

# The Railway Protection Movement in Szechuan in 1911.

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## I

On 9 May 1911, the Chinese Government issued a directive for the nationalization of trunk railways. By the end of the month, preparations had gone forward for the transfer of the privately run Szechuan-Hankow and Canton-Hankow Railways to public ownership; Tuan Fang had been appointed Director General of Railways, a loan agreement had been concluded with Britain, the U.S.A., France and Germany for a loan of £ 6,000,000, and the levy of the land tax share for the construction of the Szechuan-Hankow Railway had been prohibited. On learning of these developments, the Provincial Assembly concluded that the government's measures were calculated to wrest the rights and interests of the province from the Szechuanese and place them in the hands of foreigners, and, through the Acting-Viceroy, Wang Jen-wen, they requested the government to rescind its measures.

The government, however, disregarded these representations, and, on 17 June, laid down regulations for the transfer of the Szechuan-Hankow and Canton-Hankow Railways from private to public control. On learning of this, the gentry, literati and wealthy merchants of Szechuan, on 21 June, set up a Railway League with the intention of initiating a widespread railway protection movement. A protest carrying 2,400 signatures from the gentry and merchants was sent to the government, and representatives were dispatched to Peking, where they started agitating among the officials of the Central Government. They initiated agitation and propaganda to the effect that the government was seeking to cede Szechuan to four foreign powers, while in Szechuan they organized a protest rally of several thousand people. The

government, however, completely ignored these activities. The Acting-Viceroy Wang, who was sympathetic to the movement, was reprimanded, and Chao Erh-fang was appointed Acting-Viceroy in his place, while Li Chi-hsün was appointed Manager of the Railway Bureau at Ichang, with orders to proceed with railway works, using the resources of Szechuan.

These measures stimulated the opposition to extraordinary activity. On 24 August the shareholders held a general meeting at Chengtu, at which it was resolved that the shops should close, the schools strike, benevolences not be paid, the land tax be collected by their own hands, and Leaguers go out and organize local militia throughout the province. From this date, the shops in Chengtu closed and tablets were affixed to their doors, bearing the name of the late Emperor, Kuang Hsü, who was affectionately remembered as having graciously permitted the private control of the railway. Platforms with tablets in his memory were set up in the street, and Leaguers went round calling out, "The government is selling Szechuan to foreigners" "Don't pay your taxes". At the same time, the shareholders' meeting requested, through the Acting-Viceroy, Chao, that the question of the private or public control of railways should be decided when the National Assembly opened in October, and that, until then, private control should continue.<sup>(1)</sup> The government, however, would not listen even to this request. Tuan Fang proceeded to Szechuan at the head of troops, with orders to suppress the movement by force. This oppressive attitude on the part of the government further infuriated the Szechuanese. Moreover, Chao, on hearing that Tuan was on his way, abandoned the cooperative attitude, which he had hitherto maintained towards the League, and, resolving to suppress the movement, arrested, on 7 September, 10 of the leading figures in the railway protection movement, including Pu Tien-chün,

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(1) Wên-hsien Ts'ung-pien, vol. 23.  
Hsüan-t'ung Cheng-chi, vol. 38.  
Yü-chai Ts'un-kao, tsou-shu, vol. 18.

President of the Provincial Assembly, Lo Lun, Vice-President of the Provincial Assembly, Teng Hsiao-k'ao, Chairman of the Railway League, Yen K'ai, Chairman of the Shareholders' meeting and Chang Lan, Vice-Chairman of the Shareholders' meeting.<sup>(1)</sup>

## II

Why was it that the question of the nationalization of the Szechuan-Hankow Railway and the foreign loan provoked the gentry, literati and wealthy merchants of Szechuan into taking such violent action?

The transfer of the railway to public control, by means of a foreign loan must have been felt as a great blow by the employees of the railway company, by the pupils of the railway school and by others connected with the railway. In the first place it was likely that some of their number would lose their employment. According to the loan agreement, Americans would fill technical posts, and therefore the Chinese engineers would lose the posts they had hitherto held; the officials responsible for the collection of the land tax share would become redundant, while in other directions also, nationalization would naturally be accompanied by some changes of staff. In the second place, a number of them counted on making some private profit when capital was raised and railway works were undertaken. Such practices were common among the principal members of the company. At the time of the economic scare in Shanghai in 1910, the company lost 3,000,000 taels of its capital as the result of bank failures, but a part of the capital had been misappropriated by the principals, who had, moreover, invested some of the company's

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(1) On the Szechuan riots which arose from the railway question, there are following studies: Yutaka Nozawa, "The Structure of Classes in Chinese Revolution, 1911." (*Rekishigaku Kenkyū*, no. 150.) M. Tanaka, "The Beginning of the Riot in Ssü-ch'uan at the End of Ch'ing Dynasty." (*Sichō*, no. 44.) A number of points in the present study are based on these two articles.

capital in other enterprises on their own authority, in their desire for large profits.<sup>(1)</sup> The railway issue, therefore, raised large questions for the persons associated with the company, in connection with their personal profits, and it was for this reason that they organized the Railway League and promoted a movement to oppose nationalization.

