

Some Chronological Observations on the Fu Manchu Series by Rick Lai

In “A Question of Time” (*The Rohmer Review*, August 1917), Cay Van Ash did the fans of Sax Rohmer a great service by making insightful and accurate observations about the chronology of the Fu Manchu series. Many novels were not discussed in that important exercise of scholarship. In this article, I intend to primarily discuss five novels: *The Golden Scorpion* (1919), *The Bride of Fu Manchu* (1933), *President Fu Manchu* (1936), *The Drums of Fu Manchu* (1939), and *The Island of Fu Manchu* (1941). I will also critically re-evaluate Cay Van Ash’s contention that *The Trail of Fu Manchu* (1934) happened in early 1934.

The Golden Scorpion is important novel in the continuity of the series because it contained the first appearance of the Ericksen Ray. Invented by a Norwegian scientist, the Ericksen Ray was a powerful weapon that could disintegrate matter. In *The Golden Scorpion*, the Norwegian scientist’s full name was given as Henrick Ericksen. The inventor was injected with a catalepsy-inducing drug by Fu Manchu’s colleague, Fo-Hi, and then abducted. The rest of the world believed Ericksen’s dead. Referring to Ericksen’s alleged demise, Fo-Hi made this comment in *The Golden Scorpion* (part IV, chap.1): “Then there was Ericksen, the most brilliant electrical expert of the century, who died suddenly last year.”

The Ericksen ray was eventually reused by Rohmer in both *The Drums of Fu Manchu* and *The Island of Fu Manchu*. *The Drums of Fu Manchu* does not mention Ericksen’s first name, but *The Island of Fu Manchu* (chap. 6) gives the scientist’s first name as Sven. Despite the inconsistency of calling him Henrick in some novels and christening him Sven in another, there is not doubt that the Dr. Ericksen in all the books was the same character. In *The Drums of Fu Manchu* (chap. 46), Nayland Smith, the chief adversary of Fu Manchu, had this remark to make about the Ericksen Ray: “Dr Ericksen, its inventor, died or is reported to have died in 1914.” Comparing this passage to the earlier one quoted from *The Golden Scorpion*, an inescapable conclusion is reached. Dr. Ericksen allegedly perished in 1914, and *The Golden Scorpion* happened in 1915, one year later.

As far the time of year, it would appear to be spring. The weather was “unusually chilly” (*The Golden Scorpion*, part II, chap. 5). Other references indicated that winter had recently passed. Dr. Keppel Stuart’s housekeeper had known him for thirty years since he was a young child. The anniversary of their first meeting had been on Shrove Tuesday (part I, chap.2). In 1915, Shrove Tuesday was on February 16. Inspector Dunbar remembered Scotland Yard instructions from “some months back, early in the winter” (part I, chap. 3).

In *The Bride of Fu Manchu* (chap. 20), Alan Sterling recalled that Henrick Ericksen had “died during the World War — or soon after!” Since World War I broke out in August 1914, one would normally assume that Ericksen’s purported death happened in the early months of the war. However, a careful examination of *The Golden Scorpion* leads to the conclusion that Sterling’s was not remembering accurately the time of Ericksen’s supposed demise. The Norwegian scientist allegedly perished *shortly before* the outbreak of World War I

In a flashback, Gaston Max, the French detective, discussed the case of the Grand Duke Ivan, “that famous soldier of who so much was expected” (part 2, chap. 1). Ivan was visiting Paris incognito, and Max was assigned to watch and protect him as a favor to

the Grand Duke's government. Although the Grand Duke's nationality was not mentioned, he was clearly a Russian. The Grand Duke's government was the regime of Tsar Nicholas II. Ivan was a member of the Romanov family.

Like Ericksen, Ivan was injected with a drug and abducted by Fo-Hi. Later Max went to the opera with a French scientist. This opera visit was "long after the funeral of the Grand Duke" (part II, chap. 3). It was least three months since the Grand Duke's supposed demise. The scientist mentioned that an American admiral had allegedly perished three months after Ivan's similar fate. Ericksen's own apparent death had happened "a few months" prior to the scientist's comments. Remarking on all Fo-Hi's victims, the scientist mentioned that it was as if Heaven wanted 'to check mankind in the making of future wars' (part II, chap. 3). An unspecified amount of time passed. Max then heard of the reported death of Sir Frank Narcombe. The kidnapping of Narcombe by Fo-Hi transpired "six weeks" (part I, chap. 3) before the main events of *The Golden Scorpion* unfolded. Wherefore, we are left with the probable following chronology. The Grand Duke's apparent demise happened in early 1914. The subsequent months saw the kidnapping of the American admiral and Ericksen. The scientist's remarks about "future wars" firmly indicate that his opera meeting with Max happened before the outbreak of World War I. The most likely time for the meeting was July 1914. In early 1915, Fo-Hi then struck at Narcombe.

