreigners on the other hand had only five killed, several more wounded.²⁹ One problem facing the foreigners when the shelling began was where to put the women and children so that they would be safe from attack. It was decided that the safest place for them would be in Gordan Hall, a large building located in the center of the foreign community. It was being used as the city hall at the time of attack.³⁰ The day of the initial attack, Wilfred Newberry, who was on the staff of Herbert Hoover, climbed onto the roof of the Hoover residence to look about. In a pasture about a mile out he spotted the dairy herd that had been serving the foreigners. Realizing the value of the cattle, he secured a horse and calmly rode out to drive the herd back to the settlement, the entire time exposed to heavy fire by the Chinese. The herd became valuable later for meat and milk for the foreigners.³¹

Shelling and firing with rifle shot by the Chinese continued off and on for the next twenty-five days. On Tuesday, June 19, the Russians, supported by the British held off a Chinese attack on the railroad station. The temperature reached 94 degrees that day. Chinese shelling generally stopped about mid-afternoon while the Chinese apparently partook of their mid-afternoon tea.³² The Chinese, with their

²⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁰ U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 270.

³¹ Hoover, Memoirs, 1:49.

³² McLeish, "Tientsin Beseiged and After the Seige," p. 5.

superior numbers, could no doubt have overrun the foreigners, but at no time was an all out attack carried out. If their strategy was suspect, the same cannot be said for the Chinese fighting ability. Colonel Wogack stated that the Chinese were "fighting well and more skillfully than ever before."³³ The Russian troops bore the brunt of the most serious Chinese Charges, and therefore received many casualties. On June 19, ninety Russians were killed or wounded.³⁴

With all the fire directed at the foreign city, an increasing number of foreigners, both soldiers and civilians were wounded. The number of medical people and facilities were extremely small. Only two doctors and one nurse were available. A building that had served as a settlement club was turned into a hospital by order of Colonel Wogack. This facility was soon full of wounded. Mrs. Herbert Hoover volunteered to help in the make-shift hospital. Hoover stated that he "... saw little of her during the first period of the seige, except when she came home occasionally to eat or catch a little sleep."³⁵ She is said to have become quite good at riding her bicycle near the walls of buildings, so as to avoid bullets sprayed into the city, although one day one of her bicycle tires was punctured by a bullet.³⁶

Because of so many stray bullets flying into the foreign city from the outside, ricocheting off buildings, streets and etc., many of the foreigners became suspicious of the Chinese refugees. These people had

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁵ Hoover, Memoirs, 1:50.

³⁶ Ibid.

fled to Tientsin for protection and would have been in as horrible straits as the foreigners were they to be captured. They had been doing a tremendous service to the community building barricades to help protect the city.³⁷ Yet, many foreigners became hysterical, and immediately picked upon the Chinese in the city. The Chinese Imperial Bank was turned into a jail and over 100 Chinese were put in it.³⁸ Some were even brought to "trial" with a British captain the self-appointed "judge." Herbert Hoover tried to intervene but was ordered to leave. He immediately rode his bicycle to Colonel Wogack's headquarters. Wogack returned with Hoover to the scene of the "trials" and ordered them stopped. The Chinese prisoners were turned over to Hoover and returned to their quarters.³⁹

The feelings against the Chinese did not quickly subside. Arthur Barnes was commander of a Chinese regiment trained by the British which had been stationed at Wei-ha-wu. His regiment was ordered to Tientsin and arrived there shortly after the seige was broken. When he arrived, feelings were running so high against the Chinese people, that many of the foreigners were against letting the regiment into the city.⁴⁰ This despite the fact that at one point when it appeared a particular gun placement was doing extreme damage, a couple of Chinese volunteered to enter the Native City to find the gun. Two other Chinese volunteered

³⁷ McLeish, "Tientsin Beseiged and After the Seige," p. 7.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁹ Hoover, Memoirs, 1:50.

⁴⁰ Arthur Alisen Stuart Barnes, On Active Service of the Chinese Regiment; A Record of the Operations of the First Chinese Regiment in North China from March to October 1900 (London: Great Richards Company, 1902), p. 29.

to try to reach Taku, but neither was heard from again. About fifty Chinese helped to provide ammunition for and to move a British twelve-pounder naval gun. They dragged it from one position to another, depending on where it could be used for greater benefit. Several times this was done under heavy fire. Chinese were also responsible for washing approximately 400 articles per day which were used in the make-shift hospital. Chinese women made shirts for the sick and wounded, as well as the pillows for the hospital.⁴¹ All in all the Chinese did a great, and for the most part unappreciated, service for the foreign community.

From the day it began until its end twenty-five days later, the shelling into the foreign compound was extremely heavy. Consul Ragsdale estimated that 5,000 shells were lobbed into the area. His house was struck the first day. He described the shelling as "... far more terrific than any I experienced in the Civil War, and I served under General Sherman."⁴² Few civilians were killed because they crawled into cellars and stayed there. If one stayed below ground he was reasonably safe, since the shells exploded as they passed through the first wall they struck, with fragments being blown all over the first room, but not passing through to the lower floors.⁴³ In the street, everyone was exposed. When the firing died down, those in the cellars tried to sleep on chairs, the floor or on stairs. Diets for those in the cellar

⁴¹Brown, Tientsin To Peking, pp. 42-43.

