

15 The Scramble for China: The Bay of Jiaozhou and Port Arthur

In 1880 one of Japan's senior military officers, if not the most important one, Yamagata Aritomo, called attention to the danger that the modernisation of the Chinese army and navy posed to Japan's safety. At the same time, the fortifications built to defend Japan's coast were not only intended as a deterrent against a Russian attack from the sea, but also against a Chinese invasion, should Japan and China become involved in a military conflict over Korea (Drea 2009: 52, 55). The might of China, which as Norman (1884: 259, 287-8) wrote, had 'made great strides' since 1860 'in what we call Western civilisation', was also still a factor taken into account by politicians and diplomats in France and Great Britain. In 1883 the French ambassador in Beijing warned his government that the Chinese soldiers were well-trained, well-armed and had foreign officers (who in the eyes of Western observers made the difference) (*ibid.*: 107, 262). The performance of Chinese soldiers in the Sino-French War of 1884-85 impressed the British and, some ten years later, the then British Secretary for India, Lord Kimberley, mentioned their 'serious power of annoyance' as an argument not to provoke China too much in the Burmese-Chinese frontier negotiations that were being conducted.¹ The Chinese fleet had German- and British-built state-of-the art warships, and the Chinese army and navy used European armaments manufactured by Krupp, Mauser, Armstrong and other companies; a reality that in 1900, at the time of the Boxer Rebellion, made the military operations to relieve the besieged legations in Beijing far from easy for the powers. China also produced such weaponry, with varying success, in local arms factories.

At that time, London still looked to China as a balancing force in solving the British disputes with Russia over the Pamirs and with France over Thailand. London tried to convince Beijing that Great Britain and China should be 'working in close accord' in both issues.² To some contemporaries it even appeared that China made good use of the opportunity the British predicaments presented. Morrison (1895: 241), who had the negotiations over the frontiers of Burma and the buffer London wanted to create there between French and British territory in mind, complained that with its

1 Kimberley to Lansdowne 23-8-1892 (cited in Chandran 1977: 27).

2 Rosebery to O'Connor 17-10-1893 (cited in Chandran 1977: 87).

overtures Great Britain was willing to suffer 'indignities and humiliaties' by 'a hypothetically powerful neighbour'.

By the end of the century such caution and praise had disappeared. The 'China Question' became a source of concern for politicians and a topic of public debate. In analogy to the Ottoman Empire, China came to be referred to as 'the sick man of the Far East' (Wright and Cartwright 1908: 773). It had become too weak to resist demands by foreign nations and its government was no longer able to enforce its authority all over the country. Treaty ports no longer sufficed. Wider concessions were sought. In contrast to the South Pacific, where individual settlers played a leading role in the expansion of Western political influence, in China governments were in the vanguard. A partition of China, or as it was sometimes phrased a dividing up of the country into separate watertight compartments, seemed imminent. As Hart recollected: 'the powers were to partition China ... each year – nay, every month, the press or local rumour, Cassandra-like, foretold woe' (Silbey 2012: 51). The poor image of China in the West and in Japan, the idea that the country could collapse at any moment, and racial prejudices all contributed to such prophesies. In the Western world anti-Chinese sentiments were widespread. Morrison (1895: 2), an Australian and correspondent for *The Times* in China, wrote of the 'strong racial antipathy to the Chinese common to my countrymen'. This certainly held for the self-governing British colonies in the Pacific, Australia, New Zealand and Canada (or rather British Columbia), where, as in the United States, racial feelings were enhanced by a strong aversion to the immigration of cheap Chinese and Japanese labourers; against what some called the influx of pagan races from Asia, which in reality only concerned relatively small numbers.³ In Germany Kaiser Wilhelm II was rabidly anti-Chinese and would, from time to time, deliver rambling, even to his countrymen embarrassing, speeches about how to deal with China. German missionaries in China displayed similar prejudices (Esherick 1987: 125). In Japan a decisive anti-Chinese bias became manifest almost from the day Japan had opened up, fuelled by China's inability to resist the Western powers and the backward conditions many Chinese lived in. The Chinese were downgraded as half-barbarians, a qualification that was extended to the Koreans (Keene 1998: 49, 79; Goto 2003: 4).

As the eagerness of Europeans and Americans, and later also Japanese, to trade with and invest in the country indicates, China continued to be a country that businessmen and politicians looked to for the advancements of

3 In Australia most of the Pacific Islanders who had taken up residence there were forcefully repatriated in the beginning of the twentieth century (Thomas 2010: 238).

their economic interests. The Chinese market was developing. The rare traveller who in the closing decades of the nineteenth century traversed China could confirm this, reporting about the European products for sale in local shops and markets and, as Dikötter (2007: 1) concludes, 'the material culture of broad sections of the population was already inextricable intertwined with global trends by the end of the nineteenth century, whether by the yarn of their clothes, iron of their tools, or their lamps and the oil in them'.

A modern infrastructure was also developing, detested as elsewhere in the non-Western world by those who because of it had lost their livelihood. Here, too, it was to become a source of discontent and unrest. In the 1870s Chinese shipping companies had embraced steam, and by the end of the century Chinese ships, sailing boats as well as steamers, would have a large share in transporting goods to and from China. Railways were built and, once constructed, the Chinese made frequent use of them. Electric street lights spread from the Western settlements and, by 1900, had also been installed in Changsha, the capital of Hunan, described by one Frenchman as 'the province the most hostile to foreigners' (Chambre 1898a: 450; Dikötter 2007: 134-5). China also had a banking network covering much more of the country than foreign banks did and a telegraph network, essential for trade and for military and political communication. Initially, the telegraph was an affair of the foreign settlements and foreign and Chinese commerce. The first land line of the Chinese Telegraph Administration dated from 1881, linking the commercial centre of Shanghai and the politically important city of Tianjin, reaching Beijing in 1884 (Eitel 1895: 505-6; Morrison 1895: 156; Darwent 1905: viii; Bickers 2011: 297).

