ANGLO-TIBETAN RELATIONS 1899-1925

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Abstract

The first chapter examines the influence of geography on Tibet's social and economic life; it also analyses the country's social structure and political institutions. The second traces the course of Anglo-Tibetan relations in the 18th and 19th centuries and examines such external influences on it as the ties between Lhasa and Peking, and Britain's relations with China and Russia. The third chapter examines the aims of Curzon's Tibetan policy, and the factors that determined the Home Government's attitude to the problem. The fourth chapter analyses Morley's Himalayan policy and the resurgence of Chinese power in Tibet. In the fifth, Hardinge, as Viceroy, is compelled by force of circumstances to initiate a set of positive responses to China's persistent attempts to extend her influence in the Himalayan borderlands. Hardinge's efforts led to the Simla Conference and the drawing-up of the McMahon Line along part of the Indo-Tibetan border. The final chapter shows the continuing inability of the British Government to frame a cohesive Tibetan policy. As in the past, Tibet's pleas for help were disregarded in the interests of pressing British diplomatic needs elsewhere. The British failure was one of political leadership, for the Home Government's advisers were generally expressing themselves in favour of a firmer attitude towards China on Tibet, and recommending greater military and political help to Lhasa in its efforts to thwart China's predatory designs.
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Introduction

The purpose of this work is to examine in detail the course of Anglo-Tibetan relations during a period which witnessed both the high noon of the British Empire and the beginnings of its decline.

The Younghusband Mission to Lhasa and the events which brought it about lit the fuse to an imperial crisis, but the conflict that divided the Viceroy and the Home Government, though directly one of policy, also involved a clash of personalities with differing perceptions of Imperialism. The crisis, in short, signalled the end of an epoch when Britain had usually moved alone, and often defiantly, in defence of her colonial interests. The German threat before the First World War and her transparent weakness after it determined that she would never again, in Central Asia, act in the imperial tradition of former years.

In order to fully comprehend the options open to the British Government, to appreciate the arguments used by the contending parties in the debate over Tibet, the present account of Anglo-Tibetan relations has been placed upon the broadest possible canvas to include the influence of international politics, whether in Europe or the Far East, on the Home Government’s policies toward Lhasa, and toward Simla as well. Also included are those political developments in China having a bearing on Tibet. And, as an aid to objective judgment, the course of events in Mongolia has been used as a yardstick to measure the significance of parallel occurrences affecting Tibet, for the position of both countries in relation to China, and to Russia and Britain respectively, bore a close resemblance.

Of the personalities of this period, Lord Curzon holds pride of place, standing out among his fellows like a colossus. His strengths reflected in great measure the achievements of British rule in India, his shortcomings were equally the mirror-image of its failures. To comprehend Curzon’s Tibetan policy in all its aspects it is necessary to appreciate his view of India’s place in the British Empire, and to realise how basic to his thinking Imperialism
was as a political philosophy. Autocrat he might have been, but
the jingoist of vulgar caricature he was assuredly not. Few of
India's rulers, in recent centuries, have possessed a more
disciplined mind or been driven by deeper sense of purpose. It
was in the stormy relations with his colleagues at home that
Curzon's stature as conservative idealist and rebel assumes an
element of tragic grandeur.

The assessment of his Tibetan policy has, however, largely
suffered with his reputation. Alastair Lamb, whose first study was sympathetic, found it necessary to revise his opinion in a later
work. While still retaining his admiration for the Viceroy's
personal qualities, he was of the view that Curzon's Tibetan
policy was anachronistic. But the fact that he wonders how an
able diplomatist like Hardinge came to adopt so many of Curzon's
guide lines is the proof that the views of Lord Curzon were informed
by a deep insight into India's strategic needs, and characterised by
a sound grasp of the principles by which Great Powers have
traditionally come to a working arrangement on their mutual interests.
It was, after all, Russia's refusal to accommodate such interests by
limiting her own expansion in the Far East that caused Britain alarm,
and drove Japan to declare war. Less dramatically, for she was very much
weaker, but with equal tenacity China stuck to her maximum
demands. Morley's policy, which commands Lamb's fullest admiration,
was a patent failure, since the Chinese were not prepared to play
the game according to the Secretary of State's rules. Unlike him,
they saw their natural frontier with India not along the crest of the
Himalayas but along its foothills. Jordan, the British Ambassador
at Peking, made recommendations which, in Lamb's opinion
accepted, would have solved the Tibetan question once and for
all. As this study will show, there was not the slightest evidence
to support this view. The Chinese overtures to him were designed only
to keep alive British hopes of a Tibetan settlement in order to prevent

such unilateral action by Britain as would irrevocably prise Tibet from China's grasp. It remains a fact that Jordan left Peking in 1920, having failed in his attempts to persuade China to compromise; for the Chinese, it became clear, would be content with nothing short of Tibet's total subjugation.

The strength of the British Empire rested on its control of India, not on the profits of its China trade. For Curzon this was an article of faith as it was for a generation of British Indian officials. The wardens of the Raj harboured no expansionist designs on Tibet. They had no desire to dominate it, still less to conquer it. They only saw in its continued independence the best safeguard for India's security. It was an aim which blended well with Tibet's own aspirations for national independence. China certainly had legitimate anxieties concerning her own security, but Tibet as a buffer would have adequately met her needs. Lamb, who is quick to criticise any Indian foray north of the Himalayas, seems to assume that this same mountain wall constituted China's natural frontier. It clearly did not. Neither geographically, politically or culturally had China any right to extend its rule over the Tibetan plateau. Indeed, one of the drawbacks of Lamb's studies is the absence of any attempt to examine the historical relations between the rulers at Peking and Lhasa. But whatever one's disagreements Lamb's pioneering work remain a model of sound scholarship to all aspirants in the field of Anglo-Tibetan relations.

Authors with more limited themes have also made noteworthy contributions. P.L. Mehra's study of the Younghusband Mission promises to remain a standard work for many years to come. Smaller in scope, but of great narrative power, is Peter Fleming's account of the same subject; the one flaw perhaps being his inclination to pin the blame for Curzon's troubles exclusively on Brodrick. Brodrick's version of his quarrel with the Viceroy, which was deposited in the India Office Library, was written with the blessings of Balfour and with the help of Hardinge,

whose hostility to Curzon finds clear expression in his memoirs. Chinese accounts, Kuomintang or Maoist, are uniform in their denunciation of British Imperialist conspiracies designed to separate Tibet from the Chinese motherland. Similar charges have been levelled against India since 1959, with Nehru in the role of an empire builder. The Russians, having dutifully echoed China's anti-British propaganda in the palmy days of their relationship with Peking, are today discreetly silent on the historical past, although they occasionally charge their erstwhile ally practising racial oppression against its Tibetan subjects: truth in totalitarian societies is often the most saleable of commodities.

In India the quarrels and attendant bitterness of the past have blinkered generations to the wisdom of Curzon's Tibetan policy. With the fog of Asianism lifting, there is, however, greater hope for the future. R.C. Majumdar, doyen of Indian historians and not one wanting in courage, has already shown the way. One can only hope that others will be emboldened to follow.

Meanwhile there are signs that Tibet, though swallowed, is proving difficult to digest. While it is true that China's present rulers command a reserve of military power that would have been unimaginable to their Manchu or Republican predecessors, they share with them considerable diplomatic skill, great persistence, and an endless patience in the pursuit of traditional goals. Products, too, of an inward-looking culture, they continue to see the Middle Kingdom as the principal repository of human enlightenment, whose uniqueness places it above the rest of mankind. Their revolutionary rhetoric, apart from being a salve to ethnocentric pride, serves as a convenient camouflage for old imperial appetites just as Japan's pan-Asianism once did.

Having conceded China's claims to Tibet in 1954, the Indian Government was in error in not adopting a more flexible attitude on the question of the Sino-Indian boundary; however, had they done so there is no guarantee that relations between New Delhi and Peking would be markedly different today. India still learns the painful lessons which Britain absorbed in 1938-9, namely, that to barter away the freedom of a friendly country as a price for peace or security is an act of criminal folly whose ultimate consequence is the destruction of these very ends.
CHAPTER 1

THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY AND GOVERNMENT OF TIBET

Standing like an enormous rampart on the northern wall of the Himalayan massif, Tibet is a vast plateau of about 500,000 square miles with an average elevation of 10,000 feet above sea-level. However, the country is not uniformly flat, for numerous mountain ranges run across it from a westerly direction, the best example of which, the Tangla, being an extension of the Karakoram.

Tibet abounds in lakes some of which are remarkable for their size. The largest called Koko Nor lies to the northeast, and covers an estimated area of 1,630 square miles. Next in order of size is the Tengri Nor with an area of 1,000 square miles but situated in the northwest. The Yamdok Tso in central Tibet lay adjacent to a convent whose chief claim to fame was that its abbess, the Dorje Phagmo, represented the only female incarnation in the Tibetan church hierarchy; both lake and nunnery were within easy reach of the important town of Gyantse. Further west near the source of the Sutlej lay Lake Manasarowar and Rakas Tal, objects of veneration for Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims alike. Of these none were more than a 100 square miles.

Three broad physical divisions characterise Tibet. The Chang Tang, an area of inland drainage (1,500 miles from east to west and 400-500 miles from north to south), lying to the north is the most bleak and inhospitable. Located at an average altitude of 16,000 feet, but rising even higher in its mountains and ridges, it consists largely of a tangled mass of plains and valleys dotted by numerous lakes into

1 'The modern name "Tibet", by which the country is known to the world, derives from the Mongolian "Thubet", the Chinese "Tufan", the Thai "Thibet", and the Arabic "Tubbat", which are found in early works.' W.D. Shakabpa, Tibet A Political History, New Haven, U.S.A., 1967, p.1.
which powerful local streams empty their waters. Swept perpetually by freezing winds, the Chang Tang is a howling wilderness whose landscape is relieved merely by the scanty clumps of grass which provide pasture for wild yaks and sheep. Only the stray nomad tending his flock provides evidence of human life.

Southern Tibet, the second natural division, includes the valleys of the Indus and Sutlej to the west, and the Tsang-po or Brahmaputra, as it is known when it crosses into India, further south and east. Situated at the lower elevation of 7,000 to 12,000 feet, its climate is warmer, its soil more hospitable. In addition it is blessed with a moderate yearly rainfall of 15 to 18 inches. This indeed is the heart of Tibet, providing the bulk of its grain and livestock, and the seat of its supreme religious and political authority.

The third natural division is Eastern Tibet, lying between the Chang Tang and China. Originating from here, and flowing in an almost parallel course are two of South-East Asia's largest rivers, the Mekong and the Salween, and also China's largest waterway, the Yangtze. The inhabitants of these parts, although of Tibetan stock and acknowledging the spiritual authority of the Dalai Lama, were generally loath to accept the political control of either Lhasa or Peking. It thus proved to be an area of fluctuating administrative boundaries, with some principalities giving their allegiance to Lhasa, others to China, a few maintaining a precarious semi-independent status, while the remainder professed total independence.

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This broad area is known as Kham, and its fierce warrior tribes, the Khambas, who usually sought profit in the time honoured profession of brigandage, were widely feared among their milder brethren of central Tibet. Europeans with a direct knowledge of the country or whose deep interest in it had been sustained by years of long study were of the view that Eastern Tibet, rich in agricultural and mineral wealth, was assured of a great future.  

**TOWNS**

The principal towns of Tibet lay in the southern and eastern regions of the country. The largest and most important by far was Lhasa, the seat of the Dalai Lama's spiritual and temporal authority and the country's capital, whose population varied between 35,000 and 40,000 in the early years of the 20th century.

Next in order of size and importance came Shigatse, lying 130 miles west of Lhasa, with a population of 13,000 to 20,000. Because of the close proximity of Tashilunpo monastery in which resided the Panchen Lama (also referred to sometimes as the Tashi Lama), Shigatse came to be regarded as Tibet's second capital.

Chamdo, in eastern Tibet, ranked third in size with its population varying between 9,000 to 12,000. Because of its strategic location - lying astride the route from China - it became Lhasa's most important political and military centre in the east.

Gyantse, in Central Tibet, was situated 60 miles south of Shigatse. Though in size it ranks below Chamdo it was of greater importance as a trade mart, and consequently its role in the history of Anglo-Tibetan relations more significant. It lay at the junction...
of the Indo-Lhasa and Indo-Shigatse trade routes, "across the breadth of southern Tibet - that part of Tibet which, being within the Brahmaputra basin, is in true geographical affinity with India in spite of the Himalayan wall." 4

Brief reference may also be made to three other towns chiefly for commercial reasons. Farthest east lay Tachienlu which marked the ethnic divide between China and Tibet, but it was as an emporium that it was more significant. It was estimated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that an annual inflow of 13 million tons of tea arrived here from China to be packaged into bricks in the packing houses of the great tea firms of the city before commencing its final journey to the interior of Tibet.

In southern Tibet at a point separating the Chumbi Valley from the main Tibetan tableland and guarding one of the approaches to Lhasa through the Tangla range, lay Phari with its small population of 2,000. Situated at the immensely high altitude of 15,000 feet, Phari became noted for its formidable fort, its legendary dirt, and also as an entrepot whence came the produce of Bhutan. Perceval Landon, the 'Times' correspondent who accompanied Younghusband's party to Lhasa in 1904 has left us a vivid description of the place. All the members of that expedition, many of whom had experienced other unsavoury parts of the world were agreed that,

"Phari was the filthiest town on earth .... The houses prop each other up. Rotten and misplaced beams project at intervals through the black layers of peat, and a few small windows lined with crazy black match-boarding sometimes distinguish an upper from a lower floor. The door stands

"open; it is but three black planks, a couple of traverses, and a padlock. Inside, the black glue of argol smoke coats everything. A brass cooking-pot of an iron hammer, cleaned of necessity by use, catches the eyes as the only thing in the room of which one sees the real colour .... Everything in the place is coated and grimed with filth .... It is the same in every house. Nothing has been cleaned since it was made, and the square hole in the flat roof, which serves at once to admit light and air, and to admit emit smoke, looks down upon practically the same interior in five hundred hovels.

"But it is in the street that the dirt strikes one most. Let it be said at once that in the best quarter of the town, that in which the houses are two-storeyed, the heaped up filth - dejecta and rejecta alike - rises to the first-floor windows, and a hole in the mess has to be kept open for access to the door. It must be seen to be believed. In the middle of the street, between the two banks of filth and offal, runs a stinking channel which thaws daily. In it the horns and bones and skulls of every beast eaten or not eaten by the Tibetans - there are few of the latter - lie till the dogs and ravens have picked them clean enough to be used in the mortared walls and thresholds. The stench is fearful .... The men and women, clothes and faces alike, are as black as the peat walls that form a background to every scene .... And the disgust of all this is heightened by an ever-present contrast, for, at the end of every street, hanging in mid-air above this nest of mephitic filth, the cold and almost saint-like purity of the everlasting snows of Chumolhari - a huge wedge of argent a mile high - puts to perpetual shame the dirt of Phari."

Landon was, however, not entirely unsympathetic to the plight of Phari's inhabitants: perched at such a height, for the town at 15,000 feet was surely the highest in the world, it was constantly buffeted by a freezing wind; together they reduced any individual after the slightest exertion to breathlessness and apathy.

Yatung, in the Chumbi Valley, was the town nearest the Indian border, and in 1890 became the first place within Tibet to be opened to British trade.

As the general incline of the country is from west to east, western Tibet with its higher altitude - even plains and valleys tend to

rise over 15,000 feet above sea-level - and its sparser population, had only one important town, Gartok, around which revolved the bulk of the trade between northern India and Tibet.

EXTERNAL TRADE AND TRADE ROUTES

External trade played a very important part in the commercial, social, and political life of Tibet. It was confined almost exclusively to India, the Himalayan borderlands, China and Mongolia. However, in view of the country's low social and economic development, this trade, in its volume, variety and methods was significant only in relation to Tibet. Its real value would have been minimal in a more advanced society. This is true also of the trade routes - which were no more than rough tracks used for animal and human transport, the wheel being as yet unknown.

One of the factors inhibiting the development of great commercial intercourse between Tibet and her neighbours were the formidable mountain barriers that divided them. Dividing her from the Indian sub-continent in the south and west were the Himalayas and the Karakorum. In the north the Kunlun and Altyan Tagh stand between her and Chinese Sinkiang. In between there are ranges, which run approximately parallel to those listed above. The Tangla Mountains, as has been mentioned earlier, is a continuation of the Karakorum, and south of these are the Trans-Himalayan Ranges. Together they contribute to the forbiddingly rugged terrain - high mountain peaks and deep gorges - which divide Tibet from the Chinese province of Szechuan.
From India, Tibet imported cotton goods, precious stones, rice, sugar, tobacco and items of hardware. From China came brick tea - the Tibetan passion for which was to raise British entrepreneurs' expectations about successfully marketing their own products - silk, satin, brocade and porcelain, enamel and ceremonial scarves (Khatag). The Himalayan borderland areas traded largely in local produce.

Tibet's own exports consisted of wool, yak-tails, furs, pasham, borax, salt, medicinal herbs, ponies and mules.

However, her imports far exceeded what she was able to sell which under normal circumstances would have made it well nigh impossible for Tibet to sustain her foreign trade. From this difficult predicament she was saved by enormous inflows of gold from Mongolia in the form of donations to Tibetan monasteries and individual lamas. As Mongolia subscribed to the lamaist faith this was a case where the complementary bonds of religion and commerce served to strengthen each other.

Tibet's external trade routes successfully traversed the girdle of mountain ranges which shielded her from her neighbours, and are listed as follows: From Srinagar in Kashmir, a route runs to Leh, the capital of Ladakh, and through southern Tibet to Shigatse and Lhasa. From Lhasa a route goes eastwards to Chamdo where it bifurcates - the southern road reaching Tachienlu via Batang and Litang; the northern arriving at the same destination via Kanze and the Dango.

From Lhasa again another route strikes north across the Chang Tang to Urga (now known as Ulan Bator), the capital of Mongolia and connects with Siberia.

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Another route begins at Simla and enters Tibet through Shipki and joins the road from Leh. The roads from Almora, through various Tibetan passes, also carry a significant quantity of traffic. From Nepal two routes deserve mention: one passes Kirong Dzong on the upper waters of the Gandak river, the other crosses the frontier near Nya-nam Dzong, on the upper waters of the Arun.

Of greater significance in Anglo-Tibetan relations were the trade routes between India and Tibet which took off from Kalimpong, in the Darjeeling district, crossed south-eastern Sikkim, and entered the Chumbi Valley through the Jelap La. Thence it proceeded to Phari where some took the shorter track to Lhasa via the eastern side of the Hram Tso ("Otter Lake"), while others preferred the more circuitous route via Gyantse.

The Tibet-Assam route from Tawang was considered important more for possible future rewards in the development of commerce between India, Tibet and China, than for the scale of the traffic traversed.7

Because of its low productive capacity, the Tibetan economy, resting principally on barter, had little to sustain it in the way of internal trade. An archaic social system severely restricted the growth of population (according to one good authority the population of Tibet or that part of it under the control of Lhasa was only 3,900,000 in the early part of this century),8 prevented the proper use of the country's resources and denied the import or development of a superior technology. The severe climate and the often formidable barriers of communication within the country — distance being one — resulting in the

7 C.A. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, London, 1924, p.20.
isolation of towns and hamlets for much of the year, completes this picture of medieval backwardness. This heightened the importance of Tibet's external trade, more particularly as the fortunes and power of her ruling class depended in large measure on its development. So it did the well-being of the Tibetan sheep farmers for whom the successful export of their wool to India was a vital necessity as the domestic market was too small to absorb the available supply.

The limited quantities of currency in circulation were almost exclusively used in external trade - another index of its true significance.

Situated between Asia's two great cultural centres,

"Tibet has borrowed heavily from both India and China. Buddhism which pervades the whole life of Tibet, came from India, while the Chinese influence has been particularly strong in political institutions. Although much has been taken from the outside, the very different environment and isolation of Tibet has permitted the preservation of early patterns, as well as the re-working of borrowings into new and sometimes quite original phenomena. The Lamaist Church, although partly the result of Indian influence, is a unique Tibetan creation with an expansive force of its own, which spread as far as Peking and the Volga.

"Tibet is an outstanding area for the study of monasticism, theocratic rule, succession by reincarnation, polyandry and group marriage."

In spite of borrowing the Brahmi script from India the real philological affinity of the Tibetan language lies with Burmese, while racially the country's strongest ties are with Mongolia.

Tibetan Buddhism, derived from the later and weaker phases of Indian Buddhism, was thus in its lamaistic form, "a priestly mixture of

9 E. Kawaguchi, Three Years in Tibet, Benaras, 1909, p.457.
11 A more detailed account may be found in S.C. Das, Indian Pandits in the Land of the Snow, Calcutta, 1965, pp.51-101.
12 P. Carrasco, Land and Polity in Tibet, Seattle, 1959, p.3.
Shamanistic cult, Tantric mysticism, devil-worship, and Indo-Tibetan demonolatry, touched here and there by the brighter lights of the teachings of Buddha. As practised in Tibet to-day, the faith is not merely a monastic brotherhood, it is a truly popular religion, deeply pervading and dominating the life of the Tibetan people. ¹³

THE REFORM OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM AND THE RISE OF THE DALAI LAMA

Tibetan Buddhism experienced its first great reform with the advent of Tsong Kapa who was born in 1353 in the province of Amdo in north-eastern Tibet. The new Yellow Hats - so called because of their apparel - as opposed to the old Red Hats were instructed in a stricter code of morals, being forbidden to marry or drink wine.

Tsong Kapa's successor was Ganden Truppa who founded the Tashilunpo monastery, which in the 17th century was to become the residence of the Panchen or Tashi Lama, the second great hierarch of the Yellow Church. "After Ganden Truppa's death in 1474 his spirit was held to have passed into an infant born two years later. The child became his successor, and this system of reincarnation rapidly became popular and spread throughout the country, there are nowadays five hundred to a thousand incarnate Lamas, of greater or lesser merit, distributed over the different sects of the Tibetan priesthood." ¹⁴

The next incarnation Sonam Gyatso spread the faith not only in Tibet but also in Mongolia. And it was from a Mongol chief Altan Khan, that he received the title of Dalai Lama Vajradhara, "the All-Embracing Lama, the Holder of the Thunderbolt". The fourth Yonten Gyatso was found to be the son of a Mongol prince and thus hastened

the spread of the doctrine of the Yellow Church in Mongolia. Since then many Tibetan saints have reincarnated in Mongol families thus strengthening the religious bond between the two countries.

The fifth in the succession Lob-sang Gyatso was born of humble parentage a few miles from Lhasa. He has by popular acclaim been regarded as the greatest holder of his country's holiest and most powerful office. With the aid of the Oelot Mongols in 1641, he consolidated the power of the Yellow Sect - thus completely establishing the Dalai Lama system - and in so doing established not only his supreme spiritual status, but the highest secular authority which Mongol arms had secured for him as well. Bell summed up the position thus: "From the time of his ancestor, Lotus Thunderbolt, he had been a priest. Later, he was recognized as an incarnation of Chen-re-zi, the patron god of Tibet. And now he had become the secular ruler, the king of Tibet. He was priest, god and king." 15

It was the fifth Dalai Lama who started building the imposing Potala Palace which was to become the residence of his successors. He also made his old teacher the Grand Lama of Tashilunpo, declaring him to be the incarnation of Amitabha "The Boundless Light". In view of the latter's seniority many Tibetans believed the Panchen Lama to have spiritual precedence over the Dalai, though his temporal power was small.

The holders of these high offices were the two most august personalities in Tibet. In wielding authority and influence they often complemented each other. Occasionally, however, they became

15 C.A. Bell, Portrait of the Dalai Lama, London, 1946, p.34.
jealous rivals thus presenting an external Power, usually China, with an opportunity to exploit this division for its own purposes.

**TIBETAN GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

Being a theocracy the Tibetan Government was dualistic in character, with supreme spiritual and secular power vested in the person of the Dalai Lama. But while in theory his power was absolute, it was modified by the existence of consultative bodies. Foremost of these was the Kashag or Council of Ministers composed generally of three lay members and one monk called Kalon. They ran the political and judicial administration of the country holding joint responsibility rather than any special portfolio. They could appoint, transfer or dismiss, subject to the approval of the Dalai Lama (or in his absence the Regent), lay or monk officials. They were also empowered with power to issue decrees on land holdings without necessarily having his sanction. The Kashag constituted a court of appeal for the laity, and only the Dalai Lama could set aside their ruling.

Below the Kashag was another administrative body which was divided into the following departments: Political, Military, Economic, Judicial, Foreign, Financial, and Educational. With the exception of Finance - which was run by four lay officials - these departments were each headed jointly by a layman and a monk.

In a theocratic society the ecclesiastical affairs assume a special importance of their own. The Lord Chamberlain (Chekyab Khempo)

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16 A common error is to suppose that the Kalons and Shapes were the same body of people. See A. Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, London, 1960, p.3. The institution of the Louns with authority over the Kashag was an administrative innovation of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1907 - the reasons for which are set out in W.D. Shakapba, *Tibet A Political History*, New Haven, U.S.A., 1967, p.221.

17 Ibid, p.22.
was the link between the Ecclesiastical Department (Yiktsang) and the Dalai Lama. He also attended the meetings of the Kashag when matters of national importance were to be discussed - a true measure of his influence which sprang from his right of access to the Dalai Lama.

The Ecclesiastical Department (Yiktsang) itself was headed by four monks known as Trungyik Chemo (the most senior of whom was called the Tay Lama), who were in charge of religious affairs, including the supervision of the country's monasteries save those of Sera, Drepung and Ganden.18

The real balance of power within the body politic was best reflected in the National Assembly or Tsongdu, which circumscribed the authority of the civil executive in favour of clerical influence through the strong representation of Tibet's three greatest monasteries, Sera, Drepung and Ganden. While the National Assembly had no legislative role and possessed no formal power over the Executive, neither the Dalai Lama nor the Kashag overrode its wishes.

The four lay heads of the Department of Finance, and their four monk counterparts of the Ecclesiastical Department, often met in session to discuss matters of political importance and other leading issues of the day. They also presided over the meetings of the National Assembly and hence made their influence felt in the counsels of that body.

No discussion of the Tibetan government would be complete without the mention of the Nechung oracle, which was consulted when the search for a deceased Dalai Lama's incarnation was due to commence, or during a time of great national crisis. Like the Delphic priests of ancient Greece those of Nechung wielded considerable power in their country's religious and political hierarchy.

Attention thus far has been concentrated on the central authority in Lhasa. The Dzongpon was the linchpin of the district administration. There were often two holders of the office, one a member of the lay nobility, the other a monk official. In such cases they conducted their business jointly, presiding together, for example, over cases brought before them.

A Dzongpon was normally appointed for a period of three years and possessed great powers. He collected revenue (paid mainly in kind) and administered justice; and the further away he was from Lhasa the greater seemed his local authority. The Dzongpon's functions have been ably summarised as follows: "His income, out of which he paid his revenue, consisted of dues from the people within his jurisdiction, proceeds of the fines imposed by him, large arrears of revenue he had diverted temporarily or otherwise to his coffers, private trading in which he could compel traders to sell goods to him below market rates .... He was not obliged to be in his dzong or at his post all the time, .... he was required to .... ensure that in his absence"19 members of his family discharged his administrative duties. One of the privileges of his office was that the peasants were obliged to supply him with free transport called ula.

Government organisation in Tibet was characterised by a fairly well developed mechanism of checks and balances so as to prevent any one branch of the administration from assuming too much power for itself.

The Tibetan upper class consisted of two broad sections; one lay, the other monastic. In view of the pervasive influence of the latter it would as well be to begin with a description of the structure and functions of the monastic aristocracy. This included the monasteries as corporate institutions as well as individual church hierarchs. "Church hierarchs in their turn are of different types: There are some whose positions are hereditary; others are found as children to be reincarnations of their antecessors; still other positions are open to monks of noble or commoner origin alike."20

The monastic orders did not operate independently of the prevalent social values of Tibetan society as a whole. The majority of monks spent much of their time in proving their piety by performing the humbler duties of life for the benefit of their superiors, while those more privileged, dispensed their spiritual favours on lay supplicants or busied themselves with the administration of the country. Indeed certain monasteries - the Dalai Lama's, for instance, - were staffed mainly with men of noble origin. Thus, the broad class divisions of lay society found their corresponding reflection in the church.

It should, however, be noted that what limited social mobility there was within the country was largely confined to the church. And although the avenues for self-advancement offered by this institution were not easy to come by, they were never closed to those who wished to compensate for their lack of social distinction by their greater enterprise. As such, "Government officials who

were recruited from the priests worked much harder than did the lay aristocrats who, as Bell observed, were inclined to be slack and easygoing in the performance of their official duties.

In relation to the rest of society the poorest monk was better placed socially and financially than his peasant compeer. Not surprisingly recruits for the monasteries were never scarce. To the most needy and deprived they provided a welcome refuge from the unending grind of daily existence. Poor families who supplied monk novices did so in the hope that their boy one day would ascend the ladder of success and that his patronage would then provide ample reward for his relatives.

One social effect of the widespread practice of monastic celibacy was that it depleted the country's scarce human resources, much to the detriment of its agriculture and commerce.

Enjoying a large share of the political administration, benefitting in equal measure from the country's landed wealth, the monks like their lay compeers profited greatly from Tibet's foreign trade. Cocooned behind such privileges, their power was augmented even further by the sanctity ascribed to them by popular belief. They naturally feared "that increased facilities for intercourse between their own people and the outside world will eventually result in the decline of their own influence". The author of these remarks concluded on a more prophetic vein: "This is no doubt true, but it is impossible for the priesthood to hold up for ever the march of progress in Tibet, and the opening of the country

22 E. Kawaguchi, Three Years in Tibet, Benaras, 1909, p.430.
would benefit the masses of the people who now have to support a
great number of unproductive priests."\(^{23}\)

But in spite of its declining quality, the Church as a whole
performed an important historic function. At first, it was the
"instrument of secular kings who used it to circumvent the feudal
power of local nobles. [Being corporate] its institutions could
be established in every locality and could penetrate both the
settled and nomad societies, yet in so doing it did not succumb to
particularism but retained its corporate centralised interest and
character. It successfully eliminated the danger and difficulty of
imposing the role of one great family or one locality over other
families and localities, for the hierarchical succession to power
is relatively impersonal. In the Lama Church, as in the Catholic
Church of the Middle Ages, the general aim of religious rule is to
supersede the feudal method of dividing power between a number of
hereditary great families."\(^{24}\)

The lay nobility was the second great prop of Tibetan
society. It was drawn from three sources: (a) from an ancestor
who acquired the status of a nobleman for meritorious services to
the country by being given a place on the Supreme Council; (b) a
descendant of a family in which a Dalai or Panchen Lama took his
re-birth; (c) descendants from Tibet's early monarchs.

Certain members of the nobility resided in Lhasa and
appointed stewards to look after their estates. Others were
often appointed governors of certain districts by the central
government.

THE PEASANTRY

The peasant's lot was burdensome; the blessings conferred by civil rights and social privileges rarely came his way. As soon as a nobleman was granted a tract of land there at once sprang up between him "and the inhabitants of that particular place a relationship akin to that between sovereign and subject. This lord is an absolute master of his people both in regard to their rights and even to their lives." Taxes were heavy, debt-slavery common, and the penal code unsparing in its severity for even minor transgressors. Kawaguchi's testimony underlined the types of punishment inflicted. "Lhasa", he remarked, "abounds in handless beggars and in beggars minus their eye-balls; and the proportion of eyeless beggars is larger than that of handless ones."26

The influence of caste acted as a further blight on Tibetan society. Kawaguchi lists four occupations - ferrymen, fishermen, smiths and butchers27 - as belonging to the category of outcasts with whom intermarriage was regarded as taboo by the rest of society.28 However, the relative freedom of women provided a welcome contrast to the darker sides of Tibetan life. Bogle, a careful observer, noted that the fairer sex in Tibet were "certainly more delicate and joyous than their neighbours .... [and were] treated with greater attention."29

27 Many smiths and butchers were Ladakhi Mohammedans who resided in Lhasa by right of custom.
29 C. Markham [Ed.], Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa, London, 1876, p.75. Hereafter this work will be referred to as Markham's Narratives.
Celibacy has been mentioned previously as a contributory factor to Tibet's low population. Primitive agriculture where wooden ploughs barely scratched the surface of the soil may be regarded as another, while yet a third, and perhaps more obvious cause, was ignorance of public hygiene and medicine. If Phari was dirty, Lhasa, judging from Kawaguchi's description, was not far behind. Medical knowledge was virtually non-existent. Even herbal cures were less in vogue than charms and a wide variety of superstitious remedies. For example, "in cases of poisoning due to eating bad meat, bad eggs, and from poisoning due to copper pots, pills of various kinds are given, made from the excreta of wolves, mud, rust and other ingredients. Rheumatism was treated with branding red hot irons and affixing charms or] sometimes a particularly holy lama will spit on the part, and this is considered very effective."30 Only the bracing climate of the country prevented the spread of epidemics and lessened the danger of a higher mortality.

Thus, every facet of Tibetan life, even the speech and deportment of its people, reflected the deep social divisions based on status and privilege. It would nevertheless be an oversimplification to conclude from this that Tibetans generally were buried under gloom and despondency. This was no more true of Tibet than it was of early medieval Europe, for the human spirit often displays a resilience enabling it to transcend material constraints. If the Tibetan Church had declined to a stagnating heap, if religion had degenerated into magic and superstition, there were individuals still, who by their innate goodness uplifted those around them. The

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3rd Panchen Lama who played host to George Bogle was one such person. His successor or re-incarnation in the early years of the 20th century seems to have to have been an equally impressive person. Of him Sven Hedin, the great Swedish traveller, wrote with rapture:

"Wonderful, never-to-be-forgotten Tashi Lama! Never has any man made so deep and ineffaceable impression on me. Not as a divinity in human form, but as a man, who in goodness of heart, innocence and purity approaches as near as possible to perfection." No doubt there were others also; those who were both kind and learned. But almost all visitors to Tibet have borne witness to the infectious gaiety of its people. A canny Scotsman such as Bogle not easily given to sentimental outpourings was strangely moved at the moment of his leave-taking: "Farewell, ye honest and simple people! May ye long enjoy that happiness which is denied to more polished nations; and while they are engaged in the endless pursuits of avarice and ambition, defended by your barren mountains, may ye continue to live in peace and contentment, and know no wants but those of nature."

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC FRONTIERS OF TIBET

According to Bell ethnographic Tibet would approximately cover an area of 700 to 800 thousand square miles and have an estimated population of 4 to 5 million. In the east its extended boundary would include a large belt of territory in western China stretching from Yunnan to Kansu, while in the west and south it

31 For an outline of the Panchen's life see S.C. Das, Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow, Calcutta, 1965, Appendix 4, p.16.
33 Markham's Narratives, London, 1876, p.177.
would include a trans-Himalayan arc from Ladakh, Lahul, Spiti, Garhwal, Kumaon, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Assam - which in a word constituted the Mongolian fringe of the Indian sub-continent. These Himalayan kingdoms were to play a crucial role in the history of Anglo-Tibetan relations. To old ties of race and religion with Lhasa were added those of commerce, since pilgrims from these regions were often carriers of trade. Their political relations, however, were far more ambiguous, being neither as firm nor as close as certain writers are given to suppose. A notable example is Alastair Lamb who states:

"Many states outside the normally accepted political frontiers of Tibet owed allegiance to Lhasa, as in the case of Ladakh, Sikkim and Bhutan." 35

In answer it would be well to note that while central Tibet in the 17th and 18th centuries was falling under Mongol and Chinese influence, Ladakh was feeling the pressure of the Mughal Empire in India, and for a time submitted to it. In 1683 Tibet-Ladakh relations were settled by treaty and their common border defined a line which approximates to the one dividing India and China to-day. Ladakh came to an end as a separate kingdom in 1834 when it was conquered by the Dogras. Absorbed into Jammu and Kashmir it later became part of the British Empire.

Spiti, which formerly a province of Ladakh became part of the Kangra district of Punjab, as did Lahul, whose Tibetan chiefs were subject to the Hindu kings of Kulu.

Sikkim founded by central and eastern Tibetan immigrants in the 16th century only loosely acknowledged the Lhasa government,

who in turn accepted this arrangement. As evidence of this attention may be drawn to developments in the middle of the 19th century and subsequently when Sikkim was steadily losing territory to the British and Tibet did nothing to help. The same was the case with Bhutan. Indeed, even as early as 1730 the Tibetans sent, at much cost to themselves, a military expedition to subdue the Bhutanese— with what results may be judged from later reports of persistent raids by these hillmen into Tibet and British India. David Macdonald, who had a deep knowledge of the peoples of the trans-Himalaya, having spent all his life among them, wrote:

"There is at the best of times very little love lost between the Bhutanese and the Tibetans, the latter fearing the former intensely, especially along the frontiers. There is a proverb in the Chumbi Valley which says that if a Bhutanese draws his sword the whole of the valley trembles. The Bhutanese were inveterate raiders, and in former days, did an immense amount of damage along the Chumbi Valley—Pharijong trade route, as many deserted villages and houses testify."36

Another leading authority elucidated the ties between the two countries in the following words:

"The link was another of those loose and variable Central Asian relationships. The Bhutanese respected the Dalai Lama as a great religious figure and honoured him as a powerful neighbouring ruler. But the Gelugpa domination had not extended to Bhutan and there were closer bonds with the Tibetan hierarchs of the older sects. Attempts by Lhasa to impose its jurisdiction on Bhutan by war had been fiercely resisted; but in a crisis with the non-Tibetan world it was natural for the Bhutanese to turn for help, as they did now and then to their neighbours and kinsmen in Tibet."37

After their subjugation to British influence, both Sikkim and Bhutan (particularly the former) received large numbers of Nepalese settlers, thus diluting their traditional ethnographic relationship with Tibet.

It would be appropriate to conclude with a brief note on one particular area of the Tibetan polity, whose geographic location, and social peculiarities, gained for it a special place in the history of Anglo-Tibetan relations. The region alluded to is the Chumbi Valley, that narrow neck of land which divides Sikkim from Bhutan and lies on the southern side of the Himalayan watershed. Through it lay the shortest and most accessible route to Lhasa from the Indo-Tibetan frontier. One third as long, and much less strenuous to traverse than those from China, it was frequently used by Chinese officials, who travelled by sea to Calcutta in the first instance, and then continued their journey from there to Sikkim and thence to Lhasa - a practice which was only discontinued after Sino-Indian relations had worsened at a later stage.

About its inhabitants Macdonald wrote:

"The Tremowa, as the Chumbi Valley people are called, have undoubtedly a strain of Bhutanese and Sikkimese blood in their veins. They are different in appearance and manners from the Tibetans of the plateau, and have a much higher standard of living. Their houses are large and substantial, and they can afford, thanks to the fertility of their soil and their monopoly of the carrying trade, to import more of the luxuries and conveniences of life than their poorer upland brethren."37A

The distinctiveness of the Chumbi Valley and its inhabitants from the rest of Tibet, became for a time a recurring theme in the despatches and communications of leading frontier officials, as it embodied many of their hopes and fears for the future. Furthermore, it served to underline the fact that Southern Tibet, wherein lay the country's most important towns, including Lhasa the capital, its chief trade routes, and its richest agricultural lands, was in

geographical proximity to India. The distance from the Indian frontier to Lhasa, for instance, as the crow flies, was no more than 300 miles. It was a cherished belief of influential British officials that this area of Tibet in particular, lay within the commercial orbit of India. Together with the strategic value of the Tibetan plateau as a buffer it made their political interest in Lhasa, at least in their own eyes, a matter of legitimate concern.

Since religion has traditionally been the dominating theme of Tibetan life, and as its source lay in India, there was for centuries a considerable cultural traffic through the Himalayas. However, with the Muslim conquest of the sub-continent this largely ceased.

"Tibetans have often told me", remarked Bell, "that they can worship in Hindu temples and in Christian churches - their religion is of a wide toleration - but they can have nothing to do with Mahomedan mosques. They find no excuse for the doctrine of Mahomedan Ghazis, who kill in cold blood persons of other Faiths, and believe that, in doing so, they have gained a passport for paradise .... The violence and desecration done to the Hindu religion by the Mahomedan conquerors of India are remembered by the people of Tibet. Their books of prophecy warn them against the Islamic nations, and the prophecies of olden times exercise always a potent influence over Tibetan feeling." 38

The military campaign of the 14th century Delhi Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq in the Himalayas (even admitting that the fantastic plans of conquering Tibet and China often attributed to him are false) did nothing to lessen this abiding dread of Islam,

although by the 18th and 19th centuries the Gurkhas of Nepal had emerged as the main threat. Indeed, the search for security against a possible eruption of an aggressive power in the south might have been one of the contributory factors behind Tibet’s acceptance of a close relationship with China. It does explain, however, why Tibet had closed her doors to her southern neighbour, so that by the time the East India Company was establishing its authority in Bengal only privileged groups of Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims were permitted to enter the Hermit Kingdom.

That such pilgrims have from time immemorial braved the elements in order to worship on the shores of Tibet’s Lake Manasarowar, or at the foot of Mount Kailas nearby (another practice discontinued since 1959), is an apt reminder of the deep inspiration drawn from the Himalayas by the peoples of India, which is worthily reflected in the lore and literature of their land. Dorothy Woodman quotes E.B. Havell, the famous Art historian, as saying:

"All Indian poetry and mythology point to the Himalayas as the centre of the world, and as the throne of the great gods .... The Hindu regards the Himalayas, not from the point of view of the mountaineering sportsman or of the scientist, but as the Muhammadan thinks of Mecca and the Christian of Jerusalem."\(^9\)

She herself follows with the apposite remark that,

"Whereas the Himalayas were the Olympus of Hindu and Buddhist culture, they played no part in the early civilisation of China. They are not even a feature in any early Chinese maps .... They form a natural barrier between these two great Asian civilisations so divergent in almost every respect."\(^0\)

\(^0\) Ibid, p.3.
Although of minor significance in Anglo-Tibetan relations these factors were to become a powerful current in Sino-Indian relations, by which time Britain had left the sub-continent and the successors to the Raj had accepted as final Tibet's total integration into the Chinese body politic. They explain, in some measure, why Indian public opinion was so easily aroused in 1959 over events in Tibet culminating in the Dalai Lama's dramatic flight to India.
In 1772 the East India Company, representing the nascent power of Britain, decided to end the farce and misery of Dual Government in Bengal. Complete in its conquest of this province, secure in its authority, the East India Company began to devote its best energies to the task of administering its newly acquired domain both in the interests of security - for this was an uncertain age when the Mughal Empire was in a state of general collapse and indigenous and European rivals, notably the French, jockeyed for power and privilege - and for organised commercial profit.

It was as well for the East India Company that at this testing period Warren Hastings (1772-1785) was at the helm of affairs in Calcutta. A product of the 18th century, endowed with a questioning mind, long experienced in the ways of the country, able easily to converse in Persian, the language of diplomacy in most of Asia west of China, the Governor General, with his purposeful character and subtlety of intellect was a statesman of a high order. Britain's first essay in Himalayan diplomacy bore the unmistakable stamp of his personality.

It was a local crisis which first made Hastings ponder seriously about Tibet and the Himalayan borderland. The friendly ruler of the neighbouring territory of Cooch Behar, as it transpired, issued a call for help against the marauding Bhutanese. Hastings was quick to respond and the invaders were repulsed. Nevertheless larger considerations involving territorial security, a general peace, and the promotion of the Company's trading interests in the area remained. The seriousness of these problems was further underlined by the depredations of the Gurkhas, who periodically emerged from their mountain fastnesses in Nepal to prey on their neighbours. As a result the lively trans-Himalayan commerce from whose continued development the East India Company stood to gain declined appreciably.
The skirmish with Bhutan gave Hastings the opening for which he was looking. He was aware of the traditional ties of kinship, religion, trade and politics that bound the Himalayan borderlands to Tibet, an awareness which was sharpened when a letter arrived from the Panchen Lama, delivered by Purangir Gossain, a Hindu pilgrim and trader, begging the British to treat the Bhutanese, in spite of their numerous transgressions, with compassion.

Hastings' response was to embark on a diplomatic enterprise whose aims were as follows:

First, to establish direct links with the Panchen Lama, famed for his piety in the Lamaist world, in the hope that the latter's prestige with the Bhutanese would act as a restraining influence on their turbulent activities. The resulting peace in the region would not only reduce the pressure on the Company's over-stretched financial and military resources; it would also revive the declining profits from trans-Himalayan trade. Tibetan traders could avoid such routes as were under the control of the Gurkhas by coming down to Bengal through Bhutan, while the Bhutanese, it was hoped, would find in the newly opened British mart at Rangpur situated near their own frontier sufficient inducement to come themselves.

Hastings' third reason underscored the wider aspect of British diplomacy. The Governor General, dimly aware of the Panchen Lama's unique influence in Peking (with the Dalai Lama still a minor, a Regent ruled at Lhasa), hoped to persuade the Tibetan hierarch to speak

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1 The noted Tibetologist, Richardson, describes Purangir as a most remarkable man. He accompanied the Panchen Lama to the Court of Peking and left a valuable account of the journey. H.E. Richardson, Tibet and Its History, London, 1962, pp.67-68.

See also S. Cammann, Trade Through the Himalayas, Princeton, 1951, pp.145-46.
favourably to the Chinese Emperor about the supercargoes bottled up in Canton and so alleviate their difficulties. He was, in a word, probing Tibet's possible use as a backdoor to China.  

These then were the motives that inspired the British. But a great deal had yet to be known about the peoples of the trans-Himalaya, their habits, customs, material needs and also the nature of their ties with China. As such this early venture in Himalayan diplomacy bore the marks of a reconnaissance enterprise. Its aims were succinctly explained in the Governor General's instructions of 13 May, 1774, to George Bogle, a Scottish servant of the Company appointed to head the mission to the Panchen Lama: Court:

"The design of your mission is to open a mutual and equal communication of trade between the inhabitants of Bhutan and Bengal, and you will be guided by your own judgment in using such means of negotiation as may be most likely to affect this purpose.

"You will take with you a sample for a trial of such articles of commerce as may be sent from this country according to the accompanying list, marking as accurately as possible the charge of transporting them.

"You will inquire what other commodities may be successfully employed in that trade. And you will diligently inform yourself of the manufactures, productions, goods, introduced by intercourse with other countries, which are to be procured in Bhutan, especially such as are of great value and easy transportation, such as gold, silver, precious stones, musk, rhubarb, munjit etc.

"The following will also be the proper objects of your inquiry - the nature of the road between the borders of Bengal and Lhasa, and of the country lying between; the communications between Lhasa and the neighbouring countries, their government, revenue, and manners."  

The Governor General wanted to know more about the social customs of Tibet, the tastes of its people, the position of the Dalai Lama and the country's relations with China.

The commercial reasons behind this particular enterprise need further elaboration. The East India Company hoped that a renewed stimulus to trans-Himalayan trade would help replenish their coffers in Calcutta, it being a widely held belief that Tibet was amply endowed with gold and silver which according to the mercantilist values of the age were the true sources of economic wealth. The prevailing practice in Europe was therefore to hoard in the national interest the greatest possible amounts of specie, news of whose export abroad was apt to provoke a violent public outcry. Hastings was thus left to his own devices. He had to finance locally some of the compelling military expenses of the Company and, at the same time, its expensive tea trade with China.

In George Bogle, Hastings found his perfect instrument. A young Scotsman with a good working knowledge of Persian and Hindustani, he was a shrewd observer and, like his chief, was devoid of evangelical self-righteousness, thus enabling him to view the habits and customs of alien peoples with sympathetic understanding, strange and sometimes abhorrent though they may have seemed. Bogle's first impressions of Bhutan and its people were favourable. The rugged terrain of the country, its bracing climate, were welcome contrasts to the enervating damp and heat of the lowlands from where he had come. He liked the people; he noted that their society was characterised by a general absence of caste barriers; that women were more emancipated, and the men less ingratiating than those of Bengal.
"The more I see of the Bhutanese", he remarked, "the more I am pleased with them. The common people are good humoured, downright, and I think, thoroughly trusty. They are the best-built race of men I ever saw; many of them very handsome, with complexions as fair as the French."

The climax of the young Scotsman’s journey was, however, his long stay with the Panchen Lama. From their first meeting, when they conversed in Hindustani, the Tibetan pontiff and his guest struck an instant accord, which in time, ripened into a strange and moving friendship.

Bogle was forced to confine himself to the Panchen Lama’s domain for his attempts to visit Lhasa - then under the care of an unfriendly Regent, and a pair of like minded Chinese Ambans - failed.

As an exploratory venture Bogle’s mission must be counted a success. He had won the trust and the confidence of the Panchen Lama who promised to use his influence in Peking on behalf of the British supercargoes. Further, the Tibetan priest, for his part, was interested in reviving his country’s almost forgotten religious and cultural ties with Bengal, and the Company naturally promised to facilitate the travel and stay of Tibetan pilgrims wishing to visit holy places, hoping thereby that the goodwill generated would, in time, lead to more promising avenues of trade. Bogle succeeded in gaining valuable first-hand knowledge of Tibet and its people. He observed how Chinese presence was largely confined to Lhasa. He discussed with the Panchen Lama the problem of maintaining future contact and was in turn apprised of

4 Ibid, p.51
5 Bogle’s observation was as follows: "The Emperor of China is acknowledged as the sovereign of the country; the appointment to the first offices in the state is made by his orders, and in all measures of consequence, reference is first had to the Court of Peking, but the internal government of the country is committed to natives. The Chinese, in general, are confined to the capital; no tribute is exacted, the people of Tibet, except at Lhasa, hardly feel the weight of a foreign yoke." Markham’s Narratives, p.195.
possible Chinese objections. The Lama suggested that relations between the two sides could prosper if the Company used the services of Hindu pilgrims like Purangir Gosain and relied less on those of European emissaries.

In his final report Bogle expressed the view that the prospects for Anglo-Tibetan trade would be best served by a route that circumvented Bhutan or Nepal and linked Tibet directly with India. This could be achieved by opening a trade mart in Assam which would possibly have the twin advantage of attracting commerce from Himalayan borderland; a proposal that was to be echoed by others down the years.

When in 1779 news arrived that the anti-British Regent at Lhasa had died, Hastings got ready to send Bogle on a second mission to Tibet. But as it became known that the Panchen Lama was about to set off for Peking, there to make good, it was hoped, his promise to speak to the Emperor on behalf of the British, the projected journey was postponed. A double blow soon shattered the Governor General's hopes, for shortly after arriving in Peking in 1780, and redeeming his pledge to the British, the Tibetan dignitary succumbed to an attack of small pox, while a year later, a cholera epidemic carried Bogle to his grave.

Two years later, in 1783, more in hope than in expectation, Hastings appointed his kinsman Samuel Turner to lead a fresh mission to the Court of the new Panchen Lama. Although Turner returned with no great achievement to his name, his optimism concerning the future prospects of trade with Tibet remained unimpaired. Nothing daunted Hastings soon launched another venture. Remembering possibly the late Panchen Lama's advice to Bogle, he encouraged a group of native parents, Markham's Narratives, pp.59-60.
pilgrims and traders under Purangir Gosain to set out for Tibet. Before the party returned, however, the Governor General had departed for England.

Thus within the space of five years the Company had lost the principal architects of their Himalayan policy. Developments in the immediate future were to show how great was this loss.

The Gurkhas who, had for a number of years, been menacing the Himalayan peace, embarked, in 1789, on the daring plan of attacking the Panchen Lama's domain. The helpless Tibetans bought them off. Emboldened, they made a second raid two years later, only to find this time that the Chinese, fully aroused, had sent in a strong army which not only succeeded in repulsing the invaders but drove them back to the outskirts of their capital, Katmandu, where they eventually sued for terms.

During this crisis both Gurkhas and Tibetans had appealed to the Company for help. The prevailing political uncertainty in India was one factor which had precluded a prompt British response. Be that as it may, Lord Cornwallis, who had succeeded Hastings as Governor General, but who possessed none of his illustrious predecessor's experience or subtlety of mind proved unequal to the situation. His half-hearted attempt at mediation only succeeded in forfeiting the goodwill of both parties, particularly that of the Tibetans—since relations with Nepal were never free of mutual suspicion—while the Chinese who were uppermost in the Company's considerations were also strengthened in their natural distrust of the British.
Bhutan closed its frontiers in 1792, and Tibet followed suit. Hindu pilgrims like Purangir, who once travelled to and fro across the Himalayas, found their way barred on the suspicion that they were spies of the Company. The hermit kingdom was once more shrouded in a veil of mystery.

With Bhutan closed, the Company turned to Nepal. Previously Nepal had few qualms about receiving British representatives; now, after its defeat by China it was more reluctant to do so. Nevertheless, the door was still ajar, and of this Sir John Shore, the new Governor General decided to take full advantage. He sent Maulvi Abdul Qadir, a tried and trusted servant of the Company, on the ground that the Nepalese would be "less apprehensive of an Indian Muslim (Maulvi Saheb) than of a Firanghee."\(^{7}\) He may have also thought that in a mission to a Hindu state a Muslim rather than a Hindu would be the more reliable agent. Abdul Qadir was asked to report on the chances of getting goods into Tibet through Nepal and to assess the economic potential of the area as a whole. His observations were encouraging. There was indeed a ready market for English broadcloth in Lhasa, and certain commodities sold in Nepal were re-exported to Tibet. However, for Anglo-Tibetan commerce to thrive, the avaricious Gurkha middlemen had to be eliminated, while another barrier was the formidable Chinese force which guarded the Tibet-Nepal frontier and so blocked the important trade routes. As a way out Abdul Qadir recommended the opening of a mart on the Indo-Nepal border to which Tibetan merchants should be invited. The

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7 Cited in A. Husain, *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal*, London, 1970, p.34.
Maulvi's suggestion was not acted upon, but in 1801 when Captain Knox journeyed up to Katmandu to negotiate a commercial treaty with the Nepalese, the instructions of his superiors reflected their continuing interest in the trade of Tibet. "You will," they wrote, "direct your attention to the means of opening a beneficial trade with the countries of Bootan and Tibet either directly with the Company's Provinces, or through the medium of the merchants of Nepal. The importation into the Company's Provinces of Gold and Silver bullion is an object of considerable importance. The territories of Bootan and Tibet are said to abound with Gold and Silver mines - the produce of which may perhaps, by proper encouragement, be rendered an article of trade, and by the exchange of commodities, the produce of Europe or the provinces of India, may find its way into the Company's Territories."  

British-Nepalese relations continued on an uneasy course until 1814 when they broke down following a Gurkha attack. The principal source of contention between the parties was their common frontier in the foothills, known as the Terai. Indeed much of the initial friction in the Company's relations with Bhutan as well as Sikkim was caused by similar problems.

The Anglo-Gurkha war lasted two years. As Nepal had become a tributary state of Peking from 1792, the conflict intensified the natural concern among the Company's officials in India, notably the Governor General, the Earl of Moira about the possible repercussions on China's attitude towards Britain - remembering that the supercargoes at Canton were still struggling with the problem of establishing communications with the Government in Peking. As befitted their status

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the Nepalese called on the Chinese for help without evoking any response. Later when peace had been reached, rumours were afloat that an army from China was on its way to Lhasa. Only this time, the Gurkhas fearing that the force was being sent to punish them for having brought about the war in the first place, and then agreeing to a humiliating peace, became apprehensive and looked to the British for possible succour. As it was, the alarm turned out to be false but the Company had already decided in case of trouble to steer a neutral course, for reasons which the following statement by their agent at Katmandu makes clear:

"The maintenance of Peace and Amity with the Emperor of China is an object of such vast consequence to the Commercial Interests of the Company and indeed of the United Kingdom, that no effort ought to be spared on the part of this Government to prevent the present state of things from taking a turn which might occasion even any suspension of these relations."  

Chinese susceptibilities may have been one factor in holding back the Company from driving a harder bargain with the Gurkhas, for the Treaty of Segowlee (1816) was not as humiliating as it might have been. The agreement must be examined at two levels: In the context of Anglo-Tibetan relations and as an important development in British policy in the Himalayan borderland. The Company in acquiring Garhwal and Kumaon made important territorial gains. For the first time they had established a common border with Tibet, and this made for renewed hopes of establishing direct contact with local Tibetan officials. The resulting climate of mutual trust, it was hoped, might lead Lhasa to open its gates.

9 Ibid, p.44.
Commercailly, the British aspired to profit from the lucrative wool trade between Western Tibet and Northern India which sustained the shawl industries of Kashmir and the Punjab. For their part the Tibetans of this area regarded this trade as vital to their economic well-being, whereas those of Lhasa and Shigatse had never looked at their commercial links with Bengal in the same light. Thus for the next fifty years the British concentrated their attention on Western Tibet, while ties with Sikkim and Bhutan, although never entirely neglected were relegated to a more modest role. However, the Treaty of Segowlee was not without its importance for Anglo-Sikkimese relations. The Raja of Sikkim who had suffered considerably from the depredations of the Gurkhas agreed by the Treaty of Titalia (1817) to hand over the conduct of his foreign relations to the British. In return, and subject to his good behaviour, the Company promised to restore to him the territory lost to Nepal. It was the first step to Sikkim's eventual status as a British protectorate.

A new current emerged in the pattern of Anglo-Chinese relations, reaching climax in the Anglo-Chinese war of 1840. The pride of the Celestial Empire was finally humbled and British policy in the Himalayas became perceptibly firmer. An official view expressed in 1842 remarked that,

"of late the consolidated empires of China and England have met one another along the Himalaya Mountains, and it is time that doubt should be put at an end. It is not for us to share with others the allegiance of petty princes, nor should we desire that our dependants should have any claims on the territories of other states. Our feudatories should have no political connection with strangers, although we may allow them to interchange friendly letters, and even visits, with their neighbours under the rule of others." 10

10 Ibid, p.72
Geographically, the northward thrust in the pattern of British power continued. This was only to be expected as the focus of political interest in India had shifted to the Punjab. With the death of Ranjit Singh with whom the Company had succeeded in maintaining a peaceful but not always easy relationship, Anglo-Sikh relations fell upon difficult times. In the wars that followed, the last independent Power of the sub-continent was finally absorbed into the Company's expanding Empire. However, the first encounter ending with the Treaty of Lahore (1846) brought in a rich haul of territory, passing with Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Lahul and Spiti under the direct or indirect control of the British.\footnote{11}

Despite considerable effort the expected contacts with Tibetan officialdom failed to materialise while the profits from the wool and shawl trade proved equally disappointing. The Kashmir Durbar's monopoly of Tibetan wool meant that its shawl industry, assured of a constant supply of the best grade in the market, held an immense advantage over its rivals in the Punjab who had to make do with an inferior brand from Kerman and Seistan. What is more, the Punjabi weaver was never certain of his supplies of raw wool. To remedy this the British made a tariff agreement with the Maharaja of Kashmir in 1864 and in 1867 Dr. Cayley was appointed the first British Agent in Ladakh. These developments however failed to stem the declining British interest in the commercial prospects of Western Tibet. They

\footnote{11 The State of Kashmir which included Jammu and Ladakh came under British protection a week after the signing of the Treaty of Lahore. Its ruler, Gulab Singh, formerly a feudatory of the Sikhs, managed to remain neutral during the Anglo-Sikh war for which the Company rewarded him by handing him back his kingdom, but on condition that he consented to place the conduct of his external relations in British hands and also pay them an annual tribute.}
turned their attention to what they considered to be the more promising pastures of Central Asia by way of Yarkhand and Kashgar, the best route to which from India, passed through Kashmir. The high water mark of this awakened interest was the Forsyth Mission to Yarkhand in 1870.

The increased British preoccupation in Central Asia brought into focus two important elements in contemporary Asian politics, namely, the growing intensity of Anglo-Russian rivalry, and the vicissitudes of China's political and military strength. It would thus be appropriate at this point to examine the interaction of these factors as part of the wider context of Anglo-Tibetan relations. Of these, ties between Lhasa and Peking had an immediate and direct relevance because of the official view that Tibet constituted a part of the Chinese Empire.

The Chinese relationship with Tibet is the subject of fierce controversy. Suffice it to say that scholars are generally agreed that from the 7th to the 9th centuries A.D. Tibet was a remarkably powerful country whose military feats were felt in China, India, and in extensive areas of Central Asia. Even during the ascendancy of the famous Tang dynasty, Tibet treated with China on equal terms. As proof of this, H.E. Richardson cites the stone pillar inscription of 821 A.D. at Lhasa and even an acknowledged partisan of China such as T.T. Li desists from making any claims on Tibetan vassalage to Peking, during this period. The decline of the Tangs in China was paralleled by the slow retreat of Tibetan power to the mountain fastnesses of the Karakoram, the Kuen Lun, and the Himalayan ranges from behind which it was never again to emerge.

A more significant relationship between Tibet and China emerged in the 13th century with the incorporation of both nations into the expanding Mongol Empire. The ties between China's Mongol dynasty and Tibet had a pronounced religious character and "is an example of the purely Central Asian concept of Patron and Priest in which the temporal support of the lay power is given in return for the spiritual support of the religious power. That had been the formal description of the bond between the Mongol Emperors of China and their Lama Viceregents for Tibet. It is an elastic and flexible idea and not to be rendered in the cut-and-dried terms of modern western politics. There is no precise definition of the supremacy of one or the subordination of the other; and the practical meaning of the relationship can only be interpreted in the light of the facts of the moment."14 In view of the modern Chinese claims to overlordship over Tibet, these remarks are worthy of special note. Their validity is, significantly enough, also accepted by T.T. Li.15

With the fall of the Mongol dynasty in China in the 14th century, Chinese-Tibetan relations faded from view; their revival two hundred years later was once again due to the Mongols. For while the Manchus, a tribe from Manchuria, were busy conquering China, the Mongol chieftain, Gushri Khan, defeated the King of Tibet and set up the Dalai Lama - the same who is referred to as the Great Fifth in Tibetan annals - as his country's religious sovereign. The 5th Dalai Lama extended his spiritual influence beyond Tibet to Mongolia where he was particularly concerned with saving the Qosot and Khalka tribes

from the aggression of the Dzungars. The ambitions of the latter were threatening to create in Central Asia a rival to the new Manchu dynasty in China, a development which it was Peking's intention to thwart. The struggle to defeat the Mongols became a dominating theme in China's Central Asian policy from 1690-1758. The Tibetan Pontiff and the Manchus thus shared a common interest.

After the death of the 5th Dalai Lama, the Regent Songye Gyatso unwisely reversed Lhasa's previous policy by intriguing with the Dzungars. The Dzungars hoped, no doubt, to get the Tibetan Church on their side and so unite the disparate Mongol tribes into a powerful political and military force. The possibility of such a coalition was regarded with great apprehension by the Imperial Court at Peking. The troubled state of Tibet itself, the conflict between different factions concerning the true identity of the new Dalai Lama gave the Manchu Emperor K'ang Hsi (1662-1722) an opportunity of interfering in the internal affairs of the country. He extended Chinese power and influence by a skilful blend of subtle diplomacy and military force. A Central Asian himself, K'ang-Hsi possessed an exceptional understanding of the minds of his Central Asian neighbours, and exploited the given circumstances to the best possible advantage.

The Dzungars who invaded Tibet under the guise of friendship soon revealed their true colours. Cruel and destructive, their actions provoked immense resentment among the local people and a popular resistance soon broke out. Its leader was a Tibetan aristocrat called Po-lha-nas. The Dzungars were eventually expelled but only with the help of a Chinese army. The newly installed Dalai Lama, although treated with punctilious deference by China on account of his spiritual
authority, possessed no political power and it was Po-lha-nas who ruled the country. To Professor L. Petech whose book is a standard work on the period,¹⁶ these events confirmed the establishment of a Chinese protectorate. The ultimate source of Po-lha-nas' authority was Chinese power in the shape of a strong garrison situated in Lhasa. Peking also invested him with title of 'king' (Chung wang in Chinese)¹⁷. Nevertheless he was an extremely capable ruler and maintained a stable and just peace within the country. His death in 1747 brought to the fore his elder son Gyurme Namgyal who proved unworthy of the high office to which he succeeded. The Dalai Lama was stirred, as a result, into taking a more active political role. The Chinese once again intervened; their reforms of 1750 abolished the hereditary secular kingship and restored to the 7th Dalai Lama the powers exercised by his predecessor the Great Fifth. The temporal supremacy of the religious hierarchy within the body politic assumed a permanence that was never afterward threatened. Two Chinese Ambans or Imperial Residents were appointed for general supervision of the Tibetan government and for a time even had a hand in selecting a new Dalai Lama (a list of names of the possible candidates being placed in an urn on bits of paper, the Amban lifted one with the aid of chopsticks). With time these Ambans grew less efficient, for Tibet to them was exile from more rewarding pastures in China. And so far from controlling the Regents (from the death of the 7th Dalai Lama to the accession of the 13th - a period of 120 years during which only one Dalai Lama - the 8th - attained majority, the rest dying early, Tibet

¹⁷ Ibid, p.163.
was under the control of a Regency) they allowed themselves to be dominated. Chinese power symbolised by a garrison and two Ambans was rarely to be seen outside the precincts of Lhasa.

In sum China's attitude to Tibet from the 17th century to the 20th was conditioned largely by the wider aims of its Central Asian policy. The early Manchus having succeeded in winning over Inner Mongolia were able to set up an inner Frontier system that included Southern and Western Manchuria, Inner Mongolia and the Chinese-speaking Moslem provinces of Ninghsia and Kansu.

"To this was added under the greatest of the Manchu emperors, K'ang Hsi (1662-1722), an 'outer' Frontier or trans-Frontier of tribes and peoples who were under control but not under direct rule, in Northern Manchuria, Outer and Western Mongolia, the territory of the predominantly Turkish-speaking Moslems of Chinese Turkestan and Tibet. The Manchu position in these outer territories was not based on direct conquest. It was achieved by a policy of waiting for the Western Mongols to exhaust themselves in a series of attempts, beginning before the Manchu invasion of China in the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century, to create a new empire pivoted on the Altai region and the steppes of Northern Chinese Turkestan and extending westward into Tibet and eastward across Outer Mongolia."  

By supporting the Mongol church as a counterweight to the authority of the princes the Manchus, in the words of Professor Lattimore, created "a permanent dyarchy in Mongol affairs, with a church that looked toward Tibet (whose pontiffs were granted Manchu patronage) and princes that looked directly to Peking."  

It was this unique relationship between Tibet and Mongolia which led the Manchus to place such importance on their own ties with the Tibetan religious hierarchy. In a later period China's Republican and Maoist regimes displayed, each in their own way, a tenacious loyalty to

20 Ibid, p.89
the Manchu legacy. Strategic considerations, no doubt, weighed in
their calculations but perhaps of greater importance were the demands
of Chinese nationalism for whom Tibet had become a veritable idée fixe.
Having batten on the humiliating spectacle of China's helplessness in
the face of superior European and Japanese power, of which the loss of
Outer Mongolia was a bitter example, Chinese nationalists of every hue,
keenly sensitive to the proverbial moa in the eye of a real or
imaginary adversary, and much less aware of the beam in their own,
were apt to regard the prospect of even the slightest concession on
Tibet by Chinese governments with deep suspicion.

When in the 18th century the British first sought to open
diplomatic and commercial relations with the Imperial Court at Peking
China stood high in the estimation of Europe. "An Example and Model
even for Christians" was the general verdict of the Jesuits who had
visited the country in the 16th and 17th centuries. Among its leading
admirers Chinese civilisation could count such hallowed figures as
Leibniz, Voltaire and Spinoza. The idealised image of a benevolent
despotism run by philosophers seemed an uplifting spectacle in the
current state of Europe. This typical eulogy was uttered by a
Frenchman in 1769:

"China offers an enchanting picture of what the whole world
might become, if all the laws of that empire were to become
the laws of all nations. Go to Peking! Gaze upon the
mightiest of mortals; he is the true and perfect image of
Heaven!"22

For many 18th century Europeans China had become less a reality and
more a Utopia.

22 Ibid, p.55
The British in India were at first inclined to share the views of their compatriots in Europe. The glitter and magnificence of the Imperial Court, the reputation of its great military power, its immense commercial market—these were the major considerations that influenced them in their cautious Himalayan policy in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Gradually under the pressure of circumstances the British view of China, except its commercial potential, changed, and when the two took to arms the once imposing giant stood on feet of clay. The scholar-officials who had seemed so attractive from afar now appeared pathetically quaint. "The bureaucracy of China," remarked a contemporary historian, "had for ages received and absorbed, by an education as arduous as that of Plato's Guardians, the finest talents of the Empire. Those who emerged from its long series of tests, the Cursus honorum of China, were men changed for life, transformed into pale and spectacled pedants. The reverence in which they were held by a whole, mainly illiterate population, would be incredible, were it not that the scholar in China had no rivalry to fear from the soldier, the artist, or the priest. He himself was all three .... Verses were often read because they came from the pen of a Governor with patronage to bestow; as elsewhere poetry unaided stuffed no purses. Nonetheless the fusion of political with literary emulation helped to deepen and spread the culture of the Middle Kingdom into an all-pervading influence. At the same time it promoted stability, by grinding all politicians into the same chastened shape. There were no local magnates, no erratic demagogues, jostling their way aboard the sober Junk of State; a vessel in any case so barnacled with vested interests that it would do nothing but stand still.
'The entire bureaucratic structure rose with a graceful, ornate, pagoda-like symmetry, from the district Magistrate to the metropolitan Boards. Its whole constitution was an equilibrium, designed by checks and balances not to interfere with the myriad shuttles that wove from age to age the same patterns in the complex texture of China's life. It seemed to have solved the problem of perpetual motion - the ticking of an invariable pendulum. Precautions against irregularity were strong. The laborious education of the officials instilled into them a sense of membership in an eternal, divinely constituted hierarchy, whose head was sacrosanct. To subvert it would enfeeble the popular respect they themselves reposed on. Before any ambitious Governor's schemes could get under way he could be deposed and finished by a Decree - for the Emperor's power, within strict limits, functioned with a perfection that produced illusions of strength, from which foreigners were slow in clearing their eyes. Magistrates were not feudal magnates with local loyalties to call on, but strangers from another province, without influence except as deputies of the Son of Heaven. Being civil servants and not territorial nobles, they rose to high position gradually and were as a rule old by the time they "arrived".\(^{23}\) Curzon was even more scathing. He saw the mandarinate "Educated upon a system which has not varied for ages, stuffed with impracticable precepts, discharging the ceremonial duties of his office with a mechanical and servile accuracy .... but arrogant with a pride beyond human conception ...."\(^{24}\)

Yet as early as 1793 Lord Macartney who had a mission to China in a vain endeavour to establish diplomatic relations with Manchu Court saw through the panoply of Celestial power. His journal is full of shrewd

observations. At one place he likened China to a ship: "She may perhaps not sink overnight; she may drift some time as a wreck, and will then be dashed to pieces on the shore; but she can never be rebuilt on the old bottom." On another occasion he notes that "the volume of the empire is now grown too ponderous and disproportionate to be easily grasped by a single hand, be it ever so capacious and strong."

Macartney failed in his efforts to obtain better conditions for English trade, and in its historical setting this failure seemed inevitable, for Chinese foreign policy can only be understood against its traditional background, the tributary system. Behind the assumption of this institution lay the age-old tradition of Chinese cultural superiority over barbarians. The whole concept of equality among nations was unthinkable and wholly alien to China's historical experience. As the fount of civilisation in the Far East, surrounded on the north and west by nomadic tribes, having been subject only to fitful contact with developed civilisations like those of ancient Rome and Buddhist India, the Chinese developed an unshakeable belief in their own superiority over the rest of mankind. The commercial benefits of the tributary system - ably explained by J.K. Fairbank - were sublimated through court ritual into a mystique of imperial statecraft. China was the centre of the world and barbarians came from afar to pay homage and tribute to the Son of Heaven and bask in the reflected glory of Confucian culture. This attitude of bland disdain was crystallised in the Emperor Ch'ien Lung's letter to George III. Not surprisingly the Pope, together with Holland

26 Ibid, p.239.
and Portugal, appear in the annals of the Manchu dynasty as tributaries. The representatives of these Powers had made the kotow to the Emperor which indignity Macartney refused to perform, and hence his mission failed. But the true failure lay with the Chinese; for it was their utter lack of perception concerning the progress of the West, their failure to sense danger in the spectacle of British warships armed with cannon, their blinkered conservatism that led to their eventual downfall. China and Britain met at two different points in time, one mediaeval in its backwardness, the other propelled forward by the greatest scientific and technological revolution in man's chequered history.

The Anglo-Chinese war in 1840 was caused by the continued and increasing export of opium - much of it smuggled - despite the strict ban on its sale in China by the Imperial Court. Of particular concern to the authorities of the Celestial Empire was the social demoralization that the drug was causing, and by the resulting drain of silver from the country. For the East India Company who had a monopoly in the cultivation of the opium poppy - and in all but name in traffic of the drug - the opium trade was a source of immense profit which went a long way in paying for the tea bought from China. The cultivation of this noxious plant was a stain on Britain's conscience both for the hardship it caused the ryots of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Malwa who were forced to grow it at the expense of more profitable crops, and worse, for the havoc

28 It should be pointed out particularly with reference to Asian visitors to the Chinese Court, that every foreign representative who kotowed to the Emperor was not necessarily acknowledging Chinese overlordship of his country. Every case had to be examined separately. Neither did the award of badges and buttons by the Chinese to the representatives of smaller powers or their frontiers necessarily denote an acknowledgement of Peking's sovereign authority. This becomes particularly clear in the early 20th century when China followed an active Himalayan policy and sought to assert her power over border states such as Nepal and Bhutan. H.E. Richardson, *Tibet and Its History*, London, 1962, p.37.
caused by the soul-destroying drug in China. It was a spectacle which even a century later raised the hackles of a famous British Ambassador. "I see," remarked he, "the Government of India complain that they want to build Delhi to carry out sanitary and educational reforms. Quite so - the ends justifies the means .... If Lord Hardinge could see the Chinese point of view, he might think differently. The Chinese newspapers know very well that Delhi is being built out of opium and have said things in that connection too disagreeable to repeat."29 Nevertheless had China responded flexibly to the situation; had she seen this as part of a wider problem of opening communications with the West, she could very well have thwarted the aims of British opium interests through diplomatic means.

"While the semi-barbarian," remarked Marx, "stood on the principle of morality, the civilized opposed to him the principle of self. That a giant empire, containing almost one-third of the human race, vegetating in the teeth of time, insulated by the forced exclusion of general intercourse, and thus continuing to dupe itself with delusions of Celestial perfection - that such an empire should at last be overtaken by fate on the occasion of a deadly duel, in which the representative of the antiquated world appears prompted by ethical motives, while the representative of overwhelming modern society fights for the privilege of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest markets - this, indeed, is a sort of tragical couplet stranger than any poet would have ever dared to fancy."30

29 Jordan Papers, F.O. 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 4 May, 1914.
But if China was one of the external factors in Anglo-Tibetan relations, Russia was the other. Russia's expansion across the Asian heartland proceeded apace from the late 17th century through most of the 18th to reach its climax in the 19th century. In the farthest East her power extended to the Pacific, while elsewhere she pressed southward toward the frontiers of British India. Persia and Afghanistan which guarded the north-western approaches to the Indian sub-continent were the first to feel the weight of her power. Soon the decaying Central Asian Khanates, thinly populated and bereft of social or economic development, were submerged under the advancing tide.

