

CHAPTER XV
THE CHIH LI VICEROYALTY AND TSENG'S
LAST DAYS

ABOUT the middle of September, 1868, Tsêng received orders transferring him to the viceroyalty of Chihli. On December 17 he set out, the populace of his capital thronging the streets through which he passed in enthusiastic recognition of his great popularity. Thirty-nine days later, such was the leisurely rate of travel by the available modes of conveyance then, he entered the capital. He was granted the honor of riding his horse through the forbidden city, and was received in audience on several different mornings, attending the court festivities in connection with the New Year.¹

The interviews were held in the east room of the Yang Sin Tien, the emperor seated and facing the west, and the two empresses dowager under the yellow curtain behind, Ts'u An to the south and Ts'u Hsi to the north. The questions were all addressed to Tsêng by Ts'u Hsi, and those of the interviews of January 26 and 27 are as follows:²

Question. Have you finished all your affairs at Kiangnan?

Answer. They are all finished.

Q. Your braves are disbanded?

A. They are disbanded.

¹ *Nienp'u*, XI, 27-30.

² *Record of Chief Events*, IV, 3b, 4a. Tsu Hsi is the one who practically ruled China from then until her death in 1908.

- Q. How many have been dismissed?
- A. Twenty thousand have been discharged and about thirty thousand remain.
- Q. From what place do most of them come?
- A. The Anhui men are the most numerous. There are also some from Hunan, but only a few thousand. Those of Anhui preponderate.
- Q. Were they disbanded without trouble?
- A. Without trouble.
- Q. Did you come all the way in peace?
- A. It was quiet all along the way. At first I feared there might be trouble from wandering braves, but I arrived without any trouble.
- Q. How many years have you been absent from the capital?
- A. Your servant has been absent from the capital seventeen years.
- Q. How many years have you led soldiers?
- A. At first my only task was to lead soldiers. For the last two years, receiving the Emperor's grace, I have been an official in Kiangnan.
- Q. You were formerly in the Board of Rites?
- A. Your servant formerly had a position in the Board of Rites.
- Q. How many years were you in the Board?
- A. Four years. In the twenty-ninth year of Taokwang I entered on the office of vice president of the Board of Rites and in the second year of Hsienfung I left the capital.
- Q. Is Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan your full brother?
- A. He is your servant's full brother.
- Q. How many brothers are there of you?
- A. Your servants are five brothers. Two of them died in the camp. We have received special grace from the Emperor.
[Kotows.]
- Q. Since you were formerly in Peking you must naturally be acquainted with the affairs of Chihli.
- A. Of the affairs of Chihli your servant does, indeed, know a little.
- Q. Chihli is utterly empty [of soldiers]. You will have to give very much care to drilling soldiers.

A. Your servant's talents will probably not suffice to accomplish it.

Thereupon Tsêng kotowed and retired. The following morning he was again ushered into the same place and another set of questions and answers followed:

Q. How many steamers have you built?

A. I have built one, and a second is being built but is not yet completed.

Q. Do you employ foreign builders or not?

A. The foreign builders do not exceed six or seven in number; the number of Chinese builders is very great.

Q. Of what nationality are the foreign builders?

A. Both Englishmen and Frenchmen are employed.

Q. Have you recovered from your illness?

A. I am somewhat better. Two years ago I was very ill at Chowehiak'ow, but in the seventh and eighth moons last year I grew better.

Q. Do you take medicine or not?

A. I did take some. [Retires.]

After the Chinese New Year Tsêng went to Paotingfu, where he took up the duties of office, matters chiefly of a routine nature.

In 1870, however, occurred an event of prime importance in the relations between China and the Western world—the T'ientsin massacre. Beside it the riot in Yangchow two years before, and other outbreaks here and there, paled into insignificance, both in extent of damage done and of excitement caused in China and abroad. It is generally asserted by foreign writers that there was much uneasiness and a far-reaching wave of anti-foreign propaganda about this time which, through the neglect or even the instigation of officials, reached a climax and broke against the unlucky missionaries at T'ientsin.³

³ This is the view of Cordier, *Histoire General de la Chine*, IV, 124 ff., who cites a number of cases of attack on Roman Catholic missions in 1868

