

Boxer Rebellion - II

Lead: In 1900 native Chinese resentment against foreigners boiled over in the Boxer Rebellion.

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

Content: During the 1800s diplomats in search of concessions, traders in search of profits, and Christian missionaries in search of souls aroused great resentment in China. To their credit, many of these westerners, particularly the missionaries, were seeking to reform a vast society markedly unconcerned about the plight of the poor and abused. They built schools and hospitals and championed the cause of human rights long before such efforts were fashionable, but many did so with ill-disguised scorn for Chinese civilization.

At the same time, a weak and incompetent dynasty or government was divided over how it should respond to western ideas and attempts by European governments to extract territorial concessions. Emperor Kuang-hsu was increasingly affected by these ideas and in 1898 began issuing decrees aimed at reforming Chinese society. A conservative reaction placed the reactionary Dowager Empress Tzu-hsi in charge, but the disruption caused by the so-called 100 Days of Reform further raised tensions in Chinese Society.

Foreign governments such as Germany, Russia, France, Britain, and Japan had forced treaties on this weak government and had taken over the best seaports around which they maintained spheres of influence. The United States, which was a new power in the western Pacific because of its acquisition of the Philippines after the Spanish American War, was concerned that a weak China would be cut up like Africa and that Yankee traders would be shut out. The United States prevailed on the great powers to maintain an "Open Door Policy," which prevented partition of China but could hardly calm those Chinese who hated all foreigners anyway. Next time: The Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists.

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.