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The Opium War, 1840-1842

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(A sequel, *The Last Chopper*, covering 1963 to 1973, was published in 1976.)

Brown's theme is the "betrayal," by Ho Chi Minh, Ngo Dinh Diem, and their respective external patrons, of the Vietnamese people's burning desire for "freedom." But Brown offers no precise definition of this term: While he admits at one point that "freedom meant one thing to Europeans and Americans, something quite different to the majority of Asians," the general thrust of his argument is that the Vietnam conflict "was a war to contain communism, to establish freedom, as justified as had been the war in Europe and Asia from 1939 to 1945, and the Korean War from 1950 to 1953." This tendency to impose Western political concepts on Asian cultures prevails throughout the book to its considerable detriment.

Brown's account also suffers from his inability to disengage his passions from his subject, a step which would appear to be a necessary prerequisite to the kind of "objective evaluation" he promises us. To describe President Eisenhower as "one of the architects of the policy that enslaved millions" is not to enhance the dispassionate nature of the analysis, nor does it help for Brown to conclude his discussion of the 1954 Geneva Conference with the outburst: "Pontius Pilates—all of us!" Brown then compounds the confusion by endorsing, in his final chapter, all of the Johnson administration's arguments in defense of its Vietnam policy, down to the point of invoking Munich, SEATO, the pledges of three previous presidents, and the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

The book contains one other distinction: Although published 4 years after their release, the book does not contain, in the course of some 248 pages of text, a single reference to *The Pentagon Papers*. Since Brown cites these documents in his bibliography one can only conclude that the omission was by design, as with other aspects of this

puzzling book, though, one cannot help but wonder what the design was.

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Fay, Peter Ward. *The Opium War, 1840-1842*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1975. 406pp.

This masterfully written book deals with a far broader area than its title might indicate. The author, Professor of History at the California Institute of Technology, discusses the entire range of contacts between China and the West in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. He also demonstrates a direct connection between these and current events: The attitudes and policies of the Chinese People's Republic's leaders in 1976 show a definite historical linkage to the events of 1840 to 1842.

The reader is struck not only with the prominence in this book of "Commissioner Lin"—the mandarin who seized and destroyed 170 tons of opium, and who still is a hero to the Chinese—but also by the similarity in the language of the Manchu court in the 1840's and that of the Maoist Communist Party of today. For instance, in acknowledging Britain's military superiority in 1842, the royal emissary cautioned that the emperor "would, if pushed too far, call upon his people to rise, men, women, and children—every bush will be a soldier."

Fay credits the British penetration of China to the twin influences of "Christ and opium." The former was proselytized by an interdenominational horde of missionaries from many countries. Represented, for example, was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the English Church Missionary Society, Spanish Dominicans, Portuguese and French Lazarists (Vincentians), and Jesuits from many nations. The efforts that representatives of these organizations were willing to

engage in was demonstrated by Father Jean-Gabrielle Perboyre, a Vincentian who travelled for 16 months from Paris in order to reach his assigned post at Nanyang, in Honan Province.

Opium became important because of its immense profitability; a 300 percent turnover was not unusual. The opium trade also produced large tax revenues for the British colonial government in India. For it was in India that the vast majority of opium for the China trade was produced. One of the author's most interesting chapters is the one in which he describes the production of opium, from poppy flower to clay pipe.

Fay is both entertaining and illuminating when discussing such "sidelights" as opium or tea production, missionary efforts, and the practices of the mercantile houses, particularly the Scottish firm of Jardine Matheson and Russell and Company of the United States. The majority of the trade was conducted by the "early Victorian Vikings," as Fay terms the British merchants.

These firms headed up a trade effort which in 1839 dealt heavily in providing China with opium in exchange for tea and silver. It was the foreign desire to expand this trade, and the Chinese attempts to eliminate it, which precipitated the war of 1840-1842.

Early diplomatic attempts to settle the opium question failed, with Commissioner Lin dealing the Western merchants a heavy blow both in "face" and in the pocketbook. The British then sent a naval force to deal with the upstart Chinese.

