

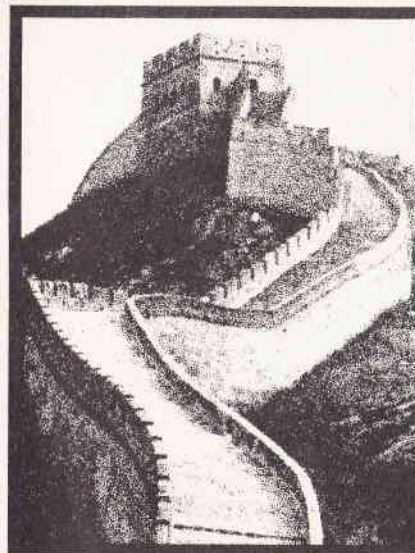
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OPIUM AND CHINA

NEW CHINA KICKED THE HABIT



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**U.S.-China Peoples Friendship Association Statement of Principles
(Adopted at Founding Convention, September, 1974)**

Goal: To build active and lasting friendship based on mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of China.

Toward that end we urge the establishment of full diplomatic, trade and cultural relations between the two governments according to the principles agreed upon in the joint U.S.-China communique of February 28, 1972, and that U.S. foreign policy with respect to China be guided by these same principles: respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.

We call for the removal of all barriers to the growing friendship and exchange between our two peoples. We recognize that two major barriers are the presence of U.S. armed forces in Taiwan, a province of China, and in Indo-China in violation of the Paris agreements for ending the war.

Our educational activities include producing and distributing literature, films and photo exhibits; sponsoring speakers and study classes; speaking out against distortions and misconceptions about the People's Republic of China; publishing newspapers and pamphlets; promoting the exchange of visitors as well as technical, cultural and social experiences.

It is our intention in each activity to pay special attention to those subjects of particular interest to the people of the United States.

Everyone is invited to participate in our activities and anyone who agrees with our goal is welcome to join.

Opium and China: New China Kicked the Habit

"I was 23 when I started smoking opium," 52-year-old Tsai Yung-mai said as she began telling her story to a group of American women visiting Shanghai in 1973. Today Tsai Yung-mai, a cured addict, is a member of the Women's Federation of the People's Republic of China and a respected member of her community.

"I didn't smoke much at the beginning," she said, recalling those years before Liberation (1949). "But my husband had a serious addiction. It turned him into a ghost — a man who could do no work. Because he could not work, he had no money with which to buy opium. He was forced into withdrawal which his weakened body couldn't tolerate; so he died."

Recounting this past was painful. Every word, every sentence brought more sorrow and her voice shook.

"When he died I suffered so much from the loss that I smoked more and more to escape my grief," she continued. "So I too became an addict. I lost all sense of responsibility even toward my little son. There were many times I would even forget to feed him. He died when he was seven because I wasn't able to take care of him through a severe case of measles."

When he died Tsai Yung-mai was shocked into trying to do something about her situation. She went to a hospital for a cure — not once but several times. Each time she stayed through the withdrawal and then was released. But back on the streets the dealers were waiting for her and there were convenient opium houses. In her lane alone, there were three always filled by opium smokers.

Over and over again she returned to her addiction. To satiate her desperate hunger for opium, she pawned her clothes and all other belongings. Every cent she could acquire went for opium instead of food. She was starving to death. Her tragic life was duplicated millions of times in China, which before 1952 was saddled with a colossal drug problem.

Background of Opium

The history of opium in China is long. It goes back to the 7th and 8th century when Arab traders first introduced opium. Its chief use then was medicinal. By the time of the Tang Dynasty (618 to 906 A.D.) Chinese herbalists were planting small fields of poppy in far western Szechuan province where the climate and soil are favorable for its cultivation. The Tang poet Tao Yung commemorates its first appearance in a poem titled "In front of my horse I saw the poppy flower for the first time."

Through subsequent dynasties, opium continued to be a medicinal herb, and as such it appeared in the lexicons of Chinese herbalists. With the arrival of Portuguese traders along the coast of China by 1620, its uses began to undergo a change. The Portuguese brought opium to Taiwan from scattered fields in India. At the same time, tobacco was introduced to the Philippines by the Spaniards and from there spread to Taiwan.

The Dutch who were living on the south coast of the island began smoking opium mixed with tobacco as a cure for malaria. A few Chinese took up the habit, but soon began omitting the tobacco. When the habit spread to the mainland, it affected only a few people. This was because it was expensive and could be afforded only by the well-to-do. So it was primarily young men of wealthy families who indulged in the drug as a status symbol.

The Yung-cheng Emperor of the Ching Dynasty which ruled China from 1644 to 1912 became alarmed when he learned that opium caused addiction. As early as 1729 he issued an edict banning opium smoking.

The British Role

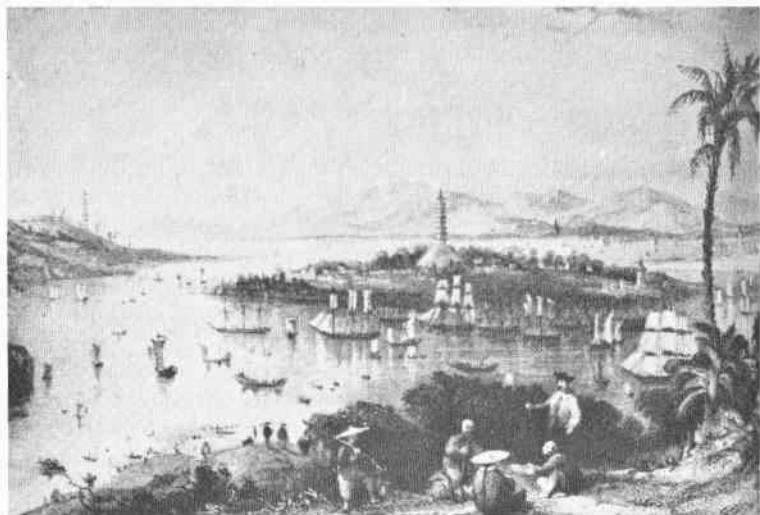
But opium wasn't a real problem to the Empire until the 1770's when England took over India and Burma. To finance this colonization of these two vast countries, the British cast about for dependable sources of tax revenue. They turned to opium. They encouraged the planting of large poppy fields in the two colonies. The opium derived from these fields was processed in Calcutta.