The spectacle aroused grave apprehension among the British who, in the two decades following the Napoleonic War, had been keeping a close watch on Russian activity along the Oxus. The deeds of distinguished Englishmen and their intrepid native assistants have been recounted by Prof. H.W.C. Davies\(^3\) and need hardly concern us here.

Of more immediate relevance to this study were the journeys of William Moocroft, a veterinary surgeon in the Bengal government, who visited Western Tibet in 1812, after which from 1820-1825 he proceeded to travel through Kashmir, Ladakh, Afghanistan and West Turkestan. He was shrewd and observant. He was distrustful of Sikh designs at a time when the Company's policy was to befriend Ranjit Singh. He was sensitive to the question of Ladakhi trade particularly in wool, and correctly foresaw the possibility of a Moslem insurrection against China in Eastern Turkestan. Nor was he wrong in forecasting the eventual

domination of Ladakh by the Kashmir Durbar. The presence of a Russian
agent - Agha Mehdi - alerted him to the dangers on India’s northern
borders. He also believed that a protectorate over Ladakh would give
Britain a foothold at one of the major points of Central Asian trade,
"with the opportunity of dominating the whole Central Asian and Chinese
market as far as Peking itself. With trade would come political
influence and useful military advantages. Ladakh would be an excellent
base for operations against China if the need ever arose, and any
Russian attempt to invade India could be forestalled from it."32
Moocroft’s recommendations may not have been acted on as the need to
stay in China’s good graces was then uppermost in British minds but it
did bring these problems within the range of official thinking.

It was long after Moocroft had disappeared from the scene that
the British began to get really alarmed at the Russians’ territorial
progress. By 1853 it had reached the line of the Syr Daria while a
separate and earlier move farther east had brought it towards Tashkent.
However, there still remained a five hundred mile gap between the last
fort on the Syr and the one nearest in the trans-Ili area. In the
decade between 1860-70 not only was the gap closed but Tashkent, and
later Samarkhand, succumbed to the weight of the Tsarist Empire.

"This advance," remarks G.J. Alder, "which came increasingly to
dominate Anglo-Indian strategic thinking as the nineteenth century wore
on, was probably too rapid and too elemental to be really understood at
the time. Public opinion assumed that, since it brought Russia nearer
to India, it must have India as its object. In all the talk of invasion,
flanking movements, parallels and salients, the fact that the Russian

advance was essentially only the acquisition of an Empire tended to be overlooked. But that in itself was serious enough, for Russia had emerged from the Napoleonic Wars as the most powerful nation in Europe, and Britain's natural rival. Her rapid approach towards the vulnerable land frontier of the British Indian Empire, an Empire won and maintained by the sea, represented a decisive change in Britain's international position. It was almost an article of belief among the Russian General Staff in the nineteenth century, as it had been with Napoleon, that without command of the sea a military offensive against Britain could only be effectively developed in Asia. No wonder people in Britain were worried. Frightened as they were by Russian invasion schemes, fed with false information, deceived by geographical ignorance, and forgetful of the vast distances of mountain, desert and plain in Central Asia, they greeted each Russian advance with almost inevitable bursts of alarm and Russophobia.33

The Russian point of view, however, found eloquent expression in Prince Gortchakov's state paper of 9 November or 21 (according to the New Calendar) 1864, one of the most significant diplomatic documents of the time. Not only did it spell out the specific aims of Russian policy in Central Asia, it also provided a historical perspective - the affirmation of a civilising mission - that found ready acceptance among the other powers of Europe, friend and foe alike.

The pith and substance of this remarkable circular was as follows:

"The position of Russia in Central Asia is that of all civilised States which are brought into contact with half-savage, nomad populations, possessing no fixed social organisation.

33 Ibid, pp.2-3.
"In such cases it always happens that the more civilised State is forced, in the interest of the security of its frontier and its commercial relations, to exercise a certain ascendancy over those whom their turbulent and unsettled character makes most undesirable neighbours."

Primitive expeditions were only a temporary expedient as its lessons were quickly forgotten by the natives and the work of pacification had to begin all over again for,

"It is a peculiarity of Asiatics to respect nothing but visible and palpable force; the moral force of reason and of the interests of civilisation has as yet no hold upon them .... In order to put a stop this state of permanent disorder, fortified forts are established in the midst of hostile tribes, and an influence is brought to bear upon them by degrees to a state of more or less forced submission. However, beyond this belt of pacified territory the other tribes and thus the inexorable advance continues. In such manner did the United States in the American continent, France in Algeria, Britain in India, expand their power and authority. No agent has been found more apt for the progress of civilisation than commercial relations. Their development requires everywhere order and stability, but in Asia it demands a complete transformation of the habits of the people. The first thing to be taught to the population of Asia is that they will gain more in favouring and protecting the caravan trade than in robbing them. These elementary ideas can only be accepted by the public where one exists; that is to say, where there is some organised form of society, and a Government to direct and represent it .... The Imperial Cabinet, in assuming this task, takes as its guide the interests of Russia. But it believes at the same time it is promoting the interests of humanity and civilisation. It has a right to expect that the line of conduct it pursues, and the principles which guide it, will meet with a just and candid appreciation."

It was not the civilising mission of Russia that was anathema to the British; it was the rising tide of Russian power which caused them concern. But to be fair, neither did Russia view Britain's role in Asia with equanimity.

Cited in
If Britain was anti-Russian, Russia was equally anti-British. In their hopes of gaining control of the prized commerce of Central Asia, in their mutual apprehensions, each was a mirror image of the other. If there were no dearth of lobbies, petitions and institutions for the defence and promotion of English trade for Russian. In Russia too exalted hopes were expressed regarding the prospects of Western Chinese markets with their teeming millions, and the grabbing instincts of Britain. The Moscow Society for the Encouragement of Russian Trade and Industry was supported in its efforts by the raucous cries of a chauvinistic Press.

However, two mitigating factors in favour of Britain deserve mention. After the traumatic experience of the Mutiny and the fact that her standing army in India was a relatively small one she could with justice feel nervous at the prospect of having a huge and unpredictable neighbour. Further, politics and commerce were so closely intertwined that any Russian move to accommodate the commercial aspirations of her competitor might have had a calming effect. No such attempt was ever made by Russia, who once having gained control of a market, closed it to others. Britain the apostle of Free Trade was matched against a Tsarist autocracy whose watchword was Protection.

Neither would Russia limit the speed of her expansion. Having absorbed the choicest morsels of Western Turkestan she sought from 1860 to gain control of the old east-west route connecting Eastern Turkestan to the Caspian. Eastern Turkestan belonged to China but Russia eagerly sought to win control over Kashgar, the capital, and its surrounds for herself. From India the Viceroy, Lord Mayo, tried to counter these designs by promoting British commerce in the area. But his efforts in
the long run were doomed to failure. Russia had the overwhelming advantage of cheaper and better transport, and because of her geographical proximity to China could bring enormous pressure to bear on Peking in order to extract commercial concessions for her own goods.

It is at this point that the relations between Britain, China and Russia intersect. The British who made their bid for a slice of the Central Asian trade had concentrated their efforts in Chinese Turkestan. Here, a Moslem adventurer, Yakub Beg by name, had succeeded in setting up his own standard. As his was one among many rebellions in China at the time, with the country seriously weakened by the thirteen year-old Taiping uprising, the British in India bargained that Yakub had come to stay; that Peking in its enfeebled state would be unable to bring this recalcitrant rebel to heel. Against the inclinations of the Foreign Office in London and of Sir Thomas Wade, the British Ambassador at Peking, Anglo-Indian officials were bent on treating with Yakub Beg as an independent ruler in an endeavour to bring his kingdom within the commercial orbit of the British Empire. By so doing they would be keeping Russia away from India's frontiers and they were therefore determined to keep the strategic city of Kashgar from falling into Russian hands. For with Kashgar under their control the Russians, it was feared, could attempt a flanking advance on India farther west.

The cautious British optimism concerning the prospects of the Eastern Turkestan market had much to commend it. The fertility of its irrigated tracts, the comfortable condition of the people and the degree of civilisation they had attained, the lack of manufacturers, the obvious openings for machinery, the natural wealth of the country, and
the apparent stability of Yakub's rule were sufficient reasons to expect a thriving commerce. At worst with Yakub in the saddle the British could expect an even share of the market with the Russians; with the Chinese back their position would become hopeless.

Of the British Viceroys of this period only Lawrence and Ripon were keen to confine India's political responsibilities within its frontier; hence they did little to promote the Kashgar trade. The others who wished to use commerce as a lever of political influence did their best to encourage it. Therefore, British policy in Eastern Turkestan was always, from the sixties of the nineteenth century onwards, a blend of commercial means and political ends, and the duties of the individuals who executed that policy—Cayley, Shaw, Forsyth, Elias, Younghusband, Macartney and the later Consul-Generals were always both political and commercial.  

Much to the chagrin of India, the Chinese in a vigorous military campaign conducted by Tso Tsung t'ang was able to defeat Yakub Beg in 1877 and bring the independence of his kingdom to an end. They then discovered to their intense surprise that the Anglo-Indian officials had concluded a full treaty with the Turki Pretender. It was a lesson China was never to forget. The significance of this became manifestly clear in the future course of Anglo-Chinese relations particularly when they involved Tibet or Singkiang (the name by which Chinese Turkestan came to be known after its pacification).

Sir Thomas Wade too was astonished to discover this independent relationship between India and Yakub Beg. There was an undercurrent of conflict between the Foreign Office, whose policy it was to support and befriend the Manchus, and the Government of India who sought to defend or promote specific Indian interests against Chinese pretensions. This was a foretaste of the clashes that were later to divide these two great departments of state on such matters as Burma, Tibet, Sikkim, Yunnan and Hunza during the last two decades of the 19th century. Now merely a cloud, these conflicts were destined one day to break like a storm leaving behind a debris of broken reputations and friendships.

China's recovery resulted in a strengthening of the Foreign Office view. With Russian pressure continuing, Britain needed an ally in the East. The calculation was that China, if not an ally, would at least act as a bulwark against Tsarist expansion. Amid the signs of general decay this surprising triumph of Chinese arms won her new respect. And when to this military victory she added a diplomatic triumph through the Treaty of St. Petersburg in 1881, in which Russia was forced to disgorge the Ili district, her stock rose even higher.

D.C. Boulgar, a well known writer on Asian questions, who was a barometer of informed opinion in London, eulogised China's traditional virtues; he had little doubt that within ten years she would be playing a far from negligible role in the politics of Asia; he was also certain that while Britain and China had no fundamental conflict of interest on the Asiatic continent, a conflict between the Russians and the Chinese was inevitable. Another writer while echoing this theme went even further.

"It has," he remarked, "often occurred to me that the true solution of the Eastern Question - at least as far as Russian aggression in Asia is concerned - will some day be found in a close Anglo-Chinese alliance. Combined British and Chinese action would effectively paralyze the hand of Russia in Asia, if not elsewhere.

"It will be well for this country if British statesmen will consider how they may best strengthen the friendship between the two mighty Empires. Let them do everything in their power to weld them inseparably together by means of the two bonds which ought, of all others, to bind them in indissoluble alliance - the bonds of similar interests and mutual preservation."

The Chinese were not, however, inclined to reciprocate these expressions of British cordiality. It is unlikely that their experience with Britain over the opium trade would be soon forgotten. Neither would the episode of British involvement with Yakub Beg. More difficult to erase was the traditional Chinese world view in which the Middle Kingdom stood supreme in its attainments, and for the radiance of whose civilisation barbarians craved. There were periods, it is true, when such peoples had won temporary superiority over the Chinese without being able to shake the immutability of China's culture. Further, in times of weakness, it had been a favourite Chinese ploy to play off one 'barbarian' against another. Thus an alliance or an equal partnership with a foreign Power was totally at odds with the Chinese ethos. As between Russia and Britain, the latter at best was regarded as the lesser evil, no more. For if China's resistance to the far greater

Territorial demands of Russia was firm - at least in intention if not in performance - their response to more modest British demands on Tibet was no less unyielding. The immediate concern of China's rulers was to strengthen the rampart of the Empire; in Sinkiang this meant the consolidation of her power, for in Tao Teung-t'ang's words, "to pay close attention to Sinkiang is to protect Mongolia, and to protect Mongolia is to shield Peking .... Russia has been expanding her territory continually and her territory borders ours from the west to the east for more than ten thousand li. The two nations are separated only by Mongolia, and we must take preventive measures lest we lose Mongolia." But already a Mongol tribe known as the Buriats had passed into the Tsarist Empire. Like their fellow Mongols elsewhere, they too were Lamaists standing in deep veneration of the Dalai Lama. As agents they could further the cause of Russia. An old theme of Central Asian politics began to re-appear: to command the favours of the religious hierarchy of Tibet in the quest for political power.

While Britain was preoccupied thus by developments beyond the Karakoram the situation in the the Himalayas though quiet was not without interest. It was, on the whole, a period of seed time.

With Western Tibet failing to provide the results expected of it, Sikkim and Bhutan, particularly the former, once more became the focus of attention. The Treaty of Titalia had given the British a foothold in Sikkimese politics, and of this they took ample advantage. In return for help and support, first, against the Gurkhas, and then against his domestic opponents, the Sikkim Raja was coerced into parting with the district Dorje-ling in February 1835. Darjeeling,

as it came to be known, soon developed into a health resort, much as Simla had done further west. It also lay astride the most convenient route from Nepal; and in case the Gurkhas had intentions of invading Sikkim its possession by Britain could act as a deterrent. Yet Darjeeling was more than a sanatorium or a guard post. The deeper significance of its incorporation into British India has been well described by Alastair Lamb:

"The cession of Darjeeling was an event of the greatest importance in the history of the northern frontier of India. Not only did it place the British in close contact with the hill states, their peoples and their politics, but also it provided a constant reminder of the possibilities of trade with Tibet. Many Englishmen - Bengal Government officials, soldiers, and influential merchants - came to pass the hot season in Darjeeling and thereby became aware of Tibet and the Tibetans. From the outset the hill station became a centre for Tibetan studies, and has remained such to the present day. Moreover, Darjeeling seemed particularly vulnerable to attack by the hill peoples; though such attacks never materialized there were frequent alarms which must have brought home to the English visitors in a very personal way the problems of this section of the Indian frontier. Whatever the policy of the Indian Government might be, from the early days of this hill station there were always English residents who strongly advocated the establishment of closer relations with Tibet; some of them enjoyed a reputation far beyond the boundaries of Bengal, and it would be hard to overestimate the part played by the residents of this town in the opening of Tibet."

It was indeed from Darjeeling that the British became increasingly embroiled in the internal politics of Sikkim. Finally in 1861 a military sally reduced the country to a British protectorate in all but name. The relative forbearance that had thus far, and for quite awhile afterwards, characterised British policy towards Sikkim and Bhutan stemmed largely from their desire to allay possible Tibetan and Chinese fears of the Indian Government's designs.

Four years later, in 1865, Bhutan was punished for its continuing raids into the Bengal and Assam Dooars, but the Treaty of Sinchula left the country to its own devices; an annual British subsidy of Rs.50,000 was promised in return for good behaviour. Having twice tangled with these hardy hill men the British, who had developed a healthy respect for their military prowess, were not keen to do so again, while Bhutan having experienced the power of Raj was content henceforward to keep the peace and extract every possible advantage from maintaining a pacific posture. It would, however, be wrong to circumscribe Anglo-Bhutan relations to the perennial cycle of frontier raid and military riposte, for here too were present the same commercial considerations that informed British policy elsewhere in the Himalayas. The Calcutta Review observed that the Dooars which were annexed by Britain in 1865 contained "the same soils which are so well adapted for the production of cotton are those which are also best suited for the production of the tea and coffee plant, and in no part of Bengal are the conditions so favourable for the development of these speculations." Moreover the proximity of Chota Nagpur meant that the best labour market in the province was within easy reach.

Ashley Eden, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, gave utterance in 1861 to his hopes for the future :

"A very considerable trade will grow up between Lasa and Darjeeling. The Tibetans will be only too glad to exchange gold dust, musk, borax, wool and salt for English cloth, tobacco, drill, etc; and the people of Sikkim will gain as carriers of this trade, and their Government will raise a considerable revenue from the transit duties."

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The Government's interest was kept alive by pamphleteers, travellers, chambers of commerce and other such bodies. On 25 April 1873, for instance, a deputation from the Royal Society of Arts consisting of such men noted for the wide knowledge and experience of Himalayas, such as Dr. Campbell, T.T. Cooper, Dr. Joseph Hooker, and B.H. Hodgson, called on the Secretary of State for India, the Duke of Argyle, and pressed him to adopt a more active Tibetan policy, both on commercial and strategic grounds. They drew his attention to the establishment of a Russian mart at Kiachta, situated on the border of Siberia and Turkestan; they argued that trade through Sikkim should be organised on a regular basis, and that the Government should aim for a British mission either at Lhasa or Shigatse.

The indefatigable Boulger expressed the view that if India could exchange her tea for Tibetan wool it would revolutionise her balance of trade and strengthen her finances. The Reverend Graham Sandberg, an old resident of Darjeeling and a well-known Tibetologist was no less optimistic:

"England will find, moreover, that the Tibetans are a very different race to manage than the Afghans. We believe they are peace-loving, and their confidence could easily be won. The development of the natural resources of the country - rich as it is in gold, and wool and borax - under British auspices and assistance would forge a clasp to the bond in the shape of self-interest."

All were thus agreed that Tibet should be opened to British trade. The question was how? The Indian view was that Tibet would on the whole welcome closer relations and admit British visitors if only Chinese objections could be overcome. They therefore favoured a direct approach to Peking to achieve this end.

British diplomats in China, and the Foreign Office in London to whom they sent their reports, saw the matter differently. In their view the Chinese Government would never willingly agree to a British visit to Tibet, firstly, because they did not wish their influence, already precarious, undermined further; and secondly, because there was no guarantee that even if they were agreeable, the Tibetans would honour Peking's undertaking - an assessment which was borne out by later events. But there was no let-up in Indian pressure. Thanks to that a separate article was attached to the Chefoo Convention of 1876 between Britain and China by which the Chinese Government accepted in principle the right of a British mission to visit Tibet. The projected mission under Colman Macaulay, Secretary to the Bengal Government, seemed to climax the hopes and aspirations of a whole generation of Anglo-Indian officials. Two distinguished Tibetologists, Sarat Chandra Das and Ugyen Gyatso were to grace the party by their presence; and the excitement was rising to fever pitch when the bubble burst. The Chinese already apprehensive about their dwindling authority in Tibet grew alarmed at the possible consequences of Macaulay's visit. They offered to recognise British control over Burma - a matter of dispute hitherto - in exchange for which they insisted that the mission to Tibet be dropped. As Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy, had never been an enthusiastic supporter of Macaulay's enterprise, he readily accepted the Chinese proposal. The mission which was due to leave at the end of 1885 got no further than Darjeeling before the Anglo-Chinese Treaty of 1886 put an end to their Tibetan ambitions.

The disappointment of Indian officials most closely connected with the trans-Himalaya must have been keen. The tone of their
pronouncements on Tibet, which had for decades been tempered by moderation, began to harden. From now on they began to advocate the use of stronger methods to force Lhasa's hand.

The internal situation in Tibet also reflected China's slow decline. The Ambans at Lhasa moved like a pair of ornate phantoms concerned principally with the necessity to save 'face' by keeping up the fiction of Imperial power. Of that power, which had in the past been used with devastating effect, notably against the Gurkhas in 1792, there still remained a lingering dread. It was this fear that supplied a measure of strength to the tattered fabric of Peking's moral authority.

A more tangible bond, however, was the commercial link between the two countries by which the Chinese Government guaranteed the Tibetan lamasaries vast quantities of tea. To allow British influence into Tibet, with the alarming possibility of Indian tea following in its wake, would serve the interest of neither party: for the Chinese it would mean the loss of any leverage within the counsels of government at Lhasa; for the conservative Tibetan clergy it could spell doom to their all pervasive spiritual, social and economic power. Lama and mandarin were thus united in their desire to see Tibet sealed from all contact with India.

Since it had been decreed by its rulers that Tibet was to be a forbidden land, save to groups of privileged pilgrims, its doors had to be prised open by other means. Such was the challenge which this ban evoked; for it was an age when Europe endlessly speculated about the heartland of Asia out of whose depths had once poured the myriad armies of great conquerors. But it was not only the spirit of
the past that beckoned. The needs of the present also called with compelling urgency. The geographical explorer, scientist, archaeologist, and not least, the political agent representing the divergent interests of two expanding empires were all driven by a common desire to share in its secrets.

The deeds of these remarkable travellers, British, Russian, French, Scandanavian and American have been recounted in numerous memoirs, biographies, travelogues and even general histories. For the most part they explored Central Asia, including a peripheral area of Tibet without ever reaching Lhasa. The sole Englishman to do so in the 19th century was Thomas Manning in 1811; the only other Europeans being the French Lazarist missionaries, Fathers Huc and Gabet who followed some thirty-five years later.

The exploration of Tibet begun in the decade after 1860 was therefore mainly an Indian achievement; 'the work of obscure travellers whose feats were among the greatest in the history of exploration, the band of "pundits" organised by the Indian Survey Department';\(^45\) they were men who with two exceptions were illiterate but whose work called for considerable powers of skill and judgment. Trained to execute delicate traverse surveys involving the measurement of all peaks, forts, and monasteries that were passed, they determined distances by counting every step they took. Latitudes were taken with a sextant and frequent boiling point observations had to be made for altitude readings. However, the accuracy of this survey depended chiefly on their ability to keep a continuous measure of the road - any break would ruin much of the work since they were unable to judge longitude by lunar observations.

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The fact that one 'pundit' walked over 2,500 miles crossing mountain ranges counting every step he took, that another travelled in similar fashion for 2,080 miles while a third did 1,319 miles, and all under conditions of utmost secrecy gives some indication of the labour and stupendous patience of their undertaking. 'They form,' in the words of Sir Thomas Holdich, 'together with another most useful band who have given us most of what we know of the north-western, and of the hinterland even to the border of Russia) a very remarkable group of Indian employees - a staff of "intelligence" workmen such as probably no other country in the world possesses .... Skilful, faithful, persistent, and cheap, there is no-where that they will not venture, and no physical difficulty of mountain or desert that they will not face.' Yet the ethics of the Raj determined that their deeds remain unsung, and that their material rewards be paltry. Small wonder

47 Lest this stricture seem unduly harsh the following account of the fate of Kintup (alias 'K.P.') by F.M. Bailey should suffice. Kintup had made his journey into Tibet in 1880 in an endeavour to trace the course of the Brahmaputra. Kidnapped and sold into slavery he returned to India after having been given up as lost, only to discover that his findings were disbelieved by his superiors. Years later, in 1913, Bailey himself accompanied by Moreshed explored the same parts; their results mostly tallying with those of Kintup. Making a determined effort to find his man, for the Survey Department of India had lost all trace of him, Bailey eventually ran him to ground in Darjeeling where he was eking out a precarious existence as a tailor. The rest of this tale deserves telling in Bailey's own words: 'I pestered the Indian Government to give Kintup a pension in recognition of his service to Tibetan exploration. But they were adamant. "We can't give the man a pension", they said. "That is an indefinite financial commitment. He might live to be ninety." I suggested that if he did live to be ninety, he would need the pension more than ever. I was anyway asking for a very small pension, sufficient to keep him from want. But the great guardian of public finance would not give way. "No pension", he said. "The best we can do is give the fellow a bonus of a thousand rupees; and leave it at that."' F.M. Bailey, No Passport to Tibet, London, 1957, pp.279-280 and pp.19-23.
that W.W. Rockhill, the noted American Tibetologist, diplomat and traveller commented sharply:

"If any British explorer had done one-third of what Nain Singh, Lama Ugyen Gyatso, Sarat Chandra Das, or Kishen Singh (alias A.K.), accomplished, medals, decorations, lucrative offices and professional promotions, freedom of cities, and every form of lionizing would have been his ...."

Of Sarat Chandra Das more must be said. Being highly educated, a scholar of Tibetan and Sanskrit, his journeys to Tibet possess a special significance. His first visit in 1879 to Tashilunpo on behalf of the Indian Survey Department was with the permission of the Panchen Lama who issued him with a passport. Two years later, in 1881, on the orders of Sir Ashley Eden, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, he departed again for Shigatse, accompanied once more by his former companion, Ugyen Gyatso. The Panchen Lama received his visitors with great cordiality and offered to take them to Lhasa as members of his entourage. But before the plan could materialise he suddenly died. Nothing daunted Das went to Lhasa in disguise where he stayed with a friendly monk official. The subsequent discovery of this clandestine trip exacerbated the suspicions of officials in the capital and boded ill for Anglo-Tibetan relations.

However the goodwill shown to the Indian travellers by the late Panchen Lama was continued by the Regent at Tashilunpo who had succeeded him. The Regent, full of curiosity about the outside world, plied his guest with numerous questions, and eventually commissioned him to buy on his behalf a lithographic press, a telephone and a camera. Seizing this opportunity, the Bengal Government sent the articles to Tashilunpo as gifts. More important, a lively correspondence
ensued between Shigatse and Calcutta, but its promise remained unfulfilled for conservative forces at Lhasa having mustered their strength barred the possibility of a more fruitful intercourse.

Like Bogle, Das had come close to setting Anglo-Tibetan relations on a new course, and like him he too was befriended by the Panchen Lama; but both shared the misfortune of losing their patrons and so missed the opportunity of achieving the crowning triumph of inaugurating official ties between British India and Tibet. Being a Bengali Hindu, speaking Tibetan fluently, Das may have succeeded in assuaging many of Lhasa's deepest fears. And had Tibet opened its doors to the world then might not its troubled history read differently today?

However, the results obtained by Das were of permanent value. He had gained important friends within Tibet and succeeding in bringing back to India manuscripts of great historical and cultural worth. Furthermore, in Sandberg's words:

"The mysterious capital of Tibet had been thoroughly explored by a learned and intelligent man, and fully reported upon. Many important places, whose actual positions had been hitherto merely guessed at, were by him fixed mathematically. Yaradok Lake had been re-explored. Finally, a new map of the Central Parts of Tibet - replete with an indefinite number of place-names, newly ascertained, and with courses of rivers and mountains accurately traced on paper for the first time - was constructed, based in part upon the information by Babu Sarat Chandra Das."49

The acquisition of this important corpus of geographical knowledge was a preliminary to the diplomatic action that followed in the last decade of the 19th century and reached its climax in the early years of the 20th.

The curtain raiser to this most dramatic phase of Anglo-Tibetan relations was the convention signed in Darjeeling on 17 March 1890 between Lord Lansdowne, the Indian Viceroy, and the Chinese Amban, Sheng Tai, which put the final seal on Sikkim's status as a British Protectorate.

It was an event which began with developments in Tibet arising from a new spirit of Tibetan independence. The first symptom of this was the rapid deterioration of relations between Tibet and Nepal in 1883 followed by a difficult period when Lhasa's ties with Bhutan and Sikkim were subject to great stress. Resentful at the news of the projected mission of Colman Macaulay the Tibetan authorities, particularly the clergy, decided that a more assertive policy towards their two small neighbours was called for. The recalcitrant Bhutanese who had raided Phari in 1883 were brought to heel by joint show of strength by a force of Tibetans and Chinese. The latter as usual sought to exploit the situation by awarding buttons of Chinese rank and other insignia to Bhutanese chiefs in an endeavour to assert the formal authority of their country. The Maharaja of Sikkim suitably cowed by this display of force was ordered by Lhasa to prevent Europeans from entering his country, while the latter as proof of its own earnestness sent a force into Sikkim in July 1886 with orders to encamp at Lingtu.

The Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, was at first inclined to sit out the crisis. His lack of enthusiasm for Macaulay's project has already been noted; a spot of quiet diplomacy in Peking would, he hoped, soon put the matter right. The British Minister asked the Chinese to bring their Tibetan feudatories into line. But as
Li Hung Chang admitted to Edward Goschen, China's influence in Tibet was only nominal, the Lamas being the true arbiters of policy. Still he did his best by asking the Amban to persuade the Tibetans to withdraw. Not surprisingly Li's efforts failed.

Meanwhile, both in Britain and in India, pressure for action mounted. Masterly inactivity having failed, Dufferin decided to expel the Tibetan intruders by force. In March 1888 a force of 2,000 under the command of Brigadier-General accomplished his task without undue trouble. "A few shells from the beautiful little mountain guns settled the whole business in a very few minutes," observed the Englishman's Overland Mail pithily. Some British officials were of the view that this latest provocation justified an invasion of Tibet itself but Dufferin refused to heed their advice.

It was China's interest in the problem based on her tenuous relationship with Tibet which gave the crisis an international character; for whatever the opinions of officials in India, the Foreign Office in London had to keep the larger interests of Anglo-Chinese relations in view.

The Chinese, desperate to get their shadowy control over Tibet recognized internationally, were soon sending their Amban in December 1888 to negotiate with Mortimer Durand, the Indian Foreign Secretary. While accepting de facto British control over Sikkim, the Amban insisted that the Sikkimese ruler continue to pay homage to the Dalai Lama and China; a demand which Durand refused to countenance for in his view a concession here would undermine British authority.

throughout the Himalayas. It might even lead China to assert some
day her suzerain rights over Darjeeling and the Bhutan Dooars.

The Amban attempted to shift his position but Durand held firm.
Once when he hinted that British obduracy could lead to war, he was
informed that such a conflict would not be fought in Sikkim but
elsewhere - in the theatre where the last war was decided. The
Chinese representative 'shut up like a telescope, with profuse
apologies for his "joke".' "I don't think," continued Durand, "he
will try frightening me again. But it is hopeless work dealing with
a Chinaman unless you can put a pistol to his head. He lies and
evades, and changes the conversation in the most amusing but
effective way."\(^{51}\) In an adroit manoeuvre the Amban attempted, while
a guest of the British, to order the Bhutanese Deb Raja to present
himself but this attempt to "assert openly in our presence the
influence of China over Bhutan"\(^{52}\) was thwarted. In view of China's
lack of political or military strength, her representative was playing
from a weak hand. Durand explained: 'The Amban evidently does not
give way about the "rights" of Tibet.' "He was," he said, "only a
guest at Lhasa - not a master - and he could not put aside the real
masters. He has no force to speak of, and he knows the Tibetans have
turned upon a Chinese Resident before now ....'\(^{53}\) The Amban refused
to give way and Durand called off the negotiations. Like many an
official after him he was for the immediate British occupation of the
Chumbi Valley both as a lever against the Tibetans and as a recompense


\(^{52}\) Ibid, p.167.

\(^{53}\) Ibid, p.167.
for the expenses which the war had entailed. The consequence of such action according to the Indian Foreign Secretary was that "we should put an end once and for all to our troubles with Tibet, and to our exclusion from that country, which would then be opened to our trade. We should entirely break the influence of the Tibetans, not only in Sikkim, but also in Bhutan: and we should greatly raise our reputation in the Himalayan States."  

A second round of talks was vigorously opposed by Durand and Lord Lansdowne, the new Viceroy, was also sceptical about its usefulness. He was certainly against any further negotiations being conducted in Peking, where he felt Indian interests might be sacrificed due to an inadequate knowledge of the problem by British diplomats; furthermore, to refer a local dispute to Peking would lower the authority of the Government of India in the Himalayas.

For the Foreign Office the need of the moment was to placate China as a possible bulwark against Russia, the wisdom of which Lansdowne acknowledged. "We must," he remarked to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Cross, "...deal with them Chinese as tenderly as we can, in order to remain on good terms with them in other parts of this Continent." Hence he stayed Durand's hand when the Indian Foreign Secretary expressed himself in favour of asserting British rights on the Sikkim frontier without referring to China. In view of the odium that Curzon was to earn later, it is interesting to note that Salisbury's

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55 Lansdowne Papers, Eur.D.555/2, Lansdowne to Cross, 26 June, 1889.
56 Ibid, " " " " 22 January, 1889.
observation was that no final settlement would be possible unless the peace terms were dictated at Lhasa. However, he was prepared to shelve his views in the interests of amicable Anglo-Chinese relations.

With the Indian Government adamant, China was fearful that Calcutta would treat separately with Lhasa; hence she agreed to concede British demands on Sikkim and in return salvaged the implicit British recognition of her suzerain rights in Tibet.

Apart from resolving the status of Sikkim, the Convention of 17 March 1890 achieved nothing of permanent value. Neither politically nor commercially did it represent a breakthrough in Anglo-Tibetan relations. No official contact between Lhasa and Calcutta was established, while the Trade Regulations of 1893, for which provision had been made in 1890, brought only a meagre gain for the British. The mart at Yatung though located near the Sikkim border was situated in a narrow valley off the main route and connected to it by a single road thus enabling the Tibetan authorities to the way for their own traders. It was an unpromising start to regular commercial relations between the two countries and, if anything, increased the resentment of Bengal officials. The Chinese for their part successfully thwarted the proposal to allow Indian tea into Tibet by getting the question deferred for another five years. As tea was both a weapon of political and commercial influence in Tibet, the Chinese fear of admitting a rival product becomes understandable.

However, in retreating before Britain over Sikkim, China's own authority - what little there was - suffered further erosion. One important factor cementing ties between Lhasa and Peking in the past had been the latter's ability as suzerain to provide the necessary

57 "Lord Salisbury says we shall not see the end till we dictate our terms at Lhasa" Lansdowne Papers, Eur.D.558/2, Cross to Lansdowne, 7 February, 1889.
protection against aggressors. China's aid to Tibet against the Gurkhas was a case in point. This she was now unable to provide.

The Tibetans showed their feelings by ignoring the frontier accord with Sikkim and obstructed in every possible way the implementation of the Trade Regulations with Britain, on the plea that they were not a party to these agreements. As a result, Anglo-Tibetan relations reached a total impasse. J.C. White, the Political Officer in Sikkim observed the hopelessness of trying to put pressure on the Tibetans through the Chinese. "The Tibetans," he wrote, "will not obey them, and the Chinese are afraid to give orders. China is Suzerain in Tibet in name only." The British dilemma was best summed up by H.J.S. Cotton, Chief Secretary to the Bengal Government:

"If the British had only to deal with Tibet, there is no doubt that the wisest policy would be to give them warning that unless they at once made arrangements to cooperate in the work of delimitation it would be done without them, and that unless they appointed a ruler on their side who could protect the pillars set up, the British Government would march in and hold the Chumbi Valley in pawn either temporarily or permanently. Such a brusque and high handed line of conduct is the only one that frontier tribes who have reached the civilization of the Tibetans can understand. But the affair is complicated by the relation of the Government with China and our desire to uphold the feeble and tottering authority of the Chinese at Lhasa, the result of which is that people who are in real power are not those whom we deal with, and that the people we deal with have no powers to carry out their engagements with us.""59

The Bengal officials who had been closely associated with Britain's Himalayan interests were naturally in the forefront of those calling for a more vigorous Tibetan policy; but more interesting was the fact that they were being joined by officials whose responsibilities

had revolved around Chinese Turkestan. The reports of the Trade Agent at Kashgar underlined the steady decline of British Indian Commerce in the area. An obvious solution was to begin a search for new markets. Captain G. Chenevix Trench, the British Agent at Leh, Ladakh, who forwarded these reports added the following observations:

"In view of the future uncertainty of our trade with Chinese Turkestan, and the chance that the "open door" in that quarter may not always be open as now, it is our duty to look for fresh fields.

"In my opinion this is to be found in the direction of Tibet. A commercial invasion of that mystic country, with the rich provinces of Szo Chan and Kansu and Shensi in China as the objective, would I believe be profitable.

"There are already hopeful signs the peasantry of Tibet are gradually losing their suspicious dislike of the traders from India. Between Ladakh and Tibet trade is busy to the few who are allowed to cross the border, and I am being constantly asked whether the wool trade in carpet manufacture, etc. could not be increased.

"Surely there is much to advocate a policy which should carry trade to South China, and I hope this trade report will at any rate be the means of drawing attention to Tibet and its possible use as a trade market." 

Neither were other commercial interests slow to notice Tibet's potential. The Bradford Chamber of Commerce drew the attention of the Indian Office in London to the possibilities of a thriving wool trade. Other Lobbies pressed the case for Indian tea in which industry a good deal of British capital had been sunk. But in view of the subsequent controversy surrounding the activities of the Indian Tea Association it should be pointed that is no proof that the Government had become their helpless captive. The Indian tea industry had grown enormously during the 19th century. British
entrepreneurs had long sought to break the Chinese monopoly and this they had been able to do most successfully. Chinese tea had been almost totally ousted from the British market by the Indian product. Nor was the trend markedly different elsewhere. Nonetheless conscious of alternate cycles of boom and slump, the leaders of the British Indian tea industry were not inclined to rest on their oars. The Indian Tea Association with branches in London and Calcutta did a great deal of promotion work, and the fact that the Chairman of its first meeting in 1894 was none other than Sir Douglas Forsyth, was proof that it had powerful friends, particularly in governmental circles. The following passage by Percival Griffiths is a fair description of the spirit that animated this organisation during this period:

"The Indian Tea Association at this time was much alive to the need for capturing foreign markets, and in his annual meeting in 1897 the chairman referred to the need to produce tea suited to the Russian taste and so capture that market from China. He also dealt with the disadvantage suffered by Indian tea producers as a result of an over-valued rupee and went on to urge the need for a propaganda campaign to oust Japan and China tea from the United States of America and Canada. Above all, he emphasized the need to cheapen costs without sacrificing quality."62

Similar motives inspired much of the overblown rhetoric concerning the need to win the Tibetan market. It would be a mistake to suppose that access to it was a fundamental necessity to the continuing prosperity of the Indian tea industry. Its failure to breach the Himalayan wall was more than compensated by substantial gains elsewhere. No hidden capitalist manipulated the Viceroy or his chief advisers into sending Younghusband to Lhasa.

But while these broader developments were unfolding, an event of immense significance had given a new twist to the international situation. From 1 August 1894 China and Japan had been formally at war over Korea. Eight months later on 19 March 1895 when the two parties met at Shimonoseki to arrange the terms of peace, Japan much to the surprise of the world had emerged the clear victor. The island kingdom which had started on the road to modernization barely thirty years ago had in its first real trial of strength emerged with flying colours. For China, the future was bleak. Britain had seen in her a possible ally against Russian expansion. And it was because of this that London had put a brake on India.

As a diplomatic card China had ceased to have much value. The serious diminution of her power exacerbated British suspicions of Russia since it was Russia that was making the greatest inroads into the Chinese Empire. At such a time the question uppermost in the minds of leading public figures in England was the concept of a forward policy about whose wisdom a variety of views were aired. 63

The Gortchakoff Memorandum had laid down certain principles which were basic to the forward policy schools of both Russia and Britain. One of the central factors, dictated mainly by the needs of local frontier security, was the necessity of permanently pacifying the marauding tribes who lived beyond the borders. An endless

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63 The Times, London, 9 February, 1898, p.8, quoted Lord Salisbury (on the Chitral Expedition) as saying that while he was opposed to a military "Forward policy" he believed a "Forward policy is inevitable - that is to say, we must gradually convert to our way of thinking in matters of civilization these splendid tribes". He fully understood the passion of Mohammedan feeling - arising from the pride of their thousand year history of military conquest.

Lord Roberts in a speech to the House of Lords on 7 March 1898 also emphasised that a Forward Policy did not necessarily entail military subjugation by pointing to the administrative work of Sir Robert Sandeman in Baluchistan. Parliamentary Debates, Volume 54, Col.752.
succession of punitive expeditions could not only prove expensive; they merely offered a temporary palliative. A permanent solution had to be based on measures that were not wholly military: a system of settled administration had to be set up and that meant exercising a degree of political control. And so new territory had to be absorbed into the expanding polity of a modern European state. For Russia the principles of a "forward policy" were learnt in Central Asia; the turbulent North West Frontier of India was Britain's school.

For the British the implications of a Forward policy transcended local requirements; as they involved a need to define the wider strategic problems caused by the expanding empire of their major political rival in Asia.

Lord Roberts, a distinguished soldier and fervent believer in a Forward policy, defined and justified its use in the following speech:

"The Forward policy - in other words, the policy of endeavouring to extend our influence over, and establish law and order on, that part of the border where anarchy, murder, and robbery, up to the present have reigned supreme - a policy which has been attended with the happiest results in Baluchistan and on the Gilgit Frontier, is necessitated by incontrovertible fact that a Great European Power is now within striking distance of our possessions, and in immediate contact with a State [Afghanistan] for the integrity of which we have made ourselves responsible."64

Britain's initial involvement in Himalayan politics sprang largely from the needs of local frontier security described by Lord Roberts (although it must be pointed out that only the Gurkhas and the Bhutanese for ferocity could be compared to the tribes of the North West Frontier). As long as China remained firm Russia was never regarded as a direct menace on India's Northern and North-Eastern

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64 Parliamentary Debates, 4th Series. Volume 54, 7 March, 1898, Column 750.
frontier. But with Peking's weakness exposed with such dramatic suddenness, and with the mad scramble for territory and influence in the Chinese Empire from which Russia seemed to be the biggest gainer, it was felt that Tibet, underpopulated and weak, like so many of the Central Asian Khanates had once been, could either pass directly under her influence, or else that a pliable China would be manipulated into acting according to the Tsar's bidding at Lhasa. A frontier of some 2,000 miles stretching from Ladakh to the Assam Himalaya could thus be exposed to unsettling influences, and result in an intolerable strain on Britain's scarce military resources. It is against this background that many of Curzon's apprehensions have to be placed.

Indeed, well before Curzon's arrival in India, the Director of Military Intelligence, Sir John Ardagh in a Paper titled "Military Considerations connected with the Pamir Frontier" called for the extension of India's strategic frontier beyond the highest watersheds to the foot of the glacier formed by the northern slope, along the longitudinal valleys which are to be found on the northern side at a comparatively short distance from the crest - a configuration which is absent on the southern slope. Sir John proposed that the British frontier be pushed forward to include certain key passes in case Sinkiang, or Eastern Turkestan, passed from Chinese to Russian control.

If China's defeat in 1895 resulted in a dramatic fall in her international standing, her reputation stood no higher in Tibet. In the very same year the 13th Dalai Lama attained majority, thus marking a break in a long line of Regents. The new ruler of Tibet was one of

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65 Ardagh Papers, PRO 30/40/10, 9 July, 1893.
the most remarkable in his country's history; comparable in political
and moral stature to the Great Fifth himself. For the next thirty-eight
years he became the driving force behind Tibet's foreign policy. A new
spirit of Tibetan independence was abroad. The settlement over Sikkim
without reference to Lhasa had increased Tibetan resentment against
China. Neither did their suspicion and fear of Britain diminish. The
dilemma in India was that it became impossible to communicate with Lhasa
either through Peking or directly. And so it remained until Curzon
decided to cut the gordian knot.

It was during Curzon's Viceroyalty that the underlying problems
of Anglo-Tibetan relations assumed menacing proportions. That there was
a perceptible increase in tension between the two Powers since the
Sikkim crisis of 1886-1890 is undeniable; but the unresolved problems of
a hundred years, such as the regularisation of border trade or the
establishment of direct political ties between Lhasa and Calcutta might
have lain dormant for yet a while. It was, however, the threatened
disintegration of China and the uncompromising attitude of Russia, that
together brought Anglo-Tibetan relations to a boil.
CHAPTER III

IN SEARCH OF A TIBETAN POLICY : THE ROAD TO LHASA

Anglo-Tibetan relations were in a state of virtual deadlock during Lord Elgin's term of office (1894-98). The Viceroy was quite impervious to the pleas of officials urging a stronger government response to Tibetan obstructiveness. "I wonder," asked the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal with suitable gravity, "if Your Excellency's attention has been drawn to the state of affairs at Yatung. In the presence of the more important problems of the North-West Frontier, the difficulties of the North-East Frontier are apt to look small. It will be very unfortunate if the Treaty, which took so many years to accomplish, should be frustrated and useless, but this seems to be the case. We have used Chinese influence to compel the Tibetans to give us an entrepot for trade at Yatung, but they allow no one to go there, or to interview our Political Officer, and have built a wall and a gate in front of Pinchingong for the better control of the traffic. They still occupy positions on the north within the boundary assigned to Sikkim by the Treaty, and we have yet made no representation about this, and done nothing to turn them out."¹

However, Elgin, neither alive to the prospect of a burgeoning trade between India and Tibet nor moved by a "dispute about a worthless piece of territory,"² refused to alter course, for in his judgment "This is eminently a case where bullying is out of place."³ And so it remained until his successor, George Nathaniel Curzon arrived to take charge on 6 January, 1899.

¹ Elgin Papers, F84/64, Elliot to Elgin, 19 June, 1896.
² Ibid, Elgin to Hamilton, 26 November, 1895.
³ Ibid, Elgin to White, 13 June, 1895.
The advent of Lord Curzon heralded a new chapter in Anglo-Tibetan relations. Barely forty when he assumed office, the Viceroy as if in anticipation of the day when the sceptre of supreme authority in India would be his to wield, had travelled widely in the East, given much thought to its problems, and his writings, a product of this experience, won him broad acclaim in his own country. "Asia," his biographer Lord Ronaldshay was later to remark, "laid her spell upon him; stirred the idealism latent in his nature; intrigued him, fascinated him; filled his mind." His life was imbued with a high sense of purpose, a purpose whose truest fulfilment lay in service to the Empire. Britain's Imperial destiny was for him an article of faith; and India, his country's proudest possession, the consuming political passion of his life.

Imperial authority had come to rest as much on the strength of British power as on the mystique of invincibility that grew from it. And while Curzon's reign is still remembered for its durbars, it would be misleading to suppose that the Viceroy was intoxicated by the trappings of power to the exclusion of all else. If the sight of the imperial arches uplifted him he was equally sensitive to the needs of their less ornate but demanding foundations. It was in keeping with this outlook that his external policies should be based on an admixture of political and economic motives. Each reinforced the

5 John Morley, a political opponent, paid a warm tribute to Curzon's grasp of administrative problems: "Whenever I want to know something about Indian administration, it is always to his minutes and despatches that I have to turn. The man's knowledge and industry and thoroughness were unrivalled. The pity is that his political judgment was that of a Tory and a jingo."

6 "It is only in the East, and especially in the Far East, that we may hope to create open markets for British manufacturers. Every port, every town and every village that passes into French or Russian hands is an outlet lost to Manchester, Bradford or Bombay."

other; together they strengthened the imperial fabric.

Suspicion and fear of Russia were the leading elements in Curzon’s Weltanschauung; feelings which were shared by many of his countrymen particularly in the East. What was notable in his case was the depth of his mistrust; his unshakeable belief that Russia’s rulers were driven by malevolent designs. In his view her

"ultimate ambition is the domination of Asia. She conceives herself to be fitted for it by temperament, by history, and by tradition. It is a proud and a not ignoble aim and it is well worthy of the supreme and material effort of a vigorous nation. But it is not to be satisfied by piecemeal concessions, neither is it capable of being gratified save at our expense. Acquiescence in the aims of Russia at Tehran or Meshed will not save Seistan .... acquiescence at Kashgar will not divert Russian eyes from Tibet. Each morsel but whets her appetite for more, and inflames the passion for a pan-Asiatic dominion. If Russia is entitled to these ambitions, still more is Britain entitled, nay compelled, to defend that which she has won, and to resist the minor encroachments which are only part of the larger plan."7

It has been said of the elder Pitt that after long years of study, in early political life, of the statistics of French commerce and industry, he came to the conclusion that in France England faced the principal obstacle to imperial greatness. Likewise, Curzon had watched with measured care the growth of the Russian Empire; he had studied its commercial and political methods; he had travelled widely in its newly acquired dominions in Central Asia: the outcome of this unceasing activity were a book and a major article which he published in one of the leading journals of the day.8 Posterity, it may be said, had cause to question some of his judgments; what no critic can say is that the Viceroy’s policies were the product of idle fancy or caprice.

7 L/FS/7/139, No. 1376, Minute by Lord Curzon on Russian Ambitions in Eastern Persia, 28 October, 1901.
8 G.N. Curzon, Russia in Central Asia, London, 1889.
With Curzon firmly in charge the Bengal officials were lent a sympathetic ear. No longer did their complaints about Tibetan obstructiveness concerning trade, the continuing incursions into northern Sikkim, the fiction of Chinese control at Lhasa fall on barren ground. Soon the Viceroy was repeating these charges to the Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton. "We seem, in fact, in respect of your policy towards Tibet," he wrote, "to be moving in a vicious circle. If we apply to Tibet, we either receive no reply, or are referred to the Chinese Resident. If we apply to the latter, he excuses his failure by his inability to put any pressure on Tibet. As a policy this appears to be both unproductive and inglorious." As the trade mart at Yatung had proved unsatisfactory, a new one should be opened at Phari. And while he would not for the moment insist on stationing a British official there, the right of such an official to visit the place, should the need arise, ought to be pressed. The Viceroy was also considerably irked to discover that while Nepalese and Bhutias traded freely in Tibet, Hindu merchants from India could only visit that country through Nepal. Here was a case of imperial dignity being affronted. The time had come to set British policy on a new course.

A warning shot was fired across the Amban's bows at Lhasa.

"The readiness of my predecessor and myself to reconsider the boundary question affords proof of our goodwill towards Tibet. Concession in respect to the frontier lands near Giaogong can, however, only be agreed to on the clear and definite understanding that matters as to trade will be placed on a proper footing, and to secure this it is essential that natives of British India should have access to and be permitted to trade freely at Phari. Phari is the nearest point in Tibet at which a real market can be looked for, and I cannot agree that a change from Yatung to any point nearer to it than Phari would be a satisfactory solution of the problem."  

10 Ibid, Annexure to No.26, Curzon to the Imperial Commissioner, 25 March, 1899.
Hamilton, however, had doubts about the timing of India's demand and decided to consult Salisbury at the Foreign Office. As China's authority in Tibet was reduced to a shadow, and because Britain had less need of China's support against a possible confrontation with Russia, now that the hollowness of Peking's strength had been so devastatingly exposed by Japan, Salisbury was agreeable to the Government of India pressing ahead in its attempts to open direct communications with Lhasa. The task was to find a suitable emissary. Bengal recommended Ugyen Kazi, the Bhutanese Agent, resident in Darjeeling, "as he seems to be honest and intelligent, his only defect being that he does not speak English and has little education."11 The Government of India agreed, though somewhat reluctantly, as they were somewhat uneasy about his reliability. Wanting another string to their bow, they suggested that Le Mesurier, the Political Officer in Sikkim, endeavour to establish contacts of his own in Tibet. Nevertheless, it was a fact that Ugyen Kazi was a frequent visitor to Lhasa, and so, that India informed Bengal on his next visit to the Tibetan capital he should be instructed, "to let it be known confidentially to the Tibetan authorities that the Government of India will readily receive a Tibetan of rank, if the Dalai Lama is willing to send one. He may also be authorised to say that the Government of India are prepared to make concessions in the matters of the boundary, if additional facilities are given for trade; and he might hint, if he finds an opportunity for so doing, that the Government of India would probably be ready to pay liberally for the acquisition of rights in the Chumbi Valley as far as Phari, and that they would be willing to negotiate direct with the Tibetans on the subject."12

11 L/PS/117, No. 1018, Enclosure 5, Bengal to India, 8 July, 1899.
12 Ibid, Enclosure 5, India to Bengal, 26 July, 1899.
Meanwhile, for what it was worth, use could still be made of China. It was suggested by the Government of India that the British Ambassador in Peking, Sir Claude Macdonald, might bring some pressure to bear on the Tsungli Yamen (the equivalent department to the Foreign Office, and a name which was later to change to Wai-wu Pu) to coax or cajole their Tibetan dependency into opening negotiations with Britain.13

In India the search for a suitable emissary, and the tapping of all possible sources of information concerning Tibet was pursued with tireless energy. H.S. Barnes, the officiating Secretary to the Foreign Department, on the Viceroy's instructions, got into direct touch with Paul Mowis, a resident of Darjeeling who was reputed to be an expert on the subject. Mowis's account, a compound of rumour, half-truth and fantasy, was typical of its time. He had heard for instance, that a party of Russians led by a man whose name in the Tibetan alphabet was spelt Sharanuff, had recently visited Lhasa. Then, recalling that the famous Russian explorer Prejevalsky had a secretary named Baranoff, he presumed that this must be the same man.

According to Mowis, the basis of China's power was her exclusive monopoly over the Tibetan market and the large payments she made to the high Lamas. Though the 8 million people of Tibet were well off, they produced no manufacturers and were utterly dependent on the suzerain for their needs. Confirmed in these rights and privileges by custom and goodwill, China naturally was loath to share these with Britain. Hence she was encouraging Lhasa to put obstacles in the way of Indo-Tibetan trade. However, Britain did have certain compensating

13 L/PS/7/117, No.1013, Curzon to Hamilton, 26 October, 1899.
advantages: Owing to the

"proximity of Lhasa, manufactured articles could be supplied from India much more cheaply than through China - and of a better quality. Tea, for example, which is largely consumed in Tibet, could be supplied from Darjeeling at a fourth of the price, and of much better quality than the brick tea which the Tibetans get from China; that the Tibetans are a practical people and would readily take to Indian goods, if they are convinced of their cheapness and good quality, and that the only way to convince them is to get into direct communication with the Lamas and to ignore the Ambans."

Thus far Mowis's analysis was not without touches of realism; what followed rightly belonged to the realms of fantasy. He suggested that with tact and pressure judiciously applied, the Tibetans might be persuaded to sell or lease the whole of the Chumbi Valley up to Phari. And with Phari in British hands, the necessary capital from Calcutta would soon make it possible to send the best English goods into the interior of Tibet. Even the Raja of Bhutan was apparently prepared to cooperate by allowing a road to be constructed through his country to Phari. In exchange for the capital needed to finance this project he had made known his willingness to grant a concession of a twenty mile strip of land for the cultivation of tea. Mowis hoped, in a few months time, to visit Lhasa in the company of fellow Buddhists from Ceylon, a trip which according to his story was being financed by Rothschild, the "New York Herald" and the "Englishman". Mowis as intermediary? Bengal thought not, as he "would not be regarded in Darjeeling as a person suitable for employment in any capacity". And no wonder, for the Bhutanese denied all knowledge of the scheme ascribed to them by this egregious man.

14 L/PS/7/117, No.1018, Enclosure 3 in 189, India to Bengal, 3 June, 1899.
15 Ibid, Enclosure 5 in 189, Bengal to India, 8 July, 1899.
In the meantime, Ugyen Kazi having returned from Lhasa revealed what had transpired between the Dalai Lama and himself in the joint presence of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and the Commissioner of Rajshahi. The British, he had emphasised to the Dalai, in spite of their great strength had shown the utmost forbearance in their dealings with Tibet. The Tibetan pontiff on his part complained about the Chinese, but "demurred to any direct correspondence with the officials of the British Government, for fear of compromising his relations with the Chinese Government."  

Ugyen Kazi finally summed up his impressions of Tibetan opinion on those subjects which were of special interest to India: Tibet would not agree to the opening of Phari to Indian traders for three important reasons: the carrying trade between Kalimpong and Phari was under the control of sectional interests - 200 families in all - in the Chumbi Valley; and the Lhasa authorities for reasons of their own were not inclined to interfere with this monopoly. The Tibetans were also apprehensive that if Indian traders were allowed in, quarrels and disputes might be referred by them to the British and so involve Tibet in complications with Britain. Lastly, in view of its inveterate dislike of all foreigners Lhasa sought to maintain its policy of exclusion. As Tibetans themselves were not denied entry to India, they could go to Calcutta and make all the purchases they needed. So sensitive was the question of a trade mart that "Ugyen Kazi stated that he dared not propose to the Tibetans the opening of Phari to Indian trade, lest he should be suspected of working against their interests and his own trade with Tibet ruined."  

16 L/PS/7/117, No.1018, Enclosure 8 in 189, Bengal to India, 13 Sept., 1899.  
17 Ibid.
The Bhutanese Vakil approved the Government's proposal to address a letter to the Dalai Lama, but advised that the plan should be proceeded with cautiously. As a first step, he agreed to draft and despatch a letter of his own to the Tibetan pontiff explaining the substance of British policies, and promised to get into touch with the Bengal Government as soon as he had received a reply. Some six months later, in March 1900, they were informed that Ugyen had written his promised missive to the Dalai Lama, in which he had advised him to settle with the British Government, whose aid he might need one day against the Russians or the Chinese. The Dalai Lama's reply emphasised that on no account would he allow the Russians into his country.¹⁸

Meanwhile, the Government of India had not been inactive. Shortly after Ugyen Kazi's first interview with the Governor of Bengal in September 1899, they resumed their search for other possible emissaries. Their attention was drawn to Taw Sein Ko, the Burmese Government's adviser on Chinese affairs who had the supposed advantage of being Chinese. It was suggested that he could make his way up through Yunnan and Eastern Tibet to Lhasa. Once there, his task would be to convince the Dalai Lama that Britain's only desire was to "establish freer intercourse with Tibet and to gain facilities for trade, and that, so far from having any aggressive views, the Government of India are prepared to make concessions in regard to the Sikkim-Tibet boundary, if the Tibetans on their side will relax their obstruction in the matter of trade."¹⁹

¹⁸ L/PS/7/125, No.891, Political Offices, Sikkim, to Commissioner Rajshahi, 20 March, 1900.
¹⁹ Thid, India to Burma, 25 January, 1900.
Burma's response proved disappointing. Taw Sein Ko, should he eventually get to Tibet as a Chinese, would be regarded there as an impostor, for he was a "person of mixed race born and brought up in Burma, and further, being very fat, would probably be unequal to the physical hardships involved in a journey to and a residence in Lhasa."²⁰

The approach to Burma was coupled with a similar approach to the British Resident in Kashmir, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir H.C. Talbot. Talbot expressed the view that the agent the government were looking for should preferably be a co-religionist of the Lhasa authorities; should be a person of sufficient standing to enable him to communicate directly with the highest members of the Tibetan hierarchy; and, not least, have great powers of physical endurance. Five years ago he could have recommended the ideal person: Chirang Palgez, a Ladakhi with a great mastery of spoken and written Tibetan; a former treasurer of Leh on the friendliest terms with the abbot of one of the great monasteries, and who had in the past visited Lhasa as head of the Lapchak mission. Unfortunately, he had since totally surrendered himself to the pleasures of Tibetan beer; and so neither his natural gifts, nor the advantages of his social position, could be of much use now. However, Talbot promised to consult with his assistant at Leh, Captain R.L. Kennion, as soon as the latter had returned to his post after leave of absence in England. Kennion duly compiled a note on the subject which Talbot forwarded to India. As Kennion was to win a commendation from the Government, and as his principal proposal proved acceptable to his superiors, this document deserves careful consideration. It highlighted the close traditional bond between Tibet and Ladakh, the institutions that cemented it, and, which he proposed, should now be utilised to serve the ends of the

²⁰ Ibid, Burma to India, 2 February, 1900.
Government of India.

In Kennion's view it would not all be difficult to find a man in Ladakh to carry a letter to Lhasa, "but I do not think it would be possible to find a man who could be trusted in any way to represent the views of the Government of India or to negotiate with the Lhasa Government on their behalf." Experience had shown that the Tibetans were possessed by ineradicable dread of foreigners which no amount of argument or conciliation would dispel. On the other hand "firmness and plain-speaking (one might add threats) may have an immediate effect." A Ladakhi Mohammedan would hardly do as an emissary since his own community had a monopoly of the Tibetan trade. He therefore suggested that he fill the role himself. To give the proceedings a normal air the Maharaja of Kashmir could empower him to collect revenue from his Minsar Jagir - a landholding near Lake Manasarowar - which would provide him with perfect excuse to visit Gartok, the chief town of Western Tibet.

These it seemed were not Kennion's only thoughts on the subject. Six months previously, he had of his own volition, penned a note to Talbot which was enclosed with his latest draft. Here Kennion lists the strong commercial pressures which could be brought to bear on Lhasa in an endeavour to make it see reason. For a start he would put a stop to the Lapchak mission - not suddenly but gradually in order to give Lhasa time to reflect and, more importantly, because the total breakdown of commercial intercourse could bode ill for India too; for the trade that "is slowly progressing might be retarded for many years,

21 Ibid, Kennion to Talbot, 30 May, 1900.
22 Ibid.
and the prospect of Indian tea-growers finding a new market in this
direction indefinitely postponed. As an immediate result, the closing
of an important source of work supply of the Punjab and Kashmir might
be regarded as certain, and the consequent throwing out of employment
of a large number of British and Kashmiri subjects engaged in the
trade." However, with an opportunity of pointing out to the Urkhu
of Gartok "that Western Tibet is almost entirely dependent on Ladakh
and British India for its grain supply, he would use his best
endeavour to obtain the assent of Lhassan Government to any
arrangements proposed if not involving too radical a change."24

The Lapchak missions, which Kennion proposed should be slowly
strangled, involved a traffic of gifts and commodities from three
categories of people: from the Kashmir Durbar to the Lhasa Government,
from one set of important dignitaries to another; and last of all,
included donations from monasteries in Ladakh to those in Tibet. It
was the financial relationship between the monastic establishments of
the two countries that Kennion found most offensive and damaging, for

'the system of Lamaism causes a great drain of the country's
resources towards Lhassa. Every Lama that goes to Lhassa, and
they practically all go, at the close of their novitiate, takes
with him a greater or smaller quantity of wealth. The frequent
transfer of kushoks between the affiliated monasteries of
Ladakh and Lhassa is also an ingeniously devised system for the
inflow of wealth to Lhassa. Tibet is numb and lifeless under
its grasp, and some of its tentacles extend even into Ladakh.
The less nutriment its rows of suckers, the monasteries, are
able to extract from this country, the better for the people,
and indirectly the better for the Kashmir revenues. The policy
of those responsible for the administration of Ladakh should be
directed towards the liberation of the Church of Ladakh from
the domination of its "Rome" ..., but in the meantime it is
obvious that the direct support of the system which the state
has hitherto afforded by supplying the monasteries with free
carriage should be withdrawn."25

23 Ibid, Kennion to Talbot, 8 November, 1899.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
Kennion's suggestion that he be allowed to visit Gartok and personally hand over a letter from the Viceroy was accepted, but he was told not to go to the Minsar Jagir as this might break the secrecy so necessary for the success of his mission.

Sarat Chandra Das, the famous Bengali explorer, was then asked to draft a Tibetan translation of Curzon's letter to the Dalai Lama. The tone of the letter was conciliatory. It explained that the British Government was animated by friendly feelings towards Tibet and its people; and had no desire to interfere in their internal administration, but sought merely to promote trade with India. As such the Viceroy was anxious that Tibet should have confidence in Britain's friendship and remain "free from encroachment from any other quarter." The Dalai Lama was gently reminded that the Trade Regulations of 1893 were not being observed satisfactorily and that neither was the problem Sikkim-Tibet border settled. Finally, Curzon offered to receive a Tibetan envoy to discuss these and other matters. Kennion took delivery of the letter but was stopped outside Gartok by a party of Tibetans who refused to allow him to proceed further. Eventually, the chief Urkhu having come out to meet him, Kennion handed over the Viceroy's communication and was assured that it would be forwarded to the Dalai Lama. The British officer, much impressed by some of the Tibetans he met, was hopeful that their contact with him would reassure them of his country's friendly intentions.

Rumours were now afloat that a party from Lhasa led by one Dorjieff had gone to Russia. India was first informed of these reports by the Foreign Office in London which had received a copy of

25 Ibid., India to Talbot, 25 July, 1900.
27 Ibid, Curzon to Dalai Lama, 11 August, 1900.
The Journal de Saint Petersburg of 15 October 1900, describing the events, from the British Charge d'Affaires, Charles Hardinge.\(^{28}\)

The administrative wheels were soon set in motion. Bengal, asked for confirmation, turned to their two trusted sources, Sarat Chandra Das and Sherab Gyatso, the Lama of Ghoom, both of whom reported meeting two Tibetans from the influential Drepung monastery but had heard no word from them about any mission from Lhasa to Russia. Das suggested that the reported mission could possibly be Mongolian, while Curzon, who still had hopes of hearing from the Dalai Lama, dismissed the story as a fraud.

"That the Russians have for a long time been trying to penetrate the place is certain; that a Russian Tibetan, or Mongolian Embassy may have conceivably been there and may have opened negotiations is also possible; but that the Tibetan Lamas have so far overcome their incurable suspicion of all things European to lead an open Mission to Europe seems to me most unlikely. Tibet is, I think, much more likely in reality to look to us for protection than to look to Russia, and I cherish a secret hope that the communication which I am trying to open with the Dalai Lama may inaugurate some sort of relations between us."\(^{29}\)

Indeed six months previously he had expressed similar optimism concerning the future course of Anglo-Tibetan relations. In his view, the myth of the Chinese having been exposed, and with every chance of Russia making approaches to Tibet, Lhasa would seek the friendship of a great power.

"That our case should not be stated in the circumstances, and that judgment should go against us by default, would be a great pity. Inasmuch as we have no hostile designs against Tibet; as we are in a position to give them upon the frontier to which they attach great importance and we none; and as the relations we desire to establish with them are almost exclusively those of trade, I do not think it would be impossible, if I could get into communication with the Tibetan Government, to come to terms."\(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\) Papers Relating to Tibet, Cd. 1920 of 1904, Volume 67, Hardinge to Salisbury, 17 October, 1900.

\(^{29}\) Hamilton Papers, D.510/6, Curzon to Hamilton, 18 November, 1900.

\(^{30}\) Ibid, D.510/1, Curzon to Hamilton, 24 May, 1899.
In June 1901 the Foreign Office was told of yet another mission from Tibet to Russia led by Dorjieff. Its informant this time was the British Consul-General at Odessa who enclosed a translated extract from a local paper, the Odessa Novosti, 25 June, 1901, informing its readers that, "Odessa will welcome today an Extraordinary Mission from the Dalai Lama of Tibet, which is proceeding to St. Petersburg with diplomatic instructions of importance." More ominous was the outburst of the Novoe Vremye, 30 June, 1901. "The difficulties," it thundered, "encountered by the Tibetan Mission on its journey through India explains why Tibet, who has already seen the lion's paw raised over it, turns its eyes towards the Empire of the north. Even now the lion is not quiet, but forges its chains in India itself. It is no secret to anyone against whom all their rifles, guns and cartridges are collected, all these factories of cordite and lyddite erected. These have, indeed, wrought no miracles in South Africa, where England has striven in vain to deprive a small but valiant people of its independence. Perhaps rumours of this struggle have penetrated to Tibet." The next few days, however, saw a softening in attitude. The Novoe Vremye in its editions of the 1st and 3rd of July, 1901, went to great pain in reproducing a full interview with Dr. Badmayeff, the man commonly believed to be the architect of Russia's Tibetan policy, in which he denied that the recent mission had a diplomatic character since the Dalai Lama was a subject of the Chinese Emperor and it was Russian policy to uphold the integrity of China.

32 Ibid, No.34. Scott to Lansdowne, 1 July, 1901.
The papers must have taken their cue from the Government for when Sir Charles Scott, the British Ambassador, called at the Russian Foreign Office, Count Lamsdorff, the Foreign Minister, "characterised as ridiculous and utterly unfounded the conclusions drawn in certain organs of the Russian Press that these visitors were charged with any diplomatic or political mission."\(^3^3\) A week later Lamsdorff clarified the matter by saying that the mission was "of the same character as those sent by the Pope to the faithful in foreign lands."\(^3^4\) For as it happened Russia's Buriat Mongol subjects, of whom Dorjieff was one, looked on the Dalai Lama as the head of their Faith.

The two Dorjieff Missions, particularly the second which reportedly passed through India, indicated to Calcutta how woefully inadequate was its political intelligence. Thus far Curzon had been inclined to view his relations with Lhasa as a local problem; it was the Russian factor, which henceforth, was to lend a new and urgent dimension to Anglo-Tibetan relations. From the middle of 1901, the Government of India's policy was set on a firmer course. Curzon's first conciliatory letter to the Dalai Lama having been returned unopened, the Viceroy decided to address himself once more to the Tibetan Pontiff; only this time his letter was much stronger in tone. Its bearer was to be Ugyen Kazi. And to emphasise the seriousness with which India regarded Lhasa behaviour, the first unopened letter was also enclosed with the words: "the action taken by the Urkhu of Gartok seems to have been improper and insulting;
and I am unable to believe that his conduct can have been in accordance with Your Holiness's approval." The Dalai Lama was reminded that neither the Sikkim-Tibet boundary problem nor questions of trade as provided for in the 1893 Regulations had been satisfactorily settled. The Viceroy's letter on a forceful and ominous note:

"These are matters which the Great British Government cannot regard with indifference; and I wish to impress upon Your Holiness that, whilst I retain the desire to enter into friendly relations with yourself and to promote a better understanding between the two nations, yet if no attempt is made to reciprocate these feelings and if, on the contrary, they are treated with rudeness and indifference, my Government must reserve their right to take such steps as may seem to them necessary and proper to enforce the terms of the Treaty, and to ensure that the Trade Regulations are observed."  

The Secretary of State was informed that

"should this letter meet with the fate of its predecessor, we contemplate, subject to the approval of Her Majesty's Government the adoption of more practical measures with a view to securing the commercial and political facilities, which our friendly representations have failed to procure .... But we may add, on the present occasion, that the overtures, whatever may be their real nature, that are now being made either by Tibet to Russia, or more probably, by Russia to Tibet, have led me to think that before long our political concern in Tibet may be quickened, and that steps may require to be taken for the adequate safeguarding to British interests upon a part of the frontier where they have never hitherto been impugned."  

The need for fresh sources of information regarding Tibet had indeed become more pressing than ever, eventually forcing Curzon to turn to the Nepalese Durbar whom he had refused previously to take into his confidence lest, like the Afghans, they began developing ambitions of their own. Putting aside his suspicions for the moment

35 L/PS/7/135, No.930. Curzon to Dalai Lama, 8 June, 1901.
36 Ibid.
the Viceroy approached Chandra Shamsher, aware that Nepal had long-established ties with Tibet, and that her representatives at Lhasa were well placed for any information that came their way. The Nepalese Prime Minister promptly responded to Curzon's overture by sending him a report of a long conversation between his man in Lhasa and an important Tibetan official. The latter vigorously denied that any mission had been sent to Russia from Tibet. It was the custom, he pointed out, of Mongolian monks to come to Tibet to study and on the completion of their courses to return home laden with certificates and other marks of honour. Tibet's policy of excluding all foreigners was applied impartially. Thus even when a party of Russians armed with Chinese passports sought permission to enter they were turned back at the frontier.

Six months later in December, 1901, the Nepalese had another talk with the same official pressing him for information concerning the purpose of Dorjieff's mission. The Tibetan in reply blamed the British for rumour-mongering. "This misapprehension," he commented, "is due to the publication of much false news by Englishmen," a charge not without basis. For instance, on the 27th and 28th November, 1901, when the Kalimpong Fair was being held with Sarat Chandra Das, Sub-Inspector Laden La and Deputy Commissioner Walsh of the Darjeeling District present, the current story in European circles was "that an emissary of the Dalai Lama to Russia was expected to be coming through Kalimpong, and that he was going to arrive at the time of the Mela so as to escape observation and so pass on unnoticed. This entirely groundless rumour originated in a letter written by

38 L/PS/7/143, No.571. Chandra Shamsher to Colonel Pears, 25 December, 1901.
Miss Taylor, the missionary at Yatung, to Mrs. Graham at Kalimpong, which the Reverend J.A. Graham has made over to me. Of such samples of bazaar gossip, however, the most amusing were to be found in the Diary of Trans-Frontier information. One entry records that, "There is a rumour that the Dalai Lama is secretly co-habiting with a high bred nun and that, if a male child is the result, he will openly be declared to be heir to the country and be proclaimed King; the Tibetans claiming from China the independence of their land. Also that the present Dalai Lama is the last incarnation. It is also said that the above is not true."40

However, the reports of Indian officials and the Government's unofficial advisers were written in a more serious vein. Two such documents during this crucial period (mid-1901) deserve attention; the first by Captain W.F. O'Connor - who was later to accompany Younghusband to Lhasa as his principal interpreter and was on the whole one of the Government's most distinguished frontier officers - was the first authentic expression of what may be called Curzonianism by a subordinate.

O'Connor's opening paragraphs were devoted to the development of Russian expansionism across Asia, in Mongolia, Manchuria and Chinese Turkestan. As this rapid extension of the Tsar's Empire was accompanied by an equally impressive growth of railways it was evident that soon the whole trade of Central Asia and Northern China would come under Russian control. And while striving to establish himself in such a position, Russia would not be found wanting in any effort to bring Tibet within her sphere of influence. She could move to Lhasa from Koko Nor which had once been explored by Prejavalsky.

The presence of a Russian representative in Lhasa and the preponderating

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39 L/PS/7/140, No.1533a, E.H.C. Walsh to Bengal, 7 December, 1901.
40 L/PS/7/144, No.770, Transfrontier Diary, 30 April, 1902.
influence of his country in Tibet could have an unsettling effect on the Himalayan hill-states and India. The possible effect on Nepal was, however, the most disturbing prospect, for the army relied heavily on Gurkha recruits, a sentiment that was to be echoed a year later by Lord Roberts the Commander-in-Chief himself.

The chief obstacle to Tibet's progress was its monastic system; the pampered Lamas being keenly aware that any extension of education to the common people would speed the end of their power. For a start O'Connor suggested the despatch of a column of troops to the Chumbi Valley in order to regularise trade there. "But such a step would be only a means to an end - the end being a march to Lhasa." Should the Tibetan authorities prove recalcitrant, the Chumbi Valley could be held by Britain; its possession would prove valuable for commercial and strategic reasons. The Government's aim must be a British representative at Lhasa just as there was one at Katmandu. The operation of these measures would cause a simultaneous decline of Chinese and Russian influence in Tibet, and its overall effect in the other important areas of Asia would be salutary, for,

"The news of this action on our part would spread rapidly over the whole of Central Asia and China, and could not fail to increase our prestige. Tibet includes the sources of the Yangtse-kiang, the Mekong, and the Salween, and borders on the great Szechuan province - the most thickly populated and one of the richest in China. Our influence exerted from so commanding a position would certainly facilitate future negotiations regarding such questions as the trade of the Yangtse Valley and Yunnan, the construction of railways from Burmah or elsewhere through these and adjacent provinces and the treatment of Europeans generally over the whole of southern China."}

41 Curzon Papers, F.111/540B, Note on Tibet by Captain W.F. O'Connor, 10 June, 1901.
42 Ibid.
The second document came from the pen of the Reverend Graham Sandberg, a noted Tibetan scholar and Darjeeling resident, who had often advised the Government on Tibetan matters. Like O'Connor, Sandberg emphasised the Russian threat to India's security, a threat made more acute by the very helplessness of the Tibetan population - unwarlike and scattered over a vast territory. This argument was, of course, a double-edged one, for if the Russians found it easy to penetrate Tibet so too would the British. There would be little danger of an ill-fated expedition in headlong retreat similar to the one from Kabul in 1879.

By the end of 1901 India was certain that Ugyen Kazi's second mission to Lhasa had failed, and that further attempts to communicate with the Dalai Lama would prove equally futile. An important watershed had been reached in Anglo-Tibetan relations. Within the counsels of Government, both in Calcutta and in London, the merits of an alternative policy were debated at some considerable length. In India the preparatory work for the eventual contingency of an armed mission went slowly ahead. J.C. White did a survey of the passes into Tibet; his also contained significant scientific data on the effect of high

43 L/PS/7/142, No.361. Enclosure 4, Memorandum Regarding the Possibility of Political or Diplomatic Mission to Tibet, 6 July, 1901.