These people, however, were only a section of all those who took part in the railway protection movement. The heart of the movement was provided by the Provincial Assembly, the Shareholders' meeting and the Railway League. The President of the Provincial Assembly, Pu Tien-chün was a Compiler of the Academy, and the Vice-President, Lo Lun was a Metropolitan Graduate, while most of the other members of the Assembly were either holders of official rank or graduates under the old system of examination.<sup>(2)</sup> Since these people were elected by the gentry, literati, large landowners and wealthy merchants, it would probably be true to say that the Provincial Assembly represented the interests of the gentry, literati, large landowners and wealthy merchants.<sup>(3)</sup> The Chairman of the Shareholders' meeting, Yen K'ai, was a Compiler of the Academy, and the Vice-Chairman, Chang Lan, was a Senior Licentiate and also a member of the Provincial Assembly. Most of the shareholders, too, were probably gentry, literati, wealthy merchants or large landowners.<sup>(4)</sup> The Railway League, then, being formed from members of the Provincial Assembly, shareholders, persons connected with the railway, and students, it would probably be true to describe the Leaguers as gentry, wealthy merchants, large landowners and students. This being so, what would have been the reason for the opposition of the gentry, literati and wealthy

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(1) Huang-cha Hsü Wên-hsien T'ung-k'ao, vols. 369-371.

(2) Hsüan-t'ung Chêng-chi, vol. 40  
North China Herald, Feb. 18, 1910.

(3) Ta Ch'ing Kuang-hsü Hsin Fa-ling, vol. 1.

(4) The holder of a land tax share had no rights of a shareholder, his rights being exercised for him by the official who collected the land tax share.

merchants to nationalization and the foreign loan? In this connection, the following four points may be considered.

(i) Reluctance to hand over the rights and interests of Szechuan to foreigners.

The gentry and wealthy merchants of Szechuan profoundly disliked the acquisition of assets in their province by foreigners. In 1910 there had been a series of cases of their refusal to provide land or buildings for missionaries' or other foreigners' schools.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1911, when the British-American Tobacco Company was set up in Chungking, the gentry formed a committee to oppose it.<sup>(2)</sup> It would, therefore, be safe to say that their plan was to prevent the transference to foreigners of Szechuan's interests in the Szechuan-Hankow Railway and to ensure the retention of those interests in Szechuanese hands. In 1888, Britain and France started trying to acquire railway and mining rights in Szechuan, and, in 1899, they acquired mining concessions. A railway, however, was essential for the exploitation of the mines, and the two countries decided to press for the construction of a Szechuan Railway, financed by a foreign loan; with a similar object in view, the U.S.A., also, approached the Chinese Government. However, precedents showed that railways financed by loans were constructed and controlled by foreigners. The gentry, accordingly, opposed the loan, and decided to try to build the Szechuan-Hankow Railway themselves. The Viceroy, Hsi Liang, was also of the gentry's persuasion, and, in 1904, inaugurated the Szechuan-Hankow Railway Company, with the intention of building a railway with Szechuan government funds and Szechuanese investment. In 1907, the government having no reserves for investment in it, the company was reconstituted under private management and started work on the construction of the line between Ichang and Wan Hsien. The company did not permit foreigners to invest in it. Chinese were employed

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(1) North China Herald, May 27, 1910.

(2) Ibid., Aug. 12, 1911.

as engineers, for the training of whom a railway school was instituted. Some of the rails, and the locomotives, were purchased from the U.S.A., but most of the rails were made at the Hanyang Iron Foundry, while for sleepers, pine, produced in Szechuan, was used.<sup>(1)</sup> In this way, then, the construction of this railway was undertaken entirely by Szechuanese funds, technology and labour, with the result that they were quite unable to tolerate handing over their interests to foreigners on account of a foreign loan and inevitably adopted the line, "Britain, America, France and Germany are going to annex Szechuan. The example of India clearly shows how wretched would be the fate of Szechuan should it fall under foreign control." On the other hand, however, they also produced such placards as the following: "Not a blade of grass belonging to a foreigner must be touched, . . . if we do this, we should only injure our own cause and give the foreign nations a pretext to step in and divide up our country . . . This has nothing to do with the missionaries of any nation. If foreign nations have money to lend, and China wishes to borrow, they have a perfect right to lend upon the very best terms that they can get. We, therefore, cannot blame the foreigners, but only our own government."<sup>(2)</sup> Thus, the railway protection movement's leaders, while carrying on anti-foreign agitation, were also manifestly striving to protect the lives and property of foreigners. In their view it was not the foreign powers but their own government that was at fault in the railway question, and it was simply as a means of attacking their own government that they provoked anti-foreign agitation.