Taxes levied on opium brought in the much needed revenue. And Britain's merchant ships carried it to China.

For a number of years China had posed a problem for foreign merchants. It had been virtually impossible to conduct any kind of reciprocal trade with the country because the Ching Dynasty maintained that its subjects had no need of foreign goods. The western merchants had to pay in silver for the tea and rhubarb they purchased. The precious metal began flowing out from foreign banks into the royal Ching coffers at an alarming rate. To restore the balance of trade, a commodity which could be sold widely had to be found.

Opium was the answer. The proximity of India and Burma gave the English a virtual monopoly on the trade. A few American entrepreneurs did bring some in from Turkey for a while, but they could not compete with the far cheaper Indian opium.

Foreign ships in the Pearl River below Canton--1830's



A Chinese Opium Den-- from "original and authentic sketches" by Thomas Allom, Esq., published in London and Paris, 1843.

By the end of the 18th century the number of addicts in China had increased alarmingly. And in 1800 the Chia-ching Emperor, who was ruling then, reactivated and extended the opium ban to include not only smoking but the cultivation and importation of opium as well.

At the time this edict was issued, Canton was the only port where foreigners were allowed to trade. The opium traffic there had been pursued openly by foreigners. But when the new edict prohibited all such trade, the British captains linked up with corrupt Chinese merchants and Ching officials to evade it. Enlisting the aid of local pirates, they smuggled opium into the small inlets up and down the China coast. From here it was carried inland to dealers. The result was that far from halting opium traffic, the edict merely caused its spread.

Addiction Problem

By 1838, officials in Kwangtung and Fukien were notifying the Imperial government that 9 people out of 10 in these provinces had become addicts. Opium shops, they said, were now as common as tea houses. And street hawkers were openly advertising and selling opium pipes and all the other paraphernalia needed for the smoker.

Emperor Tao Kuang, now on the throne, responded at once by naming a most extraordinary man Lin Tse-hsu to the post of High Commissioner of Canton and giving him strict orders to stop the opium traffic immediately. Lin, who was in his forties at the time, hailed from Foochow in Fukien Province. He was not only brilliant intellectually, but he possessed an obstinate rectitude which the British were to find most exasperating.

Lin could not believe that Britain's Queen Victoria would permit her subjects to continue such a corrupt trade as the opium traffic. His diaries and official papers show the zeal with which he urged Captain Charles Elliot, the British Superintendent of Trade at Canton, to inform her of the crimes her subjects were committing against the laws and edicts laid down by his own government.

When his remonstrances went unheeded, he set about forcefully to carry

out his Emperor's instructions. He first confiscated and destroyed all opium and opium pipes in the possession of Chinese merchants. Next he ordered all vessels in Canton harbor which carried opium to deliver it up to him for destruction. He reminded the captains that since they were being allowed to trade in China, they ought to obey the country's laws.

"How can you bring hither opium which you do not use in your own country to defraud others' wealth and undermine others' lives?" he asked them.

Lin's moralizing had little effect on the British, but he was able to pressure the merchants into giving up their opium supplies. To demonstrate his intention to destroy the opium, not hoard it for his own private gain, Lin invited the foreigners to watch its destruction in the suburbs of Canton.

Before embarking on the project, the gentle Lin wrote a prayer to the God of the Sea and made sacrifice to him. In the prayer he apologized for corrupting the god's domain with the "noxious poison," and begged him to shelter the creatures of the deep from the ensuing pollution.

The opium, which came in the form of balls, was broken up by workmen and dumped into three 150 foot long trenches lined with flagstones and heavy timber. The trenches were filled with two feet of water. Salt and lime were broadcast lavishly over the surface. The workmen continually stirred up the mess until the opium dissolved. The concoction was then forced through screens to remove any large lumps, and the liquid was channeled into a nearby creek which carried it to the sea.

Lin had hoped that the destruction of the opium would bring the merchants to their senses. Unfortunately the High Commissioner's shortcoming was that he understood nothing of Western greed or might. He believed the myth that his Emperor was indeed the Son of Heaven, possessed of mystical powers against which the threats of the barbarians would prove powerless. All his actions were conducted from this position of strength which he did not possess. He also was convinced that England separated from China by thousands of miles of sea, was too far away to give any real aid to her recalcitrant merchants.

The Opium War

Some historians have maintained that if Lin had handled his assignment with more tact there might have been no war of 1839-1842. But tact or no tact, Lin had about as much chance of preventing the massive introduction of opium into China as a swimmer in a tank of famished piranhas.

Tensions mounted and finally British gunships moved into Canton Harbor and war broke out. British warships and weapons were pitted against Ching Dynasty junks, bows and rusty matchlocks. British invaders pillaged, looted and raped in coastal villages as they made their way northward, first to Hangchow, then to Shanghai at the mouth of the Yangtze River, and finally down the Yangtze itself.

Some of the Chinese generals and their soldiers, incapacitated by opium, made a poor showing. One of these officers, Chang Ying-yun, was still smoking his opium pipe as his fleeing soldiers bore him off in a litter.

