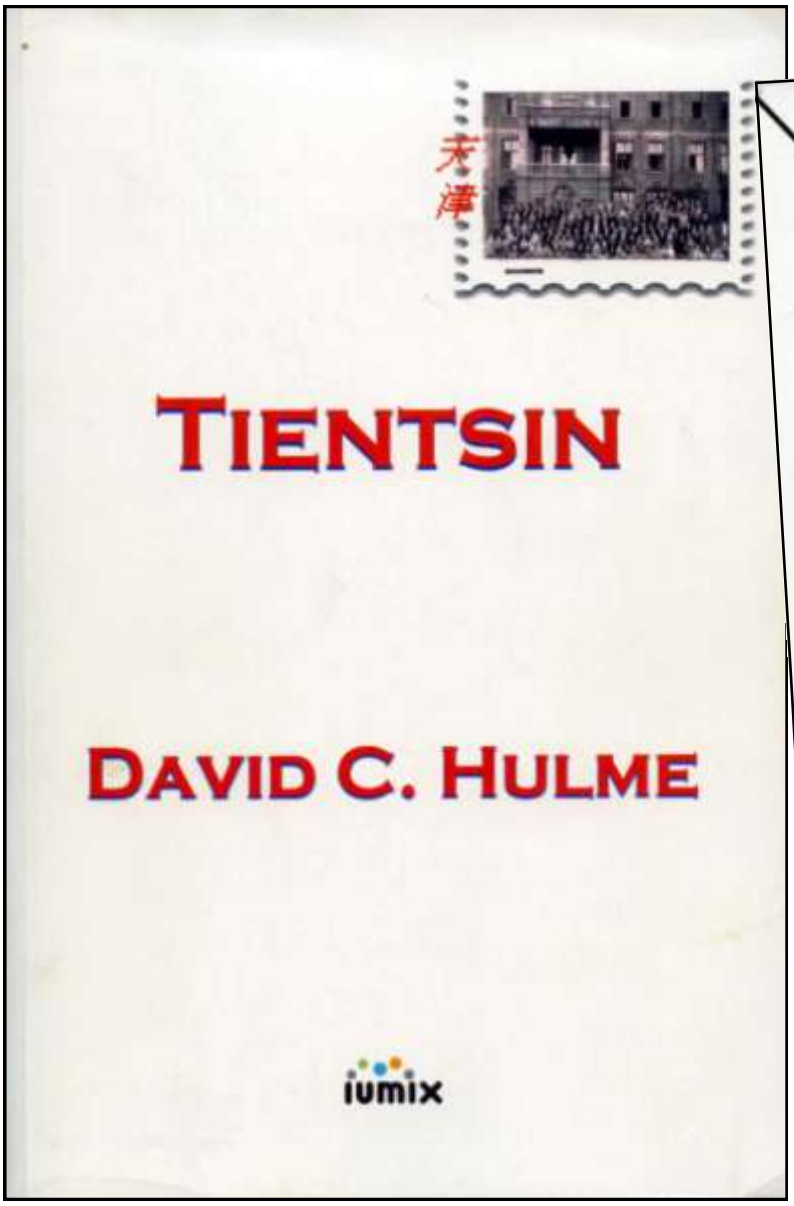

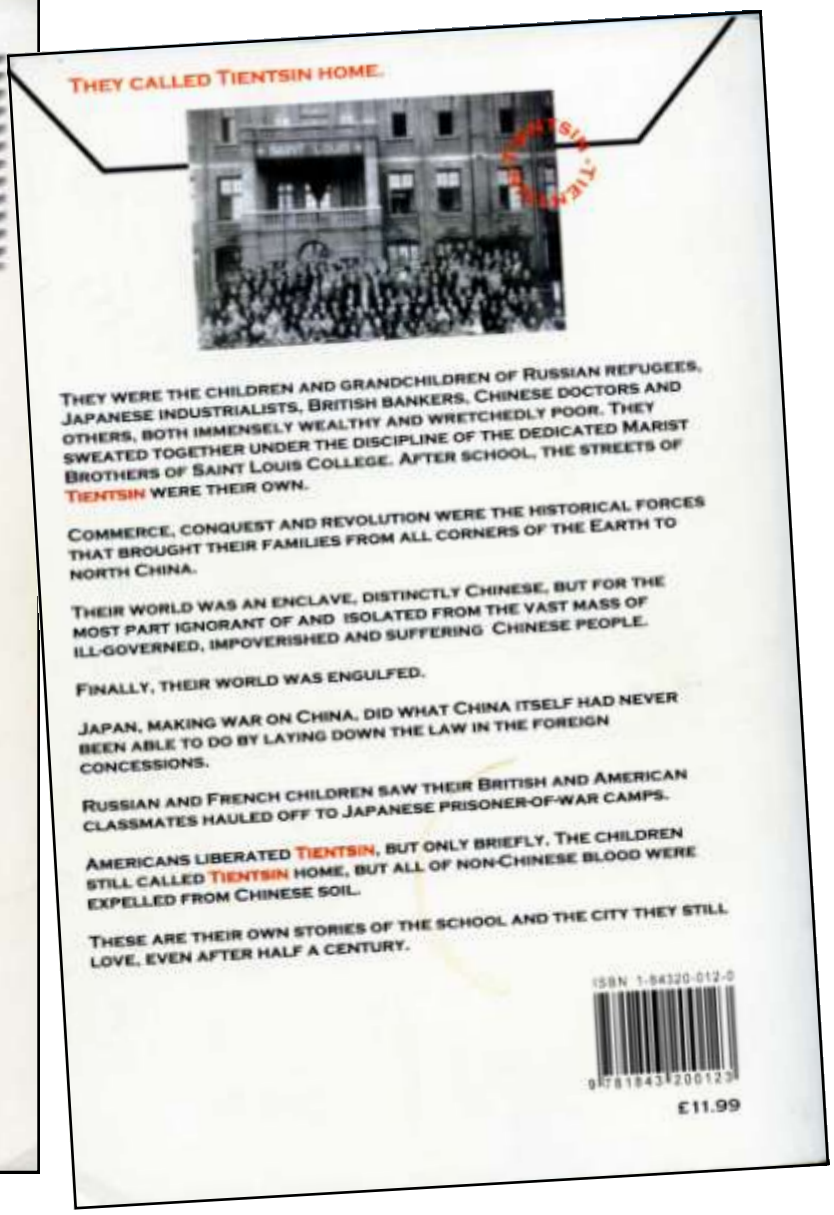

[excerpt]

Chapter 27

The Opium Wars

(1946)

Alec Zamiatin found Andreas Paradissis sitting on a camp stool, beneath an elm tree outside the Kincheng Bank, clutching the leg of his camera tripod.

"There you are Alec. Good afternoon. Did you bring my films?" the old man said quickly. "I don't want to waste too much of this lovely afternoon sun."

Alec handed over the package, then peered in the direction Paradissis had aimed his camera. It was pointed across Victoria Road toward the Deutsch-Asiatische Bank and the Jardine Matheson & Co. building on the corner of Ewo Street.

"How are things at the shop?" Paradissis asked as he fumbled with the apparatus.

"Not too bad. But the boss is worried about business dropping off. All his friends are leaving, he says. Grumbles about it all the time. Says things are going to be bleak when the Americans leave and the Nationalists have to run the show by themselves," Alec replied. "Why are you photographing Jardine Matheson's?"

"Don't you think it's beautiful?" Paradissis asked.

"No," said Alec doubtfully. Even with slanted sunbeams highlighting the facade, all he could see was a two-story pile of stones.

"Neither do I," said Paradissis gruffly. "I

would rather look at Jardine's original Tientsin home. That was one of the city's earliest foreign structures. Eighteen sixty-seven or so. But this one is here now. Somebody has to take a picture of it before it disappears."

"Are there plans to tear it down?"

"Not yet," answered Paradissis, hunching down to take aim, "but if the Chinese ever decide to demolish foreign buildings just to make a point, it will be Gordon Hall first and the Jardine Matheson Building second."

"Why?"

Click!

"Listen!" said Paradissis suddenly, straightening his back. "Quick! Help me get this tripod up the steps."

Then Alec noticed it; the sound of a tinny gong, clanging insistently, coming closer. Passersby reacted in various ways. Some hurried on. Others craned their necks or shared comments with each other. Within a minute, Paradissis re-set his tripod in the elevated position just clear of the bank's heavy revolving door.

"This is perfect. Come on, you wretched fools! Let me take your picture," he muttered to himself. "Hurry up!"

