



# China Always Says

# "No" to Narcotics

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS



# **China Always Says “No” to Narcotics**

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## Foreword

People have used drugs for almost as long as human history. According to ancient Chinese, Persian and Indian literature, marijuana has been used for hundreds of medical purposes since prehistoric times. At the same time, the ancient literature also revealed the toxicity of marijuana and its pernicious effects on the human body. A poppy capsule from prehistoric times was reported discovered in a house by a Swiss lake. A number of Bronze Age ceramic pots from 1,500 B.C. unearthed in Cyprus are now preserved in London's Science Museum and look like poppy seedpods. Archaeologists believe, after scientific research and strict inference, that these ancient pots were used to contain an opium solution sold to Middle Eastern countries.

Marble sculptures on Roman stone coffins from the third century B.C. were also found to have two poppy seed capsules in their hands, which seemed to explain the pains of the ghosts in the nether world. The great ancient Greek blind poet Homer described the poppy as a flower to dispel all worries. Perhaps it was while chewing the beautiful flower that he decided it was "a drug to lull all pain and anger, and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow." This is perhaps all that the ancients knew about the poppy's effects. A tiny dose of the drug made people slightly intoxicated, but they still could not know that it was as ferocious as poisonous snakes and wild beasts. At that time, the poppy and the opium extracted from it neither made a great contribution to humankind nor did any great harm. At most, it acted as a sedative or a hypnotic agent used in religious rites.

Hippocrates, a Greek physician dubbed the father of medicine in the West, discovered the pain-killing effect of opium in the fourth century B.C. From then on, opium was formally used as a medicine.

The German pharmacist F.W.A. Sertürner separated an alkaloid from the dried pulp of unripe poppy capsules in the 18th century. The



white or colorless crystalline powder had a strange pain-killing effect on all ailments. His find should be rated as a great medical discovery. He joyfully called it “Morphium” (“morphine” in English) after Morpheus, the Greek mythological god of dreams. Even today, morphine is still used as a common and effective anesthetic sedative and has helped many patients get through extremely difficult moments.

Opium as a narcotic drug seemed to emerge much earlier. The bad habit of opium addiction was introduced into China from beyond the South China Sea in the 17th century. Emperor Yongzheng of the Qing Dynasty ordered a ban on opium addiction in 1729, and Emperor Jiaqing ordered a ban on the import and growing of opium in 1796. The Portuguese found in the early 18th century that they could make good profits from smuggling opium from India into China. In 1773 and 1797, the British East India Company obtained patents for the manufacture of and trade in opium and then dumped large quantities of opium into China for huge profits. The United States also exported Indian and Turkish opium to China. The opium smuggled into China rose from 4,016 boxes a year in 1811 to 35,445 boxes a year in 1840.

The Chinese became the “sick man of East Asia”. It was well known that the nation was almost destroyed and two wars were fought over the opium trade. Opium became a real calamity.

However, the opium poppy’s uses as a drug had not come to an end. In 1874, the British pharmacist C.R.A. Wright was the first to extract an organic chemical compound by heating morphine and ethanol. More than a decade later, a German chemist called Heinrich Dreser also obtained the same chemical compound through experiments and confirmed that its pain-killing and sedative effect was four to eight times more powerful than morphine. It was heroin, the king of drugs. Once it was put on the market, its vicious nature – whereby it was easy to become addicted to it but difficult to come off it and whereby an overdose might inhibit breathing and cause death – was



soon exposed. People began to be on the alert.

At an international conference on opium in The Hague in 1912, the representatives of all countries agreed unanimously on controls over the production, trafficking and sale of opium, morphine and heroin. The United States passed a law in 1924 to completely ban the manufacture and import of heroin. The British government deleted heroin from the British Pharmacopoeia in 1953.

However, it was all too late. The monster, once let loose from the cage, would never go back inside readily.

When Westerners trafficked large quantities of opium to China, they might not have anticipated that, merely a century later, a new generation of opium products – together with other drugs extracted from marijuana and coca – would run rampant in the Western world as a killer comparable only to nuclear weapons.

Today, the drug deluge exists not only in the West but in all parts of the world. It has become an incurable “social plague” and “chronic disease” in the civilized world. There is not a single piece of clean land on this blue planet that is free from the damage, torment and harassment of drugs. No wonder people have called the drug deluge as a “world plague”.

According to United Nations figures published in 2001, some 200 million people in the world were addicted to drugs. Of those, 144 million used marijuana, 9 million used heroin, 4 million were addicted to opium, 14 million used cocaine and 30 million used amphetamines. Every year saw 100,000 people die and 10 million people lose their ability to work because of drug addiction throughout the world.

