

Germany and the Boxer Uprising in China

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At the end of 1890's, the situation of China was bad. Foreign powers took advantage from China's weakness, seized various ports in China and declared entire provinces their "spheres of influence".¹ The country was tormented by natural catastrophes and general unrest. At the Imperial court in Beijing a bitter struggle between reformists and reactionaries took place, and the latter party prevailed. The Guangxu Emperor was arrested by the Empress Dowager Cixi,² who became regent and ruled in his name. The victorious reactionary clique, represented by Manchu aristocrats and led by Prince Duan (1856–1922), was hostile to foreign influence. On 24 January 1900, Prince Duan reached his long-term goal and secured appointment of his son Pujun (1886–1929) heir apparent.

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² In fact, Cixi (1835–1908) was neither an Empress nor a dowager. She was a concubine of Emperor Xianfeng (ruled 1850–1861) and mother of his only son and successor, Emperor Tongzhi (ruled 1861–1875). Even after Tongzhi's death she maintained her power and secured the succession of the Guangxu Emperor.

German interests in China were significant. In 1899, there were 115 German companies and 1,134 Germans present in China, out of total 933 foreign firms and 17,193 foreigners settled in the Middle Kingdom.³ The core of German interests in China lay in the province of Shandong. Since late 1897 the Germans occupied the Jiaozhou Bay and built a new port Qingdao which became their naval base; they turned the province into their sphere of influence; and exerted on China excessive economic rights, which they ruthlessly started to exploit. At the outbreak of the Boxer crisis, German interests were protected by the 3rd Battalion of marine infantry, based in Qingdao and led by Major Johannes Christ. German cruiser squadron in Far Eastern waters was commanded by Vice Admiral Felix von Bendemann. Since May 12, 1899, Germany was represented in China by Clemens von Ketteler. He was not liked by his colleagues. Unlike some of them, von Ketteler was not only a professional diplomat, but he was experienced in Chinese matters as well. In fact, *“he considered himself the only China expert among the otherwise inexperienced crowd”*.⁴ In 1880's, Ketteler had acted as a translator at German consulates in China and as a chargé d'affaires in Beijing. Later he became German minister to the United States (1892–1896) and Mexico (1896–1899). Despite such a background, Ketteler's mission to the Chinese court ended in a tragedy.

The province of Shandong was of the most stricken parts of China. Increasing German activities in Shandong only intensified the unrest among its inhabitants and preoccupied provincial officials, who failed to solve other problems. In such a milieu of unrest and despair, a dangerous secret society emerged. In the West, its members are known as “Boxers”. The origins and the affiliations of the movement are a matter of controversy. The movement originally called itself *Yihequan*, or “Righteous and Harmonious Fists”, hence the nickname “Boxers”. Sometimes in 1898 or in 1899 it changed the name to *Yihetuan*, or “Righ-

³ H. B. MORSE, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire. Vol. II, The Period of Submission, 1861–1893*, London – Bombay – Calcutta 1918, footnote 172 on p. 326.

⁴ L. XIANG, *The Origins of the Boxer War. A Multinational Study*, London – New York 2003, p. 134.

teous and Harmonious Militia". The Boxers were practising magical rites, suppressing banditry, harassing local Christians, and chanting "Support the Qing, destroy the foreigner". It is hard to determine the sincerity of such statements. But the Yihetuan movement as such wasn't openly anti-Manchu.

Since early spring 1899, Shandong was administered by a conservative Manchu named Yuxian. The governor failed to suppress the "Boxer" movement, and he certainly felt sympathy towards their manifested goal of wiping out the foreigners. Using a sugar-and-a-whip policy, Yuxian suppressed some of less trustworthy "Boxer" leaders and protected the rest of the Yihetuan movement from his own zealous subordinates. Encouraged by the ambivalent attitude of the authorities towards the movement, the "Boxer" movement gained strength and started causing much havoc.

Foreign diplomats⁵ didn't fail to notice Yuxian's malign influence. On 6 December 1899, due to their pressure, Yuxian was recalled to Beijing "on consultations". He was replaced by an extremely able young general Yuan Shikai, who was of Han Chinese origin. "The first thing Yuan did was to test the Boxers invulnerability." The "Boxers" naturally failed Yuan's test. The restoration of order in Shandong didn't take part immediately. On December 31, 1899, only after Yuan's arrival to the province, British missionary Brooks was slain. But Yuan tried to suppress the Yihetuan movement mercilessly. His efforts were somewhat hindered by the central government which was meanwhile consulting the matter with Yuxian.⁶ In middle March 1900, the court seemingly finally "solved" the problem of Yuxian: the Manchu dignitary was appointed governor of Shanxi,⁷ whereas Yuan Shikai became regular governor of Shandong.

⁵ In 1900, there were eleven countries represented in Beijing: Germany, Austria-Hungary, the United Kingdom, Japan, Russia, France, Italy, the United States, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain.

⁶ XIANG, pp. 117–119 and 143.

⁷ L. K. YOUNG, *British Policy in China, 1895–1902*, Oxford 1970, p. 115.

The unrest in Shandong was directly affecting German activities in the province, especially those of the Shandong Railway Company (SEG; Shantung Eisenbahn Gesellschaft). Since September 1899, the company was constructing a railroad track from Qingdao to the provincial capital of Jinan. The construction of the railway greatly upset Chinese people along the proposed track. At the turn of the years 1899–1900, the turmoil in the province reached such a degree that the construction had to be stopped until February 1900.⁸ Still, the bulk of “Boxer” forces moved from Shandong to the neighbouring province of Zhili. Zhili was not an ordinary province; it was a centre of the Sinocentric world, for it surrounded the Chinese capital of Beijing with its xenophobic court. Moreover, the most important Western targets in northern China were located there: foreign entrepreneurs in the great port of Tianjin, and numerous foreign establishments and legations in the diplomatic quarter in Beijing.

It is not easy to date the exact beginning of the Boxer Uprising; and it is certain that the very term “Boxer Uprising” is incorrect. Its members didn’t call themselves “Boxers”, and they didn’t rebel against the central government; in fact, they manifested their support of it. Chinese court was at this time extraordinarily indecisive, as far as the “Boxer” movement was concerned. Manchu reactionaries naturally didn’t trust any Chinese heterodox sect, but the “Boxers” were professing loyalty to the dynasty. The court feared that the already widespread Yihetuan movement, if persecuted, would turn against the Manchus.⁹ As was already shown in Shandong in 1898–1899, the court didn’t have enough reliable troops to maintain order at the country and defend the area against the possibility of foreign attack. The defence of Beijing

⁸ C. WENDELS, *Die Schantung Eisenbahn. Das Interesse der Finanzwelt an der deutschen Bahnlinie in Ostchina*, Siegburg 2012, pp. 45–46.

⁹ On May 27, Sir Robert Hart, Inspector-General of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service, observed: “*The Court appears to be in a dilemma: if the Boxers are not suppressed, the Legations threaten to take action – if the attempt to suppress them is made, this intensely patriotic organization will be converted into an anti-dynastic movement!*” XIANG, p. 222.

was the priority, so the order at the countryside was insufficiently protected. Violent attacks on foreign and Christian targets followed, which inevitably further enraged the foreigners.¹⁰

During the first few months of 1900, the disturbances grew to an unprecedented scale, and at the end of May most foreigners started to feel extremely threatened. At the end of May, German minister reported that “A seditious trash of Boxers, 4,000 to 5,000 men strong, permeated to the immediate vicinity of Peking, occupied the railroads from Tientsin to Peking and from Paotingfu to Peking, some 30 km far from here, expelled foreign employees and wounded some of them, and burned the stations.”¹¹ Even though some governmental troops were fighting the “Boxers”, the foreigners didn’t trust their commitment. The deteriorating situation led to a series of conferences of foreign diplomats in Beijing and, eventually to a sort of embarrassment for Ketteler himself. The first meeting of 20 May 1900 has been summoned by French Minister Pichon, who was strongly in favour of calling for legation guards.¹² At that meeting Ketteler expressed his doubt about the effectiveness of a presence of marine detachments¹³ and recommended concentration of foreign warships off Shanhaiguan.¹⁴

Other meetings of the same nature would follow. On 26 May the ministers asked the Zongli Yamen¹⁵ for permission to summon troops for protection of the legations, but the permission was denied.¹⁶ Instead, the Chinese court deployed some policemen in the legation

¹⁰ J. W. ESHERICK, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1987, pp. 284–286.

¹¹ *Die Grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914* (further only *GP*). J. LEPSIUS – A. MENDELSON-BARTHOLDY – F. THIMME (Hrsg.), Berlin 1922–1927, Bd. XVI, Berlin 1924, Nr. 4511, pp. 3–4, Bülow an Kaiser Wilhelm II, 29. 5. 1900.

¹² MORSE, pp. 194–195.

¹³ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4513, pp. 5–6, Ketteler an Bülow, 2. 6. 1900.

¹⁴ MORSE, p. 195.

¹⁵ The *Zongli Yamen* was created in 1861 in order to manage dealings with foreigners.

¹⁶ H. KEOWN-BOYD, *The Fists of Righteous Harmony. A History of the Boxer Uprising in China in the Year 1900*, London 1991, p. 48.

quarter.¹⁷ The day earlier, on 25 May, Ketteler received a telegram from State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Bernhard von Bülow.¹⁸ He was instructed not to take part on collective actions of the diplomatic corps, using an alleged lack of instructions as a pretext. At the same time, he was expected to explain to the Chinese discreetly that Germany was strong enough to obtain compensation for any losses single-handedly and independently on other powers.¹⁹ Yet at the meeting of 28 May he paraphrased the second part of this message to his colleagues. Other diplomats considered it a hint of German intention to divide China, consulted the matter with their superiors, and finally even Bülow learnt about the matter. On 31 May 1900 he asked Ketteler for an explanation,²⁰ which he found unsatisfactory and reprimanded the German representative. At the end of his telegram, Bülow expressed his disappointment by minister's conduct by these words: *"Not any truth must be necessarily told."*²¹ Such an "advice" was hardly welcomed by a 47-years old high-ranking diplomat. These rumours surely worsened the image of Germany and especially of Ketteler in Chinese eyes. The Chinese court suspected the foreigners from preparing an aggression, and the foreigners gradually started to suspect the court from hostile intentions. But it may be assumed that neither side really wished a conflict. After a series of misunderstandings and hasty decisions, both sides of the dispute found themselves on a sloped plane leading to the catastrophe of 1900.

Despite Chinese refusal, foreign diplomats in Beijing asked their governments for detachments, and German Minister to China was not an exception. On 28 May 1900, he asked Berlin for detachment of 50 troops from Qingdao.²² On 31 May, the Zongli Yamen succumbed to repeated request of the diplomatic corps and permitted the envoys

¹⁷ XIANG, p. 215.

¹⁸ On 17 October 1900 Bülow became German Chancellor.

¹⁹ *GP*, Bd. XVI, footnote †† on p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, Nr. 4512, pp. 4–5, Bülow an Ketteler, 31. 5. 1900.

²¹ *Ibidem*, Nr. 4514, p. 6, Bülow an Ketteler, 5. 6. 1900.

²² *Ibidem*, Nr. 4511, pp. 3–4, Bülow an Kaiser Wilhelm II, 29. 5. 1900.

to summon no more than 30 troops for each legation. The foreigners failed to fulfil this condition.²³ The majority of foreign detachments entered Beijing at the end of May. Their German and Austro-Hungarian colleagues were the last to arrive; together they entered Chinese capital on June 3, 1900. German detachment consisted of 50 sailors led by 1 officer, Count Alfred von Soden.²⁴ In Beijing, there were about 451–458 legation guards altogether.²⁵ Together with armed volunteers of foreign origin, the overall strength of the foreigners in Beijing didn't exceed 530 to 550 men. Which were the prospects of such a force, and how powerful were its foes?

Even though the total number of Chinese soldiers was, at least on paper, enormous – one estimate gave the number of 1,752,000²⁶ –, the actual strength of Chinese army was rather low. Many units had only a small fraction of their alleged strength, and most of them had insufficient training and antiquated weaponry. But despite the fact that the Manchu court had suppressed the reform movement in 1898, it definitely didn't hesitate to continue reforming the Chinese army. Between 1898 and 1899, the overall shipment of war material to Tianjin, Fuzhou, Hankou, and Canton increased more than threefold.²⁷ Even the spread of anti-foreign disturbances in northern China in early 1900 didn't persuade the foreigners – and especially the Germans – to stop importing weapons to China. For example in mid-June 1900 the foreigners in Tianjin appropriated 50 Mauser rifles and 30,000 rounds of ammunition, which had been ordered by the Chinese, and handed them over to civilian defenders.²⁸ After the fall of Beijing the foreigners discovered

²³ MORSE, p. 198.