On the face of it, the issue in T'ientsin was the question of the bewitching and kidnapping of children, some of whom were supposed to have been sold to the Roman Catholic orphanage, complicated with the monstrous allegation that the eyes and hearts torn from children were used in making medicines for such bewitching. Throughout the month of June, 1870, great excitement had been caused by the report that children were being kidnapped through sorcery. One of the men arrested on this charge, Wu Lan-chen, asserted in his testimony that the medicine he used came from a certain Wang San of the French Church. "From this the people of T'ientsin and the members of the church frequently came to blows. The Commissioner of Trade of the Three Ports, T'sung Hou, invited the French Consul, Fontanier, to come to his *yamen* and have the accused confronted. At this time serious rumours arose on all sides and the hearts of the people were greatly stirred. Fontanier in the *yamen* of T'sung Hou drew a revolver, and T'sung Hou hastily escaped. Fontanier went out in a rage and, meeting the magistrate of T'ientsin, Liu Ch'ieh, again used his revolver, wounding a servant. On witnessing this, the T'ientsin populace murdered Fontanier, burned churches in several places, and those that perished, foreigners and natives of that place who followed the religion, numbered several tens. These things happened on the 23d of the Fifth Moon [June 21]."⁴ This is slightly different from the account given in the official report of Tsêng Kuo-fan on July 21, according to which the prefect and magistrate had gone to the church to examine Wang San, and the consul there drew his revolver

and 1869 in evidence. The French chargé constantly insisted throughout the negotiations on the culpability of the magistrate and prefect of T'ientsin for having failed to keep order when danger was known to threaten.

⁴ The account given in the *Nienp'u*, XII, 3a, and b.

on them.⁵ In any case, this was a serious blow to foreign relations, because the mob when once aroused had not been content to deal with the French consul or the Roman Catholic Church only, but had also murdered a few Russians and destroyed British and American property.⁶

The Chinese authorities acted with a speed equal to that of the foreign ministers in Peking, showing that they appreciated the gravity of the outrage. Two days after the massacre, orders were received by Tsêng to proceed to the scene and settle the case in conjunction with Ts'ung Hou. He did not, however, start for several days, not indeed until the fourth of July, though he dispatched two officials of *taotai* (or intendant) rank to make preliminary investigations, employing the intervening time for a careful study of the reports of officials in T'ientsin, that he might be prepared to meet the foreign representatives. The viceroy was ill at this time. On May 22 he had requested a month's sick leave and had renewed the request on the day before the massacre.⁷ It was therefore from a sick bed that he rose to meet this new duty, and he was possessed of a fear that the difficulties of the task would cost him his life. In view of this apprehension he probably spent the interval, while underlings investigated the case at T'ientsin, in arranging his affairs for fear he should never return to Paotingfu. At any rate, he drew up a farewell letter to his sons, which opens as follows:

Today I am proceeding to T'ientsin to investigate and settle the case of the murder of foreigners and the burning of churches. The temper of foreign countries is passionate and the disposition of the T'ientsin populace is giddy and conceited. All in all, it will be hard to harmonise them; a bad spirit may be engendered, soldiers be brought on, and the matter may eventuate in

⁵ *Dispatches*, XXIX, 38b.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XXIX, 34.

⁷ *Dispatches*, XXIX, 33.

a very great disturbance. In revolving over and over in my mind the question of this journey, I am unhappily without a single good plan. From the time I first recruited "braves" in 1853 I have sworn to devote my life on the battle field. Now, advanced in years and weighed down with illness, I am in an extremely critical position. Yet, that I may preserve my first ideals, I am by no means willing to shrink from death. Lest perchance I should meet the extreme calamity [of death] and you be left with no knowledge of my various affairs, I am now setting forth one or two matters, in order that, being prepared, you may not be too perplexed.⁸

By the time Tsêng arrived in T'ientsin, July 8, he had already decided to attempt the settlement of the less serious claims of Russia, Great Britain, and America, and then to address himself to the difficult French issues.⁹ To his mind the whole question behind the massacre was that of the implication of the church in the two charges of kidnapping and tearing out hearts and eyes, and that question must first be investigated, since the confessions of the kidnappers accused the church. After Wang San was arrested, Tsêng proposed to find out whether he had been reared by the church, whether he was or was not implicated in the crime of kidnapping with Wu Lan-chen, and, finally, whether there was any truth in the charge

⁸ *Nienp'u*, XII, 4. Also see letters to his sons, July 2, 1870. I think that the point of view here reflected, coupled with the fact of his illness—he had entirely lost the use of one eye and suffered from a liver complaint that required rest (*Dispatches*, XXIX, 33a)—will defend Tsêng from the sarcasm of Cordier, IV, 130: "A la nouvelle du massacre, Tsêng Kuo-fan avait bien reçu l'ordre (édit du 23 Juin) de se rendre de Pao Ting a T'ien Tsin; il ne donna aucun signe de vie pendant trois jours, puis il se prétendit malade; (il avait, dit-on, mal aux yeux); et finalement n'arriva a T'ien Tsin que dix-sept jours (8 juillet) apres la catastrophe."