The annual volume of drug transactions on the world drug market comes to between US\$800 billion and US\$1 trillion. This astronomical figure is equal to 9 percent of the world trade volume and exceeds the annual output value of the global steel industry or oil industry. Today, the trade volume of drugs is second only to the world’s large-scale trade in arms.



According to estimates, about one-third of the 200 million drug addicts have become delinquents, criminals or corpses. They not only have destroyed the wealth created by themselves and their forefathers but also will spread the drug scourge to others in an expansive way.

As *US News & World Report* wrote in an article headlined "The Enemy Within" on September 11, 1989: "The drug crisis is as much a threat to our civilization as were European fascists in the '30s... Multiply today's drug count in broken families, shattered health, lost productivity, highway and job accidents, family violence, spouse and child abuse, babies born addicted or retarded... All this is horrifying enough, but we would do something of even more incalculable harm. We would be announcing a moral surrender. We would be saying that governments and the rule of law can no longer produce a decent society. Education would be bunk..."

After the People's Republic of China was founded, drug addiction was eliminated in a short time. After China started its reform and opening-up to the outside world in the 1980s, international drug traffickers began to invade China, and the smuggling, trafficking and manufacture of drugs and addiction to them re-emerged and have even been getting more serious.

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# One. Retrospective of Narcotics Control

## 1. Drugs in Ancient and Modern China

Narcotics once brought inestimable disaster and humiliation to China, a country with an ancient civilization. The insulting title of the “sick man of East Asia” that Westerners imposed on the Chinese people accompanied old China for more than a century. Every Chinese person cannot but grind his or her teeth in hatred when recollecting this period of history.

Opium and poppies were introduced to China when Arab merchants presented them to the Chinese emperors as high-grade oral medicine in the early seventh century, at the start of the Tang Dynasty. They gradually spread. China was then undergoing a period of prosperity, with its national prestige and influence having spread far afield. Regarded as an excellent product in the Arab world, opium seemed not to have caused any stir in the Tang Dynasty, which was enjoying abundance. It was used only as a medicine for curing sickness and saving patients. In the more than 600 years from that period of the Tang Dynasty to the Ming Dynasty, opium’s pharmacological properties and its effects were gradually recognized and made known by the famous physicians of these dynasties.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), extravagance and indulgence in sensual pleasures were common practice in the im-

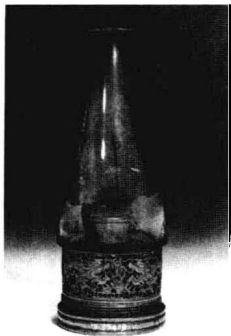
perial palace, and the nobles were mad about opium in this atmosphere, regarding it as a “masterpiece”. Afterward, addiction to opium spread from the nobles to the common people and from the imperial palace to the whole country. Opium addicts constituted a

Smoking opium in a government official’s family at the end of the Qing Dynasty.





## China Always Says "No" to Narcotics



A device for eating and smoking opium.

special stratum of society.

After 1800, in the middle of the Qing Dynasty, more and more people became addicted to the drug because the British East India Company pursued a policy of dumping opium in China and the methods of smoking and eating opium were introduced into China. By 1840, the number of opium addicts had increased to 2 million. The conflicts between China and Britain arising from opium and trade led to the first Opium War in the 1840s. As a result of China's defeat, opium flooded into China. The sale of opium, which was called "foreign tobacco", reached its peak in the 1880s.

Moreover, local poppy growing and opium production increased sharply under the official slogan of "getting a small portion of the profit from the foreign tobacco". In the early 20th century, China set some painful new records: It became the biggest poppy grower, the biggest opium manufacturer and country with the largest population of opium addicts. Even more seriously, addiction to opium and other drugs was not merely a common social problem. It was the main meeting point for the West and Chinese diplomacy, as well as an important source of revenue for the Qing government. Drug addiction penetrated Chinese society broadly and deeply and affected politics, economy, military affairs and people's lives. During the period of the Republic of China (1912-49), because of the different policies and decrees, the central and local warlords con-

Opium addicts in old China.