²⁴ *GP*, Bd. XVI, footnote ** on p. 4.

²⁵ Legations of all countries with the exception of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain were protected by their own guards. Allegedly to Morse, there were 82 British, 81 Russians, 79 French, 56 Americans, 51 Germans, 41 Italians, 35 Austro-Hungarians, and 25 Japanese. MORSE, p. 280.

²⁶ R. POWELL, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power, 1895–1912*, Princeton 1955, p. 107.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 108–109.

²⁸ C. C. DIX, *The World's Navies in the Boxer Rebellion (China 1900)*, London 1905, p. 52.

a hidden depot containing no less than 100 hitherto unused Krupp's cannons and immense numbers of other weapons and ammunition of foreign origin.²⁹

The great powers had already sent legation guards to Beijing in 1894–1895 and 1898–1899. Yet, the new arrival of foreign detachments to Beijing humiliated and scared both the Imperial court and the people. It is possible that the Chinese overestimated the real number of foreign troops in Beijing: on 13 June the court forbade any further strengthening of foreign detachments in Beijing, stating that there already were more than thousand legation guards altogether.³⁰ A mere presence of foreign troops in the vicinity of the Forbidden City was undoubtedly upsetting the Imperial court. Increasing presence of foreign warships off Dagou only increased this perception of threat.³¹ The Chinese were aware of relatively recent disturbances in Korea, during which Japanese troops repeatedly (1884 and 1894) took possession of Korean monarch in order to force him to collaborate.³²

Chinese court was protected better than the Korean one. The Guard Army, the most formidable force in northern China, was led by Manchu Generalissimo Ronglu, who was on best terms with the Empress Dowager. His army consisted of five "armies", or divisions: The Central Army was led by Ronglu himself. The Front Army or "Tenacious Army" of General Nie Shicheng was well armed by Mauser rifles, artillery, and even machine guns. The Left Army (or the Resolute Army) of General Song Qing was similarly equipped. The Rear Army of General Dong Fuxiang was nicknamed the "Gansu Braves", and was composed primarily of Muslims from the province of Gansu. Dong's troops were known for their ferocity. By far the best Chinese division was

²⁹ T. v. WINTERHALDER, *Kämpfe in China. Eine Darstellung der Wirren und der Beteiligung von Österreich-Ungarns Seemacht an ihrer Niederwerfung in den Jahren 1900-1901*, Wien – Budapest 1902, pp. 422–423.

³⁰ YOUNG, p. 121.

³¹ XIANG, pp. 213–214.

³² Accordingly to French Minister Pichon, at the beginning of June, Ketteler indeed suggested "marching on the Summer Palace". KEOWN-BOYD, p. 58.

Yuan Shikai's "Newly Created Army", or the Right Army. Yuan's forces followed their leader to Shandong.³³ Aside from Ronglu's guard armies, there were also other forces in the vicinity of Beijing; the already antiquated Eight Banners consisting of descendants of Manchu, Mongol, and Han Chinese soldiers who had conquered China in the seventeenth century were the most notable of them. One division of the Bannermen, the so-called "Tiger and Divine Corps", was led by Prince Duan himself. Accordingly to foreign estimates, some 110,000 to 140,000 Chinese soldiers were available for defence of Beijing.³⁴

German policy in general was deeply influenced by the personality of German Emperor, whose power was less limited than power of most of his fellow monarchs in other countries. Wilhelm II was a devout Christian, who had a strong sense of superiority over the Asians. He had long feared and perhaps at the same time looked forward for the day when the "Yellow Peril" would come into being.³⁵ He noticed rising chaos in northern China, and at the very beginning he pre-emptively suggested a brutal retaliation. "On 5 June, for example, Wilhelm had demanded on the *Auswärtiges Amt* that the city of Wech-huan³⁶ near Kiaochow be bombarded and occupied 'if anything happens to a German'."³⁷

Such a request was not unsubstantiated, even though Yuan Shikai was already pacifying Shandong. In June 1900, the construction of the Shandong railway was halted again, and German staff, as well as

³³ The organization and strength of Ronglu's Guard Army are analyzed by Jerome Ch'en and Ralph Powell. POWELL, pp. 102–105; J. CH'EN, *Yuan Shih-k'ai, 1859–1916. Brutus Assumes the Purple*, Stanford 1961, pp. 51–53.

³⁴ POWELL, pp. 107–108.

³⁵ "Bernhard von Bülow, then Foreign Secretary, later recorded in his memoirs that he had 'never seen Kaiser Wilhelm [...] in such excitement as during the first phase of the Chinese confusion'. According to Bülow, Wilhelm stated repeatedly: 'Now it is a joy to be alive!'" A. MOMBAUER, Wilhelm, Waldersee, and the Boxer Rebellion, in: M. MOMBAUER – W. DEIST (eds.), *The Kaiser. New Research on Wilhelm II's Role in Imperial Germany*, Cambridge 2004, p. 95.

³⁶ It is difficult to find out the exact identity of this city.

³⁷ MOMBAUER, footnote 13 on p. 95.

Chinese Christians, had to flee to Qingdao.³⁸ The measure proposed by Wilhelm II would have undoubtedly embarrassed Yuan Shikai and perhaps even dragged him into the conflict against his will. Similarly, on 2 July the Germans suggested conquering fortifications of Qifu, an important port on the coast of Shandong. They were enraged by fresh news from Beijing, not by Yuan's behaviour or by general conditions in the German sphere of influence.³⁹ Let's say in advance that the situation in Shandong throughout the entire "Boxer Uprising" was relatively good. One significant event was burning of an American Presbyterian mission at Weixian.⁴⁰ Thereafter Yuan Shikai stated that he was not able to protect foreigners in the interior of Shandong,⁴¹ and the foreigners and Christians fled, especially to the German leased area, but the unrest was manageable. It was even rumoured that the inhabitants of the eastern part of the province were anti-Boxer; an American newspaper reported that they had buried 50 "Boxers" alive.⁴² Still, Wilhelm II didn't trust any Chinese, not even Yuan Shikai and his army. On 18 July he explained his worries to Bülow. He was aware of growing tensions between the British and the Russians. Furthermore he was afraid of a possible uprising in Korea, with the possibility of Japanese involvement. Such a turmoil would endanger Qingdao, and its safety had even higher priority than an advance on Beijing. Wilhelm II therefore ordered to withdraw all German troops from Zhili to Qingdao.⁴³

On 22 July Count Bülow sent to the Emperor a quite positive report about the development in Shandong. Generally speaking, German

³⁸ WENDELS, p. 46.

³⁹ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4546, pp. 31–33. Bülow an das Auswärtige Amt, 3.7.1900. The Germans were enraged that the news about Ketteler's death was confirmed (see below). Finally, the plan came to nought, because the commander of German naval forces in the Far East, Vice Admiral Bendemann, didn't have sufficient forces.

⁴⁰ Not to be confused with Weixian in Zhili, where some Catholic missionaries were killed by the "Boxers".

⁴¹ WINTERHALDER, p. 93.

⁴² *The Boxer Rising. A History of the Boxer Trouble in China*, Shanghai 1901, p. 41.

⁴³ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4576, pp. 59–60, Kaiser Wilhelm II an Bülow, 18.7.1900.

interests weren't imperilled. Since 3 July the Governor of Qingdao Captain Paul Jaeschke⁴⁴ didn't report any incidents, and both the personnel of SEG and the missionaries were safe. German leased area of Jiaozhou was entirely peaceful, and the garrison, consisting of the 3rd Battalion of marine infantry, was ready to undertake a punitive expedition into the hinterland of Shandong. Bülow opposed such a move, for he was afraid of driving hitherto "neutral" Yuan Shikai into the camp of the reactionary clique in Beijing. He also warned that, in case of German territorial aggrandizement in Shandong, other powers would follow German lead: Russia in northern China, Britain in the Yangtze region. The latter move would seriously damage German trade.⁴⁵ After the end of the Boxer crisis, the Germans only hesitantly returned to Shandong. The Shandong Railway Company resumed construction works at the end of 1900 only, and the railroad was complete on 1 July 1904, i. e. in concordance with the schedule.⁴⁶ To sum up, the events in German sphere of influence in Shandong in 1900 had only a very insignificant impact on the development of the "Boxer" crisis. In Zhili, the situation was extremely different.

Since late May, the situation in Zhili was deteriorating day by day. On June 4, large numbers of the Boxers started to demolish a railway station and a bridge at Huangcun near Tianjin. When General Nie's troops tried to stop them by force, the Boxers prevailed, and the soldiers sustained 80 casualties.⁴⁷ The German and Austro-Hungarian detachment were quite lucky that they had already reached Beijing. On 6 June British Minister to China Sir Claude MacDonald asked for new reinforcements, but, so far, in vain. Instead, another man departed for Beijing: Li Bingheng, former Governor of Shandong, was summoned to the court. He hated the foreigners and especially the Germans. Prior to the German seizure of Jiaozhou, he had already been promised the

⁴⁴ Paul Jaeschke (1851–1901) held the rank of *Kapitän zur See*, which is equal to Colonel of ground forces.

⁴⁵ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4582, pp. 63–65, Bülow an Kaiser Wilhelm II, 22. 7. 1900.

⁴⁶ WENDELS, pp. 46–47.

⁴⁷ XIANG, pp. 220–221.

vicerealty of Sichuan. Due to German pressure, he was cashiered and dismissed from public service instead;⁴⁸ and now he was in favour of the court again. On 8 June the foreigners asked the court for permission to call for additional detachments anew, unsuccessfully.⁴⁹ In the next few days, the tension between the foreigners and the Chinese, the diplomats and the court, only rose. On 10 June Prince Duan was appointed head of the Zongli Yamen.⁵⁰ Minister Ketteler asked the Chinese to agree with German occupation of the Beijing railway station, but in vain;⁵¹ instead, the Chinese prevented the foreigners from using a telegraph connection between Beijing and Tianjin. One of the last transmissions was sent by Claude MacDonald to British Admiral Seymour, the most senior among commanders of foreign forces at Tianjin and Dagou. MacDonald stated: "*Situation extremely grave; unless arrangements are made for immediate advance on Beijing it will be too late.*"⁵² Admiral Seymour complied to this request and prepared an expeditionary force, which was expected to reach Beijing by 11 June. On that day, Seymour didn't appear. Instead, chancellor of the Japanese legation Sugiyama Akira was killed by Dong Fuxiang's soldiers, and the Japanese's body was mutilated.

⁴⁸ MORSE, pp. 107–109; G. STEINMETZ, *Qingdao as a Colony. From Apartheid to Civilizational Exchange*. Paper prepared for the Johns Hopkins Workshops in Comparative History of Science and Technology, "Science, Technology and Modernity: Colonial Cities in Asia, 1890–1940", Baltimore, January 16–17, 2009, p. 3, at: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~geostein/docs/Qingdaocolony.pdf> [2015-10-11].

⁴⁹ MORSE, p. 202.

⁵⁰ However, the existing head of the office, Prince Qing, wasn't dismissed.

⁵¹ WINTERHALDER, p. 188.

⁵² MORSE, p. 201. Edmund S. Wehrle explains MacDonald's request by rivalry among the great powers. Accordingly to him, British minister had been noticed of advance of 1,700 Russian troops on Beijing. Therefore MacDonald decided to prevent any unilateral strengthening of Russian influence by calling for primarily British reinforcements, thus significantly escalated the situation. E. S. WEHRLE, *Britain, China, and the Antimissionary Riots, 1891–1900*, Minneapolis 1966, pp. 170–173.