The clanging of the hand-held gong grew louder, more urgent, more irritating. Alec knew his role. He stood behind Paradissis, shielding him and his equipment from accidental collisions by exiting bank customers. He became aware of how many pedestrians there were along both sides of the street, and the air of excitement; anticipation; apprehension. Two young Chinese men broke into a run, heading southward, away from the sound. Then Alec saw the truck. It was a battered former U.S. military vehicle, now bearing the insignia of the Nationalist government, shuddering slowly along behind the man walking with the gong. A police guard flanked the truck on foot, and several police vehicles followed. A crowd of curiosity seekers moved with the cavalcade.

On the tray of the truck stood four pathetic figures, tied to a frame, back-to-back so each had to face the crowd. They had tall, conical dunce caps fixed to their heads, and about their necks hung placards denouncing their crimes as users and traffickers of heroin or opium. As they came closer, Alec noticed the droop of their shoulders and sensed their hopeless, pain-filled misery. One of the younger men, exceedingly sallow and emaciated, looked as if death would be welcome. The others, though dishevelled, were healthier, and feared their fate so palpably that it made Alec's innards crawl.

Paradissis waited until the truck aligned with the building he had come to photograph.

Click!

"Perfect! ... Maybe," he said, hurriedly winding the film.

Click!

"There! That will do it. One or two more of the building when the crowd thins out and I will be finished," he added.

"If we hurry down to Can Do Field you can take pictures of them being shot," Alec suggested.

"Alec! Please! I do not need this," the gray-haired man grimaced. "Do you want to go there yourself?"

"Not really," Alec admitted.

Opium dens had always been numerous in the Chinese quarter of Tientsin, and in some corners of the concession area. The drug was available at any corner stall or cigarette kiosk. Now the Nationalists were cracking down, to rescue the Chinese people, they said. Repeat possession of heroin or opium was punishable by death.

"A very effective campaign, this one," Paradissis commented sourly, again squinting into his viewfinder as the shallow noise of the gong receded. "Lots of money from America to buy guns."

