

China's Conspiracy --- Plot by the Empress

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SHANGHAI, Sept. 7, 1900.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—The evidence of a great conspiracy to drive all foreigners out of the country is steadily accumulating. This conspiracy seems to have been organized by the Chinese government. It was headed by the empress dowager and most of the high officials are implicated in it. It is a conspiracy to oust from China everything foreign and every foreigner. It is a conspiracy which has been hatching since the close of the Chinese-Japanese war, and which, had it not been precipitated by the Boxer uprising, might have resulted in the massacre of every foreigner and the destruction of every piece of foreign property in the empire.

use his best efforts to help China conserve its empire if it will suppress the insurrection and rescue the foreign ministers.

How the Conspiracy Originated.

The beginning of this conspiracy, so it is believed, was shortly after the close of the Japanese war. The empress dowager, Prince Tuan, Kang Yi Li Hung Chang and others saw that something must be done at once or they would be ousted from power. All over China the thinking classes were discussing the result of the war and possible reforms. A reform party sprang up, about thirty newspapers were established and tracts proposing the westernizing of China were distributed in many quarters. Some of the reformers got to Peking and several even to the emperor himself. The head of these was Kang Yu Wei, the man who is now in hiding outside of China with a reward of 100,000 taels (\$75,000) upon his head. Kang Yu Wei had persuaded the emperor to adopt the new civilization. His majesty had planned to introduce all sorts of modern methods into China, including a thorough reorganization of the empire, when the empress dowager, fearing the result, caused his deposition and imprisonment in the palace and again took the government into her own hands. She organized a reign of terror not only in Peking, but in all parts of China, and since then the official who has said anything in favor of foreigners or foreign methods has had to work hard to keep not only his official but his physical head on his shoulders.

The Usurpation of the Dowager.

The usurpation of the dowager caused great excitement in China. It was unfavorably commented upon, and protests came in from many other cities. They soon stopped, however, for the old empress threatened all sorts of punishments. One of the objects of her rage, for instance, was Kin Yuan Shan, the head of the telegraphs here at Shanghai. When the news came of the imprisonment of the emperor, Kin sent a petition, signed by himself and 1,000 other Chinese, to the dowager, asking that the emperor be allowed to resume the reins of government, and stating that this only would satisfy the people. When this memorial was presented to the empress dowager she is said to have fairly hopped up and down in her rage. Her officials were terrified and they trembled lest her anger should be wreaked upon them.

"Who has dared to send such a telegram?" she asked.

"Kin Yuan Shan and over 1,000 others," was the reply.

"Very well," answered the old empress, "we'll show them how we deal with traitors who cross our path."

At this time Sheng, the director of all the telegraphs of the empire, was in Peking. He at once wired Kin that he had better leave and Kin fled to Macao, where he is now under Portuguese protection. The protest was followed by others from all parts of the empire and the United States, and these, added to the objections of the powers, kept her from putting another boy on the throne.

Minister Conger's Lost Opportunity.

It is not known that the United States was practically offered the control of the Chinese empire just before the usurpation of the dowager, but I am told that this is the fact. The emperor realized his danger. He feared for his life, but he was very anxious to do the right thing and would have fought for his rights could he have had any hope of support. Timothy Richards, the secretary of the Society of Christian Knowledge of China, was in Peking at the time. He was associated with Kang Yu Wei and Liang Cho, and at their instance wrote Mr. Boxersides, the English minister, asking him

to give shelter and protection to the two reformers and intimating that the emperor would be with them at the time they came. He labeled the letter important and sent it by a messenger. An answer did not come until the next day, when the minister replied that he did not know Kang Yu Wei and Liang Cho, and that he could not receive them. His ignorance in this case was probably diplomatic, and certainly to the loss of England, for had the English minister admitted the emperor into the legation he would have made England the coming great power in China. The reform party was then strong and the empress dowager would not have dared to have made war upon the emperor in the English legation falling to elicit the support of the English minister. Mr. Richards next sent a message to Minister Conger, but he happened to be away at his summer home in the hills, and it is claimed that the letter never got beyond the gate-keeper, who may have been one of the dowager's spies. It must be remembered that at this time the emperor was the de facto ruler of China, and that as such the United States would have gained a predominant influence by supporting him.

The Empress Prepared for War.