Tsêng's *Home Letters*, April 17, speak of great pain in his side and legs which made it hard for him to read and write. His illness was, I am convinced, genuine and not formal.

⁹ A memorial of July 5, *Dispatches*, XXIX, 34.

that hearts and eyes were torn out.¹⁰ The Chinese attitude in the negotiations would depend very much on their findings on these points. If they were true, China would have a certain amount of reason on her side and need not be too yielding; but if they were false, China would have to accept the responsibility for a grave offence against France. The French chargé, Rochechouart, had maintained that four questions were at stake: the insult to the flag, the murder of an official, the murder of several people, and the destruction of property. Tsêng, commenting on this to Prince K'ung, writes: "I hear that foreign nations regard an injury to the flag as breaking off peaceful relations and showing intention to resort to arms. We Chinese, announcing our firm belief in a peaceful solution of the case, are only able in fairness to pay indemnity, restore the property of the church, punish the offenders and give recompense for the lives lost. If they raise stormy waves, we should only remain calm and not be too positive in discussing matters with them."¹¹

This frankly expressed policy of peace and justice did not meet with the approval of the Chinese population. At T'ientsin Tsêng found an outward calm which concealed a seething discontent. Through the organisation known as the "Water and Fire Society" popular dissatisfaction made itself felt against Ts'ung Hou for having taken precautions against further trouble by forbidding any gatherings or the spreading of rumours; then against Tsêng on his arrival for confirming instead of reversing Ts'ung Hou's measures. The counsels of the opposition were hopelessly divided as to the means of coping with the foreigners. Some desired a general up-

¹⁰ Letters to Ts'ung Hou about July 4, but the date is not certain. *Miscellaneous Correspondence*, XXXII, 41b. Also see letter to Prince K'ung about the same time, *ibid.*, pp. 43 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

rising to expel foreigners from China, others an alliance with England and America against France. A third group would have war with France alone, while a more timid company would be contented to see Ts'ung Hou dismissed. When Tsêng, following his peace policy, ordered the protection of all foreigners, he turned the hostility of all these factions on himself.

The investigations which followed left the question as to whether kidnapping had taken place in some doubt, but demonstrated the entire innocence of the foreigners on all the charges. After several hundred persons had been examined—a hundred and fifty in the institution itself—not a single case could be found of persons actually kidnapped or any proof of hearts and eyes torn out. All the charges were based on well-side gossip and were no more authenticated than similar charges in Hunan, at Yangchow, or in other parts of Chihli. In his report Tsêng says:

Since England and France are illustrious countries how could they permit such atrocious actions? Looking at it from the standpoint of reason it could not be true. The Catholic Church has as a fundamental aim the urging of men to be upright. In the days of the Imperial Ancestor, the Benevolent Emperor [K'anghsi], they were long permitted to carry on their work. Had they aimed to kill and cut up human beings how could they have been tolerated in K'anghsi's generation? As to the establishment of the Hall of Compassion, their original purpose is to collect together in orphanages and almshouses the bereaved and poor people. The money they spend each year is considerable.

But there is also a reason why the people of T'ientsin harbor doubts and grow excited. The first cause of doubt arises from the fact that the gates of the foreign churches stand closed the entire year; they are very secret and the inside [of their grounds] cannot be seen. The church and the Hall of Benevolence alike have underground rooms, and they are constructed by workmen engaged in other places. Your servant and others went in person

to the foundations of the burnt church and carefully examined and found that these underground rooms are only to prevent dampness and furnish storerooms for coal and have no other use. But the people of T'ientsin, not having seen for themselves, but merely having heard that there were these underground rooms, were much excited at the reports that young children were shut up in their dark recesses, especially since [the work] did not pass through the hands of local workmen.

A second cause for doubt arises from the fact that there are Chinese who have come to the Hall of Benevolence to be cured of diseases, who have remained for a long while and cannot be induced to come out again. Such a case occurred when the daughter of a former magistrate of the Tsinhsien district, Kiangsi, Wei Hei-chen, Mrs. Ho [*née* Wei], brought her daughter into the Hall for treatment. And when she did not return after a long time her father went to the Hall and gently besought her to come home, but she was stubbornly unwilling to do so. It was therefore declared that they had a medicine which magically destroyed her original nature.