44 There was considerable controversy as to whether Ugyen Kazi actually delivered the Viceroy's letter to the Dalai Lama. Sarat Chandra Das suspected that he did not, a suspicion which Kawaguchi, the Japanese monk, on his return from Lhasa was inclined to confirm. Curzon was scathing in his comments on what he regarded as Bengal's ineptitude, and expressed the view that the Bhutanese agent was a Tibetan spy. Ugyen Kazi must have been particularly hurt by this charge, for many years later when the Dalai Lama had fled to India before an invading Chinese force, he wrote a letter to Curzon asking him to direct C.A. Bell, the Political Officer, Sikkim, who was in charge of the Lama's safety in Darjeeling, to seek confirmation from the Dalai Lama of the truth of the Vakil's story.

Curzon Papers, 111/342, Ugyen Kazi to Lord Curzon, 12 April, 1910.
altitudes on the human respiratory system. A year later, O'Connor submitted a detailed report on trade routes with assessments of the commercial importance of each.

The time had now come for India to address the Home Government once more on the subject of a Tibetan policy. They would not recommend a commercial blockade as such action would harm the interests of Indian traders and might ultimately result in the diversion of Tibetan trade to Nepal. On the other hand they proposed that the Tibetans who were using the grazing grounds of Giaogong be forcibly removed by White and a company of Gurkhas. As provided for under Article 9 of the Trade and Pasturage Regulations of 1893, White could send advance warning of his action to his Chinese counterpart. They suggested that in the face of unrelenting Tibetan hostility the question of occupying the Chumbi Valley, until such time as Tibet had given satisfaction on issues outstanding between the two Governments, should be seriously considered. The concluding passage of the despatch with its pride in Empire and its plea for greater urgency lest a greater peril threatened from afar bore the Viceroy's unmistakable stamp:

L/PS/7/154, No.798. O'Connor to India, 13 April, 1903.

45 The Commissioner of Rajshahi remarked that White's report made it clear that the present Sikkim-Tibet frontier was of great strategic value to Britain. "By retaining it we keep the inner passes in our hands and hold possession of a country which to the east and north affords an easy route for troops into Tibet, and commands the road from Phari to Gyantse."
L/PS/7/148, No.1358. Commissioner Rajshahi to Bengal, 6 September, 1902.

46 L/PS/7/154, No.798. O'Connor to India, 13 April, 1903.
"The policy of isolation pursued by the Tibetan Government is one that, from its own point of view, it may not be difficult to comprehend. But it is not compatible either with proximity to the territories of a great civilized power at whose hands the Tibetan Government enjoys the opportunities both for intercourse and trade, or with due respect for the treaty stipulations into which the Chinese Government has entered on its behalf. It is, indeed, the most extraordinary anachronism of the 20th century that there should exist within less than 300 miles of the borders of British India a State and a Government with whom political relations do not as so much exist and with whom it is impossible even to exchange a written communication. Such a situation cannot in any case be lasting. But it seems desirable that it should be brought to an end with as little delay and commotion as possible since there are factors in the case that might at a later date invest the breaking down of these unnatural barriers with a wider and more serious significance."

Lee-Warner, the Under Secretary of State at the India Office, was none too happy about this latest despatch from India. "I do not think much of the "anachronism of the 20th century," India both internally and externally will present scores of such even in the 21st century. All we are concerned with are our own interests," was his first terse comment. He accepted that the Government of India had made out a clear case for retaliation. But they had omitted to state how the Nepalese would view a forward move by the British since they themselves had a treaty of alliance with Tibet. More important, Nepal's friendship was of such importance to Britain that the ill-tempered conduct of Lhasa seemed insignificant in comparison. There were other factors also to be considered: Afghanistan, the state of the tribes on the North-West frontier, how long the presence of British legions in South Africa would continue. Until the country was able to disentangle itself from the Boer War the sound policy would be to provide no dispute with Tibet. In the meantime the whole question should be held up for review with the

48 Ibid. I.O. Minute (no date).
Foreign Office. This last sentiment went down well with Hamilton who remarked:

"The position is so ridiculous that it cannot continue. But before we determine our future action from an Indian point of view we should have the Foreign Office's opinion upon the subject from an international standpoint."  

Lee-Warner and Curzon were at odds with each other in their attitudes toward Nepal. The Viceroy hardly needed the Under-Secretary of State to advise him to work in harness with the Nepalese Durbar. Neither was he unaware that given half a chance the Gurkhas would be only too happy to march on Lhasa. Against this was to be weighed the risk that too much encouragement to Nepal might make her turn into another Afghanistan, a prospect which no ruler of British India could relish. Indeed, Curzon had already had a brush with the Nepalese Durbar when he queried them on their imports of arms and ammunition and of their surreptitious domestic manufacture. The question, put in Curzon's inimitable manner, incensed Chandra Shamsher, who vigorously denied the Viceroy's accusation. The British Resident, Colonel Pears was after all permitted to visit the arsenal at Soondri Jal in October, 1901. The quality of arms produced there was poor; this, and the nature of the country, its unruly inhabitants, the developing threat to the north, made it imperative that Nepal be allowed to import better and greater quantities of weapons from Britain. Finally concluded the Rana pointedly, "if His Excellency the Viceroy were as free and generous in the matter of armament to us as

49 Ibid.
50 Hamilton Papers, F.123/76, Curzon to Hamilton, 14 August, 1901.
51 L/PS/7/149, No.14/56. Extract of Private letter from Curzon to Hamilton, 1 October, 1902.
His Excellency has been to Afghanistan, I am sure that the services which Nepal could render in time of need, at much less cost and with absolute certainty, would compare very favourably with those of the Amir."  

Eventually the Indian Government relented, but the episode serves to underline one of their dilemmas: the Viceroy in the driving seat had to decide after much care and deliberation, which of the many reins he held should be used; for the slightest error of judgment could disturb the finely wrought political balance in the Himalayas.

The Dorgieff missions focussed Curzon's attention on Russia (not that he needed much prompting), and through it brought to the fore aspects of international politics which the Home Government were increasingly compelled to take into consideration.

While awaiting the outcome of his second letter to the Dalai Lama, during which time O'Connor and Sandberg were compiling their Notes on a possible course of forceful action in Tibet, Curzon decided to test the ground in London in his private correspondence with Hamilton. Writing to the Secretary of State he asked for Home Government's reaction to the possibility of a Russian protectorate in Tibet. Britain had as much right to object to such a development as would Russia if Britain had reduced Manchuria to a similar state.

"Tibet is not necessary to Russia; it has no relations, commercial or otherwise, with Russia; its independent existence implies no menace to Russia. On the other hand, a Russian protectorate there would be a distinct menace and a positive source of danger to ourselves. I hope that no Government at home would quietly acquiesce in such a surrender."

52 LP/S/7/150, No.151A, Chandra Shamsher to Lt-Colonel Ravenhaw, 6 October, 1902.
53 Hamilton Papers, D510/8, Curzon to Hamilton, 10 July, 1901.
The Secretary of State, however, showed a disappointing lack of enthusiasm for any forward move in the Himalayas. Assuming that the Viceroy did not get a civil reply to his letter from the Dalai Lama, any show of force by the Indian Government would quickly turn into an invasion of Tibet; and although a treaty concluded in Lhasa might put Anglo-Tibetan relations on a secure footing - such action could also drive Tibet into Russia's arms and at the same time alienate China who would look upon it as an attack on an integral part of her empire. Moreover the Home Government was engaged in delicate negotiations with Peking on matters of far greater interest to Britain than Tibet and would deprecate any move that would jeopardise the chances of its success. As Russia was engaged in a similar operation over Manchuria the possibility of its seeking to establish a protectorate in Tibet at this moment, with the risk of antagonising Peking, was very remote. An aggressive move in the Himalayas could not be more untimely.

As an alternative Hamilton proposed that the Indian Government try and convince Lhasa about the danger of Russian expansion in Central Asia. Since the Tibetans dislike foreigners with a "truly Chinese hatred" India should work on those passions to keep the Russians at bay and assure Lhasa that its own object was to uphold Tibet's independence.

As a statement of the Home Government's current difficulties the letter was suitably frank but its appreciation of Curzon's dilemma was cavalier to the point of being provocative. The Viceroy, naturally,

reacted sharply. He had not proposed, in the first place, to rush headlong into a military adventure as had been implied but only to send a small escort of no more than two or three hundred with his mission. Secondly, the problem here was not a matter of negotiating but of opening negotiations since communications to Lhasa remained unanswered. But it was the blow to Imperial pride that hurt most:

"We must have sunk to a pitiable pass of weakness and humiliation, if we are to allow a lot of unarmed shepherds to graze their flocks every year in British territory, and are so frightened that we dare not turn them out. I venture to say that I know the Tibetan question pretty well, and that we shall not advance a single step or come to a solution of any sort, until we give some indication to the Dalai Lama that he cannot trample with impunity on our treaty or behave as Germany might do to Denmark."55

It is not that Curzon's colleagues in London regarded Russia with feelings of trust; it was only that the tide of events bringing to the surface a shift in the relative strengths of the Great Powers as a result of the progress of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, especially in Germany, was forcing them to modify traditional attitudes of total hostility and mistrust.

For instance, as a former Secretary of State for India, Salisbury knew the problems of Indian defence. In 1888 he had instructed the British Ambassador to deliver at St. Petersburg a warning that a Russian advance on Herat meant war with Britain. In 1891-92 he proved equally firm in the Pamir dispute. Nevertheless the international balance of power was changing. In 1878 at the Congress of Berlin Salisbury saw Bismarck's treaty system first take shape, the importance of which "was enhanced by another characteristic of this period of change, the relative decline of the strength of

Britain." Her pre-eminent position in industry and commerce was being slowly eroded, a truth that was becoming increasingly apparent in the last years of the 19th century. Even more striking was the relative decline of the country's naval strength. Sixty or seventy years before British naval supremacy stood complete. Now Britain was forced to think in terms of a combination of Powers, not merely a single rival. Also with time, the subject of naval expenditure once so sacrosanct, gave rise to serious controversies.

Thus, Salisbury's mild reaction to Russia's seizure of Port Arthur should have caused less surprise since relations with France were fast coming to a head in the Sudan. He went so far as to instruct Sir N. O'Connor, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, to enquire of Witte whether it would be possible for Russia and England to work together in China. At the time The Times quoted Balfour as saying that all Britain claimed in China was equality of opportunity in matters of trade. The Government's fear was that a Power with Protectionist traditions would extend its influence in the Celestial Empire to the detriment of the commercial interests of others. Some three weeks later Salisbury was even more explicit:

"I cannot conceive why we should object to Russia going where it will, provided we are not excluded from going there too."

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58 Balfour said: "It is not primarily a territorial policy. We do not want great accessions of territory carved out of the Chinese Empire .... We have no present desire to undertake the administration of millions of Chinamen. On the other hand, we are quite conscious of the preponderance of our trade interests in China over those of all other nations put together, and we are quite determined that those interests shall not be impaired."
The Prime Minister uttered this sombre warning in the House of Lords:

"Do not overtax your strength. However strong you may be, whether you are a man or a nation, there is a point beyond which your strength will not go. It is courage and wisdom to exert that strength up to the limit to which you may attain; it is madness and ruin if you allow yourself to pass it." 60

A few months later he elaborated his ideas in the following speech delivered on 5 May, 1898.

"You may roughly divide the nations of the world as the living and the dying .... weak States are becoming weaker and the strong States are becoming stronger .... For one reason or another .... the living nations will gradually encroach on the territory of the dying, and the seeds and causes of conflict among civilized nations will speedily appear .... These things may introduce causes of fatal difference between the great nations whose mighty armies stand opposite threatening each other .... It is a period which will tax our resolution, our tenacity, and Imperial instincts to the utmost. Undoubtedly we shall not allow England to be at a disadvantage in any re-arrangement that may take place. On the other hand, we shall not be jealous if desolation and sterility are removed by the aggrandisement of a rival in regions to which our arms cannot extend ...." 61

As an earnest of goodwill Salisbury asked that Russia hand back Port Arthur to the Chinese because of its strategic location; he had no objection to her seeking an ice-free commercial harbour elsewhere, or its connection with Trans Siberian Railway, then under construction.

The Russians remained obdurate and nothing came of this British overture. Meanwhile, Britain continued to be locked in rivalry with France while relations with Germany proceeded fitfully from hope to despondency.

60 Ibid.
The outbreak of the Boer War in October 1899 and its prolongation made Britain the most unpopular country in Europe. Never did her isolation seem so complete. Further, the stubborn resistance of the Boers made the war a searing experience for both public and politicians alike. The limitations of British power were exposed; to the country's leaders, with the exception of Salisbury, the safe anchorage of an alliance was the need of the hour. The epoch of splendid isolation was drawing to a close. Unfortunately in this difficult period the country lacked the presence of a strong hand to steady the ship of state. Salisbury was growing infirm and British foreign policy tended to drift. Curzon in a letter to Brodrich doubted that there was at all any policy whether for "China, Persia, Morocco, Egypt or any other place in the world. Lord Salisbury is an adept at handling the present, witness Venezuela. But the future to him is anathema." "Now an Empire cannot run on these lines. We must take stock, must look ahead, must determine our maximum and our minimum and above all must have a line. It is easy to blame the War Office here, the Exchequer there or the Cabinet everywhere. It is the ingrained vice of modern British statesmanship that is at fault." Hamilton in his letters to Curzon often expressed a stark pessimism which, no doubt, reflected the general mood of his colleagues. The Secretary of State, for instance,

62 Neither was the War popular with Anglo-Indian opinion as the following passage should make clear: 'We ourselves have already drawn attention to the evil effects of this utterly foolish "war" on our position in China, and that means in Asia; and Lord Salisbury, with Messrs Chamberlain and Balfour, are directly responsible for it .... to the utter detriment of England, her honour, and her Empire in the East.' Calcutta Review, Calcutta, Volume 113, 1901, pp.182-83.
63 Brodrich Papers, 50073, Curzon to Brodrich, 3 August, 1900.
felt that Britain was foredoomed in her rivalry with Russia in Asia because Russia being half-Asiatic herself had great powers of assimilation and consolidation. He wondered therefore if it was wise to be associated with opposition to movements which were bound ultimately to succeed. 64

A year later any hopes that Hamilton may have had of Britain coming to terms with Russia about a possible division of their respective spheres of influence in Asia had been dashed. 65 Russian behaviour in China was reprehensible. By April 1901 the Secretary of State was coming round to the view that Britain was in desperate need of an ally, and of the two European coalitions he would prefer the Triple Alliance. 66

The Viceroy set himself firmly against an entangling Continental alliance 67 - here he was at one with Salisbury - and certainly not with Germany, the country which he said would, in the next twenty five years, constitute the greatest threat to British interests. Hence "any English Foreign Minister who desires to serve his country well, should never lose sight of that consideration." 68

Curzon also expressed surprise that Hamilton after so many years in high office should have entertained any illusions about reaching a settlement with Russia. Britain stood in Russia's way whether at Constantinople, in the Persian Gulf, Herat, Korea or Peking for any peace between the two to be really lasting. 69

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64 Curzon Papers, F.111/159, Hamilton to Curzon, 26 January, 1900.
66 Ibid, 25 April, 1901.
69 Ibid.
The Home Government's caution throughout 1901 on Tibetan matters - Hamilton put their case well when he wrote: "the Tibetans are but the smallest pawns on the political chessboard, but castles, knights, and bishops may all be involved in trying to take that pawn" - must be measured against the following considerations:
First the war in South Africa with its continuing drain on Britain's financial and manpower resources; secondly the need to concentrate Britain's best energies on the search for an ally. Negotiations were under way by the middle of the year with Japan and Germany, and there were even hopes that Russia could be tempted to see reason by agreeing to a mutually satisfactory arrangement in Asia.

Lansdowne, who had taken over the reins from Salisbury at the Foreign Office in November 1900, set about putting British policy on a new course. The Boer War having exposed the perils of isolation, the new Foreign Secretary and some of his advisers began to cast around for suitable allies. In so doing they were reflecting the prevailing current of political opinion within the country which had on occasion also found an echo in Hamilton's letters to Curzon.

A feature of the changing situation was the growing influence of the permanent staff of the Foreign Office. Francis Bertie, the Assistant Under Secretary epitomised this new breed of officials, capable, ambitious and intent on playing a more positive role in the formation of foreign policy than had their predecessors. Intensely suspicious of Germany, their political instincts which were to blend well with those of Lansdowne and the King, made them gravitate towards a closer understanding with France. Such a step, given the existence

70 Curzon Papers, F.111/160, Hamilton to Curzon, 22 August, 1901.
of the Franco-Russian alliance, would inevitably point in the
direction of Petersburg. Indeed they attempted to reach an
accommodation with Russia, independently of France, over Persia
and Manchuria in October 1901, but their overture was spurned by
the Tsar's ministers. However the thinking which inspired this
move had ominous implications for the future relations between
Curzon and the Home Government.

In the face of Russian intransigence and Germany's own
unbending terms for an alliance the pace of Anglo-Japanese
negotiations quickened in the last quarter of 1901. If the new
men in the Foreign Office were one major influence during this
highly fluid period, the other undoubtedly was the Admiralty.

Grenville aptly remarked:

"Selborne's memorandum 72 arguing that a Japanese alliance
would strengthen the British navy everywhere had preceded
the Cabinet decision to conclude the alliance. In the
same way another memorandum, in which the First Lord of
the Admiralty in October 1902 stressed for the first time
the German naval menace, influenced Lansdowne in favour
of an entente with France. The role played by the
Admiralty was both new and striking." 73

Although a rising Power, Japan was still something of an
unknown quantity, and her insistence that the scope of the treaty
be confined to the Far East merely increased the doubts of Salisbury
and Balfour 74 concerning the value of such an alliance. Only when
she had won her spurs in the conflict with Russia in 1904-05 was
this scepticism about her military prowess dispelled. Until then
there was a lurking fear that Britain could find herself
gratuitously embroiled in a Russo-Japanese quarrel.

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72 Cabinet Records, Cab 37/58/61, Balance of Naval Power in the Far East,
Lord Selborne, 4 September, 1901.
73 J.A.S. Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy, London, 1970,
Curzon hailed the agreement "with unalloyed satisfaction," welcoming in particular the skilful construction which would allow for its armed operation only in "circumstances of extreme peril to both parties .... It is, therefore, an admirable counterpoise to the Franco-Russian alliance: and it should be an invaluable guarantee for the maintenance of peace." 75

The Viceroy may have had hopes that with the much needed security of this alliance behind them the Home Government would have fewer qualms in permitting him to pursue a bolder policy towards Tibet. He was to be sorely disappointed. Even with the end of the Boer War in May 1902 this cautious trend continued. In August that year Curzon telegraphed Hamilton with the news that information had come to hand that under a secret Russo-Chinese agreement Tibet was to become a Russian protectorate. The Secretary of State agreed that China should be approached - but not immediately.

"Our commercial treaty," he wrote to Curzon, "which, if we can bring it off, will be a big coup is now passing through its penultimate stages, and will, I believe, in the course of the next few days be signed. I daresay, therefore, Lansdowne will prefer, until that treaty is signed, not to take up another question which might jeopardise the enormous commercial interest which that treaty touches and covers." 76 True to their word Satow was instructed, once the treaty was signed, to inform the Chinese that since all attempts at negotiations had failed the British were going to assert their right to the corner of Sikkim which the Tibetans had occupied. Indeed the Political Officer in Sikkim,

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75 Hamilton Papers, D.510/10, Curzon to Hamilton, 13 February, 1902.
76 Curzon Papers, F.111/161, Hamilton to Curzon, 27 August, 1902.
J.C. White, had already gone to Giaogong - the place in question - with a small military escort and evicted the Tibetans in a manner prescribed by Curzon in his despatch of February 13, 1902. Whereupon Prince Ch'ing at the Tsungli Yamen lodged a mild protest with the British Ambassador which pointed out that when in the past outstanding issues had arisen between India and Tibet they were settled by mutual consultation. "In the present case," he complained, British officers appear to have led troops to the Tibetan frontier without any previous notice, and to have there broken down a barrier in the pass. Such action is liable to create misunderstanding among the ignorant Tibetans and give rise to trouble."\(^7\)

The Chinese, alarmed at this seemingly aggressive turn in British policy, went to considerable lengths to deny the rumours of a secret understanding under which Russia was to be given Tibet. Satow expressed his concern to Prince Ch'ing on account of the geographical proximity of British India to Tibet.\(^8\) The Prince denied these rumours which he attributed to newspaper gossip (news of the reported agreement had appeared in the China Times of 18 July, 1902) in the strongest possible manner. China had nothing to gain by handing Tibet over to another Power; certainly it would not help her recover her lost rights in Manchuria. He realised the importance of Tibet as a buffer, and as his government was equally a friend of Russia and Great Britain it would not aid one at the expense of the other. According to a confidential Chinese source which in the past had been the source of much valuable information

\(^7\) Papers Relating to Tibet, Cd. Paper 1920 of 1904, Volume 67, Enclosure in No. 55, Prince Ch'ing to Sir E. Satow, 22 August, 1902.
\(^8\) FO 17/1745, No. 256, Satow to Lansdowne, 8 September, 1902.
to the British Ambassador, this very question was debated in the Grand Council and any question of offering Tibet to Russia had been firmly rejected.

Satow, as he made clear in a letter to Lansdowne was not certain as to the genuineness of the document containing the alleged agreement between Russia and China. He suspected that if signed it was the work of a Manchu Prince, Jung Lu, and the Russian agent of the Russo-Chinese Bank. The Russians were up to mischief in Mongolia and their activities at Urga needed close observation. However, the only excuse for which they could claim an interest in Tibet were their numerous lamaist subjects, but of these Britain had many more, besides having her Indian empire in geographical contiguity to the country. The Ambassador was not inclined to treat very seriously information emanating from Kang Yu Wei (the exiled Chinese Reformer living in Darjeeling) and Captain Parr of the Chinese Customs Service at Yatung, two of the Government of India's informants. The third was the Nepalese Representative at Lhasa whose reports to Katmandu were passed to the Viceroy by Chandra Shamsher. And possibly under the Prime Minister's direct or indirect influence a bazaar rumour might have been given the weight of an established fact. It was, after all, hardly a secret that the Gurkhas yearned to settle scores with Lhasa unaided.

China anxiously awaited Britain's response to her denial.

Sir Charles Scott, His Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg, was approached by the Chinese Minister and asked with considerable concern whether Sir Ernest Satow could have credited as genuine

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79 FO.800/120, Satow to Lansdowne, 11 September, 1902.
the story of a secret Russo-Chinese understanding over Tibet. The British diplomatist replied that he 'did not think that Sir E. Satow attached much credit to it, and probably regarded it as a "balloon d'essai" started in non-official Russian quarters, but that the text had undoubtedly been circulated and had reached the Indian Government and that the Chinese Government would no doubt be able to satisfy themselves that the Indian Government would certainly not be indifferent to any alteration in the present relations of a country so near to their frontiers as Tibet.'

In December news arrived in London that Peking had appointed a new Amban, Yu Tai, who had previously seen service in Mongolia and Sinkiang, and was empowered to proceed at once to his new post so as to commence negotiations with White, whom the Chinese hoped would be given similar instructions by his superiors in India.

Irrespective of Satow's views in Peking, Curzon expressed himself as a "firm believer in the existence of a secret understanding, if not a secret treaty, between Russia and China about Tibet," a game which he was determined to frustrate while he had time. The recent action on the Sikkim border had a salutary effect on both Lhasa and Peking who, once again, were talking of negotiations. Their silence since then was merely the result of Russian tutoring. The Viceroy finally displayed his hand:

"My idea therefore, is that we should let the Chinese and Tibetans play the game of procrastination for some time longer, and should then say - as it is clear that they do not mean business - that we propose to send a mission up to negotiate a new treaty in the Spring. This would be a reversion to the policy of Lansdowne [he meant Dufferin] at the time of the Macaulay mission, from which the

80 Papers Relating to Tibet, Cd. 1920 of 1904, Volume 57, No. 57, Scott to Lansdowne, 2 October, 1902.
"Government of India of the day, in deference to the protests of China, were as I think, wrongly induced to depart. But on the present occasion I would not on any ground withdraw the mission. I would inform China and Tibet that it was going, and so it should. It would be a pacific mission intended to conclude a treaty of friendship and trade with the Tibetan Government. But it would be accompanied by a sufficient force to ensure its safety. We might even get the Nepalese to join in providing the escort. They would be delighted, for they are itching to have a go at Tibet themselves."

The extract of this private letter to Hamilton was placed before the Political Committee of the India Office, where Lee-Warner voiced grave reservations. The mission might meet with resistance and in order to save face Britain would have to use force. The Chinese might be joined in a chorus of protest by the Russians and the Tibetans. Then having got to Lhasa "how can we make the horse drink as well as lead him to the water, how in other words can we secure a treaty of friendship: and what is the friendship worth that is secured by force?"

There were troubles a-plenty on the North West frontier, so why not be patient. Once again Lee-Warner counselled the use of the Nepalese. Nepal had treaty relations with Tibet and could legitimately ask Lhasa for an explanation of its position. Should Tibet admit a relationship with Russia, Britain could join Nepal in denouncing it on the spot.

The Chinese warning to Tibet relaying Britain's concern had been ineffectual as China had lost most of her power there. Nepal on the other hand had representatives in Lhasa who could deliver a message directly to the Tibetan authorities. Should this course of action prove barren it would, as a last resort, be advisable to slip Nepal at Tibet; and if Tibet resisted Britain could move in at once, instead of waiting till next Spring, and giving Russia the breathing spell she required.

82 Ibid.
83 Ibid, Comment by Lee-Warner.
This was the first sign of the gulf that was to emerge between Calcutta and London on the Viceroy's Tibetan policy. A spirit of unease, if not of outright disapproval on the way British foreign policy was being defined and administered, informed much of Curzon's correspondence with Hamilton; he had occasionally shared his thoughts with Brodrick, an old and trusted friend from his Eton and Balliol days. The Viceroy was not sure that politicians in London knew much about India, appreciated the true significance of its role in the maintenance of British supremacy in the world, or cared deeply about Indian interests. He was resentful at the casual, off-hand manner in which India was treated - for instance, at the Coronation of Edward VII Indian guests were even expected to pay their own expenses - so resentful did Curzon become that he appealed directly to the King and to Balfour, who had succeeded Salisbury as Prime Minister. The tone of the Viceroy's letters betrayed a feeling of injured pride which Balfour with commendable promptness endeavoured to soothe. The trouble seemed to pass but relations between India and the Home

84 "You have no conception of the impression produced by such an act of shabbiness in this country. It will rankle in the minds of the people and be quoted by them in the Vernacular press for generations .... India has served you well during the past three years. She saved Natal for you. She fought your battles in China. She has accommodated 9000 of your Boer prisoners .... the late Prime Minister of England has never said one word - in public or in private - in acknowledgement of this great service." Balfour Papers, 49732, Curzon to Balfour, 16 July, 1902.

85 "You seem to think that you are injured whenever you do not exactly get your own way! But which of us gets his own way? Certainly not the Prime Minister: certainly not any of his Cabinet colleagues. We all suffer the common lot of those who having to work with others, are sometimes overruled by them .... But do not let any of us forget that there cannot be a greater mistake committed by a British statesman than to interpret any difference of opinion as a personal slight, or as indicating any want of confidence among colleagues.

Dear George, I do assure you that no one has marked with greater pride or greater pleasure your triumphant progress .... than your old friend and colleague .... I have differed from you on this and that point .... But nothing will for a moment diminish either the warmth of my friendship or the enthusiasm of my admiration."

Balfour Papers, 49732, Balfour to Curzon, 12 December, 1902.
authorities continued to simmer; the tension being broken by the increasingly frequent thunderclaps of fierce controversy that only served to widen the breach.

Faced with the continued vacillation of the Home Government Curzon was determined to force the pace. If his letter of 13 November 1902 contained a few ideas thrown out in the rough, his great despatch of 8 January 1903 contained an able summary of the Tibetan problem to date, and a detailed exposition of the course of action he proposed to take in an endeavour to break the impasse in relations with Lhasa.

In reply to the enquiry of the India Office as to whether a Tibetan representative should be associated with the Chinese Resident Yu Tai at the talks on the Sikkim frontier the Viceroy's despatch gave the following answers: First, that White had carried out his mission successfully, his action leading to a successful reassertion of British authority in the region. However, the greater advantage derived from this mission

"up to the present time consists in the fear inspired among the Tibetans that it is the prelude to some further movement - an advantage which would be wholly sacrificed when the discovery was made that no such consequence was likely to ensue. If, therefore, we now enter upon negotiations with no other ground than the successful reassertion of our authority on a very inconspicuous section of the border, it does not appear that there is much reason for anticipating a more favourable solution of the Tibetan problem than has attended our previous efforts, unless, indeed, we are prepared to assume a minatory tone and to threaten Tibet with further advance if the political and commercial relations between us are allowed any longer to be reduced to a nullity by her policy of inaction."

The second major development impinging upon the present situation was the reported secret agreement between Russia and China.

86 L/PS/7/151, No. 182, Curzon to Hamilton, 8 January 1903.
"Whether this Agreement has been concluded with or without the knowledge of the Chinese Government, whether their agency has been introduced into or has been excluded from the negotiations, whether the Agreement is of a religious or commercial or political character, or a combination of all three - we entertain no shadow of doubt that some sort of agreement is in existence and that the powers of intervention which Russia has thereby acquired, however ingenuously concealed, or however kept in reserve, are intended to be used and, unless counteracted, will be used to the detriment of British interests in Tibet."87

The British Charge d’Affaires at St. Petersburg, Charles Hardinge, had informed the Foreign Office of his belief in the existence of a tacit agreement which would permit the Russian Government to maintain a consular official in Tibet. The official in question had delayed his departure for fear of arousing suspicion; his place in the meantime would be taken by a secret agent, who, according to the Government of India, may have already set out for his destination.

Thus, the forthcoming negotiations on the Sikkim-Tibet frontier were "invested with a more than a local importance, and that what we are concerned to examine is not the mere settlement of a border dispute or even the amelioration of our future trading relations with Tibet, but the question of our entire future political relations with that country and the degree to which we can permit the influence of another great power - and that power Russia - to be exercised for the first time in Tibetan affairs."88 The presence of Russia was already a constant source of anxiety on one side of India’s frontier; her "control over Tibet would be an intolerable menace both to our interest and our prestige."89 Russia had no overriding reason for interesting herself in Tibet; her nearest territory was 1000 miles from Lhasa, which was situated in the extreme south of the country and in close proximity to the border.

87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
proximity to India.

"We are of opinion that the only way in which to counteract the danger by which we regard British interests as directly threatened in Tibet, is to assume the initiative ourselves, and to anticipate the arrival of a Russian Mission at Lhasa by being first upon the scene, and we regard the Chinese proposals for a conference as affording an excellent opportunity for pressing forward and carrying out this policy. We are in favour, subject to a qualification ... of accepting the Chinese proposals, but of attaching to them the condition that the conference shall take place not upon our frontier, but at Lhasa, and that it shall be attended by a representative who shall participate in the proceedings. In this way alone does it appear to us that we shall escape the ignominous position of having an Agreement which has been formally concluded with the Chinese subsequently repudiated by the Tibetans; and in no other way do we regard it as in the least likely that the wall of Tibetan impassivity will be broken down."90

The Government of India drew attention to the Colman Macaulay Mission of 1886 and, in their view, the erroneous abandonment of that venture for purely extraneous reasons. The revival of such an enterprise and the firm policy on which it was based was now called for - but not through the agency of China which had invariably proved a failure.

"We regard the so-called Suzerainty of China over Tibet as a constitutional fiction - a political affectation which has only been maintained because of its convenience to both parties. China is always ready to break down the barriers of ignorance and obstruction and to open Tibet to the civilising influence of trade; but her pious wishes are defeated by the short-sighted stupidity of the Lamas. In the same way Tibet is only too anxious to meet our advances, but she is prevented from so doing by the despotic veto of the suzerain. This solemn farce has been re-enacted with a frequency that seems never to deprive it of its attractions or its power to impose."91

Even if the Home Government decided to the interposition of China any agreement must be signed or confirmed by a Tibetan representative.

90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
"We may remark that there are, in the present circumstances of Tibet, special reasons for insisting that Tibet herself shall be a prominent party to any new Agreement. For the first time for nearly a century that country is under the rule of a Dalai Lama, who is neither an infant nor a puppet, but a young man, some 28 years of age, who, having successfully escaped from the vicissitudes of childhood, is believed to exercise a greater personal authority than any of his predecessors, and to be de facto as well as de jure sovereign of the country. In other words, there is for the first time in modern history a ruler in Tibet with whom it is possible to deal instead of an obscure junta masked by the Chinese Aman."

It was proposed, therefore, that commencing in the following Spring

"negotiations should cover not merely the small question of the Sikkim frontier, but the entire question of our future relations, commercial and otherwise, with Tibet, and we think that they should culminate in the appointment of a permanent British representative Consular or Diplomatic, to reside at Lhasa."\(^{93}\)

In view of the contingency of opposition the mission should be accompanied by an armed escort. However, no serious campaign was envisaged as Tibetan military strength was minimal but it would be unwise to run any risks in view of rumours reaching India that arms from Russian Central Asia were reaching Lhasa.

China and Tibet should be given emphatic assurances

"that the mission was of an exclusively commercial character, that we repudiated all designs of a political nature upon Tibet, that we had no desire to declare a Protectorate or permanently to occupy any portion of the country, but that our intentions were confined to removing the embargo that at present rests upon all trade between Tibet and India, and to establishing those amicable relations and means of communication that ought to subsist between adjacent and friendly Powers."\(^{94}\)

\(^{92}\) Ibid.
\(^{93}\) Ibid.
\(^{94}\) Ibid.
The despatch ended on the role of Nepal. Far from viewing any action by the Government of India with disquiet or suspicion, the Nepalese welcomed the attempt to thwart Russian designs in Tibet. India contemplated working in close cooperation with Nepal, who "might be encouraged to send a separate column accompanied by British Officers, by an independent route into Tibet." As proof of Nepalese cordiality the Government appended a Note of an interview between the Viceroy and Chandra Shamsher at Delhi. The Nepalese Prime Minister pointed out that his country's last war with Tibet had cost Rs. 36 lakhs and that the Durbar had accepted the paltry sum of Rs. 10,000 a year from Lhasa as part of the settlement because they did not feel able to continue operations. But the prospect of an armed (and by implication a strong) Tibet was too great a danger to Nepal to be countenanced with equanimity.

This passage merely highlights the central place occupied by Nepal in the political considerations of British India's trans-Himalayan policies. Even the threat of a Russian presence in Tibet was a double-edged one; for while such a prospect was regarded with obvious distaste by the Nepalese it could also, on the other hand, tempt them to utilise it to escape from the fetters of British control. And what was an implied theme in this despatch was explicitly stated by Curzon in a later letter to Hamilton: "There would," he said, "at once be set up a source of possible intrigue between Russia and Nepal, which might come to nothing as long as there was a strong Anglophile, like the present Prime Minister, at Khatmandu, but which in different circumstances might lead to a reproduction in Nepal of the same
intrigues that preceded the Burnes' Mission in 1838, and that brought on the last Afghan War in 1878 to 1880." 96

To return, however, to Curzon's despatch. It has been quoted at considerable length because it remains one of the two most important documents in the history of Anglo-Tibetan relations of that period. It was also the most eloquent expression of Anglo-Indian opinion: all the memoranda, the Notes and the minutes of White, O'Connor, Kennion and a host of other kindred spirits; all the editorials of the Anglo-Indian Press found just reflection in its content and spirit; but the finished article - a State paper fit to rank with the finest - bore the unmistakable stamp of a superior hand, that of the Viceroy himself. In Curzon, the men of the Forward School on India's north eastern frontiers had at last found their greatest champion and their truest prophet.

The India Office received Curzon's despatch with some uneasiness. Sir Steuart Bayley, Chairman of its Political Committee, noted that the Viceroy had made no mention of the possible difficulties that might possibly confront the mission on its journey to Lhasa. The nature of the terrain, the immense altitude, were questions that had to be borne in mind. Curzon also seemed to assume that once in Lhasa all would proceed smoothly, and a satisfactory agreement be signed. But the Dalai Lama was almost certain to flee his capital. Should the British force set off after him in hot pursuit, or, should they help construct an alternative government? Curzon had disavowed any intention of establishing a protectorate, only insisting on the presence of a British Resident at Lhasa. Yet by the same token Russia could have a similar privilege and the powers would be back where they started.

96 Hamilton Papers, F.123/76, Curzon to Hamilton, 12 February, 1903.
Sir Steuert too was haunted by the memory of Afghanistan. "The possibility," he wrote, "of our Resident and escort suffering the fate of Cavagnari cannot be forced out of sight, and it seems only too possible that we should in the end be forced to declare a protectorate and maintain a garrison at Lhassa." However, in spite of these misgivings he expressed his support of Curzon's scheme because Russian influence once established at Lhasa "would be an intolerable menace and would be disastrous to our relations not only with Sikkim, which is of small importance, but with Nepal, which is of the very highest importance." 97

Lee-Warner repeated himself along previous lines. 98 For him Nepal had long been the heart of the matter; he still favoured the use of her representatives at Lhasa in the pursuit of Britain's diplomatic ends for he remained unenthusiastic at the possibility of an armed conflict.

Nor was Hamilton easier in mind. It was possible he thought, that there was some secret understanding between Russia and Tibet. To therefore wait and sit upon events was dangerous. Assuming the correctness of this, "Can we," he questioned, "establish a good international case for the action you suggest?" 99 It echoed the doubts of the Cabinet where, not surprisingly, Curzon's proposal was to find little favour. Nevertheless Hamilton did stand by the Viceroy. He attempted to marshal his forces by arranging a meeting on 19 February which included the Prime Minister, the Leader of the House of Lords and Chairman of the Public Defence Committee, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Lansdowne, and members of his council at the India Office, in order to discuss the whole question.
before it was finally put before the Cabinet.\textsuperscript{100}

The Secretary of State began the proceedings by pointing out,

"that our power in India was largely based on prestige, and that, if the Russian flag was established at Lhasa with a permanent agent, and it became known that all British efforts to open communications with the Lhasa authorities had been treated contumely and insult, a most unfortunate impression would be created throughout the northern part of India which he did not think could be counteracted by any subsequent action which we might take."\textsuperscript{101}

He emphasised the military advantages enjoyed by the British: "We had an overwhelming superiority of force in the locality, and all that we therefore required was backing up elsewhere by Imperial prestige and power."\textsuperscript{102} It was not want of effort on his own part that Hamilton failed to carry his colleagues for,

"They evidently, looking at Great Britain's interests in other parts of the world, were very reluctant to give their acquiescence to any movement which, even though it might succeed in the locality where it was initiated, would raise in other parts of the world international complications and embarrassments, or lead to Russia retaliating in other parts of Asia, where her influence and material forces are stronger than our own."\textsuperscript{103}

Indeed Balfour observed that as Tibet was part of the Chinese Empire the action proposed by Curzon would be widely interpreted abroad as an attack on the integrity of China.

If the Home Government placed a declining premium on the Russian threat, their reasons were not far to seek. Reporting on Witte's budget of 1902 from Petersburg Charles Hardinge noted serious weaknesses in Russia's economy and its acute dependence on the West European money market. The country would therefore be taking a considerable risk in involving itself in a premature war.\textsuperscript{104} It was

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Hardinge Papers, Volume 3, Memorandum on Witte's Budget of 1902 by C. Hardinge, 22 February, 1902.
an assessment that was well received by his superiors in London. "Lord Lansdowne," wrote Sir T. Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, "was relieved to hear your prognostications as to their requiring more money, for the condition of Russian finance is a very important element in calculating what we have to meet in the way of international complications."\(^{105}\)

At the end of the year the lingering fumes of suspicion still clouded relations between London and Petersburg, for Hardinge reported, in November that he was "quite certain that the Russian expedition to Thibet and their coquetting with a Thibetan mission here were not in pursuit of science or religion but of a practical and political object."\(^{106}\) Sanderson acknowledged that some hanky-panky was going on in that direction.

Lansdowne as Foreign Secretary pointed out for his part that the Russians had been asked to clarify their intentions on Tibet. To move before he had received their reply would be sharp practice. However, if it did emerge that Russia had an agreement under which she was empowered to send an agent to Lhasa the situation would be radically altered. But short of some gross insult offered to the British flag or to British honour, the general view was against precipitate action.\(^{107}\)

The way was now clear for Hamilton's despatch of 27 February, 1903. This was the second key document of the period; an able summary of the major arguments against Curzon. It accepted the strategic importance of Tibet for India's northern frontier, particularly on the crucial position of Nepal. It also agreed that

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105 Ibid, Sanderson to Hardinge, 12 March, 1902.
106 Ibid, Hardinge to Sanderson, 13 November, 1902.
107 Ibid, Sanderson to Hardinge, 19 November, 1902.
108 Curzon Papers, F.111/162, Hamilton to Curzon, 19 February, 1902.
the time had come to adopt stronger measures. But the Home Government could not agree to the sending of an armed mission to Lhasa, or to stationing a British Resident there. Such action might no doubt be justified had the matter concerned India and Tibet alone. This, however, was not the case for,

"The position of China, in its relations to the powers of Europe, has been so modified in recent years that it is necessary to take into account those altered conditions in deciding on action affecting what must still be regarded as a province of China. It is true, as stated in the 26th paragraph of Your Excellency's letter, that we have no desire either to declare a Protectorate or permanently to occupy any portion of the country. Measures of this kind might, however, become inevitable if we were once to find ourselves committed to armed intervention in Tibet, and it is almost certain that, were the British mission to encounter opposition, questions would be raised which would have to be considered, not as local ones concerning Tibet and India exclusively, but from an international point of view, as involving the status of a portion of the Chinese Empire. For these reasons His Majesty's Government think it necessary, before sanctioning a course which might be regarded as an attack on the integrity of the Chinese Empire, to be sure that such action can be justified by the previous action of Tibet and Russia, and they have accordingly come to the conclusion that it would be premature to adopt measures so likely to precipitate a crisis in the affairs of Tibet as those which Your Excellency has proposed." 109

Meanwhile the Russian Ambassador, Count Benckendorff, had called at the Foreign Office and made known his Government's concern at British action on the Sikkim-Tibet frontier. Lansdowne, in reply, pointed out that "the Chumbi Valley was immediately contiguous to the Indian frontier, and had been constantly used as a trade route between India and Tibet. There had been a dispute as to some boundary pillars erected in the neighbourhood, and we had been obliged to send an officer to insist on their re-erection." 110

Benckendorff expressed the view that exaggerated rumours were being spread in order to create ill-feeling between Russia and Great Britain but affirmed that his country had no political designs on Tibet. The Foreign Secretary on his part responded with much deliberation:

109 L/PS/7/151, No. 182, Hamilton to Curzon, 27 February, 1903.
110 L/PS/7/151, No. 182, Enclosure 2 in No. 5, Lansdowne to Scott, 11 February, 1903.
"I said that if I were to say that we had no desire to annex Tibetan territory, I should unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative, but was bound to be careful how I gave general assurances as to our future relations with Tibet, the import of which might hereafter be called in question."\[111\]

In another meeting with the Russian Ambassador, a week later, the Foreign Secretary remarked that the Government of India's interest in Tibet was of a special character.

"With a map of Central Asia before me I pointed out to His Excellency that Lhasa was within a comparatively short distance of the northern frontier of India. It was, on the other hand, considerably over 1000 miles distant from the Asiatic possessions of Russia, and any sudden display of Russian interest or activity in the regions immediately adjoining the possessions of Great Britain could scarcely fail to have a disturbing effect upon the population or to create the impression that British influence was receding and that of Russia making rapid advances into regions which had hitherto been regarded as altogether outside of her sphere of influence."\[112\]

Lansdowne told the Ambassador that trustworthy sources would have him believe that Russia had recently concluded agreements providing for the establishment of a protectorate over Tibet and for the stationing of consular officials at Lhasa. Benckendorff denied this vigorously but in order to satisfy the Foreign Secretary offered to have this denial officially confirmed by his Government. Lansdowne accepted, closing the meeting with a warning: "I went on to say," he said, "that, as we were much more closely interested than Russia in Tibet, it followed that, should there be any display of Russian activity in that country, we should be obliged to reply by a display of activity not only equivalent to, but exceeding that made by Russia. If they sent a mission or an expedition we should have to do the same, but in greater strength."\[113\]

111 Ibid
112 Ibid, Enclosure 3 in No. 5, Lansdowne to Scott, 18 February, 1903.
113 Ibid
While these discussions were in progress the Chinese official, Ho-Kwang-Si asked White on February 6th to meet him at the Tibetan frontier town of Yatung for talks on all outstanding frontier problems. The Home Government felt that India when expressing its readiness to commence negotiations should insist that a Tibetan with full powers be a party to these negotiations, and state that the time and place of such a conference was under the Viceroy’s consideration.

Curzon was later to give, in the pursuit of his own policy, an unexpected twist to this last suggestion, one that caused further unease and resentment among colleagues at home.

On 8 April 1903, Lansdowne informed Scott that Benckendorff had called at the Foreign Office having been instructed by his Government to officially deny reports of a Russian plot to send a mission or agents into Tibet. Lansdorf, the Russian Foreign Minister, expressed astonishment that these rumours were given credence by Whitehall. However, while making this disclaimer Benckendorff emphasised that his country could not remain indifferent to any change in the status quo of Tibet, which his Government regarded as being "a part of the Chinese Empire in the integrity of which they took an interest."114 Lansdowne, although reiterating that Britain had no intention of setting up a protectorate at Lhasa or permanently occupying any part of Tibet concluded by observing:

"that it seemed to me that in cases of this kind where an uncivilized country adjoined the possessions of a civilized power, it was inevitable that the latter should exercise a certain amount of local predominance. Such a predominance, as I had before explained to him, belonged to us in Tibet. But it did not follow from this that we had any design upon the independence of the country."115

114 Papers Relating to Tibet, Cd.Paper 1920 of 1904, Volume 67, No.83, Lansdowne to Scott, 8 April, 1903.
115 Ibid.
By the middle of April Curzon was ready to open negotiations with the Chinese. The Amban, Yu Tai, had accredited Ho-Kwang-Si and Captain Parr of the Imperial Customs Service as China's official representatives. They in turn informed the Viceroy that should Yatung be an unacceptable venue for the talks they were prepared to consider an alternative site. (It was a place in India that was uppermost in their minds.) The offer presented Curzon a heaven-sent opportunity which he seized with alacrity. It was the Home Government that had, in the first instance, asked him to reserve the right to consider the time and place for negotiations, though without foreseeing its consequences, and now the Chinese quite unsuspectingly were doing the same. "I propose accordingly," he remarked to the Secretary of State, "to invite the Amban to depute Chinese delegates who should be accompanied by a duly accredited Tibetan representative at Khambajong, which is the nearest inhabited place to the frontier in dispute, near Giagong. I propose that our representative, with an escort of 200 men, should proceed to that place while reinforcements are held in Sikkim, and that, should the Chinese and Tibetan representatives fail to appear, or should the former come without the latter, he should move forward to Shigatse or Gyantse, in order that the arrival of the deputation from Lhasa might be accelerated." 116

The die was cast. An incursion into Khambajong was to be the first step on the long road to Lhasa. Strong and masterful, the Viceroy had with considerable guile succeeded in presenting the Home Government with an apparent fait accompli.

116 Papers Relating to Tibet, Cd.1920 of 1904, Volume 67, No.86, Curzon to Hamilton, 16 April, 1903.
Hamilton approved the move to Khambajong but added that any further advance would require the Cabinet's sanction. Having got the bit between his teeth Curzon began raising his sights. He proposed in a telegram to the Secretary of State that negotiations should not be confined to frontier and grazing disputes but extend to "general and trade relations between India and Tibet with special reference to the duty on tea and to the 10 per cent duty levied at Phari on trade in transit." And since Yatung as a trade mart had proved unsatisfactory, Phari could hardly be expected to do better. However, Gyantse, which lay astride the main route from Shigatse and Lhasa should prove an admirable alternative. Nonetheless, to ensure that fair trading practices were being observed it would be desirable to station a British Resident at Lhasa, or if the Home Government disapproved, he would be stationed instead at Gyantse. There would be an insistence on direct communications between the British and the Tibetans with the threat to march on Lhasa kept in reserve, should the latter prove intractable.

"Further, it will be necessary to secure for British Indian subjects the same freedom of trade and travel in Tibet as is enjoyed by Kashmiris and Nepalese; and to insist that all British subjects duly authorised by us should be allowed to proceed by recognised routes to Gyantse, beyond which a pass would be required but in case of a request being preferred by the Government of India the pass should not be refused."118

The head of the mission was to be Major Francis Younghusband who would receive the temporary rank of Colonel and the official designation of Frontier Commissioner. Traveller, explorer, soldier and mystic, he shared with his chief an unshakeable belief in

117 L/PS/7/153, No.602, Curzon to Hamilton, 7 May, 1903.
118 Ibid.
Britain's manifold destiny in the East; like him he had an abiding suspicion of Russia and a stubborn dislike of France. In him the Viceroy found his perfect alter ego. Curzon recommended Younghusband on the ground that,

"He knows Orientals generally, and the Chinese in particular by heart, and he will be able to hold his own with continued firmness and good temper against the tortuous tactics with which he will no doubt be confronted."

The Secretary of State while expressing general support for Curzon's measures wanted to know whether the Viceroy had any proposals should the Tibetans refuse to accede to the Government of India's terms concerning Gyantse. His official telegram was necessarily laconic but he was more candid in his private letter. He pointed out that Benckendorff's official disclaimer of Russian intrigues concerning Lhasa meant that Russia had agreed to give Britain a free hand in Tibet provided it stopped short of a protectorate or annexation. The mood in London had since then changed markedly. "There is," remarked Hamilton, "very great reluctance here entertained, I am afraid, by the whole of the Council to the idea of our locating an agent at Lhasa, or making any forcible demonstration in the direction of that capital; and now that the rumoured advance of Russia is removed, I shall have great difficulty in inducing the Council to approve of any expedition or expenditure which under the Act may require their sanction."

What were the alternative courses of action to which Hamilton had referred? Curzon mentioned two, both of which he proceeded to dismiss. The first was to block the trade routes and exclude all Tibetans from British India. The second would entail an occupation of the Chumbi Valley. To institute a commercial blockade would be

119 Hamilton Papers, D.510/14, Curzon to Hamilton, 7 May, 1903.
120 Curzon Papers, F.111/162, Hamilton to Curzon, 15 May, 1903.
self-defeating, since it would hurt traders from British India as much as it would the Tibetans. The occupation of the Chumbi Valley would amount to an "armed advance of a minor degree." And with the apprehensions of the Cabinet running so high it was a course of action with little to commend it.

The Secretary of State in his telegram of 28 May 1903 made known the Cabinet's alarm at recent developments. While sanctioning the advance to Kambajong they asked to be kept informed of the progress of the negotiations. In their view the Russian bogy had been laid to rest thanks to the firm assurances given to the Foreign Office by the Russian Ambassador, while Indo-Tibetan commerce was not worth the candle.

Hamilton followed up his official telegram with a private letter in which he remarked sympathetically

"that this reluctance on the part of the Cabinet to acquiesce in your scheme for asserting our political influence in Tibet for the future on the foundation of extended trade operations will be annoying to you .... but, if they are frightened, their alarm as to our intentions is still an instrument which, if judiciously used, will enable you to extract a good deal from them. And should the Tibetans prove obstructive, and negotiations break down we must express our disapproval, and that disapproval can but take shape, with little inconvenience and certainly no risk of future complications, of either a blockade or of the occupation of the Chumbi Valley."

Being an enclave in British territory this could be effected without difficulty. Nor could it give Russia a pretext for further aggression in Manchuria. The Secretary of State was himself caught in a cleft stick. "The truth is, my dear George," he warned a couple of months later, "that, if there were two more of you in other parts of the

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122 Curzon Papers, F.111/162, Hamilton to Curzon, 28 May, 1903.
British Empire occupying big posts, the machine would not be manageable. You are a very big Proconsul in India, Milner is a big but a lesser Proconsul in South Africa. We let him push things to extremities, and we know the result; and although I quite admit that there are occasions on which we ought to risk everything for the attainment of our object, they are few and far between, and we cannot afford, looking to the dispersed nature of our interests, and to the manner in which we cross the aspirations of almost every great European Power, to adopt a truculent and intolerant tone upon every difference which may arise. At the same time I agree with you that it was a pity that the Cabinet did not allow you a free hand in Tibet.\footnote{Hamilton Papers, F.123/1, Hamilton to Curzon, 9 July, 1903.}

Hamilton's letter with its ambivalence of tone and content did nothing to iron out the difficulties between Curzon and the Home Government. A firm and irrevocable decision to proceed immediately to Gyantse or to Lhasa, or one that strictly forbade the Viceroy to move beyond the Sikkimese border, or at best no further than Khamtajong, would have saved a great deal of toil and much resentment on both sides. As it was the affair dragged on, allowing the seeds of a self-destructive controversy to bear fruit. By trying simultaneously to be true to two conflicting positions Hamilton merely widened the breach. Curzon took his advice very much to heart. Each step into Tibet was made to the accompaniment of a shrill chorus on the imminence of the Russian threat; the supply of Russian arms to Lhasa, the viciousness and cruelty of the monks (and remembering the Cabinet's previous reluctance to move
unless a gratuitous insult were offered to the British honour or to the British flag, the gaoling of two British subjects and the consequent loss of British prestige if the act were allowed to pass unpunished.

It was more like a tug of war, with the Cabinet giving way a little at a time to the ceaseless pressure of their imperious Viceroy.

The Government of India had in the meantime sent Younghusband his instructions. He was to try and secure as many commercial privileges as possible. He was to try to get the Tibetans to agree to a trade mart at Gyantse, first, because it lay astride the important route from Shigatse to Lhasa, and second, because it would enable the British to undermine the economic power of the Tomos of the Chumbi Valley whose main place of business was at Phari, and who enjoyed a monopoly of the carrying trade from the Chumbi Valley to Kalimpong. While the instructions were clear that Younghusband should not press for a Political Agent either at Gyantse or Lhasa, the Frontier Commissioner was to endeavour to get Regulations 1 and 2 of the 1893 Regulations applied to the former. As both these clauses were designed to ensure that the Indian Government could send their officers to watch over the conditions of trade at Yatung, it was now sought to transfer this right to Gyantse. It was also hoped that Article 6 of the 1890 Convention which allowed for free and direct communication between India and Lhasa could be revised so that a situation whereby a letter from the Viceroy to the Dalai Lama was returned unopened would never occur again.

124 L/PS/7/155, No.966, Enclosure 13, Government of India to Younghusband, 3 June, 1903.
Younghusband himself wrote a "Note on Russian Efforts to Reach Lhasa", in which he recounted how great explorers like Prejavalsky, Piotsof, Robarofsky and Kozloff had been turned back at the Tibetan frontier. However, the recent crop of visitors to and from Tibet were Mongolians.

"Now the Mongolian Lamas are very possibly and probably not officially accredited agents to the Chinese and Tibetan officials in the same way as I now am; and the Russian Government may officially be unaware of their very existence. At the same time it is not altogether impossible that they have been used by the Russian Government as a medium for preliminary informal communications with the Tibetans in much the same way as the Government of India have used the Bhutanese Vakil Ugyen Kazi."\(^{126}\)

Now, remembering the lack of success that attended Ugyen Kazi's efforts, one would have thought that the Frontier Commissioner had little to fear on this account but for the question of prestige which seemed to lurk behind every imperial problem. For even supposing that the Russians had no knowledge of or connection with these men, neither the Chinese nor the Tibetans would find this very credible after the Tsar's private audience at Livadia. The simple Tibetans would be taken in by exaggerated stories of Russian strength, which both they and their Chinese suzerains would believe could be used to "put pressure on us in a dispute over a small piece of ground several hundreds of miles nearer to Calcutta than this place Simla itself is! ... another feature of these transactions ... should not be passed without notice. It is the way in which these innocent geographers and pious pilgrims have sought the aid and protection not of the only European Power whose frontiers march with Tibet but of that Power with whom Russia is in alliance: and who is suspected of an intention to join hands with Russia north and south across Asia through Yunnan and Tibet just as she had tried to join hands with the same Power east and west across Africa through Fashoda and Abyssinia."\(^{127}\)

\(^{125}\) Ibid, No.920, Note on Russian Efforts to Reach Lhasa by Francis Younghusband, 3 June, 1903.

\(^{126}\) Ibid.

\(^{127}\) Ibid.
The British force led by J.C. White, and including Captain O'Connor, Major Bretherton and the military escort reached Kambajong on 7 July, 1903. The Tibetans and Chinese having failed in their pleas to the intruding force to stop and negotiate at the frontier now refused further discussions. To break this stalemate the Viceroy proposed yet another advance which he pressed the Home Government to sanction without delay or else, from November, climatic factors would intervene thus delaying the departure of the mission to the following Spring, "a delay most injurious to our prestige" and whose main result would be only to postpone, not solve the problem.

To the head of the Indian Foreign Department, H.S. Barnes, he voiced his deep fears:
"Nothing is being done with Tibet. They are obstructive and insolent to the last degree and not until we move forward will any progress be made. But will a tottering Home Government even commit themselves to this?"

In the middle of September 1903 a major Cabinet re-shuffle took place. Hamilton, who had worked well in harness with Curzon, was replaced by St. John Brodrick. The new Secretary of State for India had long been one of the Viceroy's closest friends; and in the light of the subsequent events that were to mar this friendship it is perhaps fair to recall Brodrick's warm congratulatory letter to Curzon on hearing of the latter's appointment as Viceroy to India:
"Except your wife I doubt if anyone would have been more distressed if it had not come to you .... I cannot doubt you will make your Viceroyalty memorable if not unique. You have knowledge, energy, talent and resolution in a degree I think never previously combined in the history of India."
But even while Brodrick was at the War Office there was the occasional hint of the dark shadows that were to come between them. Only a month before succeeding Hamilton, Curzon had occasion to complain at the cavalier way in which the War Office was treating the Indian Government who are ordered to do this or that as though they were the Board of Trade or Agriculture or some similar institution. Neither do you seem to set any count upon public opinion in India. Even the India Office does not realise that India is changing every day: that public opinion is educated and articulate and that the old tyrannies and jobs that used to be perpetuated at the expense of India are no longer capable of repetition.... Doubts are steadily building up in India viz that India is always to be treated from the selfish and Shylock point of view by the people at home and that it is to the Viceroy alone that she can look for defence of her interests. This puts the Viceroy into a position of quasi antagonism to the Government at home of which you are always telling me that he is a colleague though it is a strange sort of colleague that is only consulted after the decision has been taken.131

Brodrick defended himself from this reproach by pointing out that Curzon's advocacy of a vigorous external policy was not adequately backed up by Indian contributions to imperial defence, quoting in his own defence Lord Salisbury's remark: "Curzon always wants me to negotiate as if I had 200,000 men at my back."132 Curzon did not take kindly to this charge: "I protest against a policy of compromise and surrender all round our frontiers," he replied, "because I hold it to be both unnecessary and fatal. But while the policy of His Majesty's Government for its execution from 10,000 to 30,000 of the Indian Army, ever since I have been in India, I am not aware that I have ever asked you for a single man of the 200,000 of whom Lord Salisbury spoke. On the contrary I have given you the past 5 years of unbroken peace that you have had in India for 50 years.

131 Brodrick Papers, 50074, Curzon to Brodrick, 30 July, 1903.
132 Ibid, Brodrick to Curzon, 19 August, 1903.
"I have so far managed Tibet which appears to His Majesty's Government to be an enterprise of imposing dimensions with a force of 500 men and would undertake to get to Lhasa with 2000 - neither of operations which need strain the Empire to breaking point."\textsuperscript{133}

The battle lines were, however, more firmly drawn in Curzon's first official letter to the new Secretary of State for India, in which he dilated at some considerable length on respective positions of the Viceroy, the Secretary of State himself, the India Office in London and the Indian Administration.

"The Secretary of State is," he remarked, "in my opinion the constitutional ally of the Viceroy. They are the joint heads of the Indian Administration, which may fairly be described as a duumvirate, complete save for its geographical bifurcation."\textsuperscript{134} The India Council seemed to have excessive powers, hence it was necessary for the Secretary of State to use his tact and influence to keep these under close control.

"India looks to her official representative to be her champion and to fight her battles in the Cabinet. She expects him to be the Secretary of State for India in the strictest sense of the word. She pays his salary and that of everyone in the great office about him: and nothing causes warmer sentiment here than the idea that this huge and costly machinery is not always or exclusively devoted to her interests. Somebody once said that India would be lost on the floor of the House of Commons. I regard that prospect as much less imminent than it once was. In my opinion the two great dangers which British rule in India has to face, arise firstly from the racial pride and the undisciplined passions of the inferior class of Englishmen in the country, and secondly from the impression, should it ever gain substantial foothold in India, that injustice, neglect or indifference are shown to her cause by those who are governing her in London. It is better to make a stand for India and be beaten by your colleagues, than to make no stand at all."\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid, Curzon to Brodrick, 10 September, 1903.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid, Curzon to Brodrick, 2 October, 1903.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
These sentiments - which were to be aired once more before his day in India was finally done - were pregnant with such political and constitutional implications as were to draw the Viceroy into headlong conflict with the Home authorities; and it is only against this setting that their growing differences over Tibet achieve true proportion.

At first all went well between Brodrick and Curzon. The Secretary of State sanctioned the advance for which the Viceroy was seeking but only in the eventuality of negotiations with the Tibetans breaking down. Meanwhile, Satow in Peking had impressed on the Chinese the seriousness of the situation and was counselled to have patience. All would be well according to them once the new Amban had taken up his post at Lhasa. The British Ambassador was told that he had been held up at Chengtu for want of an escort with which to overawe the Tibetans. In the present situation there was little that China could do, in Satow's view, to bring her Dependency to heel. When it is remembered that the Amban's appointment had been announced in December 1902, and that in spite of the Chinese Government's previous assurance that he would be in the Tibetan capital by the following June he had still not arrived, it was hardly surprising that this latest expression of hope from Peking was greeted with scorn by Curzon.

The Viceroy, delighted at having got Brodrick's approval, expressed his warm satisfaction in a lengthy postscript to his letter of 2 October which he had delayed sending. The situation in Tibet was fairly simple. The ordinary people of the country were an amicable and inoffensive lot who had no objection to relations with the British;

"but they are ruled by an ignorant hierarchy of monks, whose
continued monopoly of all power and substance in the country
depends upon the exclusion of any alien influence. China
endows the principal monasteries and thereby keeps a hold on
the ruling clique. But she is absolutely without power or
authority in Tibet, and she is equally of any outside
shock, that might expose the hollowness of her alleged
suzerainty. I myself regard it as a mistake to have dealt
with Tibet through China at all, and I should have preferred
adhering to the policy which Lord Salisbury authorised when
I came out to India viz to ignore China and try and get at
the Dalai Lama."137

However, since the Home Government had decided to move in the matter
through Peking he welcomed their decision not to be duped by Chinese
dilatoriness. And should Russia weigh in with a protest she should
be given short shrift by Lansdowne, who could remind her Ambassador
of his Government's action in Manchuria. In any case the present
situation was of concern only to Britain, China, and Tibet, and the
present action was undertaken in defence of British rights.

"But the great point is to refrain from any admission that
Russia has the smallest right of interference in a matter
that concerns our frontier and is more than 1000 miles from
theirs."138

Towards the end of October Curzon was complaining at the
persistent obduracy of the Tibetans - the breakdown in communications
which the Secretary of State had previously stated could be regarded
as sufficient for a further advance into Tibet had arrived for

"They have turned back Nepalese Yaks on the frontier, and have
now put an end to all our trade with Tibet .... We wish to
represent the deplorable effect which would be produced by
our acceptance of this humiliating position, (1) upon the
Tibetans themselves, by whom our inactivity will be attributed
to cowardice; (2) upon Bhutan, (3) upon the Government of Nepal
who have given us loyal support and have collected 500 yaks,
ready for our use. Moreover, this policy will not obviate the
necessity for an advance ultimately which we shall be obliged
to carry out after a needless sacrifice of prestige and in
circumstances of increased difficulty. Gyantse in our opinion

137 Brodrick Papers, 50074, Curzon to Brodrick, 2 October, 1903.
138 Ibid.
"will give the best winter quarters of the Mission, as supplies and communication there are cheaper and easier than at Khambajong, which has to be reached by a difficult route over a lofty pass. The climate, too, is better. A withdrawal would have most unfortunate results now that preparations, which of course are known, have advanced so far."

From Khambajong Curzon had now set his sights on Gyantse; it was but one more step on the fateful road to Lhasa. The Home Government was under sustained pressure. Each telegram and despatch from India emphasised a different aspect of what was presented as an extremely grave situation. On one occasion the Tibetans were being drilled and armed by the Russians, on another, it was a case of prestige, on a third it was their scant regard for the usages of civilised conduct. It was to this theme that the Government of India now returned. In a despatch to the Secretary of State on 5 November, 1903, they observed that "the most conspicuous proof of the hostility of the Tibetan Government and of their contemneous disregard for the usage of civilization has been the arrest of two British subjects from Lechung at Shigatse, whence they have been deported to Lhasa, and, it is credibly asserted have been tortured and killed .... (but) .... The attitude of the Tibetan Government is in no respect shared by the Tibetan people. The latter, instead of being suspicious or hostile, are, on the contrary, well-disposed and cheerful. The officers of the Commission in their wanderings in the neighbourhood of the camp at Khambajong have everywhere been treated with courtesy by the people, and Colonel Younghusband has established most friendly relations with the abbots and monks of the great monastery of Tashi Lumpo .... All these parties concur in attributing the antagonism of the Tibetan Government to the ascendancy of the monks at Lhasa,

"who fear that the intrusion of any foreign influence will be the beginning of the end of their long reign and whose attitude is exclusively reactionary."140 And then as if with an eye to the officials of the India Office, it was emphasised that a repetition of past mistakes would "estrange the confidence of the Nepalese Durbar, who have sympathised with and loyally supported us on the present occasion."141 Faced with this veritable bombardment, the Secretary of State, in an official telegram,142 sanctioned the Mission's advance to Gyantse but was careful to point out this should not presage in any form an occupation or a permanent interference in Tibetan affairs. The purpose of the advance was to obtain satisfaction, and once that had been gained an immediate withdrawal should be effected.

But before this Brodrick in his letter of 29 October had fired a warning shot across Curzon's bows. While noting the latter's views on the constitutional and political role of the Secretary of State, the Viceroy and the India Council, Brodrick highlighted his difficulties with a Council and Cabinet that were not always in agreement with the Head of the Indian Government.

'The Cabinet,' wrote Brodrick, 'was most unfriendly to any advance into the Chumbi Valley, and will unquestionably want to know exactly where we are going to stop. Do not think I am adopting their comparison when I am explaining it. Lord Salisbury half a score of times in Africa stopped small expeditions. The moment he resigned, Cranborne rushed Lansdowne into the move into Somaliland which caused Swayne's disaster, and an expedition which has already amounted to

140 Ibid, No.129, Curzon to Brodrick, 5 November, 1903.
141 Ibid.
142 L/PS/7/158, No.1904, Brodrick to Curzon, 6 November, 1903.
£2,000,000. You will say, no doubt, that any comparison between these African troubles and the Tibet position is wholly inaccurate; but so you would also probably feel as to the diplomatic use which the Prime Minister and others think will be made of any movement on our part to "Manchurianise" Tibet.143 Neither the Council nor the Cabinet - barring one member - was ready to back the Government of India's forward policy.

The Secretary of State had correctly reflected the views of the Prime Minister who had written to him only the day before expressing deep reservations about developments in Tibet. The cost of the expedition would fall on India and hence did not immediately concern the Home Government.

"But I strongly deprecate permanent entanglements in Tibet, partly because I think we have as much on our hands as we can look after, partly because, if we "Manchurianise" what is technically a part of the Chinese Empire, we may greatly weaken our diplomacy in the Far East.

"Again, who can yet say what the results of the Russo-Japanese negotiations is going to be? If they break down, and if Japan goes to war, who is going to lay long odds that we are not at loggerheads with Russia within six months? In that event, I should have supposed that any complications in Tibet, even on the small scale suggested by the Viceroy, might prove exceedingly embarrassing .... The perennial difficulty of governing the Empire lies in the fact the rulers in its outlying positions have great local knowledge, but no responsibility and little thought for the general situation; and we at home are reluctant to over-rule people on the spot who say and often with truth that their policy is the only one which will save bloodshed and money in the long run.

"I suppose we must assent to George Curzon's suggestion .... but I do so reluctantly."144

The members of the India Council were equally sceptical.

Steuert Bayley in a minute observed:

143 Brodrick Papers, 50074, Brodrick to Curzon, 29 October, 1903.
144 Ibid, 50072, Balfour to Brodrick, 28 October, 1903.
"It seems to me too late to go back from the prescription given to the Government of India to prepare for an advance to Gyantse, but I think every endeavour should be made to prevent a further advance to Lhasa, and that Lord Curzon should be induced to content himself, if he can secure a treaty with a native (Buddhist) trade agent without an escort at Gyantse instead of an English resident at Lhasa."145

To Fitzpatrick, the needs of the situation, that is the saving of British honour and prestige, would be adequately met if the army marched hither and thither, thus demonstrating to the Tibetans that it had the power to do so. Of the Russian bogey, he was utterly sceptical. "It must be remembered," he commented, "that the rumours about Russia, which were the real origin of the present embarrassing position, being now admitted on all hands to be unfounded, what is at stake is really not worth much of a fuss. The trade is quite small and not likely to increase to any extent worth speaking of."146 As for the imprisonment of the two British subjects, such incidents were constantly occurring in frontier areas. Neither was the Lhasa Government's refusal to treat with the British on Tibetan soil impelled by any desire to insult the Viceroy, but merely by a desire to be left alone. The risk of further involvement in Tibet by a European agent with an escort of 80-100 men could result in another Cavagnari affair. Nor did he see much merit in emphasising the friendliness of ordinary Tibetans in contrast to the hostility of a handful of lamas; for the experience of the frontier told him that any forward move would meet with united opposition. There was a cutting edge to Fitzpatrick's concluding observation:

145 L/PS/7/158, No.1504, Bayley's Minute, 5 November, 1903.
146 Ibid, Fitzpatrick's Minute, 4 November, 1903.
"In dealing with questions of this sort we must always think of the day of trouble, which is bound to come sooner or later, and we must always remember that we have not, and can never have, an army sufficiently large to make us feel quite comfortable even as to the defence of all our existing responsibilities. Hence we must at all times give up the idea of doing things of a sort which we should otherwise think it desirable to do with a light heart. This of course is the most commonplace, but there are some people who needed to be reminded of it, and, much as I respect Lord Curzon, I feel he is one." 147

Mackay's comments were even more direct and pungent. "In the first place," he observed, "the trade with Tibet is scarcely worth any consideration and there is not the faintest prospect of it being worth anything to speak of even if free interchange of commodities were permitted. If therefore the idea is to make a demonstration in the Chumbi Valley and if necessary to march upon Lhasa with the object of forcing Thibet to carry out the commercial treaty made some years ago I say unhesitatingly that the game is not worth the candle.

"It is absolutely nonsense to speak of loss of prestige if we do not promptly force Thibet to send a commissioner to meet Younghusband without another month's delay. The Thibetans as the Viceroy points out in his telegram are quite ignorant of our power and resources - and we can afford to laugh at their ignorance. A man does not lose prestige if when a small boy cheats him on the street he does not run after him and box his ears .... In my humble judgement it would be a crime to make an invasion of Thibet because the people are averse to carrying out a commercial treaty which is not worth six pence so far as the trade it will bring is concerned, and if this is the only excuse which we have to offer for invading the country - for the retention of two British subjects is I fancy all moonshine - we shall be rightly

147 Ibid.
"charged with a deliberate act of aggression which will involve us in serious outlay, lead to the loss of much life and may have far-reaching consequences, without any possibility of advantage to anyone." 148

While Brodrick informed Curzon of the India Council's grave reservations, he particularly emphasised those of the Prime Minister himself. Balfour was worried at developments in the Far East. If Curzon's worst fears were confirmed, and Russia did send a consul to Lhasa, there was nothing to prevent Britain from doing likewise. Whereas if Britain moved first in that direction the Russians would expose her to great trouble with regard to Manchuria, and also insist on having their own man at the Tibetan capital. It was remembered how difficult it had been to keep the Russians from sending an agent to Kabul; there was a query as to whether Tibet was in danger of turning into another Afghanistan. 149

Curzon in reply emphasised that Russia was on the verge of establishing a veiled protectorate in Tibet and it was the current British intervention that had prevented a major political disaster. A Russian presence at Lhasa about which the Cabinet seemed so sanguine would be fraught with the most dangerous possibilities for India. Even if Russia were to keep a relatively small force of 1000 men in the Tibetan capital,

"should not we require to place a corresponding or larger number in Sikkim, and what would be the effect produced upon the entire peoples of Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, Upper Assam, and Bengal? .... I venture to assert that the presence of Russia's influence on the northern frontier (from which it is now fortunately severed by 1200-1500 miles) would increase by 50 per cent the already considerable difficulty of managing Bengal." 150

148 Ibid, Mackay's Minute, 4 November, 1903.
149 Brodrick Papers, 50075, Brodrick to Curzon, 6 November, 1903.
150 Ibid, Curzon to Brodrick, 1 December, 1903.
To the argument that British action might provoke Russia to encroach on Chinese territory, the Viceroy observed with an undertone of irony that he was unaware that Britain had done anything to provoke Russian expansion in Manchuria in the first instance. Moreover in view of her current pre-occupation with Japan she would hardly want to tangle with Britain.

Curzon accepted the Cabinet's anxiety that a British mission at Gyantse or Lhasa might produce a corresponding Russian demand,

"but I hope that it is one with which we should not comply, any more than Russia would comply with a request from us to place an officer at Khiva or Bokhara .... There are certain points of equality with Russia that we should not think of claiming in Mongolia or Manchuria, and the same ought to be the case the other way about in Tibet. Perhaps also the Cabinet, in considering the case of an Envoy at Lhasa, are alarmed at the memories of Kabul. But Lhasa is not in Afghanistan; and Tibetan Lamas are not Pathans. However, I have no desire, unless driven to it by the Russians, to have a British Resident at Lhasa, or to entangle ourselves in the politics of Tibet. I have only two objects - to keep the Russians out .... and to secure that our future trade relations with the Tibetans are unhampered. I think that for this purpose we shall require some sort of representative at Gyantse, just as we at present have the right to place such a man at Yatung."151

Such then were the respective views of the Viceroy, and the leading members of the Home Government; differences that were in time to prove unbridgeable. Indeed by the end of 1903 the Home Government was determined to achieve an understanding with Russia and on 1 January 1904 an outline of an agreement between the two Powers was placed before the Cabinet. Afghanistan and Tibet on account of their geographical position were to be in the British sphere of influence, while Persia would be divided into two Zones, Russia to predominate in the north and Britain in the south. Britain also undertook to recognize Russia's special rights as a limitrophe power in Manchuria, particularly

151 Ibid.
in the Manchurian railway while in return British treaty rights in all parts of China were to be respected and British trade was to receive equal treatment with those of other Powers.\footnote{152}

The Anglo-Indian Press were generally behind the Indian Government. The "\textit{Englishman's Overland Mail}" in its editorial titled "Forward" expressed the view that the best way to bring the Tibetans to heel was to insist upon having a British Resident at Lhasa. The stakes were extremely high for a Russian presence in Tibet would not only be severely detrimental to Britain's trade prospects in the Himalayas, but would weaken her strategic strength resulting in enormous increases in military estimates.