The only objection to the placement of *The Golden Scorpion's* main events in 1915 is the lack of a clear reference to World War I. However, there is an oblique reference that indicates a military struggle was transpiring. When Dr. Stuart was held prisoner by Fo-Hi, the mastermind gave this reason for his operation against Ivan: "The Grand Duke is a tactician, who had he remained in Europe, might well have readjusted the frontiers of his country." That statement implied that Ivan's home country, Russia, was currently engaged in a war that could have led to the expansion of its frontiers.

By abducting Ivan, Fo-Hi may have determined the fate of Russia in World War I. It was a matter of pride that a member of the royal family command the Russian military. When war broke out, the Russian commander was the Grand Duke Nicholas. By September 1915, Russia suffered a series of defeat that led to the dismissal of the Grand Duke Nicholas. Tsar Nicholas II then took over directly military command of the army with such disastrous results that it led to the overthrow of the Romanov dynasty in 1917. By removing Ivan from the stage, Fo-Hi prevented the appointment of a military leader who could have given Russia a string of victories and preserved the Tsar's rule.

Fu Manchu made a brief un-credited appearance in *The Golden Scorpion*. In a flashback, Miska, a slave girl in Fo-Hi's service, saw Fu Manchu with Fo-Hi in Cairo years earlier. She was then nineteen (part III, chap. 4). Dr. Stuart judged Miska to be about twenty-three or twenty-four (part I, chap. 7) when he met her. Since the Golden Scorpion is placed in 1915, then Miska's meeting with Fu Manchu occurred in either 1910 or 1911. Cay Van Ash placed the events of *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu* (1913) in the summer and autumn of 1911. I suspect that the meeting happened in 1911 before Fu Manchu arrived in Britain to inaugurate the events of *The Insidious Fu Manchu*. As for 1910, Fo-Hi was in China, not Egypt, during that year. Dr. Stuart remembered seeing Fo-Hi on the Wu-Men Bridge five years before meeting him in London (part I, chap. 3). Tracing Fo-Hi's movements back even further, the brilliant criminal purchased Miska as

a slave in Mecca when she was fourteen (part III, chap. 3). Fo-Hi acquired Miska in 1907.

The secret society to which Fu Manchu belonged is called the Si-Fan. In *The Golden Scorpion*, Fo-Hi claimed to be working for a group called the Sublime Order. In *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*, it was revealed that Fu Manchu was a member of a tong, the Order of the White Peacock. In *The Hand of Fu Manchu* (1917), the tong was called the Sublime Order of the White Peacock (chap. 1). Fu Manchu's colleague and rival, Ki-Ming also mentioned a Sublime Prince in the same novel (chap.7). This Sublime Prince had authority over both Ki-Ming and Fu Manchu. The Sublime Prince was probably the name for the leader of the Order of the White Peacock. He may even have been the President of the Si-Fan's ruling Council of Seven before Fu Manchu assumed that position. The Si-Fan was confederation of various Asian secret societies including the Thugs of India, the Assassins of Syria and the Sublime Order of the White Peacock. Like Fu Manchu, Fo-Hi must have been a member of the tong. Since the tong was a component of the Si-Fan, then Fo-Hi was really working for both the Si-Fan and the Sublime Order of the White Peacock.

In *The Golden Scorpion*, we learned further information about Fu Manchu's catalepsy-inducing drug. Besides being known as *F. Katalopsis*, the drug's chief ingredient was the venom of "the common black scorpion of southern India" (part IV, chap. 1). This remark would be somewhat contradicted by Fu Manchu's later remarks in *The Island of Fu Manchu* (chap. 34). Fu Manchu revealed that his search for the drug began with the study of the zombie tradition in Haiti. Fu Manchu then went to Central Africa, the Sudan and Egypt. In Egypt, he discovered the nature of the drugs in the records of the ancient records of the priests of Thebes. Fu Manchu must have discovered that the drug had been derived originally from a scorpion now extinct in Egypt. He then realized that the black scorpion of India might be a related species of the extinct Egyptian arachnid.

Fu Manchu claimed that his search for the drug began sixty years before the events of *The Island of Fu Manchu*. In the novel, a newspaper headline contained these words: "Great navel battle in Skaggerak" (chap. 12). Skaggerak is a strait separating southern Norway from the northwest coast of Denmark. The headline was referring to a naval battle, which transpired during the Nazi invasion of Norway and Denmark in April 1940. Confirmation of the 1940 date was when the activities of Fu Manchu's daughter are reconstructed. She had adopted the identity of a Voodoo priestess in Haiti since 1938 (chap. 27), and she continued this guise for "nearly two years" (chap. 37). Since *The Island of Fu Manchu* was set in the spring of 1940, then Fu Manchu began his quest to discover *F. Katalopsis* in 1880.

Fu Manchu's journeys in search of the drug must have taken many years. In *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (chap. 19), the mastermind remarked that he "knew and esteemed" Lord Kitchener (1850-1916). Fu Manchu also commented on the Mahdi's rebellion in the Sudan. Probably Fu Manchu knew the Mahdi as well. It is not known when exactly the Mahdi's rebellion began in the 1880's, but the first reports of the Mahdi's uprising in the Sudan reached the British in Egypt in early 1883. On January 4, 1883, Kitchener was posted to Egypt as a captain. The meetings with the Mahdi and Kitchener must have happened during the search for the catalepsy-inducing drug. The Mahdi could have met Fu Manchu in the Sudan during either 1882 (when the revolt was being organized) or

1883 (when it had reached significant proportions). The meeting with Kitchener probably happened in Egypt during 1883. By 1884, Fu Manchu was in India.

