
UNIT 5 BOXER REBELLION

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to explain the:

- deteriorating socio-economic conditions of late 19th century China;
- extent of imperialist encroachment upon China;
- emergence of the Boxers, their activities and efforts to curb them; and
- features of the Boxer Protocol which concluded the movement.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Boxer Rebellion or the Yihetuan movement of 1900 was a major peasant uprising against imperialism. Yihetuan means a society of Righteousness and Harmony. This organization emerged and grew in China's Shandong province. What the Chinese officially call the Yihetuan movement, Western scholars call the Boxer Rebellion. 'Boxer' is derived from boxing as many of the activists and revolutionaries practiced Chinese martial arts, boxing being one of them.

Although this movement's first targets were missionaries who preached Christianity, the real aim was to fight imperialism. This violent, dramatic and earth shaking movement was the result of both the enslavement of the Chinese nation by foreign powers and also the deteriorating socio-economic conditions, which reforms at the political level could not prevent. As if Western imperialist encroachment on China was not enough, Japanese imperialism too emerged as a new force to crush China further. The ruling Manchu or Chiang dynasty had weakened considerably on all fronts due to its own internal conditions as well as imperialist domination of China. The Boxer uprising gave a crushing blow to both the

imperialist and Manchu rulers. The movement was contained by the government eventually with the help of imperialist forces and resulted in the signing of the Boxer Protocol in 1901 — most humiliating of all the unequal treaties. The indemnities the Chinese had to pay to the foreigners were so massive that the Chinese populace was squeezed to derive it. This further aggravated the internal problems of China, ultimately leading to more revolutionary uprising and culminating in the downfall of monarchy in 1911. Practically all the aspects related to the Yihetuan (Boxer Movement) have been dealt with in this Unit.

5.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN CHINA

Here we discuss the socio-economic conditions in the late 19th century China. During this period an increase in population led to an increase in the number of unemployed among educated or the literate. Competition for official jobs grew as now there were more claimants to decreasing resources. The Qing government did not adequately expand the administrative structure to make it commensurate with the growth of population and commerce. Failure of the institutional structure of the government to grow meant that upward mobility of young literate was hampered. Job competition and frustration brought about all levels of corrupt practices: bribery, nepotism and favouritism, which in turn adversely affected the procedures of administration. This also meant the erosion in the prominence of the Confucian principle. Personal cliques and patronage networks emerged which adversely affected the examination system, taxation and the administration of justice.

The peasant was further crushed. Provincial officials, whose primary task was to take tax from cultivators based on a quota assigned to them and keep some surplus for themselves, became unmerciful towards the common folk. The demand on these officials from the central treasury was high as the Beijing government struggled to maintain an army, a body of court officials and pompous ceremonies. The officials, in turn, shifted this burden on the peasantry by imposing heavy demands and used all kinds of tyrannical methods. As a consequence the number of peasant revolts increased. Many peasants also migrated to the cities.

The civil service which had kept China together century after century and dynasty after dynasty transformed into an entity for obstructing progress. Added to official rapacity and inflicting hardships upon people, were the frequent occurrences of natural calamities like famine and flood. Suffering and tension in the countryside increased by many times as the government failed to bring relief to the people. The administration appeared only as an embodiment of organized repression. On the other hand the legitimacy of the central power was challenged by rebellions in various parts of the country.

Apart from weakening of the government the population explosion directly hindered technological growth. “The super-abundance of human muscles”, as John Fairbanks puts it “made labour saving devices uneconomical”. Human life as well as human labour had become very cheap. For the common people life was reduced to a struggle for survival. Families had to water every grain of food. Some evaded taxes by linking themselves with the rich and powerful land-owners and supplied them with workers, musclemen and girls. Among those who fled to the cities, the fortunate ones sold their labour cheaply to keep body and soul together. The rest became beggars, prostitutes, criminals and

so forth. Even for the self-sufficient farmer, it was a hard time. He needed protection from unscrupulous officials, bullies and musclemen of big landowners and bandits who emerged from the landless destitute.

This deepening of a crisis in its socio-economic situation was further fuelled by the sinister demands of imperialism on China.

5.3 IMPERIALISM

The military defeat of China in the Opium Wars and the unequal treaty system had made China almost a semi-colony of the Western powers. The imperialists justified their actions shamelessly in the name of modernization. For example, England claimed that this act of theirs brought China into the family of nations and made it enter international trade on terms of equality. But external interference in China jeopardized the Emperor's status. People were dismayed and shocked to see the powerlessness of the 'Son of Heaven' which the Emperor was believed to be.