Alec knew well enough that opium was a long-standing pet hate of Andreas Paradissis, and corruption in high places

was another. Paradissis felt the Nationalists were taking a token swipe at drug users merely to impress Washington.

"Drug use is down, though, according to the statistics," Alec pointed out.

"Wealthy officials make the statistics, and keep their own opium parties discreet, while a few unemployed addicts get thrown to the wolves," snapped Paradissis. "You asked me why I'm photographing the Ewo Building." The name of Jardine Matheson & Co. was rendered in Chinese with two characters combining to mean State of Happy Harmony.

Click!

"Yes. I mean, why would the Chinese want to pull it down?"

"They might not," said Paradissis, appearing to reconsider. "They might make a museum of it.

Alec let it go. He had known the book-seller many years, and was used to his mood switches and leaps of logic.

"That building," Paradissis said, wagging a finger, "might well go down as Tientsin's foremost monument to the wellspring of Chinese resentment against the West. Ewo is synonymous with the biggest and most damaging government-sanctioned drug-trafficking operation the world has ever seen."

"I don't know that much about it," Alec said.

"Well ..." returned Paradissis, "... have you finished work for the day?" "Yes. Yours was my last delivery."

"Very well. Since you delivered on time, I'll buy you coffee at Kiessling's . . . if you help me carry this equipment." Paradissis had a way of making irresistible propositions.

The Kiessling and Bader bakery and restaurant, just a couple of blocks south along Victoria Road from Ewo Street, remained one of Tientsin's finest places of relaxation. When Paradissis and Zamiatin were comfortably seated an immaculately coiffed and crisply uniformed waitress set out coffee and cake, and Alec made the obligatory slanted reference to his host's chosen topic of conversation.

"It sounds as if you have been listening to the communists," he said. Paradissis regarded Alec with eyes narrowed as he sipped his Turkish coffee. "I listen to everyone," he said. "Plus, I read. Did you think I was going to rave at you about Jardine's exploiting the masses?"

Alec was on the back foot already.

"Didn't they exploit the Chinese?"

"Of course they did. So what? They also made some Chinese phenomenally wealthy," said Paradissis. Then he suddenly seemed to relax.

"Sorry, my boy," he said. "I was excited about getting that photograph. You said you didn't know much about Jardine's. It happens that I dug into the old firm a bit. Let's see if I can still remember what I found out."

Alec felt relieved. Paradissis could be enthralling to listen to and scintillating in argument, or impossibly overbearing and capricious. The professorial bookstore owner leaned back for a few moments, and when he spoke his voice had recovered the deep, rich mellow timbre that Alec loved to hear.

"Eighteen twenty-eight," he said slowly, "was the year that William Jardine took James Matheson into his trading firm. That was the move that put Jardine's ahead of all the rest when it came to sapping the health and wealth of this country. Both these men had been making Chinese opium smugglers rich for some years by then, in complementary facets of the same trade.

"The opium came from India. Jardine was bringing his into Macau, in huge volumes. Matheson another Scot, by the way — was more adventurous. He specialized in the coastal trade, which was much more risky, for higher returns, of course."

Alec made a small interjectory signal with one hand.

"India was a British colony then, wasn't it?" he said. "Why did the opium come from India?"

Paradissis tapped a middle finger meaningfully against his coffee cup.

"Because of tea," he stated. "The English were addicted to tea. They had to have it. They paid good money for it. So the English East India Company sent ships to China to get it. Plus silk and a few other odds and ends, but mainly tea. And they had to pay for it ... with silver."

Here the raconteur gave a melodramatic pause.

"Seems fair," Alec responded.

"Of course it does. All the fields and factories of the British Isles produced nothing that the Chinese really wanted. Basically, the tea was paid for in bullion. And that caused a problem, because tea grows on trees, and silver doesn't. After a while this trade had a noticeable impact on England's silver reserves. One way or another they had to balance it up, and that was not easy."

"Why not just grow tea in India?"

"They did, of course, eventually. And Ceylon. But first they had to steal the seeds of the tea bush and establish plantations.

"You have to appreciate how limited the traders were in China. Go back to the late eighteenth century and foreigners were merely tolerated at Canton. They were regarded as barbarians, and naturally violent . . . which they were. But their trade brought badly needed revenues to state coffers. These barbarians, naturally enough, were severely restricted. They were not allowed to mingle with ordinary Chinese. All their business went through special appointees called hongs. They were not permitted to bring their wives or families up to Canton. Also, there were to be no foreign ships of war in the Pearl River, and no dealing in arms, or China would cut off trade."

"Cut off England's tea," Alec affirmed.

"Oho!" chortled Paradissis. "Just imagine the fuss! The English East India Company they called it The Company — was annoyed by its limitations, but it trod carefully and stuck to China's rules. But it also happened that the monopoly of India trade gave it control of poppy cultivation in India. Every year most of the processed harvest was sold at auction in Calcutta, to be exported and marketed legally. To regain its balance in lost bullion, all The Company had to do was increase the opium supply. Traders discovered that The Company and the British authorities turned a blind eye if they smuggled their shipments into China. And The Company could say 'Our ships do not carry illegal opium."'

"Does that mean they were ashamed of the opium trade?"