When studying *The Bride of Fu Manchu* for proper chronological placement, the key passage is Fu Manchu's discourse on foreign politics (chap. 23):

"Now when you are about to devote your services to the triumph of the Si-Fan, consider the state of the world. The imprint of my hand is upon the nations. Mussolini so far has eluded me; but President Hoover, who stood in my path, makes way for Franklin Roosevelt. Mustapha Pasha is a regrettable nuisance, but my organization in Anatolia neutralizes his influence. Von Hindenburgh! The old marshal is a granite monument buried in weeds..."

Of course, Benito Mussolini was the dictator of Italy. He had been running Italy since 1922. By Mustapha Pasha, Fu Manchu meant Mustapha Kemal, who had been President of Turkey since 1923. In 1934, he adopted the name Kemal Ataturk. The remarks about the United States and Germany are more significant for chronological placement.

The use of the present tense in the remark the Hoover "makes way" for Roosevelt strongly suggests that Hoover had not yet relinquished power as President of the United States. Roosevelt defeated Hoover in the election on November 8, 1932, but was not formally inaugurated until March 4, 1933. Fu Manchu's commentary must have been made before Roosevelt's inauguration. Fu Manchu's implied his own responsibility for Hoover's defeat because of a revelation made in *The Bride of Fu Manchu*. Having discovered the means to manufacture synthetic gold, Fu Manchu manipulated foreign markets to cause the Great Depression.

Fu Manchu's evaluation of the German situation is also significant for the purposes of chronological evaluation. "Von Hindenburgh" was President Paul Von Hindenburg of Germany. He was the major figure in the German government until he appointed Adolf Hitler Chancellor on January 30, 1933. On March 23, Hitler used the excuse of the Reichstag fire (February 27), to fore a new law granting him dictatorial powers. Hitler's appointment as Chancellor came as a stunning surprise to most informed political observers. Although the Nazi party had been making major gains in earlier parliamentary elections during 1932, its support declined by 2 million votes in the elections of November 6, 1932. Since Fu Manchu did not mention Hitler, his comments must have been made before the Nazi chieftain's appointment as Chancellor.

Based on the Fu Manchu's analysis of the American and German political scenes, *The Bride of Fu Manchu* must have taken place in either late 1932 or early 1933. The argument for late 1932 is stronger because of Nayland Smith's remark that he had not seen Fu Manchu's marmoset for fifteen years (chap. 32). If *The Bride of Fu Manchu* happened in 1932, then Smith last saw the marmoset in 1917. Until Cay Van Ash's "A Question of Time," most reader assumed that *The Hand of Fu Manchu* happened in 1917. The 1917 assumption was based on references in *Daughter of Fu Manchu* (1931). "A Question of Time" showed that *The Hand of Fu Manchu* actually transpired during 1913-14. Cay Van Ash later revealed in *The Fires of Fu Manchu* (1987) that there was a suppressed adventure in 1917. The absence of this 1917 exploit of Fu Manchu led to the confusing chronological references in *Daughter of Fu Manchu*. Therefore, Smith was actually referring to having seen the marmoset during *The Fires of Fu Manchu*.

The Bride of Fu Manchu (chap.50) revealed that Fu Manchu had at least one agent in France since the 1890's. This agent was the famous lawyer known as Maitre Foli. The Frenchman indicated that he has served Fu Manchu for "over a period of forty years."

Assigning *The Bride of Fu Manchu* to 1932 brings forth question surrounding Fleurette Petrie's age. Since she was born one year after Dr. Petrie's marriage (chap. 43), she was definitely born in 1915. Her age in *The Bride of Fu Manchu* would only be seventeen.

The correct placement of *The Bride of Fu Manchu* in 1932 then raises questions about its sequel, *The Trail of Fu Manchu*. That novel is supposed to take place in early 1934. The year of 1934 is clearly mentioned in the opening chapter (chap. 1). We are also told that the New Year was recently "ushered" in (chap. 2). *The Trail of Fu Manchu* (chap.3) asserted that "some months" had passed since the events of *The Bride of Fu Manchu*. Dr. Petrie recalled in *The Trail of Fu Manchu* (chap. 59) that "less than two months" had passed since he saw Fu Manchu in the earlier novel. Therefore, *The Trail of Fu Manchu* really happened in 1933. The references to 1934 must be errors that resulted due to the novel being published in that year. It is most probable that *The Bride of Fu Manchu* occurred in November 1932, and *The Trail of Fu Manchu* transpired in January 1933. Fu Manchu's comments on geopolitics in *The Bride of Fu Manchu* must have been made after he received the results of the American Presidential election and the German parliamentary elections of November 1932.