But many other generals and their troops won the astonished admiration of the British for their devotion to their country. According to Captain G.G. Loch of the British forces, one of the Chinese officers in charge of the defenses of Chinkiang on the Yangtze, held his ground until all his men were killed. Then he "marched up to the points of the (British) bayonets and succeeded in pulling



over the ramparts with him two of the grenadiers" with whom he died. Other officers and men, unable to hold their own against the superior weapons of the British, killed their own families and then committed suicide. By the time the British reached Nanking, 500 of their soldiers had been killed. The Chinese had lost 20,000.

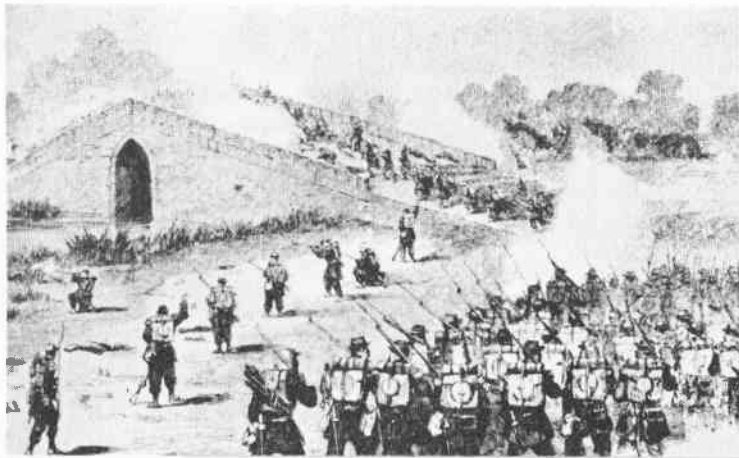
Finally in 1842 with British warships at anchor off Nanking, a treaty was signed by England and the Ching Dynasty. An indemnity of some 21 million dollars was assessed against China for the confiscated opium. Hong Kong was ceded to the British, and five port cities were opened to the foreigners for trade.

The Chinese called it the Opium War. It was an epithet bitterly resented by the British who piously maintained that it was actually a war to teach the Chinese a lesson in free trade. What manner of trade the British had in mind was shown by the swarm of opium boats which had followed the Royal Navy upstream. Impatiently waiting for the signing of the treaty they began hawking their wares, "opium is on sale very cheap at Sui Shan — an opportunity not be missed."

Britain was not able to legalize the opium trade with the war of 1839-42. The Second Opium War, waged in 1856-1858 by both Britain and France against China, forced China to acquiesce. The treaty which followed threw China wide open to opium trafficking, and England expanded the Indian poppy fields to meet the growing demand. By 1880, China was importing more than 6,500 tons of opium a year.

Opium Growing Spreads in China

However, a new source of opium had been gradually developing that threatened to undermine the British monopoly. This was China itself. By the 1860's, Chinese compradors and landlords had made peasants cultivate extensive fields of poppy in the hill country of Fukien and Kwantung Provinces. From there, opium cultivation spread to Yunnan and Szechuan provinces far to the southwest



Deep in Chinese territory French soldiers attack bridge outside Peking (1860) in continuing efforts to get China's submission, following Second Opium War, 1856-1858.

where the limey soil and temperate climate of the hill slopes were especially suitable for the growing of opium poppies.

In the beginning China's homegrown variety was considered inferior to that imported from abroad, but it was also much cheaper. In remote areas it sold for less than half the price of imported opium. This made it more easily available to the poorest peasants, the carters, workers, who turned to it for relief from their almost unendurable existence. And many died from a combination of starvation and overdoses.

Opium proved an economic boon to the governors of the provinces where it was grown. The crop brought in two to four times more revenue than wheat. Its light weight and small bulk made it much easier to transport, a very important factor in Szechuan and Yunnan provinces where all goods had to be carried over winding mountain trails.

Soon Szechuan was shipping more than two thirds of its harvest to other parts of China. By 1875, Yunnan had converted at least a third of its farmland into poppy fields. By the early 1900's China's opium crop had increased to more than 22,000 tons a year, valued at some five million dollars' worth.

Tax revenues from this highly profitable source never reached the central government which was too weak to enforce its laws in these remote provinces. Instead, local officials appropriated the taxes which provided them with lavish living.

Although accurate statistics are not available, it has been estimated there were some 15 million addicts in the country at that time. Government officials, businessmen, workers, peasants, women, even Buddhist nuns and monks had all joined the ranks of this miserable army. Addicted young graduates who took rigorous civil service examinations that required sequestration for three days often suffered such severe withdrawals that they died. On the other hand, opium overdoses were deliberately used by thousands to commit suicide.

Invasion and Resistance

Meanwhile, a debilitated and misgoverned China was suffering defeat after defeat at the hands of the western powers. An emerging Japan attacked China in

1894-1895, appropriated Taiwan and began colonizing Korea. In 1899-1900 the Boxer Rebellion, launched by a secret society to drive out foreigners, was crushed by foreign powers. This extracted further humiliating concessions from China.

Such continual degradation of their country sparked a new national spirit of resistance in millions of Chinese. Progressives began calling for far reaching reforms that would strengthen China. Top priority was given to ridding China of the opium curse because opium had brought about the piecemeal division of China's territories and had ruined vast numbers of her citizens. Opium was seen as the shameful symbol of foreign domination. The habit had even invaded the Imperial Court where the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi and other high ranking officials indulged in the pipe.

The growing opposition to opium by the people compelled the addicted Tzu Hsi and her officials to inaugurate a drive against the drug. Tang Shao-yi, once an addict himself and now a diplomat, was appointed to talk to the British about signing an agreement which would finally eliminate the inflow of opium. The British, pressured by an aroused public opinion in England and around the world, finally agreed to start curtailing and eventually eliminating opium imports.