Western intrusion into China, among other things, introduced Christian missionaries in large numbers and created a class of middlemen known as compradors to carry on business with the Chinese. Both these factors were eventually to have major bearings on the country in later years. To be able to successfully handle the challenges posed by both the foreign powers and the deteriorating socio-economic conditions, the Qing court did make an attempt to modernize the system through reforms. In the 1860s the "self-strengthening movement" was launched and later other imperial decrees, edicts and laws were passed to modernize and westernize certain aspects of Chinese life at least partially. Education, military training, science and technology and the legal system all came under the purview of the reform movement. In 1898 the so-called Hundred Days Reform, officially sponsored, touched upon many of these things but it was the "too little, too late" syndrome which made the reforms look like the last-ditch effort of a decaying system to keep itself in order (see Unit 6).

Towards the end of the 19th century world capitalism had entered its monopolistic stage that is the stage of imperialism. In such a stage, in the words of Lenin "The export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance". The struggle for the territorial division of the world became extremely keen. China was a victim of this monopolistic stage. China's defeat at the hands of Japan in 1895 along with the conclusion of the Treaty of Shimonoseki — another unequal treaty, made another imperialist entry in China. For the Chinese the crisis was never as worse. The treaty of Shimonoseki stipulated that Japanese businessmen could start factories in China's Treaty Ports. This provision satisfied the demand of imperialism to have outlets for the export of capital. China had been forced to accept the most-favoured nation clause in the earlier unequal treaties which meant that privileges given to one had to be given to the rest. So as soon as Japan got the privilege of starting factories in China, all other powers got it too. In the year 1895-96 itself several factories were set up in China which not only extracted cheap labour from the Chinese to make profit for themselves but also inhibited the growth of its own industry.

Japan had also imposed on China a heavy war indemnity, for which the Qing government had to take two huge loans from the Russo-French and Anglo-German monopoly capitalist groups. In return they had to be given special

privileges in China. Under these political conditions high rates of interest on these loans made a mockery of Chinese sovereignty. This was more so because foreign banks in China, through which imperialists exported capital, also dictated terms to the Manchu government.

The Treaty of Shimonoseki also included the provision of Japan's occupation of big slices of Chinese territory — the Liaodong peninsula and Taiwan. This also began the process of inter-imperialist scramble for Chinese territory. At one point the partition of China seemed almost imminent. Between 1896-98 most of China was carved into spheres of influence of different imperialist powers. For example:

- Russia got the areas north of the Great wall,
- the Yangtse valley went to Britain,
- Shandong to Germany,
- Fujian to Japan and Guangdong, Guangxi, and greater parts of Yunan to France.

To maintain their hold over these territorial concessions, the powers began to build railways, go in for other levels of constructions and exploited the resources of these areas. This also maintained the flow of capital into China. The imperialist powers although collaborated to exploit China and jealously guarded every right and privilege they extracted. Hence, confrontation amongst these powers was also a notable feature.

In large numbers the foreign missionaries came to China. The official Chinese historians have termed them as those “who were the cloak of religion but actually served imperialist aggression”. They had been coming into China several years before the Sino-Japanese War. Their activities included: building of Churches, preaching the gospel, and sometimes clashing with the local populace. From the 1860s anti-missionary struggles were waged in many areas.

The Boxer uprising had a definite anti-Christian or anti-missionary stance and therefore debates in academic circles have tried to sort out whether the uprising was primarily “anti-foreign” or anti-missionary. The Chinese interpretation is that it was anti-imperialist in the first place and secondly it was also anti-Manchu. In all probabilities, because the missionaries happened to be foreigners, they were the first targets of the uprising. The masses and peasants were blatantly hostile to Christianity for the significant reason that Christianity was the symbol of all that was foreign. For the Boxers the foreign missionaries were “primary devils” and their native Chinese converts the “secondary devils”. Hence both needed to be liquidated. Many Western scholars like Victor Purcell, also hold this viewpoint.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss in about ten lines the socio-economic conditions of China in late 19th century.

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- 2) Discuss, in about ten lines how during and after the Sino-Japanese war imperialism made inroads into China.