The third cause of doubt is due to the fact that the Hall of Benevolence, when it receives and keeps children who have no support, though they are beggars and poverty-stricken folk, receives all those who are dangerously ill and about to die into their faith. There is also the report about baptism. Baptism means that when they die the priest takes water and places it on their foreheads and seals their eyes, saying that they can ascend to heaven. When the people see that they receive [into the faith] those who are at the point of death, and hear that they themselves wash the eyes of the dead, they are greatly surprised. Again there are wagons and boats that bring people from other places to T'ientsin, fetching sometimes several tens or a hundred persons. The populace seeing these [persons] come in but never go out, cannot understand the reason.

A fourth cause of suspicion is that within the institution the buildings are many and scattered, with different places where scripture is studied, lessons read, hand work done, or the sick healed. Sometimes a child is in a front building and the mother in one at the back, or the mother in the Hall of Benevolence and

the son in the church building by the river, and they do not meet for years.

In addition to these a fifth cause for suspicion lies in the fact that during the fourth and fifth moons of this year there were cases of kidnappers who used medicines to bewitch people, while at the same time the number of deaths at the mission were unusually numerous, and many of the burials took place at night, with two or three corpses in one coffin. On the 6th of the Fifth Moon [June 4], in a burial ground east of the river a coffin containing two bodies was dug up by a dog. Tso Pao-kwei, *yuchi* of the middle camp of T'ientsin city, and others inspected them. The dead all begin to decompose from within, but these had begun to decompose on the outside, their breasts and abdomens were torn open and their entrails exposed. This gave rise to serious rumours. When people hear everywhere at all times the words of inflammatory placards they believe them to be proven; but when these five doubts are gathered together they hate to the utmost. When the kidnappers implicated the church and the people saw the sight in the graveyard . . . their rage was uncontrollable. Finally, when the prefect and magistrate went to the mission to examine Wang San and consul Fontanier fired his revolver their frenzy was all the more out of control. It caused a clamor to arise from ten thousand throats at the same time; they made a sudden onslaught and consummated a great riot. Such giddy conceit is surely an abominable thing, but these suspicions are not the result of a single morning and evening.¹²

So far as the preliminary investigations went, therefore, the Roman Catholic Church was completely vindicated. But while these results were being obtained the temper of the foreign ministers underwent a change. Seeing nothing tangible to show for the promises of settlement and demands of punishment, their former tone of mildness now tended towards belligerency. On his coming to T'ientsin Tsêng had sent a carefully worded letter to the French chargé of which he writes to Prince K'ung:

¹² Translated from a part of Tsêng's general report, *Dispatches*, XXIX, 36-40a.

Foreigners are most impatient by nature, and the T'ientsin affair has dragged on for ten days with nothing but empty dispatches going back and forth. So, fearing lest they might get out of patience at the delay, in order to quiet their minds—especially on the points to be debated—I have already sent them a dispatch promising speedily to settle the matter. Though the dispatch was very sincere I “used an empty pen” on the subjects of penalty and indemnity, on which matters negotiations are desirable.¹³

In a letter, about July 14, Tsêng anticipated very little trouble, writing as follows:

Yesterday I heard that a message had arrived by telegraph stating that a reply had come from the French monarch to the general effect that for many years relations with China had been conducted amicably. If on this matter the points at issue were to be settled justly, peace could be preserved and there would be no need to adopt military measures, etc. I do not know whether the report is true or not. The French and Prussians are at the brink of war; reports to that effect have been rife for some time. If by chance France should go to war with Prussia, or even if their relations grow more strained, she would not care to get into difficulties with China. I hear further that the French monarch is old and burdened with affairs so that his intentions will be peaceful, not warlike.¹⁴

Even if no complication had arisen over the punishment of local officials there would have been more difficulty in securing justice on the Chinese side than the foreigners realised, engrossed as they were with the outrageous murders of their innocent nationals. In a number of letters Tsêng makes mention of this.¹⁵ Some of the guilty ones had disappeared, others would not confess

¹³ Undated letter to Prince K'ung, written probably on the eighth or ninth of July. *Miscellaneous Correspondence*, XXXII, 45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XXXII, 46b.

¹⁵ In particular in a letter to Li Hung-chang, *Miscellaneous Correspondence*, XXXII, 52b-54a.

even under torture. Even as late as September he still had but a small list of proved participants in the riot. The difficulty of securing evidence and convictions against guilty parties in mobs, as, for example, in the United States, enables us to understand, and to some extent sympathise with Tsêng in his troubles. On the other hand, the French were not content to sit down and await the slow and uncertain outcome of such investigations. There were at least three men who could be held accountable for negligence if not culpability, the prefect and magistrate of T'ientsin, who were charged with keeping the peace in the city, and the *t'ituh* or general of the province, Ch'eng Kuo-jui. The French held that these men, knowing of the rumors that were abroad and of the placards that bore horrible accusations against the missionaries, should have taken due precautions to maintain order.