To control opium trafficking internally, the Ching government issued an imperial edict outlawing the cultivation, sale and smoking of opium. Optimistically it anticipated that within ten years the habit would be eradicated.

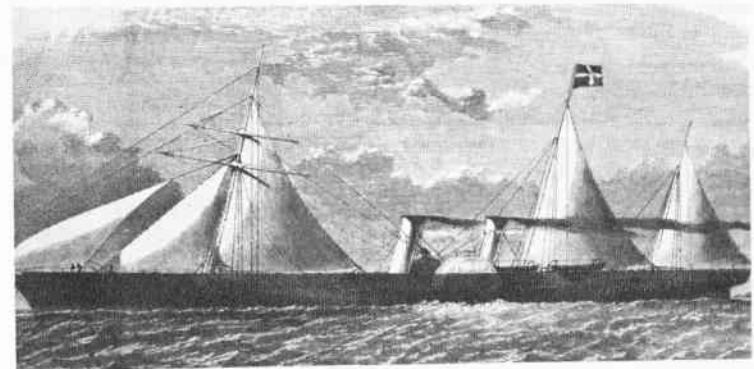
The reform was carried out vigorously. Opium dens were closed across the country. Poppy fields were sowed in wheat and rice. But nothing was done for the addicts who still suffered from their excruciating craving. They now turned to another source to alleviate their suffering — morphine.

The Problem of Morphine

The addictive qualities of morphine, a derivative of opium, were not recognized at first. Used primarily as an anesthesia it was even prescribed as an anti-opium remedy. Some western missionaries in the 1880's were giving morphine to their addict converts as a cure, so it became known as "Jesus opium."

By 1902, the addictive qualities of morphine were well known and the Ching Dynasty acted to restrict its use. The restrictions merely drove the drug

British Opium Ship, 1860. Once the opium trade was legalised in China the latest-model ships were used to convey the drug. This picture which appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, 1860, was captioned: "The new clipper steam-ship 'Ly-ee-moon,' built for the opium trade."



underground where it was difficult to detect because, unlike opium which gives off a distinctive odor, morphine is practically odorless. Far from being an anti-opium cure, it proved so potent that much less was needed to obtain the same effect. One dose of morphine, producing the effect of one dose of opium, cost about one-ninth as much. Morphine made from Middle East poppies was smuggled into China in large quantities.

All semblance of drug suppression in China came to an end with the fall of the Ching Dynasty in 1911. It had achieved little success. In 1913, seven years after the campaign was launched, only about ten percent of Yunnan's smokers had been able to rid themselves of the addiction.

Warlord Rule

The new republic which succeeded the Ching Dynasty was too weak to hold the country together. It was quickly split apart by warlords who were for the most part former Ching generals. They established local governments in the districts where they had been stationed during Ching times and fought with one another to enlarge their territories.

Since opium traffic brought in the richest revenues, the warlords concentrated on poppy cultivation. One brutal method of forcing peasants to increase their opium poppy acreage was practiced in Szechuan province where the warlords imposed a stiff "laziness" tax on those who did not grow it. When the harvest was ripe, soldiers stood over the peasants with guns at the ready to protect the fields against raids by other warlords.

The peasants worked in long relays, performing the tedious chore of slitting each ripened poppy bulb with a sharp hooked knife. After the sap spurted out and had thickened and darkened it was carefully scraped off and deposited in a receptacle hanging around the peasant's neck.

Bulb after bulb after bulb was split and scraped. The peasants worked without even brief breaks for meals. Instead the soldiers fed them rice, spoonful by spoonful while they worked. After the opium was collected, the drug was carted off by long processions of carriers protected by the warlords' armed soldiers. The peasants received only a meager return for their labor, and most of this went into opium.

The effect of opium production on the people of Yunnan and Szechuan is described by Harry Franck, world traveler, who in 1924 spent a year in southern China, much of it in Yunnan province:

"... Those among the Chinese themselves who ought to know say that nine out of ten men and six out of ten women in Yunnanfu (the present day city of Kunming) often indeed children in the middle schools, smoke opium. One general smoked two taels worth a day, though it sells for a song there and the task required steady smoking during all his waking hours, one coolie having no other calling than to tend his pipe, which had its place even in the chair he rode. . . . Nearly all coolies carried their opium pipes and the tin boxes for their lamps openly on their loads; any miserably little tea or rice shop sold it as freely as tobacco, half thimblefuls of liquid amber poison at ten Yunnan cents, which last ten to fifteen minutes. . . . I have never seen men as much slave to their vice. . . . Every morning as sure as the morning came it took between three and four hours to get the fellows up, their opium smoked, their breakfast cooked and eaten and their loads adjusted and on their shoulders. . . ."

But opium smoking was not confined to porters and Franck goes on to describe how "... The manager of the bank evidently saw nothing wrong in his

chief clerk's doing business from his seat-divan-alcove-bed, or lounging place, with an expensive opium outfit beside his desk, so that he could lie down and smoke between transactions. . . ."

The results, of course, were disastrous. Daughters and wives were sold into prostitution or as slaves to pay for the opium habit. Boys were sold to the coal fields of the hill region, where they were forced to spend their waking hours crawling in and out of shallow pits mining the coal. Half starved, living in wretched hovels, they died by the hundred but there were always more.



The countryside was afflicted with derelicts, filthy skeleton figures in rags and uncombed matted hair. Their glazed yellow skin and bleared hooded eyes gave them away as opium addicts.