⁴²U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 272.

⁴³Brown, Tientsin to Peking, p. 34.

consisted of corned beef and biscuits. Damage to property in the area was terrific. Household belongings were all destroyed. The force of an exploding shell in one house was so great that chair legs were found sticking into the ceiling, while all of the furniture was left in small pieces.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 36.

CHAPTER IV
ATTACK AND DESTRUCTION

With the beginning of the attack on the foreign settlements on June 15, all communication with the outside was cut off. It was impossible to relay word of the seriousness of the predicament of those caught in the seige. On June 19, a young Englishman named James Watts volunteered to ride from Tientsin to Taku, a distance of 32 miles, with dispatches to the British admirals.¹ After sundown, Watts and three Russians left Tientsin on their dangerous journey and were somehow able to reach Taku safely. Watts' feat was made somewhat easier due to the fact that he was extremely familiar with the countryside.² The group had several narrow escapes, having to swim the Peiho twice to avoid capture. Several times Watts and his Russian comrades were shot at.³ Also on the night of June 19, a group of nine men were sent by boat in an attempt to reach Taku. Among the nine was R. H. Maclay, who was Ragsdale's interpreter at Tientsin. The boat had proceeded only about nine miles down the river when it ran into rocks, apparently placed in the river by the Boxers. Those on board were forced to make the rest of the journey on foot, but finally reached their destination.⁴

¹U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 272.

²Letter from British Consul Carles to Marquis of Salisbury, June 28, 1900, in Great Britain Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Disturbances in China, p. 82.

³Brown, Tientsin to Peking, pp. 32-33.

⁴U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 271.

The success of the two attempts to reach the outside with information of the plight of those at Tientsin was to be of extreme importance. Troops were immediately sent to the aid of the besieged foreigners. On June 22, about 200 United States Marines and 300 Russians tried to get to the foreign city by following the railroad from the east. They got two miles from their destination when they were ambushed and forced to retreat. Three Americans were killed in the skirmish. As the original group was retreating, they met 1,500 new troops. On June 24, the combined forces were able to make their way into the foreign city, much to the relief of all who had been able to withstand the shot and shell thrown their way by the Boxers and Chinese regulars. The Chinese withdrew from their positions to the east of the foreign community and entered the walled city. This left the road to Taku unobstructed.⁵ More Russian troops reached Tientsin on June 25. The next day, Admiral Seymour and what was left of his force was led back into Tientsin by a group of Russians who had helped Seymour's group escape from harrassment from the Boxers.⁶

With the opening of the road to Taku on the twenty-fourth, and with the arrival of more troops, it became the objective of the international force at Tientsin not only to stave off the attacks of the Chinese, but to take the offensive themselves. On June 26, the large and very well equipped arsenal, three miles to the northeast of the

⁵ Ibid., p. 272.

⁶ A. Henry Savage Lander, China and the Allies, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 1:271.

foreign community, was attacked by Russian troops. They were supported by United States Marines as well as British and German troops, and were able to capture the arsenal, a serious blow to the Chinese.⁷ On July 4, the Chinese made a strong effort to take the railway station, but a combined British, Russian and French force repulsed the attack.⁸ Yet another attack was made on the railroad station July 11. The fierce fighting began at 4:00 a.m., with the Chinese actually charging the allies with bayonets fixed. A few were able to break through between British and French lines, and captured a number of trucks. They were eventually driven out, but were said to have shown an "... astounding amount of pluck and tenacity, as well as a considerable amount of strategy on the part of their officers."⁹ Had it not been for the quick action of Japanese reinforcements, the Chinese may have been successful in taking the railroad station. The Japanese came up quickly with bayonets fixed and drove the Chinese back.¹⁰ Though the Chinese did make concerted efforts to overrun the railroad station, the control of which would have given them a great strategical advantage, they never made the concentrated effort which could have led to victory over the foreigners at Tientsin. The constant shelling, though doing much damage, was not enough to bring victory. And, as seen, as the days went by, foreign troop strength continued to increase. The foreigners were actually ready to take the offensive themselves. Much of the Chinese

⁷U. S. Congress, Papers Relating to Foreign Relations, p. 271.

⁸Lander, China and the Allies, 1:171.

⁹Ibid., pp. 178-79.