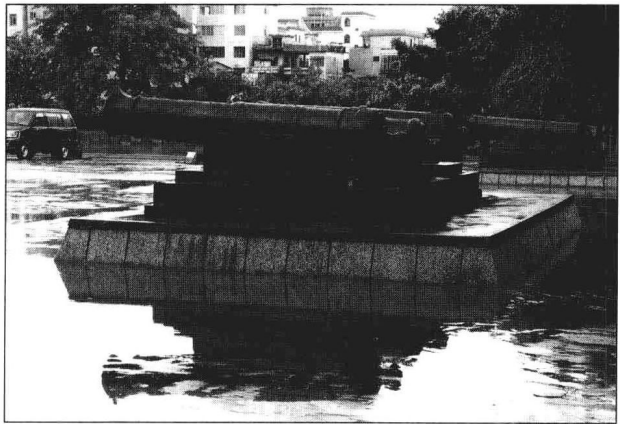
nived at and encouraged poppy growing to poison the masses. As a result, all businesses slumped, farmland was laid waste, and people lived in dire poverty. In the late 1920s, China produced 60,000 tons of opium, which was about 10 times the total opium production of all other countries combined, and 80 million people were addicted to one drug or another.



During the reign of Qing Dynasty Emperor Daoguang (1821-50), poppy growing was introduced into Yunnan Province in South-west China. Because it brought big profit, the ruling classes regarded the poppy with fondness. In less than 100 years, poppy growing covered the whole of Yunnan Province – even in the outskirts of its capital city, Kunming. Opium brought about calamity for Yunnan because of the good natural environment for poppy growing, the political environment in which the ruling classes officially banned but secretly encouraged poppy growing and opium production, the shortage of medical services and medicine, and the social environment of moral depravation. Peng Yuesong, a senior official in Yunnan during the reigns of the Qing Dynasty emperors Jiaqing and Daoguang, said helplessly: “The people of Yunnan live on poppies and opium.” Some of the local people who serve in my government said that they are so poor they don’t have enough to wear. But they cannot live without smoking opium.” These words may be exaggerated, but it must be admitted that he was painting a true picture of the serious harm done by opium to the province’s people.

Even the cannons at Humen in Guangdong Province could not stop the foreign opium-smuggling boats.

In those days, drugs were the most basic and important commodities in circulation. Drugs were sold at the price of gold. Opium could be used as a universal currency, and raw opium was called “black food.” Opium smoking became an indispensable part of the life of 16.8 percent of the entire population. More than half of the Chinese people de-



pendended to varying degrees on drugs for a living. Opium taxes of all sorts became the major source of revenue for both the central and local governments. Political forces of all factions fought wars for years on end in order to seize poppy-growing land, channels for transporting opium and opium taxes. During more than a century of modern history, the influence of drugs penetrated politics, economy,



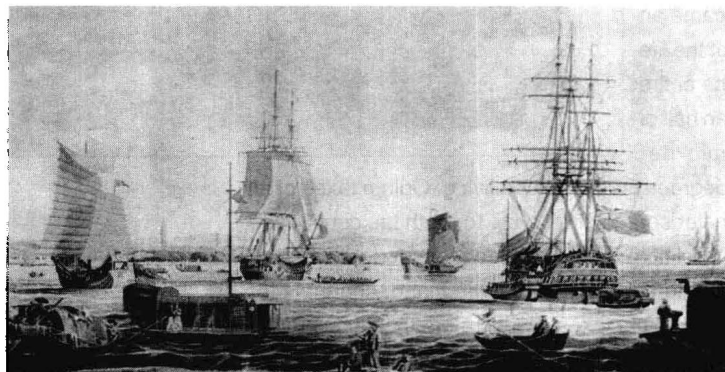
military affairs, diplomatic relations and the population's livelihood. Drugs were found everywhere and at all times and became a malignant tumor of Chinese society.

### 2. The Spread of Drugs and Drug Control

Drugs brought dire calamity to the Chinese people. The Chinese had an intense hatred of drug addiction and trafficking and strongly demanded that opium be banned. Since drug addiction was running rampant in China, the prohibition and control of drugs had become central tasks of the government. Anti-drug struggles were waged one after another in Chinese history.

Emperor Yongzheng issued China's first decree on the prohibition of opium in 1729, the seventh year of his reign. The decree said: "Whoever trades opium shall be flogged with a stick. If he trades in it again, he shall be banished to a remote place." It also stated: "Whoever opens a den to lure children of good families shall be punished for preaching evil to mislead people. If government officials, army men and civilians smoke or eat opium, they shall be punished according to the law." This was the beginning of China's struggle against drugs. In the last years of the Qing Dynasty and the early years of the Republic of China, the Qing government launched its second opium-prohibition movement and achieved great success thanks to the active participation of the masses. As a result, poppy growing was greatly reduced, a large number of dens were closed and drug addicts were rehabilitated.

Foreign opium-smuggling ships anchored at a Chinese harbor.