Such spectacles were also commonplace in all the big coastal cities where Chinese criminal gangs were taking advantage of the situation. Shanghai, largest and most modern of these cities, was their special target. Because extraterritorial rights granted the western powers were still in operation, Chinese living in the foreign concessions of the city were subject only to the laws of that particular section.

The Green Gang and the Drug Traffic

The Green Gang, which in the 1800's had flourished as a secret smuggling society on the Grand Canal, settled in the French Concession where vice was not outlawed but only taxed. The French even turned the management of the Chinese sector over to the gang, naming one of their leaders, Pock-marked Huang, the Chief of Detectives.

The rival Red Gang moved into the International Settlement which housed British and Americans as well as other western nations. There were smaller local gangs as well, all dealing in drugs.

In 1918 the British concession in Shanghai cracked down on the opium traffic in its sector. This left the field open to the Green Gang. Eventually a Green Gang man named Tu Yueh-sheng, who came to be known as the Opium King, united all the lesser gangs in the foreign concessions into a single syndicate. He was one of three bosses who were referred to as the Big Three.

The syndicate not only continued trafficking in opium, but also handled the imported morphine flooding the Chinese market from Europe, the United States and finally Japan, which banned the use of the drug in its own country. By 1920 enough Japanese morphine was being imported to give every Chinese in the country four doses apiece.

To add to these miseries, a new and terrifying drug, also a derivative of the versatile opium, appeared on the market. Hailed in the late 1800's as a miracle drug which could effectively treat bronchitis, asthma, tuberculosis and opium addiction, it was manufactured by the Bayer chemical cartel under the brand name of "Heroin." The cartel launched such a massive advertising campaign that in 1906 the American Medical Association approved its use for the general public. It was handed out indiscriminately by drug stores and physicians. It was not until 1924 that the United States Congress voted to outlaw it. But by this time it had created a serious drug problem in the United States.

Heroin was quickly appropriated by the Green Gang syndicate. It began importing and pushing red colored heroin pills, labeled "anti-opium pills" and advertised as "the best medicine in the world." It convinced thousands of opium addicts to switch to heroin. The demand for the drug became so great that the syndicate had to import some 10.25 tons annually from Europe and Japan.

The Green Gang syndicate was a thriving organization when on July 9, 1926, Chiang Kai-shek launched the Kuomintang army on the Northern Expedition to rid the country of the warlords. The Communists, who had formed a coalition with the Kuomintang in 1924, participated actively in the campaign. While the main KMT forces fought the warlord armies, the Communist propaganda corps encouraged peasants to rise against their landlords in the countryside. In the cities they helped the workers organize paralyzing strikes. The disruptions caused by large numbers of peasants and workers helped the

“... it was manufactured by the Bayer chemical cartel under the brand name of Heroin.”

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Kuomintang army make rapid progress, but the union of Kuomintang and Communist factions was an unstable one.

Chiang Kai-shek who had taken on the leadership of the Kuomintang upon Dr. Sun's death in 1925, was an anomaly. Outwardly pledged to Dr. Sun's program for bettering the conditions of peasants and workers, his real interests lay with the conservative business groups and foreign interests. And though he made use of the aid the Communists were giving him, he planned to get rid of them as soon as he had firm control of the government of China. The closer he came to Shanghai, the more expendable they became in his eyes. Meanwhile, the unsuspecting worker unions in the city were preparing to launch a patriotic strike to welcome him.

Chiang Betrays the Revolution

Chiang sent a secret message to Chinese merchants and western capitalists in Shanghai assuring them that if they would help him get control of the city, he would protect their interests. And he asked them to break the workers' strike. He then slowed his push northward to give the police forces of the foreign settlements time to break the strike, which they did with much bloodshed. But the loyal labor unions responded by organizing a second even more potent strike that shut down the whole city. Chiang was still not ready to attack his Communist allies, but he met secretly with the leading Chinese businessmen of the city to profess his loyalty to their cause. They were so convinced that they presented him with a three million dollar contribution, the first of many such donations.

Chiang's next concern was to break the strike. Though he had some three thousand troops under his command, he couldn't rely on them to attack the workers whom they considered their allies. So, he arranged a meeting with Pock-marked Huang, Chief of Detectives of the French Concession. Pock-marked Huang introduced him to Tu Yueh-sheng, the Opium King and leader of the Green Gang. Some sources maintain that this was not Chiang's first introduction to the gang, but that in his youth he had been initiated into it.

At Chiang's request, Tu organized a puppet labor group called the Common Advancement Association. The group was made up of thousands of Shanghai's underground who were recruited and armed with the three million dollars provided by the business community. Beginning on April 12, the Common Advancement Association members swarmed out of the French Concession and attacked Communists, labor unions and innocent bystanders alike. Thousands were killed as the bloody massacre spread throughout China.

After gaining control of the government, Chiang continued his association with the Green Gang. He enlisted all the Big Three as honorary advisers to his government and named Tu Yueh-sheng a major general in the army.

Chiang's new government was bankrupt. And he turned to the most obvious means of filling its coffers. In August of 1927 he legalized the opium trade, at the same time inaugurating a monopoly on opium sales taxes. By July 1928, he had made some forty million Chinese dollars. A growing public outcry, however, forced him to revoke the legalization. In spite of this, the gangs kept up their secret trafficking in drugs without government interference.

In 1928, when the Geneva convention banned international heroin sales, Tu's drug syndicate hired expert Chinese chemists to manufacture its own heroin from tons of raw opium purchased from Szechuan province and shipped down the Yangtze. So successful was the operation that heroin pills came to be more



Chinese papercut of the Shanghai Massacre

widely used than opium smoking in Shanghai and increasing quantities were being smuggled into Hong Kong. By 1930, Hong Kong authorities were confiscating as much as 847 pounds of the stuff a year—more than was seized in any other country except France.