¹⁰O. K. Davis, "Looting of Tientsin," Harpers Weekly, 15 September 1900, p. 863.

strength was now centered inside the walls of Tientsin proper. By July 11 there was talk of a concerted attack by the various foreign powers on the walled city. In fact the Chinese advancement on the railroad station on the eleventh caused a postponement of a planned attack.¹¹ A council of war made up of generals of the predominant powers met and it was decided that the attack would be made on July 13.¹² The plan of operation for the attack was for the Russians and Germans to advance on the east and southeast. At the same time Americans, British, French and Japanese forces were to make a combined attack on the walled city from the south and southwest.¹³

The actual attack commenced early in the morning of July 13. The foreign troops which advanced from the south and southwest did so with great difficulty. The wall of the native city was well armed by artillerymen of the Imperial Chinese army. In addition, a large number of Boxers were firing with old-fashioned matchlocks and other obsolete weapons. The Chinese regulars were equipped with quick firing machine guns, and European and American made rifles. The Chinese were also using an invention of their own called a gingal. It was an adaptation of the breach-loading stock joined to a seven foot long barrel. It took three men to operate one, but the gingal was deadly accurate at long ranges and fired a larger projectile which inflicted huge wounds.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Brown, Tientsin to Peking, p. 37.

¹³ McLeish, Tientsin Beseiged and After the Seige, p. 32.

¹⁴ Lander, China and the Allies, 1:182.

Because he was familiar with the topographic details of the surrounding area, gained from numerous trips on horseback around the city, Hoover was asked to accompany the approximately 900 Americans as a guide. The Americans, who were aligned to the left of the Japanese, immediately came under heavy fire from the Chinese positioned on the city walls. The Americans were in an area with little cover except for some mounds which formed old Chinese graves. Hoover explained that he was "... completely scared, especially when some of the marines next to me were hit." Hoover was unarmed at first but later was given the rifle of a fallen marine.¹⁵ The Japanese were in the center of the attack, flanked on the right by the British. By 9:00 a.m. they had moved as close to the walls as they could. They remained pinned to the ground by heavy Chinese fire, as did the rest of the foreign contingent on the south. As soon as it grew dark the Japanese started forward again. By 2:00 a.m. of the fourteenth, they had reached the wall of Tientsin. The resistance of the Chinese was very strong, and when the Japanese troops got so close to the walls that they could not be fired upon, the Chinese rolled stones and threw bricks down on them. Among the Japanese troops were engineers who carried explosives. Ladders were carried to help scale the walls. By the time the outer gate of the city was blown open, Japanese troops had already scaled the walls, some using ladders, others simply going up by hand. Before the inner gate was blown open, Japanese troops opened it from within.¹⁶ As the

¹⁵ Hoover, Memoirs, 1:53.

¹⁶ Davis, "Looting of Tientsin," p. 74.

gates opened a flood of foreign troops, Japanese, British and French poured into the town, bayonetting and shooting the Chinese who still sniped from inside buildings and made a desperate resistance.¹⁷

With the defeat of the Chinese within the walls of the native city, the entire area of Tientsin was in foreign hands. The once thriving community within the walls was now battered beyond recognition, the result of the heavy shelling the foreigners had inflicted. To make matters worse, almost one third of the city was in flames. The first thing the foreigners had to do was put out the fires.¹⁸ Shells had done heavy damage to the structural part of the city and to those living there as well. Thousands of innocent Chinese were killed. Bodies were lying everywhere, including those of women and small children. Because native homes were built of extremely flammable material, any that were hit by shells burst immediately into flames.¹⁹ The foreigners obviously gave no heed to the protection of civilians.

The fact that they had taken the city, and relieved the danger to the foreign settlements was not enough for the foreigners, neither the troops nor their leaders. The Chinese people, who had already paid heavily in property and lives from the heavy shelling, were forced to continue paying when the fighting stopped. Almost as soon as the gates were thrown open, and foreign troops began pouring in, every article of

¹⁷Lander, China and the Allies, pp. 187-88.

¹⁸Thompson, China and the Powers, p. 74.

¹⁹Charles C. Dix, The World's Navies in the Boxer Rebellion (London: Digby, Long and Co., 1905), p. 178.

portable property of any value was subject to some of the heaviest looting as has been seen in history.

The actual taking of private property of the people of Tientsin took place in several forms. First, there was some evidence that Chinese troops and Boxers had done some looting before foreign troops arrived on the scene.²⁰ Because they were engaged in heavy fighting and were forced to hurriedly flee upon the entry of the foreigners, it is quite unlikely that the Boxers or Chinese troops could have taken much. It is more likely that this charge was used as a sort of salve to the conscience of the many foreigners who took part in the looting. The foreigners had also used as an excuse that the city was on fire and that the valuables would burn anyway.²¹ There was little rationale to this since by 9:00 a.m. of July 15, the fires were generally under control.²² A second and quite common form of looting was carried on by members of the Chinese working class. Many of them had been working for the rich merchants and were paid very little. They had first-hand knowledge of where to find goods and therefore had easy access to them. The streets of the city on July 15 were full of Chinese with arms loaded with bales of cloth, rolls of beautiful silk, satins, brocades, coats of silk lined with fur of otter, fox, sable, lamb or mink. Many had tied their plunder to the ends of bars, which in turn were carried across their shoulders. Some tried to carry a quantity that was obviously much too heavy.²³

²⁰Lander, China and the Allies, p. 190.

²¹Ibid.

²²Davis, "Looting of Tientsin," p. 863.

²³Ibid.