Fay gives a detailed and authoritative account of the events and circumstances of the First Opium War. It was almost entirely a naval and amphibious war on Britain's part. A particularly interesting description is given of the *Nemesis*, the first iron steamer to navigate the Cape of Good Hope. This vessel—manned almost entirely by civilians, and not commissioned in the navy—was the Royal Navy's primary weapon for

forcing the rivers and estuaries of China.

There were three main campaigns in the war. The first was a failure; the British attempted unsuccessfully to blockade the Chinese coast. The lack of the naval forces necessary to accomplish this task was due to the Foreign Office being far more concerned with the war in Afghanistan than with Chinese affairs.

The second campaign involved an amphibious operation up the Pearl River to Canton; the third was a similar expedition up the Yangtze River to Nanking. These efforts were successful, although the author emphasizes that the British forces were almost completely dependent on naval support. Away from their ships, the troops lacked adequate supply, transport, and supporting arms. What is more, although they never effectively opposed the Royal Navy, the Chinese on more than one occasion fought very well against British soldiers.

The Yangtze River campaign ended in August 1842 with the signing of the Treaty of Nanking. Its provisions included the opening of five "treaty ports" and the cession of Hong Kong to the British. In Fay's view this treaty was most notable for what it did not mention:

Christ and opium! The bearers of the first were more insistent than anyone else that China be opened. The traffic in the second was unquestionably the occasion . . . of the war that began the opening. The Treaty of Nanking dealt directly with neither.

This sums up the thrust of Fay's book. The Nanking pact marked the "beginning of the opening" of China, a beginning that was not well-established until the 1860's. Fay concludes that the process of opening China was not much of a success, if we bear in mind that China was "open" for little more than a century. In April 1949 the English cruiser *Amethyst* was blockaded on the

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Yangtze River. Then, "one dark night [she] stealthily slipped her cables and got away down the river to the sea . . . China was closed again."

The Opium War is an excellent work. Fay provides an extensive index, a helpful "list of characters," and useful maps. This carefully documented work does not displace John King Fairbank's classic work on early Sino-Western relations but supplements it in an outstanding fashion.

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Kelleher, Catherine McArdle. *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975. 372pp.

Professor Kelleher has set herself the task of examining nuclear weapons developments in relation to German politics during the years 1954 to 1966. Her volume, as Professor William T.R. Fox brings out in the Foreword, is one of three country studies on the same general topic, of which the French and British volumes are already in print. All three are part of a series sponsored by the Institute of War and Peace Studies of Columbia University.

Professor Kelleher's book begins with a prologue for the years 1945-1954, and then in Chapters 2 through 10 proceeds essentially chronologically through the period 1954-1966. Chapter 11 is a "Commentary" on those 12 years, and Chapter 12 is "A Look Forward" at the present-day situation.

The book is based upon personal residence in Germany and a number of interviews, mostly with Germans, but also with American, British, and French subjects. (The number of interviews conducted in 1964 to 1966 exceeded 125.) Professor Kelleher notes that she did not aim at replicating "the usual American or German secondary analyses," that she wanted to focus on primary sources. As a result the notes

make only very restricted reference to books in the category of "secondary analyses." One inescapable problem with this kind of approach is that it necessarily drives a book toward a focus on such primary material as does turn out to be available.

Professor Kelleher's book is a competent account which does justice to her chosen focus. As she herself realizes and stipulates, many of the issues of German control of and access to nuclear power appear today rather remote and secondary. It is for this reason that she added the chapter at the end to provide a contemporary focus.

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Korb, Lawrence J., ed. *The System for Educating Military Officers in the U.S.* Pittsburgh: International Studies Association, 1976. 172pp.

Before he left the Department of Defense in January, Deputy Secretary of Defense William P. Clements, Jr., in a memorandum on senior service colleges, reaffirmed his commitment to improving officer education:

These institutions represent the capstone of the DoD educational system. They must be centers of excellence—marked by scholarship, innovative thought, and research. They should attract the best students, teachers, researchers, and visiting faculty . . .

For 3 years Mr. Clements had led the DoD Committee on Excellence in Education, made up of the Service Secretaries and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)—"a group that'll get your attention," one wag noted—in a searching review of officer education: the service academies, the senior service colleges, the intermediate-level (staff) colleges, and the graduate education system. And for 3 years Clements and the Committee ran into the kinds of strains and