As elsewhere in the non-western world, local products had to give way to imports, with the same devastating consequences for local traditional production as the introduction of trains and steamships had, but China was not without an industrial and commercial sector of its own, and the opposite was also possible. As a Blackburn trade mission to China at the end of the century noted, in the marketing of coarse cotton yarn the British had been 'beaten by India, Japan, and China' (Bourne 1898: 5). The report also praised the Chinese trading networks and bewailed the fact that the moment goods entered the country the British (and other foreigners) no longer had any role to play, locked up in the treaty ports as they were. And even there, with the exception of Shanghai and Hong Kong, 'the whole distributive trade' of imports was 'in the hands of Chinese', with British merchants in the foreign settlements only functioning as 'outpost stations for the collection of exports' (Neville and Bell 1898: 217, 339). Some Frenchmen, more realistic than their earlier compatriots in Indochina in the late 1860s, took a different

approach, pleading to make use of these Chinese traders and their networks and knowledge of the local markets, instead of trying to cut them out. It was impossible to beat them (Chambre 1898a: 25-6; d'Orléans 1894: 485). Also in Southeast Asia it was impossible for Westerners not to notice the prominent role Chinese traders played. As one contemporary study about French Cochinchina noted: 'They married all the prettiest women, and got all the commerce' (Scott 1885: 247). In another study the Chinese in Singapore were praised for being 'public-spirited' (Colquhoun 1902: 225).

The consequences of military defeat

China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War set in motion a development that many in those days were sure could not help but lead to a dividing up of China among the powers. The chance that this would not happen, Colquhoun (1902: 45) wrote, was 'slender'. In London Grey agreed. In 1903 he would quote with approval the Shanghai correspondent of *The Times* who had written that 'the future maintenance of the integrity of China is, humanly speaking, impossible'.⁴ 'The break-up of an Empire of four hundred millions of people', as the opening sentence of Beresford's plea not to let it happen read, would have 'no parallel in history' (Beresford 1899: 1). Anticipating such a chain of events, Curzon had viewed with some favour the construction of a railway from Burma to the Yangtze Valley. Troops from India could be transported quickly along the route to Central China, should a situation arise in which 'anything like a Protectorate or even actual possession' of the Valley had to be considered.⁵ A drawback, as one British Member of Parliament expressed it, was, 'You cannot have a railway in China without protecting it' (with troops).⁶

Fearing that other powers might push Beijing to cede territory to them or grant them exclusive commercial privileges, much diplomatic effort and scheming went into soliciting promises from Beijing that China would not make concessions to another power in certain parts of the country, and especially not in those regions where one considered one's own existing or future economic interests paramount. For Great Britain this was the

4 Grey in House of Commons 23-7-1903 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1903/jul/23/civil-service-and-revenues-departments).

5 Memorandum by Curzon 12-6-1898 (cited in Chandran 1977: 280).

6 Caldwell in House of Commons 20-3-1902 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1902/mar/20/situation-in-china-general-observations).

Yangtze Valley, consisting, according to a definition drawn up by London, of the provinces bordering the river and the Henan (Honan) and Zhejiang (Chekiang) provinces, or roughly the whole of Central China.⁷ Having established itself in Indochina, France aimed north, at southern Chinese provinces. Russia was safe and secure in the north and keen to expand its influence there still further. The staking out of spheres of influence and the hunt for commercial and territorial concessions, which characterised the closing years of the nineteenth century in China, were inspired by a mix of existing economic interests, ideas about profits to be gained in the future, political strife, and national pride and prestige. It got the better of all the participants. At a certain moment it was realised in Paris that while it aimed at control over southern China, French investments were in fact greater in the Yangtze Valley (Chandran 1977: 302, 307).

After defeating China, Tokyo had made it clear that it wanted Korea to fall within the Japanese sphere of influence. Japan, having acquired Taiwan, made the opposite coast of Fujian a likely object of a similar intention. As *The New York Times* (14-4-1901) reported, the Japanese seemed 'to feel that the province ought to be theirs' and that they regarded themselves as 'the protectors of Fukien'. An indication of Japan's increasing economic interest in the region would be reflected in the growing share of Japanese shipping, to the detriment of that of the British, to and from the treaty port of Xiamen (Amoy) (Bowra 1908: 820). Some were pretty sure that Fujian would be one of the regions in China where Japan would 'undoubtedly' act should it come to a partition of China (Colquhoun 1902: 375). As the opening of the ports along the Yangtze after the Sino-Japanese War indicated, Japan was also very interested in trade along that river, and a Japanese trading mission had at that time investigated its possibilities, travelling as far inland as Chongqing (Chambre 1898: v).

It would not take long before other countries made their move, aiming at the Bohai Sea to the north. The first to gain a concession on its coast was Germany, where Wilhelm II and its leading politicians had recently embarked on their *Weltpolitik*. Territorial expansion formed part of this. Or, as Bülow said in the Reichstag in December 1899: when the British speak about a 'Greater Britain', the French about a 'Nouvelle France' and the Russians are opening up Asia, the Germans are entitled to a 'Greater Germany' (Graichen and Gründer 2005: 83).

7 Brodrick in House of Commons 8-6-1899 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1899/jun/08/the-yang-tsze-valley).

In 1894 Germany had disbanded its East Asia Squadron, but the course of the Sino-Japanese War and Wilhelm II's insistence that Germany should get its 'fair share' when Great Britain and other powers would seek territorial concessions in a weakened China, made for a reversion of this decision before the year was over.⁸ A German naval presence in the Far East was deemed necessary, also, it was argued, in view of expanding German-China trade. To accomplish this, Germany needed its own *Stützpunkt*, a bunkering and repair station for its warships, so that it no longer had to rely on the goodwill of Great Britain, Russia and Japan for such activities in north Asia. The first priority was to decide on the location of a 'German Hong Kong in China' (Graichen and Gründer 2005: 82). Several places were considered. In November 1894, at a time when war was still raging, Wilhelm II suggested to his Chancellor, Hohenlohe, a joint occupation of Taiwan with Japan. The German Foreign Office showed a preference for Zhoushan Island in the Hangzhou (Hangchow) Bay, at the estuary of the Qiantang River. Located not far to the south of Shanghai, a German annexation of Zhoushan would have met with strong opposition from Great Britain; the more so if the German Foreign Office had it right that Zhoushan 'would soon supersede the river port, Shanghai, which is difficult to access'.⁹ The German envoy in Beijing, Edmund Friedrich Gustav von Heyking, recommended the Penghu Islands (which in 1895 became Japanese) near Taiwan or the Bay of Jiaozhou and its harbour Qingdao (Tsingtao, Tsingtau). The latter was also the location that Tirpitz had in mind when he briefly served as Commander of the German East Asia Squadron in 1896. Among the points in its favour, he mentioned that its hinterland, Shandong, as others also were to point out, was rich in coals and iron ore, promising good economic prospects. Tirpitz had yet another motive: the presence of the German missionaries in the province and the good impression a German presence in their vicinity would make at home on the Roman Catholic Germans, whose votes Tirpitz sought for his plans to expand the German navy (Esherick 1987: 128).