On July 19 the French chargé demanded (and this was confirmed by a dispatch the following day) that capital punishment be inflicted on these three men, with a threat of naval action unless the demand was complied with. Tsêng and Ts'ung Hou consulted together and decided that, in spite of their opinion that these men were in no way deserving of such a punishment, the French appeared to be so thoroughly in earnest that the welfare of the whole country rendered it necessary for China to yield to their demand. Accordingly they recommended handing over the prefect and magistrate to the Board of Punishments; but in view of the *t'ituh's* slight connection with the case they recommended that negotiations regarding him be transferred to Peking, where that officer was at the moment.¹⁶ This memorial marks the turning point in the negotiations. Tsêng felt that he had made a serious mistake in adopting the recommenda-

¹⁶ *Dispatches*, XXIX, 42.

tion that these men be punished. The *Nienp'u* asserts that Tsêng had yielded against his better judgment to the arguments of T'sung Hou, and that almost before the dispatch had left his hands he regretted his part in it. In several of his letters he tried to recall the recommendations, and in the last communication with Prince K'ung he observes that in dealing with foreigners one must leave room for retreat on account of their craftiness; that in the matter of the punishment of these officials he had made a cardinal mistake by agreeing to it and leaving himself no ground for such retreat.¹⁷ Violent opposition arose on the part of officials and gentry to sacrificing these two men. Letters of protest, memorials to the emperor, denunciations, poured in from all sides because of Tsêng's whitewashing of the Roman Catholic Mission and his recommendation of punishment for the local officials. On the other hand, Ts'ung Hou pulled in the other direction, urging that they go further in meeting the demands of the French as to the local officials. Since Tsêng, sorry that he had gone that far, firmly refused to proceed a step further, Ts'ung Hou asked to have him replaced by some other official.¹⁸

On all sides the Chinese began to talk of war. But with characteristic courage Tsêng tried to stem the current setting in that direction. At the end of July he plainly discussed China's condition for war in a frank memorial to the emperor. He said that it was necessary for China to suppress vigorously all talk of war, because she was too weak to fight. Personally the thought of death on the battle field did not daunt him, but the fact was that China could not wage a successful war and had no alternative to a peace policy. Even if by strenuous efforts temporary success could be won, the foreigners would simply come

¹⁷ *Miscellaneous Correspondence*, XXXII, 56.

¹⁸ *Nienp'u*, XII, 8a-9b.

again a following year, stronger than ever. The T'ientsin affair was stirred up by the ignorant rabble and should not be permitted to lead to war.¹⁹ This pointed to a somewhat opportunist policy—granting all the reasonable demands of France while trying to get off as lightly as possible regarding the punishment of officials. In a letter to Li Hung-chang in September²⁰ he told him that Robert Hart had advised him to apprehend the guilty parties, and, if they received their just punishment, the demands regarding the officials could easily be settled. Eventually the Chinese government was driven to Tsêng's point of view, but it first tried the plan of sending other men to aid in the negotiations. Ting Jih-chang, governor of Kiangsu, was ordered north, and Mao Chang-hsi came temporarily, bringing a number of high officials from Peking. Li Hung-chang also was ordered to bring his army to T'ientsin, and arrived there in August.²¹ He suggested that a joint commission be appointed to investigate the charges against the two local officials, the decision of which should be binding on each side,²² but at that time the emperor was indignantly refusing to consider the execution of these men, and the suggestion came to nought.²³ Another group of these new negotiators tried to secure a modification of the French demands, but the chargé was adamant, and in consequence the prefect and magistrate were ordered to T'ientsin for trial. On the twenty-seventh of September the report of the trial was made by Tsêng, saying that the evidence against them was slight and that they were commended to the leniency of the Board of Punishment, in order to allay the fears of officials and people throughout China.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Miscellaneous Correspondence*, XXXII, 54, 55a.

²¹ *Nienp'u*, XII, 8-9b.

²² *Ibid.*, 10b.

²³ *Ibid.*, 11. Edicts of August 8 and 12, which insisted that the French had the right only to demand justice, not to impose such an indignity.