The Trail of Fu Manchu (chap. 18) discussed earlier unrecorded activities by Fah Lo Suee, Fu Manchu's daughter. Sir Bertram Morgan had met Fah Lo Suee in Cairo three years earlier. A year after the Cairo meeting, Sir Bertram met her again on the Riviera. On both occasions, Fah Lo Suee used her identity of Madame Ingomar. Fah Lo Suee was in Cairo twice in the series. The first time was in *Daughter of Fu Manchu*, and the second was in *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932). "A Question of Time" placed *Daughter of Fu Manchu* in 1928 and *The Mask of Fu Manchu* in 1930. Since I placed *The Trail of Fu Manchu* in 1933, the meeting with Sir Bertram must have occurred in Cairo during 1930. During her Rivera visit in 1931, Fah Lo Suee must have been staying at the Si-Fan base raided by Smith a year later. At one point in *The Trail of Fu Manchu*, Nayland Smith made this remark about the usage of the Ingomar alias (chap. 24): "Fah Lo Suee's invention is failing her...that was the name in which she crept into the good graces of Sir Lionel Barton in Egypt three years ago." Smith was referring to the events of *Daughter of Fu Manchu*. Since Fah Lo Suee utilized the role of Madame Ingomar in 1928, Smith should have said five years instead of three. In the heat of the moment, Smith must have temporarily confused the events of Fah Lo Suee's 1928 sojourn in Cairo with her later 1930 visit.

I now come to the two most difficult novels to be placed chronologically, *President Fu Manchu* and *The Drums of Fu Manchu*. A close examination of both novels reveals obvious distortions. In the first novel, the Si-Fan created an American Presidential campaign that was inherently impossible based on American law. In the second novel, Fu Manchu prevented a world war by successfully killing Adolf Hitler in the late 1930's. Sax Rohmer would later admit that part of *The Drums of Fu Manchu* was distorted. He never made the same claim about *President Fu Manchu*, but that

conclusion will easily be reached by anyone who reads the Constitution of United States of America.

In *President Fu Manchu*, the Si-Fan expended enormous resources to finance a third-party Presidential candidate, Paul Salvaletti for the 1936 election. He was an Italian immigrant who became a naturalized American citizen. He was nominally a Catholic, although he was secretly an unfrocked priest. In order to promote his candidacy, Fu Manchu chose a glamorous woman to become Salvaletti's fiancée. She was Lola Dumas, a wealthy financier's daughter. Both Lola and her father were Si-Fan agents. She had been twice divorced, and also claimed to be a descendant of Alexander Dumas, "the brilliant quadron who created the Three Musketeers" (chap. 16). Rohmer's usage of the word "quadron" was referring to the fact that the great French novelist's grandmother had been a woman of African heritage

America didn't need Nayland Smith to stop Salvaletti. The Founding Fathers had already planted the seeds of his downfall in the Constitution. Naturalized American citizens are barred from becoming President. A person has to be born in the United States to be elected President.

Even if the Si-Fan could have sponsored the passage of a Constitutional amendment making the Presidency available to naturalized citizens, a Salvaletti candidacy still had major obstacles to overcome. The Democrats suffered a humiliating defeat in 1928 largely due to anti-Catholic prejudice against Presidential candidate Al Smith. It is doubtful that a third party would succeed with an Italian-American Catholic candidate in 1936. I also have big doubts about the willingness of the American electorate of 1936 to embrace Lola Dumas as First Lady. Divorce was then a taboo subject in Presidential politics. As late as 1964, the divorce issue played a major role in derailing the campaign of Nelson Rockefeller for the Republican nomination. The traditional Catholic voters, the natural base for Salvaletti, would be repelled by his engagement to a divorced woman. There is also the matter of the Lola's descent from Africans. Unfortunately, her ancestry would be a major issue with a large unenlightened portion of the American electorate.

The events of this novel obviously could not have happened in the matter depicted. It is also clear that the novel is based on real events. Here are the actual historical occurrences. In February 1934, Senator Huey Long, whose slogan was "Every man a king," founded the Share Our Wealth Society as a springboard for a possible third party Presidential run. He was soon challenged to a political debate by Norman Thomas, head of the Socialist Party and its perennial Presidential candidate. The debate was held in New York in March. Long was perceived to be the winner of the debate by observers. Long's Share Our Wealth Society was also criticized by Father Charles Coughlin, a right-wing Catholic priest who made political broadcasts on radio. Although both critical of Long, Thomas and Coughlin were political enemies.

Heavily involved in the Share Our Wealth Society was Gerald L. K. Smith, a skilled orator and a Protestant. With the exception of Long, Smith was the most effective promoter of the Share Our Wealth Society.

On September 6, 1935, Dr. Carl Austin Weiss, the son-in-law of one of Long's political enemies, fatally shot the Senator in Louisiana. Weiss was immediately shot to death by Long's bodyguards. A theory evolved that Weiss' bullet had not alone struck Long. Supposedly an additional bullet from a bodyguard's gun had also hit Long. At

Long's funeral, a crowd of 100,000 people listened to an emotional eulogy by Gerald L. K. Smith. Receiving publicity due to his eulogy, Smith tried to become a third-party Presidential candidate himself. His efforts failed due to lack of funds. He even tried to gain the support of Long's rival, Father Coughlin, but the priest rebuffed him.