(ii) Opposition to the centralized and despotic control exercised by the Ch'ing Government.

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(1) Huang-chao Hsü Wên-hsien T'ung-k'ao, vols. 364-371, Yu-tien-pu Tsou-i Wei-pien.

Tōa Dōbun Kai, "Shina Shōbetsu Zenshi," Shisen, Tokyo, 1917, pp. 245-256.

(2) Edwin J. Dingle, China's Revolution, Shanghai, 1912, pp. 290, 291.

In China, the gentry and literati had generally a comparatively powerful voice in the administration of their native regions, and, in the closing years of a dynasty, this voice became more powerful than ever. In the particular case of the Ch'ing Dynasty their power had been on the increase since the time of the Taiping Rebellion in the middle of the 19th century, and when the government wished to increase its revenue by levying the likin or its power by forming local militia, it had to leave the right to levy the likin or to form the militia in their hands. Once in possession of this right, their voice in the administration became greater still, and, resenting the despotic rule of the Ch'ing Government, they rallied to the support of K'ang Yu-wei's constitutional movement. The Provincial Assemblies, which first emerged in 1909, were set up by the government in submission to the demand of the gentry, literati, large landowners and wealthy merchants, "The administration of our own province should be in our own hands." With the institution of the Provincial Assemblies, there were ceaseless clashes in every province between the Assembly and the Viceroy or Governor, while the Assemblies pressed the Central Government forthwith to institute a National Parliament, a widespread movement to enforce submission to this demand being set on foot in 1910 by a combination of 17 Provincial Assemblies. When in 1911 a cabinet was formed, headed by Prince Ch'ing, the Assemblies combined to oppose it.

Szechuan being a rich province, its inhabitants were assessed for a new land tax (津貼), which no other province paid, and some of the taxes collected in Szechuan were applied to the finances of other provinces. The gentry and wealthy merchants of Szechuan were, therefore, especially opposed to the centralization of authority and were loud in their clamours of "Szechuan for the Szechuanese." To that extent they were more severe in their criticism of the authorities of the Provincial Assembly than the Assembly of any other province, and clashes between the Assembly and the Viceroy were extremely

frequent.<sup>(1)</sup> For example, the Assembly advocated reduction of the salary of the Viceroy and other high officials, demanded the dismissal of the district officials, whose corruption and illegal tortures they attacked, and expressed their dissatisfaction with the corrupt and conservative nature of the Cabinet.<sup>(2)</sup> It was inevitable that at such a time the move to transfer to public control, by means of a foreign loan, the Szechuan-Hankow Railway which was then being built by the hands of the Szechuanese, should arouse the sharpest opposition on the part of the gentry, literati, large landowners and wealthy merchants. Their chief desire was the early opening of the railway. They realized that without a foreign loan this would not easily be accomplished; for, whereas a sum of 70,000,000 taels was required for the construction of the 500 miles from Ichang to Chengtu, they had completed no more than 8 miles with the 16,000,000 taels which they had collected. Consequently, the object of their opposition was not the foreign loan itself but the despotic way in which the government had, without consultation with the Assembly, simply concluded the loan agreement and decided on the nationalization of the railway.<sup>(3)</sup> Thus the Railway League's slogans included, along with "Let the railways be privately controlled", "Administer in accordance with public opinion."<sup>(4)</sup> Moreover, according to the loan agreement concerned, the construction and control of the lines were to be entirely and exclusively vested in the Chinese Government, for the construction the Chinese were to appoint an American engineer for the section Ichang-Kweichowfu, and as far as possible, Chinese material was to be used, so that no transference of rights and interests to

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(1) North China Herald, Feb. 18, 1910.

(2) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Acting Consul Brown to Sir. J. Jordan (Sep. 22, 1911).

(3) This may be presumed from the contention (mentioned above) that this question should be decided in the National Assembly. Also, for the lack of opposition to the foreign, see North China Herald, July 29, Sep. 9, 1911.

(4) Kuo Mo-jo, Fan-chêng Chien-hou, Shanghai, 1929, p. 143.

foreigners was involved.<sup>(1)</sup> On the other hand, absolute control by a government they could not trust was precisely what the Leaguers did not want. Nothing would satisfy them but that both the construction and the control should be in their own hands. Though a foreign loan would doubtless be involved, they seem to have confidently expected to be able to conclude the necessary agreement themselves.<sup>(2)</sup> In short, any compromise with the government on this issue, entailing as it would the wholesale abandonment of their hopes of realizing the ideal of "Szechuan, of the Szechuanese, by the Szechuanese, for the Szechuanese," met with their intense opposition.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that all the Szechuanese upheld the railway protection movement. On the contrary, officials of the Peking government, who were natives of Szechuan, were opposed to the movement. For instance, Kan Ta-chang and 45 other officials of the government, who were natives of Szechuan, jointly drew attention to the inefficiency and corruption of the authorities of the Szechuan-Hankow Railway and to the appalling extortion, to which the public was being subjected for the sake of the construction of the railway, and petitioned that private control should forthwith be abolished and public control instituted. This makes it clear that the railway issue arose from the desire of the gentry and wealthy merchants of Szechuan, on the one hand, and Szechuanese officials in the Peking government, on the other, to protect their respective interests. We may therefore conclude that the gentry and wealthy merchants were opposed to the despotism or railway nationalization of the Peking government out of consideration for the interests of members of their own class and not at all for the sake of the Szechuanese at large.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) H.B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, London, 1918, vol. 3, p. 100.