The French on their side were exasperated at the slow progress of the trials of rioters, and they protested against the consideration shown the accused officials, who were, they said, treated as distinguished guests rather than as prisoners. Threats of bombardment were made by the French naval officer unless within a definite period the whole case were satisfactorily settled. In a letter to Prince K'ung, Tsêng says he does not know whether the threat is to be taken seriously or what kind of a settlement would suffice. "If they want the prefect and magistrate executed," he writes, "China can settle the case on that basis only with the greatest difficulty. If they say that they desire the punishment of the guilty parties China cannot justly refuse. Can they indicate the definite number of persons whose execution would satisfy them? When China has meted out punishment according to the number, can peace easily be preserved or not? In addition to this, and compensation for the churches, and indemnity for the lives, is there any other demand or not?" He added that he had already completed the trials of eight who deserved execution, and had a list of some twenty who should be punished. To produce a definite number of genuine rioters at a specified time was a simple impossibility. When the limit of time expired he intended to offer his list, and promise another list a few days later, thus avoiding war.²⁴ In accordance with this plan he did submit a first list of offenders (September 8),²⁵ with a total of fifteen to be executed and twenty-one to receive lighter punishment. A final list was submitted on October 7.²⁶ This sufficed for the French, and the rest of the negotiations proved to be easy. A compromise was reached on the punishment of the officials, the *t'ituh* being

²⁴ *Miscellaneous Correspondence*, XXXII, 51, 52. Early in September in all probability.

²⁵ *Dispatches*, XXIX, 64-66a.

²⁶ *Nienp'u*, XII, 15b, 16.

released, and the prefect and magistrate condemned to banishment in Heilungkiang.²⁷

Meanwhile, through the assassination of Ma Sin-yi in Nanking, that governorship again became vacant, and Tsêng, being practically *persona non grata* to the higher officials in the capital and yet too powerful to degrade or dismiss, was appointed to fill it, by edict dated August 30, 1870. When the general terms of the settlement were agreed to, he was ordered to hasten to his new office. On the way to Nanking Tsêng stopped at Peking, where he was received in audience, October 20 and 21. Again the questions were asked by the empress dowager, Ts'u Hsi:²⁸

Question. On what day did you leave T'ientsin?

Answer. On the twenty-third [October 17].

Q. Have the chief offenders in T'ientsin been executed yet or not?

A. They have not yet been punished. But according to the consul's word the Russian minister will come to T'ientsin, and the French minister [chargé] Rochehouart is sending men as witnesses, so it has not been possible to execute them.

Q. When does Li Hung-chang think he will be able to punish Win and his fellow culprits?

A. On the night of the 23d [October 17] a letter was received from Li Hung-chang stating that he expects that all the culprits will be punished by the 25th [October 19].

Q. Is the populace of T'ientsin just now restless and hard to manage?

A. The populace is already quieted now and not hard to manage.

Q. Whatever possessed the prefect and magistrate to make their early escape to Hsünteh and other places? [In other words why were they allowed to go?]

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15. Decision on the *t'ituk's* case was reached on September 25; that on the others October 5.

²⁸ *Record of Important Events*, IV, 6.

- A. When the prefect and magistrate left their posts there was no anticipation of their being criminals, so they boldly set out; then afterwards when men were sent to inform them that they had been degraded and reported to the Board of Punishments these officials were much surprised and started back from Hsünteh and Mihyun to T'ientsin.
- Q. Do you now have any sight in your right eye?
- A. My right eye is without light and I can see nothing, but my left eye still has sight.
- Q. Are your other ailments cured?
- A. The other things are much better.
- Q. From the way you stand and kneel your strength seems to be good.
- A. I have not regained all my former strength.
- Q. The affair of Ma Sin-yi, is it not strange?
- A. This affair is very strange.
- Q. Ma Sin-yi managed affairs very well.
- A. He managed affairs with skill and mildness.

The next day the interview was continued :

- Q. How many soldiers did you drill in Chihli?
- A. Your servant drilled three thousand new soldiers; the former viceroy, Kwan Wen, drilled four thousand old-style soldiers, seven thousand in all. It is the intention to train three thousand more, making a total of ten thousand. I have already come to an understanding with Li Hung-chang to determine the regulations according to your servant's memorial and carry out the plan.
- Q. The training of soldiers in the south is also most important. You must manage this very efficiently.
- A. It is now quiet along the seacoast, but we must find means of guarding it. Your servant intends to establish fortifications at important places along the Yangtse River.
- Q. If you can defend this it will be very fine. These churches give us constant trouble.
- A. Of late years there have been many riots connected with churches. The church members are fond of imposing on those common people who do not "eat the religion"; the

priests are willing to protect the church members, and the consuls to protect the priests. Next year when the treaty with France is revised we must make a revision in the clause regarding the church. . . .