"It does. The curse of opium addiction was no secret. Britain understood clearly its devastating personal and social effects. And they could deduce the economic effects. That is why The Company never used its monopoly to reap huge profits in India. They knew exactly what kind of horror the smugglers were foisting on China. And the traders knew. Jardine himself was a clever, educated man. He had been a surgeon, previously, so he had a better-than-average appreciation of what opium could do. He knew why it was banned in England, banned in India and banned wherever commonsense had any say. But for China the British dug up all kinds of arguments about responsible usage, supply and demand, medical efficacy, and China being a wreck anyhow. They never tried these arguments on India, though. Between India and China there was an essential difference. What was it, Alec?"

Alec had been about to ask a similar question. Now he had to think, with the penetrating glare of Paradissis" dark eyes upon him.

"China was helpless," he began.

"India was helpless," said Paradissis.

"The English thought the Chinese inferior?"

"Nothing special about that," Paradissis shrugged. "No. The only real difference is that India was a British asset. China was not. India was worth protecting from vultures. China was just another carcass to feed off." In indignation, Paradissis had raised his voice somewhat. Heads were turning at other tables. When Alec spoke he was contrastingly bland.

"But the Chinese have been smoking opium pipes for centuries. You can see it in the old paintings," he pointed out.

"Not in the really old paintings. Opium smoking didn't start in China until the seventeenth century. You notice those paintings depict the very wealthy indulging in a life of luxury? The Manchus knew it was a destructive addiction and were always very wary of it. And they had a simple, effective means of control. They operated a government monopoly that priced opium far beyond the means of all but the seriously wealthy. When smuggling from India started, about 1800, it broke the monopoly. It made opium readily available — not to poor peasants, of course — but any ordinary city worker could get it."

"So, by the time Jardine and Matheson joined forces," said Alec, "the opium trade had been going a few decades."

"Right. And in the meantime, England had come out of the Napoleonic Wars as the world maritime power, with secure colonies everywhere. There was no way the Manchus could begin to comprehend the power of England, even if they were taking any notice, and they weren't," Paradissis said.

"The Manchu rulers were extremely arrogant, it seems," noted Alec.

"Ha! The average English barber could easily match the Manchu emperors in that department," Paradissis snorted. "When it came to arrogance, British ship captains and company owners left the Manchus in the dust."

"But how could the Manchus let the smuggling go on for thirty years anyway? Didn't you say they could have stopped legitimate trade.

"They could have, at any time. Everybody in Canton knew the main entry point was a row of old hulks moored at Macao. The initial cargo arrived there in 300- ton clippers. Then it was sold for cash to Chinese smugglers. Real desperadoes! The smugglers used the creeks and inlets along the coast to feed their inland distribution channels. Just have a look at a detailed map of the southern coast one day, and you'll see how easy it must have been. In any case, only desultory efforts were ever made to stop them. The emperor gave orders more than once for officials in Canton to stop the drug traffic. But they were in on the deal. You know what the Cantonese are like, Alec."

"Yes. Give them an inch and they'll take a mile."

"To say the least!" said Paradissis. "And they have a history of regarding the emperors of the north as alien, and a burden. They were even more jaundiced with the Manchus on the throne, and when things started going badly for the Manchus the Cantonese would be the first to grab extra latitude. In the early eighteen-thirties there was a terrible drought, rebellion in various parts of the country, and an attempted coup in the capital. One calamity after another. And calamity in China portends change. It reflects badly on the virtue of a ruler, and by implication on his authority. It is heaven's warning that the dynasty is corroding its own mandate.

"All this made the Cantonese inclined to carry out the emperor's edicts with less than the requisite vigour. They reported back that the job was done, and the emperor couldn't get enough information to cause him genuine worry."

"I see. So officials in Canton knew that the smugglers took opium from the hulks in Macao, and they knew where it came from. How about Matheson's business?"

"Matheson, and some others, cut out the Macao middleman. They took their cargoes direct to various big smugglers along the coast. Many of the people who built the smuggling networks were descended from people made refugees for their resistance to the Manchu. They were tough, lived by their own laws and were totally ruthless. Matheson was dealing with real brutes and pirates, but also with corrupt officials of port cities. When Jardine and Matheson teamed up they had by far the biggest combined operation, and they pressed their advantage. They invested in a fleet of the fastest clippers available, to cut days off the run from Calcutta, deliver before the competition every year, and get top prices."

"What sort of prices were they, Andy?" Alec asked.

The older man's brow frowned into a mass of wrinkles.

"Gosh! I can't tell you much about that, Alec. The stuff was transported in 150-pound chests, and I think they fetched about 500 dollars each. That was a lot in those days. Jardine and Matheson quickly became extremely rich and influential. But of course they wanted more. They wanted China completely open to all trade, including their own speciality. Jardine went to London, and behind the scenes he became a main influence on Britain's China policy. As a major trader, he had a big voice, because Britain depended on trade for survival. It was also dependent on China, and it was essential to make the dependency mutual."

"Didn't the East India Company have the biggest voice?" suggested Alec.

"Good, Alec! Very good!- Paradissis beamed approvingly. "They did. But they were declining. British manufacturers were growing powerful, and they wanted a slice of the trade pie. Now that the risks of sea trade were under control, everyone wanted a free hand, so monopoly was becoming a dirty word. The Company lost its monopoly on India trade first — though it kept control of the poppies — and then, in 1834, it had to make way for competitors in China.