"We would perforce be obliged to maintain in Bengal an army of the size we have in the Punjab. And all to avoid, now, a little expenditure of money and energy which would, later, repay us tenfold both in trade and prestige."\footnote{153}

A fortnight later the same paper noted that Russia balked at the prospect of a conflict with Britain over Afghanistan, and would certainly be less inclined to fight over Tibet.

However, there was also the position of China whose suzerainty over Tibet Britain had recognised in 1888. Peking was also adept at playing off one power against another: this and the fact that India was fast being drawn into the vortex of European politics meant

"a projected movement into Tibet needs the previous exercise of every high quality of statesmanship. The matter is as much one for the statesman as for the soldier."\footnote{154}

Meanwhile the Chinese Minister in London had informed Lansdowne that the two British subjects (Sikkimese in actual fact) over whose imprisonment the Government of India had taken such umbrage were alive and well, and orders had gone out for their immediate release.

\footnote{152}Cabinet Records, Cab.37/68/1, Proposed Agreement with Russia, 1 January, 1904.
\footnote{153}Englishman's Overland Mail, Calcutta, 5 November, 1903, p.3. See also the \textit{Pioneer Mail}, Lucknow, 20 November, 1903, p.3.
\footnote{154}Englishman's Overland Mail, 19 November, 1903, p.5.
Moreover, as the Amban in company with a Tibetan representative, whose appointment was approved by the Dalai Lama, was proceeding to Yatung, there to meet with the British, the Chinese hoped that under these circumstances Younghusband would make no further move. Such wishes were of no avail for General Macdonald had arrived at Phari with a column of infantry and much needed supplies by the end of December.

In the middle of January Younghusband had set up camp at Tuna a short march from Guru where he came face to face with the Lhasa and Shigatese Generals. The Tibetans insisted that he return to Yatung where all outstanding issues could be discussed and settled. And in answer to the British Commissioner's question about their reported dealings with Russia,

"The Generals assured me that it was untrue that they had dealings with the Russians, and the monk brusquely intimated that they disliked them just as much as they did us. They protested that they had nothing to do with the Russians; that there was no Russian near Lhasa at the present time; and that Dorjieff was a Mongolian, and the custom of Mongolians was to make large presents to the monasteries; and they asked me not to be so suspicious."155

Younghusband summed up the situation as follows: the military strength of the Tibetans was contemptible; that their lay officials were less unfriendly to the British and more aware of British strength; and that the only real obstacle before the mission was the priestly influence of the senior monks.

Towards the end of February (1904) he solicited the mediation of the Bhutanese envoy - the Tinpuk Jongpen - not in real hope of success but because "the fact of his attempting to mediate might be

"the means of bringing the Bhutanese into closer relations with us."156

The Lhasa delegates complained bitterly to the Bhutanese about the behaviour of the British, expressing doubts about their reported desire for a settlement. When Younghusband was asked where his Government wanted a trade mart, he stated in reply that they had yet to make up their mind.157 This was less than the truth, for the Home Government in response to the pleas of India, had agreed that the Tibetans be asked to concede Gyantse. Could it be that the Commissioner's feigned ignorance was a ploy to buy the necessary time during which he and Curzon pressured the authorities in London to sanction the advance to Lhasa?

Meanwhile by the middle of March the British were preparing to move to Gyantse but the Tibetan force at Guru barred their way. The confrontation took place on 31 March 1904. Brigadier-General Macdonald, commander of the mission's military escort whose relations with Younghusband remained singularly difficult and unhappy throughout the course of this expedition, wished to commence firing immediately. The Frontier Commissioner, however, stayed his hand. He first asked the Tibetans to lay down their arms. Getting no response he ordered the British troops to advance on the mud fortifications behind which the Tibetans had taken up positions and eject them peacefully - which they proceeded to do

"in silence, and with something of the good-humoured severity that London policemen display on Boat Race Night .... At this point it looked as if the fantastic and perilous encounter had produced an absurd situation, but nothing worse. Officers were busy taking snapshots. Candler dismounted and, resting a notebook on his saddle, scribbled a short despatch

156 Ibid, No.47, Younghusband to India, 22 February, 1904.
157 Ibid.
"to the Daily Mail reporting a bloodless victory; Younghusband wrote a similar message to the Government of India and an orderly set off at full gallop for the end of the telegraph-line."\textsuperscript{158}

The Tibetans had now to be disarmed; but "to disarm men," as Peter Fleming remarked, "without mutual agreement is possible only when they recognise that they have no alternative but to lay down their weapons. The Tibetan army had no alternative but did not recognise that fact. It had never seen a machine-gun before; it understood only dimly how frightful was the menace of the Lee Metfords trained silently on the confined space, roughly an acre in extent, in which it was corralled; and the superstitious peasants in its ranks were sustained by a sort of half-faith in the charms, spells and other mumbo-jumbo which were supposed to render them invulnerable. They were in a death-trap, but they did not know it."\textsuperscript{159}

The Tibetans vigorously resisted all efforts to disarm them. Tension mounted. "It was a ridiculous position," observed Candler, the Daily Mail correspondent, "Sikh and Mongol swaying backwards as they wrestled for the possession of swords and matchlocks."\textsuperscript{160} In the melee a Sikh tried to bar the way of the Lhasa General astride on his pony and was shot through the jaw.

There was instant firing. Volley upon volley was discharged into the massed ranks of Tibetans. The slaughter was little short of frightful. Of a total force of 1500 the Tibetans in a matter of minutes had lost between 600-700 men, including the Lhasa General. The British force suffered a dozen casualties, none of them fatal. But the massacre left a deep and abiding impression. A young subaltern, Hadow by name, wrote home to his mother that night:

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid, p.150.
\textsuperscript{160} E. Candler, \textit{The Unveiling of Lhasa}, London, 1905, p.139.
"I got so sick of the slaughter that I ceased fire, though the General's order was to make as big a bag as possible. ... I hope I shall never have to shoot down men walking away again." 161

His other compatriots were equally shaken, not least Francis Younghusband himself who said:

"I was so absolutely sick at that so-called fight I was quite out of sorts." 162

This result was in a sense inevitable, given the fact that the Tibetans regarded the British as an invading force whom they were determined to resist yet against whom they had nothing to offer but rusty matchlocks and broad swords.

But it was Candler's final observation that gave most food for thought:

"The Tibetans we are told, are not patriots. Politicians say that they want us in their country, that they are priest-ridden, and hate and fear the Lamas. What, then, drove them on? It was certainly not fear. No people on earth have shown a greater contempt for death." 163

Brodrick hoped that this encounter would have taught the Tibetans a salutary lesson and General Macdonald may have thought likewise as otherwise the carnage he inflicted on them became less justifiable.

Such at any rate was Curzon's view. 164 The recalcitrant authorities at Lhasa, however, showed no signs of unbending, and the British Mission having reached Gyantse seemed destined for an indefinite stay. The Chinese Amban had come out to meet it there but as usual seemed quite powerless to influence the Tibetans. One significant sign of hope for the British was that the dark memories of Guru, which had seemed to gather to itself the deepest currents of popular hatred, appeared to be

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164 Brodrick Papers, 50076, Curzon to Brodrick, 20 April, 1904.
lifting. The scene near the Mission's camp was little short of remarkable: British officers and soldiers, Sikhs, Gurkhas, Bhutias, all bargaining amicably with their foes of a fortnight ago. Vegetables, eggs, condiments, watches, cigarettes, carpets, trinkets, cooking utensils and even penny whistles kept changing hands. The Tibetans appeared to be born traders and were sending messages to Phari for more goods from India. Now was the psychological moment to strike. A march to Lhasa would be quick and effective. "By carrying the Amban with me," telegraphed Younghusband, "I could manage this advance without further fighting or, at any rate without a serious collision. Our prestige is now at its height; Nepal and Bhutan are with us; the people are not against us; the soldiers do not want to fight; the Lamas are stunned; the Dalai Lama is prepared to fly, and the Russians are engaged elsewhere."  

The Home Government had in the meantime brought out the first Tibetan Blue Book and although it made its appearance at a most opportune moment when feeling in England was running high against Russia, there was a noticeable unease at the developing situation in Parliament. Lord Reay in the House of Lords was unimpressed by the Russian bogey, or by the prospects for Tibetan trade. The timing of events could not have come at a more unfortunate moment, for Britain and Russia had just agreed to enter into amicable discussions on their mutual relations, and the Younghusband Expedition was bound to arouse the mistrust of the Russian Government.

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166 L/PS/7/163, No. 803, Younghusband to India, 22 April, 1904.
167 Parliamentary Debates, 4th Series, Volume 130, 26 February, 1904, Column 1110.
Lord Reay also took issue with Curzon on the latter's dismissal of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet as a "constitutional fiction"; it struck him "as an extremely impolitic suggestion .... when we realise what suzerainty means to us in India."\(^{168}\)

Lord Ripon spoke in similar vein. No power, he said, would be foolish enough to contemplate invading India through Tibet. Similarly, it would be unwise to attempt to extend India's frontiers in a northerly direction. His advice to the Government was to stay behind the great Himalayan wall.

Nor was Ripon impressed by the charge that the Tibetans were hampering trade. While he accepted that the value of this trade, though currently of little account, might develop in the future, he was against any "attempt to do it by the agency of force."\(^{169}\)

To Lord Rosebery, "the first hundred pages or something like that, of this Blue-book are devoted entirely to the ambition of the Indian Government to impose the drinking of Indian tea on a people which prefer Chinese tea."\(^{170}\)

Meanwhile, Sir Henry Cotton, a former Chief Secretary of the Bengal Government, who had once railed against the obduracy of the Tibetans and the deviousness of the Chinese, in his new position as President of the Indian National Congress was full of biting scorn for the Government of India to which he gave vent in a series of letters to The Times. His stricture on Curzon for having attacked a country whose

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\(^{168}\) Reay was presumably meaning Britain's constitutional position vis-à-vis the Princely States; and the same point seems to have occurred to Younghusband. Witness his remark: "Tibet is a protected Chinese State; Kashmir is a protected Indian State." F.E. Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, London, 1910, p.323. This analogy was nothing more than a piece of legal pedantry. It was historically absurd and politically dangerous.

\(^{169}\) *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th Series, Volume 130, 26 February, 1904, Column 1131.

\(^{170}\) Ibid.
only desire was to be left alone was not entirely unfair though
perhaps over simplified. His dismissal of the Times Correspondent's
fanciful account of Dorjieff's sinister influence at Lhasa was telling. But his defence of Chinese suzerainty in Tibet was not only little short of absurd; it was, in view of his previous knowledge of the situation as an important civil servant in India, plainly hypocritical. "The truth is," he remarked, "that their suzerainty was no fiction deliberately shattered by the policy of Curzon's Government. It is the present expedition that has destroyed Chinese power and influence and dealt a deadly blow at the integrity and independence of China, which His Majesty's Ministers have professed themselves so anxious to maintain."

Nothing could have been more ironical, in the light of what was to follow in the next six years than this last sentence of Sir Henry's letter. The Times in its editorial of the same issue had little trouble in rebutting Colston's charges - which it proceeded to do with contemptuous ease.

"It is not the policy of Lord Curzon that has undermined Chinese suzerainty; it is the policy of Lhasa itself .... It is because what may be called the national party is in the ascendant, and finds the first and most obvious step towards the Home Rule which it desires in the cessation of the regency necessitated by the existence of a child Dalai Lama. The regency meant that China confirmed, or withheld confirmation, from his appointment. The Lamas have made up their minds to get rid of this badge of dependence upon the Middle Kingdom, and it is really too much to saddle the Viceroy with responsibility for their proceedings."
This controversy in the Press and Parliament did emphasise a genuine undercurrent of public concern; the deep scars left by the Boer War had yet to heal, while the complications in the Far East caused by Japan's conflict with Russia were giving rise to much doubt and uncertainty: what was lacking, however, was any true understanding of the wider implications of the Tibetan affair; hence although there was much declamatory rhetoric against Curzon, there was a conspicuous absence of weight in the arguments made against him. But public opinion expressed through such institutions as there are, even when wholly or partially wrong in its appreciation of a particular policy of state, is nevertheless central to the eventual outcome concerning its adoption or rejection. It is the very stuff of democratic life. For while the absence of popular debate may seem to lend strength to the state, it only does so at the heavy cost of weakening the moral fabric of society. It was in their lack of appreciation of these vital political processes that Curzon and his camp followers in India displayed their greatest weakness.

At the end of April (1904) Curzon left India on furlough. His relations with his colleagues in England had been steadily deteriorating, it was felt on both sides that personal conversations in London might dissipate much of the acrimony and bitterness that were increasingly coming to mar old friendships.

Before he left, the Viceroy in a telegram recommended the occupation of the Chumbi Valley on the ground that it was on the southern side of the Himalayan watershed and that its inhabitants were hostile to the other inhabitants of Tibet. Britain's political influence in Tibet...
had both to be exclusive and supreme. If such an objective could be secured without a protectorate, the latter could be readily dispensed with; if not, Britain would be driven to it. The answer lay in the hands of Russia, whose complete desistance from political, commercial, diplomatic, or religious interference would relieve the Indian Government from the necessity of establishing such a protectorate, whereas resumption of secret embassies, negotiations and intrigues would compel it. It was most unlikely that the Home Government in their current mood would accept the course of action proposed by the Viceroy, confirmation of which was duly contained in Brodrick's private letter to Curzon on the latter's arrival in England. He was told that orders had gone out for the advance into Tibet to continue if satisfactory negotiations had not commenced within a month but was warned that in view of his cherished belief that Gyantse was merely a step on the way to Lhasa,

"the advance will, therefore, be more palatable to you than it is to us, for however inevitable it may be, I hardly think you can realise how little appetite there is in England at this moment for another little war of any description .... However there is nothing to do but to go on, and we are taking steps accordingly."177

The Secretary of State's tone was one of sullen acceptance; and it boded ill for Curzon.

Meanwhile in India Ampthill had become the Acting Viceroy. Of a more pliable disposition he kept in regular step with the wishes of the Home Government. No sooner had he taken charge than he informed Younghusband that London was "very much against an advance to Lhasa in view of the public pledges and the vital importance of averting a

177 Brodrick Papers, 50076, Brodrick to Curzon, 14 May, 1904.
"quarrel with Russia, and the Secretary of State, telegraphing to me yesterday, directed me to give you a hint against undue precipitancy. He said that he had noted throughout your telegrams, all of which had been repeated to him verbally, a distinct eagerness for a further advance, which I gather has caused the Cabinet some apprehension." 178

The Home Government had commenced delicate negotiations with the Russians in May with a view to reaching an understanding on such outstanding issues as had divided them for so long. As a first step Lansdowne hoped that Russia would adhere to the Anglo-French Khedivial Decree in return for which the British Government promised to stand by the terms of the Secretary of State's telegram of 6 November 1903 to the Government of India concerning Tibet, the gist of which sanctioned an advance in Tibet strictly on the understanding that its purpose was to get satisfaction; and that no protectorate, occupation or entanglement in that country was to be countenanced. 179 The Russians accepted the Khedivial Decree so from now on the Home Government became doubly cautious about Tibet, afraid that precipitate action there might upset this new understanding, and also the greater prize of a more comprehensive agreement to follow, once the Russo-Japanese War was safely behind them.

All this time Younghusband chafed and fretted at Gyantse; the expeditionary force had fought two further engagements, one of which was on the forbidding heights of Karola, some 17,000 feet above sea level, and surely the time had now come for the Government of India to permit the final advance to Lhasa. The Acting Viceroy soon brought him

178 Ampthill Papers, E 233/34, Part I, Ampthill to Younghusband, 2 May, 1904.
179 FO 17/1749, Lansdowne to Spring-Rice, 5 May, 1904.
180 Ibid, Hardinge to Lansdowne, 18 May, 1904.
sharply to heel. The Commissioner was in a tartly worded telegram and in no uncertain terms that while he was free to express his opinions these should be couched within the framework of the Home Government's policies. 181

In a private letter Ampthill explained the Cabinet's current pre-occupation with almost patronizing deliberation as if to a simple-minded underling. Younghusband's difficulties with the Tibetans were appreciated but "the Government of India, however, have to take a wider view of the situation and to take into consideration such matters as finance, the position of other frontiers, and public opinion. The Home Government have to take a still wider view for, isolated though Tibet may seem to be to those who are cooped up in its inhospitable valleys, that which we are doing in Tibet closely affects our political relations with all the Great Powers ....

"Now the principal object which His Majesty's Government have at heart is to complete the great and important treaty which they have just negotiated with France. To do so it is necessary to persuade all the Great Powers to assent to the arrangements which are proposed in respect of Egypt. Russia makes the consent of her assent an undertaking on the part of Great Britain not to intervene permanently in Tibetan affairs and she thinks not unnaturally though without any real justifications, that we are taking advantage of her present troubles to extend our frontiers towards her own dominions .... nothing could be more disastrous to the peace of the world than that Russian dislike and resentment against us should be increased at the present time. It is important to diminish it and hence the policy of His Majesty's Government. That policy may result in the failure of the Tibet Mission but even that is better than the certain prospect of a war with Russia from the point of view of the whole British Empire." 182

The Acting Viceroy, however, explained his general dilemma to Sir Hugh Barnes, the Indian Foreign Secretary, very succinctly:

181 L/PS/7/165, No.1214, India to Younghusband, 14 June, 1904.
182 Ampthill Papers, E 233/34, Part I, Ampthill to Younghusband, 13 June, 1904.
"The Tibetan question is assuming a very ugly shape and we are now placed in the following dilemma - either to let the Mission prove fruitless and thus incur much odium and ridicule or else to resort to the permanent intervention in Tibetan affairs which alone can ensure the success of the Mission but which will sow a harvest of incalculable future trouble in the shape of Russian resentment, and increased responsibilities."183

Ampthill's personal dilemma became increasingly acute as he was only temporarily in charge. Small wonder that in writing to Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, he complained that

'My position between the Home Government, the Mission, Lord Curzon and a number of other forces which are at work is like that of the man at the switchboard of a vast electrical power establishment; if I turn the wrong switch and make a mistake about the current I may see some great "dynamo" fused in an instant or get blown up myself.'184

In the meantime the continuing stalemate at Gyantse meant that the Home Government had to give serious thought to the possibility of an advance to Lhasa. Brodrick drew up a set of instructions for Younghusband, in case the latter was called upon to negotiate in the Tibetan capital, which were as follows:

1. No British Resident to be demanded at Lhasa or elsewhere.
2. The Tibetans and Chinese were required to agree that no portion of Tibetan territory would be ceded to any foreign power and that no such power would be permitted to interfere in Tibetan affairs.
3. The two Lachung men were to be released and a suitable reparation demanded in case of ill treatment.
4. All fortified positions accessible from the point reached by the Mission and the frontier to be razed.
5. A trade mart was to be established at Gyantse, in addition to the one at Yatung, and under similar provisions to those existing at

183 Barnes Collection, Microfilm Reel No.603, Ampthill to Barnes, 19 June, 1904.
184 Ampthill Papers, E 233/34, Part I, Ampthill to Fraser, 10 July, 1904.
The latter. British and Tibetan agents were to have access to it. The Tibetan Trade Agent was empowered to receive letters from his British counterpart and to be responsible for forwarding them where necessary to the Tibetan and Chinese authorities at Lhasa and transmitting their replies.

(6) The boundary pillars at the Sikkim frontier pulled down by the Tibetans to be rebuilt by them.

(7) Trade and customs agreements should be drawn up on the general lines of the old convention.

(8) The Chumbi Valley was to be occupied as security for the payment of the indemnity and for the fulfilment of provisions regarding the trade marts.

It was moreover emphasised that the indemnity should not exceed the power and capacity of the Tibetans to pay, the payment if necessary to be made over three years. 185

Curzon, who was still on home leave, immediately wrote a letter of protest to the Secretary of State. 186 Without a British Resident in Tibet the agreement would be robbed of much of its value. He was for the freedom of trade all round since limiting it to one or two specific routes could lead to its strangulation. He was afraid that Russia might return by securing mining and commercial rights, since there was no adequate safeguard in the proposed treaty against such an eventuality. However, Curzon sensed with some considerable bitterness that as he had failed to carry the Home Government with him his latest recommendations would carry little weight. The Acting Viceroy had, however, previously suggested the addition of two clauses;
that would bar Tibet from granting commercial, mining or road and telegraph concessions to any foreign power without the previous consent of the British, and that Lhasa should undertake not to pledge its revenues to any external authority; secondly, that another trade mart be opened at Gartok, so that the commerce of Western Tibet and the regions contiguous to it in British India would in no way suffer. These amendments were to be eventually incorporated into the text of the final agreement between Britain and Tibet.

The permission to advance to Lhasa having been given in the face of the continuing Tibetan refusal to negotiate, Younghusband arrived at the Forbidden City on 3 August, 1904. The Dalai Lama had fled leaving the seals of his office with the Regent. The Chinese Amban called on the British Commissioner and promised all help in effecting a speedy settlement. Close on his heels came the Nepalese representative to pay his respects, while the Tongsa Penlop of Bhutan remained with the Mission as their guest.

For Younghusband, and indeed, for Curzon, it was a dream come true. They had both firmly believed that meaningful negotiations with Tibet could only be held in Lhasa; for a display of British power here would create a lasting impression.

The Frontier Commissioner was the first European to enter Lhasa since Péres Huc and Gabet in 1846 and the first Englishman since Manning in 1811. But of the city, save for the magnificent stone structure of the Potala, or its monkish inhabitants neither he nor his companions held any great opinion. Mystic though he was Tibetan Buddhism held no special charms for him.

While in Lhasa a copy of the Secretary of State's despatch of
5 August arrived. It reminded the members of the Indian Government
of the principles enunciated in Lord George Hamilton's despatch of
27 February 1903, that India's foreign relations had European
implications, and so frontier problems could no longer, as in times
gone by, be regarded as purely local issues. The wider interests of
the Empire had to be kept constantly in view. It was a repetition of
the sage advice already given to the Frontier Commissioner by Ampthill,
but of which Younghusband thought little as he was to make clear in
his book written six years later. 'I knew,' he complained, 'about the
"international relations" and the "wider view," for copies of all the
important despatches to our Ambassadors were sent to me. But there
were dozens and scores of men to represent those "wider" views, which
need not, as is so often imagined, be wiser simply because they are
wider, whereas there was only one person, and that was myself, to
represent the narrower view, but which because it was local, need not
be inferior or less important.'

To return however to Brodrick's instructions: this included a
final paragraph on the question of an indemnity. In view of the bitter
controversy that was to arise later, and the charges of insubordination
that were to be laid against Younghusband, it is as well to quote the
Secretary of State's own words:

"As regards the amount of the indemnity, our ignorance of the
resources of the country makes it impossible to speak with any
certainty. The question, in the circumstances, must be left
to the discretion of Colonel Younghusband. The condition that
the amount should be one which it is estimated can be paid in
three years, indicates the intention of His Majesty's Government
that the sum to be demanded should constitute an adequate...

188 Further Papers Relating to Tibet, Cd.Paper 2370 of 1905, Volume 58,
Part I, No.
pecuniary penalty, but not be such as to be beyond the powers of the Tibetans by making a sufficient effort, to discharge within the period named."

The Lhasa Convention between Britain and Tibet was signed on 7 September 1904. Although the Amban's role in achieving this settlement was acknowledged by Younghusband, the final document lacked a Chinese signature. And as it was British policy to accept Peking's suzerainty over Tibet the absence of an official Chinese seal was one of the treaty's fundamental weaknesses.

Article 9, which incorporated the Government of India's recommendation was as follows:

"The Government of Tibet engages that, without the previous consent of the British Government -

(a) no portion of Tibetan territory shall be ceded, sold, leased mortgaged or otherwise given for occupation, to any foreign Power;

(b) no such Power shall be permitted to intervene in Tibetan affairs;

(c) no Representative or Agents of any Foreign Power shall be admitted to Tibet;

(d) no concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights, shall be granted to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power." 190A

Did the aforementioned "Foreign Power" include China? Further negotiations were required before the matter was resolved to the mutual satisfaction of Britain and China.

Article 6 stipulated that an indemnity of Rs.75 lakhs (£500,000) was to be paid in seventy five annual instalments beginning on 1 January 1906 during which time Britain was to retain possession of the Chumbi Valley. This was to be drastically modified by the Home Government to Rs.25 lakhs, to be paid in three annual instalments.

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after which the Chumbi Valley would be returned to Lhasa's administrative control, for it was felt in London that both the amount of money and the period of occupation was unduly excessive. Lansdowne in particular made his views known with great emphasis.

What brought even more odium on Younghusband was the special article that was attached to the treaty, only to be repudiated and expunged from the official copy by the Home Government. It was however reproduced in Younghusband's own book on the subject and ran thus:

"The Government of India agrees to permit the British agent, who will reside at Gyantse, to watch the conditions of British trade, to visit Lhasa, when it is necessary, to consult with high Chinese and Tibetan officials on such commercial matters of importance as he has found impossible to settle at Gyantse by correspondence or by personal conference with the Tibetan agent." 191

From St. Petersburg Charles Hardinge viewed the British entry into Lhasa with some misgiving. The Russians had taken the event pretty well in spite of being convinced that Britain had taken advantage of her current pre-occupation with the war against Japan. For the sake of preserving the understanding already achieved between the British and Russian Governments a withdrawal from the Tibetan capital had to be speedily effected. Lansdowne was able to reassure him that Mission would soon be on its way home.

It was, however, the publication of the Lhasa Convention with its controversial 9th Article, and its provision for a British occupation of the Chumbi Valley which drew Hardinge's real broadside.

"I hope that you will not think me unduly sensitive upon this question," he wrote to the Foreign Secretary, "but it may be that in my position here I see more clearly that the officials at the India Office perhaps

"see the real dangers which may result from the very strictest
fulfilment of our pledges to Russia as regards Thibet .... it seems
to me that the occupation of the Chumbi Valley, though nominally for
three years, is a dangerous measure likely through force of
circumstances to become permanent and to finally resolve itself into
annexation .... and although I may be shortsighted I do not see that
the occupation presents any material advantage to us .... I feel so
strongly the transcendental importance of adhering to the very
strictest interpretation of our assurances to the Russian Government,
and that any deviation on our part will give them a handle which they
will be able to seize and to cause endless trouble by ignoring their
engagements to us in Persia and Afghanistan. I do not say that they
will not do this in any case, but the faithful execution of our
promises now will make our position then so much the stronger."  

Lansdowne shared Hardinge's fears. "I am not surprised," he
replied, "that this Tibetan affair should have exercised your mind. I
have been much perturbed about it. Younghusband seems to have taken
the bit between his teeth, and we are placed in a very embarrassing
situation." However, he assured him that the term "foreign Powers"
mentioned in Article 9 of the Lhasa Convention included Britain; and
that Younghusband's indemnity would be drastically reduced as would
the occupation of the Chumbi Valley from 75 to 3 years. Having
journeyed to Lhasa in search of reparation the British Government could
hardly ask for less.

192 Lansdowne Papers, FO 800/141, Hardinge to Lansdowne, 27 September, 1904.
193 Ibid, Lansdowne to Hardinge, 4 October, 1904.
But Britain had not only Russian susceptibilities to take into account. The American Tibetologist, W.W. Rockhill, who was Secretary of State Hay's adviser on Chinese affairs expressed his Government's disquiet to Satow. "... the mission to Tibet was a most unfortunate step which will inevitably result in impairing Chinese prestige, control and sovereignty over what we all hold to be an integral part of the Chinese Empire, and may be later on used by some other Power as a valid precedent for territorial acquisition in China. Then again we think the reasons given for this "war with Tibet" quite insufficient, the interests of trade unimportant and the danger from Russia, in that quarter at least, too small to justify the means adopted by the Indian Government."194

Lansdowne evinced surprise at the strength of American feeling on the subject; only now did he fully appreciate the significance of the United States Ambassador Choate's enquiry "whether what we were doing affected the rights of China in Tibet."195 The publication of the terms of the Tibetan Settlement, the Foreign Secretary hoped, would help allay American suspicions, although he accepted that Younghusband's heavy indemnity coupled especially with the projected 75 year British occupation of the Chumbi Valley were unlikely to dispel such fears easily.

Having got to Lhasa, Younghusband sought permission to remain there through the winter in order to win the confidence of the Tibetans; to consolidate the gains already won. The Government of India, mindful of their instructions, naturally refused, and with the cold weather fast approaching, the British Commissioner made for home. Unfortunately in

194 Ibid, FO 800/121, Satow to Lansdowne, 18 July, 1904.
195 Ibid, Lansdowne to Satow, 14 September, 1904.
the process he received the Secretary of State's telegram giving him permission to extend his stay in Lhasa till mid-October so that he could modify those articles in the Lhasa Convention that the Home Government found unacceptable, only a day before his departure. To have postponed his return to India by the date which he had promised the Tibetans might have aroused their suspicions, explained the Commissioner. The Government was after all free to adjust such portions of the treaty it thought fit later.

As soon as the British Commissioner had returned him a severe reprimand from the Secretary of State greeted him. He was accused of having flouted the wishes of the Home Government: the indemnity was much too severe; the separate article a gross violation of his instructions. Younghusband put up a sturdy defence on his own behalf.

The amount included in the indemnity was suggested by the Tibetans themselves. Paid over 75 years it would be reduced to half its original value. Rs. 36 lakhs was half Indore's annual revenue and Tibet was richer than Indore. Furthermore in a country where wealth was not principally to be found in cash and where the monasteries would squeeze a hapless peasantry in order to meet this financial obligation, an indemnity spread over a longer period of time would constitute a considerable relief for the ordinary people and assuage any feelings of popular hostility towards the British. The separate article was justified on the ground that it was meant to be no more than a bargaining counter.196

The Commissioner had parted on the most amicable terms with the Tibetan authorities; he contrasted this with implacable hatred of the British by the Afghans in 1840 when the Mission to Kabul had departed. The other secondary gains were also of considerable value: an old friendship with Nepal had been consolidated but more significant new and fruitful ties with the Bhutanese had been established.\footnote{197} The Tongsa Penlop had personally put Younghusband into touch with some of the leading Tibetan dignitaries. A year ago Bhutan and England were virtual strangers, now they were allies and nowhere was Bhutan's new enthusiasm more manifest than in her permission to British surveyors in search of an easier route from India to Tibet, to enter her territory.

Brodrick, however, was not mollified by these explanations. Younghusband was Curzon's man and as his relations with the Viceroy continued on their downward course, the Commissioner became the prime target of his wrath.

Curzon on his way back to India in a letter from Port Said pleaded with Brodrick to give Younghusband, who was shortly due in England, a fair hearing; he ridiculed the opposition of the military to allow Younghusband to winter at Lhasa with an escort of 500 men on the ground that the force was insufficient, and saw in General Macdonald's refusal to remain in the Tibetan capital the malevolent hand of Kitchener.\footnote{198} But any hope of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State repairing an old friendship - they had made a few fitful attempts to do so - was dashed to the ground with the arrival of Brodrick's

\footnote{197} Ibid, Enclosure 1 in No.194, Younghusband to India, 28 October, 1904.\footnote{198} Brodrick Papers, 50076, Curzon to Brodrick, 29 November, 1904.
despatch of 2 December. Its language was curt; its tone offensive. It was a reprimand to both the Viceroy and the Commissioner; and its inclusion in the second Blue Book published in February (1905) was held up for all the world to see. The sting was contained in the final paragraph:

"Indian frontier policy could no longer be regarded from an exclusively Indian point of view, that the course to be pursued in such cases must be laid down by His Majesty's Government alone. It is essential that this should be borne in mind by those who find themselves entrusted with the conduct of affairs in which the external relations of India are involved, and that they should not allow themselves, under the pressure of the problems they have on the spot, to forget the necessity of conforming to the instructions which they have received from His Majesty's Government, who have more immediately before them the interests of the British Empire as a whole."199

Following in the wake of his sharply worded despatch of 2 December, Brodrick wrote privately to Curzon explaining that the wording and tone of the despatch had been virtually forced on him by the Cabinet. His first draft had been deliberately colourless so as not to offend Curzon.200

The publication of the Blue-book and its leaked contents to the Press once again stoked the embers of the Curzon-Brodrick quarrel. The Viceroy found the howls of delight from such Radical papers as the Daily News and Daily Chronicle particularly irksome. He was angrier at Brodrick's attempt to curry favour with the editors of certain newspapers in order to win allies for the Home Government in the developing political struggle.201

"What an ass Brodrick has made of himself," remarked Chirol to Hardinge, "over his Tibetan Blue book! I have never heard, I think,

200 Brodrick Papers, 50075, Brodrick to Curzon, December (no date), 1904.
201 Ibid, 50077, Curzon to Brodrick, 21 February, 1905.
"such a chorus of disapprobation. Even Lee-Warner, who has always been a consistent and strong opponent of Curzon and especially of his Tibetan policy, came to see me last week on purpose to congratulate the Times on its protest .... It is so beastly mean too. What would have been the Government's position if Younghusband had had to come away from Lhasa without any Treaty at all, which might well have happened after the three months he had been kept hanging about at Gyantse whilst Ministers were making up their precious minds and wasting much more precious time." 202 The Foreign Editor of The Times confirmed that the Secretary of State had sent three newspapers an advance copy of the Blue book with an accompanying note giving references to passages which should be erased in order to sterilise the despatches of the Indian Government.

The publication of the second Blue book on Tibet had perhaps an importance which transcended the confines of a purely domestic political controversy; for by making clear the Home Government's own sympathies in the matter it was hoped that the doubts and suspicions of foreign Powers, on whose goodwill Britain set particular store, would be assuaged.

On the basis of the available evidence there is little doubt that Younghusband was somewhat free in the interpretation he gave to the Home Government's instructions. His experience as a Frontier Officer had moulded his wider outlook on life; he had learnt to spurn caution for its own sake.

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202 Hardinge Papers, Volume 7, Chirol to Hardinge, 6 February, 1905.
"Time after time, risk pays. Deliberately, and with your eyes open and in full confidence, run a risk for a good end and you will come out safe with your end achieved. Shrink from running a necessary risk, and danger will relentlessly pursue you, hunt you down and crush you . . . . The cautious is not necessarily the best course. In most cases it is the worst."  

Complementing this principle was the readiness to seize opportunities.

"An opportunity should never be lost. A frontier agent should be alert as a hawk to snatch it. It comes and goes in a flash; and failure to seize it may mean years of ponderous and expensive effort for Government . . . . Opportunities here occur which if seized lead on to fortune. But action must be swift. And if it has to be swift, and if it not to be rash, there must be full previous knowledge of all the conditions, and perpetual fitness in the agent to play the decisive part he may be called upon to take."  

Ampthill tried in vain to intercede on the Frontier Commissioner's behalf, pleading with Godley to "stick up for Younghusband as much as you can; it would be a terrible mistake to make a scape-goat of him."  

His efforts proved to be of no avail for in the Honours List, Younghusband was awarded only a K.C.I.E. - the lowest order of knighthood which India could bestow. He was caught in the cross fire of a bitter quarrel between two great adversaries, as he was himself to recognize many years later; and so it was on him that the wrath of the Secretary of State fell. To Brodrick he became a living reminder of the life-long friendship with Curzon that had turned sour; a symbol at once of pain and frustration.  

When in August 1905 the Viceroy tendered his resignation the Home Government's quarrel with him had assumed the scale of a vendetta. Brodrick thought nothing of citing Curzon's evident unpopularity in Bengal as a means of stopping the King from offering him an honour on

204 Ibid.  
205 Kilbracken Papers, F 102/23, Ampthill to Godley, 3 November, 1904.
his return to home, while Balfour, typically, shielded himself behind the excuse that since the Viceroy's just reward for his great services was inevitable it would be wiser to defer the prize until such time as the present controversy had died down.

What of the Russian threat? Curzon's perception of Russia existed at the broadest possible level. How far was it justified in relation to the specific problem of Tibet? The final answer to the question can only be given when the archives in Moscow are open to public inspection. In the light of available evidence, proof of Russian activity in Lhasa remains scanty. When Younghusband reached Lhasa, he found no Russian drill sergeants, and apart from a rusty gun or two, no Russian armaments either.

The more fanciful stories about Dorjieff, the Buriat Mongol, who was supposed to be intriguing in Tibet on the Tsar's behalf can now be dismissed as the product of nervous imaginations. There is no reason to doubt the veracity of Russian interpreter, Nabokoff's account of Lamsdorff's meeting with Dorjieff which apparently "never went beyond the flattest of banalities." It proves that the Russian Foreign Minister was absolutely honest in his assurances to Lansdowne but it does not disprove the possibility that other elements close to the Tsar may have harboured ambitious designs.

It would be impolitic to dismiss the Viceroy's suspicions out of hand. Even a cursory look at a map of Russian expansion in Central Asia and the Far East would show the immense swathes of territory which had passed and were passing under the control of the Tsarist Empire. In a

206 Brodrick Papers, 50072, Brodrick to Knollys, 22 September, 1905.
standard work on the subject, Andrew Malozemoff has shown how the Russian drive in Asia was sustained by state sponsored economic enterprises, for Witte was a disciple of the German economist Frederick List, and motivated by the visionary though reactionary ideology of Slavophilism. The message of Russia’s historic mission was enunciated not by obscure and unimportant men but by such well known personalities as N.N. Prjevalski, the great explorer, by Prof. F.F. Martens, a leading authority on International Law and an adviser to the Russian Foreign Office; and not least by Count Witte himself. Another fervent propagandist was Prince Esper Ukhтомский, a man of noble descent, the editor of the influential *St. Petersburg News* who accompanied Tsarevich Nicholas on a journey to the Far East in 1890-91 as a tutor and lecturer and who later became the first Chairman of the Russo-Chinese Bank and a director of the Chinese Eastern Railway, both agencies being designed to facilitate Russian expansion.

But it was Count Witte who supplied these schemes with the necessary ballast: the Russo-Chinese bank, the Manchurian railway, were his brainchildren. Less well known but equally daring was his support of Peter Alexandrovich Badmaev, a Buriat who came to Petersburg in 1853, eventually to become a lecturer in Mongolian at the University; and who in 1893 proposed that a Trading Company be financed with state patronage near the Chinese border, whose covert aim would be to finance rebellions of Tibetans, Mongolians and Mohammedan Chinese against the Manchu dynasty. Such uprisings would lead to the dismemberment of China and to the incorporation of its vast outlying provinces into the Tsarist Empire. Badmaev’s Company with an initial capital of...
2 million roubles was established in 1893 and only in 1900 was the undertaking finally dissolved.

In this context Curzon's fear and suspicion of Russia become less absurd. No doubt Russian designs were concentrated on China but Tibet was part of what was loosely described as the Chinese Empire; and it would not be for the first time if Russia in the interests of her designs in Mongolia sought to gain some leverage at Lhasa. Furthermore, by so doing she could also use her power there as a bargaining counter in negotiations with Britain for a recognition of mutual rights and interests elsewhere.

The suspicions regarding Russia seem to receive further confirmation from no less a person than T'ang Shao-Yi, one of the most able of China's diplomats, who informed Sir Ernest Satow that not long after the signature of the 1890 Convention the Dalai Lama obtained written assurances from Russia of her readiness to protect Tibet against India. These documents, three in number, had been obtained by Amban Sheng tai whose subordinates had been bribed to give them up and, as such, they had disappeared. He felt they were in the possession of the Dalai Lama. This story, if true, commented Satow, showed that Russian intrigue at Lhasa had started long before it was commonly supposed to have begun. 210

About conditions within Tibet, Curzon's assessment was in many instances surprisingly correct. The lamas were indeed parasites battenning on the land; they allowed only a limited volume of foreign trade that would enrich them without upsetting the social balance.

210 FO 555/6, No.7, Satow to Lansdowne, 29 November, 1904.
within Tibetan society; from them therefore came the fiercest opposition to increased contacts with the outside world. Lay elements in Tibet were more favourable to a change in Lhasa's traditional policy of isolation. W.D. Shakabpa, a former Tibetan civil servant, now living in exile, relates how Paljor Dorje Shatra, a former Tibetan representative at Darjeeling, having seen British power at first hand, on becoming a Minister in Lhasa, strongly argued for open ties with Britain. His reports were unfortunately decried by conservative interests who denounced him as a traitor. For a time he suffered a temporary eclipse only to emerge years later fully vindicated in his views.

The Viceroy was well advised on the weakness of Tibet. It was underpopulated, its population, apart from the Khambas in the east, was generally docile; in short the country was a far cry from Afghanistan. The relative ease with which Younghusband reached Lhasa underlined the possible danger that Russia could do the same provided she could find a suitable base of operations, which in view of China's weakness, was not impossible.

The trade of Tibet, which members of the Home Government were inclined to scoff had a rewarding future. Tibetan wool, the rich agricultural lands of the Tsangpo Valley which lay in close proximity to the tea gardens of Bengal and Assam meant that Tibet had immense possibilities both as a market and source of wealth for British industries. Younghusband in a lengthy report waxed eloquent on the prospects of trade with Tibet whose potential riches he had seen with his own eyes.

212 L/PS/7/159, No.1592, Memorandum on Our Relations with Tibet Both Past and Present Together with a Forecast of the Future Developments of Our Policy in that Region, by F. Younghusband, 17 August, 1903.
While at that particular point in time Anglo-Tibetan trade was no more than a fraction of Britain's total turnover in India its future development could have strengthened India's security along the Himalayas. Broader commercial ties with Lhasa might have drawn it into the web of a closer relationship with British India to the mutual benefit of both parties. The Viceroy recognised that India had her own strategical imperatives which had to be given due weight. She could no longer be treated as the military drudge of the Empire, yet to treat India as a mere appendage of British needs would loosen the imperial fabric.

When on his return to England on furlough Curzon tried to plead his case on Tibet he was turned down on the ground that Russia's assent to Khedivial Decree was urgently needed, at which he exploded with scorn:

"Each Cabinet Minister admits to me in private that the Cabinet have been wrong, but shelters himself behind the collective ignorance and timidity of the whole; while Lansdowne, who valiantly declared six months ago, that the Russians had no voice in the matter, has now made a bargain with them on Egypt in connection with Tibet!

"Good God! Such is the wisdom with which we are ruled."

213

With the Triple Entente between France, Britain and Russia taking shape it was almost inevitable that Curzon's Tibetan policy, which appeared as an impediment to its fulfilment, would become the Home Government's sacrificial pawn. Even the Chumbi Valley, the most valuable strategic point on the whole of India's northern border from Kashmir to Assam

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213 Ampthill Papers, E 233/37, Curzon to Ampthill, 23 June, 1904
was surrendered with a minimum of fuss. A few secondary advantages did remain: British influence and authority were consolidated in the Himalayan border States of Nepal and Bhutan. Anglo-Tibetan relations having reached their climax, after more than a century of political and commercial enterprise, of daring geographical exploration and of much physical danger, failed to reach the promised consummation.

As expected, the Indian Exchequer bore the full cost of the Younghusband Mission, even though certain members of the House of Commons pleaded for this expenditure to be evenly shared particularly as the principal beneficiaries of the Tibetan trade were British and European commercial interests.214

Nothing else remained save the debris of broken friendships, of injured reputations, and the bitter disappointment of Viceregal triumph denied.

With the original indemnity contained in the Lhasa Convention drastically reduced, and with the Special Article allowing for visits to Lhasa by a British official expunged, Britain concentrated her endeavours on persuading an uncooperative China to endorse the remainder of the treaty; for without this endorsement the legal basis of such gains from Tibet as she wished to retain would be considerably weakened in the eyes of the international community. It was a situation which arose from the pledge made by the Great Powers to uphold the territorial integrity of the Chinese Empire - which even for the Americans in their role of the republican, anti-imperialist conscience of the world, became synonymous with that of China proper.

Faced at the turn of the 20th century with the spectre of a disintegrating Chinese Empire; and not willing to be drawn into this vortex for fear that their unbridled rivalries might light the torch for a general conflagration, the Great Powers in the compelling light of their own self-interest decided thus to underwrite the sanctity of China's dominions as they then stood. It was from this combination of circumstances that the Chinese Empire drew much of its durability, for its one-ness often proved in practice to be largely illusory.

Here, the histories of the Chinese and Ottoman Empires afford a curious parallel; in their declining years both came to depend considerably on the support of the Great Powers for their continued existence. The American Ambassador at London when making representations on behalf of his Government against British action in Tibet referred to that country "as a part of the Chinese Dominions".

FO 17/1750, Lansdowne to Durand, 29 June, 1904.
existence. In other respects, however, their destinies were to be
different as even a cursory glance at a current map of the world will
show: the once extensive frontiers of the Ottomans have shrunk to
include only Turkey, while those of present-day China encompass all
of the old Manchu dominions as they stood in the early years of this
century, save that of Outer Mongolia. If modern Chinese nationalists
have cause to bemoan their country’s treatment at the hands of the
West, they also have reason to be grateful to China’s tormentors for
their efforts in enunciating the international ground rules that went
a considerable way in protecting the territorial legacy of the
Manchus and their Republican successors.  

The period under consideration, 1905-10, is characterised by
the following developments: the first was the immediate British need
to secure Chinese adhesion to the Lhasa treaty, an urgency matched by
China’s keenness to enter into an agreement with Britain that would,
at a stroke, enable her both to regain lost ground in Tibet and win
international recognition of same. What made the occasion particularly
opportune for Peking was Russia’s weakened state following its
exhausting war with Japan; for it was the relentless political and
territorial pressure of the Tsarist Empire which China had most come to
fear.

2 Symptomatic of the concern to maintain the integrity of the Chinese Empire
were the remarks by Balfour dismissing Roosevelt’s fear of a Yellow Peril
following Japan’s victory over Russia. "The real danger," warned Balfour,
"is not the remote and fantastic dream of a victory of East over West, but
the very near and imminent peril of important fragments of China being
dominated by more warlike or aggressive Powers." An Anglo-American Treaty
designed to withstand such aggression would be the perfect solution,
according to the Prime Minister, but he realised that the United States
Constitution conspired to make such an arrangement difficult.
Balfour Papers, 49729, Balfour to Spring-Rice, 17 January, 1905.
3 FO 17/755, Satow to Lansdowne, 4 August, 1905.
This view was expressed by Grand Councillor Na-Tung in a conversation with
the British Ambassador.
For Britain the projected agreement with China held out the prospect of an even greater reward, namely, an understanding with Russia based on a settlement of all their outstanding disputes in Asia. It would, to the relief of both parties, put an end to a rivalry that was proving excessively costly in both political and financial terms. And if the Government of India's political and commercial imperatives threatened to come in the way of such an accord, then these had to be modified in the interests of Britain's wider global aims.

The advent of a Liberal Government in London at the end of 1905 meant that India Office fell under John Morley's autocratic charge, and soon Britain's Himalayan policy was being sternly recast in order to give Grey at the Foreign Office a freer hand in his dealings with Russia.

However, before the Liberals set themselves to the wheel, the life of the Conservative Ministry still had a year to run; as did the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon. He had returned to India for a second term in November 1904 relinquishing his office in the same month of the following year. Thus, throughout 1905 Anglo-Tibetan relations were ambiguously placed: the Home Government having repudiated the policy of their pro-Consul seemed to expect him to cooperate in implementing another wholly different in outlook. To harbour these expectations of one who believed so passionately in the correctness of his policy - whose sense of injury at being humiliated by his colleagues cut so deep - was naïve in the extreme. Perhaps it would be unfair to impute to the Cabinet such illusory hopes; they possibly did perceive the hopelessness of the situation in which they found themselves. If so, it was quite in keeping with
their character that they did little to arrest the drift of developments.

The Government of India continued to encourage journeys, explorations and contacts within Tibet, while at the same time negotiating a treaty with China which Peking hoped would effectively close Tibet, apart from a few carefully prescribed areas, to its southern neighbour. The Home Government having reversed the policy that sent Younghusband to Lhasa seemed unable to comprehend the logical consequences of their action. They agreed to talks with China over Tibet but supported Curzon in balking at Chinese demands. Yet a speedy settlement with China would have furthered the very prospects of an understanding with Russia in whose interests they had forced Curzon to alter course in the first place. But Balfour's Ministry, in its last year of office, exhibited the customary lack of will that comes from having been in power too long.

The first problem confronting Britain was therefore to get China's signature on a document endorsing the Lhasa Convention. It will be remembered that in the absence of the Dalai Lama who had fled his capital at the approach of the British expeditionary force, Younghusband had been compelled to use the good offices of the Chinese Amban in parleying with the Tibetan Regent. Thus by a twist of fate the Chinese who had for years attempted, with scant success, to make their Tibetan 'subjects' respect agreement which they as overlords had concluded with Britain, now found themselves presiding over a meeting between the two recalcitrant parties. For China this was a signal triumph, all the more remarkable for its unexpectedness; and the possession of one such ace enabled her to play a game of diplomatic poker with consummate skill. Not surprisingly, the once helpless Amban having gained a vantage point prudently abstained from putting
his signature to the Lhasa treaty. So began a diplomatic duel between Britain and China, with each party wanting a supplementary agreement - but on its own terms.

Britain's opening shot came from E.C. Wilton of the Chinese Consular Service on special deputation to Younghusband as his adviser on Chinese affairs, who, writing to Satow in Peking, remarked:

"The deadlock caused by China refusing to agree to the Anglo-Tibetan Convention need not, in my opinion, cause any trouble to us. As the winning cards are with us it seems to me that we can afford to ignore China's assent. The moment that line is taken up, I feel sure that China will sign to save her face in Tibet."4

In view of the fuss over the supposed violation of Chinese rights in Tibet the Government of India in a telegraphic message to the Secretary of State hotly denied their validity. Tibet, it was pointed out, was not listed as one of the 18 provinces of China and, unlike Sinkiang, was not even under the direct administration of the Imperial Government. In addition, Peking had completely failed to make Lhasa honour the provisions of the 1890 Treaty. Furthermore:

"We understand that China receives no regular revenue from, and levies no taxes in, Thibet, and we gather from what has been admitted to Younghusband by the Amban that China does not enjoy full freedom of trade in Thibet; it is even stated that a tax is imposed on Chinese goods when they enter the country. Neither present Amban nor his predecessor had power to leave the capital and go to frontier until our Mission arrived. Treaties with the limitrophe States (Kashmir, Nepal, and, it is believed, Bhutan also) are the only valid Treaties which have, up to the present, been made with Thibet; to none of these was China a signatory, and they were concluded without Chinese intervention. Thibet pays to Nepal compensation of 10,000 rupees annually under the terms of the Nepalese treaty. As a limitrophe State, we are also entitled to conclude a similar Treaty with Thibet."5

Even allowing for the possibility that Younghusband may have coloured the Amban's confession of powerlessness since it was closely in tune

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4 Satow Papers, PRO 30/33/11, Wilton to Satow, 30 September, 1904.
5 FO 535/4, Inclosure to No. 119, Amphill to Brodrick, 29 September, 1904.
with his own bias, the other points made in the note were all the more
telling for being historically sound.

The Home Government's attitude to the whole issue was determined
by wider considerations. Satow having failed in his attempts to make
the "Chinese Government see reason,"6 fresh negotiations to secure an
Adhesion treaty with China became inevitable. Lansdowne and Brodrick,
as part of their running battle with Curzon, perhaps hoped that such
talks could take place in Peking rather than Calcutta. The British
Ambassador, however, refused to rise to the bait. Much time would "be
saved by the negotiations being directed at Calcutta by the Foreign
Office and the India Office working in concert. If the negotiations
had taken place here, there would have been, doubtless, frequent
referring to India on every point before final instructions were sent
to me, and the delay on each occasion would have been considerable."7

In China itself new political forces were emerging. The Boxer
uprising symbolised the last stand of the old order; the spasm of
ferment and revolt having spent itself or otherwise crushed, the
Monarchy gradually sunk into the torpor of its final years. But from
this decaying body-politic over which it presided arose phoenix-like
the spirit of national renewal, militant in form, accepting the
territorial heritage of the Manchus, while rejecting their social and
political values. The thrust of this movement came from southern-
central China, chiefly from the great coastal cities of Canton and

5 Lansdowne Papers, FO 300/121, Satow to Lansdowne, 5 October, 1904.
The British Ambassador complained that Younghusband's sudden departure
from Lhasa had hampered his efforts to secure the Chinese Government's
endorsement of the Lhasa Convention; the Amban being unable to sign a
fresh document alone. The subsequent course of Anglo-Chinese negotiations
shows this to be far too sanguine a view. But for Brodrick it was yet
another stick with which he could strike at the unfortunate Younghusband.

7 Ibid, Satow to Lansdowne, 17 November, 1904.
Shanghai; its leaders were Hans (ethnic Chinese), firmly anti-Manchu; often the products of Western educational institutions. They had watched their country's repeated humiliation first, at the hands of the West then at Japan's; they had seen the slow decline of Chinese power in the peripheral areas of the Empire, notably in Central Asia: the time had now come for them to make their stand, and Tibet was to be their diplomatic field of battle. It was also, in the course of time, to become a highly charged metaphor in the rhetoric of Chinese nationalism.

Reporting to Lansdowne, Satow exclaimed that it was not Prince Ch'ing or Na tung - both Manchus - who were so resentful of British action in Tibet as their colleague from Canton, Wu Ting-fang. And it was indeed another Cantonese, T'ang Shao Yi, a product of Yale University and a good speaker of English, who was appointed to lead his country's delegation to the forthcoming talks in Calcutta with Britain. Satow summed him up as intelligent, patriotic, reserved in manner with a reputation for being anti-British as a result of the rough treatment he had received at the hands of one Captain Bayley during the Tientsin troubles of 1900. It was conceivable that T'ang might "get the better of Mr. L.W. Dave Foreign Secretary, Government of India, but I think he will scarcely be a match for Lord Curzon, who I trust will get back in time."

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8 Prince Ch'ing, a man of royal blood, was despite of the honours heaped upon him, mediocre, wily, irresolute and corrupt. "His palace in Peking has been the place of pilgrimage of expectant officials for a generation past, "his front door is a market place" is a common saying among the Chinese; every official who enters the precincts of his palace has to pay toll to the gate-keeper." H.B. Morse, International Relations of the Chinese Empire, Volume 3, London, 1912, pp.443-444.

9 Lansdowne Papers, FO 800/121, Satow to Lansdowne, 5 October, 1904.

10 Ibid, 30 November, 1904.
T'ang held very definite ideas on Tibet and these he proceeded at some length to expound to Satow. For a start the Chinese position there approximated to the term sovereignty rather than suzerainty. Tibet's position in relation to Peking's was analogous to Mongolia's. Recognising China's declining strength in Tibet, T'ang proposed to reverse this by a drastic reform of Tibetan society by which the large number of monks, about 300,000 in all, who, according to him, had batten on the wealth of the land through a life of idleness, would be made to work. Indeed, it was for making just such a proposal that a Viceroy of Szechuan (1895-97) was removed from his post. Much had happened since then. Even the Monarchy now felt the need for younger men, less enamoured of the values of the old order, and more in tune with the contemporary world.

T'ang's views were echoed by Prince Ch'ing whose conversation with the British Ambassador was despatched in the form of a memorandum to the Foreign Office in London. Apart from underlining Chinese views on Tibet the highly nebulous concepts expressed therein concerning China's relations with foreign countries merely emphasised Peking's inability to treat on equal terms with other states; that indeed, the very conception of an international states system consisting of sovereign bodies had been alien to Chinese historical experience for almost a millennium. The following extract from this memorandum bears quoting:

"Sir Ernest then asked what was the proper technical term in Chinese to express the relation of Thibet to China. In English China was described as the "suzerain" of Thibet. How was this expressed in Chinese?"

"The Prince said there was no proper word to express this. The Thibetans called the Emperor of China their "Huangshang", not "Ta Huangti", as a foreign nation would say. The word "suzerain"
"he supposed implied the "shang kuo", the "upper nation". The superiority of the Emperor over the Dalai Lama was demonstrated in his appointment by patent ("chih shu"). Sir Ernest asked whether in the Ming dynasty a "chih shu" was not also given to the Shogun of Japan.

"His Highness. Yes; he believed so, though in that case it did not imply any claim on the part of China to sovereignty over Japan, but was merely the act of a big Power to a small one.

"Sir Ernest asked whether China considered that in Mongolia both land and people were subject to China.

"His Highness. Yes.

"Sir Ernest. And Thibet?

"His Highness. Thibet is on very much the same footing. We have conducted military operations in Thibet, in Ch'ien Lung's reign and may be said to have subjugated it."

While Ch'ien Lung may have subjugated Tibet in the 18th century, in the 20th it was Britain who had done so. Indeed it is even possible that elements within the mandarinate hoped the British would succeed where China had failed - to break the power of the Tibetan Government. Satow was not without his suspicions, for writing to Lansdowne earlier in the year he remarked:

"It is probable that they the Chinese look forward to our re-establishing their authority at Lhassa for them, and I cannot help thinking that it might be worth our while to set Humpty Dumpty of an Amban up again, with a British officer at his side to keep him upright."12

This last hope, however, was much too sanguine; for why with the Dalai Lama out would the Chinese help instal the British at Lhasa? It was as if Sir Ernest, an experienced hand in the wiles of Chinese diplomacy, had not heard the oft repeated maxim of China's statesman on the need to play off one 'barbarian' adversary against another. In the Tibetan

11 FO 535/5, Inclosure 4 in No.95, Memorandum of Conversation between Sir Ernest Satow and Prince Ch'ing respecting Thibet, Satow to Lansdowne, 17 November, 1904.
12 Lansdowne Papers, FO 500/120, Satow to Lansdowne, 19 May, 1904.
game, at least in Chinese eyes, Britain had neutralised any possible
danger from Russia and in the process destroyed the greatest obstacle
before China, namely, the power of the Lhasa Government.

There was certainly much consistency in Chinese thinking. As
early as February 1904, Satow sent a translated enclosure to Curzon
from the Shennao, a Chinese newspaper enjoying a wide circulation
among both the official classes in Peking and elsewhere, whose views
make interesting reading. The paper observed in spite of Tibet being
poor and barren, Russia from the north, and Britain from the south,
covetous eyes towards it. Why? "It is not Tibet that they are
striving for. India is the point of dispute. Now India is Britain's
treasure-house - as rich as Tibet is poor." An expansionist Russia
plunging through Manchuria and Korea finds her way barred by Japan,
hence she desires to approach India through Tibet, a design which the
British frustrated by prompt action in Tibet itself.

The dread of Russia which ranked uppermost in Chinese minds was
underlined by Satow's conversations with Na t’ung and T’ang Shao Yi.
In their view Britain and China faced a common danger, hence Peking
could profitably appeal to the British for help. Later in the year the
situation had altered in China's favour: Russia embroiled in a conflict
with Japan was pre-occupied in another theatre; the Dalai Lama had fled
his country and the repudiation of Curzon meant that the British could
also be made to depart. China would thus achieve by diplomacy what she
could not possibly achieve through arms. As she prepared to do battle
around the negotiating table the tactics of her diplomatists were to be
based not on appeals but on forthright pressure subtly applied.

13 FO 535/3, Inclosure 6 in No.27, Satow to Curzon, 18 February, 1904.
Having therefore regained their political foothold in Tibet the Chinese aim was to consolidate and, if possible, extend their position. Two overriding considerations determined their attitude towards their Dependency: first, Tibet's historic religious and cultural ties with Mongolia where Peking's authority was under pressure, and secondly, because Tibet provided a defensive shield for China proper, just indeed, as it did for India. A Chinese official summed up his country's position succinctly:

"As, moreover, Lhasa is the capital of all Tibet, the home of the cult of Lamaism, the abode of the Imperial Resident, the seat of numberless Buddhist shrines, the rendezvous of all the tribes, it has long been coveted by the British. Tibet, again, is the door that shut off Yunnan and Schuan, and should we prove remiss, the teeth will feel cold when the lips have gone. Any disturbance of her present status would bequeath to us a legacy of deep-seated injury."14

Before T'ang Shao Yi reached India, W.F. O'Connor, once Younghusband's Tibetan interpreter and now British Trade Agent at Gyantse, met and conversed with V.C. Henderson of the Chinese Imperial Maritime and Customs Service who was on a visit there, as a result of which he wrote to S.M. Fraser of the Indian Foreign Department forewarning him of the possible Chinese line at the forthcoming talks. "May I ask you," exclaimed O'Connor, "to consider this letter as of a confidential nature? .... as he is now on his way to Calcutta to meet T'ang Shao Yi, I thought it might interest you to hear what transpired. From what he said it appears (from his position at any rate - and this may very possibly reflect that of Sir Robert Hart and the Wai-wu-pu) we have not a leg to stand on in making a treaty with Tibet without the full consent to that Treaty of the Suzerain Power - China. I do not, of course, know at all whether the Chinese now mean to try to

14 L/PS/7/160, No.160, Enclosure 2 in No.17, Hosie to Satow, 9 October, 1903.
"modify the terms of the Treaty, but at any rate I think from what Henderson said that they do mean to assert themselves now and carry things with a high hand in this country, and I think an effort will be made to get rid of the British Trade Agents."¹⁵

T'ang arrived in Calcutta in the middle of February 1905. The British delegation, in the absence of L.W. Dane, who was away in Kabul, was led by S.M. Fraser, the Acting Indian Foreign Secretary, with B.C. Wilton of the China Consular Service in assistance.¹⁶

In a preliminary conversation with Wilton on 1 March 1905 - the day before the official exchange of credentials - T'ang remarked that China could not accept the Lhasa Convention because it had been made without her assent. A further complication was the Chinese plenipotentiary's complaint on the manner in which the British had received and addressed him. He saw it as a slur on his position.

T'ang's views were not merely reactive; he expressed the belief that the head of one of China's provincial administration say, Szechuan, was equal in status to the Viceroy of India. However, when it is remembered that

¹⁵ L/PS/7/173, No.361, O'Connor to Fraser, 23 December, 1904.
As the question of China's right to employ Europeans in Tibet was to prove one of the contentions in the Anglo-Chinese negotiations, O'Connor's views on the subject, indicative of his own state of mind, are especially interesting. According to him the posting of such employees in Tibet was a cunning strategem by Peking to make the British (since these employees were British subjects) unpopular with ordinary Tibetans. O'Connor's reasoning was as follows: these European agents of China's Maritime and Customs Service took their cue, as regards deportment, from the arrogance of their Chinese confreres when dealing with Tibetans under the impression that such behaviour befitted their station. However, while Tibetans might not have found Chinese arrogance palatable, they accepted it as a practice of longstanding; Europeans in China's service they regarded as interlopers.
L/PS/7/178, No.1081, O'Connor to India, 26 March, 1905.

¹⁶ This account of the Anglo-Chinese talks is based largely on the final report compiled by the Indian Foreign Department, which included draft proposals, letters and conversational records between the participants, and a closing summary by S.M. Fraser.
the Indian Viceroy at the time was none other than Lord Curzon, this essay in correct protocol by the Chinese diplomatist ruled out any chance that he may have had of winning sympathy in the corridors of power in Calcutta. T'ang also talked of taking up an appointment in London - which Wilton correctly interpreted as a veiled threat to transfer the talks there should suitable results not be forthcoming at the Indian capital. This opening chord struck the underlying themes of the tortuous negotiations in the months to follow: the Chinese holding out for their sovereign rights in Tibet; the British arguing that these in practice had amounted to no more than a loose suzerainty; the uncertain barometer of T'ang's temperament; and lastly, China's recourse to the tactic of delay by which time she hoped circumstances would change in her favour; in other words, that the venue of the talks could be moved to London or Peking - away from the influence of the Indian Viceroy and his officials.

Having outlined his Government's case to the Acting Indian Foreign Secretary, following the exchange of credentials, T'ang was asked by Fraser to submit an informal draft of China's position to which the British could then reply in some detail. T'ang obliged. His draft dated 6th March 1905 bore the title: "Supplementary Convention to the Convention between Great Britain and the Tibetan Authorities on 7 September 1904", and was centred on three main points: the trade marts established by the Lhasa Convention were accepted by his Government but any modifications in the 1893 Regulations regarding their operation should be left for future Anglo-Chinese discussions, and not for negotiations between Britain and Tibet as envisaged in Article 2 of the Lhasa Convention. Secondly,
it stipulated that Tibet's indemnity should be paid by a Tibetan appointed by the Chinese Amban. Following from this but of prime significance was the demand that Article 9 of the Lhasa Convention should be clarified by a British denial of intent to encroach or interfere in Tibetan affairs. Furthermore it was to be stated that the ban on foreign interference encompassed in this article covered all countries including Britain, but excluded China.

Fraser replied verbally. He expressed his relief that T'ang's draft was unofficial as otherwise it would have been his unpleasant duty formally reject it. Asked to elucidate his Government's position Fraser replied by citing the following points: that the British were prepared to recognise China's suzerainty over Tibet; that in view of Tibet's geographical position relative to India the Chinese Government were expected to recognise that Great Britain among foreign powers had a special interest in Tibetan affairs; and that so long as no other foreign power endeavours to interfere in Tibetan affairs Britain undertook to refrain from annexing, establishing a Protectorate or in any way controlling Tibet. As regards the suzerainty of China over Tibet, Fraser stated that Britain was not concerned with defining the powers that suzerainty implied - this being a matter for Peking and Lhasa to decide among themselves - but that the British regarded Tibet as an autonomous country, which managed its own administration and made treaties with its neighbours. In other words, Fraser had placed clear limits on the suzerainty whose precise definition he had said he would leave to the Chinese and Tibetans. The substance of sovereignty was to remain with Lhasa, even if its symbols rested in Peking. Nor was this an arbitrary view, for
as the Indian Foreign Secretary pointed out, China had conspicuously
failed to control her Tibetan Dependency since 1890. Nevertheless,
the Chinese could fairly regard Fraser's tactics as taking away with
one hand what he had given with the other.

The Indian Foreign Secretary ended by demurring at the use of
European employees by China in Tibet. In this instance they happened
to be British but he feared that precedents might be created and that
other European powers might request the same privilege of Peking.

T'ang came back vigorously at Fraser. He denied British
India's right to a special interest in Tibet; claiming that by such
logic the French desire to establish a sphere of influence in Yunnan
would also have to be conceded. Neither did he take kindly to the
proposal to ban European officials of the Imperial Maritime Customs
Service working in Tibet, since he felt it was designed to weaken
Chinese influence on the Indo-Tibetan border where such officials were
apt to be firm in their dealings with their British counterparts.

The deep differences dividing the two sides were further
highlighted by the British draft of 26 April 1905 which accepted
China's suzerainty in Tibet and the Chinese rejoinder of 5 May which
rejecting this clause replaced it with one affirming their sovereign
status.

On 5 June, T'ang offered to amend his first Article to read as
follows:

"Great Britain recognises the existing authority of China
over Tibet."

As Fraser found the change unacceptable it became quite clear that
negotiations were in a state of complete deadlock. In July
Prince Ch'ing suggested that the venue of the talks be changed to
London or Peking. Satow expressed himself against this, as did
Curzon who argued in his telegram of 10 July 1905 that failing an agreement with China, Britain should reach a settlement with Tibet alone. He further asked that the British Ambassador draw Chinese attention to the different position they had taken in 1891. On 21 September of that year Mr. James Hart, the Chinese Political Officer, made the following statement:

"I may also mention that the Yamen [Chinese Foreign Office] makes a point of Tibet's condition and says that it is not the same as the Turkestan frontier, Manchuria, or Mongolia which belong to China, but is to be dealt with by China as having something of the simple tributary state in it still."  

However, in spite of this withering blast, Curzon was not entirely unbending. He agreed to Satow's suggestion that Article 1 of the British draft of 26 April 1905, affirming China's suzerainty, be removed without a substitution being made. The issue of sovereignty or suzerainty would thus be set aside. The Viceroy agreed on condition that China accepted the other articles contained in the British plan based on a recognition of Tibetan autonomy. It soon became obvious to Satow that China was playing for time.

T'ang having pitted his wits against Fraser's may have found the exercise stimulating, but behind the Foreign Secretary stood the formidable figure of the Viceroy, and eventually the Chinese diplomatist retired from the fray with as much face as he could save; for rarely was a diplomatic illness so opportunistically feigned. But the retreat came amid the hopeful news of Curzon's resignation. T'ang having returned to China, his deputy Chang Yin-t'ang took his place. The Chinese continued

17 FO 17/1755, Curzon to Brodrick, 10 July, 1905.
to stall, no doubt, for more propitious circumstances after Curzon's departure. But the British position hardened visibly. The Chinese were asked flatly whether they were prepared to put their signature to a document based on Fraser's draft of 26 April 1905. They demurred. Finally on 15 November 1905 Fraser with calculated abruptness informed Chang that the negotiations were at an end. Two days later Curzon formally handed over charge to Minto.

So ended the first round of the Anglo-Chinese diplomatic struggle. And given the fundamental divergence of views and aims of the parties, its inconclusive end was almost inevitable. Success would have been possible only if the governments of Britain or China were prepared to concede to the other the substance of their principal demands. However, with Curzon at the Viceregal helm, the chances of Britain making such a conciliatory gesture were slim, particularly as the Home Government, having already reversed his Tibetan policy in the interests of better relations with Russia, now seemed content to deny the Chinese the concessions they were seeking. In a word, they failed to pursue to the logical end a process which they themselves had initiated. Fitful and irresolute, the Cabinet's greatest want was a clarity of purpose. Curzon's mind was on the other hand encumbered with few if any doubts. Commenting on China's draft proposals on

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18 This was a Chinese tactic with which the Viceroy had been long familiar. As a young man he made the following observation about the methods of the Tsungli Yamen (the Chinese Foreign Office, later known as the Wai-wu pu) : "The Board is in reality a Board of Delay. Its object is to palaver, and goze, and promise, and do nothing - an attitude which has been in great favour ever since the notable success after the Tientsin massacres of 1870, when the Chinese by dint of shilly-shallying for several months, till the French were hard pressed in the Franco-German war, escaped very much more lightly than they would otherwise have done. Sir Harry Parkes said that to get a decision from the Tsungli Yamen was like trying to draw water from a well with a bottomless bucket."

13 May 1905 he gave vent to his true feelings:

"I would not budge a single inch, and would personally sacrifice all hope of a Convention with China - to which I attach the minimum of importance - sooner than yield."\(^{19}\)

It was clear that having been forced to enter such talks against his better judgment, Curzon was not going to accede to what he considered were gratuitous concessions to China. A policy based on such uncompromising retreat held no future; only at Lhasa could the problems besetting Anglo-Tibetan relations be successfully resolved.

A more dispassionate view of the considerations underlying the negotiations in Calcutta, one that sets off the somewhat overdrawn assertions of Indian officialdom against the seeming nonchalance of politicians in London by its own admirable balance was provided by Fraser's adviser on Chinese affairs. The complex interplay of contrasting personalities, the significant points in the negotiations - there was not much that escaped Wilton's shrewd gaze, as his letters to Satow so clearly show.

The Indian Foreign Secretary was at first inclined to view his Chinese counterpart as something of a simpleton which, as Wilton feared, was far from true. However, Wilton expressed agreement with the attitude of the Indian Government that neither the Amban or T'ang was equal in rank to the Viceroy, but he noted that this was not emphasised with any offensiveness. Nevertheless T'ang took umbrage and was thereafter inclined to display excessive hurt. The Indian Government on the other hand having deluded themselves that negotiations were proceeding smoothly became annoyed when the tortuous methods of the

\(^{19}\) Curzon Papers, F 111/345, Minute by Curzon, 13 May, 1905.
Chinese caused the pace to slacken. "The ordinary official in India," observed Wilton, "is so accustomed to dealing with native dignitaries, who are dependents and must disguise antagonistic feelings and ideas, that he is apt to class the Chinese in the same category of Orientals. T'ang's manner and methods have irritated Indian officialdom, which seems to prefer dealings with mandarins of the Amban type, possessing polished manners and deportment. I daresay my moral feelings have been blunted but I cannot blame an unscrupulous mandarin, who tries to do the best for his side and incidentally, for himself also."\(^{20}\)

Neither was he less pointed in his observations on Peking's principal delegate whose attitude at times bore witness to the reality of timeless China: "Ridiculous as it may seem," wrote Wilton, "Mr. T'ang appears to have held the extraordinary idea, peculiar to mandarins no doubt, that he could win over Lord Kitchener by humouring his well-known partiality for Chinese porcelain, and so influence negotiations in his favour."\(^{21}\) Finally, the negotiations showed "that India cannot do without the British Legation in Chinese affairs. They don't like admitting it; but I cannot at times resist judiciously rubbing the fact into them. I have a great admiration for the work in India of the Indian civilian, but he seems to regard Imperial questions from the most limited point of view."\(^{22}\) The limited appreciation of imperial questions was by now becoming a familiar charge. Like the proverbial frog in the well, each arm of the bureaucracy seemed to mistake the patch of blue above for the whole sky.

\(^{20}\) Satow Papers, PGO 30/33/11, Wilton to Satow, 24 May, 1905.
\(^{21}\) Ibid, 10 October, 1905.
\(^{22}\) Ibid.
The clash of personalities and attitudes was thus clear enough. More interesting perhaps were Wilton's views on the contending policies and the possible course of future developments. Unlike a number of leading Indian frontier officials, he did not for a start have much faith in the potentiality of Indo-Tibetan commerce. In his view,

"The main drawback to a big trade with India is that Tibet is a poor sparsely populated region whose inhabitants are separated by enormous barren distances, and with but little transport between her trade centres, which lie in the few comparatively fertile valleys and the Indian frontier. Then also, the Tibetan is a peddler, not a trader. He has not the instincts of trade in him, and the whole of the foreign trade and a considerable portion of local trade is monopolised by outsiders e.g. Nepalese, Kashmiris and Chinese." 23

However, Wilton detected a desire among those politicals in India interested in Tibet to substitute Chinese supremacy by Indian sovereignty, a prospect which held few rewards and endless complications. "I am afraid," he remarked, "my views are not at all popular with the Tibet Commission experts; but a Protectorate being out of the question under existing circumstances, it certainly seems that a policy of peaceful and intelligent penetration, difficult and indefinite as this undoubtedly is, would be the one to best commend itself to our interests." 24

With regard to the Chumbi Valley, however, Wilton's views were much in accord with those of India's officials. "If the Chumbi Valley were taken over altogether," he suggested, "I do not think that the Tibetans would, at the present time, make the slightest objection. Lhasa, the head and fount of Tibetan politics, does not regard the Chumbi Valley as an integral part of Tibet but really as an adjacent dependency. If the Chinese officials remain on in the Chumbi Valley, and they cannot well be asked to withdraw under existing circumstances,

23 Ibid, 1 March, 1905.
"It is to be feared that their bumptiousness will revive, and this may mean complaints and possibly obstruction at Peking to our interests in China."\(^{25}\)

The uncomplaining acceptance by Lhasa of a change of status of the Valley may too readily have been taken for granted. There was no dearth of protests from the Tibetan authorities at the administrative measures undertaken by the British while in occupation there.\(^{26}\) Obviously they felt that Britain had annexationist designs. It must be remembered that the Government at Lhasa - which meant the Tibetan Church and lay aristocracy - stood much to gain from the taxes levied on the Chumbi middlemen whose prosperity generally greatly exceeded that of the rest of their countrymen. Some among the Tromowas, as the inhabitants of this Valley were called, might have welcomed the opportunity of sharing in the more profitable commerce of British India; others might have feared that their privileged position as carriers of trade was being imperilled since Britain sought to establish direct commercial links with Tibet. All would welcome the greater protection afforded by the British against the depredations of the marauding Bhutanese.\(^{27}\) However, there was a case for a possible conflict of interests.