Into the throngs of Chinese carrying off goods came yet another type of looter, this in the form of the foreign soldiers. The troops were described as having "rifles with slings over their shoulders, both hands free."²⁴ The Chinese readily bowed to the demands of the foreigner, and gave up any article the soldier may have wanted. Many a soldier could be seen carrying arm loads of valuables. Several had so much that they were forced to stand guard over it while a friend went to get a cart with which to carry the loot away. Throughout the entire day of July 14, the looting was carried on. By the next day the highest officers of the British troops had decided to take all the loot away from those carrying it into the British sector of the foreign community. The roads into the settlement were full of men bringing in their plunder. Many had forced Chinese laborers to do their carrying for them. The goods were taken away despite the pleas of protest to be disposed of for the common benefit of all the men engaged in the capture of the city. The evening of July 15, the first distribution was begun, and only the officers were allowed to participate.²⁵ This example is typical of the overall attitude displayed by the foreigners toward the Chinese people. There was total disregard for the feelings of the Chinese, with the higher officers approving it only in as much as it benefitted them.

Because troops of so many nationalities took part in the sack of Tientsin, it is interesting to note which nation's troops took part in

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 863-64.

the looting. There is overwhelming evidence to support the fact that men of all nations took part in it. The statement best summing this is, "The soldiers of all nations, none excepted, disgraced themselves alike."²⁶ But it was not only the foreign soldiers who took part. By noon of July 14, many of the civilians in the foreign city, upon learning of the capture of Tientsin, ventured into the city. Many were quite familiar with the area and were able to find the more valuable articles to steal. Many came to recompense themselves for losses they felt they received at the hands of the Chinese.²⁷ They of course did not stop to realize that it was because of their encroachments that the Chinese attacked in the first place. The British civilians were said to have been more successful looters than the troops, probably because they knew the location of the more valuable jewelry and large sums of money.²⁸

By the second and third day after the fall of Tientsen, the feverish pitch of the looting had subsided. Things in the foreign settlement began to return to normal, except that many of the homes and buildings were badly damaged during the siege, and it would take time for repairs to be made. The foreign sector was filled with officers and service men of all nationalities. It was described as a city presenting "a kaliedascope picture of varied uniforms and mixed troops of many nations."²⁹ Mostly good fellowship prevailed among the different

²⁶Lander, China and the Allies, 1:190-91.

²⁷Davis, "Looting of Tientsin," p. 863.

²⁸Dix, The World's Navies, p. 179.

²⁹Casserly, The Land of the Boxers, p. 26.

nationalities. The bond of a common language drew British and Americans quite close together. Speaking to the Japanese proved to be the most difficult for those of the other nations because the Japanese language was so much different.³⁰

In the suburbs and Tientsin proper, things were very far from normal. The immediate concern was to cremate the hundreds of bodies of Chinese who had died in the foreign attack. Prisoners who had been captured by foreign troops were forced to gather bodies into heaps, cover them with doors and other materials taken from Chinese houses and then to set them afire.³¹ Those Chinese who were still alive were forced to either have in their possession home-made flags of one of the foreign nations or a pass. Most of the Chinese made simple replicas of the Japanese flag, since it was easiest to imitate. Very few had U. S. or British flags in their possession.³² Any Chinese found in the city without a flag or a pass was made prisoner or shot.³³ For days prisoners were executed, none of whom received any semblance of a trial. Many were simply villagers who were driven to brigandage because their houses were burned and a food supply was non-existent. Others were the victims of informers, who to gain a small reward, denounced innocent people. Often the prisoners were led in groups, pigtailed together, to the place of execution. In most cases a Chinese acted as

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

³¹ Brown, Tientsin to Peking, p. 44.

³² Dix, The World's Navies, p. 184.

³³ Lander, China and the Allies, p. 215.

executioner, with white soldiers as witnesses. A sword was used, and the "convicted" were beheaded.³⁴

It is quite obvious that the Chinese people were the real losers in and around Tientsin during the early part of the Boxer Rebellion. The foreigners didn't even help those Chinese who were wounded. Red Cross workers, who entered Tientsin after the foreign attack, ignored injured Chinese and many died from want of assistance.³⁵ Property losses when all added together were astounding among even the poorer classes. Added to this was the fact the means of livelihood of all classes of Chinese was seriously disrupted. Even with all these adversities, perhaps the biggest blow of all to a people who had governed themselves for centuries was the announcement that the foreign generals had agreed that they would govern the city of Tientsin and its vicinity. A telegram from the British Consul to the Marquis of Salisbury, July 17, 1900 told of the meeting of the "allied commanders" who agreed to appoint a military government.³⁶ It is this government that forms the final chapter of foreign dominance in Tientsin.

³⁴ Casserly, The Land of the Boxers, p. 28.

³⁵ Lander, China and the Allies, p. 216.

³⁶ Telegram from Consul Carles to Marquis of Salisbury, 17 July 1900 in Great Britain Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Disturbances in China, p. 114.

