

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Seat \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Whitney High School  
9<sup>th</sup> Grade World History

Lesson 86 • Handout 175  
S. Rosenberg

Resistance, Wars, and Rebellion: China is Opened to the West

## A Private Postscript

Read, highlight, and take notes (to the side) of this primary source. Be prepared to answer the nine questions that follow for participation points. We'll be reviewing these questions next class session so be prepared!

King George III sent ambassadors and a naval expedition to China in hopes of opening China and its ports beyond the Port of Macao, which was the only foreign trade post, to English traders. In response, the Chinese Manchu emperor sent back several letters to King George expressing his views on this matter. The following letter is a private letter to King George III from the Chinese emperor and is frank in its opinion on the matter.

### Emperor's Private Postscript to King George

(A further mandate to King George III dealt in detail with the British Ambassador's proposals and the emperor's reasons for declining them.)

... Yesterday your Ambassador petitioned my Ministers to memorialize me regarding your trade with China, but his proposal is not consistent with our dynastic usage and cannot be entertained. Hitherto, all European nations, including your own country's barbarian merchants, have carried on their trade with Our Celestial Empire at Canton. Such has been the procedure for many years, although Our Celestial Empire possesses all things in prolific abundance and lacks no product within its own borders. There was therefore no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians in exchange for our own produce. But as the tea, silk and porcelain which the Celestial Empire produces, are absolute necessities to European nations and to yourselves, we have permitted, as a signal mark of favor, that foreign hangs' should be established at Canton, so that your wants might be supplied and your country thus participate in our beneficence. But your Ambassador has now put forward new requests which completely fail to recognize the Throne's principle to 'treat strangers from afar with indulgence,' and to exercise a pacifying control over barbarian tribes, the world over. Moreover, our dynasty, swaying the myriad races of the globe, extends the same benevolence towards all. Your England is not the only nation trading at Canton. If other nations, following your bad example, wrongfully importune my ear with further impossible requests, how will it be possible for me to treat them with easy indulgence? Nevertheless, I do not forget the lonely remoteness of your island, cut off from the world by intervening wastes of sea, nor do I overlook your excusable ignorance of the usages of Our Celestial Empire. I have consequently commanded my Ministers to enlighten your Ambassador on the subject, and have ordered the departure of the mission. But I have doubts that, after your Envoy's return he may fail to acquaint you with my view in detail or that he may be lacking in lucidity, so that I shall now proceed to take your requests seriatim and to issue my

mandate on each question separately. In this way you will, I trust, comprehend my meaning . . .

. . . It may be, O King, that the ... proposals have been wantonly made by your Ambassador on his own responsibility, or peradventure you your-self are ignorant of our dynastic regulations and had no intention of transgressing them when you expressed these wild ideas and hopes. I have ever shown the greatest condescension to the tribute missions of all States which sincerely yearn after the blessings of civilization, so as to manifest my kindly indulgence. I have even gone out of my way to grant any requests which were in any way consistent with Chinese usage. Above all, upon you, who live in a remote and inaccessible region, far across the spaces of ocean, but who have shown your submissive loyalty by sending this tribute mission, I have heaped benefits far in excess of those accorded to other nations. But the demands presented by your Embassy are not only a contravention of dynastic tradition, but would be utterly unproductive of good result to yourself, besides being quite impracticable. I have accordingly stated the facts to you in detail, and it is your bounden duty reverently to appreciate my feelings and to obey these instructions henceforward for all time, so that you may enjoy the blessings of perpetual peace. If, after the receipt of this explicit decree, you lightly give ear to the representations of your subordinates and allow your barbarian merchants to proceed to Chekiang and Tientsin, with the object of landing and trading here, the ordinances of my Celestial Empire are strict in the extreme, and the local officials, both civil and military, are bound reverently to obey the law of the land. Should your vessels touch the shore, your merchants will assuredly never be permitted to land or to reside there, but will be subject to instant expulsion. In that event your barbarian merchants will have had a long journey for nothing. Do not say that you were not warned in due time! Tremblingly obey and show no negligence! A special mandate!

1. The Manchu emperor refers to the British merchants as what? What do you think is meant by this name? Explain.
2. Why does the emperor claim that China has no need to trade with Europeans?
3. Why did the emperor allow trade to occur?
4. Why is the emperor reluctant to give in to the demands of the English?
5. Where does the Manchu emperor attempt to defer diplomatically the blame for the new English requests? Why would he do this?
6. What do you think the Manchu emperor means when he tells King George III that he lives in a "remote and inaccessible region"?
7. What does the Manchu emperor tell King George to do?
8. What does the Manchu emperor threaten to do to English merchants who do not obey?
9. What type of attitude is expressed in this letter? Why do you think this attitude would have been held by the Manchu emperor? Explain.