There were other advantages to be had from taking over the Chumbi Valley. For one thing it would save Britain the trouble of posting Trade Agents in Tibet and so save her much international bother. Take the Chumbi and leave Tibet strictly to her own devices was Wilton's message.

\(^{25}\) Ibid, 1 March, 1905.
\(^{26}\) Further Papers Relating to Tibet, Cd.Paper 5420 of 1910, Volume 68, Enclosure 3 in No.8, Ti-Pimpoche to W. O'Connor, 4 January, 1905.
\(^{27}\) Ibid, Enclosure in No.60, Bell to White, 17 November, 1905.
Nevertheless, leaving aside the use of such concrete terms as protectorate and suzerainty, the outcome of the Calcutta negotiations was, according to him, going to determine which of the two, China or Britain, was going to have the predominating position in Tibet. Hence the prospect of seeing Chinese mediation between Tibet and India abolished would

"be a pill too big to pass the Chinese gullet. There is no doubt whatever that it would be a blow to her dwindling prestige and a corresponding enhancement of ours in Tibet. The Lhasa Authorities have been abiding the outcome of the T'ang negotiations with intense anxiety; swayed at one moment, by the honeyed lies of the Amban who has been telling them that, just as his representatives induced the Emperor of China to force us to forego 50 lakhs of the indemnity, so T'ang Tachen [Chinese honorific meaning literally Great Man] has orders to compel us to give up the trade marts and to substitute the Yatung Convention for the Lhasa Treaty, they have become truculent and overbearing in manner; then the remembrance of British troops in the Potala awakens them with a shock and they cringe and whine that they are weak and poor."28

In the course of his assessment as to the future course of developments, Wilton had suggested that in the eventuality of the Chinese rejecting the British draft Convention the Viceroy would be prepared 'doing without the Lhasa Treaty and to adopt an unobtrusive but vigorous policy in Tibet. This is difficult but quite feasible, given good men and adequate funds: and India appears to be lacking in neither respect."29

If the Consular Official by chance imagined that he was anticipating events he was wrong, for such developments were already under way. Early in January 1905, W.F. O'Connor, the newly appointed British Trade Agent at Gyantse under the terms of the Lhasa Convention, invited the Tibetan Shapsu, with whom he established a considerable rapport, to Calcutta where trade with India could be formally

28 Satow Papers, PRO 30/33/11, Wilton to Satow, 10 October, 1905.
29 Ibid, 24 May, 1905.
regularised and they could be acquainted with the Viceroy to the mutual advantage of both parties. He was proposing to take advantage of the fact that the Government's decision to reduce the indemnity was warmly appreciated at Lhasa. And with Charles Bell administering the Chumbi Valley on more enlightened principles than had hitherto obtained the first step in the peaceful penetration of Tibet seemed under foot. The Tibetans sensed that they could lose permanent possession of the Chumbi, and the subject of Bell's measures there became a contentious issue in Anglo-Tibetan correspondence at the time. Indeed, Brodrick had felt impelled to remind India of the "necessity of avoiding language which could be construed as inconsistent with the recognition of the Chumbi Valley as part of Tibet."  

Nothing daunted, Indian frontier officials continued to advocate the cause of Indo-Tibetan commerce.  

As if this were not enough, the indefatigable O'Connor had soon thrust deep into the heart of Tibetan politics. The Panchen Lama had appealed to the British for protection against the encroaching authority of Lhasa, and although the Trade Agent listened to him with sympathy he outlined the consequences of such support with scrupulous care. "In these circumstances," he telegraphed, "if Government are prepared to make definite promise to Lama to protect him against any attempt at vengeance on the part

30 FO 535/6, Enclosure in No.9, Brodrick to Curzon, 20 January, 1905.  
31 L/PS/7/176, No.794, O'Connor to India, 15 March, 1905. See also L/PS/7/179, No.1273, Report on the Gartok Expedition 1904-05 by Captain C.G. Rawling.
"of Lhasa Government, I am of opinion that civilities on our part are distinctly advisable, including an invitation to visit Calcutta. Failing such a guarantee, it would not be fair to Lama to ask him to compromise himself with us in any marked manner nor do I think he would care himself to do so."32

White, however, on his own authority asked O'Connor to emphasise to the Panchen that the invitation to visit Calcutta in the winter of 1905-06 must be accepted without reference to Peking, and that in view of his difficult relations with Lhasa it was in his interest to do so.33 When the papers were put up before the Government for official sanction to the invitation White omitted to include in the file O'Connor's telegram of 25 June (1905) pointing out the consequence of such action. For this the Political Officer was to earn a severe reprimand from the Indian Government which by then was being subjected to new pressures arising out of the change in regime at Whitehall.34

32 L/PS/10/148, No.542, O'Connor to White, 25 June, 1905.
33 FO 535/7, Inclosure 6 in No.51, White to O'Connor, 8 September, 1905.
34 The Indian Foreign Secretary addressed White in the following terms: "The proposal to invite the Tashi Lama originated with you, and in assuming the responsibility of recommending the suggestion for the consideration of the Government of India, it was your clear duty to place them in possession of Captain O'Connor's views as detailed in his telegram of the 25th June 1905 .... With regard to the unauthorised communication made by you to Captain O'Connor on the 8th of September, I am to say that the language of the message which included instructions to Captain O'Connor to represent the invitation in a certain light and to do his best to persuade the Lama to accept it was not calculated to produce the impression which you explain was intended by you, namely that the Lama's acceptance was a matter of indifference to the Government of India." L/PS/10/148, No.542, India to White, 12 February, 1906.
Having proceeded as advised, O'Connor was soon revealing a bolder hand. China's power in Tibet might be a delusion but her prestige at the Panchen Lama's capital was high as was apparently evidenced by the use of Chinese ritual and ceremony in state and political functions there. Thus, according to his reasoning, the Lama's journey to India without Chinese permission would provoke swift retribution from Peking. To save their protege from punishment would it not be better to post a British Agent at Shigatse instead of Gyantse as was the case at present? It is doubtful if O'Connor really believed in China's capacity to move seriously - as opposed to temporary harassment - against the Tibetan hierarch. O'Connor's own assessment had an obvious flaw: while on the one hand Chinese power was a delusion, at the same time the existence of Chinese influence in court ritual showed that it was not. Had not O'Connor and his confreres often in the past sought to convince their superiors - and with good reason - of China's utter helplessness in Tibet? His true reasons were part of the wider considerations he had in mind. A British Agent at Shigatse would not contravene, in his view, the provisions of the Lhasa Treaty which indeed had provided for the opening of fresh trade marts should developments require it. And Shigatse, he argued, was far more important as a centre of commerce than Gyantse. Moreover the Panchen Lama and his leading officials were unfeignedly pro-British. "There still remains the question," concluded O'Connor with much candour,
"whether such expenditure should be justified by political advantages which we would secure by taking the Lama under our protection. It is, I think, clear that our only security against the intrigues of foreign powers in Tibet would be the establishment of an Agent at Lhasa itself. Failing this, the best we can hope for is to safeguard that part of Tibet bordering upon India from foreign influences. An agent at Shigatse would be a substantial gain, and would place us in a position to checkmate effectively any forward movement directed from the north upon Lhasa and the friendly state lying between Tibet and India. In a word, it would definitely attain the object aimed at in the recent Tibet Mission, which, as things are at present, has not been secured. The cost would be trifling; and as our prestige gradually increased, the necessity for the expenditure would diminish. Hence seize the present favourable opportunity for cementing our friendship with the Tashi Lama, even going so far if necessary, as to subsidise him and protect him and to open, under the terms of the Lhasa Convention, a new trade mart at Shigatse. And let it be clearly understood that any intrigues of other foreign powers would be met by a corresponding extension of our influence in the province of Tsang and Southern Tibet. And all this might be done without openly impugning or infringing Chinese suzerainty."

Whatever O'Connor's plans, it would have been naive to suppose that the Chinese would accept in silence such a patent erosion of the shadowy authority they still possessed. Indeed, if anything, the breakdown of the negotiations at Calcutta had made them more alert to ominous portents. Not surprisingly, they were soon informing Satow that the Panchen Lama derived his title and position from the Chinese Emperor and that his status was purely spiritual. "We suppose," said the note from Peking,

"that his present visit to India is being undertaken with a view to offering congratulations to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, who it is understood, will shortly arrive in India. The Lama has however no concern whatever with the external affairs of Tibet, and if he takes upon himself to discuss or settle any questions of a business nature, we have the honour to state explicitly that Chinese Government will in no way recognise this action."

35 L/P5/7/183, No.1869, O'Connor to White, 25 November, 1905.
36 L/P5/10/148, No.2502, Enclosure in Satow to Lansdowne, 30 November, 1905.
Meanwhile Curzon, the departing Viceroy, was replaced by Lord Minto. Descended from a family of patrician Whigs, he had seen active service under Roberts in India, and had fought with the Turks against Russia (which experience left in him a fellow feeling for the Ottomans as much as a deep antipathy for Russia during the rest of his life); while in his most recently held office, that of Governor-General of Canada, he learnt some of the technicalities of public administration in a parliamentary system of Government.  

Minto had no lack of powerful advocates, one of whom, Lansdowne, held the Prime Minister's ear. In the course of a fervent appeal to Balfour, Lansdowne shed a few revealing shafts of light on the qualities, which in his view, the head of an Indian Administration needed. Thus, Minto

"has plenty of nerve and good sense, is as true as steel and will be absolutely loyal to His Majesty's Government. He is a gentleman to the tips of his nails, and will be loved by the natives and particularly by the native chiefs who will appreciate his charm of manner and his fine horsemanship.

"Lastly he has a clever and hardworking little wife, who will undo some of the mischief which I fear has been done by Lady C [Curzon], who in spite of her attractiveness has I fancy rubbed a good many people the wrong way."

Lansdowne's pleading letters to Minto on behalf of his son who seemed to be having little success in his courtship of the future Viceroy's daughter lent some spice to this eulogy. However, matters were soon put right; the young man's affections were reciprocated and the marriage that happily followed drew the Lansdownes and the Mintos into a closer bond of political friendship.

38 Balfour Papers, 49729, Lansdowne to Balfour, 15 August, 1905.
In December 1905 Parliament was dissolved and in the General Election that followed, the Conservatives were heavily defeated. Grey held charge of the Foreign Office while John Morley became the new Secretary of State for India. One of the leading Liberals of his day, a writer and political thinker of distinction, Morley was, in Lovat Fraser's words, "certainly the most autocratic and the least constitutional Secretary of State ever seen in Whitehall." He was in thought and outlook the very antithesis of Curzon. Where Curzon's imperialism was kept buoyant by his hopes of a future partnership between Britain and her dependencies, Morley's view of the Empire was rooted in pessimism - in the belief that British political institutions could only take root among peoples of Anglo-Saxon stock. But if the former Viceroy's imperial dreams failed to inspire, neither did any Radical zeal hold him in thrall. Morley was if anything a 'Little Englander', a utilitarian with an abiding faith in financial thrift, a deep suspicion of foreign entanglements on the grounds that they led to unnecessary expense, a man for whom India - in spite of fleeting moments of awe at the majesty of the British achievement there - occupied no more than the periphery of his political horizon. On occasion he grumbled at this encumbrance yet it never crossed his mind to rid Britain of its weight. The truth was that what Morley probably wanted was an Empire on the cheap.


40 He did not include the United States in this evaluation. F.A. Hirtzel of the India Office made the following entry in his Diary on 22 January, 1908:

"J.M. admitted that he had at the moment very pessimistic views about democracy. Bryce had told Grey that after a year's experience he was horrified at the corruption - legislative and other - in the U.S.A. .... He Morley described U.S.A. as an "unpromising community"." 864/3.

41 "The more I read and think about British rule in India, the more stupendous and the more glorious it appears." Morley Papers, D 573/6, Morley to Hardinge, 11 April, 1911.
There could be few illusions about what the new Secretary of State expected of the Indian Viceroy. "The Indian Viceroy," he wrote, "is not bound to know political philosophy or juristic theory or constitutional history; he is first and foremost an administrator, and the working head of a complicated civil and military service." After the exalted view Curzon held of this office, Morley's was little short of an anti-climax. And yet, while musing on the British record in India, he asked:

"Has any nation or community in the world ever turned out such a series of great commanders and steadfast statesmen?"42

However, Lord Minto fitted Morley's requirements. He had "an ample supply of constancy and good-humour .... His vision was not subtle, but, what is far better it was remarkably shrewd."44

The suspicion that Morley had less than a deep regard for the Viceroy's intellect is borne out by a letter he wrote Hardinge in 1911 after one of Minto's parliamentary perorations:

"He may depend upon it that his political friends here won't be in a hurry to lose Lancashire seats by picking up their crumbs from his not over intellectually replenished board. I had a little chat with him the other night at the House of Lords, and there was something pathetic in the simplicity with which he bemoaned the comparative obscurity in which he now finds himself."45

Thus, Minto who was useful to Morley in India was, after his return, little more than a pathetic discard, cruelly alone.

While in opposition the Liberals had led the outcry against the Indian Government's Tibetan policies. They had approved Lansdowne's

43 Morley Papers, D 573/6, Morley to Hardinge, 11 April, 1911.
45 Morley Papers, D 573/6, Morley to Hardinge, 19 May, 1911.
diplomatic approaches to France and Russia. The Entente Cordiale was complete when the new Liberal Cabinet took office but there was nothing in the way to prevent a resumption of serious conversations between London and St. Petersburg. It was strong and confident where its predecessor was weak and lacking in direction. Furthermore, its two principal Civil Service advisers were wholly committed to the policy of achieving better relations with Russia. Hardinge, a protege of Edward VII, had done useful work at St. Petersburg first as Counsellor, then as Ambassador. Like his sovereign he was deeply suspicious of Germany. His close friend and colleague, Arthur Nicolson, shared his views. Nicolson's experience as head of the British delegation to the Algeciras Conference which met in an endeavour to resolve the Moroccan question had perhaps confirmed his own long standing distrust of the German leaders. On returning home Nicolson was appointed Hardinge's successor at St. Petersburg, while Hardinge became Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in January 1906. The man under whom they served was Edward Grey, who was noted more for his honesty and integrity than for outstanding brilliance of mind. Together they formed a closely knit team.

It was commonly believed that Britain was, naturally, averse to the existence of a strong group of powers in Europe. Grey sought to


dispel this notion. Was not Britain at one time inclined favourably
towards the Triple Alliance led by Germany? Did she not regard France
and Russia as the weaker but more restless nations? In fact Britain
has not been hostile to the

"predominance of a strong group in Europe when it seemed to
make for stability and peace. To support such a combination
has generally been her first choice; it is only when the
dominant Power becomes aggressive and she feels her own
interests to be threatened that she, by an instinct of self-
defence, if not by deliberate policy, gravitates to anything
that can fairly be described as a Balance of Power." 48

Germany was now the restless Power. 49 The naval rivalry with
England and the Moroccan crisis were but two of the most recent
manifestations of her aggressive self-assertion. Even far off Tibet
did not escape her attention. Sir F. Lascelles, the British Ambassador,
reporting from Berlin in October 1906 conveyed Germany's serious
objection to Article 9 of the Lhasa Convention, coupled with an
ominous threat that the Kaiser's Government would demand compensation
elsewhere.

In the light of these uncertain developments, it became imperative
for Britain to reach an understanding with Russia. But the first step
to such an end had to be an Anglo-Chinese agreement on Tibet. Such an
accord would be an earnest of British good faith and a redemption of
past pledges to Petersburg. The Foreign Office and the India Office
worked well in harness in pursuit of this goal. The Government of India,
with due constitutional propriety, made occasional observations from the

49 "We breathe more freely about Germany at Algeciras and Morocco, but her
temper remains extremely bad, and she is ready to make trouble in many
quarters, from Macedonia to Baghdad or anywhere else. All these make
a survey of the whole field necessary .... a disposition to look at
things from a wide and comprehensive point of view."
Morley Papers, D 373/1, Morley to Minto, 15 March, 1906.
sidelines, which apart from provoking the Secretary of State to react with an admixture of amusement and irritation achieved little else.

The deadlocked talks with China were re-opened early in January 1906 at Peking, thus fulfilling a cherished Chinese aim. While once again T'ang Shao-yi led his country's delegation, the British side this time was under the charge of Sir Ernest Satow. Satow communicated directly with the Foreign Office in London with the Indian Government making their point of view known in muted tones. Their voice, however, was not entirely unheeded. For though it is true that Simla's request that the British Ambassador press for a Chinese assurance to exclude the Dalai Lama from Tibet be written into the Treaty was rejected as impracticable, their suggestion that the contentious issue of China's European employees in Tibet be resolved through an exchange of notes to be attached to the Treaty found eventual acceptance. The needs of British security and Chinese pride having thus been met, Peking was given a year in which to remove people like Henderson from Tibet.

The Foreign Office on their part sought to rephrase Article 4 of the same draft so that it would accord with the spirit of Lansdowne's assurance to the Russian Charge d'Affaires on 27 April 1904 that Article 9(d) of the Lhasa Convention was a self-denying ordinance. Otherwise, they feared, Russia might suspect that Britain together with China, had reserved special rights for herself in Tibet.

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50 L/PS/10/148, No.2705, Foreign Office to India Office, 27 February, 1906.
51 Ibid, No.2619, Foreign Office to India Office, 5 February, 1906.

The article of the British draft was as follows: "The British Government have no desire to seek for themselves or their own subjects the concession denied to Foreign Powers or their subjects by Article 9(d) of the Convention signed on the 7th day of September 1904 on behalf of the Governments of Great Britain and Tibet. But they reserve the right to lay down by arrangement with the Tibetan Government telegraph lines connecting India with the Trade Marts defined in Article 2 of the aforesaid Convention." See F.O. 371/176, No.5282, British Draft of 26 April, 1906.
The negotiations were brisk and business-like; the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 27 April 1906 testified to the urgent desire of both parties to arrive at a settlement. The Treaty consisted of six articles of which it would be appropriate to mention the first three. The opening article confirmed the Lhasa Convention, subject to any alterations in the present agreement. Article 2 was as follows:

"The Government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibetan territory or to interfere in the administration of Tibet. The Government of China also undertakes not to permit any other foreign State to interfere in the territorial administration of Tibet." 51A

Article 3 was the one rephrased by the Foreign Office and read thus:

"The concessions which are mentioned in Article 9(d) of the Convention concluded on 7th September, 1904, by Great Britain and Tibet are denied to any state or to the subject of any state other than China, but it has been arranged with China that at the trade marts specified in Article 2 of the aforesaid Convention Great Britain shall be entitled to lay down telegraph lines into India." 51B

For Peking the Convention, in the light of subsequent events, turned out to be a signal triumph, a formal recognition from Britain of its exclusive rights in Tibet. And this even without the formal acceptance of Chinese sovereignty over the country.

However, the Chinese were as anxious as the British to get an agreement. The Russians, for one thing, were engaged elsewhere; but of more immediate importance was the serious erosion of their own power in Eastern Tibet. 52 Indeed, one reason why the Home Authorities instructed the Indian Government to withdraw their application to Lhasa for a passport for E.C. Wilton's projected overland journey from India to China was because the Sino-Tibetan borderlands through which he would have to pass were in a dangerously unsettled state. Small wonder that the Convention of 1906 confirming Chinese authority in Tibet proved such

52 FO 371/176, No.5282, S.M. Fraser to the Secretary, Foreign Department, Government of India, 13 February, 1906.
51A Aitchison's Treaties, p.28.
51B Ibid.
a boon for the Government in Peking.

Fraser, understandably on account of his lack of experience, had attached greater weight to T'ang Shao-Yi's bluster in Calcutta than the true situation warranted. He readily accepted the view formed, no doubt, by the spectacle of Chinese dilatoriness that China was not unduly keen to reach a settlement with Britain. Assuming that T'ang believed his own somewhat fanciful assertions of his country's power in Tibet, or was even serious in his expressed intention to visit Lhasa - the conceit of this new mandarin lost nothing in comparison with that of his predecessors - those Chinese officials with first-hand knowledge of the Tibetan situation, particularly as it obtained in the troubled areas of the East, must have been far less sanguine about China's ability to retain her political control. They must surely have made known their apprehensions to the Wai wu-pu.

The fact that Chang Yin-t'ang, T'ang Shao-yi's replacement, remained in Calcutta long after the Indian Government had formally broken off negotiations was as much a sign of China's concern at the possibility that the decision could become irrevocable, as a symbol of hope for their eventual resumption. Secondly, Satow himself noted that Prince Ch'ing had once preferred to send T'ang Shao-yi to Calcutta rather than face the British Ambassador as a negotiator - presumably, because with his immense experience of China, he would prove uncomfortably wise to the ways of Chinese diplomacy - but with T'ang having failed, "it seems that both he and the Prince are inclined to

53 FO 17/175A, Acting Consul, Litton, Teng yueh, to Lansdowne, 14 May, 1905.
"fall back on me after all. It was a pleasant surprise to find them actually coming forward with written proposals, which might with certain changes be safely accepted as it seems to me. With the Chinese it is often best to play a waiting game as it is impossible to hustle them."54 When the spirit moved them, the Chinese were capable of showing a sense of urgency. Their authority in Eastern Tibet continued to wane, and now that her war with Japan was over, Russia was free to resume her unwelcome attentions on China. Even more ominous from Peking's point of view was the possibility that Tokyo and St. Petersburg would give serious thought to an understanding on their respective spheres of interest in the Far East.

In order, therefore, to put the British in good humour, T'ang gave Satow a firm verbal assurance "that the Dalai Lama would not be allowed to return to Lhasa for the present, and I think it not unlikely," remarked the British Ambassador, "that in this matter the Chinese Government are sincere, as they cannot wish him to be re-established there under the protection of a Russian Guard."55 But although assuaging some of the fears of the British Government, this concession in no way stemmed from any generosity on China's part, for her own suspicions of the Dalai Lama were as keen as those of India's officials. If these frontier officials can at all be faulted in their appreciation of Tibetan politics, it can only be on the score that they were unable at this time to read the character of that country's most august personage sufficiently well. The Dalai Lama was, in their eyes, malevolently anti-British; and only with the passage of time did they perceive that it was China who was the principal cause of his concern.

54 Grey Papers, FO 800/44, Satow to Grey, 11 January, 1906.
However, on the eve of the second round of Anglo-Chinese negotiations, the Panchen Lama in response to the official invitation of the previous Viceroy arrived in India in December 1905, travelling through Agra, Rawalpindi, Benaras, Gaya, before reaching Calcutta on Boxing Day, where he was accorded the honours normally reserved for a ruling chief. Morley viewed these developments with disapproval and concern. 'With a good deal of dismay,' he wrote to Minto, 'I have been studying the papers of your guest today, the Tashi Lama. The invitation to him to visit Calcutta seems to have been given without any notification to His Majesty's Government here and Captain O'Connor's letter to White of the 23rd November opens a most unpleasant vista of possible obligations and responsibilities, of an extremely familiar stamp .... Any such action as our giving the Tashi Lama a title and a subsidy, or anything else to be called "moral support", would of course excite resentment not only in Lhasa, but at Pekin, and we should ourselves be involved - by a thoroughly well known process - in any quantity of possible troubles.'

The Secretary of State's apprehensions were not without foundation, for in a conversation with Minto the Panchen Lama made three demanding requests: First, that he be furnished with a written undertaking of British support in case of an attack by China on Lhasa; secondly, that in such eventuality he would be supplied with an adequate quantity of firearms, and thirdly, that the British officer at Gyantse should be empowered to forward his letters to the Government of India at Calcutta. Only the last of these proved acceptable to the Viceroy, but for Morley, this episode while underlining the danger of an unnecessary political entanglement also confirmed his poor opinion of Indian frontier officials.

56 Morley Papers, D 573/1, Morley to Minto, 28 December, 1905.
In matters of external policy at least, the Secretary of State left the Viceroy in no doubt as to where the ultimate power of decision lay. When Minto suggested that India should be consulted during the forthcoming talks on Anglo-Japanese relations, he was firmly put in his place. "This would," observed Morley in reply, "involve a three-cornered correspondence between London, Tokyo and Calcutta that would certainly hamper, complicate, and retard the progress of negotiations. Nobody will be more ready and determined than I to uphold the rights and status of India in imperial affairs - or to resist the imposition upon Indian finance of charges that ought to be regarded as imperial and not Indian. In all these things you will find me as jealous as anybody could desire. But the Cabinet would certainly take fright at any language or act of ours pointing to the Curzonian direction, by seeming to set up, either at the conferences at Tokyo or elsewhere, the Government of India as a sort of Great Power on its own account. I don't believe there is a trace of such thought in your mind, but it may well be that the intoxicating fumes of the late regime may still hang about your Council Chamber." 57

Later in July that year - by which time Nicolson had taken up his appointment as British Ambassador at St. Petersburg and the much hoped Anglo-Russian conversations commenced - Morley returned to the subject with even greater vigour. The Viceroy and his advisers had been asked for their views on Afghanistan in order that Nicolson could be adequately briefed on the subject. Instead, 'You say,' wrote the Secretary of State to Minto, 'If we are to enter on an entente with Russia let us bargain with her elsewhere than in Central Asia.' But then this was not the

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57 Morley Papers, D 573/1, Morley to Minto, 9 February, 1906.
'question laid before you .... An entente with Russia that should leave out Central Asia would be a sorry trophy of our diplomacy indeed. Anyhow, His Majesty's Government have determined on their course, and it is for their agents and officers all over the world to accept it. If there is one among them to whom it would be more idle to repeat this a b c of the Constitution .. you are that man .... The plain truth is .... that this country cannot have two foreign policies. The Government of India in Curzon's day, and in days before Curzon, tried to have its own foreign policy. My nervous mind sees the same spectre lurking behind the phrase about "full consultation". I note a phrase in Lord Kitchener's letter - "a railway policy which we in common with His Majesty's Government have been consistently following" etc. Quite harmless, but with a possible implication that "we" and His Majesty's Government are two independent though friendly Powers. Nothing but confusion, trouble, and danger attended the attempt to realise this sort of vision in Curzon's case, and so in my most deliberate opinion the same mischiefs always must attend the same dreams.'

A settlement with Russia that would exclude Central Asia could scarcely be called a settlement at all, and Morley, not surprisingly, fastened on to Minto's most inane suggestion with considerable relish. Curzon might be faulted for his inflexible attitude towards Russia; nevertheless when he did contemplate an understanding with her, it was based on realistic geographical and territorial alignments. He looked at the frontiers of India with the fittingly keen gaze of a pro-consular statesman. His successor's hostility to Russia, on the other hand, sprang largely from a romantic attachment to the Ottomans: neither in thought nor deed did Minto's spirit threaten to stray beyond its accustomed limits.

58 Ibid, 6 July, 1906.
Meanwhile, within Tibet, Chinese and British officials began, on behalf of their Governments, to jockey for positions of power and privilege. Among the former were Chang Yin t'ang, once T'ang Shao-yi's deputy at the Calcutta talks, now Imperial Commissioner at Lhasa; and his assistant Gow who, at Gyantse, pitted himself against O'Connor. The other British principals were C.A. Bell, under whose administrative charge lay the Chumbi Valley, F.M. Bailey, O'Connor's temporary replacement, and W.L. Campbell, the Assistant Political Officer, Sikkim.

The Chinese were determined to extract the maximum leverage from the Peking Convention, for even where British officials were allowed by treaty to deal directly with Tibetans it was China's aim to interpose herself as an intermediary and so reduce such rights to a bare formality. Such pretensions, not surprisingly, were contested vigorously by the representatives of the Indian Government who, nurtured as they were on Curzonian values, found it difficult to reconcile themselves to a retreat from traditional British aims in Tibet. Neither was their attitude without an element of legitimate concern, for while the Peking Convention had conceded much to China, it had stopped short of formally acknowledging Chinese sovereignty in Tibet. Indeed, its first Article which upheld the main body of the Lhasa Agreement, underlined Britain's acceptance of Chinese suzerainty, and was reciprocated by a recognition of British interest in Tibet in view of that country's geographic proximity to India. Writing of the Anglo-Chinese Convention shortly after its ratification, Satow remarked:

"The really important article in it seems to me the first, by which it is agreed that both parties shall see to the enforcement of the Lhasa Convention, as it emphasises the joint interests that Great Britain and China have in Tibet." 59

59 Grey Papers, FO 800/44, Satow to Grey, 11 May, 1906.
Whatever the similarity in political grammar, the underlying spirit of the Lhasa and Peking Conventions could hardly have been more opposed: the first lay emphasis on the direct relationship between Britain and Tibet; the second, in spite of its first article, sought to relegate such ties to a subordinate status within the wider context of Anglo-Chinese relations. Of the two treaties the ambiguities of the Peking Convention were more pronounced; nevertheless, these might have remained academic if the document as a whole had conveyed a similar meaning to both the parties. As this clearly was not the case, its basic flaws were to be exposed time and again: and never more so than in Tibet itself.

The Chinese, under the directing hand of Chang Yin t'ang remained true to their goal of reducing and, if possible, ridding Tibet of all British influence. Whether haggling over a pettifogging detail concerning treaty rights or questioning a procedural point, their aim was to augment China's prestige and authority within the country. Then as now the Chinese were loath to forego lightly their traditional political and territorial claims.

To Bell, Chang's overbearing behaviour was a Chinese ploy to assert their authority in the Chumbi Valley then under British occupation. The Imperial Resident for his part resented the arrogance of Campbell, the senior British official. There was perhaps a certain irony, albeit unconscious, in a situation in which the representative of one imperial power found the arrogance of the other galling. Bazaar gossip was soon afloat that Chang was going to eject European and Indian troops from Gyantse; that he was proceeding to have Campbell removed from his post, and that if the Indian Government refused to comply with his demands, China would expel the British by force. These rumours
were, no doubt, circulated by the Chinese in order to impress the Tibetans. Imperial prestige was as necessary to China as it was to Britain.

This initial cut and thrust was complemented by Chinese moves on the ground. At Gyantse, Gow made it his business to harry and question the British representative whenever the latter sought to deal directly with the Tibetans, insisting that the Jongpons (local officials) consult him first even on the most trivial issues. He also accused the British of attempting to exploit the Tibetans by under-paying them for goods and services. 61

The fact the Jongpons had complained to Gow about British attempts at price fixing made Bailey believe that they were also encouraging the Chinese official to exact exorbitant rates from him. The Tibetans were indeed playing a game of their own, seeking in a word, to play off British against Chinese. China may have wanted to assert her presence in the Chumbi in order to enhance her political stature in Tibet as a whole; but the Tibetan stakes though less grandiose were more specific - to regain control of this important valley. Lhasa was afraid that its occupation by the British, professedly temporary, could become permanent - a fear not entirely without foundation.

British explanations must have failed to alleviate Lhasa's fears; and noting that their occupation of the Chumbi had still two more years to run, the Tibetans were probably glad to avail themselves of the opportunity of using Gow as a battering ram against those English officials whose immediate presence made them the most obvious objects of attention. The Tibetans showed their hand even more clearly when

61 Ibid, Annexure 2 in No.135, Gow to Bailey, 4 December, 1906.
O'Connor in January 1907 returned to his post. The Jongpons expressed their pleasure at seeing him again (he spoke their language fluently and his pro-Tibetan sympathies were by now common knowledge), and agreed when questioned that relations between themselves and the British Trade Agents had been satisfactory until Mr. Chang had arrived on the scene. The Chinese official had proceeded to inform them that from now on all outstanding questions between the British and Tibetans were to be placed before his representatives. Somewhat apologetically, the Jongpons went on to plead their inability to disobey Chang and as such they would deal with the British through Gow. O'Connor replied by producing a copy of the Lhasa Convention, the relevant extracts of which he read out - but with little effect it would seem, for the Tibetans with a well timed turn of the screw recalled having heard of China's insistence that Britain recognise her sovereignty in Tibet. The veiled irony of this response could not have been lost on the British official who, in the months ahead, had increasing cause to ruminate over the wisdom of his Government's Tibetan policy.

In a response to these developments, Morley favoured a representation to China though in a milder form than that urged by the Government of India. While it was in order to re-state such rights as had been obtained by Britain in Tibet, the Secretary of State recognised the implications of the Anglo-Chinese Agreement of April 1906, in the following words:

"But the principle has been recognised that, provided nothing is done either by the Tibetan and Chinese authorities to impair those privileges, the British Government are precluded by the terms of the convention from interfering, even if they had the desire to do so, with Chinese action in Tibet."

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63 Ibid, Enclosure in No.150, Diary of Captain O'Connor, for the week ending 12 January, 1907.
64 Ibid, No.141, Minto to Morley, 3 February, 1907.
65 Ibid, No.143, India Office to Foreign Office, 5 February, 1907.
However, promises made in Peking, where the Wai wu pu repeatedly affirmed its recognition of the British right to communicate directly with the Tibetans, and undertook to inform its agents accordingly, were rarely fulfilled in Tibet; thus the hope that China would appreciate the extreme mildness of Whitehall's protest by stopping the harassment of British officials in Tibet proved illusory. Relations between Gow and O'Connor progressively deteriorated during the first half of 1907 when the Chinese successfully cut off the British official from all contact with the Tibetans. Complaints poured in from the Trade Agency at Gyantse, but Morley in London, commented sagely to the Viceroy that, "what is needed is to work through the Chinese Government. I should be glad to know what measures O'Connor proposes to take and trust he will do nothing without reference to you."\(^66\)

Eventually, with civilized intercourse between the British and Chinese officials in a state of near collapse the Foreign Office successfully prevailed upon Peking to recall Gow in the larger interest of their mutual relations.\(^67\) His transfer, however, was in no sense a disgrace, for in appreciation of the persistence with which he had stuck to his unpleasant task, his superiors in Peking appointed him Director of Telegraphs at Mukden.

There was also, during this vexed period, a moment or two of high drama in the exchanges between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. Minto's expression of regret at Britain's declining reputation in Tibet brought this waspish rejoinder from Morley:

"When you speak of the loss of British prestige in Tibet as being deplorable, you do not recognise, do you? - that the present Government here, just like our predecessor, regard Curzon's Tibet policy as hugely mistaken. At least one commercial expert assures me that the trade of Tibet is moonshine. Anyhow, our policy is not to act as if we meant to hold on to Tibet."

\(^{66}\) Ibid, No.154, Morley to Minto, 12 March, 1907.
\(^{67}\) Ibid, No.202, Jordan to Grey, 10 July, 1907.
"This is what O'Connor and your Foreign Department do not realise. The other day one of your Tibetan despatches - with a dreadful reek of the old policy about it - almost provoked me to an extremely unofficial explosion. Happily it was followed by a more reasonable performance."

If the Secretary of State sternly stayed the Viceroy's hand over Tibet, it was because both he and his Cabinet colleagues believed that the more compelling demands of Britain's global interests, as they saw them, had to be accorded pride of place in the counsels of Government.

The Indian frontiersmen, he complained,

"wear blinkers and forget the complex intrigues, rival interests, and, if you like, diabolic machinations, that make up international politics for a vast sprawling Empire like ours, exposing more vulnerable surface than any Empire the world ever saw."

As the menacing shadow of Germany lengthened, the canvas of British diplomacy revealed an impressive form. In the East its linchpin was Japan; in the West it was France. Between the two lay the vast land mass of Russia. With French encouragement, London and St. Petersburg had commenced conversations on their outstanding differences. But the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War and the progressive deterioration of Russia's military position interrupted these discussions with Russian public opinion, for a time, turning violently against Britain on account of her ties with Japan. In the face of this British ministers wisely kept their heads in the hope that the storm would pass and that Anglo-Russian relations would soon be blessed with a fairer wind. There was almost a Palmerstonian echo in Lansdowne's comment to Hardinge shortly after the conclusion of Russo-Japanese hostilities:

68 Morley Papers, D 573/2, Morley to Minto, 2 May, 1907.
69 Ibid, D 573/1, Morley to Minto, 11 October, 1906.
"If Japan is now regarded as a friend of Russia, is there any reason why Great Britain should not be so regarded ...."70

In other words, there were no eternal villains in British diplomacy.

As an earnest of his Government's good faith Lansdowne sent a copy of the second Anglo-Japanese Treaty of September 1905 to the Russian Ambassador, even before its official publication, with the observation

"that it is framed in accordance with principles to which we are all of us committed, and may I add that it contains nothing to prevent Russia and Great Britain from resuming the friendly examination of those important questions which you and I were discussing when the war so unfortunately interrupted our deliberations."71

For Britain the war had, by bringing Russia sharply to heel, served its purpose: the Tsar and his ministers might now be more accommodating. A prolonged conflict could not only prove ruinous for both the combatants but also defeat one of the principal ends of British policy. Hardinge put the matter well:

"How wise the Japanese have been in making peace instead of exhausting themselves by a long war with nothing to be got from it that they have not already obtained. Their value to us as allies might have been much depreciated and they have now plenty of occupation for themselves in Korea for a long time to come."72

Any possibility of a permanent Russo-German combination directed against Britain - a cherished dream of the Kaiser's - was put paid to in the Balkans where Berlin remained firm in its support of its Austrian ally; and in the Near East where it increasingly exploited the weakness of the Ottoman rulers for its own ends. The last hope of forging such an understanding came to naught when the secret Bjorko alliance of

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70 Lansdowne Papers, FO 800/141, Lansdowne to Hardinge, 21 October, 1905.
71 Ibid, Lansdowne to Benckendorff, 4 September, 1905.
72 Ibid, Hardinge to Lansdowne, 30 August, 1905.
July 1905 concluded between William II and Nicholas II foundered on the objections of Russia's principal ally, and Germany's chief adversary - France. The Treaty was thus stillborn, for the Tsar found it impossible to ride two horses at once. His French connection was vital to the economic well being of his country which, since 1890, had come to depend heavily on large financial loans raised in Paris. And with the conflict with Japan over a month later, Russia's expenses proved, at first count, to be very heavy indeed - a severe financial drain coupled with economic instability and growing social unrest. The need for foreign borrowing remained as acute as ever. Only France could supply the necessary funds. At the Algeciras Conference, called to discuss the Moroccan crisis early in 1906, Russia dutifully lined up with Britain in support of the French. Their united stand forced Berlin to give way. Nine days after the proceedings had been finally concluded, Russia was rewarded with a loan of over two billion francs from Paris.

The hour for which British statesmen had been so fondly hoping had at last arrived: Russia was prepared to talk seriously about reaching a political accommodation. In sum, the traditional Tsarist policy of limitless expansion had to be modified. In the Far East Japan had put a brake on Russia's progress; in the Balkans Austria

75 Grey had remarked: "Meanwhile I am impatient to see Russia re-established as a factor in European politics. Whether we shall get an arrangement with her about Asiatic questions remains to be seen: I will try when she desires it and is ready, and till she is ready we do not wish to change the situation in Persia or elsewhere."
Grey Papers, FO 800/72, Grey to Spring Rice, 19 February, 1906.
barred the way; in the Dardanelles it was Turkey; and behind both loomed the menacing shadow of Germany. The Russian army was exhausted; Russia's economic development gravely interrupted, while the 1905 uprising was an ominous portent of those deep, half-hidden currents which could suddenly break loose and tear the social fabric asunder. Moreover negotiations could bring considerable political and territorial gains. If Tokyo and Petersburg, erstwhile enemies, could in a spirit of mutual compromise discuss the possibility of achieving an understanding on their spheres of influence in Northern China, there was no reason why talks with Britain could not bring similar dividends. Here, furthermore, was the prospect of an added bonus in the shape of loans that could be raised on the London stock exchange thus helping a sorely pressed Government to press on with its schemes for the industrialisation of the country.76

With Germany its principal pre-occupation the major goals of British diplomacy were now in Europe. Taylor aptly observed:

"In Salisbury's time, Great Britain made arrangements with European Powers in order to defend her empire; now she made concessions outside Europe in order to strengthen the Balance of Power."77

Thus in view of the current international situation, problems which had hitherto lain dormant assumed a dimension of compelling urgency. Balfour had set up a committee to review questions of Imperial defence. The

76 In a conversation with Dillon, the Daily Telegraph correspondent and a close friend, Count Witte observed that what Russia currently "needed was not so much the support of a military power as that of a great liberal and commercial power. England's sympathy if afforded in some open and evident form would be of the very greatest service to the party of order .... He said that if England could see her way to such an open and evident sign of sympathy he himself could undertake to arrange permanently for the settlement of all difficulties between the two countries in the form of a satisfactory treaty." Grey Papers, FO 800/72, C. Spring Rice to Grey.

Spring Rice rightly concluded: "But Witte wants it (Agreement) because he wants money ...." Grey Papers, FO 800/72, Spring Rice to Grey, 29 March, 1906.

military resources currently available to the Empire were considered wholly inadequate; the case of India - the crux of the problem - being particularly acute, especially when it is remembered that the Indian Army in addition to manning the frontiers of India was also expected to protect the authority of the Raj from internal uprisings. Lord Roberts advocated the introduction of universal military service citing the examples of France, Germany and Japan but his proposal failed, on political grounds, to commend itself to Balfour.

A possible alternative would be to raise the strength of the Indian Army on the basis of Indian resources alone but this would add to the country's existing burden and lead to even greater mass unrest. The political upsurge following the partition of Bengal in 1905 had convulsed key areas of India and drawn in considerable sections of the educated classes. To the guardians of the Raj these developments were the source of grave foreboding; hence a diplomatic arrangement with Russia which would lessen some of the external pressure became the call of the hour.

Economic considerations complemented political and strategic needs, for the Russian market offered sizeable rewards to British capital: a far flung empire, rich in raw materials, seeking to develop its industries and its railways; yet unable to achieve these goals without the aid of foreign money and technology. "I need hardly tell

78 Balfour Papers, 49698, Roberts to Balfour, 25 November, 1905.
79 Writing to Nicolson, Chirol reported alarming news from India: men and non-commissioned officers of certain regiments were believed to be attending political meetings in defiance of orders. Measures were being rushed through to redress native grievances in the army about pay.

The political agitation was even spreading to the Madras Presidency which had hitherto been immune to seditious agitation. Hence: "All this is an additional cause for hoping that our long drawn negotiations with Russia will be brought as soon as possible to a satisfactory conclusion."

Nicolson Papers, FO 800/339, Chirol to Nicolson, 5 June, 1907.
"you," observed Nicolson to Hardinge, "that the resources of Russia are enormous, varied and most valuable - and will afford a splendid field for English enterprise." Three years later he was harping on the same theme:

Schemes are afloat for diverting the Oxus, irrigating deserts, and making Turkestan a great cotton growing territory. These are not visions - but projects seriously entertained and likely to be realised in some form or another. Both Siberia and Turkestan have a very great future before them - and will be splendid markets for us - if our people would only bestir themselves a little more. I hope the visit here next month of delegates from several of our Chambers of Commerce, London, Liverpool, Hull, Bristol etc. will do good.

Meanwhile, Grey was ready to bestow the blessings of the Foreign Office - in an unofficial capacity of course - on the projected Anglo-Russian bank. "We would not," he remarked, "discourage it in any way, because we were now on friendly terms with the Russian Government, and the employment of British Capital in Russia on good security and in co-operation with Russian enterprise, would naturally lead to good relations between the two countries and be welcome to us."

But however compelling were these larger factors that propelled both parties towards an accommodation, the lingering suspicions and jealousies of a lifetime remained an obstacle in the way of mutual trust and good will. Russia, a semi-medieval autocracy often spoke with many voices. Possessing at first neither a popular representative assembly nor democratic institutions of any sort, the politics of her ruling class were often the politics of factions. People like Witte, who had a good grasp of economic and social problems, mixed uneasily with militarists, arch reactionaries and charlatans of every kind. The

80 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/337, Nicolson to Hardinge, 6 October, 1906.
81 Ibid, 22 September, 1909.
intelligentsia, tarred by the brush of treason in the eyes of successive Tsars and their associates, had no role in society except as adversaries of the monarchy, while the peasantry, poor, and mostly illiterate, were no more than hewers of wood and drawers of water. Heading this rickety structure was the "all powerful" Tsar, the last European monarch who, claimed his throne on the basis of Divine Right; weak of character, a willing prey to the reactionary fantasies of those nearest him, unreliable in temperament, yet a political influence of the first magnitude.

It was not the military power of Russia that Britain now feared, but the lack of stability in its political and social structure which threatened its credibility as a political partner. It was indeed a British hope that the newly constituted Russian Duma, a popular Assembly grudgingly conceded by the Tsar following the abortive uprising of 1905, would grow in strength and stem the tide of revolution by bringing to the fore those liberal forces whose values would make them Britain's truest friends.

Not least of the many problems of negotiating with Russia was the vanity and unpredictability of its crowned head. Well before Nicolson arrived in St. Petersburg to formally commence discussions, the Tsar on his own initiative not only received Dorjieff as an emissary of the exiled Dalai Lama; he also sent him a telegram of support in early April 1906. Spring Rice related the embarrassment of the Russian Foreign Office at the "Emperor's romantic interest in the spiritual chief of the Buddhist world; but is quite unable to control His Majesty." However,

83 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/337, Nicolson to Hardinge, 21 June, 1906.
84 Grey Papers, FO 800/72, Spring Rice to Grey, 10 April, 1906.
the British Charge d'Affaires dropped a hint to the Russians that such
behaviour could conceivably jeopardize the prospect of a loan from
London. A month later he was able to reassure Grey that the affair had
no specifically anti-British overtones but involved the amour propre of
the Tsar,

'deeply flattered by the supposed devotion of the Buddhist Church
to himself personally and by their offer to acknowledge him as
temporal protector (vice China, retired). Since his journey to
the East he has had some idea of the sort which has been
sedulously nourished by Uchtomsky who accompanied him. The
attitude of the Court officials during the Thibet War was
significant as they regarded it as a personal insult to the
Emperor himself. The Dalai Lama was his friend and supporter.
He had suffered for his friendship to Russia and the Emperor
regards it as his sacred duty to accord him protection. The
story so often repeated by the Government that the Emperor is
bound to do something to conciliate his Buddhist subjects is
only partly true. The total number of Buddhist subjects of the
Empire must be under 600,000 out of 128,000,000 and his sympathy
for the Jews and the Mahomedans among his subjects (who are
numbered by millions) is not very pronounced. The real reason
is the idea which he has fixed in his mind that if he assumes or
is given the right to act as temporal protector of the head and
centre of the Buddhist faith he will become the moral chief of
the continent of Asia. Of course the idea is chimera but so
was the idea of becoming the "Lord of the Pacific" 85 which he
talked so much and which cost his Empire so dear.'

Such vainglorious posturing did not however conceal the true aims of
Russia's Tibetan policy from the perceptive eyes of Arthur Nicolson who,
having arrived at St. Petersburg in early June, 1906, was observing,
within a month of starting official conversations with Izvolsky, that
Russia's desire "to maintain intimate relations with the Dalai Lama,
either present or future, or failing a Dalai Lama then with the Tashi
Lama, is actuated by a wish to exercise, through that personage, some
control or influence over the Mongolian nomads. Their concern for the
spiritual welfare and the comforts of their Buriat subjects is, I imagine,
in second place though they put it forward as their sole object." 86

85 Ibid, 2 May, 1906.
86 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/37, Nicolson to Grey, 5 July, 1906.
The age-old ploy of using the Tibetan Church as a political instrument in Central Asia had once again come into its own. At about the same time, Poklewsky from the Russian Embassy in London called on Hardinge at the Foreign Office for a discussion on Mongolia and Manchuria. The Permanent Under Secretary observed that on the basis of past experience certain elements within Russia having seen their country thwarted in Manchuria were now keen to absorb Mongolia. His Russian visitor however assured him that his Government was interested in nothing more than the maintenance of the status quo. The Russians were apparently alarmed at the increasing Japanese interest in Mongolia as evinced in their encouragement of Peking's efforts to impose a centralised Chinese administration in place of the existing loosely knit structure. A few months later they returned to this theme when Izvolsky put out a feeler to Nicolson about including a clause affirming the desirability of maintaining the status quo in Mongolia in the Tibet Convention, suggesting as a bait that as the two countries were close neighbours, it would be in Britain's interest to agree. The British Ambassador, in a despatch to Grey, voiced his unhappiness over the matter since any such reference in the projected treaty would constitute an interference in the internal affairs of China. Hardinge, in an initialled comment, observed that "Russia has ulterior motives in her interest in Mongolia and she desires the maintenance of the present feudal system in order that the Chinese administration may never be regenerated in those provinces." Grey echoed these sentiments, adding that as Britain supported the integrity of China, Peking must have a free hand within its frontiers.

87 FO 371/177, No.26357, Minute by Hardinge, 10 July, 1906.
88 FO 371/382, No.2244, Nicolson to Grey, 6 January, 1907.
89 Ibid, Comment by Hardinge.
90 Ibid, Comment by Grey.
India also made known its objection to the inclusion of Mongolia in the treaty on Tibet. In a final conversation with Poklewsky - for the Russians never raised the subject again - Hardinge summed up his Government's position as follows:

"... it is quite impossible for us to restrict the action of China or any other Power in Mongolia although we can always restrict our own. Tibet is treated as part of the Chinese Empire, as Mongolia is also. I stated as my personal and private opinion that we could not go further than to say that in view of Russia's geographical position we recognise her special interest in the districts of Mongolia coterminous with the Russian frontier."91

This statement contained one particularly loosely expressed point. For instance, the status of Mongolia and Tibet were not strictly analogous, the former being listed as a province of China while the latter was assumed to have a special status. As this was a distinction in whose defence British diplomatists were later to fight tenaciously, Hardinge's lapse proved expensive.

The quid pro quo which Russia only offered because of its current weakness and also for its possible use as a bargaining counter in negotiations with Japan was thus for Britain a great opportunity lost. For it should be noted that as Russia had already made significant penetration in those parts of Mongolia in which she was specially interested - Hardinge's phrase about the "districts of Mongolia coterminous with the Russian frontier" was to assume a massive dimension in the shape of Outer Mongolia - London's refusal to accede to this arrangement did nothing to prevent the Tsar's Government from fulfilling its designs. And with Japan conceding Russia her sphere of influence in Outer Mongolia in the secret Russo-Japanese Convention of 30 July, 1907,92 it is hardly surprising that the Russian Government never again raised the subject with Britain. Russia had won a free hand for

91 FO 371/382, No. 4142, Comment by Hardinge.
herself in Mongolia, while Britain whose rights in Tibet were kept within the strict limits of the Lhasa and Peking Conventions seemed well satisfied with a bargain that only guaranteed that country's political sterilisation.

Haunted by the thought that she had little to offer by way of concessions in Persia, Afghanistan or Tibet - the areas under discussion - Britain was prepared to strengthen the hands of those Russians most friendly to her, like Izvolsky, and ensure the existence of a government at St. Petersburg committed to the smooth passage of Anglo-Russian relations, even countenancing the modification of her traditional attitude on the question of Russian rights in the Straits of Dardanelles.

The basis for the prospective conversations outlined by Nicolson soon after his first formal meeting with Izvolsky included the following points: first, that Russia like Britain would accept China's suzerainty over Tibet, and engage not to interfere in the internal affairs of that country. Second, that Britain by reason of her geographical proximity had a legitimate concern in seeing that Tibet's external relations were remained undisturbed by a foreign power. Third, that both Russia and Britain would agree not to send a representative to Lhasa. Fourth, that neither Russia nor Britain would seek to obtain special concessions regarding railways, roads, mines, etc. from the Tibetan authorities either for themselves or for their subjects; and fifth, that both parties would agree that no Tibetan revenues in cash or in kind were to be pledged to themselves or to their subjects.

93 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/337, Nicolson to Grey, 7 November, 1906.
94 Grey Papers, FO 800/72, Grey to Nicolson, 16 November, 1906.
As the Russian Government, with the Emperor's approval, found these proposals acceptable, they were eventually incorporated into the final convention. But if these were the areas of agreement, what were the issues that divided the two sides? There was, first of all, the question of visits to Lhasa by Russian Buriats - for spiritual purposes it was said. However, in view of previous British experience the dividing line between spiritual and temporal motives was often dangerously thin. Nicolson aired the prevailing official fears about this, and the possibility of the Dalai Lama's return to his capital when he remarked:

"Whatever paper guarantees we may obtain as to the limitations and nature of permissible communications between the Russians and the spiritual authorities in Thibet, they will afford little security against a continuation of close and unofficial intercourse with the Dalai Lama personally. I do not know if it would be possible to exclude that personage permanently from Thibet, but I should have misgivings if he were to be installed again in Lhasa. I have little doubt that Dorjieff came on a mission from the Dalai Lama and though for the moment the communications between the Russian Government and him may refer principally to Mongolia and the spiritual needs of Russian Buriats, I doubt if they will continue to confine themselves to these subjects which may not be of direct interest to us. Whatever may be the goodwill and sincerity of M. Izvolsky himself in such a matter, he would not be able to control and check the activity of others.... To my mind it is important that we should have an acknowledgement on the part of Russia of our own special interests in Thibet, so that if we find those interests tampered with or jeopardised, we could take action accordingly."95

It was agreed eventually to reaffirm the right of both Russian and British subjects to make the journey to Lhasa for strictly religious purposes. But, in order to remove the chances of any immediate misunderstanding that could ruin the newly established trust between the two sides, each government agreed to put a ban on all geographical and scientific missions to Tibet for a period of three years. Although not written into the main body of the Convention, the respective

95 Grey Papers, FO 800/72, Nicolson to Grey, 21 November, 1906.
plenipotentiaries agreed to observe this provision in an exchange of notes which were then attached to the Treaty. The Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa was also to be discouraged as a result of which he was to remain in exile a few years longer. The British agreed to evacuate the Chumbi Valley as soon as the third yearly instalment of the indemnity under the terms of the Lhasa Convention had been paid. One last point remained. Neither government was certain as to the exact geographical limits of Tibet - the Indo-Tibetan frontier was largely known but it was the Sino-Tibetan boundary that gave rise to doubt. It was finally accepted at the suggestion of Russia that for present purposes the Chinese view of Tibet's territorial alignment should be regarded as valid. As it turned out this particular problem was merely papered over, re-appearing some seven years later in a contentious form in the negotiations at Simla between British India, China and Tibet.

The Anglo-Russian Convention which came into force on 31 August, 1907, was little more than a palliative; indeed, if anything it was to prove as far as relations with Tibet were concerned, a halter round Britain's neck. Yet the chorus of relieved approval which greeted its signing was a measure of the sense of crisis that had affected the leading figures of British political life. So keen was the Home

95A J.V.A. McMurray, Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894-1919, New York, 1921, p.679
96 A notable exception was Lord Curzon who while welcoming better relations between Britain and Russia was severely critical of the terms of the convention on the grounds that they involved an abject surrender of British interests. This was particularly so in the case of the Chumbi Valley which the Home Government had decided to give up. Parliamentary Debates, Volume 183, Speech by Curzon, 6 February, 1908, Columns 1001-10023.
Some eight months earlier, on 11 June, 1907, The Times published a letter from a distinguished body of people including Bernard Shaw, Ramsay Macdonald, John Galsworthy, and J.A. Hobson, protesting at the Anglo-Russian convention (the substance of the document was apparently known even before its official publication) on moral grounds. They felt it to be a betrayal of the liberties of the Russian people and of the Jews against a government which had shown scant regard for its past pledges in the case of the Black Sea and Manchuria.

Government to reach satisfactory terms with Russia that the Foreign Office during the talks consulted only the India Office, the Prime Minister and Lord Ripon, almost totally ignoring the Indian Authorities. Hardinge noted the possibility, with a mixture of hope and expectation, that Russia from now on might concentrate her attentions on the Near East, and that this would bring her into conflict with Germany. The uncertain politics of Berlin, of which he had great personal knowledge, was one factor that had made Valentine Chirol change his hitherto bitterly hostile opinion of the Tsarist empire. But it wasn't the most important. "It is the Indian situation which more than anything else made me anxious to see the Anglo-Russian agreement concluded ...." a view shared by A.C. Lyall who writing to Nicolson observed that ".... in the present state of India the importance of avoiding foreign complications on and beyond the Indian frontier is great."100

The Anglo-Indian Press, traditionally hostile to Russia, reacted to the Convention in tones of cautious welcome. The Pioneer Mail, for instance, observed that while treaties were never everlasting, "the grand virtue of the present instrument lies in its comprehensiveness, and in the fact, that unlike its many predecessors, it seems to have been drawn up with an honest intention of closing all possible doors for future misunderstanding .... What we have to look to, however, is not the conditions of forty years ago but of four years ago. In this light by the acknowledgement of Russia's pre-eminence over a region where it was already an incontestable fact, we seemed to have gained security for India, independence for Afghanistan, and immunity for Tibet."101 Of this

97 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/339, Hardinge to Nicolson, 10 July, 1907.
99 Ibid, Chirol to Nicolson, 27 October, 1907.
100 Ibid, Lyall to Nicolson, 5 September, 1907.
101 The Pioneer Mail, Allahabad, 4 October, 1907, p.9.
independence the Afghan ruler was singularly unappreciative refusing, much to the annoyance of the British, to recognise a treaty to which he had not been party; while from his Darjeeling exile, three years later, the Dalai Lama must have been pondering ruefully over the virtue of his country's immunity. The leading organ of nationalist opinion, The Bengalee, whose editor was the distinguished Surendranath Banerjee, voiced its approval of the Convention on the ground that it might help curtail the Government's military expenditure and thus provide much needed relief to the Indian taxpayer. 102

Official circles in India, however, were less well disposed to this agreement. Minto was hostile 103 and so was Kitchener. Morley was hurt by the Viceroy's attitude. "I say this grieves me to the quick," he remarked, "because all depends on the spirit in which (on both sides) the Convention is worked, and undoubtedly if the agents of the British Government approach the working of it with counsels of suspicion, anger, despair, the prospect is not cheerful." 104 A year later Minto tried to mollify the Secretary of State, although his strong feelings on the subject made this difficult.

'Please do not think,' he remarked, 'I am shortsighted as to the value of Russian friendship at the present moment - and the German spectre is not at all unseen here. All the same "I have ma doots" as to the reliability of the friendship largely because I doubt the strength of the central power of control at St. Petersburg .... but one must look at the whole stage before one, and not be carried away by local emergencies. I quite see it, though I have never liked the price we are paying for Russian goodwill ie the obligation to be hand in glove with the most autocratic, cruel and corrupt of powers - neither can I think it can be acceptable to you!' 105 This phillipic

102 The Bengalee, 3 September, 1907, p.5.
103 Morley Papers, D/573, Minto to Morley, 22 August, 1907.
104 Ibid, D/573/2, Morley to Minto, 19 September, 1907.
105 Minto Papers, 4E/365, Minto to Morley, 29 July, 1908.
against the Russian autocracy might have carried more weight had not the Viceroy then gone on to extol the virtues of friendship with Turkey - whose ruler's depravity and decadence put him beyond all others - on the plea that the Turks were the finest soldiers in the world, and that their Caliph was venerated by millions of Muslims in India.

In order to ensure a smooth passage for the St. Petersburg negotiations, Morley had insisted that the Home Government's policy should be observed in letter and spirit by Indian officials. He was thus irritated to learn of Bell's visit to the Panchen Lama, though made at the latter's request, in the winter of 1906.106 And when the distinguished explorer, Sven Hedin, expressed a desire to visit Tibet (which he did in February 1907), refused him permission to go there by way of India. The Indian Government was only permitted to forward his letters to Shigatse, where he was due to stay, and to allow him entry through its frontiers should he choose to leave Tibet from that direction. Now, with the Treaty with Russia signed, the Secretary of State saw to it that the ground rules of his Tibetan policy were applied with even greater vigour. The Russians had "a finger in the Tibetan pie",107 and no amount of pleading by Minto about using the British occupation of the Chumbi Valley as a lever against the Chinese was able to shake the Secretary of State's resolve that the area had to be evacuated strictly on time; thus he cared less than the Indian Government about whether a Chinese or a Tibetan handed over the cheque for the final instalment of the Tibetan indemnity. '.... it is humiliating', he remarked,

106 Minto Papers, 4E/349, Morley to Minto, 7 December, 1906.
107 Morley Papers, D 573/3, Morley to Minto, 3 January, 1908.
'to think how much of diplomacy is made up of points as this of ours. I know you will say, "yes, about the Chumbi, behind Punctilio lies Policy; and the Chinese mean to play the first fiddle in Tibet, and this business about the payment is part of their tune." True enough, but I cannot for the life of me see what we gain in substance, permanent substance, by this long-drawn battle over a shadow. "Prestige with the Tibetans?" What was it ever worth, and was it worth a pin more than it was the day before. Curzon had a policy. So had the Cabinet that over-ruled him. Let us take care lest we fall between two stools, by trying to be in and out of Tibet.'

It was quite clear that O'Connor's day in Tibet was done. The British Trade Agent had few illusions about the real significance of the understanding achieved at St. Petersburg. "As you will have seen from the Russian agreement," he remarked to his friend, F.M. Bailey, "Tibet is a dead dog as far as we are concerned." His former adversary, Gow, who had been withdrawn from Gyantse as a concession to the British, had been honoured on his return to China. O'Connor had a less exciting fate. His removal by the Indian Government, early in 1908, was described by Morley as "a moment of wicked joy", and he was entrusted with the less onerous task of escorting the Maharajkumar of Sikkim on a world tour.

O'Connor, a great admirer of Lord Curzon, was one of a band of intrepid political officers whose initiative, daring and courage had been responsible for the success of many an imperial enterprise. Explorers, travellers, linguists, scholars, they lived for long years among the peoples of the Indian frontier, studied their customs and habits, spoke their languages, admired their qualities, were tied to them by deep bonds of affection. Born during the high noon of Empire they were schooled in the certainties of Victorian values. From the harsh

109 Bailey Papers, F 157, O'Connor to Bailey, 1 October, 1907.
110 Morley Papers, 3573/3, Morley to Minto, 19 February, 1908.
111 O'Connor spoke Tibetan, Nepali, Pushtu, Persian, Urdu, and read and wrote Russian.
discipline of public school they often passed straight into the
autocracy of India where society worshipped at the twin altars of class
and status. They experienced little or none of the travail of the new
popular politics that were slowly transforming the face of Britain. 112
O'Connor, Bell and Bailey were three such men who served their country
with distinction on the borders of Tibet. They were not the ordinary
Indian bureaucrat whom Morley found so tiresome, 113 and who sometimes
drove Curzon to distraction. However tenacious and subtle in
diplomatic bargaining, none of their Chinese co-peers could match them
for breadth of mind and spirit.

While in England, O'Connor, having had dinner with Morley,
confessed:

"I got for the first time some inkling of how our democratic
Empire is governed." 114

Nevertheless, he observed that the Secretary of State

"keeps the Indian Government completely in the dark about his
plans and treats them as so many children." 115

This estimate was hardly an exaggeration, judging by the tone of one of
Morley's letters to Minto written at about this time:

112 Extolling the virtues of life on the frontier to any aspiring officer,
O'Connor remarked:

'But he will find himself in the thick of real live politics - that is,
history in the making, not "politics" as they are known in England, where
the word connotes party intrigues, and personal struggles for office, and
manoeuvres in the House of Commons.'
113 "I wonder whether it is my fault, that somehow I cannot discover from the
high Indian officials who come across my horizon all the great qualities
on which they all so liberally compliment one another .... It is perhaps
natural that they should all talk the same lingo .... but this constant
repetition .... becomes horribly monotonous. I suspect you are dosed with
it all day long the year through, and if so, it must be a terrific price
to pay for your proconsular splendours. You see, I can retreat to my
little Tusculan villa, and keep bores at arm's length."  
Morley Papers, D 573/2, Morley to Minto, 31 May, 1907.
115 Bailey Papers, F.157, O'Connor to Bailey, 22 June, 1908.
"In a poor country like India, Economy is as much an element of defence as guns and forts, and to concentrate on this and upon a host of outlying matters in Tibet, Persia, the Gulf etc. which only secondarily and indirectly concern you .... seems to me to be a highly injurious dispersion from the other and more important work of an Indian Government. Then again, notwithstanding all you say about the Man of the Spot, I humbly reply that this is just what the Government of India is not. China, Persia, Turkey, Russia, France, Germany - I have never been able to understand, and never shall understand, what advantages the Government of India has for comprehending the place of those factors in the great game of Empires. On the contrary the Government of India is by no means the Man on the Spot. That I say again, is just what the Government of India is not."116

This, in a sense, symbolised the true measure of the crisis of Empire: a minister of the Crown in charge of Indian affairs, and a responsible Indian official found themselves unable to communicate with each other; one arm of the imperial bureaucracy was finding it increasingly difficult to appreciate the problems of another. At such moments, Britain's possessions seemed uncommonly large and unwieldy.

Meanwhile the Chinese, under Article 3 of the Lhasa Convention, proposed trade negotiations between themselves and Britain in order that the 1893 Regulations could be reviewed and, where necessary, suitably amended. However, the provision calling for such talks only included the "Tibetan Government" and British representatives. The Peking Convention added to the confusion by according China the position of de facto overlord in Tibet but leaving her de jure status nebulous. The Chinese were, quite clearly, out to strengthen what they had thus gained. Hence the forthcoming negotiations turned out to be as much about politics as they did about trade. But even before they formally got under way,

116 Minto Papers, 4E 351, Morley to Minto, 3 January, 1908. A great many of these sentiments made good sense: prosperity, after all, did constitute a vital element in a nation's security; yet the Secretary of State by the same logic (Britain, rich though she was, also had her share of the poor) never dreamed, for instance, of advising his Cabinet colleagues to reduce the country's growing naval expenditure.
John Jordan, Satow's successor at Peking, made a strong plea to the Foreign Office to try and disentangle the contradictions and ambiguities of its Tibetan policy. 'It would be advisable', he remarked, 'to take advantage of the present negotiations to define more precisely than is done in the existing Conventions the questions in which we claim the right of direct correspondence with Tibet and the extent to which we are prepared to accept the Ambas as the intermediary between the Indian and Tibetan Governments. The very term "Tibetan Government" requires to be defined. In the Chinese text of the 1904 Convention it appears only as "Tibet" and outside of that instrument no Government in that country other than that of China is in reality recognised by the Chinese. My short experience of the working of the existing Conventions convinces me that there will always be great difficulty in getting China to recognise the existence of Tibet as a separate political entity and that the tendency will be more and more to construe the Adhesion Agreement of 1906 as returning to China her full suzerain powers. The present position is somewhat anomalous. One day we treat some Tibetan question, scientific missions for example, with China exclusively without any reference to Tibet, and the next time we insist that, so far as the 1904 Convention is concerned, the co-operation of Tibet is essential to give Chinese action due validity. It is very much as if the United States had made, say, a Fishery Convention independently with Newfoundland and insisted that while Great Britain was at liberty to regulate the other foreign relations of the Island as she pleased, she must be associated with the Colonial Authorities in seeing that the terms of the particular Convention were duly fulfilled.'

117 L/P5/10/148, No.31739, Jordan to Grey, 7 August, 1907.
The Chinese delegation which arrived in India in August 1907 was headed by Chang Yin-tang, and included the Tsarong Shape of Tibet, Wang Chuk Gyalpo; but even the exchange of credentials and other preliminary courtesies that normally precede the commencement of such a conference generated considerable friction between the two sides—a state of affairs arising from the inconsistencies of Britain's Tibetan policy as highlighted in Jordan's despatch.

Much to Chang's chagrin, Minto received the Chinese members of his delegation together but granted a separate audience to the Tsarong Shape. The Viceroy's gesture was, if anything, clumsy and discourteous. Minto and his wife, who had taken great pride in setting one major community in British India at the throats of another, were naturally loath to eschew practices at which they were so adept. In more appropriate fashion, Dane, the Indian Foreign Secretary, fought hard at the negotiating table for the insertion of a statement in the preamble which while accepting Chang Yin-tang's appointment by the Emperor of China pointed out that the Tsarong Shape's status was conferred upon him by the Tibetan High Authorities. The Chinese Imperial Commissioner contested this vigorously, claiming that the Tibetan owed his authority to Peking and that these negotiations were really between Britain and China. He expressed the view that the Peking Convention rendered autonomous rights such as were granted to Tibet under the Lhasa Convention null and void. Neither was this the only contentious issue, for just previously, Chang with all the solemn absurdity associated with the mandarins of his time, asked to be received on an equal footing with the Viceroy of India. The request being refused the Chinese envoy fell victim to a bout of diplomatic illness.

118 Minto Papers, 4E 361, Minto to Morley, 22 October, 1907
119 L/PS/10/148, No. 1782, Dane to Ritche, 23 September, 1907
thus keeping faith with one of the principal stage rules of Chinese statecraft.

The negotiations proceeded with slow deliberation with the Indian Government eventually making more concessions to China than they might have done had Morley granted them permission to use the Chumbi Valley as a lever. The Trade Regulations were finally signed in Calcutta on 20 April 1908 by B.C. Wilton on behalf of Britain and Chang Yin Tang and Wang Chuk Gyalpo respectively. The Government of India gained a point in the preamble while acknowledging that Chang Yin Tang was an appointee of the Emperor of China stated that the "High Authorities of Tibet have named as their Representative to act under the direction of Chang Tachen and take part in the negotiations the Tsarong Shapo, Wang Chuk Gyalpo". This, however, was counterbalanced by a Chinese gain in Clause 13 which described Chang and Wilton as plenipotentiaries and referring to Lhasa's representative as "Tibetan Delegate". This general ambiguity was also noticeable in Clause 12 under which China undertook to police the trade marts effectively in exchange for which Britain agreed to withdraw her guards and send further troops to these areas. It then followed that

"The Chinese Authorities will not prevent the British Trade Agent from holding personal intercourse and correspondence with Tibetan officers and people".

A year later Peking was to justify its military action in Tibet on the plea that it was exercising its policing powers.

It was not that Chinese gains on paper were excessively substantial; they appeared more impressive by virtue of the fact that China by a vigorous policy on the ground decided to make the maximum use of the advantages she had gained under the treaty and at the same time also exploit the ambiguities of the Agreement by presenting Britain with

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Aitchison, Treaties, pp. 28-29.

A. A. A.bid, p. 33.

A. C. bid.
a series of \textit{fait accomplis}. Furthermore the evacuation of the Chumbi Valley in early February 1908 while the talks at Calcutta were still in progress may have lent weight to the Chinese achievement in the eyes particularly of the Tibetans and the peoples of the Himalayan borderlands. But of Peking's real intentions there can be little doubt. It was, in a word, determined to absorb Tibet into the Chinese body politic.

But China's clearest political gains arose from the economic consequences of the Regulations which maintained the status quo in Anglo-Tibetan relations in matters of trade and commerce. The question of fixing tariffs on ordinary articles - one of the unresolved problems from the past - was no nearer a solution, and until such time as an agreement was reached the Lhasa Authorities insisted on levying traditional dues much to the chagrin of the British. The unique economic, social and political significance of the tea trade placed this commodity in a special category. Not surprisingly the Chinese were loath to forego the use of so valuable an instrument and, as such, all the efforts of Indian tea interests to promote the sale of their product in Tibet came to naught. The Indian Tea Cess Committee had in a piteous appeal drawn the Government's attention to the commercial and political obstacles that barred them from establishing profitable business relations with the Tibetans. With the trade negotiations under way they hoped that their interests would not be forgotten, recommending that

"such arrangements should be made as will enable Indian producers to compete for the market with Chinese growers."\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{120} Further Papers Relating to Tibet, Cd. Paper 5240 of 1910, Volume 68, Enclosure in 208, Secretary, Indian Tea Cess Committee to India, 10 October, 1907.
If these demands were not pressed sufficiently hard it was not for want of any effort on the Government of India's part; it was because the Secretary of State remained adamant that Britain's involvement north of the Himalayan chain - both commercially and politically - should be reduced to a bare minimum, and no amount of pleading by the Viceroy or his advisers was going to make him reconsider his position.

As the Chinese began strengthening their position in Tibet in the period following the Peking Convention of April 1905 they set about instituting a series of probes along the southern reaches of the Himalayas. These new activities commenced early in 1907 when Chang Yin Tang informed Nepal that he intended paying a visit to Khatmandu. According to some rumours it was believed that he was going to request the Nepalese for a loan in order to enable him to carry out a scheme of administrative reform in Tibet, and that he would seek the aid of the Gurkhas in training a Tibetan army; stories were also afloat that he intended to rebuke the Durbar for the help it had given the Younghusband Mission. Knowing of Nepalese plans to send a tribute-bearing embassy to Peking, Chang may have felt that the moment was opportune to emphasise Nepal's status as a Chinese tributary. As it was, Chang's visit never took place; and the Nepalese Mission which was received by the Empress Dowager in May 1908 proved to be the last of its kind. There was indeed never any sign that the Nepalese would welcome Chinese influence either in their own country or within Tibet. They had developed over the years considerable commercial interests in Tibet in defence of which they...
had gone to war in 1854-56. As a result, their merchants, who enjoyed special rights in that country, were understandably never very popular there, and periodic anti-Nepalese riots put relations between the two countries under considerable strain.

Any fundamental change in Tibet that could jeopardise Nepal's interests was unwelcome to her rulers. In the years preceding the Younghusband Mission Nepal had threatened to move against Lhasa in the event of Russian influence becoming permanent there. Now, Chandra Shamsher was telling Manners Smith, the British Resident, in April 1907, that if the Chinese retaliated against a possible Nepalese refusal to allow Chang Yin Tang to visit their country by cutting off Nepal's trade links with Tibet, or closing down her mission at Lhasa, his country was prepared to take recourse to arms. And since he expected British support, his threat presented them with an awkward dilemma.

For if Britain had to eschew conflict in Tibet in the interests of her international undertakings, the continued security of her rule in India depended largely on the loyalty of her Gurkha soldiers. Writing to Morley, Lord Roberts observed that

"should any serious trouble arise in India in the near future, Nepal might play as useful a part as it played in 1857 on the Ridge at Delhi and in other ways .... for what has been, and is still, going on in India, makes it clearer than ever that we are not there with the will of the people, and nothing that we can do for them will ever make them wish us to remain."

Thus,

"from the Indian point of view, Nepal has become really the crux of the Tibetan problem for two basic reasons: the Gurkhas form the best fighting material of the Indian Army: we can afford neither to lose them ourselves nor to risk their passing over to anyone else. Again the ruling caste

122 Morley Papers, D573/3, Morley to Minto, 7 May, 1908.
"is Hindu and a hostile and powerful Hindu state on the border will be a great source of danger in the event of serious dissatisfaction in the interior. It has therefore been generally assumed as an axiom that we cannot allow Nepal to pass out of the Indian sphere of influence into that of any other power."123

If Hirtzel's document124 on the history of Sino-Nepalese relations - "a remarkable example of special pleading"125 according to Lamb - betrayed any anxiety it was on account of Nepal's special importance to British India in those troubled times, and not because of any fear that China's supposed claims over that country were genuine. The argument that Bhutan and Sikkim by belonging to the Tibetan world were linked, albeit tenuously, to China becomes even more threadbare when applied to Nepal whose rulers and inhabitants belonged largely to the Indian culture area.