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5.4 THE YIHETUAN

Since a long time secret societies have existed in China. They have organized the downtrodden to become rebels against many an established order. Whenever suffering and misery reached intolerable levels people often took to “banditry” and secret society membership. There have been instances of secret society leaders organizing a successful rebellion against a dynasty and setting up their own dynastic rule. The Boxers or the Yihetuan are believed to have originated in the White Lotus sect, a group of secret societies, which claimed to be descended from Ming emperors, who ruled China before the Qing took over in 1644 A.D. Their activities had somewhat subsided or were not noteworthy for a long time.

In August, 1898, the Boxers emerged on the borders of Zhili and Shantung provinces as is evident from some official documents. In October the uprising actually started with the attack on Christian families and homes. Just sometime earlier placards had appeared which declared that converts would be killed. Many who joined the Boxers are believed to be anti-Manchu to the core who linked up with other rebels against the universally hated foreigner. Some posters and wall graffiti clearly indicate that at least a section of the Boxers was anti-Manchu. The uprising started in Shandong.

5.4.1 Why Shandong?

The outbreak of violence in Shandong province where the uprising took strong roots is no accident. Shandong had to bear the brunt of the imperialist encroachments. During the Sino-Japanese war, the invading armies of Japan attacked the Shandong peninsula and for three years occupied this region, threatening not to withdraw until the indemnity imposed was paid in full. Two of Shandong’s big ports came under the control of Germany and Britain. Germany had also marked off the entire province as her sphere of influence. The introduction of coastal navigation and railways by the imperialists adversely affected employment patterns. Many boatmen, porters, peddlers and small traders were rendered jobless. This added to the overall deteriorating socio-economic condition.

By the end of the 19th century, a network of churches had spread all over China. Shandong alone had over a thousand churches and about eighty thousand missionaries and Christian converts. According to the official history of China, written after communist take-over, the missionaries were used as tools of aggression against the Chinese people. As one account says:

“many of the missionaries—directed by their archbishops, bishops or other higher-ups—collected intelligence, forcibly seized farmland, put pressure on low-courts, extorted money from the people, bought over gangsters and other bad elements to become converts, created incidents, bullied China’s common folk,

and committed crimes including murder. Like a plague they brought limitless distress upon the Chinese people. The Qing officials, high and low, covered before imperialist tyranny. They invariably reached to disputes between the people and the missionaries by shielding the latter and oppressing the former, leaving them without recourse”.

This explains the frequency of anti-missionary incidents. In each case the imperialists demanded punishment, extorted compensation, and thus expanded the sway of the church. What could the Chinese people do but take up arms against the imperialists and their lackeys.

5.4.2 The Uprising

Popular struggles against foreign churches took place in Shandong in 1896 led by a secret society called Da Dao Hui (Big Sword Society). In 1897 and 1898 too such struggles broke out. The Yihetuan Movement soon engulfed Shandong and spread elsewhere.

The membership of this organization comprised peasants, handicraftsmen, urban poor and unemployed wage labourers. It never had a central organ. The basic unit was the ‘dao’ or shrine and consisted of young men, teenage boys and many women. Strict discipline was observed by both, leaders as well as the rank-and-file, who held the organization together. Each Boxer squad was formed of 10 fighters and 10 squads made up a brigade.

In the winter of 1899-1900, the Boxers, in order to oppose imperialism attacked missionaries and churches in Shandong. The foreigners stationed in Beijing, fearing the escalation of the movement pressed the Qing government to crush it. Yuxian, the reigning governor of Shandong was removed and in his place came Yuan Shikai whose “new Army” was emerging as a powerful political force. Yuan was a favourite of the imperialists. In order to crush the uprising he enacted a proclamation to ban the Yihetuan. As a part of his suppression campaign he also ordered the troops to shoot anyone linked to the Boxers and assured them full protection if they did so.

The Yihetuan fought bravely and astutely against Yuan’s army while maintaining their anti-imperialist activities. Yuan strengthened his army adding new battalions to it. He also sought the help of German troops and other armed forces which were raised by the imperialists to massacre the Yihetuan. The latter suffered serious setback. In the spring of 1900, the Boxers, in large numbers, left Shandong and moved to neighbouring Zhili (present day Hopei province) in the vicinity of Peking. Most of their activities, henceforth, took place in this area but the influence was even felt in Shansi, inner Mongolia, Hunan and also the North-eastern provinces of China. The Boxers received widespread support from the local populace. With their help they fought battles with the government troops while carrying on the killing of missionaries, converts and those who backed them. Destruction of churches, property belonging to foreigners, residences and quarters was carried on both sporadically as well as systematically. In the month of May the Yihetuan captured the strategic city of Chochow, south of Peking. As they carried on their fight their rank swelled and this alarmed greatly the foreign powers in China as also the Qing Government.