(2) In Kwanghsi and Honan, Assemblies were opposed to government loans and advocated that for each province a foreign loan should be raised. (Paul S. Reinsh, *Intellectual and Political Currents in the Far East*, Boston, 1911, p. 240.)

(3) C. Ichiko "The Leaders of the Railway Protection Movement in Szechuan" (*Studies in Arts and Culture*, Ochanomizu University, vol. 6)

Moreover, the gentry and wealthy merchants who wanted a "Szechuan for the Szechuanese," were not only averse to Szechuan falling under the despotic rule of the Peking government, but they also did all they could to prevent interests in Szechuan falling into the hands of people from other provinces. This will be dealt with later on, but the following episode probably sprang from such a cause: when work was started on the Szechuan-Hankow Railway, Hu Chao-tung, an engineer from another province, advocated that work should be begun on the easy Chengtu-Chungking stretch, but he found himself opposed by the principals of the company and ultimately resigned his post.<sup>(1)</sup>

(iii) The disadvantageous method of repaying the company's capital, as laid down by the government, in comparison with the cases of other provinces.

The method was as follows: (a.) In return for each capital of 7,000,000 taels, cash or National Railway Bonds at 6 % would be paid. (b.) In return for 4,000,000 taels actually used in the work, National Railway Bonds at 6 % would be paid. (c.) In return for the several hundred thousand taels applied to miscellaneous expenditures, National Railway Bonds without interest would be paid. (d.) The government would pay no compensation for the company's funds lost owing to the Shanghai bank failures at the time of the economic scare in 1910, or for other losses, amounting to 4,000,000 taels.

By terms (b.) and (d.) of this method, Szechuan was at a disadvantage as compared with Kwantung and Hunan.<sup>(2)</sup> In this events, who would meet the losses? The sum collected by the company by 1911, amounted to about 16,000,000 taels, made up from: sharecapital; shares, privately or voluntarily purchased—2,600,000 taels; land tax share, compulsory purchased by farmers—9,500,000 taels; the remainder coming from the native opium forced tax, opium lamp forced tax, salt and tea taxes, interest, copper coinage mint, deficit copper

(1) Kuo Mo-jo, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-2.

(2) M. Tanaka, *The Beginning of the Riot in Ssu-ch'uan at the End of Ch'ing Dynasty*. (Sichō, no. 44.)

mint and miscellaneous receipts.<sup>(1)</sup> Accordingly, it was irrational, leaders of the Railway League asserted, for the company's capital largely collected from farmers not be repaid in full, since in other provinces almost all of the capital mainly invested by wealthy merchants was to be repaid in cash. The gentry, already dissatisfied with the diversion of taxes from Szechuan to other provinces, were infuriated by this. However, it must be noted that their opposition was not for the sake of the farmers but for their own interests; they wished to have some money at their command under the pretext of using it for public work.<sup>(2)</sup>

(iv) The sympathy of the Acting-Viceroy, Wang Jen-wen, with the movement.

Wang was a native of Kuei-chou Province, but his ancestors had originally come from Szechuan and Szechuan was his old home. As one who later became one of the leading figures in the Kuomintang, he had, even at this time, a comparatively progressive outlook. He was consequently extremely sympathetic from first to last towards a movement which sought to oppose the despotism of the Peking government and to protect the interests of the Szechuanese. There is also the following account. The Minister of Posts and Communications, T'ang Shao-i, was one of Yüan Shih-kai's most trusted followers, and, even after his retirement, had frequent meetings with Yüan. But Sheng Hsüan-huai, who succeeded T'ang as the minister, though one of Yüan's followers, was opposed to Yüan and T'ang at the present juncture. On the promulgation of the directive for the nationalization of the railways, which Sheng had drafted, Yüan and T'ang decided in consultation that the time was ripe to stir up a movement against the government; T'ang proceeded to Szechuan, where he stirred up the gentry against nationalization, and the Acting-Viceroy, Wang, who was sympathetic towards the gentry, formed one

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(1) Yü-chai Ts'un-kao, *tsou-shu*, vol. 17.

(2) C. Ichiko, *op. cit.*

of T'ang's party.<sup>(1)</sup> It is uncertain how much reliance may be placed on this account. However, in view of the fact that the Vice-Premier, Hsü Shih-ching, who was one of Yüan's trusted followers, was the only member of the Central Government to support the claims of the gentry of Szechuan, it would surely be reasonable to give some credence to the above account.<sup>(2)</sup> Thus it seems to have been Wang's sympathetic attitude and Tang's agitation which were responsible for the development of the movement.

