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NOTES

ON THE

CENTRAL ASIAN QUESTION

AND THE

COAST AND FRONTIER DEFENCES  
OF INDIA.

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1877-1893.

37

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# MINUTES, NOTES, &c.

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## I.

\* MEMORANDUM TO CONSIDER THE MEASURES WHICH SHOULD BE ADOPTED IN INDIA IN THE EVENT OF ENGLAND JOINING TURKEY IN THE WAR AGAINST RUSSIA.

SIMLA,  
4th June, 1877.

In the event of England joining Turkey in the war against Russia, what could India do?

The reply to this question depends on so many conditions that certain hypotheses must be accepted before any conclusions can be arrived at.

These conditions may be thus enumerated:—

1st.—That England does not intend Russia to gain possession of Turkish Armenia, and thus secure command of the head-waters of the Tigris and Euphrates.

2nd.—That England is determined to protect Egypt and keep open the passage of the Suez Canal.

3rd.—That England will not permit the occupation of Constantinople, or the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire in Europe.

4th.—That the action of Persia is extremely doubtful, but it is more than probable she is secretly allied to Russia.

5th.—That all intercourse with Afghanistan is broken off, and that the Amir is known to be hostile, and has been endeavouring to rouse the tribes on the North-West Frontier against us.

6th.—That no increase to the British force in India can be expected beyond what would be required to place corps on a war footing.

7th.—That any operations in Europe would probably be undertaken by the Army from England and the Mediterranean.

Under such circumstances, the part that India could take in the war would be limited to one or more of the following measures:—

1st.—To sending a Native contingent to Egypt.

2nd.—To sending a force up the Tigris either for operations eastwards against Persia, or northwards *viâ* Bagdad and Mosul towards Armenia, or north-eastwards *viâ* Kermanshah and Tabriz towards Georgia.

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\* This paper was written nearly 13 years ago. Since then our position and that of Russia in Central Asia have changed considerably. Notwithstanding this, there is much in this paper which still holds good.—F.R., 8-1-90.

- 3rd.—To sending a force to Syria, thence to advance *viâ* Diabekir towards Armenia or Georgia.
- 4th.—To landing a force on the south or east coast of the Black Sea for a similar purpose.
- 5th.—To sending a force into Persia by way of the Persian Gulf.
- 6th.—To sending a force to Herat in view to a possible movement westward towards the Caspian, or northwards towards Merv.
- 7th.—To sending a force into Turkestan for the purpose of driving the Russians from the Khanates.
- 8th.—To sending officers to Turkish Arabia and Armenia to assist the Turkish Armies, and towards Central Asia in view to raising the Turkomans and other tribes in the neighbourhood of the Khanates.

It would be interesting to work out the details that would have to be considered before a force could be sent to Egypt, Persia, or Turkish Armenia; but for the present it will perhaps suffice if we confine ourselves to the study of the manner in which operations could best be carried on towards Central Asia, in support of the opinion that this line is the most advantageous one for India to adopt, confining ourselves as regards the other measures, to a few remarks shewing the time that would be occupied, and the difficulties that would have to be overcome should any of them be adopted.

Armies have been despatched by sea from India on several occasions—in 1801 to Egypt; in 1811 to Java; in 1825 and 1852 to Burma; in 1840 and 1860 to China; in 1856 to Persia; and in 1867 to Abyssinia.

Should occasion require it, armies could be despatched again and without many of the difficulties which must have been experienced on some of the former occasions; the communications towards the east and west coasts are now complete and rapid; a fair amount of steam transport can be collected at all the larger ports on short notice; and the navigation of the neighbouring seas is much better understood than it was years ago.

Were China, Burma, the southern part of Persia, or Abyssinia, the places to be operated in, a large portion of the force would no doubt be sent from India; but Egypt and Turkish Armenia are so much more easily reached from England, and the facilities for embarking and equipping troops are so infinitely greater there than they are in this country, that it seems unlikely India would be called upon to assist in operations to be carried on in those countries beyond providing possibly a small Native contingent, or individual officers acquainted with the languages, and accustomed to deal with Asiatics.

As regards Egypt, the difficulties would depend on the season of the year in which troops might have to be despatched and on the time that could be allowed to collect a sufficiency of transport. During the monsoon, or from May till October, sailing vessels would be useless, while for the remainder of the year they would be practically so unless in tow of steamers, and even then, at the most favourable season, the voyage would take nearly a month.

For the conveyance of a small Native contingent, steamers would no doubt be forthcoming almost as soon as the regiments could be equipped and brought to the ports of embarkation; but for an army of any size, considerable arrangements would have to be made before a sufficient number of vessels could be collected for the

conveyance of the troops and the animals required for the transport of ammunition, baggage, &c.

There are three routes by which an army from India could reach Armenia or Georgia :—

1st.—By sea to Mohammerah, and thence, *viâ* Shuster and Kermanshah, towards Tabriz; or to Bagdad, proceeding thence either towards Tabriz, *viâ* Kermanshah, or towards Armenia, *viâ* Mosul.

2nd.—By sea to Syria, and thence, *viâ* Diabekir, either towards Erzeroum or Tiflis.

3rd.—By sea to some of the ports on the south and east coasts of the Black Sea.

The chief advantage of the first route is that Persia would probably be prevented from aiding Russia.

The disadvantages are—

- (a.) After leaving the sea, the march would be either through an enemy's country, or with the flank of the force exposed throughout to the enemy.
- (b.) Bad climate for several months in the year.
- (c.) Scarcity of land transport.
- (d.) Difficult nature of the country.
- (e.) Distance to be travelled.

	Miles.*
Mohammerah to Bagdad is .. ..	527
Bagdad to Erzeroum .. ..	660
Total .. ..	1,187

After receipt of orders, 3 to 4 months would be necessary to equip and despatch from India an army of strength enough to reach Armenia or Georgia.

	Days.
Time required for equipment, &c. .. ..	90
Voyage to Mohammerah .. ..	15
To equip with land carriage, &c. .. ..	20
March to Bagdad .. ..	60
„ Bagdad to Erzeroum .. ..	90
	275

or at least 9 months after the declaration of war, and on the supposition that the Persians did not delay the army *en route*.

From May to October, the plague rages annually in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, so that the 1st November would be the earliest date for troops to arrive at Mohammerah; this would take them to Erzeroum towards the beginning of the following May, to which must be added at least another month, as the roads in Armenia are quite impassable from snow until May.

It is evident, therefore, that an expedition from India, *viâ* the Persian Gulf and the Tigris valley towards Armenia or Georgia could only be accomplished with considerable difficulty and loss of time; the equipment of the army would require a vast

\* For this portion of the journey, water transport could be used to a great extent if proper arrangements are made beforehand.

amount of costly preparation, and though it is within the bounds of possibility that such an expedition could be carried out successfully, it is one that does not commend itself and which should only be undertaken in an extraordinary emergency.