The syndicate was now no longer peddling heroin in the form of anti-opium pills, but was selling it mixed with tobacco and rolled into cigarettes. Great quantities of heroin were also bought by the American Mafia and smuggled into the United States.

In 1934 Chiang Kai-shek embraced Christianity and at the same time launched a New Life campaign to improve the morals of his subjects. This included a campaign against opium. He established a bureau to suppress the drug and ordered penalties ranging from life imprisonment to death for pushers. In 1935 he appointed himself Commissioner for Opium Suppression.

This campaign was directed primarily at breaking the power of the warlords in China's hinterland by depriving them of the opium tax.

By 1936, Chiang had rerouted the opium traffic northward to Hankow. It had previously been moving from Yunnan and Kweichow to the southeastern coast. From Hankow it went to Shanghai where the drug was confiscated by the government. It was not, however, destroyed. The suppression program which lasted from 1934 to 1937 netted the government an estimated 500 million Chinese dollars.

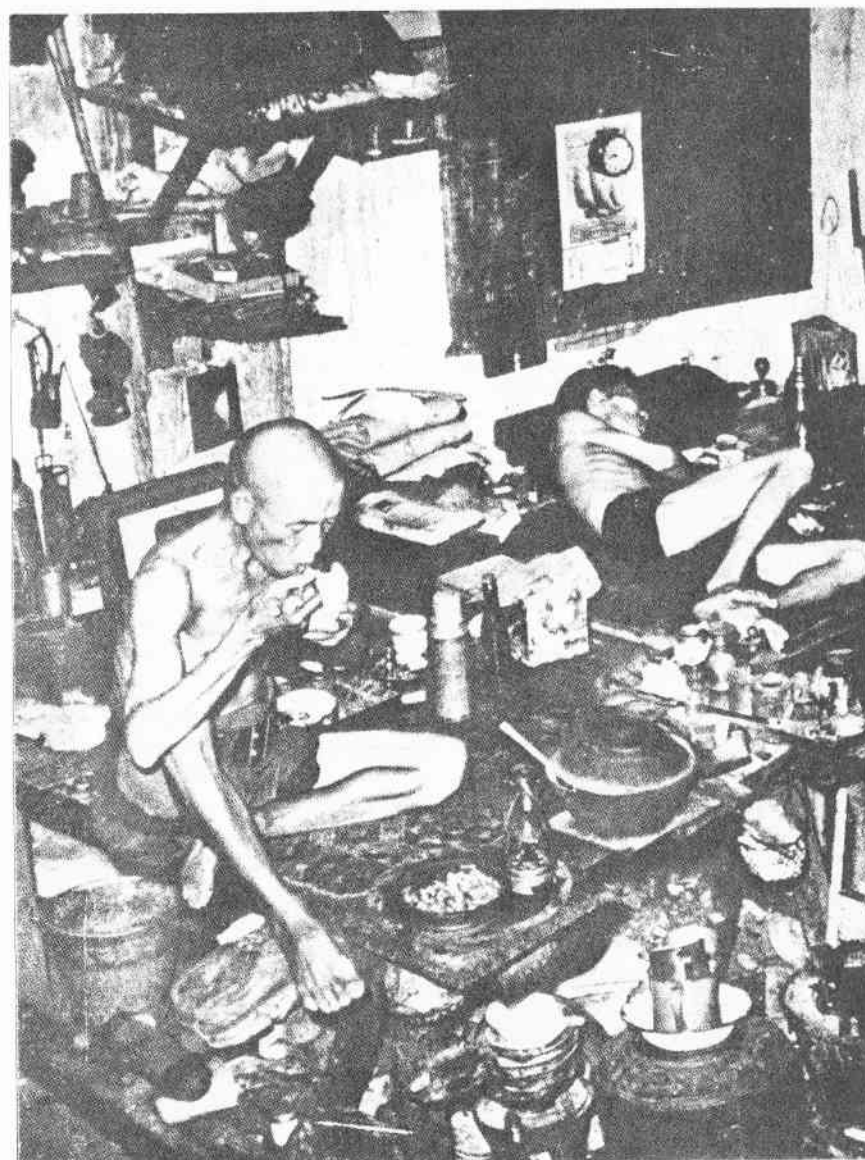
Japan and the Drug Traffic

In 1937 Japan extended her aggression into north and central China and the KMT retreated to Chungking in Szechuan Province. But the drug traffic within China continued. To all appearances Chiang and the Japanese militarists

were at war, but actually a great deal of trading went on between the invading Japanese and the Nationalist Government. Much of this traffic had to do with opium.

Japan had made opium the base of her revenue in occupied China. In 1938 its sale in the Northeast provinces accounted for some 28 percent of her income. Under the Japanese occupation, Nanking became a city of some fifty thousand heroin addicts. In Shanghai, almost a sixth of the one and a half million dollars that went every month for drugs was spent on heroin. The opium

Opium den in pre-liberation China



traffic grew as the Japanese occupied more and more Asian territory.

The Nationalist government in Chungking could supply this demand out of the large quantities of opium which had been confiscated in Szechuan during the suppression campaign. Tu Yueh-sheng, the Opium King, took charge of shipping operations, undisturbed by the Japanese secret police.

Once the opium reached Japanese hands, it was transformed into heroin or morphine in Shanghai and Tientsin laboratories, then it was peddled throughout occupied coastal territories, including Macao, Hong Kong and Canton.

But the Nationalist government in Chungking did not have to depend solely on hoarded opium stores. It was now situated in the very heart of the opium producing provinces—Szechuan and Yunnan. Chiang's Blueshirt police, the equivalent of Germany's infamous Gestapo, battled with the Kelao, a local syndicate for control of the fields. By 1943 the Blueshirts had won and the poppy fields were patrolled and expanded under their supervision.