In a few days’ time the Boxer troops penetrated into Peking. They had disrupted the railway links to the capital which cut off government’s reinforcements from

the north as well as the south. In Peking the Yihetuan forces had earlier operated in small groups involving in activities carried out secretly. They had put up anonymous poster calling for an “exterminate the foreigners” campaign. In the capital the ranks of the organization swelled up as many belonging to the working class joined it. The poster campaign brought many adherents to the movement. Their posters reflected the people’s anti-imperialist sentiments and their disgust with the ruling dynasty who they believed, collaborated with foreigners to repress their own people. One popular poster read as follows:

“Most bitterly do we hate the treaties which harm the country and bring calamities on the people. High officials betray the nation. Lower ranks follow suit. The people find no redress for their grievances.”

By early June, 1900 Peking was filled with Yihetuan posters. Its members began to enter the city by day as well as by night. Even guards at the city gate did not stop these either out of shared sentiments or out of fear. Wearing red turbans and red-bordered shoes and socks, the Boxers paraded on the streets of the capital with swords and spears. In a short span of time more than 800 shrines were set up in Beijing. They stayed in the homes of the royalty and nobility spread all over the city and assaulted foreigners. The latter, in a helpless state, huddled in the legation quarters or in the cathedrals with armed protection. The Boxers held their demonstrations mostly in the night. They urged people not to buy foreign articles and carried on their indoctrination and other activities.

Simultaneously, similar struggles were ignited and carried out in Tianjin. Here the movement had started in the form of poster destruction, setting up shrines and military training. By mid-1900 they manufactured their own swords and spears. Along with burning down churches, they broke electricity poles and wrecked the office of the customs. In two to three months, the Boxer uprising engulfed the entire Beijing-Tianjin areas. Its anti-imperialist orientation was indicated by the fact that they took the churches, railways, power lines, steamers and foreign goods as the immediate targets of their pent-up hatred. In the summer of 1900 Peking and Tientsin were virtually controlled by the Yihetuan.

Within months of its dramatic activities which began in Shandong, the Boxers raised their banner of revolt on both sides of the great wall and along the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. The imperialist powers finding the Manchu government too weak to put down this popular revolt began discussions amongst themselves to find a method to curb the Boxers. It appeared that their survival in China was at stake. By July and August 1900 anti-imperialist posters appeared in many places in the provinces of Jiangxi, Fujian, Guangxi, Shanxi and Gansu. People were also seen practicing boxing and other Chinese martial arts at public recreation grounds. In many of these places people set fire to churches and drove out missionaries. Many local secret societies, initially not part of the Boxers, joined them in this violent anti-imperialist struggle.

5.4.3 Imperialist Intervention

Despite the open anti-Manchu standpoint of the Boxers and efforts made by Yuan Shikai and other military mandarins to suppress them, the Dowager Empress, Cixi took an ambiguous stand. A court edict said that all rebels were not to be considered bandits. Another one said that the organization members acted on the ancient principle of “keeping mutual watch and giving mutual help”. This made the imperialists doubly nervous and the Boxers, most likely, interpreted

this as a go-ahead signal. Foreign officials also believed that many senior court officials and some governors secretly encouraged the “seditious secret society”. Five foreign envoys (of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States) also demanded that the Chinese Government declare the Yihetuan, a criminal organization thereby repudiating the court’s own standpoint on the Boxer uprising. The Manchu government saw this as a direct infringement on its affairs and realized that the foreigners were a greater threat to them than the Boxers.

By May, the foreign powers began preparing their troops for an armed confrontation with the Boxers. Eight powers that is, Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Japan, United States and Russia formed a joint command. Remaining in China was a common interest of all and for the time being they gave up their differences to strike a blow on Chinese nationalism. The Chinese foreign office (Zongli Yamen) called for the powers not to advance their reinforcements. As this call went unheeded, the Chinese Government prepared for war. The allied armies’ advance to Peking was a direct threat to China’s sovereignty.