For the reasons above described, the gentry, literati and wealthy merchants of Szechuan were violently opposed to railway nationalization and the foreign loan. Nevertheless, just as they strove to protect the lives and properties of foreigners while fanning anti-foreign feeling, in the same way their opposition to the despotism and centralized control of the Ch'ing Government did not mean that they sought its overthrow. The following points make this clear.

(a.) When Lung Ming-chien, a member of the revolutionary party, tried to persuade Pu, the President of the Provincial Assembly, to support the revolution, Pu refused, saying that he personally was only trying to form a political party.<sup>(3)</sup> He and Lo, the Vice-President of the Provincial Assembly, and Teng, the Chairman of the Railway League, all belonged to the constitutional party, and, even after the foundation of the Republic of China, they belonged to a party opposed to the Kuomintang.<sup>(4)</sup> Chang, Vice-Chairman of the Shareholders' meeting, Ch'ian San-cheng and Hsiao Hsiang were members of the Provincial Assembly,<sup>(5)</sup> but the Assembly was not revolutionary but in favour of a constitutional monarchy. All the above persons were leading figures in the railway protection movement, and as such were arrested by Chao Erh-fang.

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(1) M. Matsushima, *Shin-chō Matsuro Hishi*, Tokyo, 1925, pp. 222, 234, 235. (This was brought to my attention by Professor Y. Muramatsu.)

(2) Hsin-jên Ch'un-ch'iu, Szechuan.

(3) Hsin-hai Ko-ming Shih-mo Chi, vol. 9.

(4) *Nippon Gaimu-sho, Gendai Shina Jimmei Kan*, Tokyo, 1916.

(5) *Tung-fang Tsa-chi*, vol. 6, no. 11.

(b.) They were always solicitous for the maintenance of public order and issued instructions that assassination of officials or attacks on public offices could not be countenanced. When the closure of the food stores caused hardship to the poor, they ordered the opening of the stores as well as collecting foodstuffs, which they issued to the poor,<sup>(1)</sup> for they saw in the situation a possible threat to the peace.

(c.) They formed the local militia in order to resist the forceful suppression of the movement by the government, not in order to start a rebellion.<sup>(2)</sup>

(d.) They claimed that their refusal to pay benevolences was based on the argument, "The Government says that the Szechuanese are too poor to build a railway by themselves, so we say that we are too poor to pay benevolences." Again, when they refused to hand over to the government the land tax and additional levy after collecting it themselves, they said, "The government has not yet paid on the Good Faith Bonds which it issued some 20 years ago, so it will probably not pay the interest on the National Railway Bonds at 6 %. We collect the land tax, as that interest." With a view to the orderly collection of the land tax, they proposed establishing Administration Chambers of the Branch Shareholders' Associations.<sup>(3)</sup>

(e.) Out of gratitude to the late Emperor, Kuang Hsü, who gave permission for the private control of the railway, his tablets were set up in the streets or affixed to doors, and respects were paid to them.

(f.) The leaders of the agitation said that, when the right of the people to build their own road was conceded, order would be resumed as before.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) North China Herald, Oct. 21, 1911.

(2) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Acting Consul Brown to Sir J. Jordan (Sep. 22, 1911).

(3) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Acting Consul Brown to Sir J. Jordan (Sep. 22, 1911), Consul-General Wilkinson to Sir J. Jordan (Sep. 16, 1911).

(4) North China Herald, Oct. 21, 1911.

The above points clearly show that the movement was not a revolutionary one. But the fact that the overthrow of the government was not the object of the movement was connected with the fact that its leadership contained holders of official rank and graduates under the old system of examination. Both they and the officials of the government they were attacking were members of the same ruling class. Both the constitutional movement, which they directed, and the present railway protection movement were simply struggles within the ruling class.

### III

Since the leadership of the railway protection movement was trying to force the government to modify its policy by a lawful movement, no serious trouble broke out at Chengtu, the centre of the movement. When, on 7 September, ten of the leaders were arrested, a crowd of several thousand gathered in front of the viceroy's yamen and demanded their release. Hsün-fang troops or old army forces were ordered out, some forty people were killed, and Chengtu was plunged into disorder for a time. But even this disorder was quelled in a few days.