"The legitimate private traders meaning Spaniards, Germans, Danes,

Americans and others, as well as the British — always saw The Company as too stodgy, and blocking their way to big new opportunities. They all had a lot to gain from breaking its monopoly. The British most of all, and Jardine Matheson foremost among the British. Okay, Alec, when did these two reprobates join forces?"

"Eighteen twenty-eight."

"Right. Let's go to six years later, when The Company lost its China monopoly. Now the traders wanted a more favourable set of rules."

"What sort of rules?"

"Rules that could be enforced by gunboat," basically. "The British knew the Chinese on the spot were impressed by British gunboats. So Jardine, in London, advocated more and more pressure on China. He was pretty sure it would take a clash of arms to make China see reason, so he advocated a course that made conflict inevitable.

"You mean he was pushing for a war?"

"Not in so many words. He argued the convenient notion that the Chinese people yearned to trade with Britain, but were shackled by evil Manchu overlords." Paradissis took a deep breath. "Alec, there was never a worse combination of high moral ground and low animal cunning than the hypocrisy of the opium trade," he said. "So . . . Britain decided it was high time to establish formal ties, and in 1834 they sent Lord Napier across to do this little job. Napier was some diplomat! Pity . . . and derision. Those are the words he used to describe his attitude to the Chinese government."

"He must have been listening to Jardine," Alec suggested.

"That might very well be," nodded Paradissis. "In any case, he arrived in Canton full of bluff and bluster, and simply tried to barge his way through a perfectly sane Chinese resolve to keep him and all his breed at arm's length. The Viceroy in Canton, fairly generously, in my view, thought him a harmless half-wit."

"Wasn't it reasonable for Britain to want formal relations?" Alec asked.

"Not if you think about the way they behaved. The Chinese government and people consistently treated the British with far more respect than they deserved. British treatment of China and the Chinese was usually the converse. The foreigners — especially the British had become used to getting their way in China through crudity and violence. The Chinese may have been predisposed to call the foreigners barbarians, but the foreigners did more than enough to earn the label. To educated Manchus and Chinese, their corruption, greed and ruthlessness was beyond civilized comprehension. Their ability to make good Chinese citizens imitate them, moreover, was truly frightening. For such people to demand all sorts of privileges in China was incredibly presumptuous and vulgar.

"The fact is, Lord Napier made a fool of himself trying to bully the Viceroy in Canton. And he failed. Now, what do you suppose that proved to the merchants, who naturally had their hopes up?"

"It should have proved that they needed a more sensible approach," Alec guessed.

"It proved," Paradissis exclaimed, "that China was blind to reason! And it proved that force was necessary to make China join the modern, enlightened community of international trade."

"While they kept on smuggling drugs into China," Alec noted.

"Exactly! And more of it every year," Paradissis agreed. "With London backing them up . . . but only to a point. The government, even with the rebuff to Napier, was content to let China be China, so as not to endanger the supply of tea leaves. Imagine tea time without tea! They didn't want that.

"Then things started happening in Peking. Opium ships from Canton reached as far as Chihli around 1832, and Tientsin became the base for opium going into Peking and the rest of north China. The drug problem was spreading everywhere. It could not be ignored any more. So the government got more serious about cracking down. Local officials in Canton had to prove their worth by tracking down and executing Chinese smugglers, which they did . . . but fairly selectively."

"Did they slow the traffic?"

"No. They still took huge profits from it, and they still sent false reports to the emperor."

"That couldn't go on forever, could it?"

"Well, if appointed officials were the only source of information, it could have continued a lot longer than it did. But the interesting thing is that every Chinese citizen had a right to memorialize the throne."

"I didn't know that. Anybody?"

"In principle. You had to be something of a scholar to achieve the congruous phraseology. .."

"What?"

"You had to use the right words. And you had to know how the system worked. Also, you had to know that your memorial made your position public. You could make enemies that way. In fact, when it came to opium, with the amounts of money at stake, you could make some very powerful and nasty enemies," explained Paradissis.

"Yet some people were brave enough to tell the emperor what was really going on in Canton?"

"Exactly! Loyal, patriotic, responsible, socially conscious people risking their necks to tell the August Son of Heaven,

Beside Whom All Others Pale Like Paper Lantern Next to the Sun, that he was being systematically gulled by fawning minions and lackeys! Honest Chinese! With guts like that! The British didn't know there was any such thing. They thought all Chinese were half-human scum! The unwashed heathen! That was the only kind of Chinese they knew, after all, because that was the only kind they could develop any rapport with.

"Anyway," Paradissis paused to catch his breath, "Some lucid accounts of the situation eventually reached the emperor, and the emperor took the most sensible course of action. He personally appointed a man he was sure he could trust, to go to Canton and take any action he felt necessary to permanently eradicate opium smuggling, even if that meant inspecting the office of the viceroy. This Imperial Commissioner to Canton was Lin Tse-hsu.

"Lin arrived in the spring of 1839. He went straight into action, to force the barbarians to surrender their opium cargoes and promise not to smuggle next year's crop."

"Just like that," said Alec disbelievingly.

"Certainly!" Paradissis replied. "Very simple! He said hand over the mud — every particle of it, he said — or I shut down trade completely."