In the discussion about where the Germans should settle, the assessments of the German explorer and geologist Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen figured prominently. Richthofen, who had sailed with the Prussian naval expedition of Count Eulenburg, made a detailed survey between 1868 and 1872 of the natural resources of China and recorded its geography. Richthofen, one of those people dreaming of the opening up of China to Western commerce and civilisation, the country criss-crossed with railways and its

8 Wilhelm II to Hohenlohe 7-11-1894 (cited in Zachmann 2005: 61-2).

9 Ibid.; Marschall to Hatzfeldt 1-2-1895 (www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/gerchin.htm).

natural resources exploited by foreigners, evidently did want to contribute his might and did not shy away from suggesting places along the Chinese coast best suited for a German naval and coaling station.¹⁰ In 1869 he had drawn Bismarck's attention to the Island of Zhoushan as the ideal location for such a station. He praised the island for having the best harbour along the whole Chinese coast. Located in the Yangtze Delta, it formed 'the key to whole of central and northern China', and could dominate the entrance to northern China and Japan.¹¹ With the same zeal, Richthofen, though he had never been there, recommended the Bay of Jiaozhou (Weicker 1908: 31). In the second volume of his extensive report about his travels through China, published in 1882, he described it as the biggest and best sheltered seaport in northern China. Jiaozhou Bay, he wrote, offered an anchorage completely sheltered from the winds (a British naval expert who visited the place in 1898 saw matters differently, pointing out that a breakwater would have to be built to protect it from the easterly seas). As the terminus of a railway network in north China, the Bay of Jiaozhou could serve as an excellent starting point for an economic incursion into China. Its connections with the hinterland were superb. Two mountain ranges hampered any transport inland from other nearby ports, while the Jiaozhou harbour was located at a lowland pass in between these mountains. An additional advantage, which he mentioned, were the nearby rich coalfields of Shandong, to which a railway could be built without any great trouble or costs (Richthofen 1882-1911 II: 262-6; Beresford 1899: 81). Politically, it was a plus that Jiaozhou Bay was located far away from the British sphere of influence, which Zhoushan was not.¹² At the same time, this made it second-rate, the more so because the waters were too shallow for the biggest ships, and there were doubts about the possibility of defending a naval base effectively (Weicker 1908: 31).

Germany had expected – as had France and Russia – to gain some reward for its intervention on behalf of China after the Sino-Japanese War in relation to the right to issue a loan to China or another concession. The reward it suggested, permission to build a naval base along China's coast, was too great for China to grant. In October 1895 Beijing only agreed to allow Germany to have two foreign settlements of its own, one in Tianjin and one in Hankou. Berlin had not pressed the matter, Wilhelm II would write, out of

10 Richthofen to his parents (cited in Knopp 2011: 146).

11 Richthofen to Bismarck 2-1-1869 (cited in Gründer 1999: 59-61).

12 Before making a final decision Tirpitz sent George Franzius, director of the port of Kiel and a hydraulic engineer, to China in early 1897. Franzius also mentioned Zhoushan as the best location for a German base. Other places he recommended were Xiamen and nearby Samsa Bay, north of Fuzhou, both already treaty ports (Weicker 1908: 30).

'excessive modesty'.¹³ Contrary to these words, Berlin had applying military force in mind. In the autumn of 1896 the Kaiser ordered naval command to plan, in secret, for the occupation of the Bay of Jiaozhou (Nuhn 2002: 132). The German legation in Beijing also received its instructions and, months in advance, had already drafted a proclamation in Chinese to be posted after a German landing (Matzat 1985: 6).

The bay was close to the Russian sphere of influence. Before he could proceed, Wilhelm II wanted to make sure that Russia, which used the waters in winter as an anchorage place for its warships, would not object. In August 1897 he visited St Petersburg. One of his aims was to sound out how Russia would react should Germany establish a coaling station in north China. He assured Nicholas II that German warships would not enter the Bay of Jiaozhou without prior approval by the Russian naval authorities, and gained the impression, or maybe convinced himself, that Russia would not raise objections.¹⁴

The opportunity to act presented itself in November 1897. Earlier, in October 1895, the German minister in Beijing had already warned the Chinese government that if Christians were not given better protection Berlin would take on this task itself (Esherick 1987: 113). Actions matched these words when, on 1 November 1897, All Saints' Day, two German Catholic missionaries from the vicariate that Wilhelm II had taken under his protectorship were hacked to death in West Shandong. For reasons of domestic as well as foreign politics the unrest in Shandong came at a convenient moment for Berlin. The murder of the two missionaries provided Wilhelm II with the justification needed and offered an opportunity to bully China into giving Germany the bunkering station it aspired to. Not only had two German citizens been killed but their slaying was an insult to the Emperor in his role as protector of the Shandong mission. At home the incident could be used as yet an additional argument for expanding Germany's naval strength. Incidents like that in China, and another one in Haiti that took place around the same time, in which two German warships had appeared before Port-au-Prince to demand the release of a German trader and an indemnity for his arrest, served to demonstrate that Germany needed a strong navy to protect its overseas commerce and its nationals living in faraway parts of the world. Wilhelm II had yet another reason to act. He

13 Wilhelm II to Bülow 7-11-1897 (E.T.S. Dugdale, German Diplomatic Documents, Ch. III, The Growing Antagonism, 1898-1910; www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/dugdale/Kiao-Chou.htm).