The Imperial Council scheduled a meeting on June 16 to discuss the situation arising out of the eight powers armed intervention. The meeting showed differing perception of the nobility and senior court officials on the Boxer movement. There was clearly a pro-Boxer and anti-Boxer division. The foreign powers were determined to carry out an armed suppression and so the court through an Imperial edict declared war on June 21, 1900. The diplomatic community was asked to leave Peking in 24 hours, which was later extended. On the expiration of the set time limit, Chinese troops opened fire on the legations. While war broke out in northern China, the governor and viceroys of southern provinces co-operated with the foreign powers and ignored the court’s decision to fight them. This demonstrated the disunity of the nation, making it easier for the imperialists to make an effort to partition China and subjugate it completely. By June 29, the Peking government took a different attitude. The Dowager Empress through her diplomats tried to explain to the foreign governments that the rioting “mobs” would be exterminated and all foreign legation quarters would be protected. This attitude of the Qing government raises question about their motive behind the declaration of war. Chinese communist historians call this a mere expedient on the part of the Manchu rulers whose ultimate and real intention was to wipe out the Yihetuan; collaborate with foreign powers and maintain their rule.

With direct support from a sizeable section of the Chinese ruling class and a passive opposition from another, the eight nation allied army, thoroughly indulged in looting, terrorized the surrounding areas and indulged in a violent suppression of the Boxer uprising. Their warships prowled on the Yangtze river and gunboats frequented the Chinese harbours. They befriended the landlords and the gentry who saw in the imperialist forces their guarantee of security.

The Yihetuan fighters put up a gallant fight against the more resourceful and technologically advanced military combination of the eight powers. In July and August 1900 fierce fighting took place which caused death and destruction on both sides. The British forces as well as those of Russia and Japan forced their way into Peking and by mid-August the capital city fell into the hands of the foreign powers. As soon as this news came, the Empress Dowager along with a small coterie of people fled Peking.

Intense fighting took place elsewhere too; The Boxers put up stiff resistance everywhere but in the end faced defeat. Imperialist troops were not satisfied by their victory but indulged in atrocities and excesses on the Chinese population. In addition to assault, loot, rape and arson they destroyed artworks, scientific instruments, rare books and paintings — all living proofs of China's ancient glorious civilization.

With the fall of Tianjin on July 14, 1900 the Qing Government asked for a truce and openly invited the imperialist powers for peace talks. The eight nation force, however, only after occupying Peking, agreed to the cessation of hostilities.

Negotiations began in late August but the eight nations involved in the intervention took sometime to agree between themselves on the terms and conditions of peace. However, presumably after some diplomatic maneuvering among themselves they signed with the Chinese government the notorious Boxer Protocol which formally ended the Boxer episode in Chinese history. But this Protocol also marked the beginning of a resilient anti-imperialist national upsurge which within a decade wiped out not only the Qing dynasty but the entire emperor-system.

5.4.4 The Boxer Protocol

The Allied Powers' inability to come to an understanding on how to divide China among themselves prevented its partition. Rivalry among the powers had taken an acute form. But after a great deal of international wrangling a joint note was presented to China in December 1900. Discussions began soon after. Negotiations dragged on for several months and only in September 1901 the final agreements were signed.

The Boxer Protocol of September 7, 1901 consisted of twelve articles. They were as follows:

- 1) A member of the Chinese royal family was to proceed to Berlin to convey to the German Emperor the regrets of the Chinese Emperor and the Grand Council for the murder of a German minister, Baron von Kettler. A monument was to be erected on the spot where he was killed.
- 2) Suspension of the civil service examinations in all cities where foreigners were murdered or maltreated.
- 3) Vice-President of China's Board of Revenue was to proceed to Japan to express the Chinese Emperor and government's regrets for the murder of the Japanese Legation Chancellor.
- 4) An expiatory monument was to be erected by China in each of the foreign settlements which had to be 'desecrated'.
- 5) For five years arms and ammunitions could not be imported.
- 6) The legation quarter in Peking was to be reserved for the exclusive residence of foreigners.
- 7) Dadu and other forts which impeded free communication between Peking and the sea were to be razed.
- 8) Certain specified centres were to be occupied by the powers.
- 9) An edict was to be issued which would stipulate a death penalty for anyone joining any anti-foreign society.

- 10) Negotiations to be held to amend the existing treaties of commerce and navigation and the establishment of river conservancy boards with foreign participation.
- 11) The Zongli Yamen (foreign office) was to be reformed and upgraded as a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with precedence over six other ministries.
- 12) An indemnity of 333 million US dollars was to be paid over a period of forty years.