Vast fields of red, pink and white poppies covered the foothill districts. When the opium was harvested, Blueshirts instead of the armed followers of warlords took over its transportation. It was stored in Kuomintang Party offices which were used as godowns. From there long lines of carriers transported it in baskets labeled "government files" or "war material" to shipping centers on the Yangtze. Other loads went southward down the Burma Road into Southeast Asia, also under Japanese control.

After the Japanese defeat and with the help of the United States, Chiang Kai-shek again took over Shanghai. The drug traffic continued to flourish during the Civil War. When the Communists swept down from the north, most of the Green Gang syndicate and other local gangs, doubtlessly remembering their ruthless slaughter of Communists in 1927, fled the city. From all over China there was a mass exodus of criminals into Hong Kong, carrying with them quantities of opium and the paraphernalia to convert it into heroin. The syndicate's master chemists wasted no time setting up laboratories and soon abundant supplies of high-grade heroin were flooding the Hong Kong market. An influx of exile addicts added to the demand. Hong Kong rapidly became a city of vice with which the British police were unable to cope.

The People's Republic of China

By 1949, the last remnants of the Kuomintang forces had been crushed and the People's Republic of China was founded. Ravaged by Kuomintang corruption, by Japanese invasion and civil war, the country was a shambles and bankrupt in every way.

The People's Republic, unlike Chiang and the warlords, moved at once to eradicate opium from China. This looked like a hopeless task. The first step was to persuade the peasants to plow under their poppies and sow the fields to wheat or rice. It was not hard to get the compliance of most of them when they realized that their opium market was gone and that they would be guaranteed good returns from agricultural crops.

A few did continue to raise poppies in secluded nooks. But by 1951 the People's Liberation Army and the People's Militia had effectively sealed off the frontier, halting all smuggling into Southeast Asia. Poppy cultivation ceased.

It was harder to eliminate the addicts, because dealers had access to secret caches which were being replenished by runners from stores in Hong Kong, or by a few concealed laboratories which were still operating. Though the

manufacture, sale and use of opium and heroin was forbidden by law, the traffic went on practically unabated.

The government re-examined the problem and came to the conclusion that a law can be effective only if it is supported by the people. They would have to be enlisted to combat it.

A massive education program called the "ban opium" movement was launched. All over the country gigantic rallies were held attended by hundreds of thousands of people. Speeches were made on the evils of opium. Quantities of confiscated opium and smoking equipment were publicly burned. And several of the largest drug dealers were sentenced to life imprisonment or were executed.

But this was only the beginning. Small study groups were held in every neighborhood in cities and countryside. The group leaders discussed the havoc that drugs were doing to human lives and to the whole country as well, because addicts were unable to participate in the reconstruction of China. Opium, they said, had turned "people into ghosts." Now it was time to "turn the ghosts back into people."

At the same time school children were educated on the evils of opium and heroin and the ease with which addiction can be acquired. This was necessary because pushers were still operating who might tempt them into trying the drug.

Time Tables Established

Along with the educational programs the government set definite time tables for the addicts. Those who had recently taken up the habit had three months in

New China grows food, not opium poppies.



which to quit it, tapering off on a state-controlled ration of drugs. Those who were long-time habitués were given six months. If at the end of this time they were unable to overcome the addiction, they were hospitalized.

Special education courses were also given to families. Strong community pressure on drug users was making relatives ashamed of their addict members and this, it was felt, could drive the addicts themselves underground.

"You must not blame these members for their addiction," families were told. "They are victims and need your support. With you behind them they'll find the courage to report themselves and let us help them break the habit."

The committees also devoted a great deal of time to trying to lessen the stigma of guilt the addicts felt. "Don't take the blame for the death of your son," Tsai Yung-mai was told. "You were victimized by foreign imperialists. It was they who benefited by the growth and the sale and the trade. It was they who brought opium into China and forced it on the people to make them weak and easily controlled. Now you must accept a cure because the new government needs you in the work of reconstruction."

Tsai Yung-mai was so moved by the concern of family and friends that she decided to try to give up her addiction again. This time she did not enter the hospital but underwent the agonies in her own home, and she emerged cured. The government then employed her to help with other addicts in her community. Her experience was a valuable asset to the campaign. She was not only a familiar figure to the neighborhood addicts, but she understood all the sufferings and feelings of remorse that they were undergoing.

Once motivated, many of the addicts like Tsai Yung-mai were able to effect cures in their own homes. Others were so badly addicted that they had to be sent to hospitals.

The new government realized that to make the cures permanent the former addicts had to be provided with meaningful work. So they were given training and provided with jobs which gave them a new sense of self-respect and worth.

Dealing with the Dealers

Simultaneously with the re-education program, the neighborhood committees went after the dealers. Each pusher had an identification card that he presented at the secret drug supply depot. The street committees knew this and sent out a call to the pushers to surrender their cards voluntarily. They were told that if they did so they would be accepted, not punished by the community. Those who responded were given a state stipend equivalent to what they had been earning as pushers and were sent to re-education courses where they learned the evils of what they had been doing. They were also trained for other jobs.

The next group of pushers had to be pressured by the whole neighborhood into realizing that what they were doing was wrong. Unwilling to become social outcasts, they also turned in their cards and received job training.

The last group of dealers were the petty criminals who under no circumstances would reveal themselves. One by one they were ferreted out by the people of their neighborhoods, many of them being identified by reformed addicts. They were rounded up in a series of citizen arrests and packed off to prison.

Meanwhile, the secret laboratories and depots of drugs were exposed, often by reformed dealers. Smugglers and chemists were apprehended and given long prison sentences. The worst offenders were executed. By 1956 the drug problem

was virtually eliminated from China.

