

Hsiung K'o-wu, lately the ruling spirit in Szechwan, and little or nothing of this comes back to the State. In the same way the minor officials, with no restraining influence from Peking, or fear of public opinion, are out to make what they can, and as quickly as possible, whilst their day of power lasts. In the old days public opinion had much influence over the officials, and if one tried to overstep the recognised limits of squeeze, the people rose and there was trouble. Now the soldiers have increased so enormously in numbers and power that they keep the people in subjection and a state of terrorism. The merchants and peasants long for peace and security in vain.

The break-up of the Central Power has been the chance for adventurers, and now Provinces are divided against each other and often a Province itself is split up into factions.

In the old days the army was despised as an inferior profession and a restraining influence kept on it, but the rise of innumerable factions has given the soldiers their chance. Each petty leader is dependent on his men, and the men themselves now thoroughly understand their power. Very few military officers trouble about discipline, or take any pains about securing a regular payment for their men. As a result, the soldier is generally owed a large amount of back pay, which is sometimes made up for by encouraging looting. If this is not sufficiently profitable, the soldier deserts and joins a brigand band.

The students are, to my mind, an even greater source of danger. It must be remembered that, whatever his failing and lack of education, the