

Volume 4

Number 047

Boxer Rebellion - I

Lead: In 1900 native Chinese resentment of western culture, traders, and missionaries, boiled over in the Boxer Rebellion.

Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: China is an ancient society whose rich cultural heritage was already well-established when western or European civilization was in its infancy. Therefore, when western merchants sought to open trade with the Asian giant, they encountered deep suspicion of outsiders. The Chinese regarded the westerners with ill-

disguised contempt, considering them little better than barbarians.

In the 1800s western intrusive pressure became much more intense. The Chinese population is huge and traders long have lusted after the potential of such a vast market. Chinese artifacts have fascinated collectors world-wide and the demand for Chinese tea by Europeans was becoming almost insatiable. To pay for the tea, Britain introduced the Chinese to opium. When local officials, alarmed by the social consequences of the narcotics trade, resisted, China and the West fought two so-called “Opium Wars” at mid-century. China, then in one of those periods when its national government or dynasty was

weak and incompetent, was defeated by advanced western military technology. The opium trade continued, but resentment against western intrusion intensified.

At the same time that traders were seeking profits, idealists sought to reform the so-called uncivilized Chinese. Christian missionaries from America were particularly zealous. The Victorian gospel of progress often linked ideas about free-market trading, sanitation, industrialization, and literacy with eternal salvation. Many missionaries regarded their Chinese converts as heathen who needed not just to be saved but straightened out. In 1900 the pent-up Chinese anger at this interference

exploded. Next time: Western Pressures on China

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts

Resources

Esherick, Joseph. *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987.

McAleavy, Henry. *The Modern History of China*. New York, NY: Praeger, 1967.

Weisberger, Bernard A. "Righteous Fists," *American Heritage* (May-June, 1997): 14-15.

Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.