CHAPTER V
FOREIGN RULE IN TIENTSIN

The institution that was to become the ruling body of Tientsin and eventually its surrounding area has been called, "One of the most remarkable military dictatorships ever organized."¹ The institution was the Tientsin Provisional Government or T. P. G. for short. The government was composed of a council made up of three members, all having equal power. The three members were elected by a vote of the military commanders of the allied powers operating in Chihli Province. The council derived its authority from all the powers, and enjoyed absolute independence in dealing with the territory under its jurisdiction. It was pledged to comply as nearly as possible to all requests addressed to it by either the commanders of the allied forces or by the consuls representing the foreign powers.²

In looking at the provisions the T. P. G., it is obvious that the integrity of China, both of its government and people were totally ignored. No respect was shown the Chinese Government. Though the foreigners had attacked and defeated a combined Boxer-Government force in Tientsin, they had not defeated China. Yet the T. P. G. was set up as if China's government had somehow vanished from the earth. Only the

¹Otto D. Rasmussen, Tientsin; An Illustrated Outline History (Tientsin: The Tientsin Press Limited, 1925), p. 221.

²Great Britain Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting Disturbances in China, p. 157.

property of Chinese officials was to be protected, but any power those officials may have had was ignored. Consequently the people were placed in a position of being subjected to a government completely different from their accustomed form of rule. The T. P. G. is the crowning example of the lack of respect shown by the foreigners to the Chinese. As originally conceived, the T. P. G. had jurisdiction to include only the area around Tientsin as far as the mud wall. Exceptions were the foreign concessions, and any other organization or institution previously controlled by foreign powers.³

The first council of the T. P. G. assembled on July 30, 1900. The original council was made up of Colonel Wogack, a Russian, Britain's Lieutenant Colonel Bower and Colonel Aoki of Japan.⁴ Adding insult to the Chinese, the meeting was held in the palace or "Yamen" of the Viceroy of Chihli Province. The yamen became the headquarters of the T. P. G.⁵ By October, 1900, an agreement was reached to add three members to the council, one each from France, the United States and Germany. In November the new members took their place on the council. They were the German Major Von Falkenhayn, French Colonel Arlabosse and U. S. Major Foote. Major Foote served only until May 10, 1901, when the withdrawal of United States troops from Tientsin necessitated his resignation. By then another member had been added. On April 15, 1901,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, pp. 581-82.

⁵ C. L. Poor, "Tientsin Today," Harper's Weekly, 20 October 1900, p. 986.

Commander Cassanova was appointed as a representative from Italy.⁶ Thus each of the major powers was eventually represented on the council.

A myriad of problems faced the T. P. G. It had to deal with the extreme chaos which resulted from the capture of the native sectors. Trade, which had been the life line of the city, was virtually at a standstill. Shops were void of goods with which to trade, generally due to the looting that followed the foreign attack. Even the necessities of life were at a premium. Fear had driven most businessmen and customers alike from the city. The tremendous struggle to take Tientsin had resulted in serious health hazards. Bodies lay everywhere, buildings and streets had been destroyed. The city and its suburbs were in a serious state of disarray and turmoil.⁷ The fact that the T. P. G. was a foreign military government more difficult to successfully resolve. One of the first things the T. P. G. did was to set up a police system to maintain order in the area. Soldiers of the various foreign powers made up the backbone of the police force. Many Chinese were added to the force.⁸ The native policemen were stationed about the city and were to report any serious problems to the foreign police, who then dispatched troops to take care of the problem. The native city was organized into four districts, each district having a foreign central police headquarters and a detachment of foreign troops, patrolled like the Chinese police.⁹ The police system was eventually expanded to

⁶ Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 582.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p. 585.

⁹ Poor, "Tientsin Today," p. 986.

include the waterways around Tientsin. Thievery in the shipping industry had always been a problem. To combat it, sixty Chinese policemen and about the same number of Italian sailors were appointed to patrol the waterways. All were under the command of a captain of the Italian navy.¹⁰

Another early thrust of the T. P. G. was a campaign to clean up and fix up the city and to give it a better system of drainage. In an attempt to improve the pitiful conditions of the Chinese in Tientsin, almshouses were established and some aid was provided to Chinese who could not make their livings the way they had before the foreign takeover. Some were put to work by the T. P. G. in jobs designed to aid in the clean-up of the city and to build the new drainage facilities. Street improvements were also an endeavor undertaken by the T. P. G. Along the banks of the Peiho and Grand Canal, a wide, paved boulevard was constructed. The new road offered excellent accommodations for traffic to and from the city. A wide thoroughfare was also built around the city. The two existing main roads of the town were widened and straightened, and many lesser roads were improved. The T. P. G. also was responsible for the installation of a new system of water works. Chinese and foreign capitalists were granted a franchise to install and operate the new system. The T. P. G. attached several conditions to the franchise. Fire hydrants had to be installed at intervals of 225 meters. The price of the water could not exceed that of the native city of Shanghai. Also a filtering system had to be

¹⁰ Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 585.

installed and maintained. The result was a clear water supply that the natives had never known before.¹¹ Though the improvements were beneficial to the Chinese, it is obvious that many were undertaken to aid the foreign interests in Tientsin. An example is the improvement made on roads which were to facilitate the movement of trade goods in and about Tientsin.