Shortly thereafter Minister Ketteler expressed his nature, brave and brutal at the same time. On 12 or 13 June he encountered two Chinese, presumably a father and a son. They were in the middle of the legation quarter, clothed in Boxers' attire; the elder Chinese was sharpening a short sword and shouted "*This is for all foreigners!*" Unfortunately, Ketteler understood him, beat him by his walking stick, forced him to flee, and took the younger Chinese prisoner. Later, top-ranking Chinese officials including Zhongli, the commander of Beijing police, came to Ketteler and asked him for release of the adolescent, but it didn't happen. Either Ketteler refused to comply, or the captive had already been shot during an attempt to escape.⁵³

On 13 June, numerous bands of the "Boxers" entered Peking. The opponents of the xenophobic clique were killed, looting took place, and it was evident that armored clash was inevitable. Indeed, in the next few days occurred many incidents between legation guards on one side and both the "Boxers" and governmental troops on the other. The foreigners definitely weren't passive. For example on 15 June a group composed primarily of Germans and British rushed into a church full of Christians which were being slaughtered by the "Boxers". The Europeans killed the attackers and rescued the survivors into safety.⁵⁴ On June 17, there was a clash between the "Boxers" and Dong Fuxiang's soldiers on one side, and German, Austro-Hungarian and British guards on the other.⁵⁵ At that time, Seymour's troops were facing a huge threat themselves.

⁵³ WINTERHALDER, p. 192; MORSE, p. 204; KEOWN-BOYD, p. 58; M. LEUTNER, *Die Belagerung der Gesandtschaften oder. Wie der Krieg begann*, in: M. LEUTNER – K. MÜHLHAHN (eds.), *Kolonialkrieg in China. Die Niederschlagung der Boxerbewegung 1900–1901*, Berlin 2007, pp. 102–103. These authors vary in details. Rumours are that Ketteler himself shot the captive – Winterhalder explicitly claims that the "Boxer" was killed on 22 June, i. e. two days after Ketteler's death.

⁵⁴ WINTERHALDER, p. 206.

⁵⁵ G. SCHUSTA, *Österreich-Ungarn und der Boxeraufstand*. Dissertation, St. Pölten 1967, p. 78. H. B. Morse claims that on 17 June "*a conflict occurred between a small German guard and Chinese soldiers, in which five of the latter were killed*". MORSE, p. 212.

On June 10, Seymour left his ships, arrived to Tianjin, and proceeded to Beijing with the first part of the allied force. Other detachments followed and reached him, and he had 2,129 to 2,156 troops at his disposal.⁵⁶ Next to the British, the Germans were the strongest part of his force, totalling 512 to 552 men.⁵⁷ The railroad track was damaged by the “Boxers”, thus the expedition was delayed. Since 11 June the foreigners were under “Boxers” attacks. On the next day, the expedition reached Langfang and couldn’t continue. Seymour decided to safeguard his rear, and asked the French and the Germans to return to the railway station at Yangcun. Commanders of both units refused, fearing that the Briton just wanted to delay their arrival to Beijing.⁵⁸ At the beginning, Chinese governmental troops peacefully observed Seymour’s advance, but on 18 June the situation changed, and since then Seymour had to cope with repeated attacks of Chinese regular army.⁵⁹ What had happened?

After Seymour’s departure, commanders of foreign naval forces located in front of Dagu observed the situation in northern China. On 15 June, they organized a meeting presided over by Russian Admiral Hildebrandt; Germany was represented by Vice Admiral Bendemann. The commanders got the impression that the Chinese were about to reinforce the forts at Dagu and lay mines in the Peiho River, thus isolating not only Beijing and Tianjin but also Seymour’s force. In fact, it was quite possible to reach Beijing by other means, but the commanders ignored this fact.⁶⁰ Bendemann recommended sending a joint

⁵⁶ The German force reached Seymour on 11 June. Accordingly to C.C. Dix, the Viceroy of Zhili, Yulu, tried to stop them at Tianjin. DIX, pp. 23–24.

⁵⁷ H. B. Morse claims that the number of Seymour’s troops was 2,066, including 540 Germans; yet the presented numbers of men in each contingent are equal to 2,156. H. Keown-Boyd claims that Seymour led 2,129 men, 512 of them being German. Rudolf Zabel states that no less than 25 German officers and 527 men participated on the expedition. MORSE, p. 202; KEOWN-BOYD, p. 61; R. ZABEL, *Deutschland in China*, Leipzig 1902, p. 134.

⁵⁸ KEOWN-BOYD, p. 66.

⁵⁹ MORSE, p. 214.

⁶⁰ WEHRLE, p. 174.

ultimatum to Chinese commander at Dagou, asking for surrendering the forts. With the exception of American Admiral Kempff, the commanders supported such a move.⁶¹ Of course the Chinese didn't accept this ultimatum and started shooting on foreign vessels instead. As a result, a combined foreign force attacked and captured the forts early in the morning of 17 June. Furthermore, the foreigners captured four modern Chinese destroyers, built by German shipyards. Some 900 troops participated on the conquest of the fortresses; 130 of them were German, and the landing force was led by German Captain Hugo von Pohl. Moreover, German gunboat *Illtis* took part on the assault as well; its captain Wilhelm Lans and many other members of its crew were killed or wounded.⁶² The commanders at Dagou advocated their move in a memorandum which was communicated to moderate statesmen in central and southern China through German consul at Qifu, who held the position of doyen of the consular corps there.⁶³

The court in Beijing was infuriated; units of Chinese regular army started to turn against the foreigners.⁶⁴ Under these circumstances Seymour decided not to advance on Beijing, but he was unable to return to Tianjin by train, for the railroad in his rear was too much damaged. As a result, the allied forces retreated on foot along the Peiho River, repulsing constant Chinese attacks. Due to German initiative, four river junks have been seized, facilitating the retreat. On 21 June, Seymour's chief of staff, British Captain (later Admiral) John Jellicoe, was seriously wounded, and his duties were transferred to German commander, Captain von Usedom. On the same day, Seymour's army accidentally found a huge arsenal near the village of Xigu and captured it at night, the British and the Germans executing the main

⁶¹ The text of the ultimatum is quoted in: WINTERHALDER, footnote on p. 66.

⁶² Ibidem, pp. 59–87; DIX, pp. 27–45; ZABEL, pp. 113–117; KEOWN-BOYD, pp. 77–80.

⁶³ YOUNG, footnote 2 on p. 124. The text of the note is quoted by H. B. Morse. MORSE, p. 227.

⁶⁴ P. H. CLEMENTS, *The Boxer Rebellion. A Political and Historical Review*, New York 1915, p. 129.

attack.⁶⁵ Fatigued and shaken, Seymour's corps entrenched itself in the conquered arsenal, and on 25 June the relief force has been itself relieved by a chiefly Russian troops.⁶⁶ Seymour returned to Tianjin on 26 June, just in time to ward off sustained Chinese attacks on the foreign quarter which had started after the conquest of the Dagu forts. During his retreat, Seymour coined a famous phrase: "*The Germans to the front!*" During the course of Seymour's expedition 12 German participants were killed and 62 wounded.⁶⁷

The foreigners in Beijing weren't informed about Seymour's adventures. At the same time, the outside world lost its last connection with Beijing. On 17 June the Chinese interrupted even the telegraph connection between Beijing and Russian city of Kiachta, and the foreigners in Beijing were completely isolated.⁶⁸ Inevitably, rumours of all sorts started to alarm foreign governments and public alike.

Already on June 16, 1900 a telegram by the "Exchange Telegraph Company" shocked the world. Accordingly to the telegram, all legations in Beijing had been destroyed and German Minister to China had been killed. German consul at Qifu was ordered to find out more, and on June 18 he reported that the Japanese confirmed the takeover of the legations.⁶⁹ This news reached German Emperor at Helgoland. Enraged Wilhelm II immediately returned to Wilhelmshaven and wasted no time. When he received a message about departure of 2,000 Japanese troops to China, he noted that the marine infantry should be mobilized and that the armoured cruiser *Fürst Bismarck* had already received orders to prepare for an immediate voyage.⁷⁰ Later that day he ordered Admiral Tirpitz to mobilize the marine infantry, and he suggested a

⁶⁵ KEOWN-BOYD, pp. 93–96; DIX, pp. 86–91.

⁶⁶ Accordingly to C. C. Dix, Colonel Shirinsky's force which relieved Seymour consisted from 1,000 Russians, 600 British, and 300 German, Italian, and Japanese troops, i. e. 1,900 men altogether. DIX, p. 115.

⁶⁷ CLEMENTS, p. 134.

⁶⁸ GP, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4525, pp. 12–13, Kaiser Wilhelm II an Bülow, 18. 6. 1900.

⁶⁹ Ibidem, footnote * on p. 12

⁷⁰ Ibidem, Nr. 4524, p. 12, Bülow an Kaiser Wilhelm II, 18. 6. 1900.

mobilization of “a Prussian infantry division or an [army] corps”.⁷¹ He consulted the situation with Count Metternich, a member of his entourage, and enjoyed the idea of closer cooperation between Germany and Russia.⁷²

On June 18, Wilhelm II had his doubts about the credibility of the news from China and about the role of the Empress Dowager Cixi.⁷³ On the next day, he was in a different state of mind. He sent to Count Bülow a telegram of the most bloodthirsty sort, comparable only to his famous “Hun Speech”: “A *grand military action of a collective nature must be organized immediately [...] Peking must be downright attacked and levelled to the ground [...] Perhaps I shall appoint the supreme General with pleasure. Then, the course of actions must be grasped by one strong hand, meaning a European one. [We will never allow the Russians and the Japanese to solve the situation on their own and prevent us from taking part on it.] German Minister will be avenged by my troops. Peking must be razed... It is a struggle of Asia against the entire Europe!*”⁷⁴

On the same day, Wilhelm II ordered to mobilize an entire army corps, yet Bülow opposed such a scheme. He persuaded Wilhelm II to contend himself with a mobilization of a volunteer battalion and of both battalions of marine infantry which were present in Europe. Neither the Reichstag, nor even the Chancellor Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst were consulted.⁷⁵ As far as the question of supreme command was concerned, Foreign Secretary Bülow suggested waiting until the antagonism between Franco-Russian and British-Japanese blocks would emerge. As a compromise, the chief command should be given to Germany. Wilhelm II strongly opposed: “*This is definitely not*

⁷¹ Ibidem, Nr. 4525, pp. 12–13, Kaiser Wilhelm II an Bülow, 18. 6. 1900.

⁷² Ibidem, Nr. 4526, pp. 13–14, Metternich an Bülow, 18. 6. 1900.

⁷³ Ibidem, Nr. 4525, pp. 12–13, Kaiser Wilhelm II an Bülow, 18. 6. 1900.

⁷⁴ Ibidem, Nr. 4527, p. 14, Kaiser Wilhelm II an Bülow, 19. 9. 1900.

⁷⁵ MOMBBAUER, p. 96. On 26 June was published Wilhelm II’s decision to send 1st and 2nd Battalion of marine infantry, an artillery battery, and a detachment of engineers, under command of General von Hoepfner. *GP*, Bd. XVI, footnote * on p. 24.

the case! There must be no interest conflict, otherwise, the Europeans are simply lost!"⁷⁶

For the time being, until the arrival of German reinforcements from Europe, Germany had to rely on her troops which were already present in the Far East. On 30 June 1900, Vice Admiral Bendemann received secret instructions about the nature of German policy in China. Among German goals were: protection of Europeans and their assets in China; restoration of the status quo and obtaining sufficient guarantees from the Chinese court; preventing of unnecessary acquisition of Chinese territory by the powers or of creating further spheres of interest; maintaining of the Open Door Policy. It was not advisable to support closer affiliation of Japan to European powers. On the other hand, Bendemann was permitted to support any measure of political nature which would enjoy both British and Russian support (this was an especially secret point).⁷⁷

When Wilhelm II started to rage about the alleged assassination of his representative in China, Ketteler was still alive. It is a widespread belief that those people who were by mistake considered dead will live very long. Alas, it was not Ketteler's case. German minister was well known to the Chinese for his steadfast and brute attitude. *"He was a man of great courage but little finesse, who doubted the necessity or wisdom of covering the iron fist with the velvet glove."*⁷⁸ Examples of his approach have already been presented; and the final one will be given.

Following the harsh foreign action at Dagou, the Chinese court held several meetings, at which the xenophobic group gained the upper hand. On 19 June at 4 p. m. the Zongli Yamen informed the hitherto isolated foreigners in Beijing about the ultimatum given to the garrison at Dagou on 16 June. The foreigners themselves were given a ultimatum ordering them to leave Beijing within 24 hours under protection of governmental troops.⁷⁹ The diplomats saw little point in resisting,

⁷⁶ GP, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4258, pp. 15–18, Bülow an Kaiser Wilhelm II, 19. 9. 1900.