If an advance on Armenia or Georgia, *viâ* Asia Minor, be considered, the reasons why the troops destined for the work should be sent from England instead of India are even stronger than those urged in the case of Egypt.

A force adopting this route would probably land near Antioch, south of Iskenderun or Bay of Alexandretta.

From this point to Diabekir, <i>viâ</i> Aleppo and Urfa, is	..	..	..	..	Miles.
„ Diabekir, by the shortest route, to Erzeroum is	..	..	..	..	336
					211
Total	..	..	..	..	<u>547</u>

It would certainly be 4 months before a force of any size could reach the coast of Syria after the receipt of orders in India; to this must be added another month to complete arrangements for the onward march to Erzeroum.

Before the army could leave the coast	..	..	..	..	Days.
March from the coast to Diabekir	..	..	..	..	150
Diabekir to Erzeroum	..	..	..	..	45
					30
Total	..	..	..	..	<u>225</u>

or between 7 and 8 months under the most favourable circumstances, and unless Diabekir were reached in September or very early in October, the march onwards to Erzeroum could not be undertaken until the following spring, as all the routes between these places are closed by snow from November to May.

If operations have to be carried on in Armenia or Georgia, the plan which seems the most feasible would be to land the troops on the south or east coast of the Black Sea. The distance from England or India is practically not much farther than to the Bay of Antioch or Alexandretta, and the troops would be disembarked close to the scene of action.

The advantages of this plan are—

- (a.) The real point of attack could be concealed until the last moment.
- (b.) There is no long land journey before the objective point would be reached.
- (c.) So long as England has command of the sea, the place of debarkation could be reached without molestation, and reinforcements could be speedily brought up.

The disadvantages are—

- (a.) The long sea voyage from India.
- (b.) Scarcity of supplies and transport at the port of debarkation.

One thing is certain, that neither of the first two plans could be undertaken now with any hope of reaching Turkish Armenia or Georgia before next spring; by the last plan, if we were to commence preparations at once, a large force might possibly arrive at Erzeroum or Tiflis before winter, but to do so, admirable arrangements would have to be made and unusual energy to be displayed.

A small contingent of Native infantry could, of course, be landed in Armenia in a much shorter time than a large force; a limited amount of steam transport can always be secured in Calcutta and Bombay on short notice, requiring no special preparations, as in the case of ships taken up for cavalry and artillery.

This is perhaps what should be done if British troops are sent to aid the Turks in Armenia. In 2 to 3 months from the receipt of orders, 4,000 or 5,000 men could be disembarked at Batoum or Trebizond, where they should be preceded by officers who would prepare for their reception, collect carriage and supplies, and arrange for the onward march in any direction that might be decided upon.

Operations in Southern Persia would be easy compared to any of the lines we have hitherto considered.

- (a.) It is nearer our base.
- (b.) A small, well equipped force would probably suffice to bring the Persians to terms without proceeding farther inland than Shiraz or Shuster.

On the other hand—

- (a.) A force operating in Southern Persia could have no direct influence on a war between Russia and England, and would afford no material assistance to Turkey.
- (b.) The force would be locked up in a tract of country which could probably be brought to terms by a few men-of-war.

The present attitude of Persia is evidently due to the promptings of Russia, who naturally wishes to see us drawn off from her lines of advance in Asia, and to prevent us taking any action in Armenia, Georgia, the north of Persia, or Afghanistan.

Having committed us to the southern shores of Persia, Russia would endeavour to induce the Persians to besiege Herat, assisting them with officers and material. A Persian garrison in Herat would, under existing circumstances, be tantamount to a Russian occupation. It seems necessary, therefore, that we should avoid all military complications with Southern Persia, and trust to our fleet to keep the shores of the Persian Gulf quiet, while we devote our whole strength to checkmating the advances of Russia on the north of Persia, the north-west frontier of Afghanistan, and in Central Asia.

The points which will determine the nature, extent, and direction of such a campaign are—

- (a.) The force Russia could bring against us, supposing it was decided to operate in the Khanates.
- (b.) In what manner would the tribes of the Khanates receive a British army, and what assurances could we give them that they would be protected from the wrath of Russia at the termination of the war.
- (c.) What objects would be gained by an advance to Herat, and thence possibly towards Merv and the Caspian.
- (d.) What opposition might be expected in this direction.
- (e.) What action are we prepared to take with regard to Afghanistan.



- (f.) Would it not be advantageous to regain our lost influence in Persia and to maintain her frontier in the direction of the Elbourz mountains and Atrek Valley.
- (g.) Our relations with the frontier tribes.
- (h.) The practicability of the several routes by which an army could advance.
- (i.) What would the strength of the force be.

These questions must be carefully enquired into before any plan for a campaign can be decided upon.

According to the tables given in Lieutenant Stumm's *Khiva*, the approximate strength of the Russian force in Turkestan is as follows:—

#### *Regulars.*

Artillery.—8—9-prs., 32—4-prs., 16 mitrailleuses, 8—3-pr. mountain guns.  
 Total, 64 guns, with 4,035 gunners.  
 Cavalry.—1,850 Cossacks.  
 Infantry.—17,090 bayonets.  
 Sappers.—270.

#### *Irregulars.*

Artillery.—8—4-prs.  
 Cavalry.—1,800 Cossacks.

In round numbers, 25,000 men, with 72 pieces of field artillery, to which must be added certain detachments from the Orenburg circle, now permanently attached to the Tashkend Government, aggregating about 4,300 men, with 460 marines of the Aral flotilla, making a grand total of nearly 30,000 men.

This force is distributed over the three provinces of Russian Turkestan, *viz.*, Semiretchya, Syr Daria, and the Zarafshan.

For purposes of administration, the Semiretchya belongs to Turkestan proper, but strategically it is separated from it by the Turkestan mountains, forming, from a military point of view, a part of the Siberio-Chinese section intended chiefly to watch the Chinese frontier and Kashgar.

Deducting the 5,000 men in the Semiretchya, there remain 25,000 men and 72 guns in the Syr Daria and Zarafshan provinces.

Of this number, Stumm states that only 7,500 could be reckoned upon for field service, the remainder being employed in the protection of the frontier, &c.

Of the infantry, about 3,000 are armed with the Berdan rifle, (a serviceable weapon with a small bore, superior to the Snider on account of its low trajectory, but inferior to the Martini-Henry), some others with the Carle rifle (a breech-loader converted from old Minies), and the rest with smooth-bore muzzle-loaders.

The 9-prs. are breech-loading bronze guns, the 4-prs. are breech-loading, partly bronze and partly cast-steel Krupp guns; the mountain guns are breech-loading bronze.