As Peking's intentions started to crystallise, Nepal emerged as one among a number of pieces on the Chinese chequer board. In a conversation with the Nepalese Representative at Lhasa, Chang observed:

"China, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim might be compared to the five colours, viz, yellow, red, blue, black and green. A skilful painter may so arrange the colours as to produce a number of beautiful designs or effects."126

The Amban opened a newspaper in which his government's views were given a thorough airing and of these Bailey, from Gyantse, kept his superiors in India well posted.

The groundwork for the eventual British response to these forward thrusts by China was achieved by the tireless efforts of principally three frontier officers. The first, A.W. Paul, in the concluding years of the 19th century succeeded in drawing the Bhutanese out of their shell

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123 L/PS/18/91, Tibet by A.H. Hirtzel, 27 January, 1913.
124 L/PS/13/3176, Historical Note on relations between Nepal and China, by F.A.H. Hirtzel, 4 November, 1910.
126 L/PS/10/149, No. 564, Bailey to Bell, 11 February, 1909.
See also C.A. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, London, 1924, p.101.
of aloof hostility; and the Tongsa Penlop's aid to Younghusband was a tribute to his work and that of his successor, J.C. White. The Government of India also made its own contribution by magnanimously allowing the Bhutanese to keep a tract of some 70 to 80 square miles of territory north east of Kalimpong which due to a surveyor's mistake had been included in Bhutan.\(^{127}\) Having perhaps realised that the new regime at Whitehall was set on jettisoning Curzon's Tibetan policy, White directed his efforts at strengthening Anglo-Bhutanese relations as a second line of defence. He visited that country in May 1906, and again in April 1907, on the occasion of the Tongsa Penlop's coronation as Maharaja. The Political Officer recommended a new Anglo-Bhutan treaty to replace the existing Sinchula agreement of 1865 suggesting in particular a fresh clause which would allow the British Government to arbitrate in disputes between Bhutan and all her neighbours and whose final decision had to be accepted as binding.\(^{128}\) Previously this right to arbitrate only included disputes involving the Hajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar. Later, in December 1907, White led yet another mission to Bhutan whose aims and expectations were best summed up by the \textit{Pioneer Mail}:

"... it is not to be supposed that because there has been no flourish of trumpets, Simla attaches no importance to the despatch of this embassy. It is a friendly mission, a mission of congratulation, a mission to pay the respects of the Government of India to the newly elected Maharaja of Bhutan .... The Indian Government could no more contemplate with equanimity the setting up of a hostile power over its borders in Bhutan that it could, say, in Nepal. Friendly dynasties in both must be the object of our desires .... The time has arrived for cementing our friendship with Bhutan and for adding the corner stone to the arch begun by the Mission of 1905."\(^{129}\)

\(^{127}\) FO 535/3, Enclosure 1 in No.3, Bengal to India, 26 January, 1904.
\(^{128}\) L/PS/10/221, No.981, White to India, 13 April, 1907.
\(^{129}\) The \textit{Pioneer Mail}, 4 October, 1907, p.9.
This visit, however, failed to fulfil its promise, thanks principally to Morley's extreme wariness - amounting at times to horror - at involving Britain in unnecessary political entanglements. By the time Bell succeeded White as Political Officer in Sikkim in April 1908, the Chinese had begun to unfurl their colours. Like his predecessor, Bell advocated the controlled development of Bhutan's natural resources with British and Indian help, and suggested that the new Maharaja, Ugyen Wangchuk, should be asked to place the conduct of his country's external relations in British hands in exchange for which he would be guaranteed complete internal autonomy and given an increased annual subsidy. The one loophole that might conceivably have allowed for Chinese penetration into Bhutan would thus be effectively closed. For whereas White's proposal permitted British arbitration only in disputes between the Bhutanese and their immediate neighbours - there remained a possibility, however remote, that Chinese agents could be invited to enter the country by the Maharaja independently of any undertaking given to Britain - Bell's suggested agreement met both the needs of the current situation and the possible demands arising from a future contingency. With these sentiments, Wilton, who was in India advising the Government in the negotiations with China over the Trade Regulations, was in basic accord. Such thinking did not conflict with the reality that Bhutan as a state was fully independent of Tibet and China; that whatever the ties that bound its rulers - as in the case of their Sikkimese cousins - with the hierarchs of Lhasa these were religious and cultural and implied no political subordination. Likewise, although the Chinese Emperor was venerated, there was never any hint that Peking's political supremacy had been accepted. Lamb, however, hints otherwise, stating that as a result of China's attempted mediation in
a civil conflict in Bhutan in 1885 the Amban "managed to acquire through the crisis some measure of control over the appointment of the Deb Raja and the Penlops."130 As proof he quotes from a contemporary Memorial to the Throne. These Chinese Memorials had often more to do with 'face', and the requirements of prescribed etiquette by which a mandarin in the 18th and 19th centuries held back unwelcome news from reaching the ears of the Son of Heaven, than with factual reliability. For instance, the Emperor Chien Lung only moved against the Gurkhas in 1792, after they had already invaded the Panchen Lama's domain twice in successive years, because the Amban at Lhasa had kept him in the dark about the earlier aggression. It is hardly enough to ascribe such behaviour simply to the generally poor quality of Chinese officials in Tibet. That this was not an uncommon practice may be gauged by the experience of the first Opium War when early Chinese reverses were carefully concealed from the Court at Peking. Thus the events referred to by Lamb are described differently by Bell. "In 1835," he remarked dismissively, "the Ambans at Lhasa demanded of the two leading Chiefs in Bhutan, the Penlops of the Tong-sa and Pa-ro districts, that they should restore a Bhutanese chief, whom the Penlops had expelled, but the demand was disregarded and abandoned."131 It is true that the present Maharaja had once been presented with an insignia of rank, comprising of peacock feathers, by the Chinese but these had faded from disuse. Moreover no soon had the Amban addressed him in early 1908 than he promptly informed the British. Chinese tutelage, it is clear, held no attractions for him.

Fortified by expert advice, Minto penned his despatch of 1 October 1908 to the Secretary of State recommending an urgent review of British policy towards Bhutan which

"is co-terminous with British territory for about 240 miles. It rolls down to the south in low hills and shades away over a mere geographical line to the Doobars which are occupied by tea-planters and other British capitalists. Moreover it is fast becoming a Nepalese State. Already three-quarters of the population of Sikkim are Nepalese, and the Gurkhas, who are multiplying fast are streaming over into the vacant spaces of Bhutan. For obvious reasons it is of real importance to keep the Gurkha States under our control." 132

This last observation underlined the imperial necessity of balancing social and ethnic groups in as polyglot an empire as India. Furthermore, it indicated that however effusive were the British expressions of regard for Nepal there was always an undercurrent of suspicion concerning the political ambitions of its rulers. But it was eight months before Morley was moved to approach the Foreign Office. His departmental note pointed out that

"The question involves not only the direct result of the establishment of the Chinese authority in Bhutan, on the immediately adjoining districts, and on our position in Sikkim, but the wider issue of the effect that would be produced thereby upon Nepal." 133

And writing to Grey from Peking, Jordan, whose advice was sought, voiced his firm opinion "that a Treaty of the kind contemplated is necessary to checkmate Chinese pretensions." 134 Finally on 8 January 1910 a treaty was signed in Punakha placing Bhutan's external relations in British hands but otherwise guaranteeing complete internal autonomy to the Bhutanese Government. Britain also increased her annual subsidy of Rs.50,000 to Rs.100,000 to the Maharaja. The signatories were C.A. Bell and Ugyen Wanchuk.

132 L/P/10/221, No.1921, Minto to Morley, 1 October, 1908.
133 Ibid, India Office to Foreign Office, 22 April, 1909.
134 Ibid, Jordan to Grey, 27 April, 1909.
134A Aitchison's Treaties, pp.100-101.
Although reluctant at first to heed the promptings of India, the Secretary of State's hand was eventually forced by the growing evidence of a Chinese forward policy whose political tremors were initially being felt in the Himalayan States. Lamb believes that China's manoeuvres were

"probably little more than ballons d'essai intended to test the reactions of the British and the rulers of the Himalayan States ... in the ability to create such pressure the Chinese had acquired a bargaining card of some power. In the second place, the rulers of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan had probably not been quite so adamant in the face of Chinese diplomacy as they tried to make the Government of India believe."^{135}

To take this last point first. There is no evidence - indeed Lamb has suggested none - to show that the rulers of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan were coquetting with the Chinese or exhibited in any way the slightest preference for them. Their material interests for one thing militated against such an attitude; their veneration for the far-off Emperor at Peking was a mere ritual and, if any political significance is attached to it, it should be for the very good reason that it stemmed - like the feelings of the Tibetans - from fear and dislike of China. Lamb's other observation is much too ingenuous. Certainly, little objection can be seriously made against a political move or gesture intended to test a neighbour's intentions, for this is part of the accepted cut and thrust of normal diplomacy. If, however, such action should turn out to be a prelude to a military campaign or is co-ordinated with it, the matter assumes a more ominous dimension. By Lamb's somewhat artless definition, the Japanese aggression in Manchuria in 1931 can be reduced to a measure designed simply to test Chinese and world reactions. The same, no

doubt, could be said of Japan's undeclared war with the Soviet Union in 1939 - along the borders of Outer Mongolia. Manchu China, for single-minded endeavour, for military strength and ruthlessness may have fallen short of the standards of Meiji and Fascist Japan. Yet expansionist impulses, commensurate with its strength, seem to have driven Peking forward in areas of Central Asia on the basis of imperial traditions. Relationships with smaller nations, however tenuous and hoary, were pressed into the service of her territorial demands. As with a resurgent Japan, atavistic passions, masked by a bland exterior, came readily to a boil at moments of crisis.

An examination of Chinese thinking as evidenced in the conversation between Chang Yin Tang's secretary, Liu, and Wilton hardly inspires a sanguine view of their Himalayan policies. Tibet, declared Liu, had belonged to China for centuries, and was as much a part of the Chinese Empire as India was of the British, an analogy of particular interest in view of the much favoured anti-imperialist defence of Peking's moral and political position there, put forward by latter-day Chinese nationalists of both the Knomintang and Maoist variety. Chang's secretary went on to remark that hitherto it had been his country's policy to seal up Tibet but it was her intention to build it up as a bulwark for Szechuan. In reply to Wilton's assurance that the British Government only wanted trade facilities in Thibet, and that Great Britain at any rate, had no more idea of invading China through Thibet than China had of invading India through Thibet, Mr. Liu laughed and said that preposterous as the latter half might seem, there were people in China who nursed it .... Mr. Liu told me that he heard alarming accounts of the unrest in India but admitted that he had not seen the slightest signs of disturbance ...."136

136 FO 555/10, Enclosure 1 in No.104, Notes of a Conversation between Wilton and Liu on 23 and 28 September and 1 October, 1907.
Even at a time when their country’s fortunes were at a perilously low ebb, there were elements within China who revealed deep and disturbing ambitions.

However, in the complicated tapestry of international politics, it is only natural to suppose that there were other factors affecting China’s calculations. The respite that the Chinese were able to win from Russia, thanks to the latter’s conflict with Japan, was over. The three Great Powers, Russia, Britain and Japan, that had gained most at China’s expense were burying past rivalries in the interests of a common accord. And in the light of previous experience, the Chinese believed that such an understanding could only be sanctified at the cost of their country’s political and territorial integrity. Russia was resuming her pressure in Mongolia and the Anglo-Russian Convention thus aroused deep, popular suspicion within China.137

Hence her most appropriate response was surely to prevent the consolidation of any potentially hostile combination. Before which of her principal adversaries, Russia or Britain, (Japan was to fill this role later) should she dangle a bait that would draw it away from its partner? As the former was the more unquenchable in its quest of territory, it was to the latter that China turned. Britain had accepted China’s predominant position in Tibet and she was evacuating the Chumbi Valley strictly on time. The moment was opportune, and much to Minto’s astonishment, Chang and Liu approached the Indian Government with a proposal for an “offensive and defensive alliance between ourselves and China.”138 Morley politely turned

137 FO 371/382, No.34674, Jordan to Grey, 4 September, 1907.
138 Minto Papers, 4E 365, Minto to Morley, 6 February, 1907.
down the offer. However, Chinese reasoning emerged in clearer outline: Russia could be resisted with greater strength in Mongolia while in Tibet China would have carte blanche in adopting any measures she considered necessary to consolidate her authority. Such British privileges that remained in Tibet would be there by courtesy of China rather than by legal right. The Chinese calculated, no doubt, that with so much unrest in India, the British would find a proposal that would relieve them of some of the pressures in the Himalayas attractive, if not irresistible. Their move though well timed and not without a dry logic, particularly when viewed through the strictly circumscribed perspective of a Chinese world-view, nevertheless reflected in its very conception an inability to perceive the powerful currents which were bringing Britain and Russia together. It is this failure to comprehend foreign politics in all its dimensions that has been the traditional Achilles heel of Chinese diplomacy.

Notwithstanding the failure of her efforts to draw Britain into an alliance, China went quietly ahead in her preparations for a more assertive policy in Tibet. Indeed the Imperial Decree of March 1903, with its reminder that Tibet was a rampart for Szechuan, and its call for fundamental reforms from Lhasa was a portent of things to come. The future was not slow in revealing itself. Chang Yin Tang withdrew to Peking where he took charge of the Tibetan department of the Wai wu pu. He was essentially a diplomat and his duel with the British had been a battle of wits; for all the while his scabbard remained empty. His successor, Chao Erh-feng was principally a soldier and one of the most remarkable Chinese of his time.

139 I/28/10/221, No.1921, Enclosure 7, Imperial Decree, 9 March 1903 of 174, Minto to Morley, 1 October, 1908.
The significance of this new appointment was not lost on the British Ambassador. "It is unusual," observed Jordan, "to select an official of his standing and record for this position .... Chao Erh-feng is expected to perform in Tibet functions similar to those of Marquis Ito in Corea, and especially to extend the control of the Chinese Government over the Tibetan Administration."\[140\]

In September 1903 the Dalai Lama arrived in Peking from his wanderings through Mongolia and north-west China which had commenced with his flight from Lhasa four years before. Any hopes that he might have had of getting succour from Russia were finally extinguished by the Anglo-Russian Convention. A stay in the Chinese capital gave him an opportunity of pondering and exploring other courses of action. Not surprisingly the Tibetan Pontiff was soon in touch with the representatives of the leading foreign embassies in Peking. Jordan was one of the first to be granted an audience, a sure sign that relations between the two nations were on the brink of a significant change. The Chinese, however, were deeply suspicious about such contacts and did their best to discourage them.\[141\] There was little they could do by way of curtailing the Dalai Lama's freedom while he was near Mongolia and its surrounds from where he drew his spiritual following; but once in Peking they kept him under close watch, which even the impressive ceremonial accorded him could scarcely disguise. "There is a sort of tragic interest," remarked Lord Bryce after reading a report by W.W. Rockhill which was made available to him by President Theodore Roosevelt, "in observing how

140 Further Papers Relating to Tibet, Cd.5420, No.238, Jordan to Grey, 9 April, 1909.
141 FO 535/11, No.114, Jordan to Grey, 12 October, 1908.
"the Chinese Government, like a huge anaconda, has enwrapped the unfortunate Dalai Lama in its coils, tightening them upon him till complete submission has been extorted .... It deserves to be noticed in this case that not only has the Dalai Lama been thrust down to a lower position than his recent predecessors had occupied, by being obliged to send his Memorials to the Chinese Government through the Chinese Viceroy in Thibet, but that these are not permitted when they reach China to go direct to the Sovereign .... The history of this whole transaction enforces once more the moral which seems the natural one to be drawn from the British expedition into Thibet. The chief result of that expedition has been to immensely strengthen the hold of China of Thibet, making it now almost a province of the Chinese Empire, and therewith to give British India upon the northern frontier instead of the feeble and half barbarous Thibetans, a strong, watchful, and tenacious neighbour which may one day become a formidable military Power."\[142\]

As if in echo of Curzon, Younghusband or O'Connor, Rockhill noted with regret that Britain did not press for the stationing of one of her Commercial officers at Lhasa during the recently concluded negotiations with China over Trade Regulations. A British presence there would not only have been a restraining influence on Tibetans and Chinese alike but also "assist in a peaceful change in the administration of the country."\[143\] Neither was there any harm, according to him, in conceding Russia a similar privilege if she asked for it, since London and Petersburg were now bound in a common accord.

The Foreign Office, however, being in one of its more unimaginative

\[142\] FO 535/12, No.3, Bryce to Grey, 17 December, 1908.
\[143\] Ibid, Enclosure in No.3, Rockhill to Roosevelt, 8 November, 1908.
moods preferred to wait upon events whose climax came with Chao Erh-feng's flying column of 2,000 men thrusting at the gates of the Tibetan capital and the Dalai Lama in flight on 25 February 1910, for the sanctuary of the Indian frontier.

The Government of India was expressing its concern even before the Chinese had reached Lhasa. In a lengthy, if at times incoherent, telegram, Minto tried to arouse the Home Authorities by raising the spectre of Chinese atrocities once Tibet was totally subjugated; by pointing to the danger of Nepal taking action on her own account in order to safeguard her interests - a serious point which was underlined by enclosures from the Durbar at Khatmandu addressed to Calcutta; by accusing China of violating past treaties and undertakings; and by urging the necessity for close relations with the exiled Tibetan Pontiff

"as in his absence, a monopoly of wool, hides and yak tails, against which strong remonstrances have been addressed to us by Cawnpore Woollen mills and Kalimpong merchants, were given by Lhasa to certain Thibetan merchants. Our political officer has also received an appeal in regard to this from the Bhutan Durbar."

This last point, made at a time when a crisis whose possible consequences dwarfed the relatively petty problems of trans-frontier trade, devalued the tone of the Viceroy's warning. The Foreign Office was inclined to scorn the idea of any real danger. But a mild note to China, calling her attention to the danger of unrest along India's frontiers and expressing the hope that she would do nothing to exacerbate matters, was recommended. The feeling at Whitehall was that as China had in the past been reproached for not having sufficient

145 Ibid, No.3292, Max Muller to Grey, 15 February, 1910.
control over her Tibetan Dependency a strong British move now would appear highly illogical.

Morley, in his letters to Minto, particularly those written in March 1910 by which time the Dalai Lama, safely ensconced in Darjeeling, had met the Viceroy, reflected the prevailing scepticism about India's alarm. The Secretary of State, ever sensitive to the scent of Curzonianism, warned against taking any precipitate steps that would lead to a repetition of the events of 1904; his message flavoured with a dressing of utilitarian tenets would, he hoped, commend itself all the more to his colleague in Simla. "Let me tell you," he remarked to Minto, "how it strikes shrewd and expert people in the City. We have at least, they say, got our gold standard reserve back where it was before the American crash and famine in India. A year or two of normal rains will restore some finance and smooth water. But if we get drawn into a Tibetan expedition, chasing a lower import duty on tea, in favour of a trade that good judges say will never be worth two pence - or mix ourselves up in rows between China and Tibet, we shall squander a million or two that will throw us back, and be absolutely unproductive."\(^{146}\)

In the months ahead, Morley never ceased to declaim against the slightest tendency to enlarge the scope of British commitments. His themes were unvarying: to make China take the place of the old Russian bogey would be a deplorable error of judgment; he would/China and Tibet fight out their own battles; he poured scorn on all the idle chatter about Prestige; he balked at any proposal to strengthen the military escorts at the British Trade Agencies since the Tibetans might

get the erroneous conclusion that Britain was about to take up cudgels on their behalf; and he was tired of the Dalai Lama, "a pestilent animal, as he has proved himself to the Chinese in Peking, who should be left to stew in his own juice."\(^{147}\)

The British Charge d'Affaires at Peking did little to ease the confusion within the Foreign Office, if anything, he contributed most notably to it as the following extract from one of his reports should show. "A policy which consists in subjugating outlying dependencies," observed Max Muller to Grey, "before the Central Government is in a position to exercise proper control over the provinces of China may appear strange and contradictory from the western point of view, but in China we are in the land of contradictions, where the men dress as women and the women as men.

"It is highly probable that the Chinese Government have no clearly defined policy in Thibet .... but there can be no doubt as to their general intention which is that Thibet shall become a province of China, in fact if not in name thus aggravating the responsibilities of the Indian Government and emphasising the necessity for watchfulness on our frontier and in the three neighbouring frontier states."\(^{148}\)

It may have been suitably patronising to ascribe the apparent irrationality of China's policy to the general quaintness of the Chinese people, but for all the blandness of his comments, Peking's moves were more finely calculated than the British Charge had the wit or the wisdom to realise. For it was in China's outlying Dependencies, sparsely populated and inhabited largely by non-Chinese subjects, that her authority was most vulnerable. It was here, therefore, that she faced

\(^{147}\) Ibid, D 573/6, Morley to Minto, 30 June, 1910.  
\(^{148}\) FO 535/13, No.67, Max Muller to Grey, 22 April, 1910.
the most compelling need to assert her sovereign rights and have them recognised by the international community, even if the administrative control normally associated with claims to such rights had to await a more favourable hour. In China proper the strong bond of national identity compensated for the weaknesses of the Central Government.

But complaisant though officialdom in London was about China's action in Tibet, they viewed the prospect of a lengthening Chinese shadow over the Himalayan border States with marked apprehension. Muller had informed the Wei-wu pu that Britain would not allow any changes that China might affect in Tibet to interfere with the integrity of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. In reply the British were assured that China had no intention of interfering in Sikkim and Bhutan though no reference to Nepal was made, an omission whose significance became clear soon afterwards with the notification of Chinese suzerainty over that country. By now Jordan was no longer in a mood to hide his anxiety, claiming, in a private letter to Alston at the Foreign Office, that as the Chinese had been less than frank about their activities in Tibet, it was time for Britain to protect her own interests.

"A formal memorial in the Peking Gazette every 10 years has been hitherto the only evidence of their claim to suzerainty over Nepal, and this is, I think the first time they have notified us of such a claim."

The British Ambassador suggested that India should immediately open negotiations with Nepal - before indeed China had consolidated her power in Tibet - over an arrangement concerning the control of the latter's external relations. This was imperative as any Chinese assurances on the subject of non-interference in Nepal were of little

149 FO 535/13, Enclosure 1 in No.67, Max Muller to Prince Ch'ing, 10 April, 1910.
150 FO 371/854, No.16007, Jordan to Alston, 11 May, 1910.
value. Jordan's estimate of the promises received in Peking was not unduly harsh when it is recalled in the light of recent events that only two months before, Na T'ung, the President of the Wai-wu pu, in an interview with Max Muller "emphatically denied the report which had appeared in the press as to the Viceroy and Chao Erh-feng having proposed the conversion of Thibet into a Chinese province, rested on the slightest foundation .... as the step would constitute a violation of the stipulations of the Anglo-Chinese Treaty."\(^{151}\)

The problem that faced Britain now was not so much to protect Nepal as much as to persuade her against launching an attack on Tibet in defence of her commercial privileges. The question had assumed a certain urgency since Chandra Shamsher had already enquired of the Government of India whether the provisions of the Anglo-Chinese and Anglo-Russian Conventions pledging to uphold the territorial integrity of Tibet applied to his country; and the India Office to whom his note was passed on had to admit that they did not. Confronted with this delicate situation, Morley fell in with Minto's proposal - which was to inform the Maharaja that in view of Britain's commitments to Russia and China, she expected to be consulted by the Durbar before it embarked on any armed action. He was strengthened in his view by fears in the Foreign Office that behind any display of force by Nepal the Russians might choose to detect the hidden hand of the Indian Government.

As to Jordan's suggestion, the Secretary of State while recognising the advantages of a treaty with Nepal under which Britain would control its external relations thought it prudent to await the initial overtures from Khatmandu. Otherwise his natural caution made him keenly alive to

\(^{151}\) FO 535/13, No.40, Max Muller to Grey, 6 March, 1910.
the danger of a recalcitrant Nepal refusing one day to abide by such an agreement.152

As the possible threat of an explosion along India's northern frontier gradually receded so too did the danger of an attack on British Trade Agencies in Tibet. Nevertheless, troops were assembled at Guatong, in case the need for their services arose. But for this uneasy calm in the Himalayas, Britain shared no direct responsibility. She had accepted China's right to do as she pleased in Tibet, but China on her part, had fewer scruples in questioning British authority in the Himalayan border kingdoms, and in the belt of largely tribal territory east of Bhutan, by putting forward irredentist claims. In October 1910, the Indian Government was informing London that China had addressed a communication, dated 8 August, 1910, to the Chiefs of Bhutan in terms that presupposed Chinese suzerainty if not sovereignty over that country.153 This was soon followed by rumours of an impending visit to by a Chinese mission to the Nepalese and Bhutanese capitals. Max Muller therefore reminded the Wai-wu pu of the British note of 11 April 1910 in which China was informed that no interference by her in the affairs of the Himalayan States would be countenanced. In reply the Chinese claimed that both Bhutan and Nepal were vassals of Peking but admitted that Sikkim was under British protection. Furthermore it denied all knowledge of the Anglo-Bhutan Treaty and affirmed the right to regulate its relations with Bhutan's rulers according to established precedent.154

These claims, as the British Charge correctly pointed out, went beyond the previous Chinese note of 18 April. Its tone moreover was so

152 FO 371/894, No.1678, India Office to Foreign Office, 11 May, 1910.
153 FO 535/13, Enclosure in No.170, Minto to Morley, 4 October, 1910.
154 FO 535/13, Enclosure in No.190, Wai-wu pu to Max Muller, 28 October, 1910.
aggressive and unconciliatory that he thought best to forward it to the
Foreign Secretary. The India Office when consulted on the subject
responded with remarkable coolness. They felt that the Wai-wu pu should
be informed of Britain's acceptance of the "present friendly and
complimentary relations between Nepal and China", but took a stronger
line on Bhutan. Peking had to be informed that Bhutan had entered into
a treaty with Britain of her own free-will, and as China had been made
aware of its contents, there could be no further excuse for her to
address the rulers of this small Himalayan country in the manner of a
suzerain.

The absence of any undue alarm or apprehension at the Chinese
claim over Nepal, a country whose importance to the Raj had been
repeatedly emphasised in the past, becomes somewhat less astonishing
when it is known that both Simla and Whitehall were by this time in
possession of a letter by Chandra Shamsher in which he had expressed
strong feelings on the subject. "I repudiate," remarked the Nepalese
Prime Minister to the British Resident at Khatmandu "with all the stress
and emphasis at my command the Chinese claim of suzerainty. The claim
is a damaging reflection on our national honour and independence,
besides being an unwarranted fiction. We have always regarded the
nature of our relations with China, although of long standing, as
innocent, simple, and friendly. Nepalese missions to Peking are of
the nature of embassies from one court to another ..., the channel by
means of which our high regard and respect for the Emperor was expressed,
and the good-will of the Chinese Government, especially on account of
our heavy stake in Thibet, is cultivated. The missions ..., can never
be regarded as tributes. The Durbar agreed with me that a claim so

155 Ibid, No.190, Max Muller to Grey, 3 November, 1910.
"derogatory to their status as a free people must be promptly disavowed."157

In his five years at the India Office Morley in conjunction with Grey had redefined Britain's Himalayan policy. Relations with Tibet were to be regulated within the firmly prescribed confines of commercial privileges centred around the three trade marts of Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok. Active British interest in local politics was to extend no further than the southern side of the Himalayas. But as the Chinese had made no reciprocal gesture this amounted to no more than a self-denying ordinance. More than ever the situation demanded that India's line of defence be drawn up on sound geographical and strategical principles. Yet this is precisely what Morley failed to do. The Chumbi Valley, the most sensitive point on the whole north and north-eastern frontier of India, was handed over to the Chinese with astonishing unconcern; and Indian officials who had the temerity to warn of the possible dangers of such a move earned either a lecture or a scolding from the Secretary of State. One such person was W.F. O'Connor whose cogent plea for the retention of this strategic valley has echoed prophetically down the years.

"It is," he observed,

"...a wedge of foreign territory thrust down to the south of the Himalayas into the middle of States friendly or subject to us. North of the Himalayas there is a great barren upland stretching for 100 miles before any fertile spot is reached where any body of troops can be maintained. Without Chumbi, China would be unable to retain any but the most insignificant garrisons within 100 miles of our frontier. With Chumbi she can retain quite a considerable garrison within our natural boundary and can post officials there to worry us and to intrigue with the neighbouring States.... Chumbi, geographically and historically, should belong to us. It is necessary to us for strategical, commercial, and political reasons. The people are well disposed to us and would welcome our rule. If it were ours it would constitute a valuable security for the peace of that frontier. In the hands of a foreign (and possible hostile) Power it is always a thorn in our sides - a cause of friction in time of peace and a danger and embarrassment in time of war."158

157 Ibid, Enclosure 1 in No.193, Hardinge to Crewe, 6 December, 1910.
158 FO 535/11, Enclosure I in No.101, Note by Major O'Connor regarding Tibet, 13 March, 1908.
These lines were written in March 1908. Two years later the Dalai Lama had fled his country as columns of the Chinese army marched into his capital. It was an event which drew from the Morning Post in London this sombre reflection:

"... a great Empire, the future military strength of which no man can foresee, has suddenly appeared on the North-East Frontier of India. The problem of the North-West Frontier thus bids fair to be duplicated in the long run, and a double pressure placed on the defensive resources of the Indian Empire.

"The men who advocated the retention of Lhasa have proved not so far wrong, whatever their reasons for giving the advice. The evacuation of the Chumbi Valley has certainly proved a blunder. The Strategic Line has been lost, and a heavy price may be exacted for the mistake. China, in a word, has come to the gates of India, and the fact has to be reckoned with."
CHAPTER V

THE SEARCH FOR A FRONTIER: THE McMAHON LINE

Even as the crisis in the Himalayas continued to simmer, Minto's term of office expired. The question of his successor was one to which the Home Government had given much thought. Kitchner had aired his desire to don the viceregal regalia, and both the King and the Prime Minister, Asquith, looked on him with favour. The final decision which, however, rested with Morley went against him. The Secretary of State was, for a start, uneasy at the prospect of a soldier heading an essentially civilian administration. But when the soldier in question happened to be Kitchner his doubts hardened into a resolute opposition, for the Indian Commander-in-Chief had already given Morley a foretaste of the methods with which he had once reduced Curzon. Unknown to his colleagues in India, or at Whitehall, he had sought to whip up opposition to the Anglo-Russian Convention, on which the Cabinet set great store, with the help of the military correspondent of The Times in London. Only this time there was no Tory cabal to lend weight to his efforts. When Morley got wind of the intrigue, he gave vent to his feelings in no uncertain terms.

"Now I have always had almost a superstitious faith in the loyalty of every soldier to his salt," he remarked to Minto, "... but I am amazed and dismayed at this sort of perfidy."

The choice finally fell on Charles Hardinge, the Permanent Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. A grandson of a former Governor-General in India, and a protege of Edward VII, his rise to prominence made

2. Morley Papers, D 573/2, Morley to Minto, 3 October, 1907.
him one of the principal advocates of closer British relations with
France and Russia. Having shared in the anxieties and preoccupations
of two successive governments, he was intimately aware of their major
concerns. Able, rather than brilliant, it was perhaps felt that as
a Viceroy, Hardinge could be trusted to keep India on a safe and
steady course, with its internal administration maintained in good
working order, but more importantly, its external policies functioning
within the carefully prescribed limits set up by the Home Government.
This meant, among other things, that the Indian Foreign Department
whose time honoured distrust of the Tsarist Empire had presented
problems in the past, had to abstain from any action which could
conceivably impair the existing relationship between Great Britain and
Russia.

The new Viceroy's first public speech with its friendly reference
to Russia was read in St. Petersburg as a statement of intent, and
Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, promptly

"sent ... a telegram expressing the thanks of the Russian
Government ... and promising to co-operate with me in
a friendly settlement of any question arising to affect
Anglo-Russian relations in India." 5

The most urgent question awaiting Hardinge's attention was the
growing Chinese pressure along the Himalayas. Far from withdrawing its
claims to Nepal and Bhutan, Peking now began to manifest an active
interest in the belt of tribal territory farther east. The relatively

4 Discussing the question of a successor to Arthur Godley on the eve of his
retirement as Permanent Under Secretary at the India Office, Morley
ascribed the lack of an obvious successor to the general dearth of
outstanding talent in the Civil Service in the following words: "In the
F.O. there was no one: even Hardinge was not a first class mind."
864/5, F.A. Hirtzel's Diary, 7 January, 1903.
easier gradient of its mountain walls; the fact that it was largely inhabited by an assortment of primitive tribes about whose political allegiance the British were uncertain made this area the weakest link in the Himalayan chain. For similar reasons China felt equally vulnerable; the southern flank of Eastern Tibet seemed to be dangerously exposed thus laying bare the approaches to her western province of Szechuan. Not surprisingly, the whole region became, for a time, a natural field for Anglo-Chinese rivalry with each Power maneuvering to gain control of the most strategic positions. Thus, the search for a strong, secure frontier along the Assam-Burma-Tibetan divide emerged as a principal theme of Hardinge's Viceroyalty.

In this the Viceroy had to proceed with care lest the web of alliances and interests on which so much British time and calculation had been expended should suffer some irretrievable damage. He had therefore to thread his way through the labyrinth of a diplomatic minefield, and it would have been little short of a miracle had he succeeded in reaching his goal without setting off even a minor disturbance. Hardinge's freedom of action was limited from yet another quarter; for although Lord Crewe had become the new Secretary of State, Morley, still an influential member of the Cabinet, continued to keep a jealous watch on the activities of the Indian Government in the trans-Himalaya; the merest sign that they were straying from the strict observance of the policy of non-interference laid down by him while in office, was instantly noted and opposed. Indeed, so large loomed the shadow of the former Secretary of State that when the present incumbent had to retire for a while through illness, his predecessor returned to preside in his place.
While official Indian attention in the 19th century may have been concentrated on Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and other areas of the frontier farther west, the Assam Himalaya was not ignored. Assam had been absorbed by the British in 1826, and in keeping with the prevalent practice elsewhere on India’s northern borders, they sought to revive a traditional, trans-frontier trade by opening a mart at Odalguri in the Darrang District in 1833 to which it was hoped traders would come from Tibet and the hills to barter their wares. However, as the border with Tibet was undemarcated, there was occasional friction between officials of the Assam Government and those of their northern neighbour and this put paid to any thriving commercial enterprise for the present. Nothing daunted, certain scribes and experts continued to give expression to their hopes of a day when the Brahmaputra as an artery of commerce would carry British goods and services to the very heart of the Celestial Empire. Shortly after the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa, Sir Thomas Holdich wrote in a similar vein reviving, however fleetingly, the vision of an earlier age. "It is a gradual rise from the plains of Assam (500 feet)," he remarked, "to the highlands of Lhasa (11,500 feet), and in those good times when the last relics of savage barbarism shall give place to that interchange of commercial rights which is, after all, the best guarantee of international peace (a guarantee founded on mutual interest), it will be realised that this is the natural highway from India to Tibet and western China, and we shall have a Tibetan branch of the Assam railway, and a spacious hotel for sightseers and sportsmen at the falls." But in order to realise this dream, a great deal remained to be done in the way of acquiring vital geographical and ethnographical knowledge of

Upper Assam. It was an area of dense jungle, of great rivers like the Brahmaputra, whose precise course was as yet unknown, and of hostile tribes, a list of which from west to east was as follows: Akas, Daphlas, Apa Tarrangs, Miris, Abors, Mishmis, Khantis and Singphos.7

In the second half of the 19th century punitive missions were periodically sent against the Abors, Mishmis and Daphlas for,

"true to their highland origin they have endeavoured to live at the expense of their neighbours of the plains."8

The Monbas, however, were one ethnic group who were an exception to this rule. Kinsfolk, perhaps, of the inhabitants of Eastern Bhutan at some distant past, they were law abiding, timid and showed great skill as farmers. Their social customs resembled those of Tibet, except that polygamy and polyandry were not prevalent among them. Both in their language and religion, Tibetan influences were plainly evident; a fact easily understood when it is known that Towang, the specific area in which they lived, lay under the administrative control of the Tibetan authorities and that its monastery of 500 monks had strong links with the parent body at Drepung, near Lhasa.

Towang or Konyul (meaning in Tibetan the lower country) consists of an area of 2,000 square miles wedged in between Bhutan on the west, the Miri and Aka hills in the east, Assam in the south, and by a rugged mountain range of 15,000 feet in the north which separated it from the Tibetan plateau. Although two subsidiary ranges subdivided Towang into three broad physical zones the country was, as a whole, easier to traverse than any other in the territory.

8 L/PS/18/B 180, North-Eastern Frontier of India, J.E.S. Shuckburgh 1910.
It was also notable for the road that commenced at Odalguri, proceeded thence to Taklung Jong before passing through it into Tibet, and whose total distance from the foothills to Lhasa was a mere 311 miles. The commercial possibilities were best summed up by O'Connor:

"Towang is a mart of some importance as the distributing centre of goods from Lhasa and Eastern Tibet, from Bhutan, India and Assam, and from the fertile, though savage districts of Southeastern Tibet; and no doubt the commerce of this place will some day assume fairly large proportions. At present it is reached from Assam by execrable tracks which become impossible in the rains."

Throughout the 19th and early years of the 20th centuries, however, the Indian frontier was held to be run along the foothills, for it was the declared policy of the British Government to leave the inhabitants of Upper Assam to their own devices. Indeed so serious were they in this that in 1872 they took a hand in controlling the activities of rubber speculators whose activities not only interfered with the Government's revenue but also threatened to disturb relations with the hill tribes. But when in the following year the spread of tea gardens outside the fiscal limits of the British dominion led to further complications with the neighbouring hillmen, administrative measures were introduced to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. The Government's Inner Line Regulation of 1873 was designed to prevent strangers from going to tracts where official control was inadequate and where little or no official control was available. Thus, special permission was required to pass the Inner Line which constituted the administrative boundary of British India. However, beyond the Inner Line was the Outer Line whose position along the foothills was regarded as the country's external frontier, while the territory in between covered by dense jungle and sparsely populated, was loosely administered by a political officer.

9. L/FS/7/154, No.798, Note on Trade Routes between India and Tibet W.F. O'Connor, 13 April, 1903.
Normally the Government strongly discouraged political officers from making journeys beyond the Outer Line but, in exceptional cases, permission was granted.

One such instance was the freedom that was allowed Francis Jack Needham, the first Assistant Political Office, Sadiya, who amply repaid the trust placed in him by his superiors, apart from one disastrous error of judgment concerning the Bebejiya Mishmis against whom, on the basis of his report, a punitive expedition was sent in 1900, whose size made it a costly waste and thus earned Curzon's censure. His, however, was the work of a pioneer and it was fitting that years after his retirement, the Sadiya Frontier Tract Gazetteer of 1928 should recall his remarkable achievements in these words:

"By his explorations, and discoveries, Mr. Needham acquired an international reputation and his work from 1882 to 1905 laid the foundations of the modern North-East frontier of Assam."

Noel Williamson, who succeeded Needham, also travelled with official blessing beyond the Outer Line towards Rima, situated in the South-eastern corner of Tibet, in the winter of December 1907-January 1908, advocating on his return a series of measures whose immediate purpose was to attract Tibetan commerce to India. On a more ambitious note was his suggestion of a railway line to Rima, a feasible project as the height of the town was only 500 feet, and his expressed hope that sufficient thought would be given to extending the line into the territory beyond. For, difficult though the second half of this plan might be, the rewards would be greater still because,

10 R. Reid, History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941, Shillong, 1942, p.181.
"were there facilities for quick communication between India and Western China the possibilities would appear to be boundless. Given a railway, every ton of our exports for Szechuan would be captured for this route instead of being carried by a long sea voyage from Calcutta, only then to commence the difficult journey up the Yangtse. With such improved communications, the resources of Szechuan, one of the wealthiest provinces of China, would develop enormously; with an easy and expeditious route there is no reason why the Chinese Coolie could not seek for employment on the tea-gardens of Assam, and so possibly solve some of the present difficulties." 11

Three years and more later, in March 1911, Williamson met his death at the hands of Abor tribesmen whose territory he was visiting. It turned out later that on this occasion he had crossed the Outer Line in violation of the Government's instructions; his tragic end emphasising the sort of incident the authorities feared when they instituted their Frontier Regulations. However, the inevitable despatch of a punitive mission gave the British an opportunity of initiating a bolder and more positive policy in the tribal belt, particularly as the Chinese were showing a disturbing interest in the area themselves. 12

Nevertheless this new policy was only adopted after much agonizing within the counsels of Government. The realities on the ground may have demanded a change but Morley, with his ill-concealed contempt for the opinions of the men on the spot from whose myopic vision the loftier concerns of Whitehall were hidden, was loath to jettison his cherished views on non-interference in the Himalayas.

As early as May 1910, during Minto's term of office, the Government of East Bengal and Assam had indicated the need for fresh thinking. Apparently a Mishmi chief had approached Williamson while the latter was on tour, claiming that he was a British subject. Thus far, the

11. Ibid, p.212
Mishmis had been left well alone to administer themselves as they pleased, and under normal circumstances, a continuation of this traditional policy would have been the wisest. The second alternative, to take them under British protection, would entail a number of difficulties, the chief of which was that the Government's political boundary would greatly exceed its area of administrative control. To remedy this, posts would have to be set up in sparsely populated mountainous tracts and their supply lines assured. On the other hand

"it is doubtful whether the Chinese would venture to disregard a definite pronouncement that we would not tolerate any advance beyond the western boundary of Tibet. The third alternative to allow the Chinese to extend their influence right down to the foot of the hills bordering on the valley of the Brahmaputra might be productive of serious administrative inconvenience. The question is one which must be decided on grounds of military expediency and high state policy...."

Lord Minto was sufficiently impressed by the seriousness of Chinese activity at Rima and in the vicinity of the tribal tracts to address Morley on the question. The Viceroy suggested that the Outer Line be extended to include a part of Tawang, stretch as far east and as near Rima as possible, and continue through the watershed between the Irrawaddy and the Zayul Chu to the divide between the Salween and Irrawaddy. Meanwhile arrangements should be made to prevent the tribes from establishing relations with foreign powers. However, a great deal more knowledge concerning these tribes remained to be acquired before the guidelines of a suitable policy could be drawn up. But in the case of the Mishmis, whose territory lay adjacent to Rima and was thus most vulnerable to a Chinese thrust, urgent action was

13 L/PS/7/241, No.1093, Assam to India, 26 May, 1910.
necessary. They should immediately be placed under British protection having of their own accord expressed their desire to be treated as British subjects.\textsuperscript{14}

As expected, the Secretary of State dismissed Minto's pleas, holding that the question should be kept pending until Hardinge's arrival in India. He calculated, no doubt, that the new Viceroy untouched by the phobias of Indian administrators would give short shrift to any recommendations for a new forward policy.

Hardinge reacted predictably. At an interview with the Governor of Assam, Sir Lancelot Hare, in Calcutta on 22 November 1910 he was at pains to emphasise that

"any forward movement beyond the administrative frontier was strongly to be deprecated. Chinese aggression would, in Lord Hardinge's view, be met, not in the tribal territory bordering Assam, but by an attack on the coast of China. He was, therefore, opposed to running risks or spending money on endeavours to create a strategic frontier in advance of the administrative border, and he was unable to agree to any promise of support being held out to the Mishmis or other tribes beyond our frontier who might appeal for help against Chinese aggression. Frontier officers should, Lord Hardinge thought, confine themselves to cultivating friendly relations with the border tribes and punishing them for acts of hostility within our limits."\textsuperscript{15}

The Viceroy was, however, prepared to support cautious explorations of the country beyond the Outer Line provided there was no risk of complications, but he firmly refused official sanction to any general increase of activity in that direction.

Notwithstanding the Viceroy's discouraging words, Hare held tenaciously to his views. He had the advantage of Hardinge in his experience and knowledge of the situation. The Viceroy's comment that

\textsuperscript{14} FO 535/13, Enclosure in No.176, Minto to Morley, 23 October, 1910.

\textsuperscript{15} FO 535/14, Enclosure 7 in No.51, Hardinge to Crewe, 22 December, 1910.
possible Chinese aggression on India's North-Eastern frontier would be met by a British attack on China's coast was almost ludicrous in its lack of comprehension. It was as if he were seeking to retouch the fading canvas of the Opium Wars. While China may still have been weak, Hardinge seemed to have momentarily forgotten that the precarious international peace in Europe covered Asia as well since the Great Powers who were involved in upholding it had binding interests in both continents.

Even so his reactions might have made sense where frontiers between states were neither far flung nor unknown, but were, for the most part, well demarcated; where relatively advanced and organized forms of social life prevailed in almost every corner of a country's domain. Aggression in such a context inevitably meant open war. Not so in the north-eastern frontier of India. Developments there recalled the Great Game of an earlier period when the expanding empires of Russia and Britain pushed and probed at each other, when the frontier officer as explorer, soldier and surveyor was the indispensable knight to an opponent's pawn, when the threat of war loomed large one moment only to fade the next. In forcing Hardinge to learn some of the lessons of the past the continuing challenge from China wrested him from the provincialism of his Foreign Office background.

A few months after his encounter with the Viceroy, Lancelot Hare returned to his theme, "that the Chinese should not be permitted to extend their influence up to the Outer line. The position on this frontier could then be similar to that of the north-west frontier if we ceased to control the Khyber and Bolan Passes and retired to the plains, leaving the Afridis and other tribes in possession of
"all the hill country. Given possession of the hills, the Chinese will be in a position to dominate all the tea gardens north of the Brahmaputra and, at their present rate of peaceful penetration, it will not be long before they assert their influence over the hill tribes of our border."

The letter was shrewdly timed. News of Noel Williamson's death at the hands of the Abors having reached India, the Assam Governor must have been aware that plans were afoot to send a punitive expedition. And as such an undertaking involved breaching the Outer Line, it was an opportune moment to initiate a review of official policy.

Hardinge thought so too. The disquieting evidence of increasing Chinese activity on the north-eastern frontier brought with it a dawning realisation of the true seriousness of the problem before him. He began by appealing to the Secretary of State for permission to despatch a punitive expedition to the Abor territory and, at the same time, to allow the Mishmi country to be systematically explored and surveyed so that a suitable frontier between India and China could be determined. No trouble was anticipated from the Mishmis who, after all, had first approached Williamson with a request to be treated as British subjects. Although the Viceroy disavowed any intention of extending the present administrative line the fact that he also proposed in future to despatch a small police force at periodic intervals to the area meant that he wished to draw a line of loose political control well beyond it.

16. FO 535/14, Enclosure 2 in No.51. Hare to Hardinge, 25 April, 1911.

The Viceroy's mind was not, however, entirely free of confusion for earlier in the month in a private letter to Nicolson he remarked: "People in England and elsewhere talk and write a good deal of the danger we are in here of being enveloped by China on our North East frontier. I assure you it is all moonshine. We have the good fortune to have on that side an almost impenetrable jungle for some hundreds of miles where there is neither food nor water, and where the risk of invasion by as many as 1,000 Chinese is nil. So long as we are on our present terms of friendship with Russia we have no external danger to fear".

FO 800/348, Nicolson Papers, Hardinge to Nicolson, 9 June, 1911.
Less than a year before a similar request from Minto had been turned down by Morley, a decision with which Hardinge had been in complete accord. The wheel of events had indeed turned full circle.

Crewe approved the punitive measures that the Government of India intended to take against the Abors. He also accepted the need to explore their country and that of the Mishmis. But in case of unprovoked aggression from the Chinese it would, he emphasised, involve definite British protection for the frontier tribes. It was a matter which he hoped Hardinge had fully considered, as he would be held responsible for any dire consequences that might follow.

When in late September Hardinge replied with a detailed explanation of India's case his views on the Chinese danger had hardened. F.M. Bailey had by this time completed an astonishing journey from China through South-eastern Tibet into Assam, arriving finally in Simla where he was able to testify in person on China's attempts to establish her authority over the Mishmi Chiefs. Circumstances, remarked the Viceroy, had forced his Government to revert to the policy of Lord Minto, and his main object now was to secure a sound strategical boundary between China and Tibet and India. As long as Tibet lay dormant an undefined frontier represented no danger. An entirely new situation had arisen making the question one of compelling urgency. For within the government's administrative border considerable European capital had been sunk and more Europeans worked here than in any comparable district in India. Furthermore the internal situation in Eastern Bengal and Assam was troubled enough already without the advent of an aggressive and intriguing neighbour. Not only did China...
continue to display unusual activity in the vicinity of the tribal tract, she showed no signs of withdrawing her claims to Nepal and Bhutan. Finally, in an attempt to allay the fears of the Secretary of State about needlessly extending the Government's responsibilities, the Viceroy remarked that British protection would not automatically include the Abors and Mishmis in the event of a Chinese attack, but that all the same, these tribes would be left in no doubt that they were under British control and would therefore be expected to behave accordingly. This entailed a curiously unequal exchange: the exercise of rights without the discharge of corresponding obligations. Fortunately it proved to be no more than a loose end of policy which in time fell silently into place. But for the moment this was the continuing contradiction, for India while proposing to put up boundary cairns at points where tribal territory emerged distinct from Tibet, would give no undertaking to defend the country beyond its administrative border.

The Viceroy also showed his hand by appointing Henry McMahon as Secretary to the Indian Foreign Department, his immediate responsibility being to supervise arrangements for the Delhi Durbar in December 1911 at which India would pay homage to the newly crowned George V and his consort, Queen Mary. The ceremonies concluded, he could then turn his whole attention to the weightier problems of India's North-Eastern frontier.

Born in Simla, of a family with long and honourable connections in India, the new Foreign Secretary had acquired a lifetime's experience as a Political Agent in the strategic areas of India's North-West. The successful demarcation of the Afghan-Baluchistan
border was carried out under his skilful direction. Now, in an hour of growing need, he was, once again, entrusted with the task of co-ordinating the search for a secure frontier. Hardinge's choice was not merely wise; it was inspired.

Crewe's misgivings about the Viceroy's declared aim to establish an external frontier beyond the line of administrative control were shared by Grey. The Foreign Secretary expressed the opinion that to put up boundary cairns and then retire would merely complicate matters. He was also in favour of informing China of the formal limits of British territory only when such a claim was supported by evidence for its protection and defence. Therefore, suggested Grey, the various missions in the process of being despatched to the tribal tracts should confine their efforts to a careful investigation of the terrain and its inhabitants. Then when their reports were ready the Government, in the light of the available data, could take a decision concerning a suitable frontier, after which an intimation to China would be made. A premature approach to Peking might otherwise provoke greater Chinese activity in the area.

The Secretary of State drew up instructions to Hardinge on the lines of Grey's proposals but allowing India to apply them flexibly. For instance, it was possible in view of Rima's proximity to the frontier, that measures might have to be taken to prevent Chinese aggression directly after the departure of Dundas, in which case the establishment of a police post commanding Menilkrai (a point where the Chinese had put up flags in August 1910 and January 1912) should be

22. FO 535/14, No.37, Foreign Office to India Office, 26 October, 1911.
considered. The Mishmi mission under the charge of Dundas was the most important of the three that were despatched in the winter of 1911, simply because the territory to which it was assigned was the most vulnerable to a Chinese thrust. Its efforts were to be complemented by a second party led by Kerwood, whose task it was to survey and report on the Miri tract; while the punitive expedition against the erring Abors was commanded by Major-General Bower with Bentick as the Assistant Political Officer.

Ever since Alexander's day, the well worn trails of invaders have made the North-West frontier familiar to the peoples and rulers of Hindustan; the North-Eastern marches, in contrast, proved to be the Great Unknown, of which "little has been written, and for many years this border has remained hazy in its geographical limits, peaceful in its policies and happy in the dulness of its annals." The chapter of developments about to commence would prise this region from its seclusion and integrate it into the dominions of the Raj. But the tremors accompanying this process affected not only Anglo-Chinese relations but had wider diplomatic ramifications as well.

Principally it was Peking that was most concerned. China's military presence in Tibet coupled with her forward policy along the Himalayas had forced Britain to make these counter moves, thus reversing the roles of the two sides in the period immediately before and after the Younghusband Mission. With the Dalai Lama now an exile in Darjeeling, Tibet was reduced to a voiceless part of the Chinese Empire. In 1911, therefore, Anglo-Tibetan relations had all but ceased.

The year was also notable for another event. According to the notes exchanged between Russia and Britain during the Convention of August 1907, both parties had agreed to ban the entry of scientific missions to Tibet for a period of three years after which the matter would be discussed again. In view of the uncertain situation on the Assam stretch of the Indo-Tibetan frontier the British Government, at India's prompting, perhaps felt that the usefulness of this self-denying clause had ended. Otherwise the reconnaissance missions which might possibly be sent to explore the terrain with a view to establishing a sound frontier would be unnecessarily impeded in their efforts. Moreover the delicate phase in Anglo-Russian relations was over; their friendship, it was felt, had taken firm root. As such Russia showed little hesitation in accepting the British proposal to allow the agreement to lapse. Sir George Buchanan, who had succeeded Nicolson as his country's Ambassador at St. Petersburg when the latter returned to London to become Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office after Hardinge's departure, enclosed an extract from the Novoe Vremya of 13 January, 1911, to Grey, which voiced its approval in the following words:

"The paper welcomes this decision as a sign of confidence between the two Powers, and is showing that the old absurd fear of military and political missions masquerading under the guise of expeditions in the cause of science is now at an end. There is no doubt that if either country were now to send a scientific expedition to Tibet men of science and naturalists of the other country would be invited to join it. The more Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations are simplified, the better it will be for both countries. With a reasonable give and take there is nothing to divide Russia and England, and each country has something to gain by combining forces."24

24 FO 535/14, No.4, Buchanan to Grey, 14 January, 1911.
But whether this understanding with Russia would work to Britain's ultimate advantage in Tibet only time would show.

Rockhill, the noted Tibetan scholar, and now the United States Ambassador to Russia was eager to see the new spirit of friendship between Britain and Russia put to use in the form of a joint scientific expedition to Tibet. Apart from its scientific value, such a venture would put heart into the Tibetans in their resistance against Chinese domination. For there was little doubt in his mind that China had emerged as the biggest single threat to peace in the Himalayas; an opinion which he forcefully expressed in a conversation with a member of Sir George Buchanan's staff. He wondered how we could watch with equanimity the manner in which the Chinese were overrunning Thibet and trying to extend their influence over Nepal, Bhutan and other principalities on our frontiers. Of the two, China was the lesser evil. Today, argued Bell, Anglo-Russian relations were amicable, but present circumstances could change; if and when they did, it would not be in Britain's interest to have Russian influence at work in the Tibetan capital. Moreover the British had already turned down the Dalai Lama's request for help against China; should

25 FO 535/14, No.6, Buchanan to Grey, 17 January, 1911.
26 The British Ambassador drew Grey's attention to a similar pronouncement made publicly by Youngusband. Ibid.
27 FO 535/14, Enclosure 3 in No.46, Bell to India, 29 March, 1911.
an Anglo-Russian mission now arrive at Lhasa it would only redound to
the credit of the Tsar. And as Russia's prestige increased so too
would Britain's diminish. Lastly, he was afraid that the nearness of
a Russian presence could have an unsettling effect elsewhere in the
Himalayas. In Bhutan, for instance, Russia was the vaguest of names
and it was in Britain's interest to keep things as they were. Bell's
despatch, notable for its hidebound conservatism conveys a picture of
a period-piece Indian official at his least endearing.

Certainly, the Dalai Lama would have welcomed Russia's support,
but only as an instrument with which to thwart the expansionism of
Peking. He had made it amply clear that he regarded China as his
country's principal foe; and all his viles were concentrated on
keeping its rulers at bay. Further, the Tibetan Pontiff was much too
shrewd not to appreciate the proximity of British power in India, whose
strength had been so emphatically demonstrated by the Younghusband
Mission nearly seven years before. When he fled his capital for the
second time in February 1910 it was to the sanctuary of India that he
directed his steps; the Russian border, 1000 miles away, held out little
hope of him eluding his Chinese pursuers.

It is also difficult to see what real advantage Britain stood to
gain by keeping Bhutan ignorant of the outside world. Surely there
were greater rewards in persuading the peoples of the trans-Himalaya to
stride toward modernity with British help; for thus strengthened they
would become less vulnerable to the designs of a predatory Power, and
therefore less prone to turn to Simla at the merest hint of trouble.

29 Bell's deeply conservative outlook found expression in his belief that the
Anglo-Bhutan Treaty of 1910 of which he was an architect, was a model for
Britain's relations with other kindred races of the trans-Himalaya.
L/PS/10/120, Enclosure 3, No.1918, Bell to India, 20 August, 1910.
Indeed, such self-assurance as was gained would correspondingly enhance their value as a buffer on India's northern frontiers.

It may however be pointed out in Bell's defence that fear of the Tsarist Empire had for long years been among the most potent traditions of British rule in India; and in view of this it was perhaps asking too much of a civil servant to accustom himself so quickly to the sudden glare of Anglo-Russian friendship. Moreover it remained a fact that the deepest instincts of the Raj as a whole made it gravitate towards an accommodation with the forces of indigenous, and often archaic conservatism, under the fond delusion that by so doing it was adding to its strength and security.

But even as the merits of British policy towards Tibet was being debated; and even as the first tentative steps were being taken in the search for a secure frontier in the mountainous reaches of Upper Assam, momentous developments were afoot in China that were shortly to lead to a new balance of political forces in the Himalayas and beyond. For where it was once the gradual pressure of Chinese power in Tibet culminating in Chao Erh-feng's march to Lhasa that had given a new dimension to Anglo-Tibetan relations, now it was the total collapse of such authority which was to enable Britain to assess the scene anew.

The infant Chinese Republic, ushered in formally on 1 January, 1912, struggled at birth; its social base insecure; its political future bleak. In order, therefore, to preserve his country's precarious unity, Sun Yat-sen, the radical nationalist, stood down as President in favour of Yuan Shih K'ai, the northern conservative, who succeeded him to that high office on 10 March, 1912, and whose Prime Minister was none other than T'ang Shao-yi. Uncomfortably harnessed,
they symbolised the controlling influences in the new regime; the coexistence of warlordism and republican nationalism, the first with its strong traditional roots, the second a tender plant striving to survive in an hostile environment. 30

As Szechuan in western China became one of the storm centres of the Revolution, its value as a traditional base of military operations against Tibet was seriously impaired. On 22 December 1911, the Governor-General, Chao Erh-feng, was taken from his palace and executed. So ended the life of one who, more than any other, was responsible for the triumph of Chinese arms from Chiamdo to Lhasa. His strong military administration crumbled after him and the men who, under his command, had entered the Dalai Lama's capital in glory soon found themselves isolated and demoralized. Hemmed in by a force of Tibetans taking fresh heart from this sudden reversal of fortune, it became increasingly evident that only the intercession of the British could save the besieged garrison from an unkindly fate.

Although China's sudden collapse may have relieved the pressure in the Himalayas, few illusions were held either at Whitehall or in Simla concerning this temporary respite. She had shown her hand once, and when an effective Government was restored in Peking there could be little doubt that she would again set about achieving her traditional goals. In the last years of the Monarchy, an exercise combining military vigour with deftness in diplomacy had produced the desired political rewards; the reality of Chinese authority at Lhasa being

ultimately accepted with no more than the expected squawk of protest. There was no reason why a future regime in Peking should not do as well. Barely had the Manchus been overthrown than a conference of opposition groups meeting on 30 December 1911 to discuss the composition of China's future National Assembly unanimously agreed to invite delegates from Tibet and Mongolia to join as full members of that body. It was a foretaste of things to come.

The Foreign Office was quickly off the mark with a note to the India Office in which it raised three leading questions for Crewe's consideration: First whether His Majesty's Government would be justified in opposing the inclusion of Tibet in China proper; second, whether British interests would be best served by such opposition or whether it would be likely to lead to an anti-British outbreak and result in the dismemberment of China's outlying dependencies; third what steps could be taken to give effect to such opposition if it was decided upon? Such were the broad guidelines in the dialogue between interested parties in London and India on the most suitable course of action for Britain to take, in the light of the new circumstances, which involved, in a word, a complete review of her trans-Himalayan policies.

On the first issue all were agreed: the British Government would be right to oppose the absorption of Tibet into China. It was, however, the second and third points which gave rise to most contention. Not surprisingly, it was India that came out most strongly against the Chinese. It argued that Tibet's inclusion in China would jeopardise Britain's special interests and privileges there, and in addition,

31 FO 535/15, No. 9, Foreign Office to India Office, 13 January, 1912.
32 Ibid, Enclosure in No. 44, Hardinge to Crewe, 23 March, 1912.
threaten her influence in Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal. (Peking, it must be remembered, had still not withdrawn its claims to the two latter countries.) India also pointed out, in answer to Home Government's query, that no anti-Russian outbreak in China had followed the support given by Russia to the new Mongolian regime, and there was no reason to suppose that any such demonstration against Britain would follow on the heels of a British announcement opposing Peking's announced intention to incorporate Tibet. However, it did not feel confident enough to give an opinion on whether such action by Britain would signal the dismemberment of China's outlying dependencies. But on the need to abjure the use of force it did feel strongly; for it doubted whether naval or military strength could be applied effectively against aggressively inclined officials near the frontier, such demonstrations being more useful near the seat of Government. Furthermore, the Indian military authorities would depurate local action which would cause an even bigger strain on the already scarce resources of the army. Instead it suggested that a satisfactory solution of the Tibetan problem should be the condition of British recognition of the new Chinese Government. Two other points of note were also made: first, that the Dalai Lama moved by British hospitality and impressed by the fairness and power of the Raj had become a good friend and, as such, his return to Lhasa would be to Britain's advantage. Secondly, it was emphasised that because of its geographical position, Tibet had to be kept in a state of political isolation.

The Secretary of State's initial reaction was to raise his own demands, suggesting that as a condition of British recognition China had to call off her pressure on the Burmese frontier, demonstrate her
ability to control her outlying dependencies, as otherwise her
assurances concerning the maintenance of foreign rights and privileges
would be worthless; and lastly that she respect Tibetan autonomy by
keeping the administration of the country unchanged.

Grey, on the other hand, was quite rightly of the opinion that
the dispute on the Burma-Yunnan border concerning Pinma was a local
one and merited, at best, a firm note of protest to Peking. Neither
was the Foreign Secretary enamoured of Crewe's proposal that China's
ability effectively maintain her authority in her outlying
dominions be tested, for to bring

"this new element into the question of recognition, in which
His Majesty's Government are compelled to act with so many
Powers, might lead to complications, and he would prefer,
in the first instance at any rate to deal with it separately."33

On the question of Tibet's autonomy, Grey saw no objection to the line
taken by Hardinge and Crewe particularly as Russia had also made
reservations about her special rights and interests in Mongolia and
northern Manchuria. Apprehensions about the attitude and actions of
Russia became a prime consideration in the thinking of the Foreign
Office, whose policies were thus never more than reactive. If in
British eyes the Anglo-Russian Convention had circumscribed their
freedom of action in Central Asia or the Far East, the Tsar's
ministers for their part felt no obligation to behave in a similar
spirit of self-denial. They were prepared to abide strictly by the
letter of their agreement with Britain, no more.

When the question of recognition was referred to Jordan, the
British Ambassador though expressing general accord with views of the
Foreign Secretary discouraged any equation between British rights in
Tibet and Russian rights in Mongolia. In the light of subsequent

33 FO 535/15, No.48, Foreign Office to India Office, 11 April, 1912.
developments there was an element of unconscious irony in his emphasis that "our position is stronger than that of Russia, who cannot claim
to have any direct treaty relations with Mongolia." He also favoured
confining "ourselves to a demand for the maintenance of the status quo
under treaty. If we go further and insist on a measure of autonomy,
claimed by Russia for Mongolia we may give other Powers an opportunity
of putting forward similar claims, and incur the charge of promoting a
policy of dismemberment;" and so violate one of the principal terms
of Britain's policy in the Far East, namely, to uphold the territorial
integrity of the Chinese Empire.

The repeated references to Mongolia highlighted the fact that
developments there were closely akin to those in Tibet. In both
countries Chinese authority had collapsed. Each was bordered by the
empire of a Great European Power. But their common experience was more
than just circumstantial, for they were bound by deep ties of culture
and religion.

In late 1911, when the Mongol Princes declared their independence,
they did so against the background of a worsening drift in Russo-
Chinese relations. Having failed to reach an understanding with Peking
over Outer Mongolia, the Russians took positive action by distributing
arms among the Mongols and exploiting to the full their antipathy to the
Chinese. The Russian Press clamoured for action. The Novoe Vremya of
29 December 1911 denounced the Chinese for having enslaved and exploited
the Mongols while the Bourse Gazette of the same date in Buchanan's
words -

34 FO 535/15, No.50, Jordan to Grey, 12 April, 1912.
"urges the utility to Russia of the creation between her and China of a buffer state, which would, while recognizing the suzerainty of China, be independent of that Power and under the influence of Russia."  

To the British Ambassador, however, Russian officials were at pains to disavow their Government's intention to absorb Mongolia. As much as Britain, Russia too wished to avoid a military conflict, for according to Sazonov - Izvolsky's successor as Foreign Minister -

"All our Ambassadors are like myself of the opinion that, in view of the present international constellation in Europe, a one-sided engagement of the Russian military forces in the Far East must be avoided."

Nothing daunted, Russia set about her task with a skilful blend of economic and political diplomacy in which great trading firms such as the Russian Export Company as well as men on the spot, foremost of whom was Ivan J. Korostovets, the Imperial Minister at Peking, played an indispensable part. These agents, with no Russian Morley to impede their efforts, worked well in harness with their superiors in Petersburg.

But if Russia's policies towards Outer Mongolia were becoming a prime factor in Central Asian politics, of deeper historical significance were the far older ties between Mongolia and Peking: together they cast a giant shadow over Anglo-Tibetan relations.

The complexities underlying the Sino-Mongol bond becomes clearer in the context of Fritters' cautionary reminder:

'It is essential to note,' he observed,

'that here we are not concerned with the relation between "China" and "Mongolia", but with that between the Manchu Emperors and the

35 L/23/10/225, No.151, Buchanan to Grey, 29 December, 1911.
36 Ibid, No.419, Buchanan to Grey, 11 January, 1912.
'Mongol chiefs .... In the course of the seventeenth century, the Manchus subjugated first the Inner Mongols - and at the end of the century - the Outer Mongols. The first document dealing with relations between the Manchu Emperor and the Inner Mongolian tribes seems to be one dated 1636, and in it the suzerainty of the Manchu Emperor is recognised. It was stipulated, however, that should the Dynasty fall, all the laws previously existing should come into force again. In 1688, an assembly of Mongol princes at Dolo Nor decided to submit to the Manchu Emperor. The Chinese later considered this event as marking the formal annexation of Mongolia, but the Mongols claimed that the assembly only paid homage to the Emperor personally.'

The Manchus allowed Outer Mongolia a considerable degree of autonomy, and Chinese colonization there was forbidden, until the turn of the 20th century. This act of political submission was complemented by Mongol princes marrying the daughters of the Manchu Royal House. In addition, the two races had strong ethnic and cultural links, and though the Tibetan Buddhist Church expressed their common devotion to one religious faith.

Jordan commented in similar vein on the pattern of developments concerning Tibet. Noting the upsurge in China's interest after the 1911 Revolution, the British Ambassador remarked:

"It is realised that the Chinese hold upon Thibet was largely a Manchu achievement, which must necessarily have been considerably weakened by the fall of the dynasty. The result has been the almost complete disappearance of Chinese influence in the country, and something more than the gift of a strip in a Chinese republican flag was evidently required to regain the allegiance of the Thibitans .... It is evidently felt that the secular arm is not long enough to extend to Tibet, and that the question must be approached from the spiritual side. Yuan Shih-K'ai has accordingly issued a presidential order, which constitutes a reversal of policy pursued by the late Government toward the Dalai Lama, and particularly cancels the decree of the 25th February, 1910, deposing him from his position as supreme Pontiff of the Yellow Church .... the solicitude which is shown for the future of Thibet and Mongolia is a foretaste of what may be expected if the President succeeds in establishing a stable form of Government."
China’s fears about her future in those countries was closely intertwined: concessions in one might lead to similar demands regarding the other and eventually result in the loss of both.

Yuan Shi-K'ai’s two presidential orders of April 1912 were an advance warning of Peking’s grand design. The first, dated 13 April, advocating intermarriage between the five races of the new republic was an extension of the late Empress Dowager’s solution for healing the breach between Chinese and Manchus. According to Jordan the mandate was grotesque and had little chance of being realised, as the Chinese from time immemorial had limited their marriage alliances to their native provinces. Perhaps it was asking too much of an Old China hand, like the British Ambassador, to recognise the first stirrings of a movement whose twin aims were to rejuvenate Chinese society as well as redefine China’s national identity by breaching the encrusted norms of Confucian ritual and practice.

The second presidential order, dated 21 April, which in Jordan’s view was worthy of serious consideration, followed logically from the spirit of the first for, by abolishing the administrative machinery designed especially to control and run the ‘dependencies’, it paved the way for the integration of Mongolia, Tibet and Turkestan into the republic whose unified dominion, at least on paper, exceeded that of the Monarchy in its declining years.

It was urgently realised, both in Whitehall and in Simla, that the new situation in Central Asia called for a thorough review of Britain’s Tibetan policy. In all the three Government departments concerned, it was felt that Russian action in Mongolia had morally freed Britain from the self-denying ordinances of her trans-Himalayan

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Ibid, No.67, Enclosures 283, Jordan to Grey, 27 April, 1912.
commitments. The question was to get Russia to recognise this fact by releasing her treaty partner from undertakings in the Anglo-Russian Convention pertaining to Tibet. But how? In 1907, still feeling the effects of the war with Japan, Russia suggested a common understanding over Mongolia which Minto in particular had refused to countenance. The opportunity of ensuring possible Russian co-operation in a future Tibetan contingency was thus lost. Russia got the support she needed in a bargain with Japan. What could Britain now offer St. Petersburg as a quid pro quo? In the counsels of government alternative lines of action were discussed and argued out at length.

In India, Bell, with Russia always on his brain, saw the sinister shadow of a Tsarist Empire controlling Mongolia, then creeping through Tibet until it loomed ominously over the Himalayas. The picture, as usual, was hopelessly overdrawn.

W.F. O'Connor's contribution to this debate was by far the more impressive, for, like Bell, he too had grown up in an anti-Russian school; had drunk deeply at the fount of Curzonian wisdom, yet because of his surer grasp of political realities, he was quick to perceive that Russia no longer constituted a threat to British interests in Tibet. Any lingering doubts had long been removed by the Anglo-Russian Convention and perhaps by his subsequent experience of working opposite a Russian in Seistan.

The real danger was China. Her aims in Tibet as well as on the Indian frontier had been expansionist; her assurances to the contrary had invariably been belied by her deeds. The Tibetans having driven out the Chinese were nonetheless too weak to successfully withstand a
renewed onslaught from Peking as was likely to occur some time in the future, hence some form of British influence at Lhasa had to be maintained as a safeguard. Since he did not envisage a British protectorate, which would needlessly give rise to international hostility and also disturb public opinion at home, O'Connor recommended the stationing of a British officer in the Tibetan capital. He was thus reviving one of his pet schemes but now advocated it with renewed vigour, arguing that with the Dalai and Panchen Lamas friendly to Britain, no popular opposition to such a move need be feared.

Russia had to be approached with a view to working out a mutual arrangement over Mongolia and Tibet. If necessary the British as part of a deal could safely accept a Russian agent at Lhasa, who might possibly turn out to be co-operative. Even if this were not so there was little he could do to harm Britain, stranded as he was 1000 miles from his own country; while the Dalai Lama, having learnt his lesson in 1904, was unlikely to provoke Britain again.

To China the message had to be clear: she must restore conditions in Tibet as they prevailed at the time of the Adhesion Convention of 1904, and agree to the scrapping of the 1903 Trade Regulations. But should Peking be unwilling to accept these terms, the British Government ought then to withhold recognition of the new republican regime.

As his concluding remarks show, the former British Trade Agent at Gyantse aired his views to the Viceroy and found him sympathetic. However, while Hardinge may, in the light of his predilections, have agreed with much of what O'Connor had to say, he knew well enough that leading members of the Cabinet would not be so favourably disposed. It was perhaps because of this context that Harcourt Butler, the Education
member of the Viceroy's Council and, a past Foreign Secretary at Simla, could write to Minto in the following vein:

"Dear old O'Connor got half at the Viceroy over the old game of a Resident at Lhasa, or thought he had, but when it came to fact the proposal fell through as of old."^{42}

He (Butler) himself favoured a deal with Russia over Mongolia which would result in Britain getting back the Shumi Valley. Yet for the British to take possession of this strategic valley now would only have alienated the Tibetans. O'Connor realizing this, wisely refrained from even alluding to the subject. The opportune moment for such a move had come and gone in 1907-8.

But although the changed situation called for fresh thinking, the Cabinet was loath to deviate from what it considered to be old and well tried policies. The friction that was to develop between the Home Government and India over the Laden La mission to Lhasa was a classic case in point, for not only did it underline the broad divergence of view between the two, but it also emphasized the difficulties of men on the spot who were required to respond to events in the uncomfortable knowledge that they did not entirely possess the trust of their superiors.

It was a Tibetan appeal to the British to mediate between themselves and the remnants of the besieged Chinese force at Lhasa that presented the Viceroy with his dilemma. The Nepalese were plainly not acceptable either to Lhasa or to him, although for different reasons, in such a role. If Hardinge could get one of his men to undertake this delicate mission successfully, then his aim of getting the last body of Chinese troops out of Tibet by having them transported home through

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^{42} Minto Papers, 43 530, Butler to Minto, 13 May, 1912.
India would be achieved. It would, furthermore, deny Peking the excuse to send a relief in whose wake might follow the tide of Chinese military power.

The Viceroy chose Laden La, a Deputy Superintendent of the Bengal Police to lead the mission to Lhasa, and his judgment could rarely have been sounder. For the man in question was of Sikkimese extraction, a Buddhist, a fluent speaker of Tibetan, Nepali and English, and, not least, he had been on special duty with the Dalai Lama during his years of exile in Darjeeling.* He was, in a word, the perfect agent for the task in hand.

To Wardinge's suggestion, Crowe did not at first demur. He merely emphasised that Laden La should keep strictly to the letter of his instructions and not interfere in the domestic politics of Tibet. And in accordance with Article 3 of the Anglo-Russian Convention, he would see to it that Russia was duly informed. But as he delayed his telegram of formal assent, India, mistaking his silence for acquiescence, ordered Laden La to set off on his journey. Hardly had he done so than the Secretary of State was wiring the Viceroy to stop him proceeding any further. The Home Government apparently feared that Laden La's journey might lead to an entanglement in Tibet and unnecessarily complicate relations with Russia.† The officer who was eventually contacted a few miles short Lhasa turned back immediately for the Indian border.