In the outlying districts the railway protection movement was not conducted so peaceably as at Chengtu. Following the shareholders' meeting of 24 August, members of the Railway League and students, alleging that the government was about to sell Szechuan to foreigners, organized local militia or peasant train-bands. The local militia was brought into being by the leaders of the movement as a precaution against forcible suppression by the government, but the soldiers took action contrary to the wishes of the leadership. On 3 September, police and tax offices were destroyed at Chung-chiang Hsien. On 5 September, police and likin offices and the tea school were destroyed at Kuan Hsien. Foreigners, too, found themselves in a position sufficiently

perilous for them to claim, "Some of the excitement which characterized the Boxer year has been our lot".<sup>(1)</sup>

After the violent action taken by the Acting-Viceroy, Chao, in Chengtu on 7 September, the situation in the outlying districts further deteriorated. The infuriated local militia bore down on the outskirts of Chengtu. Incidents involving the cutting of telegraph wires, dismissal of magistrates, destruction of offices, looting of storehouses, attacks on prisons and release of the inmates occurred at Wen Chiang, Pi Hsien, Chung-ching Chou, Kuan Hsien, Shuang-liu, Hsing-ching, Ch'ung Chou and P'u-chiang.<sup>(2)</sup>

With the outbreak of the revolution at Wuchang on 10 October, the disorder in Szechuan increased also. Faced with this situation, the Central Government, on 26 October, dismissed the Minister of Posts and Communications, Sheng Hsüan-huai, who had drafted the plan for the nationalization of the Szechuan-Hankow Railway, and released the ten leaders who had been arrested. But the disorder did not cease. On 22 November, at Chungking, Chang P'ei-chüeh and Hsia Chih-shih, members of the revolutionary party, became President and Vice-President, formed a military government and declared their independence. Lu-chou and Wan Hsien then became independent also.

Under these circumstances, the next question that arises is why the local movements took such violent form in opposition to the plans of the leaders. So far as the peasantry was concerned, the railway question was not the great issue it was in the eyes of the gentry and wealthy merchants. In general, the peasantry were not well disposed towards railway construction, and, in the particular case of Szechuan, their liability for the land tax share rendered them even more antipathetic. The rule was that a farmer paid 3% of his rent as land tax share, but in practice when landowners paid land tax, they

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(1) North China Herald Sep. 23, 1911.

(2) Hsüan-t'ung Chêng-chi, vol. 38.

were forced to pay four or five taels for every tael of land tax, and this of course they levied from their tenants. When a landowner had paid 50 taels by way of land tax share, he received a registered share certificate, but until then the dividend due was compulsorily ploughed back into the share, and in general he would receive none of the privileges of a shareholder.

It goes without saying that tenants wanted the land tax share abolished. The poor landed farmer, too, though there was the possibility of his becoming a shareholder at some unspecified future date, was doubtless eager for its abolition, if only to alleviate to a slight degree the hardships of his present lot.—In order to construct the Szechuan-Hankow Railway from private resources, they would be compelled to pay the land tax share for some 20 years yet. Even if they received no return on the sums they had already paid out, they must inevitably have wished for the abolition of the system. In the eyes of the poor peasants, therefore, a policy which would discontinue the land tax share and build the railway with a foreign loan, was preferable to the gentry's movement. But it was the threat to their lives and property, caused both by the excessive weight of taxation and rent and by the corruption of the officials and landlords, which, in spite of the above considerations, led them to take part in the gentry's movement and take violent anti-official action.

In the closing years of the Ch'ing Dynasty, both the varieties of taxes in Szechuan and the sums involved increased.

The taxes collected for every tael of land tax may be listed as follows:<sup>(1)</sup>

New land tax (Ch'in-t'ieh 津貼) 1 tael.

This tax was levied to meet military expenditure at the time of the Taiping rebellion, and was never subsequently abolished.

Benevolences (Ch'ang-chüan 常捐) 3-4 taels.

Imposed in the same way as the new land tax.

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(1) Local Gazetteers of Szechuan.

New benevolences (Hsin-chüan 新捐) 1.8-2.4 taels.

Levied since the Boxer rebellion for indemnity payments.

Railway share land tax (Tsu-ku-chüan 租股捐) 4-5 taels.

In addition to these there were certain small taxes, such as "fu-ma" (夫馬) and "ch'i-mi" (旗米). When these were added up, there were some districts where as much as 14 taels were levied for every tael of regular land tax.<sup>(1)</sup> Further, these taxes each involved its own additional levy.

All the above were concomitants of the land tax, but, for the purpose of various reforms, including making up the revenue which had fallen owing to the prohibition of opium, the establishment of the Provincial Assembly and a new police office, some tax assessments rose, while new taxes were imposed. For example, the tax on salt (yen-k'ó 鹽課) rose, and a tax on pork (jou-li 肉釐) was imposed. With the prevalence of official corruption, moreover, the poor were even compelled to pay several times the due amount of tax, and their lot was extremely hard.