Stumm says there are no guns of large calibre; that "owing to the difficulty of transport, it is barely possible to convey modern fort guns to the remote east, and some of the strongholds are to this day provided with nothing better than old Bokharian or Kokandian smooth-bore breech-loaders of bronze, manufactured by the Asiatics on the model of the Russian 12-prs., and captured by the Russians during the war."

The cavalry prefer fighting on foot to horseback; they are armed with a sword, rifle, and bayonet.

The nearest support to Turkestan is the Orenburg corps, amounting to about 40,000 men: of these, only 8,000 are regulars, remainder being—

Cossacks of Orenburg .. .. .	21,000
Ditto Ural.. .. .	11,000

The distances from Orenburg to the Khanates are as follows:—

Bokhara .. .. .	about 1,100 miles.
Tashkend .. .. .	" 1,200 "
Khiva .. .. .	" 800 "

There is a caravan route from Orenburg to Bokhara, passing the Jaxartes at Fort Perovski, but that commonly used crosses the river at Fort Kazali (No. 1) near its mouth.

For the first 634 miles, as far as Fort Kazali, there is a cart-road; 130 miles beyond Kazali the Yani Daria is crossed; the road for 200 miles then traverses the almost waterless dessert of Kizzil Kum; the last 140 miles are across a sandy, but not altogether unproductive region.

The distance occupies a caravan from 2 to 2½ months; owing to the snow hurricanes of winter and the scorching heat and want of water in summer, only two caravans pass between Orenburg and Bokhara during the year, and these travel at seasons when the inconveniences noted above are not experienced.

From Orenburg to Tashkend the road is the same as that to Bokhara as far as Fort Kazali; it then passes by Fort Perovski, Turkestan, and Chimkent; the first half, or as far as Turkestan, the country, although near the Jaxartes, is almost entirely waste.

The road is said to be throughout practicable for carts, and is evidently a line which is regularly worked.

Besides the land route, it must be remembered that the Syr Daria or Jaxartes is navigable as far as Fort Perovski, and that endeavours are being made to take steamers even higher up the river.

From Orenburg to Khiva an army has recently marched, and the communication between these two places will doubtless be improved yearly.

Orenburg is 900 miles from Moscow; a railway connecting the two places was opened for traffic on 31st December, 1876. Tashkend, Samarkand, and Kokand are in connection with the telegraph system of Russia.

From the above it seems certain that reinforcements from Russia could arrive at Khiva, Bokhara, and Tashkend within 5 or 6 months of the news reaching St. Petersburg that a British force was marching towards Central Asia.

It is not possible to predict the strength of such reinforcements, but it is quite certain that we must be prepared to meet many more Russians in the Khanates than Stumm shews were available for field service in 1873.

These improved communications must greatly lessen the difficulty of providing heavy guns for Tashkend and Turkestan generally.

Excluded from these estimates is the force under General Lomatine in the Mangishlak division which reports to the Caucasus, not to Turkestan; this is the force which will operate on the Atrek and Daman-i-koh line, and which may be reinforced to any extent *viâ* Baku.

The opposition we should experience would depend to a great extent on the manner in which the tribes of the Khanates consented to receive a British force. If they could be satisfied that we should free them from the Russian yoke, and place them in such a position as would prevent the re-occupation of the Khanates by the Russians, no doubt a large number would declare for us; but if they believed that, on peace being proclaimed, we should leave them to the mercy of the Muscovite, the probability is that, if they did not oppose us, they would not actively assist us, for those who might welcome us would have a poor chance of escaping Russian vengeance on the withdrawal of our troops.

Emissaries from the Porte could doubtless help our cause by proclaiming a religious war; but at this distance, and without knowing much more of the feelings of the people than we do, it is not possible to say to what extent they would be successful.

One thing must be remembered, that we turned a deaf ear to the solicitations of the tribes when they sought aid from us against the Russians, and it is not to be supposed that they would welcome us now without receiving some positive assurance for future protection.

While the Russians have advanced steadily south and east towards the frontiers of Afghanistan and Kashmir, they have not neglected to improve their position on the west. It was necessary for them to possess the Khanates in order to consolidate their power in Central Asia, and to approach close enough to Afghanistan to gain influence over the people of that country; at the same time, they have never lost sight of the fact that Russia proper is their main base, and that the shortest, quickest, and most convenient route from this base to India is by the Caspian Sea.

Rail and water communication connect the Caspian Sea with St. Petersburg; Russia is undisputed mistress of the Caspian Sea, in the south-east corner of which she has fortified the small island of Ashourada; from the sea-coast of this bay Astrabad is distant about 20 miles; from Astrabad to Herat 580 miles; the road offers no difficulties, and leads through a fertile country.

North of Astrabad there is a road from the Caspian Sea to Merv; this is reported to be fairly easy, and to pass for a great part of the way through cultivation.

It is understood that the Russians have established a post at Kizil Arvat on this upper road; their next move will be to Merv, while the Persians, under the guidance of Russian officers, will meanwhile advance on Herat and Seistan.

Once settled at Merv, communication will be opened out with Khiva and Bokhara *viâ* Charjui; the country between the Khanates and Badakshan would in all probability soon afterwards be annexed and Kashgar occupied; thus making the Russian frontier conterminous with those of Afghanistan and Kashmir.

Nothing could then save Afghanistan from becoming a province of Russia. It would be too late for India to attempt, with any reasonable prospect of success, what she might do now with certainty.

To save Afghanistan from Russia, and herself from eventual attack by Russia in a position strategically weak, it is absolutely necessary for India to be in possession of Herat, and of some position such as Balkh covering the passes through which the line of communication from Samarkand to India *viâ* Kabul leads.

From such a position England might view without anxiety the extension of Russian power in Central Asia. Her right would be protected by the impassable

range of mountains lying between Kashgar and the Pamir; the Hindu Kush, covered by a force at Balkh, would be her centre; and Herat, her left, which, while checking the further advance of the Russians from the west, would enable her to regain lost influence in Persia, give her absolute control over Afghanistan, and bring her in alliance with the Turkoman tribes.

To carry this out, it is essential that Afghanistan and Kashmir should be made to understand that their and our interests are identical. As regards Kashmir there will probably be little difficulty. Afghanistan may be already committed to Russia, or may not be prepared to receive us as allies, in which case an occupation of that country, temporary or permanent as the future may determine, may be found necessary.

Afghanistan, therefore, is the point to which our thoughts and energies must be directed. After all that has recently occurred, it is a question whether it would be politic to make any overtures to the present Ruler, or whether it would not be wiser to leave matters as they are until the time for an advance arrives. It will perhaps be acknowledged that the time for advancing is rapidly approaching, and that without reference to the hopes or fears of the Amir.

Meanwhile the army should be equipped, and when everything is ready, Sher Ali should be informed of our determination.

If he decide to cast his lot in with ours, matters will be simplified; should he prefer a Russian alliance, then we must take such steps as seem best to ensure Afghanistan giving us the least amount of trouble.

