

The *Sichuan* Railway Protection Movement

—Social Setting on the Eve of the Movement—

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In the latter half, especially during the 90's, of the last century, farmers of *Sichuan* suffered heavy increase of additional and miscellaneous taxes levied by the government of the *Qing* dynasty. There were, for the government, growing expense of military expedient which might suppress the rising of farmers, indemnity to be paid to the Western Powers who had been encroaching China since the Opium War, and expenditure for reactionary reorganizing of the Establishment. The authorities wanted to cover such expense by an easy hand-to-mouth means of tax levying.

In the meantime, the open port of 1891 at *Zhongqing* gave rise to the Western goods flooding in China and farming villages of *Sichuan* were rapidly becoming a part of the world-wide market of capitalist economy. The situation inevitably forced the farmers to reconstruct their farming system in a half-colonial tone. Foreign goods came in and badly hit the still primitive handicraft in the district. While farmers were obliged to buy their necessities in money, until they could not help selling their daily food, rice, in order to obtain the money.

Hard times of the later 90's made their rising increase in number, with its scale growing larger and its intensity higher, and finally it burst forth as the *Sichuan* Railway Protection Movement which is a prelude to the *Xinhai* Revolution.