14 Bülow to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11-8-1897 (E.T.S. Dugdale, German Diplomatic Documents, Ch. III, The Growing Antagonism, 1898-1910; www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/dugdale/Kiao-Chou.htm).

could show his Catholic subjects – who in Bismarck's days had suffered under the so-called *Kulturkampf* for Cultural Confrontation directed against them – 'once again' that he cared for them as much as he did for the rest of the nation.¹⁵ National pride was also evoked. Bülow told the Reichstag in December 1897 that it was imperative that 'German missionaries and German entrepreneurs, German products, the German flag and German ships should be respected in the same way those of other Powers were'.¹⁶

Wilhelm II, who was an admirer of Kipling (Mann 1992: 509) as well as a staunch supporter of Germany's *Weltpolitik*, which because the South Pacific had become divided up meant acquiring a foothold in the Far East, did not hesitate. He treated the killing of the two German missionaries as a personal affront. Haste was made. Germany, one author wrote some ten years later, acted without going 'to the trouble to stalk her prey through the usual processes of evasive diplomacy, but sprang abruptly upon it without warning and established possession by pure audacity almost before other powers realized what was happening' (Millard 1906: 210).

On 6 November, and within hours after he had read about the murders in the newspapers, Wilhelm II sent a wire to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which he emphasised that the Shandong mission was under his protection and that vengeance was in order, if not harsh retribution. The East Asia Squadron (now renamed the East Asia Cruisers Division) should steam to Jiaozhou Bay immediately, occupy the town there and threaten China with the most severe retaliation if it refused to pay a large sum in compensation and punish the people responsible.¹⁷ Following a reply from the Ministry the following day, Wilhelm II, with similar speed, that same day cabled the Commander of the German East Asia Cruiser Division in Shanghai, Rear Admiral Otto von Diederichs, with orders to steam north. Wilhelm II had made up his mind, and could only have been fortified in his opinion that he had taken the right decision by Anzer, who happened to be in Berlin. When he met the Kaiser a few days later, Anzer told him that occupying the Bay of Jiaozhou was 'the last chance for Germany to get a possession anywhere in Asia', adding that it was good for restoring German prestige and that Shandong had a future which would be 'greater and more meaningful than Shanghai is today' (Esherick 1987: 128).

In his enthusiasm, Wilhelm II had overlooked one possible obstacle: Russia. Reminded to do so by the German Chancellor, Hohenlohe, who

15 Wilhelm II to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 6-11-1897 (cited in Gründer 166-7).

16 Germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=1371 (accessed 10-10-2010).

17 Wilhelm II to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 6-11-1897 (cited in Gründer 166-7).

preferred a political solution (Gottschall 2003: 156), he informed Nicholas II of the intention to send a squadron to the Bay of Jiaozhou; also stressing that he was 'under the obligation to [the] Catholic party in Germany to show that their missions are really safe under my protection' (Esherick 1987: 130). He contacted the Tsar reluctantly: 'However humiliating it may be for the German Empire to be obliged almost to obtain permission in St. Petersburg ... I did nevertheless not hesitate a moment in taking this step for the good of my country', he complained.¹⁸ When the response of Nicholas II was that he did not 'approve or disapprove', Wilhelm II thought he could proceed.¹⁹ On 7 November he instructed Diederichs (who would receive this order in Shanghai on 8 November) to sail to the bay and demand 'complete satisfaction'.²⁰ It was also the day the Chinese government learned what had happened in Shandong from the German minister. They expected the worst, assuming that the killing of the missionaries was the pretext Germany was waiting for (Esherick 1987: 129).

As is evident from the haste he made, Wilhelm II wanted to show the world what Germany was worth:

I am determined to abandon our hyper prudent police, which all over East Asia is seen as weak, and with all rigour and when necessary with the most brute inconsideration to show the Chinese that the German Emperor does not stand for any nonsense and that it is a bad thing to have him as an enemy.²¹

He also had no doubts about how the expedition would be viewed and that the Germans were out to conquer territory:

Hundreds of German merchants will rejoice at the realisation that the German Empire has at last won a firm footing in Asia. Hundreds of thousands of Chinamen will tremble when they feel the iron fist of the German Empire heavy on their necks, and the whole German people will be glad that their Government has done a manly act.²²

18 Wilhelm II to Bülow 7-11-1897 (E.T.S. Dugdale, German Diplomatic Documents, Ch. III, The Growing Antagonism, 1898-1910; www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/dugdale/Kiao-Chou.htm).

19 Ibid.

20 Wilhelm II to Diederichs 7-11-1897 (cited in Nuhn 2002: 132).

21 Wilhelm II to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 6-11-1897 (See Gründer 166-7).

22 Wilhelm II to Bülow 7-11-1897 (E.T.S. Dugdale, German Diplomatic Documents, Ch. III, The Growing Antagonism, 1898-1910; www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/dugdale/Kiao-Chou.htm).