The question as to the best line of advance cannot be determined independently of Afghanistan; were she friendly, it would no doubt be possible to make Tashkend the objective *viâ* the Oxus and the Khanates.

The routes by which Tashkend can be reached are —

1st—Through Kashmir, and then by the Pamir to Kokand.

2nd—Through the Swat or Kunar valleys, and onwards either by the Pamir or Badakshan.

3rd—Through Kabul, then by the Hindu Kush and either by Badakshan or Balkh.

The two first routes present so many physical difficulties, and pass (if we except Kashmir) through such a hostile country that our enquiries may be confined to the third, *viâ* Kabul and the Hindu Kush. We have no information by which the distance from Kabul to Tashkend can be accurately estimated; there are two routes, one westwards *viâ* Balkh, Karshi or Shahr-i-Sabz and Samarkand; the other eastwards *viâ* Rustak, Kolab, and Kokand; the distances approximately are as follows from Peshawar—

					Miles.
Peshawar to Kabul	..	..	..	..	191
Kabul to Balkh.	..	..	..	..	357
Balkh to Samarkand	..	..	..	..	300
Samarkand to Tashkend	..	..	..	..	184
					<hr/>
					1,032
					<hr/>
Peshawar to Kabul	..	..	..	..	191
Kabul to Rustak	..	..	..	..	350
Rustak to Kokand	..	..	..	..	450
Kokand to Tashkend	..	..	..	..	150
					<hr/>
				Total	1,141
					<hr/>

From Peshawar to Kabul the road is rough and stony, but, except in one place—the Landi Kotal—which can easily be repaired, it is practicable for guns and carts; forage for camels and grass are generally procurable, water is tolerably plentiful, and supplies can be collected in the neighbourhood of Jalalabad and other places.

Between Kabul and Balkh the road is extremely difficult for the greater part of the way, and the passes over the Hindu Kush are closed from 2 to 9 months; forage for camels and horses is very scarce, and supplies are only procurable in small quantities and at a few places.

From Balkh to Samarkand little is known beyond that, between the Oxus and Karshi, upwards of 150 miles, a sandy desert has to be traversed requiring special equipment; that cultivation exists between Karshi and Samarkand; and that onwards to Tashkend the road is good, and passes through a fertile and well-watered country.

Notwithstanding the difficult nature of this road, it must not be lost sight of that this is the route by which successive armies have invaded India from Central Asia.

Of the eastern route we know but little; to Rustak the road is understood to be much the same as that from Kabul to Balkh, except that the passes over the Hindu Kush are more difficult, and are closed by snow for longer periods.

The Oxus is crossed about 50 miles beyond Rustak and the Kolab territory entered; throughout this latter portion the road is said to be fit for guns, and grain and water to be procurable.

Between Kolab and Kokand, the Alai mountains have to be crossed; they are practicable for camels (except when closed by snow), but not for guns; throughout Kokand, grain, grass, and water are said to be obtainable; from Kokand to Tashkend, the road is reported to be level.

Though this route might not be used by any large army, it would probably be necessary to send detachments by it.

If a force left Peshawar or Kohat on 1st March, it could be assembled at Kabul by 1st April, and Balkh by the middle or end of June. Samarkand could probably be reached towards the middle of August, and Tashkend a month later. That is to say, if the Afghans and the tribes of the Khanates were friendly, and if forage and supplies were everywhere forthcoming, an army might possibly hope to arrive at Tashkend in about 7 months after leaving India: such a result is, however, most improbable, and delays for indefinite periods must be calculated upon from the necessity of having to provide for the maintenance of a large force.

If Afghanistan could be induced to join heartily with us, it would no doubt be possible for a portion of the force to reach the Oxus or even the Khanates in less time than that given above.

Should the contrary be the case, it is impossible to say how long it would take to reach Tashkend, and it would be difficult to decide on the strength and composition of the army to accomplish such an undertaking. The force would have to be large enough to occupy Afghanistan, to keep open communication for upwards of 1,000 miles, and to be able to meet on Russian territory an army the strength of which it is not possible to calculate but which is known to be considerable. During the greater part of the winter, the several detachments on the line of advance could hope for no support from each other, and the main army would have no line of retreat open to it.

Any operations, therefore, in the direction of Central Asia, seem to be prohibited, unless we can previously be assured of the friendship of the Afghans, and of the neutrality, if not the active assistance, of the tribes in the Khanates.

An advance towards Herat does not present the same difficulties. From Quetta, our frontier post, Herat is distant about 530 miles; as far as Kandahar, 144 miles, the Kojak pass is the chief obstacle; but as a British army crossed this pass 40 years ago,

after having marched from Ferozepore, upwards of 750 miles, it is not likely to cause delay now that operations will commence within 50 miles of its summit.

Near the Kojak pass grass and forage for camels are procurable, but, as a rule, these are scarce until Kandahar is approached, when all difficulties cease, supplies gradually become plentiful and water abundant.

From Kandahar to Herat there are two routes; the northern, leading direct from Girishk, is 369 miles; the southern, which passes through Farah and Sabzawar, after leaving Girishk, is 400 miles. The roads are stony in places, but they could be made passable for guns throughout in a short time; cultivation exists here and there, but the country is usually barren and desolate; nevertheless, forage for camels and horses can generally be procured. Except in the dry season, water is plentiful, and should a large force undertake this march in the summer months, and it were practicable to separate the several arms, the cavalry, artillery and stores could be sent from Girishk, along the banks of the Helmand, to the lake of Seistan, and then by the Hari Rud river to Herat; in this way, all risk of scarcity of forage or water would be avoided.

In the event of Herat being friendly, a portion of the force on leaving Kandahar, would no doubt push on by the northern or shorter route; but it is improbable that any army would march from Kandahar to Herat without passing Farah and Sabzawar. If a post were established on the banks of the Khash Rud, large supplies of grain might be procured in the neighbourhood. The harvest in the Farah district is reaped 15 days earlier than at Herat, and if this were secured early in June, when the Farah road becomes easily fordable, there would be no difficulty in reaching Herat in time for its harvest.

Authorities agree that the rich valley of Herat, could, in the first instance, maintain and supply a force such as that assigned to it, and eventually, under British nourishment, would doubtless meet far greater demands, even to those for 150,000 men.

The roads from Persia, Seistan, the Caspian Sea, Merv, Khiva, Bokhara, Kandahar, Maimana, Balkh and Kabul, all meet at Herat: hence its position is of great strategical importance, and this is attested by the fact that from the 12th to the 17th centuries it has been on seven occasions demolished and rebuilt.