"He was talking to Jardine's?"

"He was talking to all of them. Butterfield & Swire, Russell & Co. and Dent & Co. were all up to their ears in the opium trade, but Jardine's were the worst by miles."

"Surely they wouldn't just hand over their cargoes," Alec scoffed.

"They did, though," said Paradissis with a sly grin. "There was a Royal Navy Captain there by the name of Charles Elliot, whose role was to oversee trade by British merchants in and around Canton. Now, he decided, reasonably, that protecting legitimate trade was his first priority, so he decided that the merchants should comply."

"Was he authorized to decide that?"

"For the British merchants, maybe. For the others, definitely not." "Well, how did he get them to go along?"

"Ahaaa!" Paradissis produced a rascally smirk. "The wisdom of Captain Elliot!"

"Well?"

"Well, Alec, he promised them compensation from the British government!"

"Was he author . . . ?

"Hell! No! Not in a thousand years! Imagine! Alec! This was so delightfully wicked. Imagine that you have, say, a thousand cameras, and the Nationalist government demands that you hand them all over. Do you like it?"

"Definitely not."

"Now let's say the Americans give you a wink and say 'don't worry, we'll pay you for the cameras.' Do you like it?"

"Mmm. Maybe."

"Right. Now suppose another thing. Suppose all those cameras were contraband in the first place. You faced real costs and big risks getting rid of them one by one. Now the Americans say they will pay you for the whole lot if you hand them over to the Nationalists. How do you like it?"

"I love it. I have to admit, I really love it," Alec laughed. "So what did Lin do with the opium? I bet they expected him to go into business by himself."

"Perhaps. But that wasn't Lin's style. He sincerely wanted every molecule of it taken out of circulation. I've read stories that he burned it all, but there is also a fairly detailed account of how he had a row of pits dug, and decomposed the opium in water with a mixture of salt and lime. Either way, it would have taken a great deal of work. This wasn't powder. It was blocks of brown sticky stuff."

"Why not burn it? A big fire is so exciting."

"That's the problem. If it were me, I

would not want all that smoke and sparks, and dozens of people rushing to and fro with firewood. The sludge-pit method is much easier to control," said Paradissis, evidently relishing the thought of such a task. "But ... it wasn't me, and I don't know for sure."

"How much of it was there?"

"Over 20,000 chests. Say 300,000 pounds of it, at least. Some accounts give a much higher figure, so maybe Lin managed to track down more that was already in storage ashore." Paradissis scratched reflectively at the side of his chin before continuing. "Lin had the right approach, I suppose, but don't forget he was dealing with barbarians. The situation got more complex, not less. When smugglers started bringing in next year's crop, Lin demanded good behaviour pledges from the traders. The other captains, the Americans and Danes and so forth, signed agreements to go along with Lin's ultimatum, but Elliot refused. Things got very tense and unpleasant. Eventually Lin took the next step and chased the British out of Canton, then out of Macao, and he issued orders forbidding any Chinese to sell provisions to them when they took refuge in Hong Kong harbour aboard the merchant fleet.

"Then Elliot lost his temper and ventilated a Chinese war junk or two with cannon balls. Under the western definition, that meant there was a war on. China didn't know that, and China didn't ask for a war."

"But Elliot started one, without orders from London," said Alec incredulously. Paradissis gave a dismissive wave of his arm.

"The fact that Elliot fired the first shot was just coincidental," he said.

"Maybe even ironic, since it was Elliot who finally made war inevitable."

"How did he do that?"

"By guaranteeing the merchants indemnity for the confiscated opium! What would it be . . . something in the region of ten million dollars? The money would have to be found. Now, Alec, you tell me. Where would the money come from to pay for a load of illegal drugs?"

Alec could only shrug.

"Not the English taxpayer, I guess," he said.

"Exactly! There was nobody weak enough to squeeze for a payoff like that except China. China had to accept the logic that it owed millions of dollars to Britain. Nobody accepts that kind of logic unless they've been thrashed in a war. So, what the opium suppliers needed, and wanted, was war.

"Unfortunately for them, the Whigs were in government. Did they teach you about Whigs and Tories in that French school of yours, Alec?"

"Of course they did. We took the Cambridge exams. Whigs and Tories . . . yes . .. Tories were conservatives. Whigs were reformers. Right?"

"Correct. The Whigs and their supporters were blazing moral activists as well. They were not going to coerce China for the rancid bunch of excuses the traders were using," said Paradissis.

"Unfortunately for the traders," repeated Alec. "So there should have been no war."

"Exactly! But the traders didn't need any say-so from the government. They had Jardine in London, remember? Jardine was talking to Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston, recommending that Britain blockade the river leading to Peking, demand a treaty opening such ports as Foochow, Amoy and Shanghai for free trade, and demand payment for the opium. So Palmerston, without informing Parliament, issued instructions for a force to be despatched from India. That must have seemed appropriate, I suppose, since tariffs from the opium crop dominated India revenues."

"So England went to war without knowing it," observed Alec.

"More or less," nodded Paradissis. "And it put the opium trade right under the spotlight when the parliamentary opposition found out. While you were studying Whigs and Tories, did you hear of William Gladstone?"

"Yes. He was an English prime minister and a great reformer," said Alec, clutching at fragments of the syllabus drilled into him over a decade before.