⁷⁷ Ibidem, Nr. 4538, pp. 24–26, Bülow an Diederichs, 30. 6. 1900.

⁷⁸ KEOWN-BOYD, p. 42.

⁷⁹ This was hardly encouraging, for the foreigners in Beijing were already clashing

and asked the Zongli Yamen for arranging a meeting on the next day at 9 a. m. Most of the ministers were ready to comply with the Chinese request; Ketteler strongly opposed. On 20 June at 8 a. m. the ministers met together and waited on Chinese reply; by 9 a. m. no reply came. Enraged Ketteler decided to visit the Zongli Yamen and explain to Chinese princes in charge of Chinese diplomacy the wrongfulness of their behaviour; he had already announced his visit in advance. His colleagues tried in vain to dissuade him from undertaking such a risk, stressing even the inappropriateness of waiting on the princes; but German minister was adamant.⁸⁰

Shortly after 9:30 a. m., Ketteler and his interpreter Heinrich Cordes entered two sedan chairs, accompanied by two unarmed ceremonial attendants. When they were passing by a checkpoint at the Hatamen Street, a Bannerman named En Hai shot Ketteler into his head. Cordes tried to escape, but En Hai shot on him as well. Hit in his legs, Cordes managed to crawl into the nearby American Methodist mission, observed, but not further harmed, by Chinese bystanders. En Hai stole Ketteler's silver watches. Both the Zongli Yamen and the foreign community were informed about the event immediately. German commander von Soden with 20 marines rushed to the scene, but he didn't find traces of Ketteler or Cordes. Later that day Cordes and all the Methodist missionaries and converts were evacuated to the relative safety of foreign legations. Ketteler's duties were assumed by his deputy, Claus von Below. Shortly thereafter, the Zongli Yamen dispatched two notes. The first note discouraged the foreigners from visiting the Yamen, the second one, sent to the Germans, *"demanded to know who were the two Germans, one of whom had been killed, who had fired into the*

with Chinese soldiers for several days.

⁸⁰ "I will go there and I will be sitting there until they come, even if I had to wait the entire night", Ketteler explained. D. NOWAK, *Der Tod des deutschen Gesandten Clemens von Ketteler*, in: M. LEUTNER – K. MÜHLHAHN (eds.), *Kolonialkrieg in China. Die Niederschlagung der Boxerbewegung 1900–1901*, Berlin 2007, p. 112. Moreover, Ketteler *"felt that, having announced his visit, he must pay it"*. R. HART, *"These from the land of Sinim." Essays on the Chinese Question*, London 1901, p. 19.

crowd. No reply was sent to either of these cynical and insulting documents”.⁸¹ As a matter of irony, the news about factual Ketteler’s death reached Europe only after 12 days, i. e. on 1 July,⁸² and the day after it was finally confirmed.

Little is certain about the background of Ketteler’s death. After the fall of Beijing, Ketteler’s murderer En Hai was captured by the Japanese when he was trying to sell Ketteler’s watches. The Japanese handed him over to the Germans; he has been interrogated repeatedly, and he claimed that the troops had been ordered by some Manchu prince to kill the foreigners. Since he knew neither Prince Duan nor Prince Qing personally, he was unable to mark the culprit.⁸³ Many foreigners were of the opinion that Ketteler’s murder was just a proof of a plan to exterminate the entire foreign community in Beijing. As Henry Keown-Boyd summarized it, *“by his death he unwittingly saved the lives of his diplomatic colleagues”*.⁸⁴

Other sources claim that Ketteler was specifically targeted by the Chinese who hated him personally. Accordingly to Mr. Jamieson, a member of British legation staff, *“No other minister but the German would have been murdered on his way to the Yamen that day. It was the firm hatred towards him cherished by Li Peng Hêng, who fancied that he had been deprived of the Governorship of Shantung owing to German representations that proved fatal to Baron Ketteler.”*⁸⁵ In fact, Li Bingheng had just begun his long journey to Beijing, and he didn’t owe his dismissal to Ketteler personally. H. B. Morse quotes an unreliable source and suggests that some officials wanted to have Ketteler’s corpse decapitated and his head exhibited over a gate.⁸⁶ Edmund Wehrle suggests that

⁸¹ KEOWN-BOYD, p. 92.

⁸² MORSE, pp. 247–248. Accordingly to a contemporary observer, young British naval officer C. C. Dix, who took part on fighting in China, the foreigners in Tianjin learned about Ketteler’s death already on 22 June. DIX, p. 66.

⁸³ NOWAK, p. 115.

⁸⁴ KEOWN-BOYD, p. 44.

⁸⁵ WEHRLE, p. 176.

⁸⁶ MORSE, footnote 125 on pp. 223–224.

Ketteler's death was a result of faction struggle at the Chinese court: the war faction disliked a peaceful solution, therefore it arranged for Ketteler's murder.⁸⁷

An opposite view is that Ketteler lost his life by chance. Dominik Nowak discusses a theory of Xiang Lanxin which is based on the same notes which Keown-Boyd plainly dismisses.⁸⁸ Accordingly to this theory, the German envoy was passing by the checkpoint and the nearby Belgian legation. Ketteler's revolver suddenly shot, the Chinese thought to be under attack, and killed Ketteler. Foreign troops guarding the Belgian legation repeated fire, and Cordes was wounded in a crossfire. Later, En Hai allegedly found a revolver with five rounds only inside Ketteler's sedan chair. In reality, the Belgian legation had been protected by Austro-Hungarian sailors. On 15 June, shortly after midnight, the "Boxers" attacked the Belgian legation and were repelled by determined defence. On 16 June the entire legation staff and its guards had left the isolated building. Austro-Hungarian sailors were several times a day undertaking patrols towards the legation; yet Austro-Hungarian officer Theodor von Winterhalder doesn't mention their presence at the scene of the fire.⁸⁹ Any possibility of the crossfire must be therefore dismissed.

Whatever the intentions of the Chinese court were, after Ketteler's death no foreigner did dare to leave the "safety" of the legation quarter. On 20 June at 4 p.m. the fight against the foreigners in Beijing began. Several thousands of Chinese converts, protected by about 40 French and Italian troops, were isolated in the Beidang Cathedral. Most of the foreigners, less than thousand people, were besieged in the legation quarter. The diplomats had at their disposal little more than 410 troops and several tens of armed volunteers; and they had to take care of hundreds of foreign non-combatants and thousands of Chinese Christians. The Germans were protecting their legation and part of the wall of the

⁸⁷ WEHRLE, p. 176.

⁸⁸ Xiang's theory is summarized by Dominik Nowak. NOWAK, pp. 115–117.

⁸⁹ WINTERHALDER, pp. 49, 203–204, and 212.

Tartar City; to the west of them were the Americans. Both sides were hiding behind barricades; at the walls of the Tartar city, the fighting was especially fierce, and the barricades of both sides were very close to each other.

At the beginning of the siege, things went wrong for detachments of both German powers. In the morning of 22 June, German commander was informed by an American messenger that the Americans had left their position at the walls of the Tartar city. Fearing that the Chinese would take advantage of this gap in the defence, Captain Thomann ordered general retreat into the British legation. When the situation became clear, the troops returned to their posts. Thereafter the committee of foreign representatives – unattended by both its German and Austro-Hungarian members Below and Rosthorn – decided to recall Captain Thomann from supreme command.⁹⁰ Instead, the leadership was entrusted to Sir Claude MacDonald, who had been an officer of the 74th Regiment of the British army.⁹¹

How could the besieged foreigners be saved? The Germans considered a desperate suggestion by British consul at Tianjin Carles: to threaten the destruction of Manchu ancestral tombs. Accordingly to a report from 1 July, Wilhelm II didn't consider it opportune; Vice Admiral Bendemann had objections as well.⁹² British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury was afraid of reaction of the British public opinion; too few troops were available to undertake such an expedition; and a compromise has been reached: the great powers stated that "*all authorities at Peking of whatever rank will be held responsible in person and property for any act of violence against the Legations*". Germany agreed, and in the first week of July the warning has been handed to Chinese minister to London.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibidem, pp. 234–238; KEOWN-BOYD, pp. 104–106; S. LESZKOVICH, *Die Donaumonarchie und der Boxeraufstand in China, Diplomarbeit*, Wien 1991, pp. 33–34; SCHUSTA, p. 84.

⁹¹ KEOWN-BOYD, p. 41.

⁹² *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 5439, pp. 26–27.

⁹³ YOUNG, pp. 143–145; *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4545, pp. 30–31, Richthofen an Bülow,

Meanwhile, on 2 July 1900 reliable news about Ketteler's factual death finally reached the Emperor. Wilhelm II was preparing to speak to the first German contingent of marine infantry which was about to start the journey from Wilhelmshaven to the Far East. German emperor explained: *"Into the midst of the deepest peace – alas, not surprising to me – the torch of war has been hurled [. . .] The German flag has been insulted, and the German Empire held up to scorn. This demands an exemplary punishment and revenge."* The Emperor also reminded his troops of broader aspects of their task: *"Maintain a good comradeship with all the troops whom you will join with there. Russians, Englishmen, Frenchmen, and whoever else – they all fight for one cause, for civilization. Yet we also bear in mind something higher, our religion, and the defense and protection of our brothers overseas, some of whom have stood up for their Savior with their life."*⁹⁴ On the same day, Wilhelm II ordered to organize a brigade 7,000 men strong⁹⁵ and composed of volunteers. Finally, German expeditionary corps consisted of six infantry regiments, one cavalry regiment, one artillery regiment, and was commanded by General von Lessel.⁹⁶ The expeditionary corps consisted from about 520 officers and 11,000 soldiers.⁹⁷

3. 7. 1900. Still, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Richthofen was of the opinion that Germany could threaten the destruction of tombs unilaterally.

⁹⁴ The text of the speech is available online at: The World War I Document Archive, *Kaiser Wilhelm II on German Interests in China*, http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Kaiser_Wilhelm_II_on_German_Interests_in_China [2015-10-08]. Accordingly to this website, the editors of the official version of the speech deleted the sentence: *"I hope [. . .] to take revenge such as the world has never yet seen."* The moderate variant of the speech is included in a contemporary edition of Wilhelm II's speeches, printed in 1904. L. ELKIND (ed.), *The German Emperor's Speeches. Being a Selection from the Speeches, Edicts, Letters, and Telegrams of the Emperor William II*, London 1904, pp. 313–314.

⁹⁵ MORSE, p. 266.

⁹⁶ ZABEL, pp. 151–152.

⁹⁷ Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg (further only "BArch-MA"), RM3/4745, Nr. 90. Betrifft Meldung über Massnahmen des Reichs-Marine-Amtes, welche die Aktion in China betreffen. An Seine Majestät den Kaiser und König.

Moreover, Germany sent the 1st division of battleships to East Asian waters.⁹⁸

Long mistrust of German Emperor towards China became justified. In retaliation for Ketteler's death, the Germans suggested not only the aforementioned conquest of the forts at Qifu, but also seizing and sinking of Chinese vessels at Yangtze. Fortunately, they didn't have enough naval forces in the Far Eastern area, thus neither of these measures was adopted.⁹⁹ The Chinese apologized almost immediately. On 3 July, while the foreigners in Beijing were fighting for their lives again, the Chinese court tried to start negotiations with foreign powers. The Chinese adopted a different approach to each country: the British were reminded of the importance of their trade with China, whereas the Americans were asked for mediation. The Chinese apologized to Germany for Ketteler's murder and promised to punish the culprits.¹⁰⁰

In mid-July the Chinese court received a more palpable warning than mere threats of responsibility. The international force defending the foreign quarter of Tianjin was being steadily reinforced. Since 18 June there were about 600 German sailors present. On 19 June two companies of the 3rd Battalion of German marine infantry, or, 265 men under command of Major Christ, left Qingdao, on 22 June they landed at the mouth of the Peiho River and on the next day they entered the foreign-controlled part of Tianjin.¹⁰¹ Among returning Seymour's troops were about 500 more Germans, about 450 of them able-bodied. Ironically, while other countries were bringing reinforcements, the Germans started withdrawing their men from Zhili, out of concern for the safety of Jiaozhou. As a result, the withdrawn German marine infantry returned to Qingdao on 6 July 1900.¹⁰² On the same day there were

⁹⁸ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4546, pp. 31–33, Bülow an das Auswärtige Amt, 3.7.1900; *ibidem*, Nr. 4559, pp. 46–47, Bülow an Kaiser Wilhelm II, 8.7.1900.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, Nr. 4546, pp. 31–33, Bülow an das Auswärtige Amt, 3.7.1900.