China has been getting ready for trouble ever since the close of the Japanese war. Several years ago I had an interview on the situation in China with Yang Yu, who is, I believe, now Chinese minister to Germany, but who preceded Wu Ting Fang as minister to the United States. It was just after the war and he warned me that the Chinese army would be reorganized after modern methods. He said that the country would have new ships, new forts and its military strength would be so increased that it could defend itself against any nation or all nations. He took a pencil and figured up the possibilities of the Chinese army of the future. He said China could put twice as many men in the field as any other nation referred to the wonderful wealth of the country and its mineral resources, saying that it could make its own guns and munitions of war. He told me that the iron mines near Hankow would be developed and new arsenals built.

This prophecy has been borne out by the facts. The arsenals at Tien Tsin, Canton and Nankin have been busy for the past four years and the Kiagnan arsenal, here at Shanghai, is still turning out guns of all descriptions, and smokeless powder as well. The empress dowager has been importing Mausers and arming the troops, and some of the biggest American gun factories have had their agents here trying to introduce American rifles.

How We Lost a Rifle Order.

The Chinese think well of our guns, and the viceroy of Canton not long ago asked Consul General Goodnow for the name of the best American gun and of the most responsible of the American firms. It happened that one of our gun factory agents was in Shanghai at the time, and at the suggestion of the consul general he went to see the viceroy and offered to fill his order at 15 taels per gun, or 150,000 taels for all. The viceroy replied that he would give him the order, but that he must have the stuff at once. The agent then cabled to the United States and in reply was told that the guns could not be furnished within less than a year.

Upon this the viceroy said that this would not do, he must have the guns at once. He then applied to the Germans, who told him that they could give him what he wanted in sixty days and that at 11 taels each. They got the order, but the guns sent were a lot of old weapons hardly worth their freight.

At the arsenal at Shanghai the Chinese are making guns almost as large as any made in the Washington navy yard. Some of them are thirty-five feet long, with projectiles weighing 1,000 pounds. Armstrong rapid-fire guns are made and also modern rifles. Projectiles of all kinds, from re-



FOREIGN OFFICE OR TSUNG LI YAMEN AT PEKIN—RECENTLY DESTROYED BY BOXERS.

volver cartridges up to great shells of steel as high as your waist, are turned out in great quantities, and the different kinds of shot and shrapnel number about 200. The work is all done by Chinese under one or two foreign superintendents.

Gunning at Hankow.

Many of the weapons with which the Chinese are armed come from Hankow. The great viceroy, Chang Chi Tung, has an arsenal there upon which he is spending 500,000 taels a year. The guns turned out are a sort of Mauser, and the steel comes from the steel works at Han Yang, just above Hankow. There are large iron mines in the vicinity and coal mines, to which a railroad has been built.

I was at the city of Hang Chow not long ago and had a chance to see the troops there undergoing their drill. They did well, showing the effect of their rigid training since the war with Japan. Chang Chi Tung's troops have been drilled by Germans, and this is so, I am told, with most of the armies of the viceroys. In the military and naval schools Germans, Belgians and Russians are employed.

Modern guns have been introduced as rapidly as possible, 160,000 Mausers having been recently bought. The arsenals have also been turning out a number of quick-firing mountain guns and some native-made rifles of one-inch caliber, each to be manipulated by two men. This weapon is nine feet long and is fitted with a homemade breech mechanism of the Mauser order.

The Empress and the Boxers.

From what I can learn of this alleged conspiracy it was not the intention of the empress dowager that the action against the powers should begin before the year 1903. She had no idea that the Boxer movement would develop as it did and when she first began to encourage the Boxers it was with the idea that they would stir up the anti-foreign sentiment among the masses and help along the conspiracy. In the meantime the brutality of the Germans toward the Chinese at Kiao Chau and the starvation there, which was attributed by the people to the wrath of heaven against the Chinese allowing the foreign devils in their country, so accelerated the growth of the Boxers that they got beyond her and the rebellion broke out. At first she had hoped that she might bring them into the army and at last she did so, uniting with Prince Tuan in directing their movements. Like all Chinese, she is superstitious to an extreme and it may be that she actually believes in the edicts which the Boxers put forth stating that 8,000,000 spirit soldiers will come down from heaven

and aid the Chinese in sweeping the empire free of all foreigners.

I have this edict before me. Two hundred thousand copies of it were distributed in Tien Tsin just before the troops came there. It states that the Catholic and Protestant religions are insults to the gods and enraging both heaven and earth. It promises the support of the 8,000,000 spirits and bids all to spread the doctrine of foreign expulsion far and wide, stating that the man who converts one be absolved from all future misfortune, that he who converts five will save his whole family and if ten his village. It states that those who make no converts shall be decapitated and predicts that there will be no rain in China until all the foreigners have been exterminated.