Even before this time it had frequently happened that, when the lower classes found themselves plunged in the depths of misery, they would not individually consider what was responsible for their individual plight, but, whatever the reason, would be stirred up with anti-foreign or anti-official arguments and embark on a course of violent action. But the ease with which they could be stirred by anti-foreign or anti-official arguments was due to their permanently entertaining, collectively rather than individually, crude anti-foreign feelings (such as that western people would take out their eyes and make medicine of them, or that rain would not fall once a church was completed) and anti-official feelings. In the present case of Szechuan, responsibility for the hardships of the peasants did not lie solely with the government and officials. The excessive weight of taxation was also due to the various

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(1) Ch'ung-ning Hsien-chih, vol. 3.

reforms carried out by the government in response to the demands of the gentry and wealthy merchants. In the case of tenants, impoverishment was due to the greed of landlords. Moreover, the collection of the likin, benevolences, and new benevolences was undertaken by the gentry, who, like the officials, would have taken an excessive amount. In particular, the Szechuan-Hankow Railway Company was one of the chief causes of their hardships. Thus the gentry, wealthy merchants and large landowners were involved in the responsibility for the impoverishment of the peasantry. But when the wretched peasantry, plunged so far into the depths of misery that nothing short of the destruction of the existing order of society would enable them to survive, heard their landlords' propaganda to the effect that the outrageous government was planning to sell Szechuan to foreigners, they rose to a man. But the local militia formed from the peasantry was directly led by hot-headed students, who, though they detested the government, were not in this way preparing to set up a new government. The revolutionaries and Ko Lao Hui, too, who served in the militia and grasped its leadership, were, just in the same way as the students, intent on the overthrow of the government, but had given no serious thought to the measures to be taken when that aim had been achieved. The movement of these poor and untrained peasants, under the leadership of such people, was without direction and solely destructive rather than constructive. They simply become rioters. Then gangs of salt smugglers and robbers, under the name of local militia, engaged in looting, rape, murder, arson and destruction; Tibetans and Miaos rose in revolt; and the Hsün-fang tui who should have put down the disturbance, embarked on a course no less violent than that of the rioters, with the result that the country districts fell into a state of complete disorder.

Since the popular rising was the result of discontent with excessive taxation and extortionate officials, the railway issue was not directly connected with it. This is also made clear by the following incident. It is related

that, when the Viceroy, Chao, declared, "The officials have revoked the railway share tax, while the league are continuing it and demand in addition a dollar a day from all shops. Thus, under pretext of saving the people, they are but making greater taxation and thinking only of their own success," the people were pacified.<sup>(1)</sup> And subsequently, as a result of consultations between the Viceroy, Chao, and the elders among the gentry, traders and students, Chao made the following statement: "(a.) Land taxes shall be cut down 60%. (b.) The increased duty on salt, which was imposed to make up for the fallen opium revenue, shall be abolished. (c.) Likin duties both new and old will be done away with and the office closed. (d.) As lotteries are but a form of gambling, all such means of raising funds will be discarded."<sup>(2)</sup>

#### IV

The disturbed state of the country districts further deteriorated after 10 October. Faced with this situation, the Acting-Viceroy, Chao, considered that it would be unwise to attempt to suppress the rising by force himself, and, with a view to cooperating with the Leaguers, released the Leaguers, whom he had arrested, on 26 October. Now the Leaguers thus released had basically the same class interests as the officials of the Ch'ing Government, who wanted to suppress the rising, and they had only provoked the rising in the country districts with a view to taking (by lawful means, moreover) power from those officials for themselves, the gentry of Szechuan. They now turned round and joined Chao in discussing measures for the suppression of the rising. They represented to the Szechuanese that, since the loan agreement contained the words, "If . . . any political . . . crisis should take place . . . then

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(1) North China Herald, Oct. 21, 1911.

(2) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Consul-General Wilkinson to Sir J. Jordan (Nov. 25, 1911).

North China Herald, Dec. 30, 1911.

this contract shall become null and void," they had achieved their object, had persuaded the Viceroy to reduce taxation and grant remission to districts ravaged by fighting, and that the Szechuanese should immediately "turn back into the paths of peace."<sup>(1)</sup> When there was a call for the independence of Szechuan, "members of the Provincial Assembly and well-known merchants were urging caution and moderation".<sup>(2)</sup> A further stage was reached when, on 22 November, Chungking became independent, followed by Lu Chou and Wan Hsien. The situation around them having reached this stage, they conferred with the Viceroy, Chao, with a view to the peaceful transfer of authority, and, on 27 November, they formed the Great Han Military Government at Chengtu and declared the independence of Szechuan.

Chao's conditions for the transfer of authority were as follows: (i) The president of the new government should be Pu, and the vice-president, Chu Ch'ing-lan. (ii) On his resignation, Chao should become responsible for operations against the Tibetans, his expenses being defrayed by the Szechuan Government. (iii) Chao would remain in Chengtu for the present. (iv) The new government's military strength would be formed from the Lu Chün and Hsün-fang tui, with the Vice-President, Chu, as their commander-in-chief. The Chu who appears in the above conditions was a native of Chekiang Province, and, as commander of the Lu Chün troops until now, had rendered loyal service to Chao. Although, therefore, Chao had originally said in his statement, "All the functions of government will be transferred to the Szechuanese themselves," the new government, of which the independence was based on the above conditions, was by no means one which, in accordance with Chao's statement, transferred authority entirely to the Szechuanese. Military authority

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(1) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey (Dec. 25, 1911).