¹⁰⁰ MORSE, p. 248.

¹⁰¹ ZABEL, pp. 128–129; WINTERHALDER, p. 88.

¹⁰² WINTERHALDER, p. 93. The author quotes a Russian estimate of the overall number of landed troops, including the legation guards – I have excluded these.

about 17 100 foreign troops available in northern China; about 1100 of them German.¹⁰³ On 13 July about 12,000 foreign troops¹⁰⁴ started an assault on the Chinese part of Tianjin. Russian and remaining German troops were encircling the city from the east and north-east, forces of other nations were attacking from the south, and the city fell on 14 July.¹⁰⁵ Tianjin had already been plundered by the Chinese themselves, and the foreigners followed suit. *“Some of the Russian, the French, the Indian, and the German troops distinguished themselves as highway robbers... it is certain that the three shortest of the Ten Commandments were constantly violated on an excessive scale.”*¹⁰⁶ Shortly after the fall of Tianjin the Germans withdrew their remaining forces back to Qingdao.¹⁰⁷

Most of xenophobes started changing their mind and Cixi ordered to stop harassing the legation quarter in Beijing; this armistice lasted until 29 July. At that time, Li Bingheng had finally arrived to Beijing. He gained favour of Cixi, was appointed Generalissimo, like Ronglu, and he urged renewing hostilities. Furthermore, he arranged execution of five ministers who have proven their goodwill towards foreigners. Among the executed was a distinguished diplomat Xu Jingcheng, who had been representing China in Germany and other European countries several times since 1884. Despite the renewal of hostilities, foreign diplomats in the legation quarter kept contact with the Zongli Yamen until the arrival of international forces.

On the same day when Tianjin fell, other “news from Beijing” reached Europe: On 8 July, the “Boxers” and Dong Fuxiang’s troops had allegedly overrun the defences of the legations in Beijing and

Taking the context into the account I assume that the Russians didn’t count the marine infantry in Qingdao.

¹⁰³ Ibidem, p. 98. Winterhalder further quotes a telegram from 14 July by Japanese General Fukushima. According to him, there were 13,500 foreign troops in Tianjin, 500 of them Germans. Ibidem, pp. 321–322.

¹⁰⁴ MORSE, p. 264.

¹⁰⁵ ZABEL, pp. 144–149; MORSE, p. 244; KEOWN-BOYD, pp. 134–143.

¹⁰⁶ MORSE, p. 246.

¹⁰⁷ ZABEL, pp. 155–156.

slaughtered everyone. This news was attributed to a notable Chinese enemy of the “Boxers”, namely Sheng Xuanhuai, who was in charge of Chinese telegraphs. Sheng immediately denied any responsibility, but the world didn’t care.¹⁰⁸ Only after the Chinese court allowed the besieged envoys to send ciphered telegrams to their capitals, the people started to believe that the foreigners in Beijing still held on.¹⁰⁹ Still, defeating the “Boxers” and punishing China was by no means a single task. Various estimates of the number of foreign troops necessary to capture Beijing ranged from 25,000 to 80,000, besides additional guards protecting their supply lines running through Dagu and Tianjin.¹¹⁰ The most widely accepted opinion was that no less than 50,000 foreign troops would ensure the conquest of Beijing. The Germans were decided to participate on it; and they expected that they would have enough time to reach the Far East in time.

German armed forces needed to transport large numbers of troops to the Far East by sea. Since the voyage from Germany to China around the world was quite long, German government was looking for another route. It seemed sensible to transport German troops through Austria-Hungary to Trieste, and the Germans asked Austria-Hungary for military access. On July 11, 1900, Austro-Hungarian emperor Francis Joseph I, who was at that time at his usual summer residence at Bad Ischl, permitted German forces to pass through Austro-Hungarian territory at will.¹¹¹ On the next day, Count Bülow asked top-ranking

¹⁰⁸ MORSE, pp. 248–249.

¹⁰⁹ German telegram, dated 21 July, arrived to Tianjin on 29 July. Its text is quoted in: T. WHITE – J. P. BOYD, *The Story of China and Her Neighbours. Their Manners, Customs, Life and History. Including the Boxer Uprising, Massacre of Foreigners and Operations of the Allied Powers*, [s.l.] 1900, p. 469.

¹¹⁰ MORSE, footnote 20 on pp. 264–265; POWELL, p. 114. The latter author claims that the estimates ranged from 40,000 to 100,000, including rearguards. At the same time, “by 13 July Admiral Seymour was calmly reporting that an advance by land was not feasible ‘until after the rains say early September’”. YOUNG, p. 143.

¹¹¹ Haus-, Hof- und Staaatsarchiv Wien (further only HHStA), Politisches Archiv (further only PA) XXIX, China, Karton 14, Liasse Ia, Nr. 2167. Der Kaiser an Sectionschef Graf Szécsen, Ischl 9. 7. 1900.

representatives of the Army and the Navy whether or not would they suggest such a move to German Emperor. They unanimously supported an urgent sending of further German forces to the Far East, but preferred Bremerhaven to Triest. As a result, the idea of embarking German troops at Trieste came to nought.¹¹²

Accordingly to the Emperor, the command in China was to be entrusted to one of the most prominent German soldiers. Count Alfred von Waldersee was a former chief of Prussian General Staff and he had been in close touch with his Emperor for decades. It is a widespread rumour that in April 1866, prior to the outbreak of the Prusso-Austrian War, he arrived to Prague in order to gather military intelligence, only to be arrested within a few days. In fact, Waldersee persuaded his elder brother to undertake that mission.¹¹³ He distinguished himself in the Franco-German War, and later he closely collaborated with Helmut von Moltke the Elder. Between 1888 and 1891, Waldersee was a chief of the Great General Staff. After military manoeuvres of September 1890, Waldersee found himself somewhat estranged from Wilhelm II, who dismissed him from that position and replaced him by Alfred von Schlieffen. At the beginning of the Boxer crisis, Waldersee was a Inspector-General of the Third Army in Hannover. On May 6, 1900, he was promoted to the rank of Field Marshall.¹¹⁴ Waldersee had been since the outbreak of the Boxer crisis informed about news from China, and he was of the opinion that neither German nor foreign diplomats did truly understand the situation in the Middle Kingdom. “*Certainly,*

¹¹² *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4564, p. 49, Bülow an Admiral Diederichs, 12.7.1900, and footnote * on pp. 49–50.

¹¹³ *Denkwürdigkeiten des General-Feldmarschalls Alfred Grafen von Waldersee. Auf Veranlassung des Generalleutnants Georg Grafen von Waldersee bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Heinrich Otto Meisner. Erster Band, 1832–1888, Stuttgart – Berlin 1922, pp. 24–25.*

¹¹⁴ *Denkwürdigkeiten des General-Feldmarschalls Alfred Grafen von Waldersee. Auf Veranlassung des Generalleutnants Georg Grafen von Waldersee bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Heinrich Otto Meisner. Zweiter Band, 1888–1900, Stuttgart – Berlin 1922, p. 445.*

our Minister to Peking, Ketteler, informed us already six weeks ago that very serious events were to be expected; but he has not been listened to."¹¹⁵

On July 27, 1900, another part of German punitive expeditionary corps left Bremerhaven. German emperor himself appeared in front of his troops, accompanied by the Chancellor and State Secretary Bülow. Emperor Wilhelm II was well known for his lack of reservation in speech,¹¹⁶ and at this occasion he fully professed his contempt of the Asians and his murderous grief over death of his minister to China and over supposed slaughter of all Europeans in Beijing. In his famous "Huns' speech" (*Hunnenrede*)¹¹⁷ vengeful German Emperor expressed his Christian bias and instructed his troops:

*"But you can see from this what a culture not based on Christianity comes to [...] Well you know that you shall be fighting against a sly, brave, well-armed, and cruel foe. When you come upon the enemy, smite him. Pardon will not be given. Prisoners will not be taken. Whoever falls into your hands is forfeit. Once, a thousand years ago, the Huns under their King Attila made a name for themselves, one still potent in legend and tradition. May you in this way make the name German remembered in China for a thousand years so that no Chinaman will ever again dare to even squint at a German! Open the way for civilization once and for all!"*¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ *Denkwürdigkeiten, Zweiter Band*, p. 447.

¹¹⁶ As Alfred von Waldersee remarked in May 1896: "He [the Emperor] frequently expresses himself crudely in conversation, although later he often scarcely knows what he said." J. C. G. RÖHL, *Wilhelm II. The Kaiser's Personal Monarchy, 1888–1890*, Cambridge 2004, p. 712.

¹¹⁷ For wider context of the "Hun Speech", see: B. SÖSEMANN, "Pardon wird nicht gegeben!" Staatliche Zensur und Presseöffentlichkeit zur "Hunnenrede", in: M. LEUTNER – K. MÜHLHAHN (eds.), *Kolonialkrieg in China. Die Niederschlagung der Boxerbewegung 1900–1901*, Berlin 2007, pp. 119–122.

¹¹⁸ The World War I Document Archive, *Kaiser Wilhelm II on German Interests in China*. http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Kaiser_Wilhelm_II_on_German_Interests_in_China [2015-10-08]. H. B. Morse translated the most interesting sentences slightly differently: "Let all who fall into your hands be at your mercy." MORSE, p. 309. Louis Elkind presented an absolutely different translation of the crucial part of the speech: "If you fall into his hands, then know that quarter will not be given, prisoners will not be made [...]." The reference to the Huns is omitted altogether. ELKIND,

These sincere words didn't fail to impress the audience. Both the Chancellor and State Secretary Bülow asked the audience not to publish its most striking parts. The authorities published two censored versions; yet it was inevitable that the full text of the speech gradually leaked out.¹¹⁹ The impact of Wilhelm's words was mixed. Inside Germany, this speech aroused much criticism, but many Germans considered it a fitting response to atrocities of the Chinese. Outside Germany, the audience was as shocked by alleged slaughter of all foreigners in Beijing as Wilhelm II himself. German ambassador to France was told by French Foreign Minister Delcassé that the speech "*had made the best impression throughout the whole of France*". From the technical point of view, it was difficult to capture a "Boxer" alive. And both the Chinese and foreign troops were habitually killing captured enemies.

The question of united command of the allied forces was a matter of controversy among the great powers. The Russians were unwilling to place their troops under command of a British, Japanese, or American officer, whereas the Japanese refused to submit their troops to a Russian.¹²⁰ Some of British statesmen didn't recognize the need of a supreme commander at all.¹²¹ It was a matter of German honour to be in supreme command, and Wilhelm II wished to secure a universal consent with Waldersee's appointment. At the same time, he hesitated to propose it on his own. Therefore he asked British government to

p. 315. In German, the most significant passage sounds: "*Kommt Ihr vor den Feind, so wird er geschlagen, Pardon wird nicht gegeben; Gefangene nicht gemacht. Wer Euch in die Hände fällt, sei in Eurer Hand.*" SÖSEMANN, p. 119.

¹¹⁹ SÖSEMANN, pp. 119–120.

¹²⁰ MOMB AUER, p. 100; *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4548, pp. 34–36, Richthofen an Bülow, 4. 7. 1900.

¹²¹ Robert Cecil, Marquess of Salisbury, who at that time held the post of Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs simultaneously, was the most resolute opponent of any joint command. On the other hand, already in late June Admiral Seymour had suggested that "*if a march on Peking becomes necessary there would have to be one [his own emphasis] commander of the combined forces*". T. G. OTTE, *The China Question. Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894–1905*, Oxford 2007, pp. 186–189.

suggest Waldersee's appointment, but the British failed to approve this plan. Lord Salisbury had originally underestimated the "Boxer" crisis,¹²² and he distrusted not only Russian, but also German intentions. German chargé d'affaires in London, Baron Eckardstein, hinted in vain that British refusal could force the Germans to cooperate with Russia and France. Some of Salisbury's colleagues from the British government felt that he was too indecisive during the Chinese crisis, and major changes in his government took place in November of the same year – Salisbury himself transferred the Foreign Office to Marquess Lansdowne.¹²³ Wilhelm II's Hun Speech of July 27 had further negative impact on Lord Salisbury – but at that time, the Germans ceased counting on British cooperation, and managed to gain support for Waldersee's appointment elsewhere.