Diederichs (who was to have a mountain in the bay named after him) must have been only too happy to comply. He himself, as he would write to his wife, pleaded with all his 'might' in favour of Jiaozhou Bay being a suitable place for a German base when he was Chief of Staff of the German navy.²³ He was also among those naval officers with a firm belief in naval retaliation, and, being informed about the murder of the missionaries on the same day as Wilhelm II, had himself suggested to his superiors in Berlin that he be allowed to sail to the Bay of Jiaozhou (Gottschall 2003: 153-7). The three warships of the East Asia Cruiser Division left Shanghai on 10 November and arrived at the bay three days later. The following morning troops went ashore. Beijing, realising that its military was too weak, refused to put up a fight (Esherick 1987: 129). So, without meeting any resistance, the Germans marched through Qingdao to the Chinese military camp to the strains of Prussian marching music; there they discovered Krupp field guns (Nuhn 2002: 276). The Chinese commanding officer, Chang, was handed a proclamation written in Chinese informing him that Jiaozhou Bay had been occupied to serve as a guarantee that China would comply with the demands Germany was to make to avenge the killing of the two missionaries. The same proclamation was posted in Qingdao. In it the Triple Intervention of 1895 was mentioned to convince the Chinese that Germany had always been a good friend of China and that the occupation was not a hostile act against China. On the contrary, it would only make it easier to foster friendly relations between the two nations. The Chinese were further informed that the German authorities would protect peaceable Chinese, but would act with severity against anybody who broke the law or resisted German rule (Weicker 1908: 36). In his official report Diederichs described Chang as a 'helpless weakling'. He found it hard to treat him in a harsh manner, but, he wrote, remembering the fate of the two missionaries and the 'unscrupulous way other nations, namely the English for example in the opium question', had behaved made him set aside his reservations (Nuhn 2002: 275). In the afternoon, once the German troops had secured their position, Diederichs addressed his men, expressing the hope that 'German rule and culture' might be there to stay (*ibid.*: 276). Subsequently, the German flag was hoisted, with 'three hurrahs for his Majesty the Emperor' (Weicker 1908: 34).

Further action had to be delayed. Much to his dismay, Diederichs – who wanted to press on²⁴ – was informed by telegram that the occupation had

23 Diederichs to his wife 15-11-1897 (Knoll and Hiery 2010: 52).

24 *Ibid.*

Figure 20 German Qingdao



Source: KITLV 110376

to be postponed. To Wilhelm II's surprise Russia protested. The Kaiser had put too much faith in emperors' tête-à-têtes and private correspondence. Russia considered Jiaozhou Bay as falling within its sphere of influence. Within days after Wilhelm II had ordered the squadron to sail, the new Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count M.N. Muraviev, informed the German Chargé d'Affaires in St Petersburg that Russia had a special claim to the Bay. In 1895 the Chinese government would have promised Russia that when Qingdao had to be turned over to a foreign nation, it would be offered to Russia first. St Petersburg threatened to direct Russian warships to the Bay of Jiaozhou 'the moment any German ship entered it'. To add yet more weight to the Russian protest Muraviev hinted that a situation might emerge in which both Great Britain and France would also send warships to the Bay. The Russian reaction was reason enough for Hohenlohe to suggest improving relations with Great Britain and gain a token of goodwill from London, 'if only in connection with Samoa'. He wanted Muraviev's belief in bad Anglo-German relations to be 'shaken a little'. The Russian message had clearly upset him. Hohenlohe feared the consequences should Wilhelm II persist. He did not preclude that the German squadron would have to leave the Bay of Jiaozhou, and might have to go in search of another

spot along China's coast more to the south, closer to the British sphere of influence.²⁵

Russia withdrew its reservations, for reasons that would soon become clear, and Germany could proceed. German troops occupied Qingdao and then moved further inland. In December Germany announced that it intended to turn Qingdao, at that moment no more than a small fishing village, into a fortified coaling station. To show that he meant business, Wilhelm II dispatched his brother Prince Heinrich of Prussia (who would soon have a mountain in Shandong named after him) as commander of a special navy squadron from Kiel to north China in December 1897. Accompanying the squadron were extra troops, about a thousand marines, and artillery units, plus a geologist charged with investigating the mining prospects on the Peninsula. Seeing them off, Wilhelm II impressed upon the marines that their task was a logical continuation of what his grandfather and Bismarck had started, and what his father 'had accomplished with the sword on the battlefield'. Trade abroad, he also said, could only prosper when one felt secure under the protection of the power of the state, and power of the state meant power at sea. Those who tried to deny Germany its rights should be confronted with an 'armoured fist' (Weicker 1908: 39-40). Heinrich, for his part, was also partial to rhetoric. In a toast to his brother he promised, as newspapers all over the world reported, to preach 'the gospel of Your Majesty's hallowed Person' to those who wanted to listen to it and also to those who refused to do so. The fact that he took the risk of sending his only brother, Wilhelm II stated in the Reichstag, showed how highly he valued the honour of the Empire. Unfortunately, the journey did not proceed as splendidly as the words promised. Shortly after sailing, Heinrich's flag-ship, the *Deutschland*, ran aground. She was refloated and eventually made it to Chinese waters, where her engines broke down. This time Heinrich had to change ships and board one of the accompanying battle cruisers. His arrival in Shanghai in April was seized upon by the German community in town as a way of demonstrating what they were worth. Years later years people would remember how Heinrich was fêted in the ballroom of Club Concordia (Darwent 1905: 166). He must have been less pleased, however, with the playing of the German and French national

25 Baron von Rotenham to Wilhelm II 10-11-1897; Hohenlohe to Hatzfeldt 13-11-1897, 16-11-1897; Muravieff to Ostensacken 13-11-1897, Bülow to Hatzfeldt 8-1-1898 (E.T.S. Dugdale, German Diplomatic Documents, Ch. III, The Growing Antagonism, 1898-1910; www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/dugdale/Kiao-Chou.htm).

anthems when he visited the Roman Catholic bishop in Beijing (Doumer 1905: 222).

The military intervention earned Wilhelm II the praise of the Pope and many other Westerners in China. Even the British minister in Beijing, Claude Maxwell MacDonald, hailed the extra protection that the German action would provide foreigners: 'It seems hopeless to expect the Chinese to do their duty in protecting missionaries and discouraging anti-foreign movements unless they are forced thereto by some measures as the Germans have taken'.²⁶

China replaced the Governor of Shandong and other local officials and punished those said to be responsible for the murder of the missionaries; it paid an indemnity and promised to build a number of cathedrals (Esherick 1987: 131). However, it still lost the Bay of Jiaozhou. In view of the strategic location of the Bohai Sea, Berlin rejected an offer by Beijing to grant Germany a port more to the south, presenting the refusal as a friendly gesture towards Great Britain.²⁷ On 6 March 1898 Germany leased the region for ninety-nine years; though leasing might not be the appropriate word as in the contract – in contrast to the Anglo-Chinese agreement relating to Burma of February the previous year – the word rent was not mentioned. In the introduction to the Lease Agreement it was stated that, after the mission incidents in Shandong had been resolved, the Chinese government considered it 'advisable to give a special proof of their appreciation of the friendship shown to them by Germany'. Article one mentioned the legitimate German desire to have a place in the East Asian waters where German ships could be repaired and fitted out, just as other powers had.²⁸ London protested, fearing (not without reason) that Russia and France might act the same way Germany had done. Bülow, from his side, assured the British ambassador, Frank Lascelles, a number of times that Berlin had been careful to select a spot outside the British sphere of influence. Wilhelm II, pleased with the occupation of the Bay of Jiaozhou, commissioned the German painter Carl Wuttke to make a painting of the Bay and Qingdao for his City Palace in Berlin (Titus 2012: 132).