Here are the fictional events presented by Rohmer. Harvey Bragg, whose slogan was "America for every man—every man for America," founded the League of Goods Americans as a springboard for a possible third party Presidential run. He was challenged to a political debate by Dr. Orwin Prescott, a rival Presidential candidate. The political debate was scheduled for New York. Also opposed to a Bragg candidacy was Abbot Donegal, a Catholic cleric who made political broadcasts on radio. Prescott and Donegal were friends.

Bragg's secretary was Paul Salvaletti, a skilled orator and a nominal Catholic. He was also a Si-Fan agent who had been in Bragg's entourage since "early 1934" (chap. 22). The Si-Fan's plan was to boost up Bragg by ensuring his victory over Prescott in the debate. After the debate, Bragg would be assassinated to allow Salvaletti to take his place as the Presidential candidate.

Fu Manchu kidnapped two men, Prescott and Bragg's bodyguard. Prescott was hypnotized into throwing the debate, and the bodyguard was brainwashed to slay Bragg. After winning the debate in New York, Bragg was assassinated by his bodyguard. Salvaletti then gave a stirring funeral oration. He used the publicity from that speech to seize control of the League of Good Americans and become its Presidential candidate. He also became engaged to another Si-Fan agent, Lola Dumas. Abbot Donegal then revealed that Salvaletti was not only a defrocked priest but also a would-be bigamist (he already had a wife before his engagement to Lola). Fu Manchu then murdered Salvaletti to cover the Si-Fan's tracks.

Since Rohmer's fiction contains impossible premises, it can be theoretically combined with reality in a more plausible fashion. Here's my theory about the events portrayed in the novel. Fu Manchu intended to take over a nation-wide political machine of an American Senator with Presidential aspirations. The Senator created his organization in early 1934. He was challenged to debate in New York by a noted Socialist. The Senator won the debate due to his own oratorical skills. News of this victory reached the ears of Fu Manchu, who then conceived a plan to take over the Senator's organization. Salvaletti was ordered to infiltrate the Senator's entourage.

In September 1935, Fu Manchu kidnapped two men. One victim was a doctor with a grudge against the Senator. The other was one of the Senator's bodyguards. Both were brainwashed to shoot the Senator in his native state.

With the Senator's death, one of his lieutenants gained prominence by giving a stirring eulogy at the funeral. The Senator's lieutenant had Presidential aspirations, but lacked financial support. The lieutenant was approached by Salvaletti and offered a deal. Salvaletti would supply financial support to the new Presidential candidate. In exchange, Salvaletti would become the candidate's campaign manager. If the candidate won the Presidential election, Salvaletti would become the key political advisor in the White House. Salvaletti's role in the White House would be equivalent to that of Henry Hopkins in the Roosevelt administration. Fu Manchu's plan was simple. The Si-Fan would control Salvaletti, and Salvaletti would control the Presidential candidate.

Salvaletti's engagement to Lola Dumas was arranged to provide a cover story for the Si-Fan money to be funneled into the Presidential campaign. The money would ostensibly be supplied by Lola's wealthy father and his elitist friends, but would really come from the Si-Fan's gold reserves. This whole plot exploded when a Catholic priest, who was also a radio personality, revealed that Salvaletti was already married to someone else. The unwanted negative publicity ruined Fu Manchu's scheme. The leader of the Si-Fan ordered the murder of Salvaletti.

If we were to judge *President Fu Manchu* uncritically, it would be chronologically assigned to early 1936 because it was snowing in the opening chapters. Nevertheless, I argue that the novel's events should be placed in September 1935 since it is unarguably connected to real events that transpired during that month. The snow in the novel must be another distortion.

Nayland Smith trailed Fu Manchu to the United States from Europe to Asia, then from Asia to South America, and then from South America to the United States (chap. 3). Fu Manchu must have left London for Asia in 1933. He then must have gone to South America in 1934 before arriving in the United States in 1935. What was Fu Manchu doing in South America? He may have been intervening in two South American conflicts. There was a border dispute between Peru and Colombia (September 1932 to May 1934). The Chaco War (1932-35) also raged between Bolivia and Paraguay.

President Fu Manchu also revealed further evidence about Fu Manchu's growing vendetta against Benito Mussolini. Nayland Smith strongly suspected that control of the United States was just a stepping stone to combating Fascist Italy (chap. 26): "Have you glanced at the Abyssinian situation, for instance? Dr. Fu Manchu's triumph here would mean the end of Italy's ambition." In September 1935, Mussolini was threatening to attack Ethiopia (Abyssinia). The invasion was launched in October.