On 6 August Wilhelm II turned to Russia, and the Tsar complied: "I am happy to tell you that I fully agree to the nomination of Field-Marshal Count Waldersee to that post [...] With full confidence I place my troops in Petchili [Zhili] under his command."¹²⁴ Thus, Nicholas II suggested limiting Waldersee's authority to the province of Zhili, while reserving Manchuria for Russia.¹²⁵ On 7 August, German Emperor informed Waldersee about his appointment.¹²⁶ On 9 August 1900 the British cabinet finally consented with German proposal. However, Lord Salisbury succeeded in making the acceptance conditional. "If the other powers placed their troops under the field marshal's *supreme direction*,¹²⁷ Britain would follow their example."¹²⁸ On the next day, British Ambassador to

¹²² Ibidem, pp. 182–183.

¹²³ Ibidem, p. 229.

¹²⁴ GP, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4602, p. 83, Kaiser Wilhelm II an Bülow, 6. 8. 1900; MORSE, p. 309. Tsar's consent was announced by Germany on 7 August 1900.

¹²⁵ A. MALOZEMOFF, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881–1904. With Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War*, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1958, p. 131.

¹²⁶ *Denkwürdigkeiten des General-Feldmarschalls Alfred Grafen von Waldersee. Auf Veranlassung des Generalleutnants Georg Grafen von Waldersee bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Heinrich Otto Meisner. Dritter Band, 1900–1904*, Stuttgart – Berlin 1923, p. 1.

¹²⁷ Emphasis added by T. G. Otte – compare to footnote 129.

¹²⁸ OTTE, p. 195.

Germany Sir Frank Lascelles informed about British consent.¹²⁹ Other powers, including the French, approved Waldersee's appointment. On 18 August 1900 Alfred von Waldersee accepted Field Marshall's baton from the hands of his Emperor at Kassel.¹³⁰ He proceeded to Austria-Hungary and Italy, and on August 23, he left Naples on board of a steamer *Sachsen*.¹³¹ But at that time the fighting was already almost over.

On 4 August German Ambassador to Russia reported that the Russians didn't expect an advance on Beijing too soon. Subsequent Bülow's report supported this view.¹³² In fact, already on 4 August the allied force left Tianjin and started its advance on Beijing. These force totalled less than 20,000 men: 8,000 Japanese, 4,800 Russians, 3,000 British, 2,500 Americans, and 800 French, but no Germans.¹³³ The Chinese were unable to halt the advance of the international forces, and on 14 August 1900 the relief force finally seized Beijing and liberated the legations.

Of course German forces weren't idle. On 5 August 1900, two companies of German troops under command of Captain-Lieutenant Philipp took part on an allied storming of Chinese position at Beicang.¹³⁴ The lack of German participation on the advance on Beijing has been caused partly by the assumption that the allied force would advance only to Yangcun.¹³⁵ On 9 August 1900, 200 German sailors led by Captain Pohl joined forces with Austro-Hungarian and Italian detachments, totalling 30 men each, and started their advance from Tianjin

¹²⁹ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4607, p. 88, Lascelles an Derenthal, 10. 8. 1900. The text in German edition uses the term "*supreme command*", instead of "*supreme direction*".

¹³⁰ ELKIND, pp. 315–316; MORSE, footnote 108 on p. 311.

¹³¹ *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, pp. 5–8.

¹³² *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4600, p. 80, Radolin an das Auswärtige Amt, 4. 8. 1900; *ibidem*, Nr. 4601, pp. 81–82, Bülow an Kaiser Wilhelm II, 5. 8. 1900.

¹³³ MORSE, p. 268.

¹³⁴ BArch-MA, RM2/1961, Nr. A. 6092 I, Berlin 8. 8. 1900.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, Nr. A. 6094 I. Bendemann, Berlin 9. 8. 1900.

to Beijing along the railroad. On the next day, Wilhelm II ordered all available sailors to disembark and advance to Beijing.¹³⁶

The Austro-Hungarians were delayed for some time, but all parts of the expedition reached Yangcun on 11 August and guarded it for one day against possible Chinese attack – even though Chinese forces had been repeatedly defeated by the allied force, large hosts of the Chinese continued fighting and disrupted rear of the foreign armies. On 12 August a new force of 100 Germans reached Pohl's column. While the allied armies were entering Beijing on 14 August, Pohl's mixed force reached the city of Madou, just in time to repel a Chinese attack on American troops which were guarding the city. Only on 18 August Pohl's forces reached Beijing after a dangerous journey.¹³⁷ Further 1,200 Germans entered Beijing on 23 August 1900.¹³⁸

The fighting in Beijing was fierce until the last moment. In early August, Yuxian's troops from Shanxi reached the capital; and they were well equipped and led by a resolute general. On 12 August the general came to the barricades and encouraged his troops; and he was killed by Mr. Bismarck, a German official of the maritime customs service who had volunteered to defend the legations.¹³⁹ The last of German victims was killed on 14 August: a previously wounded soldier who was killed one hour after his release from the hospital.¹⁴⁰ During the entire siege, German casualties were among the highest. Accordingly to H. B. Morse, 13 Germans were killed and 16 wounded.¹⁴¹ Winterhalder claims that 12 Germans were killed and 15 wounded. The difference between these sources may be explained by the fact that Winter-

¹³⁶ Ibidem, Nr. A. 6169 I. Berlin, 10. 8. 1900.

¹³⁷ WINTERHALDER, pp. 417–418.

¹³⁸ MORSE, p. 286. Morse claims that this was the first German force which entered Beijing.

¹³⁹ HART, p. 47.

¹⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 48.

¹⁴¹ MORSE, table on p. 280. Accordingly to this source, the overall number of killed defenders was 76. 18 French were killed and 50 more wounded; the Italians claimed 13 killed and 16 wounded as well, but their detachment was smaller.

halder's table does count civilian casualties separately.¹⁴² The Germans had the highest death toll among all defenders of the legation quarter itself. The number of casualties might have been even higher, but the medical staff in the legation quarter spared no efforts. Among its most praised members was doctor Welde from the German legation.¹⁴³ On 21 September 1900 Wilhelm II awarded medals to all German defenders of the legation quarter; Soden was awarded the highest military order "Pour le Mérite".¹⁴⁴

After the fall of Beijing, the Empress Dowager, the Guangxu Emperor and numerous dignitaries fled the Forbidden City. They were accompanied by Dong Fuxiang and his army; and finally they reached the city of Xian in the province of Shaanxi, almost 1,000 km far from Beijing. Ketteler's murderer En Hai made a fatal mistake when he tried to sale the silver watches he had stolen. Japanese troops captured him and later handed him over to the Germans. En Hai's defence was based on the fact that he was merely following orders. The Germans were unimpressed by such a defence and sentenced the murderer to death. Ketteler's body was found on 16 August in a coffin near the Hatamen Street, unmutilated; soon thereafter it was buried with all honours.¹⁴⁵ On 16 August, Beijing was divided into occupation zones of intervening powers: Russia, the United Kingdom, France, USA, Japan, and Germany. The German zone was located in north-western part of the Chinese City.¹⁴⁶ The Forbidden City was not divided, but on 28 August a friction of the allied forces paraded through this most sacred ground in China. The Germans were less represented than some other nations. 800 Russians, 800 Japanese, 400 Americans, 400 British, 400 French, 250 Germans, 60 Austro-Hungarians, and 60 Italians participated on the

¹⁴² WINTERHALDER, p. 440.

¹⁴³ HART, p. 43.

¹⁴⁴ BArch-MA, RM3/4745, Nr. A. 7617 I. Wilhelm II, Berlin, 21. 9. 1900.

¹⁴⁵ WINTERHALDER, p. 415; MORSE, p. 223.

¹⁴⁶ WINTERHALDER, pp. 414–415.

event.¹⁴⁷ At that time the unrestricted rivalry among the great powers started again.

On 26 August 1900, Russian Tsar announced his intention to withdraw the bulk of his troops from Beijing. Even though the Germans have been informed by Russian diplomacy in advance,¹⁴⁸ this was a blow to German interests.¹⁴⁹ British cabinet refused to follow Russian lead; the ministers were both unwilling to let German troops without British counterweight, and willing to spare Germany the humiliation of being deprived of command of an international army.¹⁵⁰ German objections were partly based on the obvious fact that the situation was far from settled.¹⁵¹ Indeed, units of Chinese army and the “Boxers” were dispersed, but not destroyed. There was still much fighting in Zhili, in the vicinity of Tianjin as well as Beijing; and many foreigners in other parts of China still felt threatened as well.

While the Germans contributed almost nothing to the relief of the Beijing legations, they didn’t fail to react to a failure of British policy at Shanghai. In August, the British decided to occupy the city in order to protect it from possible Chinese attack. France and Japan followed British example, and the Germans landed about 500 troops in the city as well.¹⁵² Lord Salisbury didn’t consider German landing a

¹⁴⁷ MORSE, p. 287; WINTERHALDER, p. 431.

¹⁴⁸ GP, Bd. XVI, footnote ** on p. 101.

¹⁴⁹ The Russians claimed that it was not an anti-German move; yet Bülow pointed out that it was perceived as such not only abroad, but also by German public opinion. GP, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4646, p. 134, Bülow an das Auswärtige Amt, 17. 9. 1900.

¹⁵⁰ OTTE, pp. 198–199.

¹⁵¹ On 14 September 1900 German Ambassador to France Prince Münster informed Berlin about his conversation with Russian Minister of Finance S. J. Witte. “*By the conquest of Beijing the situation changed, the resistance was broken,*” claimed Witte. – “*Nonsense, the slaughter goes on with undiminished strength in western regions,*” German Emperor remarked. Nevertheless, he approved the following notion: “*Good relationship between Russia and Germany is worth more than entire China.*” – “*That may be true.*” GP, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4641, pp. 128–129, Münster an das Auswärtige Amt, 14. 9. 1900.

¹⁵² YOUNG, pp. 183–188; OTTE, p. 220.

threat to British interests.¹⁵³ On 27 August the new German Minister to China Mumm von Schwarzenstein, en route to Beijing, appeared in Shanghai and informed about German plan to send a war vessel to Hankou.¹⁵⁴ The British feared the possibility of German seizure of forts at the Yangtze, yet in case of a serious clash between the Germans and the Chinese they were ready to assist the Germans.¹⁵⁵ Subsequent construction of German barracks in the very heart of Shanghai soured British attitude towards German troops in Shanghai.¹⁵⁶ When the Chinese asked German diplomacy to withdraw German forces, German Minister to China suspected that the British have induced Chinese officials to make such a move.¹⁵⁷ The Germans weren't persuaded that the conditions in China were already safe.¹⁵⁸ Since August 1901, British diplomacy tried to reach a simultaneous withdrawal of all occupying forces.¹⁵⁹ The British, French, Japanese, and German forces – totalling 2,000 to 3,000 soldiers each at the end¹⁶⁰ – were withdrawn only after prolonged negotiations which were completed at the end of 1902. German forces withdrew by 20 December 1902, most of them returned to Germany, two detachments, 150 and 80 troops strong, were sent to Jiaozhou and Tianjin, respectively.¹⁶¹

Aside from the question of Shanghai, the British and Germans generally cooperated. On 16 October 1900 the Germans and the British concluded the so-called Yangtze Agreement which was aimed at maintaining territorial status quo in China, as far as the two governments

¹⁵³ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4717, pp. 217–218, Richthofen an Kaiser Wilhelm II, 4. 7. 1900.

¹⁵⁴ YOUNG, p. 191.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 192.

¹⁵⁶ *GP*, Bd. XVI, footnote * on p. 451.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, Nr. 4943, pp. 452–454, Mumm an Bülow, 9. 6. 1901.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, Nr. 4944, p. 454, Mühlberg an Mumm, 9. 8. 1901.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, Nr. 4945, pp. 455–456, Mumm an Bülow, 9. 6. 1901; *ibidem*, Nr. 4946, pp. 456–457, Mumm an Bülow, 21. 1. 1902.

¹⁶⁰ MORSE, p. 365.