The advantages of an advance towards Herat are—

- 1st.—Its proximity to our base.
- 2nd.—The comparative easiness of the route, and the fact that it can be adopted at any season of the year.
- 3rd.—The belief that Kandahar could be occupied without much opposition.
- 4th.—The possibility of protecting the flank from attack from Kabul, by the occupation of Kalat-i-Gilzai, 90 miles on the Kandahar-Ghuzni-Kabul road.
- 5th.—The fact that a moderate-sized army would suffice for the occupation of Herat, irrespective of the attitude of Afghanistan, for keeping open the communication with our base, and for placing a force in the field at Herat, sufficient to cope with anything that could be brought against it under existing circumstances.
- 6th.—The occupation of Herat would bring Afghanistan to terms.
- 7th.—It would reassure the Turkomans, and place them in immediate connection with us.

8th.—It would in all probability regain our lost influence in Persia.

9th.—It would effectually check the advance of Russia towards India from the southern shores of the Caspian, and the lower valley of the Oxus.

10th.—It would enable us to raise a force of Afghans, Turkomans, and Persians sufficient to drive the Russians from the southern and eastern shores of the Caspian, and by rousing the Circassians to make her position on the western shores extremely dangerous.

A force assembled at Quetta by 1st November could reach Kandahar on the 20th November, and Herat by the middle or end of the following January.

To carry out these plans the following arrangements would have to be made—

1st.—All regiments and batteries selected for service to be increased to the war strength; the required number of drafts for British corps to be despatched at once from England.

2nd.—Two camel corps to be raised, similarly equipped to the one which proved so useful in 1858-59.

3rd.—All Officers now on leave in England to be recalled.

4th.—Intimation to be sent to Australia that more horses will be required.

5th.—To see that each battery of artillery and regiment of cavalry has the full complement of grass-cutters with ponies.

6th.—To push on to Quetta munitions of war and stores of all kinds.

7th.—To collect transport for the troops, ordnance parks, &c., at selected points, and to purchase a sufficiency of bullocks for ordnance purposes.

8th.—To make a road fit for guns from Dera Ghazi Khan through the Murri-Bugti country to the Bolan, and onwards towards Quetta.

9th.—To make a railway from Sukkur as near to Quetta as the nature of the country will admit.

10th.—To send to Quetta enough material to continue the line of telegraph to Herat.

11th.—To send Officers towards Herat, Merv, and Balkh, to make themselves acquainted with the resources and nature of the country; to arrange, if possible, for supplies; to organize the Turkoman cavalry, and to ascertain what assistance we could expect from them in men and horses.

12th.—To endeavour to gain influence amongst the tribes between Yarkand and the Caspian.

13th.—To enter into communication with the tribes on the frontier, and either subsidize or enlist a certain number of them for the purpose of keeping open the passes for troops and convoys.

14th.—To forward to Quetta all our force of sappers and pioneers for necessary works on the road towards Kandahar, and for preparation of posts.

A force to accomplish this undertaking should not be of less strength than 30,000 men; it would consist of—

	Men.	Horses.	Guns.
4 batteries of Royal Horse Artillery .. .. .	628	712	24
6 " Field Artillery .. .. .	942	900	86
3 " Heavy Artillery .. .. .	160	10	14*
4 " Mountain Artillery (2 of these to be Native batteries)..	320	728†	24
	2,050	2,350	98
3 regiments of British Cavalry .. .. .	1,500‡	1,500	..
8 " " Infantry .. .. .	8,000‡	..	..
‡ of 2 Camels Corps .. .. .	600	..	..
Total of British troops.. .. .	12,150	3,850	98
8 regiments of Native Cavalry .. .. .	4,400	4,400	..
16 " " Infantry .. .. .	12,800	..	..
‡ of 2 Camels Corps .. .. .	600	..	..
12 companies of Sappers and Miners .. .. .	1,200	..	..
Grand total .. .. .	31,150	8,250	98

In the first instance, 10,000 men would be required for Kandahar and Kalat-i-Gilzai and for maintaining communication between these places and Quetta. For Herat and the road from Kandahar, 10,000 more men would be necessary, leaving 10,000 men available for any move beyond Herat.

Additional heavy guns should accompany the army to be placed in position at Kalat-i-Gilzai, Kandahar, Herat, and elsewhere.

These operations would fall mainly on the Bengal and Bombay Armies. Should a contingent be sent to Egypt or Asia Minor simultaneously with them, Madras and Bombay would have to provide the troops.

FRED. ROBERTS, *Major-General.*  
*Quarter-Master-General in India.*

\* Besides 18 elephants and 580 bullocks.

† Including 712 mules.

‡ If the proposed war strength of British Cavalry and Infantry is not agreed to, the number of regiments must be proportionately increased.



## II.

## IS AN INVASION OF INDIA BY RUSSIA POSSIBLE ?

HEAD-QUARTERS, MADRAS ARMY,  
31st December, 1883.

Barely 3 years have passed since the discussion as to the advisability of retaining or abandoning Kandahar was at its height. Those who advocated the policy of retention were no doubt guided by the anticipation of movements on the part of Russia, which are now taking place, and by a desire to hold a certain position in Afghanistan, from which British influence might gradually be extended to Herat, as a check to Russian designs, which were to them but too apparent. Those, on the other hand, who advocated the policy of abandonment, desired to be relieved of the burden of holding Kandahar before it was absolutely necessary to do so; and wished to abstain, as long as possible, from any action which might involve us in interference with the affairs of Afghanistan. While a small, but influential, section of this party went so far as to express their profound belief that any danger to India from Russia "is so remote that its possibility is hardly worth considering."\*

I have no wish to reopen the question as to whether we were right or wrong in not retaining Kandahar. My desire is to draw attention to the changes which have taken place since its abandonment was decided upon, and to inquire whether these changes do not demand some corresponding alteration in the policy which led to that abandonment. Since then, Russia has approached perceptibly nearer to Afghanistan, the Turkoman tribes are practically in her power, a railway has been pushed on east of the Caspian as far as Kizal Arvat, while the whole country between Askabad, Sarakhs, and Herat has been surveyed, and every preparation made for the extension of the line towards the frontier of Afghanistan, whenever the time for the next move arrives.

It seems scarcely possible that any one, who has studied the question, can view unconcernedly the position which Russia is so rapidly gaining; or that any one interested in India should now object to a reconsideration of our Indian frontier policy. I can quite understand the feelings which actuated so many of the most distinguished men India has produced, and a large majority of our fellow-countrymen at home, in looking with extreme repugnance on any interference with our Afghan neighbours; because, though they may have foreseen that Russia must eventually dominate Northern Persia, they never seem to have contemplated her approaching so near to Afghanistan as to threaten its independence and prevent its remaining on friendly terms with us. Their policy of non-interference was apparently founded on the supposition that Russia's position in Central Asia was too insecure, and too distant, to admit of her causing disaffection amongst the chiefs, the army, and the population generally of India, much less attempting anything like an invasion. With Russia *en l'air* in Central Asia, and at some considerable distance from Persia and Afghanistan, it was reasonable to suppose that she had more to fear from us than we had from her; and that our right policy was to keep aloof from Afghanistan, and leave the

\* Sir Henry Norman, Memorandum against the retention of Kandahar, 20th September, 1890.