Paradissis took to rubbing the other side of his chin.

"Sounds like a Whig," he mused.

"Must have been," agreed Alec.

"William Gladstone," said Paradissis, almost reverently, "was one of the finest men of his age, and worth studying because his thinking underwent such a long and complete odyssey of change."

"Pardon?"

"He had strong views, but he considered other views. When he was young, Gladstone was a deep-dyed Tory. He made impassioned speeches in support of slavery. At the time of the Opium War he was still young, but he was in opposition. Shoving opium down China's throat was too much for William Gladstone. He stood up in parliament and cut right to the heart of the matter. He said that Britain could control the growth and export of opium if it wanted to. He said China was being patently reasonable in demanding an end to the opium trade. He said making war on China amounted to allowing pirate smugglers to sail under protection of the Union Jack. He said the Union Jack would be permanently disgraced."

"But they went ahead, anyway," said Alec.

"Oh, yes. By then it was probably too late to back off. I suppose dear Mr. Gladstone consoled himself with a nice cup of tea," said Paradissis. and he laughed happily at his own joke.

"Where did they fight the war?" asked Alec.

"Hard to call it a war, really. They took Jardine's advice and headed straight for Peking. The war fleet got to the mouth of the Hai Ho, but somehow they were induced to withdraw to Canton for negotiations. The talks went badly, so the British put on a show of force, and captured the forts guarding the Pearl River. Then the talks went really smoothly. The Chinese negotiators agreed to establish diplomatic ties, open Canton for trade, and to pay an indemnity of six million pounds."

"So the traders got what they wanted," commented Alec.

Paradissis grimaced.

"Parliament turned around," he said, "and rejected the agreement. They sent another plenipotentiary, to get a fatter indemnity, and permanent trading ports further op the coast. The British had to put on a few more shows of force, but they had no trouble demonstrating that they could reach any port city in China and kill and destroy at will. And they occupied Hong Kong regardless. Peking capitulated when British warships appeared off Nanking, because it was clear they could cut traffic on both the Yangtze River and the Grand Canal. The Treaty of Nanking was signed in August of 1842. China was obliged to open five ports, give away Hong Kong and pay indemnity of 21 million silver dollars."

"That was Britain, by itself?" Alec asked.

"Yes. But two years later France and the United States rode in on the soiled British coattails to obtain identical concessions," said Paradissis. "But the interesting thing, Alec, is that not one word about opium appeared in the treaties. They made fine pronouncements about bringing the benefits of trade and western civilization to China, but the war itself was about a shipment of contraband opium that had already been destroyed. There would have been no fuss at all except for that opium.

"With China open to trade, the British should at least have been ready to stop the smuggling," said Alec.

"That's one of the saddest things about it," Paradissis said. "The immediate result of Lin's no-nonsense tactics was a jump in the price of next year's opium, which made smugglers even more ruthless. Even with legitimate business growing quickly, Britain did nothing to reduce production in India or shipments to China. The Anti-Opium Movement kept on crusading across the British Isles, and the traffic kept on growing.

"How long did it go on for?"

"It finally ended in 1908, but by then the domestic crop was huge. Chinese warlords took over production and distribution. Some of them shifted whole provinces into poppies as a cash crop. Instead of importing opium, they exported it as a revenue mainstay. Sun Yat-sen's revolutionaries and Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists depended heavily on a hand-in-glove relationship with the Chinese underworld for a slice of the opium, morphine and heroin businesses. Then the Japanese came along. Whichever parts of China they took over, they also took over the drug trade and ran it very efficiently."

There was a pause as Alec thought over the main features of what Paradissis had told him.

"What about Tientsin?" he asked suddenly.

"What about it?"

"There were no foreigners here until the 1860s. Right?"

"Right. Not until after the Second Opium War.

"How could they have another war over opium?"

Paradissis groaned.

"They wanted the opium trade legalized," he sighed. "And they wanted to let the missionaries loose."

"What do you mean . . . about the missionaries?"

"Well, Alec. I'm proud to call myself a Christian, but I'm not proud of the missionaries. Don't take what I say as an attack on religion, or on any of the churches . . . or even the missionaries. I'm just not proud of the way it worked," said Paradissis. "It was opium that brought China to the attention of evangelists, and opium that opened China's doors for them." He was seldom so sombre. Alec nodded his understanding and agreement. Paradissis continued.

"The 1842 treaties gave foreigners, including missionaries, access to a few port cities. Just a few tiny pinpoints on this vast continent. So, instead of being satisfied they were more frustrated than ever. You see, the Jardines, and the Elliots, and the Napiers had always made a point of how filthy, immoral, uneducated and heathenish the Chinese were. These uncomplimentary assessments justified everything the traders did, but they also created a tremendous urge among western Christians to rush over and rescue the Chinese from the clutches of ignorance and evil.

"The overthrow of idolatry and the complete triumph of Christianity in China became the grand, overwhelming benefit that made the whole sorry mess of British meddling not only worthwhile, but also imperative. The conversion of hundreds of millions of Chinese was not just the faint wish of a few wide-eyed proselytizers. It was a bald assumption, taken straight, at every level of the foreign population.

"Part of what the English call their civilizing influence," put in Alec, recalling the phrase from pre-war newspaper columns in the Peking and Tientsin Times.