The degree of authority which the T. P. G. held over the Chinese people is evident in the judicial power in Tientsin. The T. P. G. had the power to inflict fines upon the natives, confiscate their property and punish them with banishment or death.¹² The police made up largely of foreigners could make the arrests, and the cases were heard in courts presided over by foreigners. There is little wonder that at first the Chinese were terrified by the T. P. G. and that they distrusted it.¹³ But the T. P. G. quite early won the confidence of the foreign powers. As early as November 1900, the council applied for and received an extension to its jurisdiction. The council extended the territorial limits of the T. P. G. in a decree which stated:

The jurisdiction of the council shall extend over the city of Tientsin, and over the surrounding territories where the establishment of the Provisional Government shall appear necessary to assure the security of the city of Tientsin, to complete the public works, to maintain the communications by the rivers and canals, to protect the markets where the city of Tientsin secures its provisions, and to protect goods in transit to and from the interior.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 584-85.

¹² Great Britain Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting Disturbances in China, p. 158.

¹³ Tientsin and Peking Times, 15 June 1901, p. 22.

¹⁴ Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 581.

The council thereby extended its rule to include a strip of country on both sides of the Peiho, from the Gulf of Pechili to a line about twenty-five kilometers to the west and northwest of Tientsin. The entire area was divided into five districts, of which Tientsin was one. The four outlying districts were each placed under control of a military officer who had the designation of Chief of the District. The chiefs of the four districts organized and superintended a staff independent of that of the metropolitan district. The chief of the district wielded more nearly absolute power than any one official within the city, although he was at all times under the orders of the T. P. G. Council.¹⁵ Thus the scope of the foreign control was expanded to include a much larger area and many more Chinese were forced to live under the rule of a foreign power.

One of the most unpopular actions of the T. P. G. was its decision to carry out the demolition of the wall surrounding the native city. The Chinese natives strenuously opposed this action. Leaders of the gentry class petitioned the T. P. G. to leave the wall so that they would not be subjected to the disgrace of living in a city without a wall. The reason the T. P. G. gave for wanting to tear the wall down were military and hygienic. The contention was that the wall was in such a location that the foreign concessions were always in a position to be threatened by gunfire from the wall.¹⁶ Also, many Chinese were living near the wall in wretched lean-to huts, which the T. P. G.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 584.

wanted to remove. The demolition of the wall was a gigantic task but was carried out with surprising speed. Once the Chinese accepted the fact that the wall was coming down, they caused few problems to the completion of the project.¹⁷ Nevertheless it was another example of the foreign powers ignoring the traditions of the Chinese people to promote their own causes. The people living near the wall were compensated with lots in the western part of the city.¹⁸ They were not, however, given any means with which to build a shelter on their new land. The result was that they lost what little shelter they had had before. It is obvious that the tearing down of the wall was a reaction to the experiences of the siege. One cannot help but suspect a degree of punitiveness on the part of the T. P. G. The hygienic reason for tearing the wall down was particularly weak, as the run-down shacks could have been removed without demolishing the entire wall.

To run as extensive a program as the T. P. G. meant the necessity of large amounts of funds. The income of the government was derived chiefly from domestic duties that it imposed. These included dues on goods coming to and from Tientsin. House taxes, plus the sale of shop and boat licenses helped provide funds.¹⁹ Although as early as June 1901, there was some movement to end T. P. G. rule, many Chinese had come to accept the new government. Many Chinese in the gentry

¹⁷ Tientsin and Peking Times, 15 June 1901, p. 22.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 584.

class and many traders, who had benefitted financially from T. P. G. measures, urged that the T. P. G. continue its rule.²⁰ There were also some Chinese who criticized the T. P. G. as being too lenient in dealing with criminals. Most ruffians were sentenced to hard labor, and it was felt by some that a more severe punishment was in order.²¹ By mid-year 1902, the programs initiated by the T. P. G. were either completed or well underway. Tientsin and its surroundings had returned to normal, and it became increasingly obvious that the T. P. G. was beginning to outlive its usefulness. Thus, August 15, 1902 the T. P. G. conducted its final meeting and its power was returned to Chinese authority.²²

The terms under which the T. P. G. transferred its power presented some rather delicate problems. It must be kept in mind that this power had been the creation of military men in occupation of Chinese territory. The problem facing the T. P. G. was how to resolve the fact that its actions of over two years should be recognized by Chinese authority, when the Chinese again took control of Tientsin. Persons who had assisted the government had to be protected from any natural resentment that Chinese authorities may have held for them. Also the T. P. G. wanted to insure that works begun by it would be continued by the Chinese. These were the crucial points to be negotiated in releasing the T. P. G. from power.²³ The foreign powers dealt with the Chinese concerning the points of negotiation by extending the

²⁰Tientsin and Peking Times, 15 June 1901, p. 22.

²¹Tientsin and Peking Times, 2 November 1901, p. 1.

²²Decennial Reports, 1892-1901, p. 583.