Amir to manage his own affairs. It has indeed been said that if the only barrier between Russia in Asia and Britain in Asia were "a mountain ridge, or a stream, or a fence, there would be no difficulty in preserving peace between Russia and the United Kingdom."\* But no one, with the smallest knowledge of India, could make such an assertion, or believe for a moment that we could, under these conditions, maintain our hold over India without a very considerable increase to our army, especially the British portion of it.

Afghanistan and the deserts beyond have hitherto been to India what "the silver streak" is to England, and have enabled her to do without those large standing armies found necessary by continental nations, whose boundaries are conterminous. Once this safeguard is lost, we must be prepared to meet invasion from the front, and to control probable rebellion in the rear. It must, moreover, be remembered that, whereas the the invasion of any country is usually met by the determined opposition of all classes of the inhabitants, every man of whom can be depended upon to fight for his hearth and home, with the British in India the conditions would be vastly different. At the best, we could only expect the natives to remain passive, while the first disaster to our arms would raise throughout Hindustan a storm, compared with which the troubles of 1857 would be insignificant.

This is a discouraging result of more than a century's rule; but I think that the truth of the statement will be admitted by most people who have been long associated with the natives of this country. It seems to me tolerably certain that, in the event of any serious disturbance, even if numbers were on our side, the strength of the country would be against us. The better educated of the Hindus, and possibly even the majority of them, might favour our cause; they could, however, afford but little real assistance, while the Mahomedans and the many other restless spirits in the country would, I fear, be found against us. Not, perhaps, from any love of Russia, but from a hope that change might, in some way or another, benefit them, and from a cordial dislike to the check which our rule has imposed on disorder and oppression.

It has been urged—

† "That should a foreign power, such as Russia, ever seriously think of invading India from without, or, what is more probable, of stirring up the element of dissatisfaction or anarchy within it, our true policy, our strongest security, would then, we conceive, be found to be in previous abstinence from entanglements at either Kabul, Kandahar, or any similar outpost, in full reliance on a compact, highly-equipped and disciplined army, stationed within our own territories, or on our own border; in the contentment, if not the attachment, of the masses; in the sense of security of title and possession, with which our whole policy is gradually imbuing the minds of the principal chiefs and the native aristocracy," &c., &c.

It may appear presumptuous of me to offer an opinion opposed to that which Lord Lawrence and his Government formed so recently as 1869. Few men knew more than Lord Lawrence did about the Native Chiefs and the people of India, and probably no Englishman ever had to deal with so serious an internal disturbance as Lord Lawrence had in the summer of 1857; but I confess that I cannot bring myself to share the views expressed in the above-quoted despatch, or to feel satisfied that, under the circumstances contemplated in that despatch, our position in India would be as secure as Lord Lawrence and his advisers seemed to think, or that we

\* Extract from a speech delivered by the Right Honourable John Bright, M.P., at Birmingham, on 16th April, 1879.

† Despatch from the Government of India (Foreign Department), to the Secretary of State for India, dated January, 1869.

should have left to depend upon "a compact, highly-equipped, and disciplined army." The fact of white faces, other than British, being paramount in a country on whose independence we have hitherto insisted, would be such a blow to our prestige that our Native soldiery would most assuredly question the policy of remaining faithful. This is a point apparently lost sight of by those who advocate waiting to attack the Russians until they debouch on the plains of India. Were we certain of having the same hold over the country as we now have, and of being able to raise an almost unlimited number of Native regiments, on whose fidelity we could depend, we might perhaps afford to remain quietly behind our own frontier, awaiting the issue of events, and thus forego the advantages of removing the theatre of war beyond the limits of our own territory. But, in the state of affairs assumed by Lord Lawrence's Government, it seems to me that we could not depend on either troops, Native Chiefs, or the masses remaining loyal; and if they did not, instead of being able to repel invasion, we should require all our strength to quell internal disturbances.

The student of the events which gradually led to the extension of our Indian Empire, from the days when a few scattered factories were the only evidences of the English in Hindustan, will readily admit that our success was founded on the prestige of the British name, and on the adoption of a decisive and active policy—the only policy possible with Asiatics. He will have noted the thrill which ran through India when the news of our disastrous retreat from Kabul in 1841-42 spread like wildfire through the bazaars. British troops, hitherto deemed invincible, had received a check; England's prestige was damaged, and the result was apparent in the outbreaks at Gwalior and Lahore, and subsequently at Mooltan; it is besides very generally believed that the story of our defeats in Afghanistan was used as a powerful lever by those who instigated the sepoys to revolt in 1857. To come down to our own times, those who were in India in the autumn of 1880, and were in a position to note the effect of news on the public mind, have assured me that it was curious to observe the subdued feeling of excitement which passed over India, on the announcement that a disaster had befallen our arms at Maiwand. It was a mere surface ripple, but it was enough to make those who had witnessed the storm of the Mutiny anxious for better news from the north.

With such warnings as these before us, and with the shadow of Russia looming larger day by day, we cannot afford to shut our eyes to an event the accomplishment of which is merely a matter of time. England and Russia must meet in Asia; and would it not be wiser, instead of waiting with our hands folded, hoping that the evil day is far distant, to prepare for the crisis by utilising the present time to strengthen our position, militarily and politically, so that we may enter on the struggle with the greatest possible advantage to ourselves.\*

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\* When we consider our position in 1857, and think of the possible combinations we may have against us in the future, we can hardly fail to see that we may have to meet difficulties infinitely greater than we have had hitherto to deal with. Anyone would have been thought insane, who, in January 1857, ventured to hint that disaffection was abroad, and that a spark might set alight the inflammable passions of the governed race. Yet, in May of that year, the episode of the greased cartridges furnished a pretext for a struggle, which cost us a large expenditure of life and money. Who can say that even a greater struggle may not occur again? The recent controversies about the Ilbert Bill prove clearly how much race antagonism still exists; and although this Bill has only affected the unwarlike Bengalis, it is quite possible that some question may arise hereafter, which will rouse, to even a greater degree, the more turbulent races in the country. India, in 1857, has been aptly compared to England during the reign of Queen Anne, when news travelled slowly, and it was only some weeks after it had occurred that the well-thumbed newspaper told the village gossips that the battle of Blenheim had been fought. So in India 26 years ago, communication was very slow and most uncertain; indeed in some parts it can scarcely be said to have existed. Now, railways are spreading rapidly, and every little village has its post and telegraph offices. Information can be received at Travancore, Assam, or Peshawar of events taking place in India almost as quickly as news travels from London to any part of the United Kingdom. As communication has been improved, so has education spread. In every province in India men are to be found

It seems tolerably certain that the further advance of Russia towards Afghanistan will be at least as rapid as her progress during the last 20 years, unless England steps in to delay her. And during the last 20 years what has that progress been? In the year 1863, the southern frontier line of the Russians ran as follows:—From the shores of the Sea of Aral on the north-west it followed the Syr Darya or Jaxartes River to Julek, then striking almost due east, it took the line of the Chu River to the Issik Kul Lake. Tashkend was captured in 1865; the treaty of Bokhara followed in 1867; in 1868 the Russian troops entered Samarkand; and, in the summer of 1873, we find the Muscovite columns marching triumphantly into the city of Khiva. Since then, year by year, on one pretext or another, the pioneers of the White Czar's army have pressed on with startling rapidity.