Each and every provision of the Boxer Protocol was a blow on Chinese sovereignty and self-respect. The provision on indemnities was the harshest as it played havoc with China's resources. The interest rate was so high that the amount would have doubled during the period of payment. Every year the already impoverished people of China were burdened with fifteen million dollars of payment. The method of payment implied a very extensive invasion of Chinese sovereignty. As security for the indemnity, the following resources were taken:

- the maritime customs and that part of the internal customs hitherto under Chinese control, and
- the salt gaballe. (salt tax)

The Manchu government became, as somebody remarked, "a debt-collecting agency for the powers".

The Boxer episode ended but it revealed the shallowness of reforms which the Qing Government had initiated as they could not save China from humiliation. The Western powers treated China devoid of all consideration and all understanding.

5.5 ACADEMIC DEBATE

Scholars have used a variety of sources to understand the real nature of the Boxer uprising, its impact and the response it evoked. These include:

- official publications of the foreign powers involved in China,
- missionary documents and writings,
- manuscripts of historians and other scholars in that period living in China, and
- the publications and documents of the Chinese Government.

All these put together provide a great deal of information.

However, there is an ongoing debate about its nature. Was it primarily anti-Christian or anti-imperialist? If it was anti-Christian, was it more anti-Catholic than anti-Protestant? How far were the Boxers anti-dynastic? are the questions around which the debate revolves. The Marxist-Leninist viewpoint regarding the outcome of the uprising is that a deliberate well planned conspiracy between domestic feudalism and external imperialism crushed the movement. The non-Marxian interpretation is that the failure of the Chinese system to modernize kept it a weak nation. Hence it did not have the resources to obstruct foreign intervention or to meet the demands of the people satisfactorily. This was the reason that the Qing Government distanced itself from the Boxers.

One question about the movement asked frequently is: could the Boxers have established a successful regime in China? A simple answer is 'quite unlikely'. They were organizationally weak even if they had devoted members. Despite their widespread support, they could not be called an organization as they had all the characteristics of a secret society. Moreover, ideologically they had nothing to offer which could take the place of state Confucianism which was then on the decline. As compared to the Taipings they had no programme for agrarian reform although a majority of their constituents were peasants. Their sole progressive principle was that they granted equality to women. All said and done, their aim was not to rule China but to rid their country of its enemies.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss in about ten lines the aims and objectives of Boxer Protocol of 1901.

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- 2) Discuss in brief about the academic debate on the nature of Boxer uprising.

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5.6 LET US SUM UP

The Boxer uprising was a major peasant upheaval in the series of peasant revolts that had occurred periodically in Chinese history. This was a patriotic outburst of the North China peasantry, accompanied by outbreaks in many other parts which signaled the birth of Chinese nationalism. It was directed first against Christian missionaries and Converts and eventually a war was waged against the whole imperialist establishment. It was the result of impoverishment, suffering, untold miseries and mercilessness of the system. The Manchu Government's failure to satisfy the needs of the masses and its official and ruthlessness in dealing with its subjects alienated the people. Along with this, imperialist encroachment upon China, stipulating it of all the dignity and prestige the mighty Empire once had contributed in the outburst. The imperialist powers' efforts to curb the movement through the Qing Government failed as the latter took an ambivalent attitude towards it. The eight-nation plan to initiate a military offensive was responded to by the Qing Government through a declaration of war which turned out to be a feeble attempt if not a hoax. Soon peace negotiations started and the so-called Boxer Protocol was signed between the powers and the Qing Government. In addition to extracting many concessions from the Chinese, this humiliating treaty stipulated a huge indemnity payment, an amount so large that paying it would drain the country of all its resources. Imperialist powers' disagreement amongst themselves saved China from partition.

The people of China today hail the Boxer uprising as a revolutionary struggle. The Yihetuan was an organization of brave, sacrificing and patriotic people which inspired the spirit of nationalism.

5.7 KEY WORDS

Graffiti : Writing on the wall.

Indemnities: Monetary compensation paid by the defeated group to the victorious groups after a war.

Legation: Headquarters of a group of officials of one country in another.

Protocol : Formal diplomatic procedure.

5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Unemployment, population explosion, corrupt practices and failure of the institutional structure, all these led to the deterioration of socio-economic conditions of China in late 19th century. See Section 5.2.
- 2) The defeat of China in the Opium Wars, the unequal treaties in favour of Western powers and the monopolistic capitalism gave enough opportunities to the Western powers to establish imperialism in China. See Section 5.3.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The Boxer Protocol was mainly designed to divide China and to undermine its sovereignty and integrity.
See Sub-Section 5.4.3
- 2) There is an ongoing debate on the nature of Boxer uprising. Explain.
See Section 5.5