North China Herald, Dec. 30, 1911.

(2) Ibid.

remained wholly in the hands of Chao. Pu's aim, from the first, had been constitutional monarchy, and he had therefore made no plans for a revolutionary government. The result was that, even after the formation of the new government, Chengtu society was still in an unsettled state. The revolutionaries, therefore, while extremely discontented with independence in this guise, were able to increase their influence in proportion as the social unrest grew.

It so happened that, on 8 December, the Hsün-fang soldiers received only a one month's bonus, whereas the Lu Chün soldiers received three months', and they therefore began rioting, attacking and looting the Ta Ch'ing Bank, the Financial Commissioner's Treasury, pawnshops and other shops. Seeing this, the Lu Chün soldiers also began looting; then Lu Chün and local militia from the outlying districts entered Chengtu, which thereupon lost all semblance of government. It is even said that these riots were deliberately instigated by the ex-Viceroy, Chao, but this is not certain. It is certain, however, that he planned to take advantage of these riots to recover his power.<sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, people of other provinces, afraid that the Szechuanese might seize their power from them, closed their ranks and joined with Chao in discussing protective measures.<sup>(2)</sup>

On the 9th, however, Yin Ch'ang-heng, Director of the Lu Chün school for military cadets, put down the disturbance at the head of Lu Chün troops. Pu and Chu having both fled, Yin became President and Lo, one of the leaders of the League, Vice-President. With this, the power of other provinces was almost wholly swept away, for the new President and Vice-President were both Szechuanese, and the Hsün-fang troops were disbanded.<sup>(3)</sup> These troops

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(1) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Consul-General Wilkinson to Sir J. Jordan (Dec. 10, 1911).

(2) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Consul-General Wilkinson to Sir J. Jordan (Dec. 9 & 10, 1911).

(3) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Chengtu Intelligence Report for Quarter ending Dec. 31, 1911. (Jan. 1, 1912).

were old time soldiers from other provinces, whose utter rottenness and frequent violence towards the inhabitants had excited the detestation of the Szechuanese.<sup>(1)</sup> With the disappearance of these troops, the preservation of peace in Chengtu became the responsibility of the Lu Chün troops and local militia. The latter were of course Szechuanese. The latter, too, recruited as they were from the sons of Szechuanese farmers, included many members of the League, and, averse to fighting against Szechuanese, they would discharge their weapons into the air.<sup>(2)</sup>

In this way, then, a "Szechuan for the Szechuanese" was realized, but how much of the power was revolutionary? Vice-President Lo, like the ex-President, Pu, had belonged to the constitutional party, but, after Chengtu had become independent, unlike Pu, whose attachment to the idea of a constitutional monarchy had persisted, he aimed at a republic on the American pattern. The Minister of Finance, Tung Hsiu-wu, and the Chief of Police, Yang Hsin-yu, were members of the revolutionary party. The Hsün-fang troops, who had been loyal to the old order, had been disbanded and their place taken by the revolutionary local militia. It may therefore be concluded that the revolutionary element was a degree stronger than before. President Yin, however, though an outstandingly able military leader, had no particular political views, and, in the past, had resisted persuasion to join the revolutionary party.<sup>(3)</sup> Moreover, Yin behaved so autocratically in the new government that, although the constitutionalists had been routed in the recent coup, the revolutionaries, lacking any effective strength, failed to obtain political power; political power was held by those who controlled military force, in other words by the faction which possessed effective strength. It would thus be

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(1) Tōa Dōbun Kai, op. cit.

(2) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Acting Consul Brown to Sir J. Jordan (Sep. 22, 1911).

(3) Chih-yüan Tzū-chi.

true to say that revolutionary power at Chengtu was far weaker than in the government of Chungking, headed by President Chang and Vice-President Hsia, both members of the revolutionary party. When, therefore, on 2 February, 1912, the two governments were combined, and a single military government for Szechuan was established, it was Chengtu, where the revolutionary power was weaker, that emerged the victor in the negotiations for unification between the two governments, and Chengtu, with its more strongly conservative atmosphere, became the seat of the government, with Yin as its President.<sup>(1)</sup>

## V

The independence of Szechuan come later than that of many of the provinces, and the revolutionary element in its military government was comparatively slight. This was of course partly due to the fact that in Szechuan the revolutionary movement had not been strong and to the considerable military strength of the viceroy, but the fact that the leaders of the Railway League were aiming at constitutional monarchy probably played a considerable part. Thus we may say that, their aim of a "Szechuan for the Szechuanese" was, outwardly, largely realized, but "Szechuan for the Szechuanese" did not mean Szechuanese at large.

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(1) Parliamentary Papers, China (1912), Consul-General Wilkinson to Sir. J. Jordan (Jan. 5, 1912)