26 MacDonald to Salisbury 1-12-1897 (cited in Esherick 1987: 134).

27 Bülow to Heyking 17-12-1897, Hatzfeldt to German Foreign Office 29-3-1898 (E.T.S. Dugdale, German Diplomatic Documents, Ch. III, The Growing Antagonism, 1898-1910; www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/dugdale/Kiao-Chou.htm).

28 Convention between the German Empire and China respecting the lease of Kiai-chau (*Pachtvertrag zwischen China und dem Deutschen Reich*) of 6-3-1898. (www.jstor.org/stable/2212069, accessed 22-11-2010).

The Bay of Jiaozhou, an area of some 550 square miles, became a *Pachtgebiet*, though Germans continued to speak about a *Schutzgebiet*. In a wider area in Shandong, German troops were allowed to patrol a semi-circle of 50 kilometres inland from the coast (measured at high tide); an agreement, Weicker (1908: 98) suggests, that was intended to keep out 'robbers and other undesirable rabble'. China, though reserving its rights to sovereignty, would refrain from any measure or regulation regarding the zone without German approval. Its hinterland, the province of Shandong, became a German *Interessengebiet* (Gründer 1999: 109). Germany gained the right to construct two railways from Qingdao to Jinan (Tsinan), the capital of Shandong, only one of which – with a branch line to Poshan – would actually be built. A naval officer became Governor. On the express request of Tirpitz the German concession was administered by his Imperial Navy Office, and not as was the case with the other German protectorates by the colonial department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Germany would only establish a Colonial Office in 1907). This was a decision that, not unexpectedly, led to frictions with and obstructions by officials of that ministry. The reason was that Tirpitz had a poor opinion of the colonial administrators appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and, as he wrote in his memoirs, the stakes of the navy were too high to leave matters in Jiaozhou Bay to such people (Gründer 1999: 173-5; Nuhn 2002: 135).

Jiaozhou also provided the Germans with a convenient base from which to organise punitive actions when their incursions inland to prepare for their railway and mining projects met with resistance by the population. Troops could also be deployed when the missionaries and their Chinese converts in other parts of the Peninsula needed or asked for military assistance. In Germany Tirpitz was well aware of what was happening and reined in the German action in Shandong. In June 1899 he warned the German Governor of Jiaozhou Bay, Captain Otto Jäschke, that the missionaries formed a 'serious danger' to the German economic interests and that he should beware of becoming a 'blind tool' of them.²⁹ For Tirpitz and the German navy commercial considerations had priority. Unrest occasioned by the missionaries did not fit into their plans. They intended to turn the newly won territory into more than just a naval base. The Bay of Jiaozhou was to become a model colony and a centre of international trade (Graichen and Gründer 2005: 225; Steinmetz 2007: 473-8). In line with this, Qingdao was declared a *Freihafen*, a free port, on 2 September 1898. The navy – which decided on the matter – was sensitive to the commercial drawbacks an

29 Tirpitz to Jäschke 27-6-1899 (cited in Esherick 1987: 204-5).

alternative policy might have. In August 1900 the Imperial Navy Office pointed out to Wilhelm II that other parts of China, and especially the Yangtze Valley, were of much greater importance to German commerce and that German trade would be best served by an Open Door policy in China.³⁰

Port Arthur

When Germany invaded Shandong Russia had already moved forward in Manchuria. Russia's expansion being essentially one overland, railways played an important role. If the Trans-Caspian Railway had caused much anxiety among the British in Central Asia, the Trans-Siberian Railway, which was to connect European Russia with Vladivostok, did the same in north Asia. The line was both the symbol and the instrument of further Russian expansion eastwards at the end of the nineteenth century. Construction was zealously promoted by the influential statesman Count Sergei Witte, who had started his professional career as a railway manager. He saw railroads, as it was phrased in a document of his Ministry of Finance, as a means of 'expansion of the natural sphere of Russian political and commercial influence in the countries of the east' (Wcislo 2011: 161).

During the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) Russia had been too weak militarily to come to the assistance of China in repulsing the Japanese invasion. Aware of this, still in 1895 St Petersburg decided to speed up the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Because of the difficulty of the terrain, the best way to proceed was to construct part of the railway in Chinese Inner Manchuria and not in Russian Outer Manchuria; an option Witte may well have considered earlier, not out of strategic considerations, but for reasons of economy (*ibid.*: 176-7). Such a route had as an additional advantage that this would reduce the track to be laid by half. Beijing agreed. China's approval was facilitated by St Petersburg holding out a defensive pact against Japan, arguing that it could only effectively take on such an obligation when there was a railway line along which it could move its army to the front. The Russian promise was put on paper during the visit to Moscow by the official representative of China, Li Hongzhang (Li Hung-chang), for the coronation of Nicholas II. During his stay in Moscow, he and the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky, signed a secret Sino-Russian Treaty on 3 June (or 22 May according to the Russian calendar) 1896. However, the status of this treat, also in view of later developments,