Chang Chi Tung and His Monkey.

It seems impossible that the sharp old empress dowager could hold such superstitions. She is a Chinese woman, however, and the Chinese are saturated with all kinds of crazy ideas as to spirits and the spirit world. One of the chief causes of the trouble is, I am told, the hatred which the people have for foreigners because they propose to put railroads through the ancestral graveyards and thereby spoil the luck of the Chinese and anger the spirits of their ancestors.

The Chinese believe every one has a spirit which controls him. Take for instance Chang Chi Tung. He is one of the greatest scholars of China, a man who rules, I venture, half as many people as President McKinley, and who spends millions a year. He is a scholar and an author, having written a book on the modern movement for China.

Now, Chang Chi Tung believes in the transmigration of souls, and he is said to imagine that his soul came from a monkey. According to tradition, when Chang Chi Tung was born there was a monkey in his brother's house. This mysteriously disappeared the same day that his birth took place, and, according to the Chinese theory, its soul passed into the new-born child. Whether Chang really believes this or not I cannot say, but his friends tell me that when he is accused of foolishness or of acting imprudently he replies:

"How can I help it, that is the way I was born? It must be the monkey in me."

How the Empress Terrified Chang.

Speaking of Chang Chi Tung, he is a living evidence of the terror inspired by the empress dowager's anti-reform ideas. Prior to this he has held the broadest opinions of a modern civilization for China. He has put up an enormous steel plant at Han Yang and has been making steel rails for a railroad which he proposed to build from Hankow to Peking. He has opened iron and coal mines and has gone into all sorts of modern enterprises.

Among other new things proposed by him was an agricultural experiment college to teach his people our methods of farming. He sent to Cornell for American professors and made three-year contracts with them at high salaries to come out and take charge of this school. When they arrived they were given a house and told to go to work.

In the meantime the old dowager issued her edict and Chang Chi Tung began to draw back. He refused to give the professors farms on which to work, putting them off on one plea or another from month to month until the time of their contract had almost expired. At last the young men would stay no longer. Their salaries were being paid, but they would not consent to remain without they were given a chance to earn them, so they have thrown up the job and gone back to the United States.

Chang Chi Tung had ordered all kinds of agricultural implements in connection with this school. The latest mowing machines, plows, harrows and cultivators were shipped out to him. They arrived in good order, but are rusting away unused. He had ordered a modern carriage in order that he might ride about in state and astonish the Chinese in a region where our conveyances are rude carts and sedan chairs. The carriage came, and, though Chang Chi Tung has plenty of horses, he does not use the carriage. If he did he would be looked upon as a modern innovator and a friend of the foreigners, so he sticks to the sedan chair and the cart.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.



CHANG CHI TUNG, THE VICEROY OF HANKOW—BELIEVES HIS SOUL CAME FROM A MONKEY—CLAIMS TO BE FRIENDLY TO FOREIGNERS.

Such is the belief of many of the oldest residents of China, foreigners who are acquainted with foreign methods—business men as well as missionaries. They think that the powers are being deceived by the Chinese diplomats and laugh at the idea of the Boxers being the cause of the trouble.

Said an American who has been connected with Chinese matters in a diplomatic and business way for more than twenty-five years to me the other night:

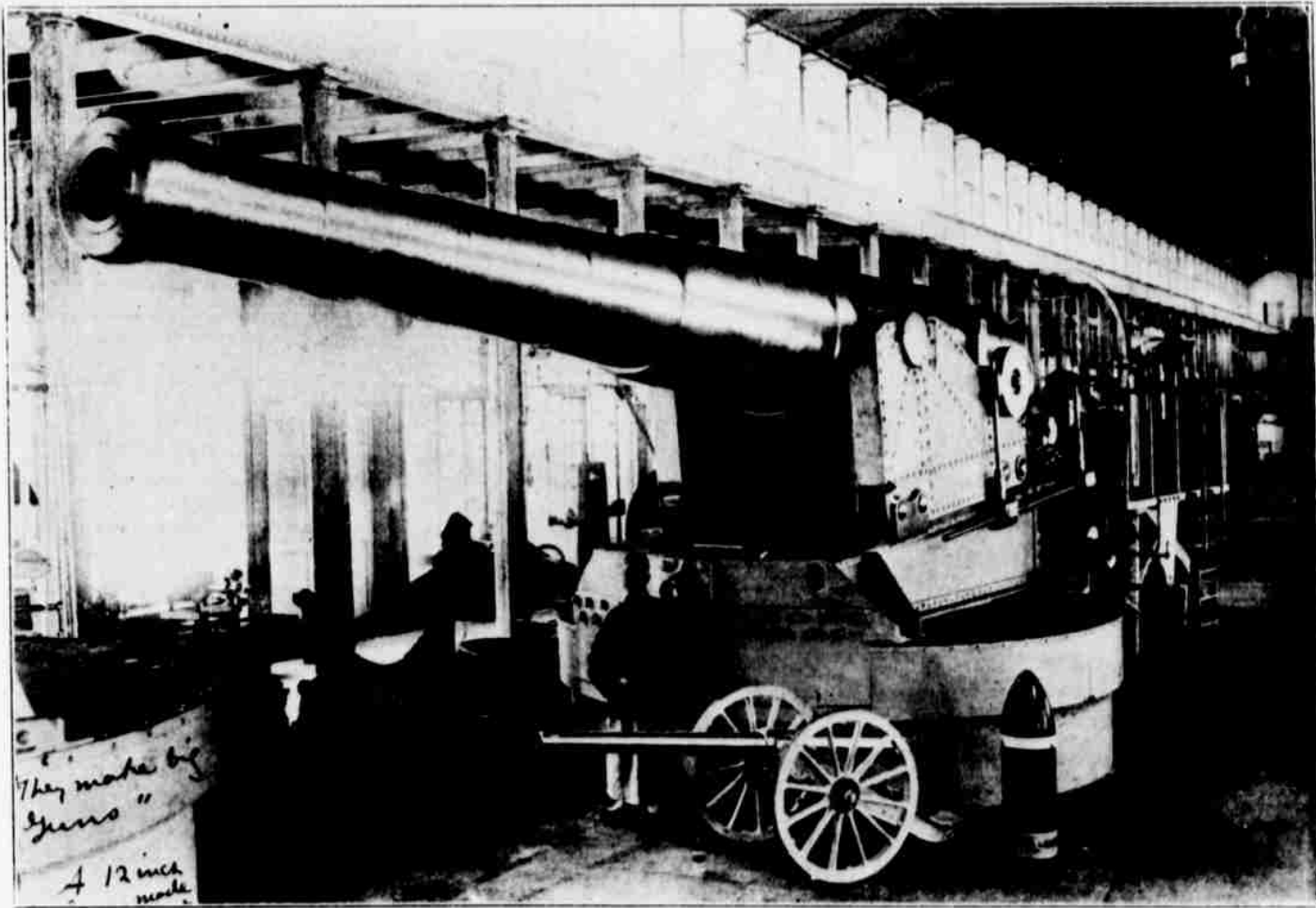
"There are two things about the situation which you must bear in mind. The first is that this crusade is not anti-missionary, but anti-foreign, and the second that it is a war and not a rebellion, as our government would have us believe. The Chinese so recognize it. The Boxers were organized by the empress dowager as a part of the force with which she hoped to sweep all foreigners into the sea. They were paid out of the imperial exchequer, they were armed from the imperial arsenals and Prince Tuan and Kang Yi were, in an imperial edict, appointed the leaders of what some would have us call 'this rebel band.'"

"Documents have been found in the viceregal yamen at Tien Tsin which incriminate the imperial government beyond all hope of escape. Among these are lists of Boxers, receipts of awards paid to Boxers for foreign heads, receipts for arms, ammunition and stores supplied by the government to Boxer leaders, and also the imperial edicts of June 21 and August 2 ordering the extermination of all foreigners in China."

Were the Japanese in It?

The extent of the conspiracy has not yet been disclosed. The leading viceroys, including Li Hung Chang, were probably in it. There is evidence that Japan may have been a secret party to it and that it was ready to act in concert with China at the proper time. It was incensed at the treatment it received from the continental powers at the close of the Chinese-Japanese war and especially at their support of Russia. Since then its relations with the Russians have become more and more strained. It has been insulted and restricted in Korea and just before the Boxer rebellion a Russo-Japanese war was everywhere predicted. The rebellion precipitated matters and Japan shrewdly changed its attitude.

Among the straws which show how the wind has been blowing between Japan and China was the appeal of the Chinese emperor on July 3 last to the mikado, asking him to join forces against the foreigners. In his appeal Kuang Hsu states his belief that the powers wish to swallow up Japan as well as China and that the Chinese and Japanese, the two great nations of the east, should join to fight the west. To this the Japanese emperor replied diplomatically and kindly, saying that he would



INTERIOR VIEW OF KIAGNAN ARSENAL.