Fu Manchu's determination to halt Mussolini's conquests reached its zenith in *The Drums of Fu Manchu*. Using all the resources of the Si-Fan, Fu Manchu became determined to stop the outbreak of a new world war by launching a terrorist campaign against Fascism in the late 1930's. Fu Manchu's main targets were Pietro Monaghani and Rudolph Adlon, the dictators of Italy and Germany. Monaghani and Adlon were obvious aliases for Mussolini and Hitler. Monaghani escaped Fu Manchu's wrath, but the mastermind successfully murdered Adlon.

There are obvious problems with the assassination of Adlon. Since Hitler caused World War II in 1939, Sax Rohmer realized that an explanation was in order. An incomplete rationalization was offered in *The Island of Fu Manchu* (chap. 36). There Fu Manchu confronted Bart Kerrigan, the newspaper correspondent who narrated the previous exploit, with this observation: "I admire your spirit---although it is so correctly English; as correct as the attitude of your Foreign Office which compelled you to alter your account of certain facts in my previous encounter with Sir Denis Nayland Smith---" Fu Manchu then made an additional comment: "In order that his identity might be hidden they demanded that you describe the funeral of 'Rudolph Adlon.' Actually he was at his usual post at the time."

The British Foreign Office was responsible for the falsifications in *The Drums of Fu Manchu*. There can be little doubt that the same government bureaucrats caused all the blatant modifications to the earlier *President Fu Manchu* in order to safeguard the

true identity of “Harvey Bragg.” What really happened in *The Drums of Fu Manchu* regarding Adolf Hitler?

In the novel, Adlon had secretly gone to Venice to confer with Monaghani. There he was abducted by Fu Manchu. The master of the Si-Fan had also imprisoned Nayland Smith and Bart Kerrigan. Fu Manchu demanded that Adlon relinquish his dreams of conquest, but the German dictator refused. Smith and Kerrigan escaped, but they were unable to prevent Adlon’s murder. Later in Germany, Adlon’s successor, General Diesler, was killed by a sniper recruited by the Si-Fan. The sniper was then slain by a German mob. Supposedly because of his failure to protect the sniper’s life, Fu Manchu was deposed as President of the Si-Fan’s ruling Council of Seven. Fu Manchu remained inside the Si-Fan in a demoted capacity.

The masked reality of these events is easy to discern. Hitler went to Venice to meet with Mussolini. Smith and Kerrigan escaped in time to rescue Hitler from the vengeance of Fu Manchu. Another Si-Fan plot involving a sniper was then launched. This plot was aimed at killing Herman Goering, Hitler’s second-in-command. The assassination was foiled by Heinrich Himmler’s Gestapo, who captured the sniper and tortured him to death. Fu Manchu was deposed as President of the Council of Seven for failing to slay both Hitler and Goering.

If the assassination of the German dictator is unquestionably false, what about the other events in the novel? It was asserted that the Si-Fan was behind the resignation of major political figures in Great Britain and Turkey. The Si-Fan also interfered in a major diplomatic quarrel between France and Italy. Those events in the novel correspond very well to actual historical occurrences.

Before addressing the resignation in Britain, I will focus on the similar event in Turkey. That event is very easy to find by searching historical records. The Si-Fan was supposedly behind “the retirement from public life of the ruler of Turkey” (chap. 42). There are two people who could be considered the ruler of Turkey, the President and the Prime Minister. Rohmer was referring to the latter. On September 23, 1937, Prime Minister Ismet Inonu of Turkey tendered his resignation to President Kemal Ataturk. If the Si-Fan pressured Inonu to quit, the victory was short-lived. Following Ataturk’s death on November 10, 1938, Inonu was elected President. It is unclear why the Si-Fan would target Inonu, Perhaps they felt he was too pro-Hitler. If that was the reason, the Si-Fan had really no cause for concern. During World War II, Turkey under Inonu walked a skillfully plotted neutral path until very late (February 1945) when it declared war on Nazi Germany.

Shortly after the resignation of the Turkish leader, Nayland Smith went to protect Marcel Delibes, a French government minister, from the Si-Fan’s threats. Delibes wanted to issue an ultimatum to Monaghani (alias Mussolini) that could result in war. The attack on Delibes indicated a major shift in the Si-Fan’s policy. The terrorist campaign had never been directed before against anyone with blatant anti-Fascist policies. The reason for this change in direction must be attributed to the replacement of Fu Manchu as President of the Council of Seven. I will discuss the ramifications of Fu Manchu’s replacement later.

Marcel Delibes had drafted an order to a French general. The order would mobilize the French army for possible action against Italy. Monaghani (Mussolini) could avoid that mobilization if he acceded to a demand of the French government. It was

never explained what the French demand really was. Nayland Smith decided to take action into his own hands. He drugged Delibes, and then destroyed the mobilization order. When the Si-Fan learned of this development, they canceled the order for Delibes' removal. It is not clear from Rohmer's novel how much time passed between the Turkish resignation and the French ultimatum to Italy. The interval could be days or it could be weeks. Considering that Inonu resigned on September 23, the French ultimatum must have been sent in late September or October.