30 Imperial Navy Office to Wilhelm II 20-8-1900 (in: Gründer 1999: 169-70).

remained unclear. The agreement, also known as the Li-Lobanov Treaty, not only stipulated the engagement of Chinese military forces if Russian territory in East Asia was attacked (which China was hardly capable of doing), and the engagement of Russian troops in case China or Korea was invaded. It also stressed the importance of constructing a railway line to facilitate the Russian army reaching the theatre of war.³¹ In September 1896, in the Chinese Eastern Railway Convention (adjusted in July 1898), China gave an 80-year concession to the recently established Russo-Chinese Bank, which had to establish a Chinese Eastern Railway Company for this purpose in which only Chinese and Russian nationals could hold shares. In theory, the company would be under joint Russo-Chinese management, with the president being appointed by China. The railway line would not only allow for a much greater economic presence of Russia in Manchuria, but also for a military one. The transportation of troops, weaponry and ammunition along the line could be a threat to China, but it could also be to its advantage in facing Japanese aggression. In July 1897 construction of this Chinese Eastern Railway (and a telegraph line) by the company of the same name commenced. The project alarmed not only the Japanese (though the business community immediately recognised the opportunities for trade with Manchuria) but also the British. One British politician foresaw that completion of the railway would 'mark the turning point in the history of Central Asia'.³² The military significance of the Trans-Siberian Railway was not lost on Bülow either. In 1898 he speculated that maybe ten years from then, with the railway and 'Russian war preparations on the Indian frontier' completed, a war between the Dual Alliance and Great Britain might become a reality.³³

At the end of 1897, with the presence of German soldiers on Chinese soil, the grabbing of land started. Events happened in quick succession. In December 1897, a few weeks after the German punitive expedition against Qingdao, a Russian naval squadron of five warships sailed from Vladivostok to Dalianwan on the east side of the Liaodong Peninsula in South Manchuria. They subsequently sailed on to Port Arthur (named by Captain William C. Arthur in 1856 during the Second Opium War), the harbour that in 1895 St Petersburg had denied Japan. Witte had been against

31 An English translation of the treaty is included in *Manchuria* 1921: 30-2.

32 Ashmead-Bartlett in House of Commons 1-3-1898 (hansard.millbanksystem.com/commons/1898/mar/01/independence-of-chinese-territory).

33 Bülow to Hatzfeldt 30-3-1898 (E.T.S. Dugdale, *German Diplomatic Documents*, Ch. III, *The Growing Antagonism, 1898-1910*; www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/dugdale/Kiao-Chou.htm).

this action. He feared a confrontation with Japan and resistance by the local population when the Chinese Eastern Railway had to be connected with Port Arthur, but his objections were ignored (Wcislo 2011: 182). Witte, an advocate of a peaceful, economic advance into the Far East, was losing ground. For years after he had become Minister of Finance he had been a dominant force in domestic politics. His relations with Alexander III resembled those of Bismarck – whom he admired (*ibid.*: 171-2) – with Wilhelm I. After the Tsar's death in October 1894, however, he was unable to build a similar rapport with Nicholas II. A group of, what the British ambassador in St Petersburg called, 'military chauvinists' came to the fore, favouring territorial expansion.³⁴ The seizure of Port Arthur also meant that Witte could no longer withhold money for plans developed earlier by Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, a cousin of the Tsar, to strengthen the Russian fleet in the Pacific (Wcislo 2011: 181-2).

Ostensibly, the reason for the presence of the Russian squadron at Port Arthur was to look for an ice-free port where its warships – with permission of the Chinese government – could anchor during winter. Troops were landed and the Russian flag was run up. On 23 December St Petersburg assured Great Britain – the only power to protest (Temple 1902: 435) – that the occupation was only temporary. A few days later, on 25 December, the squadron was sighted by chance by the British Admiral Buller. On his way to Incheon, he ordered two cruisers to keep a close watch over the Russian warships (Berryman 2002: 7-8).

Aiming at Port Arthur was a provocative gesture, one that led to anxiety in Great Britain on a similar scale to what the country had experienced at the time of the Pamir incident and during the conflict with France over Thailand. Not so long before, Curzon (1896: 213) had pointed out that a 'Russian port and fleet in the Gulf of Pechili would, in time of war, constitute as formidable a danger to British shipping in the Yellow Sea as they would to the metropolitan province and the capital of China'. By mid-January Anglo-Russian relations had reached a low. Great Britain, Russia and France were quarrelling over the third Chinese loan (with British politicians still angry over what had happened with the first loan in 1895), while the British Admiralty had directed warships to Korea to counter a Russian move to acquire a coaling station on Deer Island.

St Petersburg considered Port Arthur and Dalianwan to fall within the Russian sphere of influence. Muraviev, who had initiated the taking of Port Arthur, left no doubt about this (Wcislo 2011: 182). On 12 January 1898 he

34 Scott to Salisbury 11-1-1900 (PRO FO 539 81).

warned the British ambassador in St Petersburg, Nicolas Roderick O'Connor, that the presence of the British warships at Port Arthur was seen by St Petersburg 'as so unfriendly as to set afloat rumours of war with Great Britain'.³⁵ Before the month was over, three more protests followed. When the last one was received on 26 January, the two warships – which, leaving aside the matter of spheres of influence, the British had every right to send there – had already sailed away. St Petersburg and London had different stories about the reason why. St Petersburg made good use of the incident. In Beijing and elsewhere, it presented what had happened as a victory: the British warships had left because of Russian objections. Newspapers published the Russian version. The story, O'Connor reported home, had had a 'most injurious effect'.³⁶ In London the British government tried in vain to convince its critics that the Russian version was incorrect. Nothing out of the ordinary had happened. The departure of the ships from Port Arthur had nothing to do with the Russian protests. It had already been decided upon by the navy well in advance. The Admiralty had given the orders, not the government, nor had it been asked by the government to do so. The explanation did not prevent Beresford, not afraid of using big words, from calling the sailing away of the British warships 'one of the most humiliating things' that had ever happened to the British Empire.³⁷ Later, British authors also wrote about the 'retreat of the British fleet' (Putnam Weale 1908: 251).