¹⁶¹ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4976, p. 491, Aufzeichnen des Staatssekretärs des Auswärtigen Amtes Freiherrn von Richthofen, 7. 12. 1902; and footnote * on the same page.

could exercise their influence.¹⁶² The spirit of Anglo-German cooperation survived for some time, and for some time it seemed possible (at least to the Germans) to create an alliance between Germany and the United Kingdom, with possible participation of Japan. But the Germans were too eager to bind the United Kingdom to the Triple Alliance formally, a move which the British resolutely opposed. Thus, the only result of the negotiations became the conclusion of the British-Japanese alliance on 31 January 1902. It is not necessary to present a detailed account of all these machinations, for it is already outside the scope of this article.

The rivalry between the great powers spoiled Waldersee's command. On 18 September the German commander reached Hongkong, embarked on board of German armoured cruiser *Hertha*, and proceeded to the north. On 21 September he arrived to Shanghai and met Minister Mumm; on 27 September he reached Tianjin. On 17 October Waldersee entered Beijing and enjoyed a spectacular parade of the allied forces inside the Winter Palace.¹⁶³ In the same palace he also set up his headquarters. Fedor von Rauch from Waldersee's entourage listed members of the staff. Waldersee's staff was overwhelmingly German, and this fact undoubtedly contributed to its efficiency. Aside from auxiliary personnel and of Waldersee himself there were 38 officers altogether; with the exception of 8 foreign attachés all of them were Germans.¹⁶⁴ There was one genuine Hun in Waldersee's staff: Captain von Etzel¹⁶⁵ from the General Staff. Major General von Gayl held the crucial post of *Oberquartiermeister*. Waldersee's chief of staff was Major

¹⁶² Full text of the treaty is quoted by Kajima. M. KAJIMA, *The Emergence of Japan as a World Power, 1895–1925*, Rutland – Tokyo 1969, pp. 91–92.

¹⁶³ F. v. RAUCH, *Mit Graf Waldersee in China. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, Berlin 1907, pp. 115–117.

¹⁶⁴ RAUCH, pp. 14–16. Rauch lists 51 people altogether, but 12 of them were clerks and surgeons and had no officer rank. Waldersee's own memoirs enumerate the number of members of staff: 38 officers and clerks, 30 NCO's and 146 soldiers. *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, footnote 1 on p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ "Etzel" means "Attila" in German.

General Karl Julius Gross von Schwarzhoff. Colonel Yorck von Wartenburg was a noted historian. Among notable German commanders outside the staff of the allied forces was Major Erich von Falkenhayn, who had been between 1899 and 1903 working as a military instructor to Chinese army and later became one of the most notable German commanders during the First World War. On Waldersee's request Falkenhayn became German representative in the Tianjin Provisional Government, an autonomous body in charge of the city, composed from foreign officers.¹⁶⁶ General Lothar von Trotha led a brigade; four years later he distinguished himself by slaughtering Herero rebels in German Southwest Africa.

Directing an international force was an enormous problem. The presence of large contingents from various countries led to frictions and renewal of national animosity. Initially good relations between Waldersee and French commanders have slightly worsened. Despite this fact, the relationship between German and French soldiers was generally good, much better than between the French and the British.¹⁶⁷ Even during the closing phase of the campaign the Germans were often fraternizing with unruly French troops.¹⁶⁸ Waldersee enjoyed much less respect than a "Weltmarschall" would deserve.¹⁶⁹

After his arrival, Waldersee immediately found himself in the middle of a dispute between the Russians and the British. The Russians had

¹⁶⁶ MORSE, p. 292.

¹⁶⁷ *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, p. 45.

¹⁶⁸ "In June [1901], a serious clash occurred over the closing of a brothel [in Tianjin]; over 200 of the French attacked with drawn swords and needle bayonets; a pitched battle ensued with the British and Japanese on one side, the French and Germans on the other; about a score were killed and wounded." YOUNG, pp. 251–252.

¹⁶⁹ "The French, Japanese and American generals stated that they had not received definite orders to place themselves under the field-marshal's command." MORSE, footnote 113 on p. 312. "The French and Russians ignored him, the Japanese barely tolerated him, the Americans thought him amusing." YOUNG, p. 157. C. C. Dix had a much better opinion of Waldersee: "For the rest of the operations he showed the greatest capacity and tact, and did much not only to bring the campaign to a close, but to preserve at any rate the semblance of a Peace between the Allies, who, immediately after the fighting was over, began to quarrel among themselves." DIX, p. 299.

already seized railroads between Beijing and Manchurian border, run by the British.¹⁷⁰ A compromise has been reached: the control of the track from Beijing to Yangcun was given to Waldersee, whereas the rest to Shanhaiguan remained in Russian hands.¹⁷¹ Thereafter Waldersee negotiated with the Russians about return of the railway from Yangcun to Shanhaiguan. The British disliked the terms of the treaty and asked the German government to instruct Waldersee not to sign the treaty until the British expressed their objections.¹⁷² British Ambassador Lascelles stated that the situation was “exceedingly grave” and could seriously damage British-German relationship. Bülow had his doubts about the best course of actions, but he didn’t object to postponing of the signing of the treaty. Moreover he suggested that General Schwarzhoff should sign the treaty instead of Waldersee.¹⁷³ The treaty has been signed on 17 January 1901. Another treaty from 15 February 1901 gave the control of the railway to British military authorities. In accordance with Bülow’s suggestion, both treaties were signed by Schwarzhoff.¹⁷⁴

The inhabitants of Zhili cared little of such machinations of the foreigners; they were living under threat of foreign punitive expeditions. H. B. Morse states that between 12 December 1900 and April 1901, 46 expeditions took place, 35 of them solely German, 4 Italian, 1 British, 1 American, the rest mixed.¹⁷⁵ Fedor von Rauch lists 61 punitive expeditions which took place at Waldersee’s command or were reported to him. Rauch doesn’t enumerate those operations which had been conducted prior to 29 September 1900. Accordingly to him, 40 of these

¹⁷⁰ MORSE, p. 322.

¹⁷¹ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4757, pp. 261–262, Aufzeichnung des Vortragenden Rats im Auswärtigen Amt Klehmet, 11. 12. 1900.

¹⁷² Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin, (further only PA AA), R 17822, Nr. 270, Berlin 5. 1. 1901.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, Nr. 162, Berlin 6. 1. 1901.

¹⁷⁴ German text of both treaties is quoted by Fedor von Rauch. RAUCH, pp. 421–424 and 425–430.

¹⁷⁵ MORSE, p. 317.

expeditions were German, 8 Italian, 3 Austro-Hungarian, 2 Japanese, 1 British, 1 American, and 6 mixed.¹⁷⁶ Susanne Kuß states that 76 expeditions took place in Zhili, 51 of them solely German. Moreover, the Germans were involved in 29 cases of fighting with the Boxers or Chinese soldiers.¹⁷⁷

Such punitive expeditions were facilitated by attitude of many Chinese commanders and officials. The most astute of Chinese statesmen, Marquess Li Hongzhang, had for a long time been trying to negotiate on China's behalf. He tried to mitigate Wilhelm II's wrath. In August 1900 he humbly asked Emperor Francis Joseph I for an intercession,¹⁷⁸ but the aged Emperor refused to undertake any steps.¹⁷⁹ On 1 October, Li re-assumed the duties of Viceroy of Zhili. At the same time, he was appointed China's negotiator during the peace talks, together with Prince Qing. The attitude of Li Hongzhang towards foreign occupants of Zhili was rather compliant. He ordered Chinese garrisons to retreat just before arrival of foreign troops.¹⁸⁰ What was more important for the poor inhabitants of Zhili, Chinese governmental troops turned against the "Boxers".¹⁸¹ The exact number of Chinese victims of the suppression of the Yihetuan movement will remain unknown, but it is certain that tens of thousands of people lost their lives.

Only several punitive expeditions in Zhili will be summarized shortly. On 11 September 1900, both Hoepfner's battalions of marine infantry, accompanied by Indian cavalry, surrounded and conquered a small city of Liangxiang held by Chinese troops and the "Boxers".

¹⁷⁶ RAUCH, pp. 417–420 and 439–445.

¹⁷⁷ S. KUß, *Deutsche Strafexpeditionen im Boxerkrieg*, in: M. LEUTNER – K. MÜHLHAHN (eds.), *Kolonialkrieg in China. Die Niederschlagung der Boxerbewegung 1900–1901*, Berlin 2007, pp. 136–137.

¹⁷⁸ HHStA, PA XXIX, China, Kt. 14, Liasse 1a, Nr. 6266, 20. 8. 1900.

¹⁷⁹ SCHUSTA, footnote 198 on pp. 197–198.

¹⁸⁰ MORSE, p. 318.

¹⁸¹ For example on 17 May 1901 Waldersee reported that a "Boxer" group had been defeated by Chinese regular army. BArch-MA, RM2/1863, Telegram Nr. 231. Waldersee, Peking 17. 5. 1901.

Accordingly to Susanne Kuß, all adult males were summarily executed, and the city was burned.¹⁸² Theodor von Winterhalder states that 800 Chinese were killed during the fighting and 150 “Boxers” were executed. Among the defenders were people who had taken part on siege of the legations in Beijing.¹⁸³ On 16–17 September 1900, a coordinated punitive expedition of the allied forces took place to the west of Beijing. H. B. Morse claims that its target was a city of Sanjiadian, whereas Th. von Winterhalder states that the goal was a city of Badazhu. Both authors are describing the same expedition. Accordingly to Morse, three columns were supposed to surround the city, but the German one didn’t appear, and so the Boxers fled.¹⁸⁴ Winterhalder states that the column in question, consisting of 1500 Germans, 100 Austro-Hungarians, and 170 Italians, arrived on time, but that the Americans attacked too early.¹⁸⁵ Among more notable cities occupied by the Germans and other allied forces were Kalgan, an important city on the border with Inner Mongolia, or Baojingfu, the capital of Zhili.

The greatest punitive expedition ever didn’t take place. In early 1901, Waldersee gradually formulated several different goals. In his report from 12 January he evaluated the possibilities of expanding German influence in Shandong. He didn’t consider necessary to seize the port of Qifu. In case of speedy advancement of peace talks with China, he suggested sending of 5,000–6,000 German troops from Zhili to Qingdao in order to enlarge German leased territory.¹⁸⁶ Shortly thereafter the situation changed. On 15 February 1901 Waldersee conversed with Minister Mumm, who was disappointed by the conduct of the negotiations with China.¹⁸⁷ On the same day Waldersee issued a general order in which he suggested to renew hostilities on a large scale. Accordingly to Waldersee’s plan, some 13,000 foreign troops should advance some

¹⁸² KUß, pp. 142–143.

¹⁸³ WINTERHALDER, pp. 454–455.

¹⁸⁴ MORSE, pp. 314–315.

¹⁸⁵ WINTERHALDER, pp. 455–456.

¹⁸⁶ *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, pp. 84–85.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 98.

700 miles to the province of Shanxi in order to put pressure on the Chinese court. Waldersee had consulted this idea with French commander Voyron who had agreed. Even British commander Gaselee supported the plan, but finally this idea has been rejected by the diplomats.¹⁸⁸ On 28 March 1901 Waldersee reported to Chief of Staff Alfred von Schlieffen that he had to abandon his plan; the most important reason was that he had too few troops available. Basically, he could rely on 9,000 Germans, plus relatively few Austro-Hungarian and Italian troops.¹⁸⁹ His plan was indeed hazardous, and it was widely criticised at Reichstag, even though some observers advocated it.¹⁹⁰ Waldersee's scheme of enlarging German leased territory in Shandong came to nought as well.

In China as well as at abroad, there were many complaints on behaviour of various armies, especially of the Germans. Already on 18 October an American newspapers "New York Nation" wrote: *"It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the greatest single obstacle of peace is the intransigent attitude of Germany [...] It is to Germany that the primacy belongs in aggression and mischief-making."*¹⁹¹ But the Germans already had in American eyes a rather undeserved reputation of being unenlightened and aggressive.¹⁹² Indeed, Waldersee's army had been suggested to be aggressive. Alfred von Waldersee fully shared his Emperor's attitude towards China. On February 21, 1901, he wrote in a private letter: *"Our Kaiser was the only one who wanted to tackle the Chinese properly: if one had followed him we would long have had peace."*¹⁹³

Both Germany and China had been represented at the First Hague Conference of 1899.¹⁹⁴ Yet China did not ratify the 1899 "Convention

¹⁸⁸ MORSE, pp. 343–344; *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, p. 98; YOUNG, pp. 247–249.