Just as Monaghani and Adlon were based on real people, so was Delibes. The French leader was portrayed as "handsome" and "grey-haired," with "the dark eyebrows and moustache which had proved such a boon to French caricaturists." Delibes was based on Leon Blum (1872-1950). In June 1936, Blum, the leader of the French Socialist party, became Premier of France. He formed the Popular Front Coalition government with Radicals and Communists. Although Blum's coalition controlled the Chamber of Deputies, the French Senate was under the domination of a conservative majority. When the Senate refused to grant Blum emergency powers to deal with the Depression, he resigned as Premier. The Popular Front ruling coalition was reformed under Camille Chautemps, a Radical. Blum assumed the post of Vice-Premier in Chautemps' government. In January 1938, Chautemps organized a government solely consisting of Radicals. In March, Blum replaced Chautemps as Premier and reformed the Popular Front Coalition. During April, the Popular Front collapsed, and Edouard Daladier, a Radical, became Premier. Blum was no longer in the French cabinet.

In 1936, the Spanish Civil War had begun. Mussolini and Hitler sent military troops to act as "volunteers" to aid the right-wing Rebels. Blum, then wanted to provide firm aid to the Loyalist forces, but he found his hands tied by the deep political division in France. In August 1937, Mussolini overstepped his assistance to the Spanish Rebels. He ordered his submarines to torpedo British, French and Russian ships carrying supplies for the Loyalist government. It was pretended that these attacks were the work of "pirates," but the pretence fooled nobody. For the first time, the French government took firm action to curb Mussolini's excesses in Spain. The French called for an international conference in Nyon to handle the issue of the submarine attacks. The British and the Russians agreed to attend. The Italians and Germans refused to send representatives. The Nyon Conference in September 1937 was a big success. The British, French and Russian representatives agreed to form an international naval patrol that would prevent all further "piracy" on the Mediterranean. Faced with the opposition of the Nyon Conference, Mussolini was forced to commit the Italian navy to the international naval patrol, and consequently terminate the submarine attacks.

Attempting to build on the success of the Nyon Conference, the British and French governments sent a joint note to Mussolini on October 2, 1938. The note requested a London conference between Britain, France and Italy to discuss the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Spain. Mussolini declined the invitation to participate in such a conference.

This October 1938 note to Mussolini provides the proper historical context for analyzing the "Delibes" episode in *The Drums of Fu Manchu*. Based on historical evidence, the "Delibes" ultimatum must have been sent after October 2. After Mussolini's initial response to Anglo-French note, "Marcel Delibes" (Vice-Premier Leon Blum) must have persuaded his colleagues in the Popular Front government to dispatch

an ultimatum to Mussolini. The dictator must either agree to negotiate the withdrawal of the Italian forces from Spain, or face the consequences of a French military mobilization. Mussolini did not accept the terms of the French ultimatum, but Nayland Smith prevented the French Government from carrying out its threat.

The historical evidence then points to the chronological placement of *The Drums of Fu Manchu* in 1937. Besides the Turkish resignation and the French-Italian dispute, *The Drums of Fu Manchu* alluded to another real-life historical event. Nayland Smith cited the resignation of “a prominent cabinet minister” (chap. 1). Smith even further implied that the Si-Fan was behind his resignation. This resignation happened shortly before the novel began. In May 1937, the most prominent cabinet minister of all, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, resigned. Baldwin had adopted a policy of appeasement towards Germany and Italy, which was briefly reversed by his successor, Neville Chamberlain, in September-October 1937. The reference in *The Drums of Fu Manchu* also made it clear that the government official had not just merely resigned his position in the cabinet to assume the role of a backbencher in Parliament. According to Rohmer, the minister had “retired” from public life. Baldwin retired from the House of Commons, accepted elevation to the House of Lords, and played no significant role in politics up to his death in 1947. An early reference to the “purposeless slaughter” in China (chap. 6) also indicated the novel began after the Sino-Japanese War erupted on July 7, 1937. Therefore, *The Drums of Fu Manchu* took place during the summer and early autumn of 1937.

The only objection to the placement of *The Drums of Fu Manchu* in 1937 is a reference in *The Island of Fu Manchu* (chap. 1). Bart Kerrigan remarked that “Smith and I left Paris, at the end of Fu Manchu’s battle to put an end to dictators.” Kerrigan further added that this departure occurred “nearly two years ago.” Since *The Island of Fu Manchu* happened in the spring of 1940, then this remark implied that *The Drums of Fu Manchu* took place in 1938.

It is impossible for *The Drums of Fu Manchu* to have happened in 1938. Disregarding the false story of Hitler’s assassination, the novel’s three other major political events (the British resignation, the Turkish resignation, and the French ultimatum) all neatly fit into 1937. It should also be noted that while *The Drums of Fu Manchu* had frequent references to Mussolini’s conquest of Ethiopia (1935-36), the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), and the Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), neither of the two major events of 1938, Hitler’s annexation of Austria or the Munich Conference, were mentioned by Rohmer. The evidence firmly puts *The Drums of Fu Manchu* in 1937.