²³Ibid.

fiction that the foreign powers had never been at war with China, but were only an internal uprising. The T. P. G. looked upon itself as simply a means to which this was partially accomplished. Using this logic, the powers attempted to get the approval of its actions by the Chinese authority.

The exact proposal of the council "for the rendition of the government to the Chinese authorities" were as follows:

Given that the Allied Powers have always maintained that they have not been at war with China, the Provisional Government ought to be regarded as having acted for the Chinese Government, and the Chinese Government ought to recognize the validity of all of its acts, as if they have been done in the name of the Imperial Chinese Authorities themselves.²⁴

The Chinese were in no position to quarrel, no matter how hypocritical the proposition may have been. To regain their sovereignty from the foreign powers was their objective. Thus the T. P. G. disbanded leaving the 2,758,651.18 of Chinese taels that were left in the T. P. G. treasury to the Chinese authorities.²⁵

What effect did the T. P. G. have on Tientsin? There is little doubt that it did bring some physical and economic benefits to the vicinity. Many Chinese certainly received some improvements in their living. Yet there is little doubt that the T. P. G. caused serious psychological damage to the Chinese people in and around Tientsin, who for over two years were forced to live under the authority of a foreign power. There was certain to be a resulting lack of confidence in the old order to control the destiny of China. And though the T. P. G.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 588.

did not actively participate, its rule coincided with the greatest land grab by foreign powers near Tientsin in Chinese history. If one accepts the T. P. G.'s own proposition that it "acted for the Chinese Government" in Tientsin, then full responsibility for the land grab must be placed on its shoulders. Ulterior motives of the European countries developed as early as November 1900. Russia and Belgium were proposing extensions of their concessions, and later Germany, France and Austria did the same. Japan also got into the act.²⁶ Americans denounced this as a "grab game," but U. S. Minister to China, E. H. Conger, acknowledged that it would be, "Advantageous to us in many ways to have an American concession at Tientsin." He admitted, however, that it wasn't practical because the United States had too few citizens and too little money in the area.²⁷ Thus the United States took the role of guardian of Chinese territorial integrity. Its efforts were of little consequence in the vicinity of Tientsin, as by the end of February 1901, all available land around Tientsin had been seized by the land hungry powers, except for a small tract that had once formed the American concession.²⁸ The T. P. G. obviously did little to act in the interest of the Chinese even though it was supposedly acting "for the Chinese Government." It is inconceivable that one can truthfully say that the T. P. G. was good for China. On the contrary, it did very

²⁶ Paul H. Clements, The Boxer Rebellion; A Political and Diplomatic Review (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1915; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967), pp. 164-65.

²⁷ U. S. Department of State, Foreign Relations, 1901 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 40.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

little for China, and has to be looked upon as a detriment to the continuation of China in its old tradition.

The actual ceremonies of the transfer of authority was made on August 15, 1902. A huge, official function was made of the transfer. Yüan Shih-kai, who had become the Viceroy of Chihli Province, was present. The allied generals who authorized the transfer were French General Lefevre, Major General Rorsheidt of Germany, Major General Creagh of Britain, Japanese General Akiyama, and Lieutenant Colonel Ameylio of Italy. Several Chinese officials were present to be in charge of the proceedings for the Empire.²⁹ With the end of the T. P. G., China again ruled Tientsin. But the T. P. G.'s effects were to be felt for many years to come, most of which were negative to China rather than positive.

²⁹Rasmussen, Tientsin; An Illustrated Outline History, p. 230.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The great trading that was once so prominent in Tientsin was thoroughly disrupted by the events of 1900. The loss in trade by the United States, one of the lesser trading powers, was described as "almost incalculable."¹ The Chinese, though losing the battle in Tientsin, had seriously disrupted the major foreign influence in Tientsin. The fact that the trade was of so much importance to the powers goes far in explaining why the foreigners were willing to fight so fiercely to win victory. Once the siege had been raised, it would have been a simple matter to remove the consular officials, missionaries, businessmen and all others who were placed in jeopardy by the Chinese. The powers, however, seemed interested only in protecting their trade and extending the control they already held in China.

The powers on the surface appeared to cooperate well with each other and act as one unit, the fact remains that there was little trust held for each other. The British and Russians were particularly suspicious and envious of each other. Japan was also wary of the Russian moves in the area of Tientsin, and saw them as an attempted chaos there. Japan felt this chaos would aid Russia's advances in China.² The United

¹U. S. Congress, House, Commercial Relations of the United States with Foreign Countries During the Year 1901, H. Doc. 320, 57th Cong., 2d sess., p. 805.

²Thompson, China and the Allies, pp. 140-41.

States, though seeming to be the protectorate of Chinese integrity, looked somewhat longingly at a possible concession in Tientsin. With so many powers with roots in Tientsin, it was inconceivable that there would be a mass pullout, as none of the powers was willing to see another make gains at its own expense.