His visit in Peking was extended till after the emperor's birthday (November 3) and his own (November 4). That being his sixtieth anniversary, his fellow officials of Hunan and Hupeh gave him a magnificent feast in the Guild Hall. After that he repaired to Nanking, where he took over the seals on December 14.²⁹

He was far from popular now in the capital, and wrote to his brother from Nanking during the following year:³⁰

The two times I was in Peking I was not properly received, for I was neglected by all the officials. Especially has this been true since the T'ientsin affair, over which wordy discussions have taken place, and since when in all matters great or small those in the Board have been disposed to keep it stirred up with trifling words and cutting gibes. When Ch'eng Yu-li, being forwarded to Heilungkiang, passed through T'ungchow, his wife at the capital made accusations in which she said that I had been unfair in carrying on my investigation and that I owed him four thousand taels on his salary and would not pay it, etc. From this my heart cannot but be saddened. Who, having lived through several decades, does not know that official life, if it has its comforts, also has its risks; that if there is promotion there is also downfall, and that he should in anticipation cultivate a detachment that cannot be overcome, only praying that no serious calamity shall befall him sufficient to bring shame to his ancestors, his relatives, and the people of his native place?

Aside from routine matters and a long tour of inspection in October and November, 1871, only one thing is of especial importance in this second term of Tsêng at Nanking. This was the memorial in which he and Li Hung-

²⁹ *Nienp'u*, XII, 17b.

³⁰ *Home Letters*, September 24, 1871.

chang begged the emperor to depute Ch'eng Lan-pin and Yung Wing to pick out and send to America and other countries of the West superior young men to learn the mechanical arts. They called attention to the earlier attempts to send Chinese abroad to learn how to organise the army and navy, but thought that the time had now come, particularly in view of the newly negotiated treaty with America, to send students, first to America and then to other countries, to learn all the arts. The two viceroys had already instructed the two designated officials to draw up regulations for these students and begged the Tsungli Yamen to endorse them. Funds were to be secured from the customs revenues. It is beyond the limits of this book to trace the subsequent history of this attempt, which if carried out in accordance with the wishes of Tsêng Kuo-fan and Li Hung-chang—provided sufficient numbers of chosen men had been sent abroad—would have resulted in bringing China far on the road of progress.

This plan was sound in its aim. When we reflect on the benefit secured to Japan from the Iwakura Embassy and the students sent abroad about the same time, it does not appear at all unreasonable to suppose that, had there been a succession of men of such liberal spirit and fearless temper as Tsêng, the plan would not have failed as it did. Its conception and outspoken recommendation by a man, who in his youth had reflected a strong desire that foreigners might leave China forever, shows how little truth there is in the charge that Tsêng was hopelessly reactionary. He was distinctly in advance of the average official and citizen of his day and for a generation thereafter. He had evidently grasped the thought that China was far behind the Western states both in government and the mechanical arts, and that she would be at a serious disadvantage unless steps were taken to remedy her shortcomings.

It was probably about this same time or a little earlier that Tsêng sent a secret memorial urging the modernisation of the government by the adoption of the following programme:³¹

1. The removal of the capital from Peking to some central point.
2. Abolishment of the corrupt practices of officialdom and the establishment of right methods of government.
3. Reform of the military in the creation of a modern army and navy, both to be placed under the central government.
4. Reorganisation of the treasury, which should be controlled entirely by the central government.
5. Reform in the method of recruiting the civil service, the dismissal of useless officials and the specific training of those who were capable.

The matters discussed in this memorial, of which the above is a simple outline, are the fundamental weaknesses of the Chinese system as it then existed, and, despite the Revolution, still exists today. It is very doubtful whether even the prestige of a man of Tsêng's caliber would have sufficed to transform the China of that day, with its great conservatism, into a progressive state. The task was certainly beyond the strength of Li Hung-chang, who, however, was more of a politician than Tsêng and apparently acted less on principle than expediency. Yet it is greatly to the credit of Tsêng that he so accurately pointed out the evils and indicated the remedies which, if his successors could only have adopted them, would have prevented the sad collapse of her central government.