The Viceroy, quite naturally, was put out by these developments. Writing to his friend, Nicolson, he enquired,

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* FO 355/15, Enclosure in No. 95, Hardinge to Crowe, 3 June, 1912.
† Ibid, Enclosure 1 in No. 93, Crowe to Wardinge, 10 June, 1912.
"whether it was the Foreign Office or the Cabinet as a whole that compelled us, much against our will, to recall Laden La from his mission to Lhasa. We do not consider that it would have involved any breach of our agreement with Russia, while the advantages to be obtained from a successful negotiation were obvious. The position is really a very extraordinary one, since both the Tibetans, the Chinese in Tibet, the Chinese Government and our Minister at Peking, are all begging us to do what we have done our best to do but are not allowed to do by our own Government. It is a great pity that this chance has been lost of establishing really friendly relations with the Tibetans, and it is not very likely to occur again."\(^{45}\)

The decision, replied Nicolson, was the Cabinet's. He felt that it was not so much the Convention with Russia which made them oppose Laden La's journey as the possibility that the Chinese expedition at present preparing to march into Tibet from Szechuan might disregard any agreement arrived at in Lhasa and seek to wreak vengeance on the helpless Tibetans, thus casting an additional responsibility on British shoulders. And the fact that no pressure could be brought effectively to bear on Peking since the Central Government had lost control over the provincial authorities made the Cabinet even less likely to risk an adventure. Nicolson himself was sympathetic to Hardinge's predicament. While expressing optimism about an understanding with Russia over Mongolia, he concluded thus:

"However, I am much afraid that the tendency of the present day is to avoid taking any responsibility whatsoever, or, indeed, of adopting any policy which has an element of vigour and foresightedness. This is evidenced not only in China but throughout the world. I suppose it is a malady which attacks every Government who is in power for any length of time and feels that its future tenure is somewhat uncertain."\(^{46}\)

If any one person was responsible for blocking Hardinge's plan, it was Morley. It was, in the first place, he who had pressured Crewe into placing the matter before the Cabinet on whose members the

\(^{45}\) Nicolson Papers, F 300/357, Hardinge to Nicolson, 27 June, 1912.

\(^{46}\) Ibid, Nicolson to Hardinge, 18 July, 1912.
former Secretary of State was then able to bring his formidable influence to bear. He would not want to interfere to the extent of recalling Laden La, he remarked soothingly, but

"Hardinge must take the responsibility, if any mischief happens .... for he must see that his action might involve trouble with China, Tibet, Russia." 47

Morley continued to be an invaluable aid to Grey, just as he had been during his days at the India Office.

In seeking to make the Viceroy culpable for any untoward developments that might possibly occur exposed one of the most vulnerable points in his armoury, for Hardinge was a civil servant and not a politician. All his working life he had been trained to advise, to act within a given brief, but to leave the major decisions to his political masters. Such deeply ingrained habits are not easily eschewed. It may be remembered that when as the new Viceroy he brushed aside the Governor of Assam's plea for a firmer line in the Himalayas he had argued that force against China could only effectively be used on the Chinese coast. His reasoning may have sprung from a faulty understanding of the situation but could it not also be that he was, consciously or otherwise, drawing back from taking a decision which could breach the peace with a foreign Power and was therefore rightly a matter for his superiors at Whitehall? Later when he himself had come to accept the need for a more vigorous policy in the Himalayas and was advocating the adoption of measures which would ensure its success, he stopped short of recommending the use of force. Again, the reasons he cited for abstaining from such action may have been perfectly sound but the underlying contradiction did not go unnoticed in the Foreign Office. 48 It was as if he felt that a

47 Crewe Papers, Box I/6, File No.14, Morley to Crewe, 10 June, 1912.
48 Fo 371/1317, No.15375, Unsigned Comment by Foreign Office official, 12 April, 1912.
decision to embark on hostilities was a burden, which should be borne in London. Nicolson’s lament on the disinclination of Governments to accept responsibility not only echoed Hardinge’s dilemma; it highlighted one of the deeper problems of Britain’s imperial diplomacy during this period.

However discouraging the attitude of the Home Government, Hardinge must surely have been fortified by the arrival of two letters from Chirol, containing more than just ritualistic expressions of sympathy. In the first, the Foreign Editor of The Times described a meeting with O’Connor, which had convinced him that Morley’s insistence on remaining strictly aloof from Tibetan affairs was now out of date. “It seems to me,” he continued, “that this is just one of the questions which ought to have been thrashed out before our Government committed itself to countenancing the proposed huge loan to China. For myself, I am extremely doubtful about the whole policy of loaning money to China in existing circumstances. I am afraid the F.O. is inclined to listen exclusively to the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank.”49

His second letter contained a point even more telling; for it urged the necessity of presenting the interests of the peoples of India to the Imperial Government in the forthright manner displayed by the White Dominions. “Now, it is quite clear to me,” he concluded, “that the Government of India does not possess that authority. You know better than I do how often it is over-ruled from Whitehall in deference to the narrow interests of these islands or still the narrower interests of the party in office. It is this that will have to be modified in any re-adjustment of relations between the component members of the Empire if, in the long run, we are to preserve India to the Empire.”50

49 Hardinge Papers, Volume 70, No.156, Chirol to Hardinge, 14 June, 1912.
50 Ibid, No.183, Chirol to Hardinge, 26 June, 1912.
But for Grey and the Foreign Office, it was the alliance with Russia which provided the axis around which British foreign policy revolved. Writing to Lord Stamfordham, the King's Private Secretary, Nicolson recognised that public opinion at home remained suspicious of Russia, but pointed out that the balance of advantage arising from the Anglo-Russian Convention lay firmly in favour of Britain. As such, the breakdown of the Agreement would not only be generally detrimental to British interests in Europe and Asia; it could, conceivably, have an adverse affect on relations with France. And while the Russian Government had shown a strong desire to keep faith with Britain, there existed another party in Russia who were opposed to their accord. In view of these factors, observed Nicolson, the need to continue supporting the Anglo-Russian understanding was the call of the hour. For him and his colleagues, the road to Lhasa lay through St. Petersburg. Yet a diplomatic journey so tortuous, could only have been accomplished under the guidance of one blessed with a clear head and a firm hand. As it was, they were still struggling to free their Government from the coils of its understanding with Russia in Central Asia when the yawning chasm of the First World War swallowed them all.

In Peking, the difficulties facing Jordan were formidable. The Chinese invariably procrastinated and his representations on Tibet rarely, if ever, achieved results. The British Ambassador was a diplomatist with a great range of experience in the Far East; he was not unsympathetic to China's point of view; he certainly preferred its people to those of Japan; but the Confucian society

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51 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/352, Nicolson to Stamfordham, 7 December, 1912.
with which he was so well acquainted was fast crumbling; the slow
moving conservative Manchus had given way to a new generation of
Chinese nationalists moved by radical impulses, seeking to right
old wrongs, and to restore their country to its former glory; to
that end they sought restlessly after new truths and new solutions.
While old China drew closer to its death agony, the new China waited
to be born. It was a period of transition on the grandest possible
scale, and through the accompanying welter of chaos and confusion,
Jordan had to keep a jealous watch over Britain's commercial
interests in the country, to see that these were not harmed either
by government decree or by popular agitation against alleged British
transgressions in Tibet, and at the same time to help safeguard his
country's rights at Lhasa. His Tibetan despatches mirrored his
predicament; for although on occasion his assessment of Chinese
policy proved to be hard and true the same cannot be said for the
settlement which he envisaged with China over Tibet. He was in the
end a victim of impossible circumstances.

On 23 June, 1912, Jordan accompanied by Alston and Barton, two
senior officials of his Embassy, called on Yuan Shih-K'ai. Disquieting
news of an expedition from Szechuan whose intended destination was
Lhasa had reached the British, and the Chinese President was asked if
it were true. He stated in reply that it was only designed to protect
Chinese life and property in the marches and gather relevant information
pertaining to the area. After its report had been received, a proper
policy for Tibet would be drawn up by the Cabinet. Sir John then
pressed the President to give an assurance that the expedition would
not cross the Tibetan boundary without prior consultation with Britain.
Yuan demurred on grounds of constitutional propriety: such a guarantee could only be given after he had consulted with his Cabinet, but he did promise to keep the British Ambassador informed of the Cabinet’s progress towards a decision.

Jordan hoped that the decision arrived at would not jeopardise Tibetan rights as allowed for under treaty which China had consistently violated in the past.

Yuan disclaimed any desire of incorporating Tibet as a province of China or of altering arrangements based on existing treaties. Again the question was a matter for the Cabinet, and perhaps the proper course for Sir John would be to address himself to the Wai-chiao Pu (the new name of the Chinese Foreign Office).

Exasperated, no doubt,

"Sir John Jordan replied that he had made representations on this subject to Mr. Hu, the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, exactly a month ago - on the 24th May. Mr. Hu had promised to lay them before the President and inform him of the result. In spite of this, not a word in reply had been received from the Wai-chiao Pu. Moreover, there had been a great deal of correspondence on this subject during the past few years, and many verbal and written assurances had been given by the former Government; but the Wai-chiao Pu were inclined to ignore engagements and precedents ...."

The Ambassador warned that the moment Chinese troops crossed the Tibetan frontier, British loan payments to China would stop; however if it was the fate of its garrison at Lhasa which was causing concern to Peking, an arrangement to evacuate them through India could be made and to achieve that end he was prepared to get into touch with Simla. Ironically, he lent substance to the Indian Government’s view by affirming the necessity for a third party to mediate between the two combatants, neither of whom had the slightest...

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52 FO 555/15, Enclosure in No.150, Memorandum of Interview on 23rd June, 1912.
trust in each other.

The interview was a classic of its type; full of subtle feints and thrusts, but ending with China standing her ground and the British Sisyphus doomed to commence his labours once more. Sure enough, some six weeks later, on 14 August, Jordan was informed by China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs that in view of the perilous position of the Chinese garrison at Lhasa a combined military expedition from Szechuan and Yunnan was being sent. This decision was being made available to Britain in accordance with a promise made by Yuan Shi-K'ai. Two days later, the President of the Republic denied all knowledge of having instructed the Vice-Minister to communicate with Jordan in such terms. He repudiated any intention of sanctioning a military expedition to Tibet, though a number of provinces were pressing him to do so, preferring to work through the Dalai Lama. The affair was the result of a misunderstanding, observed Yuan, with the Vice-Minister probably having confused the President's views with those held by the Wei-chiao Pu. 53

However, not all Chinese favoured the forcible or immediate incorporation of Tibet into their country. A minority view envisaging a less drastic solution was aired by Wen Tsung Yao, a Cantonese educated in America who had served as Secretary to the Canton Viceroy from 1905-08 and then become Assistant Resident at Lhasa from June 1908 to March 1910 before being recalled from there in disgrace by his Government on account of his allegedly pro-Tibetan views. Wen's differences with his compatriots were over means not ends.

53 FO 335/15, No.176, Jordan to Grey, 16 August, 1912.
He compared the policy of Great Britain with regard to Tibet with that of the Chinese, stating that the Thibetans said the British treated them like brothers, while the Chinese treated them like dogs. It was a mistake to alienate the Thibetans... and this the Chinese were certainly doing by their treatment of the Lamas, who were held in great respect by the Thibetans, and, by their overbearing manner towards the latter, compelling, for example, high Thibetan officials to stand or kneel in the presence of the Chinese resident... Wen Tsung Yao considered that China's policy towards Tibet should be that of peaceful penetration, which could not be completely successful under a generation. It was useless to try to educate the present generation to new ideas; but at any rate, the Chinese could avoid alienating their sympathies. Schools, however, should be set up, and the younger generation should learn the Chinese language and imbibe Chinese ideas. Chinese colonists should be given inducements to settle in Tibet and inter-marry with Thibetans. Communications, consisting of wide mule tracks, should be opened up. He considered that there was plenty of suitable land in Tibet for colonisation, and the climate would suit Chinese.

This indeed was a summing up of China's age-old historical experience involving for the most part contact with less cultured 'barbarian' peoples on her borders some of whom were culturally and racially absorbed over a period of centuries while others more stubborn, were driven deeper into the heartland of Asia. Mongolia was a leading case in point.

Meanwhile in Upper Assam the various expeditions of 1911-12 had returned and submitted their reports. The Government of India in keeping with the recommendation made to it favoured the opening of a police post at Rotung as part of the peaceful pacification of the Abor tribes, which Crewe in deference to the prevailing views of the Cabinet refused to sanction. This attitude of the Home Government brings to mind the comments made in July 1911 by an exasperated Arthur Hirstzel when his colleagues at the Foreign Office balked at the...
idea of Indian officers undertaking tours of duties beyond the Outer Line. "They do not understand in the Foreign Office," he wrote, "that administration of this kind of country in the sense in Yorkshire or even the N.W. Frontier Province is administrated is impossible. Administration, as I explained to Sir F. Campbell, means a tour - lasting at the outside 6 months - by a Political Officer every year, and there is nothing to prevent a Chinese Tao tai from touring there for the remaining 6 months." The Foreign Office by calling for an end to such practices was thus clearing the ground for a Chinese frontier to march alongside settled British districts in the plains with no natural barrier in-between.

In one of the most important documents of this period the General Staff having dwelt on the weak points of the present de facto frontier sketched a rough outline of one more suitable to India's strategic requirements with this warning:

"Throughout this note the assumption is made that the pertinacity of the Chinese will not long permit of their acquiescence in the present state of affairs in Tibet. Although their activity on our frontier may have received a temporary check on account of the Revolution, history proves that succeeding a Revolution, as a rule, a period of natural vigour and expansion follows. A renewal of activity may therefore be expected. Moreover, the Republican Government has revealed its intention of making the new China a Military Power, and we have received news that the Chinese are already sending parties to align the frontier with the republican flag on the borders of Assam.

"There is therefore no time to be lost in declaring to the Chinese in unmistakable terms the line the frontier is to follow, in making our occupation of that line effective in so far as placing ourselves in positions whence we can watch developments and prevent further encroachments in concerned, and in improving communications on our side. By reason of the effect produced by the expeditions of last season - although the effect may have
"been discounted to some extent, in the case of the Abors, by the withdrawal from Rotung — the present time is a propitious one to carry on and complete the work of survey and exploration throughout these regions. It is therefore worthwhile to make the effort now; if we delay, the necessity for so doing may, later on, be forced on us at a greater expenditure of force and money."”

Fortunately the Home Government's obstruction over the post at Rotung and its excessively cautious attitude towards the whole enterprise presented no permanent obstacles; and the work of frontier exploration with Hardinge's encouragement and McMahon's firm direction went forward to its climax in 1914.

Whatever the difficulties the search for a frontier in Assam had, thus far, been conspicuously more successful than the search for a Tibetan policy in Whitehall. Prodded by India Crowe had shown uncharacteristic firmness in withdrawing Nepal and Bhutan from the scope of Anglo-Chinese discussions; generally he had been content to wait upon events. By the end of June 1912 the Dalai Lama, full of gratitude and goodwill towards the British, had left for his capital. Had Laden La been allowed to complete his planned journey and to receive the Dalai Lama when he arrived, this conjunction of events would have signalled a rare diplomatic triumph. Morley's inflexible wisdom had, however, decreed otherwise.

The situation was effectively at a stalemate when the Secretary of State decided to break the impasse. The Foreign Office was informed that the time had come to formulate in definite terms a British policy in regard to Tibet and to that end the following points were put forward for Grey's consideration: first, that His Majesty's Government, while

59 L/P5/10/181, enclosure F in No.3057a, Note on North-East Frontier by Chief of General Staff, 1 June, 1912.
60 FO 535/15, enclosure in No.57, Hardinge to Crowe, 29 April, 1912.
61 Ibid, No.102, India Office to Foreign Office, 13 June, 1912.
accepting China's suzerain rights in Tibet, were not prepared to accede to her sovereignty over that country; second, that they would not accept China's right to intervene actively in the internal administration of Tibet which should remain in Tibetan hands subject to the right of Great Britain and China under Article 1 of Anglo-Chinese Convention of April 1906 to take such steps as were necessary to secure the fulfilment of treaty stipulations; third, on these grounds the British Government would refuse to recognise the incorporation of Tibet into China as provided for by Yuan Shih K'ai's presidential decrees; fourth, Britain, although accepting China's right to station a representative with a suitable escort at Lhasa, with authority to advise Tibet as to its foreign relations, could not agree to the presence of an unlimited number of Chinese troops either in the Tibetan capital or in the country as a whole; fifth, that the British Government would insist on the conclusion of a written agreement on the foregoing lines before recognising the Chinese Republic; and lastly, all communications between China and Tibet through India would be closed until a satisfactory Anglo-Chinese agreement had been reached. However, this provision, as Yuan Shih K'ai had been informed did not apply to the present Chinese garrison at Lhasa who could, if they wished, return home via India.

C rave's proposals became the genesis of the famous Jordan Memorandum of 17 August, 1912, to the Wai-chiao Pu in which the provisions of the Secretary of State's draft were reproduced almost in their entirety. The document was not intended as an ultimatum but as the basis for fresh negotiations between Britain and China. Scrupulous as ever, the Foreign Office informed Pussia of its contents. However, Peking in true style procrastinated, and the year was almost out before the British were able to evoke a firm response.

Ibid, No. 133, Jordan to Wai-chiao Pu, 17 August, 1912.
Jordan grumbled that as Yuan Shih K'ai - to whom he was partial - was under pressure from hotheads from Szechuan and Yunnan it was a pity that not more was being done to remove the Chinese garrison at Lhasa, the cry for whose "relief is stirring up a certain amount of military enthusiasm which it may be hard to check." Sir John's reproach directed at Simla was patently unfair. The Viceroy had made known his Government's willingness to allow the besieged Chinese to use the more convenient route through India for their journey home. It was for them to secure their own release from their Tibetan captors as Laden La's endeavours had been set at naught by the Cabinet in London.

Whatever else, Hardinge showed no lack of urgency about India's northern frontier. He drew Crewe's attention to the arrival of a Russian force in China's Sinkiang province (known also as the New Dominion), on the pretext of protecting Russian lives and property in the face of local disturbances, observing that Russia's policy of peaceful penetration unchecked could become a menace to Indian interests. But he firmly rejected the proposal of Macartney, the British Consul-General, to send a similar detachment of Indian troops to Kashgar, thus no charge of seeking to pursue a forward policy could be laid at India's door. The Viceroy was merely pointing out that the fruits of the Anglo-Russian understanding were habitually falling into Russia's basket.

The Secretary of State took up the matter with the Foreign Office. He suggested that it might even be advantageous to accept Russia's action at Kashgar provided Britain were released from the restrictive aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention in Tibet. The question had assumed a compelling urgency with the northern frontier of India and Burma needing greater attention.

63. Jordan Papers, FO 350/8, Jordan to Langley, 16 August, 1912.
64. FO 535/15, Enclosure in No.177, Hardinge to Crewe, 27 July, 1912.
Nepal too, whose friendship was vital to British India, had been solemnly assured that her interests in Lhasa would not be allowed to suffer on account of recent developments in Tibet. Russia's own policies towards Mongolia and China meant that relations between the three Powers were being recast. Central Asia in a word, was in a state of flux; hence this was a most opportune moment for Britain to consider afresh her own interests in the region.

The permanent staff of the Foreign Office responded with commendable promptness. Not insensitive to the possible gravity of the situation, they produced three separate minutes on 26 August, and 2 September 1912, in the form of a general memorandum. Its salient points may be thus summed up: With a British protectorate over Tibet ruled out by the Government of India on military and political grounds, Tibet's relation to India could be put on the same footing as Nepal and Bhutan. In order to achieve this end, to maintain the influence of the Government of India and their present friendly relations with the Dalai Lama, the establishment of a British agent at Lhasa holding a semi-diplomatic status similar to that enjoyed by the present resident in Nepal was suggested. To have such a man in the Tibetan capital would be an insurance against future developments which could be detrimental to British interests, such as a new forward policy undertaken by a re-invigorated China singly or in conjunction with other European Powers; or the possibility of Nepal going to war in defence of her commercial rights and privileges. In a word, Tibet, whatever the external symbols of the relationship had to be entirely dependent on India.

65. Ibid, enclosure in No.177, Memorandum respecting the Situation in the countries bordering on the North-East frontier of India. 26 August / 1 September, 1912.
But would Russia free Britain from the restrictive obligations of the 1907 Convention with regard to Tibet, in exchange for a free hand in Mongolia and the New Dominion? The general view was that Russia would consider it favourably, having, in the first instance, made a preliminary sounding herself through Cambon, the French Ambassador at the Court of St. James, about a possible deal between the two countries modelled on the Moroccan treaty of 1904 between Britain and France. The Foreign Office had not, at the time, been responsive to this overture but the moment to re-open the question had now arrived. The danger was that Mongolia and the New Dominion would pass under the Russian sphere in the natural course of events, in which case Britain presented with a fait accompli would have no cards left to play. At present the British had an opportunity of conceding to Russia as a favour what eventually they would find impossible to keep from her.

With these factors in mind, it was recommended that Britain should contact Russia immediately with the intention of securing a modification of the 1907 Convention, and thus gain a free hand for herself in Tibet. Russia, no doubt, would name her price but by this means Britain should know at once the full extent of Russia's designs. The new solution between the two Powers should be a published agreement with secret clauses, for a secret annulment of the 1907 Agreement followed by the sudden appearance of a British resident at Lhasa would give rise to needless and unjustifiable suspicion abroad.

Meanwhile, at the end of August news reached India that the Chinese garrison in Lhasa, having run out of food and ammunition, had given up the struggle and negotiated terms of surrender with their captors under the auspices of the Nepalese resident. Under these
they were required to hand over their arms before being permitted to
return home via India. They would be supplied with provisions on the
way. Those among them who had married local women and wished to stay
for this and other reasons would be allowed to do so provided they
accepted Tibetan citizenship. It was by any standard a generous
settlement which effectively gave the lie to inspired rumours of a
possible massacre circulated in Peking. Indeed, greater significance
should be attached to the performance of the Chinese in discharging
their pledges. One clause in the agreement signed on 12 August
stipulated that they would leave the country in three groups within
fifteen days. The first party left as planned. The two remaining
stayed on for another five months harassing their hosts until they
were forcibly put on the road to India on 6 January, 1913. 66

The stage was thus set for an elaborate Chinese ploy of force,
persuasion and diplomatic craft. While the Chinese force in Lhasa
indulged in sporadic fighting and kept the Tibetans unsettled, the
news that reinforcements were on their way from Szechuan would, it was
hoped, not only further undermine Tibetan morale, but by doing so
enable the relieving force to enter the country in triumph as Chao
Erh feng's men had done two years before. But even as the Chinese
were gathering strength to pass through the Tibetan marches in safety,
for the Khambas barred their way, the Dalai Lama was offered a
sweetener in the form of a presidential order dated 28 October 1912
reinstating him as head of the Yellow Church (he had been deposed by
a similar decree after his flight to India). The British, on the
other hand, were met with the refrain that as Chinese were in danger

of being massacred, Peking reluctantly was obliged to sanction the
despatch of an armed expedition in order to rescue them. Bell pointed
out the speciousness of the plea, and even Jordan's attitude
hardened visibly at this subterfuge. In a note to Grey, he observed
that recent developments had shown that China's aims in Tibet remained
unchanged. He noted the appointment of a Chinese magistrate in the
Zayul district of Tibet in immediate proximity to the Assam frontier.
"Such an appointment," concluded Sir John, "can only be regarded as
the latest evidence of that peaceful penetration and persistency of
purpose which has marked every incident of the Chinese campaign against
Thibet, and which is unlikely to be abandoned until they have reached
the line at which their neighbours are prepared to check their advance
by physical and moral pressure."

In London the Foreign Office awaited Sazanov's visit to Britain
in late September 1913 before broaching the subject of Tibet to the
Russians. Shortly after his arrival Nicolson aired, what he was
careful to emphasise, were his private views to Hardinge, according to
which the British should confine themselves to informing their Russian
guest, that in the light of recent developments in Tibet, they found
it vitally necessary to have an agent at Lhasa. Laden La possibly
would be the best man for the job. Sir Arthur was not in favour of
making a bargain over Mongolia and Kashgar as the Chinese might
otherwise think that Britain was "assisting Russia in despoiling them
of some of their territory." But while these compunctions, sharpened
no doubt by a mixture of economic and moral considerations, may have
done him credit, it was quite clear that the Permanent Under Secretary
had yet to appreciate the workings of the Russian mind.

As the air hung heavy with the threat of a fresh Balkan crisis,
and as the Foreign Office were averse to pressing the matter, the
Tibetan question did not figure prominently in the talks between
Sazonov and the British leaders. However, if these unforeseen
circumstances had not intruded, it is still doubtful whether a solution
to the problem would have been found. The Russians were quite content
to keep things as they were, for they had no major interests in Tibet,
while the British for their part were having no end of trouble even
drawing up a Tibetan policy let alone applying one. Nicolson complained
to the Viceroy:

"I wish that our Government could make up its mind to adopt your
suggestion to send an agent to Lhassa, but I fear that they are
disinclined to do so. They seem haunted by apprehensions that
he might meet with the same fate which befell our agent at
Kabul many years ago ...."

Two months later, Sir Walter Langley, the Assistant Under Secretary of
State at the Foreign Office, was echoing these views to Jordan.71
According to Langley, the Government of India and the permanent staff
of the India Office were champing at the bit for a more active policy,
but Morley's influence in the Cabinet coupled with a general
disinclination to do anything that could lead to another Tibetan
Expedition made it doubtful whether the Home Government would adopt
their views, a standpoint with which Sir Walter was not entirely out
of sympathy.

70 Ibid, FO 800/359, Nicolson to Hardinge, 19 September, 1912.
71 Jordan Papers, FO 350/1, Langley to Jordan, 28 December, 1912.
Until such time as his Government’s aims were formalised in Mongolia, Sazanov cleverly kept alive British hopes of a deal over Tibet. He had told Crewe that what Britain did in Tibet was of little concern to Russia (although he did say that jingoism at home were pressing him not to make any one-sided concessions on the subject); a view which the Japanese Ambassador in London also relayed to Grey after his conversations with the Russian Foreign Minister. Meanwhile the Tsar’s agents went about their task of detaching Outer Mongolia from the Chinese Empire, comfortable in the knowledge that the British, keen to keep Petersburg in good humour, would do nothing to impede their progress on the traditional objection that China’s territorial integrity was being violated.

On 3 November 1912 a Russo-Mongol Agreement and Protocol was signed by which Russia agreed to provide military aid to the Mongols in their struggle against China in return for which the Mongols offered Russia far-reaching economic rights and privileges in their country. The treaty, a triumphant culmination to years of patient endeavour was one of the major achievements of Russian diplomacy in Central Asia.

In China news of the agreement was greeted by a tremendous clamour for war. Jordan observed that while their agitation was pathetic and even grotesque in its futility "it indicates a consciousness of nationality which it would be unwise to overlook."

For Britain in particular the warning was clear:

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72 Hardinge Papers, Volume 118, Crewe to Hardinge, 3 October, 1912.
73 FO 535/15, No.246, Grey to Macdonald, 10 October, 1912.
74 L/PS/10/225, No.532, Contains text of the Agreement.
75 Ibid, No.4978, Jordan to Grey, 20 November, 1912.
"... it should be remembered that our position in China is infinitely more vulnerable than that of Russia. Our immense trade interests all over the country are a hostage for our good behaviour and expose us to retaliatory measures from which Russia is immune."76

In London the Chinese Minister had told Grey that what had caused most offence to his Government about the Russo-Mongol treaty was the fact that Russia by dealing directly with Mongolia had bypassed China77 - which confirmed the India Office in their view that the threat of direct negotiations with Tibet would probably be more potent than any other.

The India Office in a lengthy note to the Foreign Office recalled that Sir John Jordan favoured the idea of a fresh agreement with Russia over Tibet although like the Government of India he was averse to including Chinese Turkestan. Indeed, as Sazonov had disclaimed designs upon it, it should not be a stumbling block in Anglo-Russian negotiations. In keeping with Sir John's suggestion, however, the India Office proposed that Russian action in Mongolia might form the basis of a transaction. Sazonov would no doubt argue as he had indeed done when Grey broached the subject to him during his visit to England in September that Tibet and Mongolia were not in pari materia, a view which was correct insofar as the one was the subject of a convention with Britain and the other was not. On the other hand, the Russo-Mongolian agreement by declaring Mongolia to be autonomous had altered the status of an integral part of China and the British Government's acquiescence could not be taken for granted. What Britain sought in Tibet was not something Russians could in good faith take exception;

76 Jordan Papers, FO 350/8, Jordan to Langley, 13 November, 1912.
77 L/PS/10/225, No.4768, Grey to Jordan, 21 November, 1912.
"for it is not the extension of British influence, but simply
the restoration of the status quo recognised by the Anglo-
Russian Convention, and its maintenance by more effective
means than are admitted by that instrument. For this purpose
what is required is a modification of the arrangement of 1907
in the direction of allowing Great Britain to enter into
negotiations with Thibet, and to send a representative to
Lhassa when the relations between Great Britain and Thibet
render such a course necessary.

"But if Sir E. Grey thinks that no such modification is
practicable, it only remains to apprise the Russian Government
in due course of the action which His Majesty's Government
propose to take in present circumstances. It might at the
same time be desirable to sound them as to their attitude in
the event of it appearing advisable, for the purpose of
assisting the Tibetans against Chinese aggression, to lend
them money, arms, and (temporarily) British officers for the
organisation of their army."  

The Foreign Office were not agreeable to any modification of
the 1907 Convention fearing that Russia, in keeping with Sazonov's
view that Tibet and Mongolia were not *in pari materia*, would meet any
such British request with a demand for a *quid pro quo* in Afghanistan.
Langley felt it best to do nothing for the present, but to let Russia
know what Britain proposed to do once the Government had made up its
mind. Nicolson was concerned above all to keep faith with Russia by
upholding the Convention, a view with which Grey was in complete
accord.  
A note incorporating these points was thus drafted and
despatched to the India Office.

Just before the year was out the Chinese finally indicated to
Jordan that they were prepared to open negotiations with Britain on
the basis of the British Memorandum of 17 August 1912. But it was to
be another eight months before these assurances were finally fulfilled.

78 FO 535/15, No.296, India Office to Foreign Office, 3 December, 1912.
79 These comments are to be found in FO 371/1329, No.51749.
80 FO 535/15, No.311, Foreign Office, 21 December, 1912.
Hardinge had expressed the hope that China by responding tardily to Britain's overtures would force the Home Government to renounce their obligations towards her as regards Tibet and enter into relations with the Dalai Lama. The Viceroy's expectations were stillborn; for China's procrastination was matched by an almost total lack of urgency at Whitehall. In the Foreign Office there were lengthy discussions on the consequences of Russian action in Mongolia; much talk of circulating, in conjunction with the India Office, a paper on Tibet to the Cabinet but the will to act seemed lost in this labyrinth of words. The practised eye of a senior civil servant like Langley was nevertheless able to discern amid this confusion that,

"We are at present marking time about Mongolia as nothing has been settled yet about the Tibet policy, and the India Office are anxious that we should have something to play with if the decision of the Cabinet entails an arrangement with Russia. European affairs are still in such a tangle that it is difficult to get any attention paid to other questions." 

The same surely must have been also true for Russia, yet she was doing extremely well for herself in Central Asia and the Far East.

The Government of India suggested a possible alternative for Britain: to allow China to return to Tibet subject to an agreement by which she would agree to an adjustment to India's north-east frontier line and a small rectification of the boundary between Nepal and Tibet which would concede to the former control of the passes dividing the two countries. It could be argued in favour of this proposal that it would relieve India of the responsibility of acting in Tibet thereby lessening the strain on her military resources, a matter of considerable importance particularly if a crisis arose, for example, in Persia. Against this proposal it could be said that Russia

81 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/361, Hardinge to Nicolson, 19 December, 1912.
82 Jordan Papers, FO 350/11, Langley to Jordan, 10 January, 1913.
might object to the frontier rectification envisaged on the ground that it violated the 1907 Convention. In India's eyes its real weakness was that it "would not be fair to the people of Thibet, who would look upon it as a breach of faith, and would be robbed of the confidence they now feel in us. They would thus be open to easy persuasion to arguments of Russia. Nor are we of opinion that we can count implicitly on China's continuing to be a friendly neighbour for long."^83

In view of this the Viceroy's Government advocated the continuation of the present firm line towards China.

The India Office then produced a memorandum incorporating the points raised by the Indian Government and exploring others, such as unleashing Nepal at Tibet as Lee Warner had once advocated, but rejecting it as dangerous for reasons similar to those of Curzon. The document emphasised that there were no compelling commercial, political, or strategical interests for Britain to have relations with Tibet for its own sake; it was essentially towards the safety of the Himalayan borderland that Britain's eyes were directed. East of Bhutan on the Indian side of the tribal belt lay some of the richest districts of Assam in which much European and Indian capital had been sunk; farther west lay the states of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal, the first two bound by treaty to India in a subordinate relationship, the third having only a friendly informal arrangement with the British. All three had cultural, ethnic and commercial ties with Tibet which a hostile Power from Lhasa could exploit or seek to undermine, thereby generating new tensions along the Himalayas; a possibility which in the light of recent developments Britain could no longer ignore.

83 FO 371/1609, No.2534, Hardinge to Crewe, 16 January, 1913.
84 L/PS/18/B191, Tibet, by A.H. Hirtzel 27 January, 1913.
However, no papers were placed before the Cabinet and the impasse over Tibet continued. The Foreign Office which had at one time regarded an Anglo-Russian arrangement over that country with hope seemed now to be in mortal dread of losing Russia's friendship should Britain press for discussions on the subject. Grey and Nicolson were the two individuals most responsible for this shift in attitude. While the Foreign Secretary, haunted by the spectre of unnecessary diplomatic entanglements sought, above all, to keep a free hand for Britain, his Permanent Under-Secretary increasingly came to see the Russian alliance as his country's life line. Between them they ensured that British policy on Tibet continued to remain adrift.

When Nicolson communicated his views that sooner or later Britain would have to approach Russia in order to revise their agreement over Tibet, Sir George Buchanan expressed his assent. For while he did not doubt the good faith of the Russian Government and the absence of any intention on their part to gain a foothold in the Dalai Lama's country, he was less sure about the reliability of their agents, and as such thought it wise to forestall any action from that quarter. But the British Ambassador counselled patience, as the most opportune moment to raise the subject was after the current acute stage of the Balkan crisis had passed, and Sazonov had his hands free. The favourable moment finally arrived in May when the Balkan crisis was over and Russia was feeling particularly grateful to Britain for her support.

85 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/365 Buchanan to Nicolson, 20 March, 1913.
86 Grey Papers, FO 800/74, Memorandum by Sir G. Buchanan on Anglo-Russian Relations, 19 May, 1913.
The bureaucratic wheels were once again set in motion and the search for a Tibetan policy resumed. This decision must have been greeted with relief by British representatives abroad. Langley had managed to buy time from Jordan by soothingly reassuring him that it was the cumbersome machinery of the India Office and the Government of India that was causing the delay. Had this stalemate continued the British Ambassador at Peking would have begun suspecting the truth. Hardinge too was getting impatient. How long, he asked, would things be allowed to drift? The portents at Kashgar seemed ominous and if Russia made a forward move there Britain would have to move in relation to Tibet. To his friend Chirol he was even franker in his complaints. Britain had acted loyally to Russia about Tibet; indeed so scrupulous had she been that the Foreign Office had even prohibited him from writing harmless letters to the Dalai Lama when he was in India lest it be construed as a violation of the 1907 Convention. In order to alter this one-sided arrangement it was imperative to open discussions with Russia, who should renounce all interest in Tibet save that of the purely religious involving her Burial subjects; but Britain in her turn must be permitted to send an agent to Lhasa, communicate directly with the Dalai Lama, and offer him advice.

However it would be wrong to suppose that no exchange of ideas had taken place during this period between Jordan, Hardinge, and their respective departments at Whitehall. Each had sounded the other on the possible nature of a new conference involving Britain, Tibet and China. The British Ambassador ruled out the suggestion of an Anglo-

87 Jordan Papers, FO 350/11, Langley to Jordan, 26 March, 1913.
88 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/357, Hardinge to Nicolson, 16 May, 1913.
89 Hardinge Papers, Volume 93, Hardinge to Chirol, 15 April, 1913.
Chinese agreement to which Tibet would later accede or of Sino-Tibetan talks under British auspices, arguing in favour of a tripartite conference, which eventually came to be accepted. The Foreign Office had feared that full British participation would restrict the government's liberty of action and only after much persuasion did they signify their agreement to Jordan's proposal.

At the end of May the British Charge d'Affaires at St. Petersburg, O'Beirne, reported that Sazanov had no objection to the British idea of tripartite conference as Tibet held no great interest for Russia. Direct approaches to China and Tibet were made. The India Office suggested Darjeeling as a venue for the talks but the Indian Government had it changed to Simla where they could exercise greater control over proceedings and where the Tibetan delegates would be less exposed to Chinese intrigues.

China was warned about continuing her military campaign in Eastern Tibet but a severe setback to her forces prevented this from developing into a contentious issue. But the status of the Chinese and Tibetan delegates, as had been the case on previous occasions, threatened to become a subject of serious dispute particularly when a presidential order appeared in Peking appointing Ivan Chen and Hu Han Miu Commissioners for the Pacification of Tibet. The Foreign Office insisted that the order be revoked and as a result of their representations a fresh order appointing Mr. Chen as Chinese

90 Ibid, Volume 93, Jordan to Hardinge, 10 April, 1913.
91 FO 371/1610, No.16537, Foreign Office to India Office, 30 April, 1913. "You appear to me, if I may venture to say so, to think that you can arrange a satisfactory settlement without accepting any responsibility." Alston Papers, FO 800/246, Jordan to Langley, 6 April, 1913.
92 FO 371/1611, No.25215, O'Beirne to Grey, 29 May, 1913.
93 Ibid, No.27640, Hardinge to Crewe, 16 June, 1913.
plenipotentiary was issued. When it is remembered that Chinese power in Tibet had collapsed except in the marches, and that Lhasa earlier in the year (January 1913) had entered into independent treaty relations with Mongolia, the British attitude although firm was eminently fair. For while the Mongol-Tibet treaty may have lacked legal validity it unmistakably underlined the will to political independence, the Dalai Lama's proclamation of January 1913 to his people being further evidence of this fact.

From Beilby Alston, Jordan's deputy in Peking, came a call for bold and forthright action. In a note to Hardinge he remarked:

"Now that we have formally threatened them [Chinese] with direct negotiations with Tibet, we should, I think, be prepared with a means of carrying out this threat in such a way that the Chinese will realise that we are not bluffing. The idea of an agreement with us alone would probably not appeal to the Tibetans, unless it were accompanied by something more than a mere verbal assurance of support against Chinese retaliation on their Eastern Frontier. Would it not be possible to go so far as to lend them arms and ammunition and, say, reservists from Gorkha regiments to train their own native levies and to show them how to keep the passes? .... The Russians have already done this, and more in Mongolia, and I think the stationing of a British Resident in Lhasa should also be kept in view as the coping stone to the edifice of peace which we are endeavouring to erect on your North-Eastern Frontier .... I cannot too strongly urge my own conviction that our own action, and not Chinese assurances, or even written obligations, will be the only safe foundation on which to build."

The threat to treat directly with the Tibetans was used to great effect by the British in Peking. The Simla Conference opened ceremonially on 6 October with the first negotiating session commencing on 13 October 1913. After such Chinese prevarication and delay, it was an achievement that the talks had got under way at all.

94 Ibid, No.28355, Alston to Langley, 21 June, 1913.
95 W.D. Shagakpa, Tibet A Political History, New Haven, pp.246-48
96 Hardinge Papers, Volume 93, Alston to Hardinge, 29 August, 1913.
But even as the first tentative steps to Simla were being taken, Nicolson, whose mind by now was obsessed by the need to keep Russia's friendship, was apprehensive lest developments in India marred Anglo-Russian ties. As he nervously awaited Sazanov's proposals for a revision of the 1907 Convention concerning Persia, he anticipated more Russian activity in Mongolia and possibly an expression of Russian interest in Tibetan affairs. Nevertheless, he remarked to Hardinge, the British could meet their ally

"half-way and not allow ourselves to be influenced by Anglo-Indian prejudices and traditions as would engender suspicions and misunderstandings between us and Russia. It is always to me a very great comfort to think that you are at the head of affairs in India as I am quite sure that if we had any other Viceroy we might find ourselves drifting towards a certain alienation from Russia."97

For the British team at Simla, caught between the conflicting needs of India, and the Home Government's overriding desire to accommodate Russian susceptibilities, the negotiations seemed set to follow a long and tortuous course. Their leader was Sir Henry McMahon among whose principal advisers were Charles Bell, Political Officer, Sikkim, and Archibald Rose of His Majesty's Chinese Consular Service. China was represented by Ivan Chen, and Tibet by Lonchen Paljor Dorje Shatra.

The first problem facing the Conference was an agreed definition of Tibet's territory. As expected this became an acutely contentious issue between the Chinese and Tibetan delegates, and led eventually to the breakdown of the talks. The immediate question was, however, to settle for an agreed procedure. The Government of India favoured a statement of Tibetan claims followed by an adjournment after which the

97 Nicolson Papers, FO 800/367, Nicolson to Hardinge, 2 July, 1913.
Conference would re-convene to hear China's reply. The British delegation confronted by two widely divergent points of view could then get to work on a compromise plan. As this procedure did not appear to contravene the Home Government's view of Britain in the role of an honest broker no objection was evinced in London. However, Alston from Peking expressed his reservations about its wisdom. He reminded the Foreign Office that the idea of an honest broker was Lord Morley's and that it had not been discussed with Peking. Indeed, China had been given to understand that the basis of the Simla negotiations would be the Jordan memorandum of 17 August 1912 and that the Tibetans were being made parties to it in order to ensure their adherence to any arrangement arrived at. Alston's suggested procedure was that Tibet should make known her requirements in the form of a commentary on the memorandum alluded to, and this could subsequently be used by Britain in preparing her own draft proposals.

India may have calculated that by giving publicity to the sweeping Tibetan claims it would be putting pressure on China to reach a reasonable settlement. If so, it calculated wrongly, for the Chinese by putting forward extravagant counter-claims of their own ensured that the Conference by having to consider the case of either side item by item would be bogged down by this wearying detail. And nothing suited China better than a situation of total stalemate. Alston seemed to have sensed this. In his view the only viable pressure to which Peking would prove amenable was a British threat to treat directly with Tibet. Had greater weight been attached to his opinions in London Anglo-

98 FO 555/16, No.376, Alston to Langley, 9 October, 1913.
Tibetan relations would have run a more satisfactory course.

The Home Government's position was embodied in an India Office paper which Crewe circulated to the Cabinet a few days after the Simla Conference had opened. The document emphasised Britain's role as an honest broker; it disavowed any intention either to extend India's responsibilities or her frontiers but merely sought to limit Chinese activity in certain areas of Tibet; it pointed out that by recognizing the present Chinese regime on 8 October Britain had lost her remaining lever in Peking; it emphasised the fact that McMahon's bargaining hand was weakened even further by the restrictive provisions of the Anglo-Russian Convention and that whatever gains he won would have been achieved by diplomatic means. The paper conspicuously refrained from mentioning any threat to deal direct with Lhasa in the face of possible Chinese obduracy but it did mention in general terms the need to define the Indo-Tibetan border east of Bhutan. It was on the whole a weak and negative document notable only for the scant encouragement it gave to the British negotiations at Simla.

The Conference proceeded according to plan. The Tibetan delegation began by laying on the table the claims of their Government to territory which included the Kokonor district and extended eastwards to Tachienlu. They asserted the independence of Tibet and recounted the recent excesses of the Chinese.

99 L/PS/18/3201, Tibet: The Simla Conference, 17 October, 1913, J.E.S. [Shuckburgh]
100 FO 535/15, Enclosure in No.382, Hardinge to Crewe, 13 October, 1913.
On 30 October the Chinese replied with a counter-claim by which they claimed sovereignty over Tibet, the right to station a Resident at Lhasa with an escort of 2,600 men, the right to guide Tibet in her foreign and military affairs, and a frontier between China Proper and Tibet which went as far west as Giamda, within 260 miles of Lhasa.\(^{101}\)

The problems facing McMahon were as follows:\(^{102}\) Tibet had repudiated Chinese suzerainty and the chances of re-establishing that suzerainty on the former basis were nil. The Tibet-Mongol agreement of January 1913 may have carried no weight in Europe but in Tibetan eyes it was an effective assertion of their country’s independence. However, discussions within the Tibetan camp made it clear that Lhasa needed outside help and guidance;\(^{103}\) and in view of

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101 FO 535/16, Enclosure in 410, Hardinge to Crewe, 31 October, 1913.
102 L/PS/10/344, 3160, Enclosure 1, Sir Henry McMahon’s final Memorandum on the Tibet Conference. Hereafter, this will be referred to as McMahon’s final Memorandum.
103 McMahon's views received confirmation from Rose who observed that, "unless we have someone at Lhasa to give advice and moral support to the de facto Government, there seems little hope that Tibet can work out her own salvation. This leaves us with two alternatives - a British representative or complete Chinese control. The Lonchen is a shrewd and capable man, the one man who really counts in Tibet, as they tell us, and he frankly admits that he is powerless against the conflicting factions in his own camp unless we stand by him .... One point which is new, and which will need careful consideration, is the determination of the Tibetans to open up their country: they are always thinking of and discussing communications, mines, and new sources of revenue: this will mean changes in administration, possibly foreign loans, and in view of the Russo-Mongolian agreements, the sterilisation of Tibet seems to be no longer possible." Langley Papers, FO 300/30, Rose to Jordan, 17 November, 1913.
this a British Representative at the Tibetan capital and direct relations with the Tibetan Government were the wisest course of action open to the British. The Home Government should press for the revision of the Anglo-Russian Convention concerning Tibet without delay. Furthermore while China's right to post an Amban at Lhasa with a small escort of 300 men was recognised no reference was made to her claim to advise Tibet on its foreign relations since this could have been interpreted to include Nepal and Bhutan. In conclusion, recent development in Mongolia by possibly opening the back door to Tibet had underlined the impracticability of maintaining a political vacuum in the latter country. McMahon therefore aimed to provide for British participation in industrial and commercial enterprises in Tibet. These then were the factors which determined his own draft proposals of 10th November which were despatched to London for consideration. Meanwhile Sir Henry summoned a second meeting of the Conference on 18 November in order that a clear understanding should be reached between all three parties on the limits of Tibet. Ivan Chen demurred at any procedure which did not first recognise China's suzerainty, and then accept the reinstatement of the Amban at Lhasa. Unable to get his way the Chinese diplomatist at the close of the meeting promptly "took to his bed and has as yet shown no disposition to rise. I trust that our subsequent negotiations will not suffer from delays of this nature," were McMahon's concluding remarks on the opening phase of the Conference.

104 FO 535/16, Appendix to No.461, Papers Communicated by India Office, 11 December, 1913.
105 McMahon's final Memorandum, Enclosure 1, 20 November, 1913.
In Whitehall, Mongolian developments had become a fresh apple of discord. The Russo-Mongolian Protocol of 3 November 1912 as was recognised in the Foreign Office had virtually reduced Mongolia to a Russian protectorate, and notwithstanding the storm of protest it at first provoked in China, Peking in return for a few face-saving clauses, eventually came round to endorsing its provisions under a Sino-Russian Agreement signed on 5 November 1913.  

The initial reaction of the Foreign Office was to assure the Board of Trade in a departmental note that the British Charge at Peking had been instructed to get into touch with the Mongolian Government with a view to recognising their autonomy in exchange for securing fair terms and an open door for British commerce. The problems of India's frontiers could not obviously have had a totally paralyzing effect on Grey, for he managed to display unusual dash in pursuing the chimera of trade across the wastes of Mongolia! The reasoning of the Foreign Office was that as Mongolia was on the same footing as the rest of China, Britain could negotiate directly with it since any change in its status was a matter of concern to all Powers having treaty rights in China. Any hopes the British may have had of gaining leverage in St. Petersburg by the use of this argument were finally dashed early in the following years when Sazanov informed Buchanan that his Government denied that Mongolia was an integral part of China but merely a vassal. Russia was now strong enough to ignore her past assurances.

107 L/PS/10/365, No.4614a, Foreign Office to Board of Trade, 7 November, 1913.  
In the meantime Crewe, faced with a posse of rebellious
advisers, decided to close ranks with Grey. He expressed agreement
with the Foreign Secretary's view that it would be undesirable to
complicate the Tibetan question by linking it with Mongolia and
that it was premature to raise the matter with Sazanov. The pursuit
of Mongolian trade was for the moment much the safer occupation. 109

Having studied McMahon's draft of 10 November and the
Government of India's suggested amendments, the India Office in
collection with the Foreign Office produced one of its own early
in December. Hirtzel's accompanying minute is of particular interest.
"We have," he remarked, "embodied in it as much as we could of the
Government of India's recommendations, but our draft differs
essentially from theirs in that theirs is based on the assumption
that Russia will agree to a complete revision of the arrangement
concerning Tibet without raising awkward questions elsewhere, and our
draft is based on the assumption that she will not .... This Office
has always held - as the Government of India now hold - that revision
should be pressed for if possible, but if the F.O. say that it is
impossible, as they do, there is an end of it. A new consideration
is this: if Russia did not ask for compensation in Persia and
Afghanistan, almost the only place left is Chinese Turkestan. Now,
apart from the fact that the Government of India themselves are
unwilling to give compensation there, the F.O. have had a strong
appeal from Sir John Jordan not to do so. In the light of these
circumstances the present draft is the best possible one." 112

109 Ibid, No.4614a, India Office to Foreign Office, 19 November 1913.
111 Ibid, Enclosure 1 in No.473, 2 December, 1913.
112 L/PS/10/342, 4619, Minute by A. Hirtzel, 3 December, 1913.
Sixth Article which presented considerable difficulty called for
detailed explanation. Under Article 3 of the Anglo-Chinese Convention
of 1906 China was given a monopoly of concessions in Tibet and it was
desirable that as Britain was freeing her own hands to use the present
opportunity of getting rid of this monopoly. There were two courses
of action open to the British Government: first they could place
themselves on the same footing as China; in other words exercise a
joint monopoly; or secondly, they could cancel the article in question
which would then have the effect of revising Article 9(d) of the Anglo-
Tibetan Convention of 1904 by throwing Tibet open to foreign enterprise
subject in each case to Britain's consent. This would mean that Tibet
was to be opened to everyone except Britain and Russia. Tibet, for
example, would be within her rights to offer a concession to (say)
Japan because neither Britain or Russia were available. Public
opinion in neither country would accept this. The choice between
these two alternatives was complicated by Article 4 of the Anglo-
Russian Convention under which the parties engaged not to obtain
concessions in Tibet. This clause could only go with Russian consent
which was unlikely to be forthcoming. Another complication was that
it would morally be impossible to sterilize Tibet against her will.
The only way out of this impasse, suggested Hirtzel, would be the
creation of spheres of commercial influence, the difficulty was agreement on an
acceptable line. So little was known about Tibet that a fair division
of commercial interest was impossible; hence it would have to be based
on political considerations, and the commercial consequences left to
time. Thus Britain should claim a sphere of 200 miles in breadth
stretching along the whole northern frontier of India and its
adjoining states, and leave the rest to Russia. If Russia objected
that the settlement left Lhasa in the British Zone Britain could reply
that under a similar arrangement in Persia Tehran remained in the
Russian sphere. There was however a third alternative. This would
entail cancelling the Chinese Monopoly and modifying Article 4 of the
Anglo-Russian Convention so that each party would be able to obtain
concessions in Tibet, but only with the consent of the other. One
disadvantage was that this could lead to unfriendly competition
between Britain and Russia; that permission for every venture meant
that Russia would have to be approached cap in hand even if it were
to involve British enterprise in the Chumbi Valley; more objectionable
was that it would expose vast areas of territory adjacent to the
Indian frontier to Russian influence. The Permanent Under-Secretary
personally favoured the division of the country into spheres of
commercial interest. His minute threw important light on the
considerations which lay behind the formulation of Article 6 in the
India Office draft. 113

The Government of India responded with a sharp rejoinder. It
deprecated the re-opening of the Persian and Chinese Turkestan
questions, and it prepared to countenance Russian commercial
privileges in Tibet. It upheld in the main McMahon's draft of
10 November; it emphasised the need to review the whole situation in
the light of Russian moves in Mongolia; it pointed out the prime
necessity of having a British Agent at Lhasa as a safeguard against

113 Article 6 of the India Office draft of 23 December 1913 reads as follows:
"Article 3 of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 is hereby cancelled, and
it is understood that in article 9(d) of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of
1904 the term "foreign Power" does not include China.
Not less favourable treatment shall be accorded to British commerce than to
the commerce of China or the most favoured nation.
No rights of monopoly as regards commerce or industry shall be granted to
any official or private companies, institutions, or individuals in Thibet."
the possible intrigues of foreign Powers; (the ease with which Japanese
disguised as Tibetans could enter the country was cited as an example)
and lastly it sought a way out of the current impasse by suggesting the
substitution of Tibet for China in Article 3 of the Anglo-Chinese
Convention of 1906, a proposal "which would involve a partial
sterilisation of Tibet ....".

That Russian action in Mongolia entitled Britain to a quid pro quo
in Tibet was a view with which Hirtzel had every sympathy. The stumbling
block, however, was the Foreign Office who refused to approach Russia
because Sazanov's remarks in September 1912, during the occasion of his
visit to Britain, that the cases of Mongolia and Tibet were not
analogous, ruled out any possibility of an agreement. In their opinion,
nothing for the present should be done that could possibly cloud Anglo-
Russian relations. Hirtzel observed that Sazanov's argument was sound
only

"if Tibet and Mongolia stood in no kind of relation to one
another: it falls to the ground when what is done in the
one reacts on the other. How far Russian action in
Mongolia was going to affect the situation in Tibet could
not be foreseen in September 1912, and it was impossible
then to counter Mr. Sazanov's argument."

The series of agreements negotiated between Russia and Mongolia, Russia
and China, and Mongolia and Tibet had since introduced new factors into
the situation which entitled Britain to demand a quid pro quo. To
Sir Arthur, the case for pressing such a demand appeared unanswerable,
"and it leaves no excuse for re-opening the Persian and Afghan Agreements. I would therefore venture most strongly to urge H.M.G. at least to try it, before they acquiesce in any of the extraordinarily lame alternatives that alone are open."117

However, Hirtzel came down hard on Hardinge's proposal for the partial sterilisation of Tibet. The Viceroy's amendment to Article 3 of the Anglo-Chinese Convention, he argued correctly, by permitting the grant of commercial privileges to Tibetans only would in effect result in the total sterilisation of that country. Neither did Grey's advocacy of administrative sterilisation, as contained in the Foreign Secretary's amendment to Article 2 of the India Office draft, find favour in his eyes. He summed up his case thus:

"To my mind the administrative sterilisation of Tibet against her will is, no less than her commercial sterilisation, impolitic - because it will alienate her - impracticable - because if she is determined to get outside assistance, she will succeed, whether we like it or no - and morally indefensible - for obvious reasons."118

As to India's attempt to press its case for a permanent British representative at Lhasa, the matter was now closed. Had the posting of such an agent been permitted the terms of the treaty under discussion could have been less stringent. The absence of such an agent, commented Hirtzel, made it all the more urgent for the British Government to ensure that paper safeguards were as effective as possible.

But while this vigorous debate between the two concerned departments of state at Whitehall continued and as the Indian and Home Governments were locked in verbal battle, the parties at Simla had set about the task of defining the territorial limits of Tibet. Ivan Chen

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
relied on extracts from a pamphlet by General Fu Saung-mu recording
the frontier campaigns of Chao Erh-feng, and on the published works
of foreign authors, such as Sir Thomas Holdich, for documentary
evidence of his country's case.

'The Lonchen, whilst expressing his interest in the opinions
expressed by the authors, refused to accept as conclusive
any statements which lacked the weight of an official seal.
In support of the Tibetan claim he produced a large number
of original archives from Lhasa, tomes of delicate
manuscripts bound in richly embroidered covers, he
confronted his opponent also with the official history of
Tibet, compiled by the 5th Dalai Lama and known as the
"Golden tree of the Index of the sole ornament of the World",
a work of great scope and colossal dimensions.

'The Lonchen claimed recognition for the Chinese-Tibetan Treaty
of 822 A.D., which was recorded on three identical pillars,
one in the Ta-Chao-Ssu Monastery at Lhasa, one at the Chinese
capital (Hsi-an-Fu), and one on the frontier at Marugong, on
the Kokonor-Kansu border. The historical and traditional
frontier of Tibet, as outlined in this Treaty, is the one
indicated on the map attached to the Tibetan claim. He
announced moreover that he would lay on the table the
original records of each Tibetan State as far east as
Tachienlu, proving that the lamasaries and tribal chiefs had
exercised a continuing administrative control over the country
for many centuries, and that they held their lands, collected
their taxes and received their subsidies by virtue of their
association with the Government at Lhasa.

'For some days Mr. Chen showed evident signs of panic; he
protested that his Government would never consent to the
production of evidence in regard to the country east of Batang
or the discussion of Kokonor; he telegraphed to Paris for an
official copy of the "Institutes of the Manchu Dynasty"; and
he stated that he relied on China's position in international
law, by which Chao Erh-feng's effective occupation of the
country cancelled any earlier Tibetan claim.'

These three paragraphs from McMahon's Memorandum read together
give a somewhat different impression to the single line containing the
quaint title of the 5th Dalai Lama's history, quoted by Alastair Lamb. 120
His attempt to cast a slur on the Tibetan evidence contrasts curiously
with the serious attention he pays to Chinese claims over Nepal and

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119 McMahon's Final Memorandum, Enclosure 2, 24 December, 1913.
Bhutan, even when these were being pressed with the aid of such substantial evidence as a decorative button or peacock's feathers!

Furthermore it would be unwise to disregard the value of stone inscriptions such as the Tibetans produced in evidence of their claims particularly when it is remembered that serious historians look upon similar engravings on the Asokan pillars as one of the principal sources of Ancient Indian history.

The Chinese certainly were not unmoved by the weight of the Tibetan evidence. Ivan Chen, the Chinese Plenipotentiary, a man well schooled in the principles and practice of Western diplomacy, who spoke English with fluent ease would surely have not shown such "evident signs of panic" (McMahon's phrase) had the Tibetan documents been of "dubious relevance"\(^{121}\) as Lamb would have us believe. Moreover McMahon's phrase (remembering that he was a witness to the proceedings) is by a neat sleight of hand turned by Lamb into: "became increasingly annoyed - and never at a loss for an opportunity to have a dig at Nehru's Government, he added in parenthesis - as, one suspects, Chinese diplomats became during the Sino-Indian boundary discussions of 1960-61, when the Indian side started quoting from Sanskrit epics."\(^{122}\)

\(^{121}\) Ibid.

\(^{122}\) Ibid. This could only have been to embellish a point; nevertheless these last remarks hinting at the absurd provide an interesting contrast with the author's observations in another book. There, he says, "The Indians .... have used their history in a way which Western scholars can understand and relish .... the Chinese have said that one of the major causes of the present crisis in Sino-Indian relations has been Prime Minister Nehru's co-operation with the capitalist Tata family in creating a war scare so as to increase arms production, and hence, to augment Tata profits. This sort of thing, at least outside Communist countries, does not really need refuting."

Faced with a seemingly unbridgeable gulf between the two sides and perhaps inspired by the Russian model in Mongolia, McMahon put forward a compromise draft under which Tibet would be divided into two Zones. The Inner Zone, nearest China, was to include the Manch country, while the Outer Zone lying adjacent to India and comprising Central Tibet was to include such important towns as Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse. Only the latter Zone was to have well defined rights of autonomy. The British Plenipotentiary urged his superiors to accept his plan on the grounds of four main advantages which were as follows:

"Firstly, Thibetan and, indirectly, British interests in Inner Thibet would be safeguarded and perpetuated.

"Secondly, negotiations with both China and Thibet would be rendered easier.

"Thirdly, the possibility that any part of Thibetan territory would in future be included within the still undefined frontiers of Outer and Inner Mongolia, would be avoided.

"Fourthly, creation of an effective Zone intervening between Russia, or other foreign sphere of influence, and Thibet would be facilitated."

Hardinge endorsed the McMahon plan as did Crewe who, however, added the rider that Tibetan rights in the Inner Zone had to be carefully defined. Unless this were done the Chinese would lose no opportunity of ignoring the restrictions placed on their activities and thus provoke the Tibetans into making embarrassing appeals to the British for help.

The Conference adjourned for a Christmas recess of a week during which time Ivan Chen motored down to Agra to see the Taj while the Lonchen Shatra undertook a pilgrimage to a Buddhist shrine.

123 FO 535/16, Enclosure in No.475, Hardinge to Crewe, 18 December, 1913.
124 Ibid, No.475, India Office to Foreign Office, 23 December, 1913.
Having re-convened in the New Year, McMahon empowered by the
Home Government placed his plan before the Chinese and Tibetan
delегations on 17 February 1914 with an accompanying map. Clearly
defined though the autonomy of Outer Tibet was it reserved
"to China the right to re-establish such a measure of control
in Inner Tibet as would restore and safeguard her historic
position, without in any way infringing the integrity of
Tibet as a geographical and political entity. I made it
clear that indeed we were prepared to consider the Tibetan
March country between Batang and Tachienlu as a buffer
State, which would effectually safeguard the border
provinces of Szechuan and Yunnan; whilst the territory round
the Lake of Kokonor, of which little was known by either of
my Colleagues save that it was practically unadministered
and was inhabited by bands of Mongol nomads, would play the
same part in regard to Kansu and the new Dominion - but that
we were determined to prevent the absorption of any part of
Tibet." 125
Later in that year Walter Langley was to say of McMahon after
the latter's return to England:
"He was naturally not very sympathetic about China and it is
no doubt difficult to convince any one from India that there
is a Chinese point of view which deserves consideration." 126

That this was a piece of ill-deserved criticism is borne out by an
examination of McMahon's report outlining the advantages China stood to
gain in Inner Tibet. For instance, she would be allowed to re-establish
a measure of control in the Marches much of which she had lost in the
continuing conflict with the Tibetans. The genuine needs of her
security were accepted; hence the recognition of a buffer State safe-
guarding the provinces of Szechuan and Yunnan. Furthermore the British
may have been prepared to be even more flexible in practice, for Rose
defended this settlement in a conversation with Jordan in these words:

125. McMahon's Final Memorandum, Enclosure 3, 30 April, 1914.
"... that as China could practically what she liked in Inner Tibet, it was immaterial whether the places were included in Inner Tibet or regarded as China."\textsuperscript{127}

Although the Tibetans did not react to McMahon's plan with noticeable joy - they demurred at the prospect of Chinese influence being consolidated in Inner Tibet an area in which they claimed to have enjoyed undisputed authority - the Chinese rejected it out of hand, being

"prepared only to recognise a limited Tibetan autonomy in a loosely defined area, which appeared to consist of little more than the country in the immediate vicinity of Lhasa."\textsuperscript{128}

The India Office draft Convention of 20 February 1914 incorporating the various points raised in the recent correspondence between India, the Home Government and the two departments of State at Whitehall,\textsuperscript{129} had by now reached Simla and was submitted before the meeting of 11 March. On 20 March Ivan Chen sent a message to the British rejecting the entire draft. All this while Lu Hsing Chi, the Chinese Agent in Calcutta, was telegraphing his Government asking them to take a harder line on the plea that India was about to rise in revolt and that the British would therefore be unable to hold out much longer. Unfortunately for him his telegrams were intercepted by the Indian Government and as such McMahon was aware of his intrigues.\textsuperscript{130}

The time had now come to open a more direct channel of communication with Lhasa. The Lonchen Shatra and his British conjurers repaired to Delhi where they would be free from the unwelcome attention of prying foreigners, particularly the Japanese whose exceptional

\textsuperscript{127} Jordan Papers, FO 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 17 September, 1914.
\textsuperscript{128} McMahon's Final Memorandum, Enclosure 3, 30 April, 1914.
\textsuperscript{129} FO 535/17, Enclosure in No.35, 20 February, 1914.
\textsuperscript{130} I/PS/10/593, The whole volume consists of these intercepted telegrams.
curiosity was arousing considerable suspicion and some alarm both in
India and at Whitehall. With the Chinese obdurate, the Tibetan and
British Plenipotentiaries got down to the business of defining a
common boundary along the Assam Himalaya. Indeed as early as
November 1913 Hardinge had suggested that such a discussion should
be restricted to territory east of Bhutan since Nepal and Bhutan had
disputed boundaries with their northern neighbour. The moment
was opportune to make good the Viceroy’s proposal. F.M. Bailey in
company with Morshead had just completed the last of his remarkable
explorations of the Tawang area; whereby he was able to trace the
course of the Brahmaputra, an achievement which deservedly won him
signal honours. Farther east O’Callaghan had led perhaps a less
exciting venture but no less important for that and made available
to the Government the result of his surveys. Summed up:

“The expeditions and explorations on the north-east frontier
from 1910-14 provided a mass of new geographical and political
material, on which it was possible to base the definition of a
boundary between Tibet and Assam.”

McMahon’s name was given to the line which it was agreed should define
the frontier. From the British point of view it was drawn up on
the basis of strategic, geographical and ethnic considerations. In
an exchange of letters between the two sides Tibet conceded the
Tawang track on the understanding it would seem that Britain in
return upheld Lhasa’s claim on its frontier with China.

Among the benefits to Indo-Tibetan trade McMahon included the
right to export Indian tea to Outer Tibet free of duty and the
avoidance of any reference to a customs tariff.

131 L/PS/10/342, 4790, Hardinge to Crewe, 21 November, 1913.
133A Addison’s Treaties, pp.34-35.
While it would be unwise to regard the McMahon Line as
sacrosanct particularly as it was never demarcated on the ground,
it was subject to adjustments of a secondary nature, a frontier
which was fair and strategically sound. The Tawang tract had been
absorbed principally for strategic reasons. This obviously was a
violation of the letter of the Anglo-Russian Convention but in the
light of Russian activity in Northern China and Mongolia the
transgression was a minor one.

The Chinese were not aware of the agreement concluded secretly
between McMahon and Lonchen Shatra, and when the three sides resumed
discussions, showed no inclination to move from their previous position
of total rejection of the British draft Convention. The threat of a
separate deal between Britain forced Ivan Chen to think again and much
against his inclinations he proceeded to initial the document on
27 April. The British had made one last concession: the neighbourhood
of Lake Kokonor was excluded from Inner Tibet and included in China
Proper whilst the prohibition against Tibetan representation in the
Chinese National Assembly was confined to the inhabitants of Outer
Tibet. However, on the morning of 29 April Chen called on McMahon to
inform him that Peking had repudiated his action in initialling the
Convention.

Although the Chinese Government refused to sign the Convention,
the Tripartite talks had not broken down, for Peking still maintained
its interest in reaching an agreement.

However, the problem facing the British was to get Russia's formal approval to the Agreement, and, even more pressing, persuade her to consent to the modification of the 1907 Convention concerning Tibet. For with their diplomatic flank to Petersburg secure the British would then be able to set about the task of getting a recalcitrant China to sign the Simla Convention with a greatly strengthened hand.

The Foreign Office sent R.T. Nugent who was well briefed on the Tibetan question to St. Petersburg to help Buchanan in his discussions with Sazanov. The Russian Foreign Minister's asking price was high. First, Article 10 had to be deleted and replaced by another declaring the English text to be authoritative. Second, Apropos of Article 6: the British and Russian Governments would engage by an exchange of notes, to be published simultaneously with the Convention, that they would not ask for concessions for their respective subjects without previous mutual understanding. In return Russia, in a secret note, would undertake not to ask for concessions for Russian subjects; neither would she oppose any request for concessions in favour of British subjects that might be addressed to them by His Majesty's Government. Third, Britain had to undertake, by an exchange of notes to be published, that she would not put Article 8 into effect without the previous agreement of the Russian Government. Russia, on her part, would bind herself through a secret note, not to oppose the visits of the British commercial agent at Gyantse to Lhasa whenever these were considered necessary. The official in question, however, had to retain his commercial character and not become a political agent.
As a counter-concession, the Russian Foreign Minister demanded that Britain address a note to the Russian Government to the following effect:

"His Majesty's Government engage not to support any demand on the part of British subjects for irrigation works, railways, or any preferential rights for commercial and industrial enterprises in Northern Afghanistan." 135

Sazonov also hinted darkly that he might have to address a note to the Foreign Office asking that Britain recognise more fully Russia's predominant interests in Northern Persia.

The Government of India balked at the idea of altering Article 10 since in their view any change in the text of the Convention would present the Chinese with an opportunity of re-opening the discussion on issues of substance within the document. They did, however, accept Russia's proposals concerning Articles 6 and 8 involving an exchange of public and secret notes between the British and Russian Governments. Neither did Hardinge object to the idea of sending Russia a note on Northern Afghanistan on the lines suggested by Sazonov; his only apprehension was that the Amir might choose to misinterpret it. Therefore he was in favour of keeping such a note secret until such time as India could explain its significance to the Afghan ruler and so remove from his mind any possible qualms that his country was being partitioned behind his back. 136

The India Office shared these views. Hirtzel in a Minute 137 remarked that the publication of the note on Afghanistan might incense Muslim feeling in India, and also that as an insurance against possible

135 FO 535/17, No.130, Buchanan to Grey, 19 May, 1914.
137 FO 371/1930, 23144, Minute by A. Hirtzel, 22 May, 1914.
future misunderstanding Russia should explicitly re-affirm that Afghanistan lay outside her sphere of influence. This last point found particular favour with India who in a further expression of its views deprecated any attempt to define Northern Afghanistan as such an undertaking would arouse the Amir's suspicions.

Meanwhile Grey had intervened in the debate. He agreed to modify Article 10 and accepted Russia's proposals concerning Articles 6 and 8. The Russians hoped that the arrangement outlined by them would be completed before Britain proceeded to full signature of the Simla Convention, but as time was of the utmost essence, they agreed to keep these in abeyance provided the British kept the text of the Convention secret. 138

The Russians then proceeded to ruffle a few British feathers by insisting that both the definition of Northern Afghanistan and Britain's undertaking concerning it had to be made public, and that Russian Buddhist pilgrims be allowed to travel to Tibet through India. 139 Nugent commented tartly:

"M. Sazanov is behaving very badly, he makes proposals and, as soon as they are agreed to, raises fresh demands." 140

The same official in a more elaborate minute 141 observed that the Russians were insisting upon the publication which suited them while their concessions to Britain would remain secret. Public opinion in both countries would be apt to draw a wholly one sided conclusion of the deal. There for the moment the matter was to rest, overtaken as it was by the darkening shadow of a European conflict which began to

138. FO 535/17 No. 134, Grey to Buchanan, 22 May, 1914.
139. FO 371/193, 26093, Buchanan to Grey, 10 June, 1914.
140. Ibid.
141. Ibid, Minute on Tripartite Convention and Russia, by R.T. Nugent, 11 June, 1914.
loom large in the wake of a fresh Balkan crisis. It was in a sense fitting that the concluding gestures of the Tsarist ministers, bereft of magnanimity or understanding, should ring down the curtain on an epoch of Anglo-Russian diplomacy in Central Asia notable for the singular absence of such qualities.

Having rejected the draft Convention of 27 April the Chinese Government were quick to follow this up by hinting to Jordan that should his Government prove unyielding it might be moved to retaliate against the sizeable British commercial interests in the Yangtse Valley, a threat to which the Ambassador was at all times sensitive. China's objections were for the moment confined to the boundary clause (Article 9) dividing Tibet from China Proper which, according to leaders, had been grossly unfair to their country. They pressed for negotiations to be resumed either at London or Peking reasoning, like their predecessors in 1905, that negotiations with Britain could be more rewarding if conducted oceans away from the baleful influence of Indian officialdom. It was also in their interest not to close the door to further talks since such action could irretrievably commit Britain to the step of treating exclusively with Tibet.

Crewe, at the end of his tether, was not particularly impressed by such tactics. "The Chinese proceedings over Tibet, and their repudiation of their representative's signature, seem to be very much à la Chinoise", he remarked. "I suppose after long experience of them one learns what is the proper blend of cajolery and brutality required in order to get anything done, unless one goes mad in the process of acquiring this knowledge."\(^{142}\)

\(^{142}\) Hardinge Papers, Volume 120, Crewe to Hardinge, 1 May, 1914.
Nugent and Alston were in favour of dealing independently with Tibet and in this they were joined by the officials of the India Office. Lining up behind them were Hardinge and his advisers. Jordan however thought otherwise; he was more concerned on how such an attitude would react on Anglo-Chinese negotiations on Railway and Mining concessions. The Tibetans for their part informed McMahon that they were not prepared to retreat from their current position.

Grey and Nicolson were prevailed upon to send an extremely stiff note to China in early June threatening to establish direct relations with Lhasa unless Peking was more amenable to reason. It turned out to be a piece of bluff, for Grey suffering from one of his Hamlet-like let downs refused to back up the warning with effective action. The prospect of offending Russia exercised its usual paralyzing effect on both him and Nicolson.

Caught within these conflicting currents McMahon arrived at the most sensible compromise: in company with the Tibetan Plenipotentiary he merely initialled the final draft. But in order to keep faith with the Tibetans, particularly with Lonchen Shatra, who had reposed their trust in the British, McMahon included a secret Anglo-Tibetan Declaration which affirmed that the provisions of the treaty would be observed by the two Governments in their mutual relations.

143 "I do not agree with Jordan's view that, by showing weakness to the Chinese, we have a better chance of getting mining and railway concessions. The experience of the Russians is just the reverse. They have bullied the Chinese over Mongolia, and they are getting all the railway concessions they want from them."
Hardinge Papers, Volume 120, Hardinge to Crewe, 3 June, 1914.

143A For final draft of 3 July 1914 see Aitchison's Treaties, pp. 35-37.
If British conduct was devious then such deviousness has to be set against the formidable difficulties of negotiating with the Chinese. Neither in her attitude nor in her demands did China once show a degree of moderation that might have shown British fears in India to be ill-founded. Not content with the free hand Morley allowed her in Tibet she was soon reaching out for territory and influence in the southern reaches of the Himalayas. And to each British attempt to reach a reasonable accommodation successive Chinese Governments responded with endless procrastination and prevarication. Had they been concerned primarily with the needs of security they could have obtained a good line of defence in the Tibetan marches. Jordan's belief, though firmly held, that territorial concessions in that area would have won Peking's assent to the rest of the Simla Convention, was backed by little or no evidence. Indeed, the British Ambassador went so far as to say that the concession need have extended no further than the region of Southern Kokonor. The facts of the case certainly do not warrant such a conclusion. China was primarily interested in her rights in Tibet and less concerned with defining the limits of Tibetan territory, as Ivan Chen made quite clear during the opening phase of the negotiations in November 1913.

Furthermore, even if the British had been so inclined they could not have made the concessions desired by the Chinese without jeopardising their considerably more important relationship with the Tibetans, who had conceded territory along the Assam Himalaya.

144 Jordan Papers, FO 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 4 May, 1914.
presumably on the understanding that they would be supported in their demands on the Chinese frontier.

In the absence of either the full signatures of the Plenipotentiaries or of ratification by their Governments the Simla Conference has no standing in International Law. The question of Tibetan independence, however, gives rise to greater doubt. A.P. Rubin argues astringently against Tibetan claims to sovereign status.145 However, as the basis of his case revolves around the concept of Chinese suzerainty it is anything but a cast iron one.

Indeed, part-sovereign states (itself a contradictory term), as Tibet juridically seems to have been, are difficult to classify. Their "domestic rulers find themselves limited and conditioned in dealing with external affairs by the rights of control vested in the government of an external power."146 Some are described as protectorates and some as being under suzerainty. The extent of control exercised by a foreign power over each such state can be explained only by the circumstances of its origin. In course of time some became independent while others became extinct through merger or annexation by the controlling power.