Russia's move to gain a naval base in Port Arthur was the beginning of what one Member of the British Parliament described as a 'great crisis'.³⁸ In Europe many wars were thought possible; between Russia and Japan, between Russia and Great Britain, and, although less likely, between Russia and China. When matters had settled down, people in Great Britain debated whether skilful diplomacy by the government had prevented an armed confrontation with Russia, which the Conservative Leader in the House of Commons, Balfour, feared would have involved 'the whole globe in the horrors of war', or that London had bowed to Russian power politics.³⁹

35 Letter by O'Connor cited by Harcourt in House of Commons 29-4-1898 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1898/apr/29/class-ii).

36 Quoted by Dilke and Beresford in House of Commons 29-4-1898 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1898/apr/29/class-ii).

37 Beresford in House of Commons 29-4-1898 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1898/apr/29/class-ii).

38 George Wyndham in House of Commons 28-4-1898 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1898/apr/29/class-ii).

39 Balfour in House of Commons 29-4-1898 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1898/apr/29/class-ii).

The Chinese government was powerless to resist Russia claiming Port Arthur, hoping in vain that London might be able to deter St Petersburg from pressing on; for instance, by pledging that Great Britain did not – contrary to what Nicholas II was thought to believe – have its own plans with Manchuria.⁴⁰ London, trying to convince St Petersburg that taking Port Arthur would signify the beginning of the dismemberment of China, made some efforts, offering feeble alternatives to a Russian expansion on the Liaodong Peninsula; but St Petersburg was not responsive. On 27 (or 15) March 1898 Russia was granted a twenty-five-year lease on Port Arthur and the Bay and Port of Dalian, an area of about 220 square miles. In the lease Dalian was declared an open port but an exception was made for Port Arthur (and one inner bay of Dalian). Port Arthur was to be a naval base open only to Russian and Chinese ships and would 'be considered as a closed port to war-ships and merchant vessels of all other States'.⁴¹ Russia made this exception for Port Arthur because, St Petersburg claimed, it needed a naval base to protect its commercial fleet in the Pacific.

The convention, as hypocritical as other international treaties enforced upon a weak country were and would be, spoke of the desire to strengthen still further the friendly relations between the two countries and mentioned as the rationale of the lease that Russia needed 'a secure base' for its navy in the northern Chinese waters; with enough land 'as is necessary to secure the proper defence of this area'.⁴² The rest of the Liaodong Peninsula to the north of the Guandong Leased Territory became a neutral zone, which Chinese soldiers were only allowed to enter with Russian permission. It was closed to concessions to other states. Japan did not protest, using the pretext that the occupation of Port Arthur was only 'of a qualified and temporary nature'.⁴³ Russian troops took over the buildings and fortifications the Japanese had been forced to evacuate a few years earlier.

In a separate statement, St Petersburg, announcing the lease, spoke about the 'existing friendly relations' between China and Russia, and hailed Dalianwan (which, in February, Salisbury had called 'practically worthless'⁴⁴) as a new centre in the Pacific for Chinese and Russian commerce and industry. The Trans-Siberian Railway was presented as connecting the 'far borders of the two

40 Harcourt in House of Commons 29-4-1898 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1898/apr/29/class-ii).

41 Convention for the lease of the Liaotung Peninsula, Art. VI (Manchuria 1921: 43).

42 Convention for the lease of the Liaotung Peninsula, Art. I, II (Manchuria 1921: 42).

43 Paper submitted by the Japanese Minister to the British Minister of Foreign Affairs 29-1-1901 (PRO FO 538).

44 Salisbury in House of Lords 8-2-1898 (hansard.millbanksystem.com/lords/1898/feb/08/the-queens-speech-reported-by-the-lord-chancellor).

continents of the Old World'. The 'profound historic meaning' of the agreement for Russia was also noted in the statement (Krahmer 1899: 20). Finally, the Russian Empire had its long desired ice-free port on the shore of the northern Pacific.⁴⁵ Nicholas II did it all over again. In a telegram to the Chinese Emperor, he called attention to the 'great historical meaning' of the agreement, which he saw as a 'confirmation of the friendly bond which had already existed for centuries' between Russia and China. In his reply, the Chinese Emperor showed himself to be extraordinarily pleased with the friendly telegram and also referred to the 'over 200 years of hearty friendship' between the two empires (Krahmer 1899: 21). Similarly soothing words were spoken by the Commander of the Russian Pacific Squadron at the end of March after the Russians had entered Port Arthur and Chinese troops had withdrawn. Russia's 'only' aim was to transform the Peninsula into a strong army and naval base for the protection of China (*ibid.*: 24). To show that China still held the sovereign rights over the territory, the Russian and Chinese flags were flown side by side.

The Guandong Leased Territory gave Russia command over the Bohai Sea and thus over the road to Beijing, but still much work had to be done to turn Port Arthur into a strong naval base. The deep water port was small, while the surrounding area was muddy and almost fell dry at low tide. Such conditions necessitated the building of a second port, Dalian (Dalny, Dairen, Tairen), for commercial shipping. Within a few years the Russians succeeded in transforming the little village of Dalian into 'one of the finest ports in the whole region of the Far East' (Lawton 1912: 1274). Dalian had the advantage over the nearby treaty port of Yingkou (Yinkow, Newchwang, Niu-Chwang, Niuzhuang, Niuchuang) on the Liaodong Peninsula that it was ice-free, which Yingkou was not.

The taking of Port Arthur earned the Tsar the praise of the German Kaiser. In a letter to Nicholas II, dated 4 January 1898, Wilhelm II enclosed a sketch that he had drawn 'under the blaze of the lights of the Xmas trees', 'showing the symbolising figures of Russia and Germany as sentinels at the Yellow Sea for the proclaiming of the Gospel of Truth and Light in the East'. Two months later, on 28 March, the Kaiser again referred to Germany and Russia as 'a good pair of sentinels ... who will be duly respected especially by the Yellow Ones', complementing the Tsar for having become 'morally speaking, the Master of Peking!' (Letters 1920: 41, 43-4).

45 In the winter of 1898-99 Russian warships had to divert to Nagasaki because the waters at Port Arthur were partly frozen over (Caraway n.d.: Ch.29, p.5). Within about ten years powerful icebreakers would solve the problem, also keeping open the port of Vladivostok in winter (Lawton 1912: 434).