¹⁸⁹ *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, pp. 116–118.

¹⁹⁰ RAUCH, pp. 368–369.

¹⁹¹ MORSE, p. 319.

¹⁹² R. KAGAN, *Nebezpečný národ. Zahraniční politika USA 1700-1900*, Sv. I, Praha 2008, pp. 324–325.

¹⁹³ MOMBAUER, p. 95.

¹⁹⁴ The list of Chinese representatives at the First Hague Conference is available in:

with respect to the laws and customs of war on land” until 12 June 1907.¹⁹⁵ Germany and many other great powers ratified this Convention on 4 September 1900,¹⁹⁶ but their troops were behaving as if they had never heard about any regulations at all. As a matter of irony, Walderssee’s chief of staff General Schwarzhoff had been a technical expert of German delegation at the First Hague Conference of 1899. As such, he had taken a special care of legal definition of combatants and non-combatants.¹⁹⁷ But his participation on the conference seemingly had no impact on behaviour of international or German forces.

Not only the “Hun Speech”, but also “Hun letters” impressed mind of Germans. Many German soldiers were disgusted by the enormous bloodshed, and expressed their disgust by letters which they sent home. These letters were widely exploited by the Socialists and their leader August Bebel, and also by the Liberals. On 19–20 November 1900 a lively debate in Reichstag about China took place.¹⁹⁸ Eugen Richter (1836–1906), a distinguished Liberal statesman, criticised both various aspects of the “Hun Speech” and the subsequent conduct of German military:

“In general I mean: politics and religion shouldn’t be mixed together. Should it happen, not only politics, but also religion will be spoiled... Undoubtedly, many Chinese have been captured; taking into the account the limited fighting ability of Chinese troops it should be admitted; but so far we haven’t heard that Chinese prisoners had been anywhere taken into custody”¹⁹⁹

J. B. SCOTT (ed.), *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907. Accompanied by Tables of Signatures, Ratifications and Adhesions of the Various Powers and Texts of Reservation*, New York 1918, p. 8.

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem, p. 130.

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem, p. 129.

¹⁹⁷ J. B. SCOTT, (ed.), *The Reports to the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907*, Oxford 1917, pp. 140–142.

¹⁹⁸ U. WIELANDT, Die Reichstagsdebaten über den Boxerkrieg, in: M. LEUTNER – K. MÜHLHAHN (eds.), *Kolonialkrieg in China. Die Niederschlagung der Boxerbewegung 1900–1901*, Berlin 2007, pp. 165–172.

¹⁹⁹ On 20 December 1900 Major Erich von Falkenhayn explained to the Tianjin Provisional Government the fate of some captured and presumably innocent Chinese.

[...] Herr von Levetzow says: 'I have experienced a war as well, and the soldiers may have behaved in a similar way, too.' That happens. But in the previous wars, I believe, it didn't happen that the supreme commander had said in advance: 'Pardon will not be given.'²⁰⁰

Of course, some people defended Wilhelm II's speech and actions of German military. During the parliamentary debate Minister of War said that Wilhelm II's conduct was "from the human point of view, nice".²⁰¹ Rudolf Zabel argued in his book that German soldiers in conquered cities weren't encountering peaceful Chinese – truly peaceful Chinese had already fled out of fear of the "Boxers".

"Therefore, when a Boxer army retreats to such a city as Liangsianghsien and holds a new position there, then we may assume that the few 'peaceful Chinese' who remained in the city under such circumstances are to be considered to a certain degree accomplices of the Boxers. Even the Chinese knows well: 'Together captured, together hanged.' So why did he stay there? [...] But the war generalizes."²⁰²

Waldersee's opinion of the Chinese was not entirely unfavourable. German Field Marshall noticed that many Chinese settlements were as clean as cities in Germany or France.²⁰³ He spotted Chinese frugality, even though he wasn't impressed by some of its aspects, like eating cadavers.²⁰⁴ Meanwhile, Waldersee was experiencing the better part of Chinese culture. A decade ago he had met a courtesan named Sai Jinhua, who was at that time a concubine of Chinese minister to Berlin, Hong Jun. When Alfred von Waldersee arrived to China, Sai Jinhua introduced herself to him again. She gained some influence over him

"These prisoners had already been handed over. . . it was in contrary to German custom to keep [emphasis mine] prisoners." MORSE, p. 299.

²⁰⁰ Richter's entire speech is available at a website dedicated to Richter's memory: Eugen-Richter-Archiv, *Eugen Richter zur Hunnenrede Wilhelms II.*, http://www.eugen-richter.de/Archiv/Reden/Reichstag_20_11_1900.html [2015-10-10].

²⁰¹ SÖSEMANN, p. 120.

²⁰² ZABEL, p. 382.

²⁰³ *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, pp. 85–86.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 95–96.

and presumably persuaded him to treat the Chinese less harshly. There was even a suspicion that these two were in fact lovers.

The conditions in China were by no means good for the Germans. Among notable victims of conditions in China were: Colonel Count Yorck, who died on 27 November 1900 on a suffocation by carbon monoxide,²⁰⁵ Captain Bartsch, “*treacherously shot by a Beijing worker*”, and a notable military surgeon Prof. Kohlstock, who died of illness.²⁰⁶ Moreover Governor Jaeschke and Major Christ died in Qingdao at the beginning of 1901 and 1902, respectively. At the night of 17/18 April 1901, large part of the Winter Palace was destroyed by a huge fire. The fire originated in a house at the palace courtyard; Waldersee himself had lived there and later he moved to a modern asbestos house nearby. In the neighbouring house lived Major General Schwarzhoff who became the only victim of the fire. At its beginning Schwarzhoff was absent, walking in the neighbourhood, but then he returned and managed to save some of the most important documents which he kept at his flat. Thereafter he wanted to save his dog which was sleeping under his desk; and he disappeared. His corpse has been found the next day. Schwarzhoff’s burial took place on 20 April.²⁰⁷

At that time, the withdrawal of the allied forces has already been underway. On 28 March Waldersee expressed fear that the German expeditionary force could be drawn into British-Russian hostility. Moreover he was afraid of spread of infectious diseases among the troops. From these reasons he suggested withdrawal of the Germans from China.²⁰⁸ On 6 April 1901 Field Marshall Waldersee proposed partial retreat of foreign contingents.²⁰⁹ At that time there were still tens of thousands of foreign troops in Zhili.²¹⁰ On 3 June 1901 German Field

²⁰⁵ RAUCH, p. 174; *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, p. 62.

²⁰⁶ RAUCH, pp. 325–326.

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 324/ /345; *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, pp. 126–129.

²⁰⁸ *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, pp. 114–116. Waldersee’s report from 28 March 1901.

²⁰⁹ YOUNG, pp. 253–255.

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 253. Young claims that no less than 60,000 troops were present in

Marshall himself left China for good. He arrived to Hamburg at the beginning of August; on 12 August he met the Emperor in Homburg; and he returned to his post of Inspector-General of the Third Army.²¹¹ Similarly, the allied forces were gradually withdrawing from Zhili. In July 1906 there were still more than 5,000 foreign soldiers, excluding the legation guards; 450 of them were German.²¹²

At that time, the negotiations between China and the foreign powers which had started in December 1900 were still underway. Generally speaking, throughout the entire negotiations the Germans enjoyed support of their allies from the Triple Alliance, i. e. Austria-Hungary and Italy. Among the most controversial questions was the fate of the noblest culprits. The Germans continuously insisted on punishment of the worst criminals, including prince Duan himself.²¹³ Finally, Duan's life was spared, but Duan was deprived of his ranks and banished, and his son Pujun lost the position of heir-apparent. After prolonged negotiations, the "Boxer Protocol" has been signed on 7 September 1901.²¹⁴ It assured satisfaction for the murder of Minister Ketteler. China had to send a prince as a special envoy to Berlin, and a marble arch had to be erected at the place where Ketteler had lost his life. China agreed to pay an enormous indemnity: 450 million taels (67.5 million pounds), plus interests. Throughout the negotiations the Germans claimed 91,287,043 taels, and they were ascribed 90,070,515 taels, or 20 % of the enormous sum. China had to repay this sum in instalments until 1940. The legation quarter had to be rebuilt, fortified, and garrisoned by a standing force of legation guards. The area of the German legation had grown

Zhili at that time. Some of his figures are inflated: he states that 17,800 French and 18,700 Germans were present, whereas Morse estimates that there were some 44,000 foreign troops at the end of 1900, 9,000 to 11,000 of them being German. MORSE, pp. 319–320.

²¹¹ *Denkwürdigkeiten, Dritter Band*, pp. 170–171.

²¹² YOUNG, footnote 2 on p. 255.

²¹³ *GP*, Bd. XVI, Nr. 4643, pp. 130–132, Bülow an Kaiser Wilhelm II, 15. 9. 1900.

²¹⁴ The terms of the Boxer Protocol are analyzed in: MORSE, pp. 347–359.

ten times: from 2.5 to 25.5 acres.²¹⁵ Germany was allowed to station 300 legation guards in Beijing, together with 5–6 cannons and 6 machine guns. Furthermore, foreign forces gained the right to occupy various points at the way between Beijing and the sea, whereas Chinese fortifications in the area were destroyed. Weapons import to China in the next two years was forbidden. Among other provisions of the treaty were: punishment of high-ranking culprits and posthumous rehabilitation of moderate ministers, or capital punishment for membership in anti-foreign societies.

At the time of the signing of the Boxer Protocol, the penitentiary mission had already arrived to Germany. On 12 July 1901²¹⁶ Chinese court sent to Germany a special envoy, Zaifeng, Prince Qun, who was a brother of the powerless Guangxu Emperor and a future father of the last Chinese Emperor Puyi.²¹⁷ Prince Qun was requested to perform the ritual of kowtow in front of the German Emperor, but he refused to do so. On 4 September 1901 he was granted an audience at Potsdam and apologized for Ketteler's murder. Wilhelm II replied in a conciliatory manner, even though he remained adamant as far as the punishment of guilty Chinese was concerned.²¹⁸ German Emperor believed in cooperation between foreign powers and China, and the Empress Dowager Cixi shared this attitude. On 7 January 1902, Chinese Imperial court returned to Beijing. The entire diplomatic corps was invited to observe its return. On 24 January 1902, the Empress Dowager and the Guangxu Emperor granted an audience to foreign representatives in Beijing.²¹⁹ At this occasion, those diplomats, who had been appointed only after the defeat of the Boxer Uprising, presented their

²¹⁵ Ibidem, pp. 355–356.

²¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 348.

²¹⁷ K. MÜHLHAHN, *Kotau vor dem deutschen Kaiser? Die Sühnemission des Prinzen Chun*, in: M. LEUTNER – K. MÜHLHAHN (eds.), *Kolonialkrieg in China. Die Niederschlagung der Boxerbewegung 1900–1901*, Berlin 2007, pp. 204–209.

²¹⁸ Wilhelm II's speech to Prince Qun is recorded in: ELKIND, pp. 316–317.

²¹⁹ HHStA, PA XXIX, China, Kt. 7, Berichte 1902, Nr. 3/Vertraulich, Czikanan an Gołuchowski, Peking 25. 1. 1902.

credentials; as the first of them, Minister Mumm, the others followed. It was clear that the Boxer Uprising was over; but the dynasty was almost over as well.

Abstract

In late 1890's, a xenophobic Yihetuan ("Boxer") movement emerged in German sphere of influence in Shandong. In 1900, the movement spread into the neighbouring province of Zhili and was largely tolerated by anti-foreign officials. Foreign diplomats failed to understand this threat. As a consequence of hasty and miscalculated moves of both sides, the Chinese court found itself in the middle of an open conflict with the great powers. Since mid-June, foreign detachments were fighting with governmental troops in Zhili; on June 20, German Minister to China was killed and the siege of the Beijing legations began. German forces in the Far East were too limited to participate much on the fighting. Germany sent a large expeditionary force to the Far East, but these troops arrived too late to take part on the conquest of Beijing on 14 August 1900. Allied forces under supreme command of German Field Marshall Alfred von Waldersee occupied Zhili and conducted many punitive operations at the country. During the crisis, Germany gained bad reputation for the conduct of her troops.

Keywords

Germany; China; Qing dynasty; Yellow Peril; Boxers; Yihetuan; Imperialism; Hun Speech; German Military