However, the good times did not last long. In 1917, warlords set up separate regimes and engaged in entangled warfare. This created the conditions for widespread opium addiction. After the Nationalist government was established

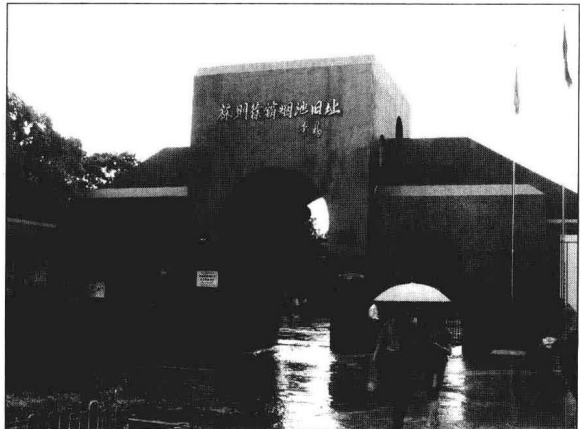


in Nanjing, the opium-ban policy changed several times. At first, the government implemented a policy of "prohibition through taxation." The fact was that taxes were levied but the drugs were not banned. In 1935, the government implemented a "six-year opium-ban plan." There was some progress in the first years but, after the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1937-1945), there was no time for the work, so the opium calamity continued to spread, and the situation was particularly serious in the Japanese-occupied areas. After the victory over Japan was achieved, the Kuomintang reactionaries waged a civil war and focused their attention on "annihilating the communists" and putting out the flames of revolution. The Kuomintang had neither the desire nor the power to ban opium. As a result, the drug calamity proceeded unchecked. On the eve of nationwide liberation, poppies were grown on 1.3 million to 1.4 million hectares of land and there were more than 20 million drug addicts.

### 3. The Opium Wars – Wars Sparked off by Drugs

The grave consequences of opium and its tendency to spread quickly became a big headache for the Qing Dynasty rulers. In December 1838 Emperor Daoguang called Lin Zexu to Beijing and for eight days discussed with him about imposing a ban on opium. The emperor appointed Lin as his special envoy and sent him to Guangdong Province to search for smuggled opium. China's first large-scale movement to ban opium thus began. In April and May 1839, Lin confiscated about 2.37 million kilograms of opium from British, United States and Indian merchants and burned it all on the beach at Humen between June 3 and 25. He banned the drug, arrested dealers and destroyed opium dens. His measures to ban and destroy the drug became a magnificent feat in the world history

The Opium War Museum at Humen. Lin Zexu, the Qing Dynasty imperial envoy, burned more than 20,000 boxes of British-smuggled opium here on June 3, 1839. In the museum compound is a pit where the opium was burned.







of drug prohibition, delivering a severe blow to the foreign colonialists' drug trade, showing the world the Chinese people's strong determination to prohibit opium, and setting the first example in the world of a large-scale movement to ban and destroy opium. The destruction of the opium at Humen dealt a heavy blow to the aggression of the British and US colonialists and played a huge role in safeguarding the motherland's independence and dignity,

thus writing a brilliant page in China's history of banning opium.

As the opium ban encroached greatly on British interests, Britain found an excuse to wage its long-planned war against China. This war is called the "Opium War" in Chinese history books. At that time, if a Chinese person smuggled opium to Britain, he would be hanged according to English law. Britain all along called it a "trade war" to avoid admitting to being a drug dealer. Even Britain itself said there was no reason for the war. The basic principle in trade should be mutual agreement. When others did not want Britain's goods (let alone opium), the British used cannons to



Statue of a sitting Lin Zexu in the Opium War Museum in Humen, Guangdong Province.

force them to buy. What is the difference between this and the bandits who blackmail people for "toll charges"?

In late June 1840, the British Oriental expedition sent 50 warships and more than 4,000 soldiers to the sea off Guangdong. They did not succeed in capturing Guangdong or Fujian but sailed north and captured Dinghai in Zhejiang Province and then Shanghai and Zhenjiang, and then they advanced to Nanjing. The Qing government dispatched troops from more than a dozen provinces and assembled them on the battlegrounds in ancient close formations, but the troops all crumbled under the enemy gunfire. As Lin Zexu described it: "Even if there were 1 million crack troops, they could not resist a burst of gunfire." As a result, the Qing imperial court asked for peace and the Treaty of Nanjing (Nanking) was signed in August 1842, through which China ceded territory, paid indemnities and opened trade ports.

After the war, opium was not only smoked openly by emperors but also found in the families of the common people.