That he is to be classed as a progressive and not a reactionary is to be seen in the further fact that Tsêng and the higher officials of state for a generation had broken through the red tape of Chinese practice and attained

³¹ Kawasaki, *To-ko no I-jin*, pp. 105-6. I have been unable to secure the original memorial, but it apparently dates from 1870 or 1871.

high office at a comparatively youthful age, in many instances without having gone through the intermediate steps.³² Tsêng himself never held any provincial office in the regular way until he was appointed viceroy of the Two Kiang. His brother, Kuo-ch'üan, although he held titular rank in the lower levels, actually commenced his civil career as governor. Li Hung-chang, Tso Tsung-tang, and P'eng Yu-ling similarly moved into the higher ranks with little or no actual service in the minor civil offices. These were extraordinary steps for so conservative a government as that of China to take. By thus radically breaking red tape for Tsêng and his appointees, China was borne far from its old moorings, and in political as well as other matters Tsêng proved himself liberal if not radical, where changes did not involve departures from the inner genius of his race.

His death occurred suddenly in March, 1872, during his period of rest following the daily after-dinner walk in his garden. It was not wholly unexpected, however, for there had been a number of preliminary warnings, one of them a few days before his death, when he went out to the riverside to meet a distinguished visitor and fainted in his sedan chair on the way. It was a great loss, deeply felt by the people of Nanking and by those who recognised the importance of his work throughout China. For three days the imperial audiences were suspended in his honor. The mandate issued on this occasion may well summarise the Chinese feeling towards him, because it expresses what in his case were no mere polite platitudes:

Tsêng Kuo-fan, Grand Secretary and Viceroy of the Two Kiang, was thoroughly learned, wide and deep in ability, loyal and sincere by natural disposition and upright in conduct. Hav-

³² Li Ung-bing calls attention to this fact in his *Outlines of Chinese History*, pp. 543 f.

ing gained special notice of the Emperor Hsuan Tsung [Toa-kwang] he rose continuously from the Hianlin Academy to the second rank. In the second year of Hsienfung he organised the Hunan Army and attacked the Yueh Rebels, fighting successively in a number of provinces and repeatedly gaining honours for meritorious service. The Emperor Wen Tsung [Hsienfung] rewarded him by designating him to active office and appointed him viceroy of the Two Kiang, ordering that he be appointed an Imperial Commissioner in charge of military affairs. Later on, when We were looking over these records We realised that here was a most important man. His merit was very great in the pacification of the southeast. On the fall of Nanking he was honoured with a first class "Enduring and Brave" marquisate, hereditary and not to be abrogated, and granted the right to wear a two-eyed peacock feather. Having held office at this post for a long time he knew all its good and bad points. He gave all his strength to making plans [for its welfare]. He was a reliable minister and greatly esteemed by the populace—in truth a minister who was Our other self, who would be expected to live long and enjoy continued favour. Now We hear of his passing away and Our grief is profound.

Let Tsêng Kuo-fan be granted the posthumous title of Senior Tutor. Let a reward of three thousand *taels* be granted, according to the rank of a cabinet minister, for funeral expenses, to be paid from the Nanking treasury. Let a sacrifice be offered in his honour; Mutenga is to go thither to perform this sacrifice. We also confer on him the posthumous name of Wen Cheng. His spirit tablet is to be in the Memorial Hall of the Illustrious Faithful and in the Hall of the Worthy in the capital. Also in his native Hunan and in Nanking let special memorial temples be erected in his honour. A full account of his life and activities is to be forwarded to the Board of Historiographers. As is fitting, his mistakes are hereby cancelled. Let the *yamen* investigate and send in a memorial. When his coffin is being borne to his native place let all the local officials [along the way] give it special care. His title of marquis of the first grade is to be inherited by his son Tsêng Chi-tse, who is excused from being presented for an interview. As to the number of his descendants, Ho Ching is

to make an investigation and report in a memorial, after which Imperial Mandates will be issued, granting them special favour in order to commemorate his extreme faithfulness and sincerity. Respect this.

Tsêng's mantle fell on Li Hung-chang, whose subsequent career meets foreign relations at so many points as almost to obliterate among Westerners the memory of his older chief, in spite of the fact that in Chinese eyes there is no comparison. Li Hung-chang and Tso Tsung-tang accomplished much after Tsêng's death; but not a leaf of Tsêng's wreath have they taken away in the eyes of the Chinese. Tsêng was honest and died poor; Li was reputed to have profited from high office and died very wealthy. In addition to this, Li never found the type of associates whom Tsêng had gathered about him. Some said this was because Li was too radical, others because he preferred to have inferior men that he might shine by contrast. Whatever the cause, the civil service, which to the end of the eighties was largely dominated by Tsêng's veteran leaders of the Taiping days, rapidly declined in the generation following until the Revolution of 1911 swept the Manchu Dynasty from power altogether.