Important as these additions of territory were to Russia, they are of little account to us, when compared with the conquests she soon afterwards made in the neighbourhood of the Caspian. Russia doubtless felt that her newly-acquired possessions would never be secure, until she had got the warlike Turkoman tribes as completely under her sway as she had the Tartars of the North. She determined, therefore, to abandon the project of extending her rule beyond Bokhara, Samarkand, and Kokand, until she should have brought these places into direct communication with Russia proper *via* the Caspian. Krasnovodsk, on the east shore of the Caspian, had been occupied in 1869, in the belief that it afforded a good base for operations across the desert against Khiva and Merv. The following year found the Russians established at Michaelovsk on the opposite side of the bay. In 1872 a small fort was built at Tchikishlar, at the mouth of the Aтрек, from which point, as Mr. Marvin clearly shows, "year after year, those reconnoitings of the Aтрек Valley and Kopet Dagh range took place, which ultimately resulted in the recent incorporation of the entire oasis of Akhal, to a point 200 miles closer to Herat than our foremost outpost at Quetta."

So long as the warlike tribe of the Tekke Turkomans maintained their independence in the fertile Akhal oasis, paralysing by their raids the Khivans and the timid Persians, the extension of the Russian power trans-Caspian was impossible. A succession of these raids had led to several columns being sent against the Turkomans, even as early as 1871, and the disastrous repulse of one of these expeditions under General Lomakin at Geok-Tepe in 1879, rendered a punitive campaign inevitable. General Skobelev was appointed to the command. On the 23rd June, 1880, he occupied, without opposition, the Tekke fortress of Bami, the junction of the routes from Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar to Geok-Tepe. In the winter of 1880-81 he conducted the expedition to Geok-Tepe, and brilliantly retrieved the honour of the

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who are familiar with English literature. The public offices throughout the land are worked almost entirely by native clerks; the railways and telegraphs are, for the most part, in the hands of natives; while many of the better-educated officials have, of late years, given signal proof of their ability to administer the affairs of State. Those who were in India in 1857, will remember how some half dozen master-spirits came to the front, men like Koer Sing of Shahabad, the Moulvie of Lucknow, or Tantia Topi, the hero of Central India. With a few more brave and capable leaders, the struggle would have been a still fiercer one, and where one such man of power existed then, many more, from their superior mental training, are to be found now. This is the natural outcome of our honest endeavours to elevate the native character, and although it should encourage us to hope that India may eventually benefit considerably by this gradual enlightenment of her people, as yet she is in a state of transition, in which there is a vast element of danger, both to India herself and to our rule. We cannot afford to hide from ourselves that the very power which the people are becoming possessed of, may be utilised against us by a clever and enterprising enemy. Then, again, there is a certain amount of danger in allowing Native Princes to maintain unnecessarily large forces. I do not share the somewhat prevalent idea that every Chief in India is surrounded by a formidable army. I know this is not the case and that probably not half a dozen States possess anything beyond an armed rabble. But some (notably Hyderabad) have many more troops than there can be any necessity for, and the existence of which entails a large British force being employed in their neighbourhood to watch them.

Russian arms in Central Asia. A few days after these victories, Askabad and Gyaors were occupied. The railway from Krasnovodsk to Kizil-Arvat, which had been commenced the previous year at the suggestion of General Annenkoff, and had been pushed on with great energy, was completed during the summer of 1881.

From this brief trace of the recent movements of Russia, it will be seen that in spite of all promises to the contrary, each success was invariably followed by the extension of her frontier line. We cannot blame the Russians for the advances they have made. We ourselves have not been idle; nevertheless this steady, continuous advance, threatening as it does the stability of our empire, must be jealously watched.

On referring to the actual distances that divided the advanced posts of Russia and England in Central Asia, in 1863 and 1883, we have as follows\* :—

In 1863 :	Miles.
Fort Kasala to Bokhara .. .. .	330
Bokhara to Balkh .. .. .	270
Balkh to Herat .. .. .	370
Herat to Kandahar .. .. .	369
Kandahar to Jacobabad .. .. .	343
Total ..	1,682

In 1883 :	Miles.
Askabad to Sarakhs .. .. .	186
Sarakhs to Herat .. .. .	202
Herat to Quetta .. .. .	530
Total ..	918

So that in 20 years the Russian and British outposts have approached between 700 and 800 miles nearer to each other, and are now little more than 900 miles apart. Of the above distance, the British have advanced 200 miles from Jacobabad to Quetta, and the Russians the remaining 600 miles. Previous to 1878, an invading Russian army would have had to solve for itself the problem of the formidable Hindu Kush barrier, or if it took the line by Herat, it would have had to face the terrors of the deserts of Bokhara and Merv. Many months must have elapsed before reinforcements could have reached it in case of disaster, while hordes of Turkomans would have hovered on its flanks, ready to swoop down at the first signs of weakness. The same army, in 1884, would proceed leisurely from its base at Askabad, through a conquered country, with supplies available close at hand from its allies, the Persians; with no dread mountain chain ranged directly across its path, and with the knowledge that, should occasion arise, thousands of men, from the very heart of Russia itself, could be forwarded rapidly to reinforce it. So late as 1878, troops would have taken some 6 months to reach Samarkand from Orenburg, the terminal point of the Russian railway; while now, reinforcements could be marched in 6 days to Askabad from Kizil-Arvat, which is in direct rail and steamboat communication with St. Petersburg, *via* Michaelovsk, Baku, and Batoum. We may shortly expect to hear of the extension of the trans-Caspian railway from Kizil-Arvat to Askabad, 146 miles, and Sarakhs, 186 miles, leaving a distance of 202 miles only to Herat.

\* I have purposely omitted the route from Fort Kasala *via* Balkh and Kabul to Peshawar, because as I show hereafter, that line seems to me impracticable for an invading army.