It would be too easy to view the reference to an interval of “nearly two years” between the two Fu Manchu novels as a mistake. As I mentioned earlier, Cay Van Ash concluded from the chronological contradictions in the Fu Manchu series that there was a missing adventure in 1917. There is ample evidence of unrecorded actions during 1937-1938. *The Drums of Fu Manchu* ended abruptly with too many unanswered questions. It may only have been half the story of Fu Manchu’s war on dictators.

When did the Si-Fan abandon its terrorist campaign in Europe? The Si-Fan had just scored a major accomplishment by preventing the French mobilization against Italy. There was no reason to stop the campaign.

How did Fu Manchu regain control of the Si-Fan? Fu Manchu was back as President of the Council of Seven in *The Island of Fu Manchu*. Nobody made any

reference to his previous demotion. At the very least, a keen journalist like Bart Kerrigan would have asked Fu Manchu how he was restored to power. Of course, Kerrigan may already have known how Fu Manchu was restored to power. He just didn't bother to share that information with the readers.

Who replaced Fu Manchu as President of the Council of Seven? The attack on the French cabinet minister indicated a major revision of the Si-Fan's policies. The Si-Fan had gone from attacking dictators to threatening anti-appeasement political leader. In *The Island of Fu Manchu*, we get a further clue about the opposition to Fu Manchu inside the Si-Fan. In 1940, Fu Manchu was facing opposition from a pro-Nazi faction within the Si-Fan (chap. 21). It must have been this pro-Nazi faction that seized control from Fu Manchu in 1937. They may even have sabotaged Fu Manchu's assassination plots against Hitler. This pro-Nazi faction then targeted the anti-Fascist politicians of Europe. Who was leading the pro-Nazi faction in 1940? The answer is Fu Manchu's daughter, the woman known as Fah Lo Suee and Koreani.

What was going on with Fu Manchu's daughter? In *The Trail of Fu Manchu*, the impression was given that her father had liquidated her for disloyalty. *The Drums of Fu Manchu* revealed that her execution was an elaborate illusion. Her memory of her life as Fah Lo Suee had been erased, and she now believed herself to be a slave girl called Koreani. In *The Island of Fu Manchu*, she had returned to her own treacherous ways and had now risen to the leadership of the pro-Nazi faction. Clearly someone has restored her memory as well as her high rank within the Si-Fan. How did this happen?

The obvious answer would be that Fu Manchu's successor as President of the Si-Fan restored Fah Lo Suee's memory and then promoted her again to a position of power. In *The Island of Fu Manchu*, she was still called Koreani whenever Kerrigan discussed her with Smith or Fu Manchu. However, Kerrigan was originally introduced to Fu Manchu's daughter under her Koreani alias. He was not used to referring to her as Fah Lo Suee. Inside the Si-Fan during 1938-40, she must have been known as Fah Lo Suee. Such a premise is also confirmed by the fact that in her next and last appearance, "The Wrath of Fu Manchu" (first published in 1952), Fu Manchu's daughter was presented in her Fah Lo Suee incarnation instead of her Koreani persona.

There now begins to form a clear picture of the man who replaced Fu Manchu as ruler of the Si-Fan. His pro-Fascist sympathies indicate a love for conquest. He certainly did not have any idealistic philosophy. His ability to restore Fah Lo Suee's memory also indicated a mastery of Tibetan mesmerism similar to those talents demonstrated by Fu Manchu and his daughter. Fu Manchu's rival was probably not Chinese. His alliance with Fascism demonstrated that he had no sympathy for the suffering of China during the war with Japan.

Fu Manchu's rival also seemed to have mastered the dictum voiced by the Corleone family in the Godfather movies: "Keep your friends close, keep your enemies closer." Rather than expel Fu Manchu from the Council of Seven, the new President forced his demoted predecessor to remain there and conduct the pro-Mussolini persecution of a French statesman. It must have really galled Fu Manchu to be acting in Mussolini's interests. As cited earlier, Fu Manchu stated in 1932 that the removal of the Italian dictator had long been desired.

During the unrecorded activities of 1937-38, the pro-Fascist leader of the Si-Fan must have looked for new targets. Would the Si-Fan have gone after Winston Churchill

or Anthony Eden? Considering that Communism then also opposed Fascism, the Si-Fan may even have attempted to kill Josef Stalin.

At some point, Fu Manchu reasserted his control over the Si-Fan in 1938. The usurper would have then been expelled from the Si-Fan, or even executed. Inheriting leadership of the pro-Fascist faction in the Si-Fan, Fah Lo Suee then left for Haiti to lay the groundwork for her unsuccessful coup two years later. Fu Manchu would then be faced with an important decision. Should he then continue his campaign against Fascist dictators? The best opportunity for him to continue his original anti-Fascist agenda would have been at the Munich conference in September 1938. Both Mussolini and Hitler were openly at the same place. The Si-Fan could slay both of them with one blow.

This theory would also explain why Nayland Smith's activities in 1938 remain unrecorded. Nayland Smith's actions during 1937 are controversial. There is conjectural evidence that Fu Manchu rescued Hitler in Venice. There is undisputable proof that Smith sabotaged a French initiative directed against Mussolini. Smith could have saved both dictators from Fu Manchu at Munich.