A microcosm of what took place all over the country can be seen in one lane of 1,700 families living in Shanghai. Seventeen of these families were involved in drug traffic. Among them, 21 individuals were directly engaged in it. Five of the 21 were given life sentences and three have died in prison. Four were convicted of high crimes, but repented and were put under public surveillance. Three were imprisoned for a six month re-education program and then released. Eight who were not guilty of serious drug-related offenses were re-educated and given work. One escaped to Hong Kong.

Today Tsai Yung-mai no longer works to rehabilitate drug addicts, for there are none left. She has remarried and has a job in a factory, a step-daughter and three grandchildren. As for the opium that almost destroyed her, it is raised in only a few carefully guarded hospital plots for its medicinal uses.

The Opium Trail

The Hong Kong heroin laboratories and others in Southeast Asia are continuing to flourish. The opium they process comes from the hill country of northern Burma and Thailand. At one time there were only scattered opium fields in this area. The rapid expansion began after 1949 when Yunnan along with the rest of China was liberated by the Communists and the remnants of the Kuomintang forces led by General Li Mi crossed the border into Burma.

Backed by the CIA which supplied it with arms and ammunition training, the KMT established bases along the border of Burma, ignoring Burmese protests. From these bases the KMT remnants launched three invasions of Yunnan province. But in each case they were thrown back with heavy casualties. Finally, they were driven out of Burma into northern Thailand.

During the some twenty-five years of their sojourn in Burma and Thailand, the officers and men of the Kuomintang have been known as the opium barons of Southeast Asia. They have been forcing the hill people to extend their plantations of opium poppies and have taken over the transportation of these opium

General Tuan Shi-wen, commander of the Fifth Army of the Kuomintang in northern Thailand. "We have to continue to fight the evil of Communism, and to fight you must have an army, and an army must have guns, and to buy guns you must have money. In these mountains the only money is opium." *Weekend Telegraph*, London, March 10, 1967.



harvests. Long caravans of mules and drivers, protected by Kuomintang soldiers, bring it to Thai laboratories where it is converted into heroin. Before the withdrawal of the American army from Saigon, this heroin was peddled openly at all army camps, creating thousands of GI drug addicts. Now that these addicts have been sent home, the heroin is following them in vast quantities, smuggled into the United States by Mafia agents.

Slanders Against China

On many occasions in the years since 1949 both the press of the United States and Taiwan have accused the People's Republic of China of being responsible for the opium saturation of Southeast Asia and Hong Kong. One typical press story in Taiwan's *Free China Weekly* of 1971 stated flatly "...Red China exported some US \$800 million worth of narcotics last year. Plantings of poppies are said to be on the increase in Yunnan, whence raw opium moves into the free world via Laos, Burma and Thailand . . ."

And as recently as May 16, 1975, the San Jose *Mercury News* of San Jose, California in a story headlined, "China Reported as New Bay Area Heroin Source" stated flatly, "Even as South Bay narcotics agents braced for an influx of Mexican heroin late this summer, the word was going out Thursday that the area may face a deluge of the drug from yet another source—China."

"A secret federal report, the *Mercury* has learned, pinpoints the People's Republic of China as the producer of quantities of heroin that have been detected in the Bay Area . . ."

Such irresponsible news releases are completely at variance with known facts. They are particularly revealing in light of the well-publicized activities of the Kuomintang forces in the opium traffic of Thailand and Burma. According to on-the-spot research by Alfred W. McCoy and his associates, authors of *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, it is the massive supplies from these two countries that are being smuggled into the western hemisphere by representatives of the international crime syndicates.

So far as any smuggling into Hong Kong from China is concerned, the British scoff at the idea. One customs official, Mr. Graham Crookdale states, "We've never had a single seizure from China since 1949, and I've been here since 1947."

As for any smuggling out of Yunnan, the Shan tribesmen of the Burma hill countries, who know all the mountain trails, deny this vigorously. The Shans are rightist, pro-western tribesmen who have been employed by the CIA as spies.

Between 1962 and 1967 they penetrated deep into China's Yunnan province on espionage missions. They report that legitimate agricultural crops are now being grown in places where formerly there were extensive poppy fields. But of poppy cultivation, they saw not a trace.

So definite is this information that in reply to a query sent in by New York Senator James Buckley concerning China's possible involvement in the drug traffic, David M. Abshire of the United States State Department wrote as early as 1971: "... Recently, the Department of State in conjunction with the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs and other concerned Washington agencies has made extensive studies of the opium and heroin trade in Southeast Asia. Because allegations have been noted from time to time that the People's Republic of China is actively involved in this trade, special attention was given to examining this aspect of the problem.

"Our studies revealed that there is no reliable evidence that the Communist Chinese have ever either engaged in or sanctioned the illicit export of opium or its derivatives. Moreover, we found no evidence that the PRC exercises any control over or participates in the Southeast Asian opium trade . . . For example, almost all documented illicit shipments of opium and morphine base into the British colony of Hong Kong, which is estimated to have between 60 and 100 thousand addicts, originate in Southeast Asia.

"There is, insofar as we know, no illicit drug problem in Communist China as that government has for years strictly forbidden the private production, consumption, and distribution of opium or its derivatives."

Back in 1839, in a letter to Queen Victoria which was never delivered, Commissioner Lin chided, "... So long as you do not take it (opium) yourselves, but continue to make it and tempt the people of China to buy it, you will be showing yourselves careful of your own lives, but careless of the lives of other people, indifferent in your greed for gain to the harm you do to others; such conduct is repugnant to human feelings."

More than a century later, the ethical standards of the upright Commissioner have been put into practice by the People's Republic of China.

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