"Exactly, Alec. But, this time, your countrymen got in on the act as well," said Paradissis.

"Russian missionaries?"

"No. I was talking about Russia's part in the Second Opium War," said Paradissis.

The Czar's Russia, already pressing hard against China from the north, joined Britain. France and the United States to place a new set of demands before Peking

in 1854. The list included rights to keep legations in Peking, to purchase and utilize land in the interior, the opening of new trade ports, and the legal importation of opium. Peking balked, but the pretext for extreme violence did not arise until two years later, with the so-called Arrow Incident.

In October, 1856, Chinese authorities in Canton captured a gang of pirates hiding aboard the *lorcha* (Portuguese hull with the rig and sails of a junk) Arrow. Like many such Chinese-owned vessels, the Arrow had been licensed to fly the Union Jack. It was doing so when the pirates were arrested. British officials on the spot complained that the flag was insulted by the Chinese boarding. They demanded apologies, completely ignoring the fact that the Arrow's permit to sail under the British flag had lapsed. When apologies were not forthcoming they bombarded Canton with cannon-fire for a week. London was briefly distressed at being thrust into another war, but when the dust settled a punitive expedition set sail anyway. It would not bother with Canton. Since Emperor Hsien Feng thought the trouble with foreigners a local affair, they would have to go north to get his attention. France used the murder of a French missionary as its excuse to join the reaping. Russian and American warships also joined the fleet, which arrived at Taku in May, 1858. While the Russians and Americans watched, Anglo-French forces took the Taku Forts, which were defended only by Tartar cavalry armed with bows and arrows. The operation occupied just over two hours. Tientsin was invaded via the serpentine Hai Ho River.

The Treaties of Tientsin were negotiated with each of the four powers the following month. A year later the British and French withheld ratification. The newly equipped Taku Forts were attacked again, but this time the invaders badly underestimated the readiness of Mongolian General Sankolinsin, and made a disastrous tactical error. Sustained, disciplined fire from the fortresses mangled British and French troops as they floundered about the mud flats. Sankolinsin's barricades across the Hai Ho remained intact. Suffering 89 dead and over 300 wounded, the attackers withdrew, to spend a year preparing terrible revenge.

In July of 1860 a joint Anglo-French force of 16,000 men arrived at Taku. Emissaries demanded an apology, and indemnities, for the previous year's "ambush" at the mouth of the Hai Ho. When these were rejected, in August, the Allies declared war. They defeated the Taku defenders and occupied Tientsin. In October, as they moved to attack Peking, Emperor Hsien Feng, with his family and courtiers, left the Summer Palace, a few kilometers north of the capital, and fled for Jehol, 110 miles to the northeast. The Summer Palace was a royal resort of incomparable beauty, covering thousands of acres. In the peaceful groves and gullies successive dynasties had installed gardens, fishponds and reflective pools to delight the soul. Ornate pavilions and halls by the score were filled with priceless treasures from all the regions and vassal states of all the ages of China. Victorious European troops, at first, were overwhelmed by the beauty, richness and astounding craftsmanship before them in abundance beyond imagination. Then they looted. Soldiers were allowed to drag away all they could carry of gorgeous silks, carvings in gold and jade, gems by the hatful, art pieces encrusted with pearls, rubies and sapphires.

"As if by pretending to be at war against a defenceless nation they could claim the heritage of its people as spoils!" Paradissis rumbled. "Barbarian was too kind a term for invaders like these . . . much too kind."

What could not be carried was smashed. What could not be smashed was ruined. Toward the end of the rampage, British commander Lord Elgin decided to set the whole complex ablaze, partly to remind the Manchus to cooperate in future.

The Ch'ing government had no choice

but to sign the Sino-British and Sino-French conventions of Peking, which expanded on the unratified Treaties of Tientsin, ceded Kowloon to Britain, and added Tientsin as a port of trade.

"Tientsin was left off the initial treaty, for the very good reason that if foreign interests got established here they would contend with each other to influence the capital," said Paradissis.

"That didn't happen though, did it?" asked Alec.

"Not to the extent feared, I would think," Paradissis conceded. "I say 'for good reason' not for the logic of the thing but because it was one of the few decisions taken not for pure greed."

"But greed won in the end."

"Exactly, and so did the missionaries. The Conventions gave Protestant and Catholic missionaries freedom of movement all over China, and the right to buy or rent land and to build anything they wished to build. The Chinese say that the clause about land and construction was secretly inserted by a Catholic missionary who served as interpreter during the signing. Anyway, the Conventions also allowed foreigners to set up concessions, and to import and sell opium. Of course, the missionaries and the drug sellers didn't quite see eye to eye, but they came in on the same boat, so to speak, backed by the same guns.

"Having the missionaries about helped the traders feel superior to the heathen Chinese, too. Never mind that Britain had so recently been in the slave trade, burned witches, drawn and quartered political dissenters and was still swamping China with opium. They were in China with God on their side and would jolly well make the most of it.

"Conservative Manchus were in a black rage at the foreign guns protecting a flow of imported opium that seemed to be infesting every corner of society. The very same guns protected missionaries whose pernicious and treasonous ideas tore at remnants of the social fabric not already rotted by the drugs.

"Missionary or mercenary; to the Chinese they were all part of the same ignoble, obnoxious package."

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