The real losers in this power struggle were the Chinese. The defeat of its army in Tientsin was a serious blow to the prestige of its government, as was the establishment of the Tientsin Provisional Government. But it was the people of Tientsin who suffered most. The loss of lives and property was astounding. Seldom were the Chinese peasants treated with any respect by the foreigners. Shells were lobbed with no heed as to whether they landed on a military objective or a peasant's hut. There was indiscriminate shooting both during the seige and in the capture of Tientsin City. People were executed with only a mere semblance of a trial. The T. P. G. helped the area in many respects, yet its major motive was restoration of the trade that had once flourished in the area. And during its rule, China lost more land to the powers in the vicinity of Tientsin than at any previous time. Little respect was shown the Chinese government except in those cases where it would have been a benefit to the foreign cause.

These are the major conclusions that can be drawn from the study of Tientsin in 1900. It is evident that these situations existed before, during and after what took place in Tientsin during the year 1900.

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APPENDIX

General Regulations for the Administration of the City of Tientsin

THE town of Tien-tsin having been occupied by the allied troops, it has been decided to constitute a Provisional Administration under the form of "Council of the Provisional Government of the Chinese city of Tien-tsin."

The jurisdiction of this Council will extend over the city of Tien-tsin itself and over the surrounding territories as far as the mud wall, with the exception of--

1. The foreign Concessions: German, English, French, and Japanese
2. The arsenals, camps, railways, telegraphs, and other military institutions already occupied by the allied troops.

The Provisional Government will deal with the following questions:

1. The re-establishment of order and security within the boundaries of the city on the territory subject to their jurisdiction.
2. The ordering of sanitary measures in the city, on this territory, and in the surrounding country, in order to prevent epidemic and other diseases.

3. They will facilitate the quartering of the allied forces, and will procure them provisions and means of transport, beasts of burden, carts, boats, coolies, &c.

4. They will draw up an inventory of, and will take the measures necessary for preserving, the moveable and immoveable property belonging to the Chinese Government, as well as that of private individuals left behind by them.

5. They will take measures to prevent famine among the natives.

The Provisional Government will be represented by a Council composed of three members enjoying equal rights, elected by a meeting of the Military Commanders of the allied Powers operating in Pechili.

The Council, deriving its authority from all the Powers, will enjoy absolute independence on the territory confided to it, and will comply as far as possible with all requests addressed to it either by the Commanders of the allied forces or by the Consuls of the foreign Powers.

In case of a difference of opinion arising between the Council and one of the Commanders of the allied forces, or between the Council and one of the Consuls, the question will be submitted to the arbitration of the assembled Commanders of the allied forces or to that of the Consular Body, according to the character of the dispute. If an arrangement cannot be come to by this procedure the difference will be submitted to the decision of their respective Governments.

The Council will have the right

1. To draw up and publish Regulations upon questions interesting the Provisional Government.

2. To impose upon the natives duties, taxes, and contributions, and to collect the taxes due to the Chinese Government.

3. To seize or take under its control all the securities, as well as the documents which shall be found in the Government buildings and in private houses deserted by their owners.

4. To make use, according to its requirements, of all the moveable property belonging to the Government, with the exception of that belonging to the Military Administration, and to proceed to the sale of the confiscated personal and real property of the native inhabitants.

5. To employ the sums placed at the disposal of the Council for the necessary expenditure.

It is understood that an advance of funds shall be made to the Council by the Powers to which the members of the Provisional Government belong, with a view to meet the first expenditure before the finances of the city have been put in order. The sums will be repaid out of the first money available from the collection of taxes and dues. Besides their rights of police, the Provisional Government will also be invested with the judicial power, They will, in consequence, be able to inflict fines upon the natives, to confiscate their goods, and, if necessary, punish them with banishment or the death penalty. As regards foreigners, both military and civilian, the Council will only exercise police rights over them. Foreigners who contravene the Regulations will be arrested, and a record of their examination will be drawn up immediately. They will then, within twenty-four hours, be handed over to their own military or Consular authorities.

The Provisional Government will be assisted, under their control, by the following Departments, which will be under their control:

1. General chancery of the Council.
2. Police Department.
3. Sanitary Department.
4. Treasury.
5. Administration of the property of the Government as well as of that abandoned by private persons.
6. Military section.
7. Judicial section.
8. Office of public food supplies.

Besides these general Departments each member of the Council has a private office.

The functions of each of these Departments are defined by their designations. As regards the details of the Department, they will be determined by special instructions of the Council.

Each administrative section is composed of a Head of Department and of such a number of employes as may be required.

The personnel of the Administration may be chosen among soldiers and civilians.

All persons attached to the service of a foreign Government who shall be members of the Administration of Tien-tsin will keep their present posts, as well as the additional salary, in the same proportions as that allotted to those who are members of the Provisional Government without occupying an official position.

There will be three categories of salaries, according to the position of the functionaries:

- Head of Department, 800%. a-year.
- Deputy head or assistants, 600%. a-year.

Secondary employes, 300% a-year
The salaries of the native personnel will be fixed by the Council.

Tien-tsin, the 10th (23rd) July, 1900¹

¹From Great Britain Foreign Office, Correspondence Respecting the Disturbances in China (London: Harrison and Sons, 1901), pp. 157-59.