The intrinsic vagueness of the above terms render them, in Lawrence's view, "unfit for purposes of scientific classification,"147 hence he prefers to call them client states, whose patrons act on behalf of them in the manner defined by long-continued custom or by the terms of some formal agreement, or by both.

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147 Ibid, p.57.
Countries in a position broadly similar to Tibet's had in the past proceeded to full independence. Bulgaria, for example, was placed under Turkish suzerainty from 1878 to 1908. But it set at naught the authority of its suzerain, behaved in an independent manner both internally and externally, before finally proclaiming its independence in 1908.148

Turkey's suzerainty over Rumania and Servia from 1856 to 1878 was equally shadowy. In 1878, the independence of both was recognised by the Treaty of Berlin.149

The statement in the exchange of notes attached to the Simla Convention that: "It is understood by the High Contracting Parties that Tibet forms part of Chinese territory", should not inhibit one from recognizing the reality of Tibetan independence, for a similar clause was included in the Treaty of Kiakhta of June 7, 1915, concerning Outer Mongolia.150 In the Sino-Soviet treaty of 1924 the U.S.S.R. re-affirmed the formal status of Outer Mongolia as an integral part of China. Yet only twelve years later in the interests of its border security in the Amur-Ussuri region against the menace of Japanese aggression it "entered into an agreement with the Mongolian People's Republic, under which title Outer Mongolia had been exercising its autonomy, providing for mutual support in the event of an attack by any third party."151 In 1945 after a plebiscite Outer Mongolia's status as a fully sovereign member of the international community was formalised.

148 Ibid.
It is beyond dispute that Tibet was a nation with distinct cultural, ethnic and administrative identity. She possessed a government which exercised effective control over a settled portion of territory, and whose leaders conducted their country's foreign relations as would those of an independent power. Lonchen Shatra attended the Simla Conference, it should be remembered, as a Plenipotentiary and not as a member of the Chinese delegation. Lamb's somewhat inspired picture of a Tibetan yokel lost in the maze of modern diplomatic negotiations and turning to McMahon constantly for help bore little resemblance to reality.  

McMahon himself saw things differently. "It is difficult," he remarked, "to do adequate justice to the personality of my Tibetan Colleague Lonchen Shatra .... He combines a simplicity and charm of manner with an unexpected knowledge of men and affairs. He has impressed me throughout the negotiations as a man of very great shrewdness and capability, and despite his want of the diplomatic training in Western countries which his Chinese Colleague has enjoyed, proved quite his match in debate and political acumen." And Hardinge whose diplomatic experience was second to none observed:

"It is curious to find that the Tibetan representative is very much cleverer than the Chinaman in spite of the fact that the latter talks English fluently and was 10 years in London."  

The question thus remains: Can International Law be entirely divorced from political morality? Had international opinion answered this in the affirmative the United Nations today could not have grown to its present size.

153 McMahon's Final Memorandum, 8 July, 1914.
154 Hardinge Papers, Volume 93, Hardinge to Sanderson, 22 January, 1914.
The last word on the subject belongs however to an anonymous prophet writing in the Pioneer Mail. "In coming to some satisfactory settlement of the Tibetan question," he remarked,

"we might well bear in mind that at present everybody in Asia is engaged in a game of grab - even the chief victim, and if in the future any one who has suffered from this policy is in a position to retaliate, he is likely to do so without discrimination. This being so it would be wise to make our Indian frontier as secure as possible now, before the storm comes, and for that reason Great Britain can never afford to see China take Tibet. She has already shown her hand right along our Burma frontier, and to have her north of the Himalayas, enveloping our Indian Empire on two sides, would create an intolerable situation .... Looking further ahead, a still more serious situation is threatened by the advance of China along the southern shores of the Central Asian deserts, since she will thus be able to link up with her advance - an accomplished fact along the northern route through Chinese Turkestan - eventually menacing the north-west frontier .... it would be of great advantage to us to place a friendly and possibly a formidable buffer state between the two empires, since it is the Tibetan plateau not the Himalayas, which forms the real northern frontier of India. That is to say we should uphold the status quo as it was a year after the revolution and if China does not agree, fight her for the possession of Tibet since it would be easier to wage an aggressive war now than it will be to carry on a defensive one ten or fifteen years hence .... Mongolia has virtually perished - Tibet follows unless Great Britain signs her charter of freedom; and it requires no foresight to see what that implies. It will be the cheapest way in the end."\(^{155}\)

CHAPTER VI

THE POST-SIMA DECADE

With the Cabinet rallying to the standard of France and Russia in August 1914, the British Government's best energies, both in India and at home, were to be concentrated exclusively on the war effort against Germany and her allies. Like many of his colleagues in London, Hardinge had long regarded the Kaiser and his associates with deep suspicion, his worst foreboding having been confirmed the Viceroy dedicated himself body and soul to his country's cause in the ensuing struggle in Europe and the Middle East. Not for a moment were Imperial interests allowed to subordinate or obscure Britain's needs in either of these principal theatres of conflict.

Tibet was no exception. In August 1914 the British supplied Lhasa with 5,000 rifles and 500,000 rounds of ammunition against a possible Chinese attack, informing the Dalai Lama at the same time, that no further assistance in the immediate future would be forthcoming.¹ Meanwhile Peking, under the mistaken impression that Britain and Tibet had proceeded to a full signature of the Simla Convention was anxious to re-open negotiations. Jordan, however, recommended that the Foreign Office bide its time until China had become amenable to the idea of endorsing the Agreement as it then stood.² Never ones to wait upon events when it was not in their interest to do so the Chinese resumed their war of attrition in Eastern Tibet. The continuing problems of this country underlined the truth of an unsigned comment made by an official at the Foreign Office two years before:

2. Jordan Papers, FO 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 17 September, 1914.
"The theory of the buffer state," he remarked,

"has never worked properly except where the buffer state was strong enough to keep up an efficient Government and administration and to make encroachments by either neighbour a risky undertaking."3

Thus unresolved questions from the past continued to plague British policy makers, including the necessity of making a fresh approach to Russia after the war. Also of growing concern to them was the disturbing evidence of Japanese designs in the Far East.4 As Britain's ostensibly ally Japan was quick to take advantage of the outbreak of hostilities in Europe by seizing German concessions in China. And in presenting her notorious Twenty One Demands, in violation of the open door principle, to an enfeebled Government in Peking she displayed a vastly more ambitious hand. Japanese behaviour in the past, in particular their excessive curiosity over the proceedings at Simla, even when they were being supplied with relevant information through the normal channels, had raised disquiet at the Foreign Office. Jordan, who had witnessed their methods at first hand in Korea, was inclined to view them with considerable distaste. With certain militant Indian nationalists being given refuge in Tokyo fears were increasingly expressed that Japan harboured pan-Asiatic ambitions.5 As a consequence of the War Japan and the United States of America joined Britain to become one of the three dominant Powers in the Far East. Russia, though temporarily crippled, soon showed signs of acquiring a new political dimension in lieu of

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4 FO 371/2326, No.15089, Memorandum respecting Japan's Aims in China, 1 Feb.1915.
5 L/PS/18/8226, Japanese Policy in its Bearing on India, Memorandum by the Secretary in the Political Department, India Office, 16 May, 1916.
3 F O 371/1317 No. I5527, 13 April, 1912.
her traditional military strength.

Exhausted by the war the Tsarist monarchy had collapsed, giving way to a succession of indeterminate governments the last of whom was finally overthrown by the Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership. The ideology of the new regime, which assumed power on 7 November 1917 (according to the Western Calendar), was based on a vision of social change rapidly transcending national barriers and finding its ultimate fulfilment in the creation of a socialist world order. The new Russia was determined to break with the old patterns of diplomacy; its leaders were prepared to throw overboard past agreements, treaties, and understandings to which their Tsarist predecessors had been parties if by so doing they could quicken the pulse of world revolution. After 1917 the British Government had to cope not only with the possible resurgence of traditional Russian power, but also with the more pressing political challenge posed by Bolshevism as an ideology.

As with the other major combatants Britain emerged from the war considerably weakened; her final victory had been dearly bought for the toll in lives and treasure had been immense. As such her dependence on America increased markedly. In India the Raj was beginning to lose its mystique; these developments were to cast their shadow over Anglo-Tibetan relations in the decade following the abortive Simla Conference.

With the Chinese mounting fresh attacks in the Tibetan Marches the Lhasa authorities were soon asking the Indian Government for additional military and diplomatic help. Their request was

6 FO 371/2318, No.1933, British Trade Agent, Gyantse, to Bell, 28 October, 1914.
turned down on the plea that British Consular officials in Szechuan did not consider that China was getting ready to embark on further expansionist adventures, and that no representation to Peking by His Majesty's Embassy was for the moment warranted.\(^7\) Nothing daunted the Dalai Lama sent two letters to the Viceroy\(^8\) pointing out that he had placed his trust in Britain, and while grateful for such help as had been rendered by her in the past, he awaited the fulfilment of a promise made to Lonchen Shatra by the British that the negotiations with China which had been suspended at Simla would be resumed at the earliest opportunity. A sympathetic response in Tibet's hour of trial would serve to strengthen British influence in the country. As a compromise the Government of India agreed to supply Tibet with 200,000 additional rounds of ammunition on payment instead of the 3 million originally asked for, and loan her the services of four drill instructors under the supervision of the British Officer commanding the escort at Gyantse. But this concession had been made as much by news that the Tibetan authorities were seeking to negotiate secretly with China\(^9\) as by the official entreaties of Lhasa.

For the Government of India the question of military aid was complicated by the objections of the Nepalese Durbar to any possible strengthening of Tibet. Chandra Shumshere had been told that the first consignment of arms and ammunition given to Tibet in August 1914 had been sent with the express intention of helping her to thwart the Chinese. Further supplies could only rouse the ire of the Nepalese

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7 Ibid, 9 November, 1914.
8 Ibid, No.6922, Dalai Lama to Viceroy, 2 and 3rd December, 1914.
9 FO 371/2318, No.31090, Jordan to Grey, 19 February, 1915.
Prime Minister and it hardly took Manners-Smith, the British Resident at Katmandu, to remind his Government of Nepal's importance to Britain. The Indian Government eventually assuaged Nepalese feelings by a gift of three thousand rifles.

Locked in the horns of this dilemma Britain felt that she could do little for Tibet, yet at the same time, she was sufficiently concerned lest the rulers of that country set their policy on a course detrimental to British interests. Even as the Simla Conference was drawing to a close Nugent at the Foreign Office had warned that if a definite arrangement was not reached by the time the delegates departed, Lonchen Shatra, the most powerful pro-British official in Tibet, would lose much of his influence to opposing factions favouring closer links with China. While pro-Chinese elements may not have gained the upper hand - an unlikely probability with the head of the Tibetan Church so resolutely opposed to China - the Lonchen lost favour with the Dalai Lama who

"was dissatisfied with his conduct of the negotiations. He was summoned to an interview at six o'clock in the morning, but His Holiness kept him waiting till five o'clock in the afternoon. Sha-tra and his friends kept the rebuke as secret as possible, but of course it came out."

Thereafter Lonchen Shatra lost ground to his opponents becoming a lonely figure towards the end of his life.

If the Chinese had cause to view askance the division of Tibet into two Zones, as Sir John Jordan would have his government believe, the Dalai Lama as the foremost champion of Tibetan independence had even more right to do so. Years later, his suspicions still rankling,
he asked Bell who was on a visit to Lhasa to explain the motives that led the British to make this decision. The Political Officer replied thus:

"The Chinese wanted to give the parts of Tibet near China Chinese names, and treat them as provinces of China. We arranged for them to be called Inner Tibet, thus keeping Tibet's name on them. Later on, if your army grows strong enough to ensure that Tibet's rights are respected, you may regain the rightful possession of this part of your country. But not if the name be lost." 13

The explanation was interesting, not so much for its ingenuity, but for the fact that Rose in defending the Simla settlement told Jordan that there was nothing to prevent China from establishing her control in Eastern Tibet if she chose to do so. It was obviously a case of allowing the two contestants to settle the matter through a trial of strength.

With a crisis brewing in Eastern Tibet Lhasa needed more assistance than India was prepared to give. Not surprisingly the Tibetans turned to Japan in an endeavour to make her combine with Britain to check China's expansionist ambitions. The Japanese, for their part, were not slow to respond. Four of their number, Kawaguchi, a scholar and priest, Tada, a monk in the Sera Monastery, Aoki, who was once Private Secretary to Count Otani (brother-in-law of the Emperor of Japan), and who was now engaged in the study of Tibetan scriptures, and Yasojiro Yajima, a military officer engaged in training Tibetan troops, wielded considerable influence on behalf of their country at Lhasa. "There should appear to be no doubt,"

13 Ibid, p.207.
observed Hardinge in a despatch to Austen Chamberlain, who had
replaced Crewe at the India Office, "that Japanese interests in
Tibet must increase as an inevitable sequel of Japan's policy in
regard to China. In our opinion there is, however, no immediate
danger of Japanese action affecting the relations between the
British and Tibetan Governments, but the situation is one which
will need to be closely watched."\(^1^4\)

Bell who had already pressed Tibet's case for greater aid
returned to this theme in another despatch. He reminded the
Government of India that though Lhasa had made gains at Simla, most
notably through the autonomy of Outer Tibet in whose administration
the Chinese were forbidden to interfere, and where no Chinese
colonists were to be permitted to settle, it felt the loss of areas
in Eastern Tibet which were under its control before Chao Erh-feng's
invasion. Against this the strategic and commercial advantages won
by the British were immeasurably greater. In the former category
could be included the removal of Chinese pressure on the Indian
frontier, from Kashmir to Assam - some 1,500 miles. More
specifically,

"the cession by Thibet to us of the Tawang district, a
country with an area of some 2,000 square miles, and much
of it fertile. Also the cession of other tracts of
Thibetan territory bordering on the territories of the
hill tribes of the north-eastern frontier. We have thus
been able to form buffer territories along the whole
northern frontier of Assam, between it and Thibet.
Formerly Thibetan territory in Tawang adjoined the plains
of Assam, and might at any rate have been occupied by
Chinese troops. These cessions are naturally of great
importance."\(^1^5\)

\(^1^5\) FO 535/18, Enclosure 1 in No.44, Bell to India, 6 August, 1915.
Commercially, Britain gained by acquiring the right to export Indian tea to Outer Tibet free of duty, and by getting monopolies in Tibet abolished. She scored politically by establishing the right to communicate directly with the Government at Lhasa.

China by an adroit mixture of cajolery and force was trying to reduce Tibet. The campaign in the Marches was costing the Government at Lhasa dear for it meant that a relatively large force of 10,000 Tibetans had to be kept in proper settle to withstand the repeated thrusts of the Chinese. And as the Chinese were in occupation of the more fertile parts of the country Tibet was hard pressed for food. To give the Tibetans temporary relief Bell suggested that they be allowed to levy a simple customs tariff on exports of, say, one rupee per maund of wool and on other articles at similarly moderate prices. Tibetans felt that they had a better right to tax their own products going out than foreign goods coming in. The War had altered the state of affairs that obtained at the Simla Conference when the British refused to permit such a tariff. As evidence, Bell cited the fact that the export of Tibetan wool, the country's chief staple, from India had been prohibited, whereby the woollen mills in Cawnpore had become the sole purchasers of Tibetan wool because of which the war-price of the product had fallen instead of risen. It seemed therefore that the Government of India while objecting to the monopoly in Tibet had established a monopoly in India. Such were the arguments used by the Political Officer for the adoption of his first measure. His second recommendation was that Tibet should be supplied with machine guns and mountain guns. Her troops although ill-armed in comparison with the Chinese had performed admirably in keeping their foes at bay. But Tibet's shortage of trained men and adequate
weaponry could in time become a serious disadvantage, and it was for India to make good this deficiency. Bell described his proposals as moderate and reminded the Government of the loss to India should Tibet fall under Chinese control.

The Viceroy and his advisers proved unsympathetic. They saw no reason for urgent action since Tibet was reported to be parleying secretly with China; hence a British approach now could be misinterpreted as a sign of undue anxiety, and might tempt the Tibetans to make further demands.

"As regards the actual proposals which you put forward, the Government of India are not inclined, at the present time of grave preoccupation, to take up so complicated a question as the levy of a customs tariff on exports from Thibet to India. This question would not only involve the examination of all the conditions along the whole length of the Indo-Thibetan frontier, but would necessitate a consideration of the trade relations between Thibet and Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Further, if a tariff were to be permitted, the Government of India would require some guarantee that it would be levied in such a manner as to preclude abuse and corruption, which could only result in hardship to individuals and the strangling of Indo-Thibetan trade. Such a guarantee would not in all probability be forthcoming.

"As regards the procuring of machine guns and mountain guns for Thibet, in view of the fact that there is a serious shortage, particularly of machine guns, in the main theatres of war, and that the Government of India cannot secure sufficient for their own needs, it is out of the question at present to contemplate the purchase of them for the Thibetan Government .... The present view of the Government of India is that we must mark time and wait developments in Thibet." 16

Such was the tone of this letter that Bell had a right to feel aggrieved. His proposals were modest in scope. It is difficult to believe that the mightiest empire in the world, however hard

16 FO 535/18, Enclosure 2 in No.44, India to Bell, 3 September, 1915.
pressed, was unable to spare a few machine guns, or allow a temporary tariff to be imposed by a country for whom these minor tokens of generosity meant a great deal. It was absolutely right that Bell should draw his Government's attention to the considerable territorial and commercial concessions made by Lhasa in the expectation that it could count on appropriate British help against China. It is quite understandable that Lonchen Shatra should lose favour with his countrymen for having made a one-sided bargain at Simla (the price of such failures in more developed nations has often been more severe). There was nothing in this attitude that "would appear to show a curious want of logic on the part of Tibetans generally." What such comments exposed was the petty arrogance in Hardinge's own character. It was as if the fears and aspirations of a people struggling to rid themselves of an alien tyranny counted for nothing if such a tyranny were not yoked to the power of Germany; or that the strategic needs of India, whose contribution to Britain's war effort was substantial, were now matters of less urgent concern. It was, in short, an extraordinarily poor display of statesmanship. Perhaps it was because at heart the Viceroy had always remained a civil servant, one who was more at ease carrying out the great decisions of Government than making them himself.

Shuckburgh of the India Office in a minute showed that he was plainly unimpressed by the Government of India's attitude. In his view Simla's assertion that the Anglo-Tibetan Secret Declaration had brought advantages to both sides without at the same time being willing

17 Ibid.
to scrutinise the gains of either side was a lame response to the situation, for

"Mr. Bell's whole point is that, as things at present stand, the Tibetans are not deriving any advantage (though we are) from the Declaration."18

However, Shuckburgh agreed with the Government of India's decision to withhold further supplies of arms for the reasons they cited and because the Nepalese Durbar would regard such a move with hostility. He was far more sympathetic to the proposal to allow Tibet to impose a light tariff on her exports, and appeared somewhat mystified at the Viceroy's negative response. For the moment the matter had of necessity to be kept in abeyance.

"But it will certainly be necessary, when the time comes for a more active policy, to consider the whole question in a more sympathetic light."19

But just as the general view in the Government was that a settlement of these questions had to await the conclusion of the War it was also commonly believed that Britain's agreements with Russia and China over Tibet had to be similarly deferred. The discussion began in the first place due to a Russian proposal to Britain in March 1915 that the talks on Northern Afghanistan between the two countries suspended in July 1914 be resumed on the old lines.20 The weight of opinion in the Foreign Office was against any immediate resumption.21 It was felt, furthermore, that in view of the altered situation there was little advantage in throwing Afghanistan into the melting pot unless the British were able to secure a much more
substantial quid pro quo in Tibet. The Government of India summed up the strong British feeling on the subject when it remarked that the time had come to impress Russia that a change in her "attitude towards British interests in Asia is very desirable and that as India, standing side by side with Great Britain and her Colonies is supporting the Franco-Russian Alliance in five theatres of war to the very utmost of her strength and resources, and is even assisting to obtain Russian predominance in Constantinople and the Dardanelles, she has the right to expect Indian interests in Asia to be fairly and even generously treated, and without creating needless difficulties in Afghanistan, Thibet and elsewhere. For it can only be upon a basis of equity and confidence with a due regard to the central interests of each, that the future peace of Asia can be securely maintained and controlled by British and Russian Governments."\[22\]

Towards the end of June Jordan reported from Peking that the Chinese had made an overture to him on Tibet. While making it clear that they still could not accept the Simla Convention as it stood they were prepared as a concession to evacuate the strategically important town of Chamdo and allow for its inclusion in Outer Tibet. The British Ambassador was personally of the view that the moment was opportune for settling the question.\[23\] Hardinge predictably favoured deferring a final decision on the matter till the end of the war, after which Britain having first come to terms with Russia on all Asiatic questions, could safely deal with China.\[24\] It was an opinion

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22 Ibid, No.83731, Enclosure 8 in No.1, Hardinge to Crewe, 12 June, 1915.
23 FO 535/18, No.27, Jordan to Grey, 28 June, 1915.
24 L/PS/10/344, No.2479, Hardinge to Crewe, 6 July, 1915.
which Crewe shared, for:

"To sign the Convention with China before this is done is to invite future trouble. To leave the question an open one between Russia and ourselves till the war is over is to abandon the rights and advantages which our action in the Dardanelles fairly give us."  

The Secretary of State suggested that the Foreign Office approach Petersburg immediately with a reminder that British acquiescence in Russia's occupation of Constantinople deserved a reciprocal gesture.

Hirtzel was less optimistic. While he accepted that with the war on Sazanov could perhaps plead his cause with less speciousness than before, he thought that

"Tibet is too good a lever for what they want in Afghanistan to be lightly abandoned. I am also afraid that if we approach the Russian Government they will at once tell the Chinese, who, scenting concession, will raise their terms."  

In April 1916, Hardinge, having completed his tenure as Viceroy returned to Britain, where he was persuaded by Grey to take up his old post as Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, for Nicolson, the current incumbent, had expressed a strong desire to retire.

The new Viceroy in India was Lord Chelmsford, who continued the Tibetan policy of his predecessor. In July the Indian Government refused a plea from Lhasa to be permitted to purchase machine guns abroad, or allow the passage of such articles through India. However, as a sop, the new Viceroy, in the following month, made known his willingness to supply the Tibetans with 200,000 rounds of .303 ammunition, but refused to include machine guns in his list.

26 L/PS/10/344, No.2479, Minute by A. Hirtzel, July 12, 1915.
In September 1916 the British Legation in Peking penned a Memorandum on the Tibetan Question and placed it before the Foreign Office and the Government of India. The document bore the unmistakable marks of Jordan's influence: it urged Britain to re-open the Simla Convention for discussion as soon as possible, for once the Chinese set about the business of sending a military expedition into Tibet, Tibetan resistance would quickly crumble. The moment was thus opportune for Britain to take the initiative in resuming negotiations with China before such an eventuality occurred and reduced her bargaining power. But for the Chinese to be interested in fresh talks certain British concessions had to be made, chief of which was a territorial modification of the Sino-Tibetan frontier and the abolition of the division of Tibet into an Inner and Outer Zone. For the rest Britain and China would have equal rights and privileges in the country, and Tibet would not be represented in the Chinese parliament. The contents of this memorandum were given considerable weight in Whitehall, and from India Chelmsford described it thus to the Secretary of State:

"This paper appears to me to be a most able review of the situation at a time when it was written, and there is undoubtedly a great deal of force in the contention that the Chinese Government will never adhere to an instrument so unfavourable to themselves as the Simla Convention of July 1914. There is no doubt, I am afraid, that Sir Henry McMahon adopted an extreme pro-Tibetan attitude throughout the Simla Convention in 1914, and that the Convention then drawn up was such as no Chinese Government were likely to accept in toto. If we are ever likely to come to an understanding with China on the subject, it seems certain that the Convention will require considerable modification, particularly as regards Inner

28 FO 535/20, Enclosure in No.6, Memorandum on Thibetan Question, 24 September, 1916.
"Tibet, before China will subscribe to it. For the time being, however, it would appear impossible to move in the matter, first, because there is no stable Chinese Government with whom to reopen negotiations; second, because with our grave preoccupations it is obviously undesirable to reopen the question at present if it can be avoided; and third, because the reopening of the question on the lines suggested in the Memorandum referred to would certainly excite the liveliest suspicion in Tibet and tend to estrange the Dalai Lama. My object therefore in calling attention to this Memorandum is not to suggest immediate action, but merely to ask you to bear the matter in mind and to realise that when the time comes we shall probably have to adopt towards China a much less uncompromising attitude than we did in 1914, ...."

The Secretary of State in reply approvingly echoed the Viceroy's remarks. As both were relatively new to their office their illusions about the measures necessary to unfreeze Anglo-Chinese relations over Tibet, fed by Jordan's reputable expertise, are understandable. A growing experience of Chinese procrastination in time made them realise that their fond hopes had been no more than a mirage.

But while these developments were taking shape, momentous changes in Government were taking place in London. In December 1916 Asquith's ministry had fallen and its successor was headed by Lloyd George. At the Foreign Office Grey was replaced by Balfour.

Meanwhile Sino-Tibetan relations continued on a precariously uncertain course as did relations between the Nepal Durbar and Lhasa. Chandra Shumshere complained of overbearing Tibetan behaviour in a letter to the British Resident at Katmandu, hinting darkly that but for the considerable number of Gurkha troops engaged in Britain's war effort, Nepal might have taken stronger steps to redress her loss of honour in Tibet. And Hardinge who had never forgiven Lhasa for

29 Montague Papers, D 523/6, Chelmsford to Montague, 7 August, 1917.
30 Chelmsford Papers, E 264/3, Montague to Chelmsford, 6 September, 1917.
31 FO 371/2649, No.263530, Comment by Hardinge, 28 December, 1916.
persisting in its requests for greater British help after the conclusion of the Simla Conference and then voicing its disappointment at not receiving it, minuted the file in the following words:

"The Nepalese Army would simply walk round the Tibetans. I am not sure that a lesson would not do them a great deal of good." 32

It is ironical to observe how a man who took such pride in never losing sight of the tricks and strategems of German diplomacy should have fallen for one played by a ruler of a far less formidable Power. The local Indian officials on the other hand were quick to perceive the true nature of the situation. According to Bell, Nepal had lost her privileged position in Tibet as an intermediary after the Younghusband Mission, and the subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama to India five years later cemented Anglo-Tibetan ties. It was thus natural that Nepal should feel somewhat aggrieved at having lost ground, but it was one of the changes that had become inevitable with Tibet's widening political horizons. Bell warned that,

"if we should support Nepal in an unjust cause against Tibet, or in a cause which Tibet for serious reasons regards as unjust we run the risk of driving Tibet into the arms of China. And if Chinese power should be re-established at Lhasa, not only shall we have the Chinese menace on the North-Eastern frontier, but Nepal also will entirely lose her position in Tibet. Even during the few years that China exercised power in Lhasa recently the Nepalese position as regards these rights of extra-territoriality were seriously weakened, as is shown by the Nepalese agents of the time." 33

Major W.L. Campbell, the British Trade Agent at Gyantse, brought the Nepalese-Tibetan relations into clearer focus at a more basic level when he observed:

32 FO 371/2649, No.263530, Comment by Hardinge, 28 December, 1916.
33 FO 371/2904, No.42704, Bell to India, 16 December, 1916.
"The feeling among the lower classes in Tibet appears to be generally hostile to the Nepalese. The people of Gyantse regard the small Nepalese trader in the bazaar much as the Bengali villager regards the Pathan money lender and trader. ... the attitude of the Nepalese subjects in Tibet is one of superiority and independence apparently based on the confident feelings that the Tibetan officials are not in a position to interfere with them in any way."34

By the middle of 1917 the Government of India had modified its previously unsympathetic attitude towards Tibetan demands. Bell was asked to inform Lhasa35 that while its latest request for machine guns could not be immediately met, once the War in Europe was over supplies of these would be made available. In the meantime the Indian Government expressed a readiness to train batches of Tibetan soldiers in drill and musketry, and Tibetan mechanics at the Dum Dum and Ishapur ordnance factories in the simple manufacture and repair of weapons.

At the Foreign Office the vexed question of a possible British approach to China over Tibet was being earnestly debated. Alston had endorsed the British Embassy's Memorandum on Tibet of 24 September, 1916 (a copy of which was brought by Jordan to London in the following November when he returned home on leave and which was therefore only officially forwarded from Peking in May 1917) - which meant that he had modified, even if temporarily, his earlier views on the need for a harder British line towards Peking about whose intentions on Tibet he harboured grave suspicions. In his despatch of 2 June 191736 he re-stated his belief that China seemed willing to re-open negotiations

34 Ibid, Campbell to Bell, 4 December, 1916.
35 Ibid, No.13146, India to Bell, 4 May, 1917.
36 FO 371/2904, No.138705, Alston to Balfour, 2 June, 1917.
with Britain. But in order that Britain should not be placed at a
disadvantage, in the eventuality that such negotiations did commence,
Alston suggested that his Vice-Consul at Tachienlu, O.R. Coates,
should be permitted to visit Lhasa in order to assess the political
situation in Tibet, and particularly to gauge the strength of the
pro-Chinese party within the country.

Jordan, who was in London at the time, penned a minute, the
substance of which was recorded in the Foreign Office's departmental
note to the India Office. In it he expressed himself in favour of
modifying Sino-Tibetan frontier as laid down by the Simla Convention;
of re-opening negotiations with Peking while China was still weak and
distracted, and before Japan was able to extend its influence in
China's Central Asian dependencies. He also felt that the collapse

37 Ibid, Foreign Office to India Office, 7 August, 1917.
of Russian Imperialism would stiffen China's resolve in Tibet and Mongolia, with the latter eventually reverting to Chinese allegiance. Jordan was firmly against Coales going to Lhasa since any such visit could re-activate Chinese policy in Tibet.

38 Jordan was convinced that Russian agents like Korostovetz, and Russian gold were the primary causes of Mongolia's defection from China. The fact that there was a genuine resurgence of Mongol nationalism, that the methods of Chinese imperialism involving the forcible colonisation of vast areas of the Mongol territory by Chinese farmers or the commercial exploitation of the Mongols by Chinese merchants and money lenders, not to speak of the ethnocentric attitudes of the Chinese in whose eyes the Mongols were nothing but barbarians, does not seem to have entered his calculations. Owen Lattimore, the well known authority on Mongolia, who was also known for his espousal of China's cause, observes:

"From the time that the Chinese became their own masters, not a single measure beneficial to the Mongols had been undertaken. They had stressed the attitude of racial superiority, and the Mongols recognised in Chinese law only an instrument of extortion."


Bell's comments were equally apposite: international opinion, "knowing that China has been bullied by the white nations and by Japan, could not easily understand that she in her turn often inflicts extremely harsh treatment on her outlying dependencies.... This exploitation has taken two main forms. At frequent intervals Chinese soldiers used to drive out the Mongol nomads from their grazing grounds, and make these lands over to Chinese farmers for cultivation. In this way the Mongols have been despoiled of many thousands of square miles. Secondly, astute Chinese traders lured the simpler-minded Mongols heavily into debt, threatened the Chinese law, and so seized the Mongol's grazing ground and cattle, and even bought their daughters as wives for themselves."

Others in the Foreign Office, like Hardinge, were against the visit taking place on the ground that it would constitute a breach of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, and because its possible results were not likely to outweigh the risks entailed.

The Dalai Lama in the meantime had invited Bell to Lhasa. Edwin Montague (who had succeeded Chamberlain as Secretary of State for India in July 1917) agreed with Chelmsford that such a visit would be inadvisable as it would contravene the terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention. Otherwise, in his view, the visit would serve a useful purpose, for unlike Coales, Bell's invitation had come from the head of the Tibetan State himself.  

Hardinge expressed his approval of Bell as an emissary, but like Montague, he thought the visit inopportune on the grounds that it would arouse Russian suspicions of British good faith and would also open the door for Russian travellers such as Dorjieff.

It was finally agreed by both the India and Foreign Office that the whole question including a fresh approach to China over Tibet should be kept in abeyance till the end of the War. But Lhasa, facing Chinese pressure on its eastern frontier, was understandably reluctant to accommodate itself to the British timetable. In a letter to Bell, the Tibetan Government stated that in their view China was waiting to see if Britain did badly in the European War before launching a full scale attack on their country. Britain, they said, was Tibet's only hope. The current situation was costing their

39 FO 371/2904, No.17122, India Office to Foreign Office, 1 September, 1917.
40 Ibid, Minute by Hardinge, 1 September, 1917.
41 Ibid, No.227195, Tibet to Bell, 27 July, 1917.
country dear, for with the Tibetan march land under Chinese occupation Lhasa was losing valuable revenue from monasteries in that area. Furthermore the burden of keeping a relatively large standing army was proving a considerable strain on the country's scarce human resources. As China was currently distracted by domestic troubles the Tibetan Government were of the view that the moment was ripe for British pressure to be applied on Peking to participate in a re-convened tripartite conference between Britain, China and Tibet.

Bell, in a covering letter to the Indian Government, drew their attention to the similarity of views held by Lhasa and Jordan on the need to approach China for fresh negotiations on Tibet. Such negotiations could be held on the basis of the British Legation's memorandum notwithstanding the disadvantages to Tibet contained in them. He was confident about persuading the Tibetans to accept this without at the same time jeopardising the good relations which prevailed between Tibet and Britain. Bell's one principal objection to the memorandum was that it allowed Chinese agents into the country. He was in favour of expunging this proposal. But be that as it may, prompt British action was needed, for to leave the Tibetan question in its present unsettled state held obvious dangers for India.

As if to underline Bell's apprehensions news reached London of the notes exchanged between Japan and the U.S.A., wherein the latter recognised its partner's "special interests" in China, while the Japanese issued a "declaration of respect for the Open Door and the independence and territorial integrity of China." The India Office

42 Ibid, Bell to India, 14 September, 1917.
expressed concern lest this agreement affect British rights in Tibet - which in the view of the Foreign Office was hardly likely since Britain had no intention of appending her signature to these documents.\(^{45}\)

The Government of India having previously agreed with the position taken at Whitehall of deferring discussion of the Tibetan question with China till after the War now had second thoughts. The Viceroy proposed to place before Lhasa the substance of the British Embassy memorandum as suggested by Bell. And if the Tibetan Government proved responsive, then the authorities in Peking could be officially approached. Meanwhile as a token of goodwill the Viceroy intended to present Lhasa\(^{46}\) with 500,000 rounds of rifle ammunition. The India Office responded positively to Chelmsford's suggestion by drawing up a note to the Foreign Office in which it was stated as a negotiating tactic that in exchange for a British willingness to rectify the Sino-Tibetan frontier, Britain should be accorded the right to station a representative at Lhasa, as indeed had been suggested in the British Embassy's Tibetan memorandum,\(^{47}\) and which included an enclosure of a revised draft of a tripartite Convention drawn up on the basis of the aforesaid document.

The Foreign Office accepted the Indian Government's suggestion on supplying ammunition to Tibet, but the proposal to station a British representative at the Tibetan capital evoked old and familiar fears. Langley wished that the British Embassy had avoided mentioning the question (it may be safely surmised that Alston was the moving spirit behind this proposal, for Jordan, a close friend of

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\(^{45}\) FO 371/2904, No.22148, Foreign Office to India Office, 23 November, 1917.  
\(^{46}\) Ibid, No.230146, Chelmsford to Montague, 1 December, 1917.  
\(^{47}\) FO 535/20, No.15, India Office to Foreign Office, 11 December, 1917.
Langley's, was less disposed to accept Indian arguments over Tibet),
while Hardinge felt that to win acceptance for a British agent at
Lhasa without Russia's consent would present her with the opportunity
of ignoring the arrangement over Afghanistan. He was, in a word,
echoing the fears he expressed as Viceroy in 1914 and in the following
year. Balfour concurred. Russia's current state, in his view, might
well be a temporary phenomenon, and Britain could therefore not act
unilaterally.48

The unspoken hopes behind this reasoning may well have been
that Russia notwithstanding her new Bolshevik Government could be
persuaded to remain on the battle field and so continue contributing
to the Allied war effort. Such illusory hopes lasted a few more
months, for in March 1918 Russia signed a separate peace with Germany
at Brest-Litovsk and ceased thereafter to be a belligerent. Opinion
at Whitehall against the Soviet Authorities hardened accordingly.

Jordan, however, stuck firmly to the decision reached in
August 1917 by Whitehall and the Government of India that the approach
to China over Tibet be postponed until the War was over.49 In his
view, China at present was too unstable and divided for any British
initiative to bear fruit. However, Bell's despatch50 pointing out
the danger of a China controlled and directed by Japan intriguing on
India's frontier must have struck a responsive chord, for Jordan
agreed to discuss the Tibetan question informally with the Chinese
Foreign Ministry.51

48 Ibid, No.234952, Comments by Macleay, Langley, Hardinge and Balfour,
11 December, 1917.
49 Ibid, No.235786, Jordan to Balfour, 12 December, 1917.
50 FO 371/3180, No.10171, Bell to India, 24 November, 1917.
51 Ibid, No.70224, Jordan to Balfour, 20 April, 1918.
But whether China had any serious intention of reaching a settlement remotely acceptable to Britain was open to doubt. Eric Teichman, the British vice-consul at Tachienlu, who had great knowledge and considerable personal experience of Tibetan matters, gained access to a document submitted to the Central Government in Peking by the Chinese Frontier Commissioner, Yin Ch'eng-hsien, in which was outlined an ambitious military and political scheme for the reorganisation of China's military and administrative structure in the frontier region, and the eventual subjugation of Tibet. And the fact that Commissioner Yin, in Teichman's view, was the ablest Chinese frontier official since the days of Chao Erh-feng and Fu-Sung-mu lent greater weight to the document in question. Events on the Sino-Tibetan frontier took their own course. Active hostilities - a cyclical experience in these parts - broke out between the Chinese and the Lhasa army commanded by the Kalon Lama. Only this time, the Chinese force steadily lost ground from the middle of April, until in the following month, the Tibetans climaxed their successes by carrying the strategic town of Chamdo by assault.

In order to keep watch over events Jordan suggested that Teichman be appointed to mediate between the two sides, a suggestion strongly endorsed by the Indian Government and eventually accepted by both the belligerents. The Tibetans were glad to avail themselves of the services of a British official, who they knew would do

53 FO 371/3180, No.110226, Chelmsford to Montague, 20 June, 1918.
nothing that was detrimental to their interests, as a channel of communication with their adversaries. It was, moreover, an opportunity which they had often sought in the past, of involving the British in their struggle against China. The Chinese for their part were less enthusiastic about a mediator, but calculated, no doubt, that his presence might help reduce Tibetan military pressure on their weak and demoralised forces.

The Tibetan field commander, the Kalon Lama, who had a realistic appreciation of the military situation favoured a compromise in the territorial alignment of the region. Teichman, himself, thought that the Yangtse-Mekong watershed constituted the best possible boundary between the two sides. The Kalon Lama, however, informed him in confidence that the Dalai Lama was determined to press for territory as far east as Tachienlu, and he thus appealed to the British mediator to use his Government's influence and make Lhasa see reason. 54

The Government of India played their part by seeking to restrain Lhasa. In spite of Bell's recommendation Simla turned down a Tibetan request for a million rounds of ammunition 55 just as their military campaign against the Chinese was getting into full gear, while their later demand for artillery 56 following their capture of Chamdo, as a weapon of defence against a Chinese counter attack was similarly rejected.

Thanks to Teichman's efforts a provisional tripartite agreement was signed on 19 August 1918, establishing peace on the Sino-Tibetan frontier. Under the terms of the Settlement the

54 FO 371/3181, No.149229, Teichman to Jordan, 20 May, 1918.
55 FO 371/3180, No.105636, India to Bell, 19 April, 1918.
56 FO 371/3181, No.191740, Tibet to Campbell, 9 August, 1918.
Tibet was awarded an area which included Chamdo, Draya, Markham and Derge, while China got Yenching, Batang, Litang, Kantze, Chantui, and the Hora States. The Kalon Lama was vested with full authority by his superiors to sign the document but his Chinese opposite number, General Liu, being unable to communicate with Peking it was decided that the agreement would become final only after the sanction of the Chinese Central Government had been received. Some three months later Teichman informed Jordan from Rongbatsa that after mutual adjustments to their provisional frontier both Chinese and Tibetans agreed to keep the peace for a year pending a decision by their Governments concerning the ratification of the treaty.  

Jordan was full of praise for Teichman's achievement, which he described as being in the finest traditions of the British consular service. He also confessed, in the same despatch, the futility of his meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister who, like his predecessors, was obsessed with his country's sovereign rights in Tibet. Nevertheless Sir John expressed a hope that an eventual settlement of the problem could be reached once the Northern and Southern factions within the country had composed their differences.

The Chinese game, however, was one of time-honoured deviousness.

Three months before the Foreign Office had informed the British Ambassador that Alfred Sze, the Chinese Minister in London, was sending out telegrams to his Government calling on them to secure America's services as an arbitrator. Jordan rejected the move since China would find it convenient to apply such a principle "to every

57 Ibid, (No.29), Teichman to Jordan, 21 August, 1918.
58 Ibid, No.189969, Jordan to Balfour, 17 November, 1918.
59 FO 371/3688, No.23260, Jordan to Balfour, 13 December, 1918.
"difficulty that occurs and we should be reduced to inaction until a settlement was found in arbitration."  

On 6 January 1919 Curzon became Acting Foreign Secretary, for Balfour was called to do duty at the Peace negotiations in Paris. As it turned out, the latter was never to return to his old post, for shortly after the Versailles Settlement, Curzon was asked to take over the permanent seals of office.

In May Jordan reported receiving a set of written proposals from the Chinese Government concerning a Tibetan settlement which contained the following four points:— (1) A statement that Tibet forms part of Chinese territory now included in notes to be exchanged to be inserted in treaty itself. (2) Chinese commissioners to be stationed at trade marts. (3) Insertion of a clause in the treaty to the effect that autonomous Tibet recognised Chinese suzerainty. (4) A revision of the Sino-Tibetan frontier as laid down by the Simla Convention.

Jordan found points (1) and (3) unobjectionable. Concerning point (2) he submitted that the Chinese agents at the trade marts would be harmless provided the British as a counter-concession held out for the right to have a representative at Lhasa. The British Ambassador also found the details of China's concluding point negotiable. What he thus sought was a free hand to commence discussions with the Chinese. As a Tibetan presence in Peking would, in his view, be a hindrance, he wished to negotiate on behalf of Tibet, whose best interests he promised to uphold. The opportune moment had arrived since China seemed willing to talk.

60 FO 371/3688, No.23260, Jordan to Balfour, 13 December, 1918.
61 FO 371/3181, No.157190, Jordan to Balfour, 13 September, 1918.
The Indian Government, whose opinion was solicited, were strongly in favour of consulting Tibet, as otherwise a treaty signed without her assent, would have little permanent value. They expressed misgivings about allowing Chinese agents at the trade marts. The activities of such agents between 1906-10 was remembered, as was perhaps the warning delivered only six months before by Campbell, that while the Tibetans were prepared to concede a great deal on other matters they were determined to rid themselves of all Chinese interference in their internal affairs.

Jordan was given permission to begin negotiations, but was asked to resist Peking's attempt to restore its agents at the Tibetan trade marts. As a last resort the British Ambassador could accept such an arrangement provided such agents confined their duties to matters affecting Sino-Tibetan trade. Sir John was also asked to press for the right to station a British representative at Lhasa, a provision that was to involve only China and Britain, for in the Foreign Office view, the Anglo-Russian Convention was still valid in spite of having been denounced by the Bolshevik Government.

A few weeks later the Foreign Office received an urgent telegram from Jordan announcing the abrupt suspension of the talks. The Chinese Foreign Minister said that as his government anticipated considerable opposition to the projected agreement from within the country it felt unable to continue. Jordan saw the malevolent influence of Japan behind this decision, a view which in his eyes

63 FO 371/3688, No.35368, Campbell to India, 30 December, 1918.
64 FO 535/22, No.7, Curzon to Jordan, 1 August, 1919.
65 FO 371/3689, No.121855, Jordan to Curzon, 27 August, 1919.
was confirmed a few days later, by a conversation he had with a former member of the Chinese Legation in London. 66

The breakdown of the talks must have come as a particularly bitter blow to the British Ambassador, who had resolutely and consistently advocated their resumption together with concessions from his government so as to ensure their success.

However, let it be said from the start, that the Chinese proposals enshrined all the old ambiguities and contradictions of treaties pertaining to Tibet, and that they therefore held little hope of a permanent solution to the problem. A strong China would one day have ample scope to interpret the provisions of such a settlement in a manner hostile to Tibetan aspirations or British interests. Lhasa communicated its grave reservations to the Indian Government: the prospect of acknowledging any right by China to interfere in Tibet was anathema, and such an agreement would have had little chance of Tibetan compliance.

Even the Nepalese Prime Minister, in a conversation with the new British Resident, W.F. O'Connor, who had once been closely involved in his country's relations with Lhasa, recognised a more assertive national spirit in Tibet and accepted the fact that Nepal's treaty of 1856 with that country being wholly unequal was bound to be irksome to the Tibetan Government. When the Tibetans asked for the revision of its provisions Nepal would be prepared to accede to their request. 67

66 Ibid, No.126511, Jordan to Curzon, 6 September, 1919.
67 FO 371/3688, No.96775, Notes of discussions with His Excellency, the Prime Minister of Nepal at Khatmandu, on the 13th and 15th April 1919. Written in consultation and collaboration with Lt.-Colonel W.F. O'Connor, Resident in Nepal, by R.E. Holland, 2 May, 1919.
Jordan, as has been stated, saw the sinister hand of Japan behind the refusal of the Chinese Government to proceed with the negotiations. Yet the Japanese Ambassador in London, in an official conversation with Curzon, vigorously denied the charge. China was in a state of turmoil; a great tidal wave of nationalism known commonly as the May Fourth Movement, which was both anti-West as well as anti-Japan had engulfed the country. Chinese opinion was particularly incensed over the transfer of Shantung from German to Japanese hands. The Central Government at Peking was under constant attack for showing weakness in the face of imperialist aggression, whether over Shantung, Tibet or Mongolia. In a highly fluid situation such as this the Japanese without doubt sought to divert Chinese attention from their own misdeeds to those of other Powers. Hence their inspired press campaign against British attempts to annex Tibet in which every known canard against Britain was vigorously aired. The United States even incurred the odium of having financed Chinese students against Japan. But the major stumbling block as far as the Tibetan negotiations were concerned was the tenacity with which the Chinese clung to their Manchu heritage in Tibet and Mongolia: nationalists are notorious for noting the transgressions of others while ignoring those of their own.

69 Chow Tse-tung, *The May Fourth Movement*, Stanford, U.S.A., 1967, p.198. This movement had social and literary dimensions of immense importance which is beyond the scope of the present work to explore. It should be said that popular resentment against Japan and the West was generally restricted to the activities of their Governments; it was not based on 'anti-foreignism', for philosophers such as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, who lectured at Chinese Universities, won a considerable intellectual following.
With the War in Europe over, the vexed question of arms for Tibet came up for review. Campbell, who had succeeded Bell as Political Officer, Sikkim, in April 1919 reported receiving an urgent request from Lhasa for machine guns in accordance with a past promise. Bell had apparently, in the Tibetan text of his note of 3 May 1916, conveyed an impression that supplies of this weapon would almost automatically follow the conclusion of the War. The Indian Government was in favour of despatching 2 machine guns and 50,000 rounds of ammunition. Montague agreed with their decision. The arms were paltry and could only be used for defensive purposes. The Tibetans had kept scrupulously to the terms of the Chamdo and Rongbatza Agreements and were keen to hold only what they already had. The Chinese on the other hand remained tenacious in their claims to Tibet and the prospect of their re-appearing on India's north-eastern frontier was most welcome. Equally important the supplies in question would help retain Tibetan goodwill for Britain. 71

The Foreign Office, however, barred the way. To supply arms to Tibet would in their view constitute a violation of the Arms Traffic Convention which had been signed in Paris on 10 September 1919. Under the terms of the Convention Britain could only export arms to Governments of other signatory Powers. The agreement was drawn up presumably to restrict the flow of arms to sensitive areas of the world in the interests of international peace and stability. To make an exception now "would create a highly undesirable situation were it to become known to the Chinese Government, and through them to the outside world, that with the approval of His Majesty's Government arms were being sold to the Tibetan Government when China is not only the acknowledged suzerain of Tibet but herself a party to the Arms Convention in question." 72

70. FO 371/3688, No.83725, Campbell to India, 3 April, 1919.
71. Ibid, Montague to Chemsford, 7 October 1919.
72. FO 535/22, Foreign Office to India Office, 23 October, 1919.
The major theme in Anglo-Tibetan relations during the next five years was Britain's attempt to get China to participate in fresh negotiations over Tibet and Peking's refusal under a variety of pretexts to do so. And all the while the British Government attempted to grope their way to a suitable Tibetan policy without succeeding in discovering one. The long-term needs of India's security, which required forethought and steadfastness, were invariably sacrificed in the interests of more pressing, but ultimately less significant, international problems confronting British diplomacy in the Far East.

In mid-January 1920 Bell was asked by the Indian Government to return from retirement and resume his former position as Political Officer, Sikkim. The reason was not far to seek. A Chinese delegation, known as the Kansu Mission, had arrived in Lhasa at about this time in an effort to persuade Tibet to return to China's fold. But the Tibetan Government in an agitated note to India expressed their refusal to commence negotiations with the Chinese visitors unless a British mediator was present.

The Kansu Mission remained in the Tibetan capital till April 1920 without achieving their objective. Their visit, however, was a timely reminder to the British on the need to display a more positive attitude. The Dalai Lama, who held Bell in great personal regard, sent him an urgent invitation in September 1920 to visit Lhasa. This time the British Government agreed, for earlier in March the Foreign Secretary decided that the provision of the Anglo-Russian Convention which had hitherto prevented a British representative from going to Lhasa was no longer valid.

73. In a conversation with Jordan the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs accused Britain of coming in the way of an amicable settlement between China and Tibet. In his view, "like Mongolians, Tibetans had been instigated by outside influences to fight Chinese against whom they had no grievance." FO 535/22, No. 30, Jordan to Curzon, 4 December 1919.

74. Although the Chinese Foreign Minister informed Jordan that the Kansu Mission did not represent the Chinese Government little credence can be placed on his denial. FO 535/23, No. 1, Jordan to Curzon, 27 December, 1919.

75. FO 535/22 Enclosure in No. 35. Chelmsford to Montague, 23 December, 1919.

Meanwhile Bell, given back his watching brief in the Himalayas, pressed strongly for the British Government to redeem their promise of arms to Tibet made during the War. In his view the provisions and wording of the Arms Traffic Convention were flexible enough for Lhasa to be supplied with its defence needs. More important, the security of India's north-eastern frontier demanded it. The question was still under discussion when Bell departed for Lhasa on 1 November, 1920, where he was to remain for nearly a year, and during which time he was able to renew his own cordial relations with the Dalai Lama and other leading personalities, much to the benefit of Anglo-Tibetan relations. Lhasa's faith in British support and goodwill was restored. This was particularly important when powerful forces within the country were beginning to favour an accommodation with China. To restore Tibet's trust Britain had to supply her with the arms she needed, which he itemised as (1) 10 mountain guns; (2) 20 machine guns; (3) 10,000 rifles; (4) 1,000,000 rounds of small arms ammunition to be re-supplied every following year; (5) help train Tibetan army; (6) send two British mechanics to train Tibetans on how to make gun powder and rifles; (7) mine prospectors to help develop Tibetan mines where there was every chance of gold being found.

77 FO 371/5315, No.F. 885/22/10, Bell to India, 13 March 1920.
78 Bell Papers, F 80, 5e 21-25, Reading to Montague, 14 May, 1921.
79 Ibid, 5A 40-45, Macdonald to Bell, 12 January, 1921.
The importance of Tibet's friendship for India's security was again emphasised and her importance as a buffer against the virus of Russian Bolshevism underlined. The Political Officer's note ended on a high note of warning:

"China is pressing, Japan has begun to press. We cannot bury our heads in the sand, like the ostrich, trying to prevent dangers by ignoring them. Our only chance of keeping out Japan and China is by establishing our influence in the country first. Government have an exceptional, possibly an unique, opportunity of settling this question now, while I am in Lhasa."

While Bell was in Lhasa Jordan's tenure as British Ambassador had to come to an end. His replacement, Beilby Alston, held views on Tibet which were very much more in accord with those of the Indian Government. Eric Teichman had also returned to London for a spell of work at the Foreign Office, where his views did much to lend weight to the arguments of Bell in favour of stronger British support for Tibet. When the Political Officer reported from Lhasa that the Dalai Lama was ill, Teichman minuted the note as follows:

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80 Ibid, 5e 21-26, Bell to India, 21 February, 1921.
"Any mishap to the Dalai Lama, who is the centre of the anti-Chinese and pro-British party at Lhasa would be most unfortunate at the present juncture, when the Tibetans are becoming more and more impatient at our inability to effect any settlement for them and the danger of turning of their own accord to the Chinese is increasing from month to month. It is therefore more than ever desirable that we should make friends openly and definitely with the Tibetans and consolidate our position in Tibet in the manner advocated by His Majesty's Legation at Peking, if necessary independently of the Chinese."

Montague who on first taking office had been in tune with Jordan's views on Tibet, now found himself more in accord with Bell:

"... I find myself very much in agreement with the broad lines of Mr. Bell's argument and conclusions. There are of difficulties, arising mainly from the fact that Tibet is - or has been hitherto - recognised as a part of Chinese territory; but I feel strongly that we should take more active measures to help the Tibetans and bind them to us, and I cannot help wondering whether it would not be wise - and entirely justifiable, in view of Chinese procrastination, and of the existing disorganisation in China and de facto position as between China and Tibet - to take the bold line of recognising Tibetan independence - not perhaps formally, but at any rate for practical purposes - without much ado."

Both Alston and Teichman were agreed that the sterilisation of Tibet was a policy which had outlived its usefulness. The former in an important despatch remarked:

"The policy of sterilising Tibet is, I venture to submit now out of date and places us in the wrong in the eyes of third parties, such as America: while it cannot but appear out of harmony with any proposals for referring the question to international arbitration or the League of Nations. I recollect that in a conversation with the United States Ambassador at Tokyo the latter, in explaining the reasons for the present attitude of so many Americans referred to the case of Tibet where they were disappointed to see us continuing our old policies and apparently engaged in secret negotiations with China, which seemed to have for their object the monopolising of Tibet in our interests to the exclusion of those of other Powers."
Alston’s message was clear: open Tibet to the outside world as an insurance against the possibility of its re-conquest by China and, in the meantime, strengthen the bilateral ties between Simla and Lhasa. China’s game was one of procrastination, and only a firm British policy could defeat Peking’s ends. A year later the British Ambassador recommended a final appeal to China to get negotiations started, but if unsuccessful, Britain without more ado should resume supplies of arms to Tibet, a view which received strong support from Teichman.

The reference to the United States underlined Britain’s growing dependence on America. In December 1921 the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was terminated by Britain under American pressure, a decision whose wisdom came to be questioned by Winston Churchill and Lord Vansittart. A weakened Britain found the burdens of Empire increasingly difficult to bear alone.

This new reality meant that the Foreign Office had to tread warily, for American sentiment was extremely sensitive about any violation of Chinese rights, China being regarded in the United States as the country’s political ward. The Chinese who, as a nation, were more accustomed to playing the role of protectors, may not have relished the idea of being the protected ward of an alien people, but they used the situation by playing off one Power against another with the skill and persistence of their Manchu predecessors. Thus the Chinese Foreign Minister in a conversation with Alston threatened to raise the Tibetan question at the forthcoming Washington Conference.

84 FO 371/6608, No.F 1092/59/10, Alston to Curzon, 17 May, 1921.
85 Ibid, Minute by Teichman, 23 May, 1921.
87 FO 371/6607, No. F 3268/59/10, Alston to Curzon, 26 August, 1921.
The Dalai Lama told Bell that the Tibetan negotiations could only be discussed at Lhasa or in India. The Government of India agreed and so did the Foreign Office. Nevertheless the latter did accede to the request of the Chinese Minister to postpone discussion of Tibet till after the Washington Conference about which his Government was, for the time being, pre-occupied. Curzon, who had long experience of Chinese procrastination was considerably annoyed with his department for having agreed, but the need to placate American public opinion by not appearing to push China too hard may have weighed in its calculations.

The one positive development to have emerged from this endless inter-departmental parleying was the decision to supply Tibet with the arms listed by Bell, who was able to inform the Dalai Lama accordingly. Teichman remarked:

"Mr. Bell's visit to Lhasa has been a great success, and will, it is to be hoped, eventually be followed by permanent British representation at Lhasa, and the opening up of closer relations between India and the Tibetan Government, who, ever since the Chinese were expelled from the country, have desired to be friendly with us and develop their resources with our assistance."  

Teichman's hopes were never to be fulfilled in their entirety, and Tibet's independence was to remain vulnerable to hostile external pressures.

The framework of Anglo-Tibetan relations thus remained fundamentally unchanged; but the peoples of the Himalayan borderland continued to move within the British political orbit, although Nepal, under the new Anglo-Nepalese treaty of 21 December 1923 was recognised

88 FO 371/6611, No. F 4690/59/10, Bell to Dalai Lama, 11 October, 1921.
89 FO 371/6610, No. 4001/59/10, Comment by Teichman, 2 November, 1921.
by Britain as a sovereign state. But it was understood in turn that the Nepalese would do nothing in Tibet that could lead to a disturbance in their mutual relations without first consulting the British.\(^{90}\) It was a minor insurance; for with the establishment of Britain’s political and military paramountcy in India the principal threat to peace in the Himalayas never did come from that quarter.

The Foreign Office at about this time felt that a less forthright policy towards Tibet would help Britain mend her fences with the Soviet Union. Hirtzel in a moment of heat referred to "the excessive solicitude of the Foreign Office for Bolshevik susceptibilities in respect of Tibet".\(^{91}\) Having failed in his efforts to elicit active British support against China, with Charles Bell no longer at hand to advise and reassure him, the Dalai Lama was forced to rely on his own devices. In 1925 Tibet’s relations with Britain began to cool visibly, of which the closure of the British school at Gyantse was an unmistakable sign, for Lhasa had decided to explore other avenues of action through which it could safeguard Tibet’s independence.

\(^{90}\) FO 371/9214, No. F 1642/145710, O’Connor to India, 14 April, 1923.

\(^{91}\) FO 371/10289, No. F 1406/1324/10, Hirtzel to Bland, 13 May, 1924.
Conclusion

Anglo-Tibetan relations were a kaleidoscope reflecting a great many themes, from the ascendency of British arms in India to the eventual triumph of empire. And while an empire so immense in its territorial expanse, so diverse in its multitude of peoples and races, brought with it the matching benefits of power and prestige, it also threw up deep and perplexing problems. How, for instance, to formulate policies that would reconcile the economic or political interests of its different members. To keep such an empire on an even keel, to meet the challenge of jealous competitors, be it in the Bosphorus, Egypt, Afghanistan, Persia, or the Far East, would tax the keenest intellect as well as generate on occasion considerable tension within the body politic.

So while for the first century and a quarter Anglo-Tibetan relations at a basic level represented an uncomplicated interplay between the economic and political needs of British India to gain access to the trans-Himalaya, and the Tibetan resolve to deny it entry, they also operated on another plane under the influence of Britain's relationship with China, her rivalry with Russia; of Tibet's own historic ties with the Mongols and its possible links with the Tsarist Empire. Furthermore, by the time Anglo-Tibetan relations were moving to a climax at the start of the 20th century considerations of European Realpolitik were determining as never before the course of political developments in Asia.

Thus as the perspectives of Curzon would differ from those of Hastings, so too would their diplomatic methods be dissimilar. The first British Governor General represented a nascent Power in the form of a Trading Company; his Viceregal successor epitomised its imperial incarnation in the full tide of its glory. When Curzon grew to political maturity the rulers of British India had already set their sights beyond the engirdling ranges of the Hindu Kush and the Karakorum deep into the heart of Central Asia. They had begun contesting with Russia the right to dominate its markets, to bend its political direction to their will. The spoils were rich and tempting, for the Chinese Empire, apart from an occasional spasm of life, seemed inert and moribund.
This, then, was the Great Game, in which Cayley, Shaw, Forsyth and Younghusband exemplified the values of an ascendant bourgeoisie in quest of an empire; where the explorer was soldier, surveyor, political agent, commercial prospector, linguist and diplomat. But the Russian advance aided by the advantages of geographical contiguity and railway proved inexorable; slowly the British dream dissolved. Thwarted, they turned their attention to pastures new. In the Himalayas an equally inspiring tradition had been taking root. Bogle, Turner, Manning and Moorcroft were followed by a group of Indians known as the 'Pundits', the best known of whom was Sarat Chandra Das, an intrepid agent and a fine scholar. In their footsteps, in the early years of the 20th century, followed Younghusband, O'Connor, Bell and Bailey. While Curzon had little time for the desk-bound bureaucrat, he extolled the virtues of the frontiersmen who were, for him, the living embodiments of the imperial ideal he cherished so dearly.

When the sceptre of Viceregal authority was placed in Curzon's hands the imperial venture in the western areas of Central Asia had failed. Indian trade, as British agents were noting, unable to withstand the challenge of Russian competition, was falling off and their hopes of an alternative increasingly came to rest on Tibet. The problem was that Tibet had shut its doors to its southern neighbours for the past hundred years, and except for small groups of pilgrims, who successfully combined their religious devotion with commercial gain, none had been able to enter. From the middle of the 19th century the 'Pundits' were able to penetrate its mysteries, one of them reaching its fabled capital, Lhasa, the centre of the Lamaist church, whence came pilgrims from within the country and from far-off Mongolia to worship and receive the sacramental blessing of its pontiff, the Dalai Lama.

Although a plateau, Tibet is criss-crossed by mountains, and while on the whole it was thinly populated, the bulk of its people lived in the general area of Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse. The climate here is relatively milder than elsewhere, its soil more fertile. It also lay adjacent to India, the distance from Darjeeling to Lhasa being no more than 300 miles. India's Mongolian fringe, the peoples and
states of the southern Himalayas, had ties of race, language, culture, religion and commerce with the rulers at Lhasa. These the British sought to exploit for their ends. Tibet's other links with the Manchu dynasty of China in which political and commercial factors also played a vital role. However, at the close of the 19th century Lhasa's political subordination to Peking was increasingly under question, for the spirit of Tibetan independence was abroad, and the 13th Dalai Lama, the first to attain majority for over a century, was determined to free his country from the tutelage of the Chinese.

Wherein lay the promise of the Tibetan market? It lay in the fact that, apart from the basic items of agriculture (even these were in scarce supply in Western Tibet), most articles of consumption came from abroad, that is, from China, Central Asia and the Himalayan borderland; these purchases being largely financed by the devotional offerings of gold which flowed in from Mongolia. Heading these commodities was tea, an inferior brand of which was imported from China. The Tibetan thirst for this beverage seemed insatiable, and the Chinese used this as a weapon to maintain their influence at Lhasa, particularly when their military power was on the wane.

Confronted with this spectacle, the British marvelled at the profits which could be made if the Tibetan demand could be met by suppliers of the Indian product. This became the urgent refrain of publicists, pamphleteers, and the leaders of the Indian tea industry, in whose grand scheme all stood to gain: the Tibetans blessed with a finer brew from Darjeeling or Assam would throw overboard the gritty mixture from Szechuan, the plantations in India would thrive and, not least, the Indian Government would win a measure of influence at Lhasa. Alas! for the best-laid plans. The Tibetans, stubborn creatures of habit, refused to change: the hope of winning a new market proved to be a tantalising mirage, and Lhasa continued to keep its doors firmly shut to the British. Was it to force the Tibetans to drink Indian tea instead of Chinese tea that Curzon sent Younghusband to Lhasa, as Rosebery wittily remarked? The answer must plainly be no. Imperial policies were usually fashioned by a multiplicity of factors, more so when the man at the helm was Curzon.
The Viceroy having failed in his attempts to establish relations with Lhasa through a variety of intermediaries turned his thoughts to other methods. If trade could not lead, the flag could not follow. The order therefore had to be reversed, and the anachronism which determined that the ruler of British India could not even exchange a written communication with the head of a neighbouring country was forcibly removed. It was the possibility of Russian intrigue at Lhasa, with its attendant danger to the British position in the trans-Himalaya, which lent urgency to the prevailing situation. Already with the aid of a Buriat Mongol named Dorjieff, the Dalai Lama seemed to be seeking the patronage of the Tsar. Tibetan missions to the Russian capital were being received with honour and ceremony. Was this the prelude to more sinister developments? Russia had worsted Britain north of the Hindu Kush and Karakorum; for over a century she had been sweeping southwards and eastwards absorbing huge swathes of territory after each advance, observing none of the customary diplomatic proprieties by which Great Powers consulted with each other on mutual spheres of influence and the like; a menace to anyone who stood in the way of her uncontrolled expansion.

Material interests and imperial pride dictated that this time Britain make a stand. She had justice on her side for the nearest point of Russian territory was over 1000 miles away from Tibet, while the Tibetan capital was within easy reach of the Indian border. A vital imperial interest was at stake and Curzon called for action, but much to his chagrin the response of his colleagues proved far from encouraging. A few years before, in a letter to Brodrick, he had wondered if the Home Government had a policy at all, whether it was China, Persia, Morocco, Egypt, or any other place in the world. For this he blamed not the various departments of state but modern British statesmanship. The reaction to the Tibetan crisis at Whitehall confirmed his doubts.

What caused the Home Government to turn a deaf ear to the Viceroy's pleas? The searing effect of the Boer War was one reason; the fact that much of the responsibility for this conflict lay in the imperial zeal of a pro-Consul like Milner was another; the memory of
the Kabul disaster was a third; fourth was the rising spectre of a naval threat from Germany which caused them to seek the security of a safe diplomatic anchorage in an understanding with France, and through her, eventually Russia; they anticipated Japan's defeat in the conflict with Russia, and, as allies of Japan, were terrified at the prospect of being drawn into a war with the Tsarist Empire; last, but not least, they were men who were largely insensitive to Indian affairs and Indian interests, and lacked any real knowledge of the country which, after a fashion, they ruled. Downing Street had become a sort of Hotel Cecil, remarked Brodrick, a jest which carried more than a grain of truth. If Salisbury was struck by physical infirmity, his nephew, Balfour, suffered from an infirmity of purpose. They governed a sprawling empire, but to the priority of its interests they had given no thought.

The progress of the Younghusband Mission bore ample testimony to the Cabinet's indecision and weakness of will, and it was in a sense fitting that the expedition should end amid the uproar of controversy in which the moral cowardice of Balfour was exceeded only by the malice of Brodrick.

How far was Curzon correct in his assessment of the Tibetan situation? He understood the Dalai Lama's desire to rid them of Chinese yoke but hoped that he would turn to Britain rather than to Russia in order to achieve that end. He saw clearly that China's authority in Tibet was a political affectation which warranted scant regard. He correctly perceived that the chief obstacle to closer relations between Tibet and British India was the parasitic monks bating on their privileges and fearing the loss of these should their country be opened to foreign influences. The Viceroy contrasted the friendliness of ordinary Tibetans with the fierce hostility of the tribes of the North-West. In spite of the loss of life which marked the advance of the Younghusband Mission, Anglo-Tibetan relations were to become remarkably friendly. The Tibetans, the Dalai Lama among them, contrasted the warmth and friendship of such able British frontier officers as O'Connor, Bell and Bailey with the supercilious arrogance of the Chinese mandarins. Furthermore, there were elements in the upper echelons of Tibetan society who were curious about the world
outside and were prepared to welcome greater contacts with it, as Sarat Chandra Das discovered in his dealings with Kyabying Senching Lama and the Phala family. Thus, while the country was weak because of its archaic social system, modernising impulses could have come from India. (The sterilisation of Tibet was a conception which owed little to Curzon.) But in order to achieve these ends the Viceroy quite rightly perceived the need for direct relations between Simla and Lhasa. An intermediary had to be used only so that initial contact could be established. The use of the Gurkhas as a permanent go-between, particularly in view of the political ambitions of the Ranas with their previous history of conquest in the Himalayas was a course of action he firmly rejected when lesser minds at the India Office, like Lee-Warner, were pressing hard for the adoption of such a policy.

Neither were the Viceroy's fears of Russia groundless. However, it was not the cruder forms of Russophobia with which he was associated; not for him were the anguished cries of a Russian invasion through the Khyber. Their game was far subtler: to put pressure on the British in the Himalayas in order to extract concessions elsewhere. A hostile Power at Lhasa would be a knife at India's throat - which was as much a strategic imperative in Curzon's day as it is in ours. An understanding with Russia? Not a congenial prospect, but if one must, it had to be on the right terms. What Curzon found in London made him explode with scorn. Lansdowne had made a bargain with Russia on Egypt in connection with Tibet. This cavalier disregard for Indian interests spelled danger to the continued strength of the British Empire. For Curzon, India stood at the centre of that Empire, and Imperialism, as a vision, a hope and a conviction, was the anvil which forged the strength of his country's national character.

Years later, Hardinge, one of the principal architects of Britain's understanding with France and Russia, whose appointment as Viceroy owed much to the feeling in government circles that he was ideally suited by training and temperament to still rather than arouse controversy echoed Curzon within a year of assuming office: a British agent at Lhasa; the insistence that Tibet's independence was the best safeguard for India's security along the Himalayas; that these were principles which should not be bartered away in any bargain with Russia.
Hardinge was reacting to the disastrous consequences resulting from the high-minded ignorance of Morley's Tibetan policy. The Chinese whose power at Lhasa had long been a fiction were able to return to Tibet in strength. And not content with this substantial prize they were soon gnawing at the British position in the southern Himalayas with the express intention of replacing it with their own authority. There was obviously no Chinese Morley in Peking.

The Chinese view of themselves and the world faithfully mirrored in the concept and workings of their traditional tributary system. Apart from contacts with nomadic tribes on her northern and western frontiers China, for a millennium, had only the scantiest relations or knowledge of civilisations of a comparable order to her own. This deep historical experience has been largely responsible for moulding the Chinese world outlook. Modern Chinese nationalism - which began manifesting itself as a political force after the defeat of the Boxer rebellion - while spurning and despising the Manchus for their weakness in the face of foreign aggression was far less iconoclastic in its attitude towards China's imperial frontiers. The new wine-skins of Kuomintang and Maoist ideology thus contain considerable quantities of the old wine.

In the widest historical terms Tibet reflected the contrasting elements of British and Chinese imperialism: the first was based on a social order and organised on economic principles which had carried the British and European bourgeoisie to world hegemony, albeit at great social cost, whether such power was measured politically, in military strength, in artistic creation or in scientific endeavour; the second, based on an agrarian economy under the control of the scholar-gentry, was preserved at the price of enormous human suffering, and had long ceased to bring any enlightenment to its own citizens, still less to its subject peoples whom it offered nothing save the bitter fruits of economic exploitation and racial contempt.

Until the outbreak of the First World War European politics continued to be the major external influence on relations between Britain and Tibet, although with Japan's entry into the magic circle of Great Powers, other influences were in the making. Apart from whetting her own
imperial ambitions Japan's victory over Russia quickened the pulse of Indian nationalism whose growing hostility to the Raj deprived British India's foreign policy of much of its strength and authority.

Anglo-Tibetan relations remained static for the duration of World War I. The Simla Convention of which high hopes had been held in India remained in a state of disrepair long after the conflict was over. Britain had emerged a victor from this ordeal but her strength had been severely drained. Previously the inadequacies of her Tibetan policy had in great measure been concealed by the strength reflected in her pre-eminent position in the world. After 1918 her weakness was laid bare for all to see. In India the Raj having lost much of its lustre came under increasing domestic pressure; in China British commercial rights and privileges were threatened by a flood-tide of Chinese nationalism spurred by the spectacle of Bolshevik Russia hurling defiance at its adversaries. And Russia which had once been regarded as a military threat was now in British eyes the fountain head of a dangerously subversive political ideology.

As Europe licked the wounds of war a new balance of power emerged in the Pacific with Japan and America the principal contenders for supremacy. Unable alone to bear the burdens of empire in the Far East, Britain chose increasingly to rely on American strength. But with the United States firmly committed to the territorial integrity of China and her dominions, in the intensifying struggle with Japan, just as Britain had once bestowed her blessings on the Ottomans in an endeavour to keep Russia at bay, Tibet's hope of securing international recognition of her defacto sovereign status with British help slowly disappeared. It was as if Tibet were held in trust by the Great Powers until such time as China was powerful enough to reclaim what she considered to be her birthright.

Curzon's wisdom was vindicated during his own lifetime. The measures he recommended in 1903–4 became part of the conventional wisdom of government after 1910. Notwithstanding a few doubting spirits, like Jordan, the Foreign Office as a whole — and this included men with great experience of the Far East such as Alston and Teichman — accepted the need for a firmer Tibetan policy. So too did the India Office.
Montague's conversion followed the pattern of Hardinge: association with the Indian administration convinced him that India's strategic problems were questions of primary consideration.

What was lacking in London was political leadership at the highest level. The deplorable spectacle of Britain either refusing outright or acceding grudgingly merely in part to Tibet's plea for arms in her defence against China was repeated time and again. The want of statesmanship becomes more apparent when her paltry military needs are measured against the resources of the British Empire. That a Tibetan policy entailing no cost in men, and an infinitesimal expense in treasure, found less favour than one based on drift was an apt epitaph on a declining empire. The different course of events in Mongolia was proof that, given clarity of purpose and steadfastness of will, Tibet could have received from Britain the succour she so desperately sought in her hour of need without imperilling international peace or causing any significant loss to British interests. The evolution of Mongolia as a sovereign state constituted the truest vindication of Curzon's judgment.

Curzon's failure, however, also had lessons of its own. First, that in politics it is not enough to be right; the highest art lies in convincing others of this truth. His long absence from Britain and his Indian experience seemed to strengthen the autocratic strains in his character, making him lose touch with the mainsprings of British political life. In India, he reflected in part the shortcomings of the Raj, which showered its blessings on a decadent aristocracy while spurning its true progeny - an articulate and politically organised middle class, yearning to share in the responsibilities of government. With this section of the Indian public behind him the Viceroy's opinions might have carried greater weight in London.

Deep down within, Curzon may have sensed this contradiction; hence his expressed hope of an India that, one day, might emerge from a dependency to become Britain's greatest partner in empire. He was, however, ill-equipped to translate this vision into reality. His brilliant but conservative mind was at its best when treading familiar
paths. In the field of foreign relations, for example, where despite mankind's most cherished hopes the practices of international diplomacy continue to remain subject to atavistic compulsions.
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Map showing India-Tibet frontier as mutually agreed upon by the British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries.
S/d. A.H. McMahon
British Plenipotentiary

Scale and Signature of Tibetan Plenipotentiary

Delhi, 24th March, 1914

Scale 1" = 16 miles.
Map showing India Tibet frontier as mutually agreed upon by the British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries

(Sgd) A. H. McMahon
British Plenipotentiary

and Signature of
Tibetan Plenipotentiary

Delhi
24th March 1914.

Scale: 1" = 16 miles
Map of Tibet

Scale: 1" = 69 Miles

Yellow line: represents boundary claimed by China
Green line: " " Tibet
Blue line: proposed boundary of "Inner Tibet"
Red line: proposed boundary of "Outer (autonomous) Tibet"