Russia cannot stop until she has consolidated her power on the north-east frontier of Persia, and perfected her communications between the Caspian and her possessions in Central Asia. She could no more stop than England could have stopped east of the Ganges and the Jumna at the beginning of this century, or, in later years, south of the Sutlej. The progress of Russia might have been checked, had England 9 or 10 years ago, responded to the wish of Persia, that the friendly relations which formerly existed between her and Great Britain might be restored, and acceded to her request that she might be allowed the services of British Officers to discipline and train her troops. By this means England would have regained her influence in Persia, and might have been in a position to save Merv and the Turkoman country from falling an easy prey to Russia. Nothing we can now do will prevent this becoming a *fait accompli*, whenever it may suit Russia.

It is generally believed that a secret treaty exists between the Governments of St. Petersburg and Teheran, by which the armies of the former are to be permitted to pursue their way unmolested along the northern slopes of the Kopet Dagh, or, if necessary, to pass through Persia itself, being assisted by her with supplies. Treaty or no treaty, it is perfectly clear that Persia is completely at the mercy of her powerful neighbour; her boundary on the north marches with that of Russia for nearly its whole extent, and no effort on the part of England, or any other Power, can prevent Russian influence being paramount at Teheran. How long it may be before this influence is equally powerful in Afghanistan, depends upon England. We must not be deceived by any promises the Russians may make, for they themselves may be unable to keep them, nor should we calculate on the Afghans opposing Russia. So long as we can keep a good stretch of desert between the Russian outposts and Herat, our influence in Afghanistan may survive; but when Russia comes within reach of that fortress, and from there, gradually works her way towards Maimana, we must feel, as the people of Afghanistan will certainly feel, that their country is dominated from the north.

While the late Amir Sher Ali was employed in consolidating the united kingdom of Afghanistan, between the years 1869—1878, Russia was approaching nearer and nearer to the Afghan frontier—so near, indeed, as to make her vicinity a source of considerable anxiety to the Amir, who naturally looked to us for assistance and protection. Notwithstanding his soreness and disappointment at the many rebuffs he had received from us, in the earlier parts of his career, Sher Ali was still quite prepared, in 1873, to enter into a treaty, offensive and defensive, with us. He had been received in a princely manner by Lord Mayo at Umballa, 4 years before, and although, as was to have been expected from an Afghan, he had returned to his country dissatisfied with the money and other presents he had received, he carried away with him a strong personal feeling for the Viceroy, who had welcomed him so kindly and courteously, and evidently wished to be on friendly terms with the English. In 1872 came the unfortunate Seistan question. Sher Ali had placed the matter in our hands. In obedience to our wishes he had refrained from attempting to recover territory, which, formerly belonging to Persia, had gradually been retaken by her from Afghanistan. Our decision in favour of Persia, though undoubtedly right in itself, offended him deeply, and he considered that he had been treated unjustly by us. This feeling of anger and discontent was greatly aggravated the following year, 1873, when Sher Ali's Envoy failed to obtain from Lord Mayo's successor that support in his domestic and foreign difficulties which the Amir not unreasonably hoped for, viz., the recognition of his favourite son, Abdullah Jan, as his heir, and a direct promise of aid to Afghanistan against Russian aggression. It was considered that to accede to the first proposal might involve us in a too active interference in Afghan affairs, and the the only terms on which we would agree to the second, were altogether too one-sided for the Amir to accept.

From that day we lost our hold over Afghanistan, and the strong united kingdom we had helped to consolidate by large presents of money and arms, became to us a weakness and an actual menace, instead of a strength. Sher Ali never trusted us again; and believing that the integrity of his kingdom depended upon his having the protection of either Russia or England, he decided on throwing in his lot with the former. This he did most thoroughly, and ever afterwards treated all our overtures with supreme contempt.\*

It was in this frame of mind that Lord Northbrook's successor found Sher Ali when 3 years later he took up the Viceroyalty of India. In the interim, the Amir had refused to accept our presents of money, and had hesitated for months to take over some stands of arms which had been sent to Peshawar for him. The Government of the day, recognising the necessity of obtaining reliable information as to what was going on in Afghanistan and the countries beyond, and feeling that it was useless to expect the Amir of Kabul to come to any satisfactory terms with us, unless we were prepared to meet him at least half-way, determined, if possible, to improve our relations with Sher Ali, which had become more and more strained. But Lord Lytton's overtures met with no success; Sher Ali refused to receive the special messenger it was proposed to send to Kabul, and assented, with a bad grace, as an alternative measure, to a meeting being held at Peshawar between our Envoy, Sir Lewis Pelly, and his own representative, Syed Noor Muhammad. The result of this meeting, which took place in January and February 1877, showed clearly that Sher Ali's decision, to throw himself into the arms of Russia, was not to be changed. For although our Envoy was empowered to sign an offensive and defensive treaty with the Amir, and to recognise Abdallah Jan as his heir—to meet, in fact, all the demands which had been made at Umballa in 1869, and at Simla in 1873—Sher Ali refused absolutely to accede to the sole condition we insisted upon, in return for undertaking such serious responsibilities, viz., to permit British Officers to reside (not at Kabul, if this were objected to), but at certain places on the frontier of Afghanistan. Soon after, our Agent at Kabul, who had been treated almost as a prisoner, was withdrawn, and no further communication was held with the Amir, until news arrived that a Russian Embassy had reached Kabul.

The events which followed are too well known to need description here.

Our relations with Abdur Rahman are now very much what they were 10 years ago with Sher Ali. We have agreed to pay him a subsidy of 12 lakhs of rupees a-year, and we have made him presents of large quantities of arms and ammunition; in fact, we are doing all that we did before, to consolidate the power of the ruler of Afghanistan. But, in the meantime, the relative positions of Afghanistan, England, and Russia in the East have materially altered.

Russia by her rapid advance has done much to gain a dominant position in regard to Afghanistan, and it must not be forgotten that, notwithstanding England helped Abdur Rahman Khan to take his seat on the throne, he is less likely than Sher Ali was to prefer the protection of England to that of Russia, unless we can give him substantial reasons for his preference. As a refugee, he was received by Russia, and lived on her bounty for 11 years, and he has many friends among her people. In fact, the situation

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\* I am aware that in making this statement I am treading on debatable ground, and I should hesitate to refer to our past dealings with the rulers of Afghanistan, were it not necessary to do so, in order that we may have some guide for the policy of the future. I had frequent opportunities, when in Afghanistan, of discussing with those best able to form an opinion our relations with Sher Ali; they all pointed to 1873 as the date from which the Amir became estranged. Whether Sher Ali would, in process of time, have recovered his temper, had the policy of Lord Northbrook and his two predecessors been continued, it is impossible to say. Upon this point no satisfactory conclusion is likely to be arrived at, but it will probably be generally admitted that the result of our whole policy was a failure, inasmuch as, that in the summer of 1878, a Russian Embassy was welcomed at Kabul, while the British Envoy was refused permission to set foot on Afghan soil.

presents infinitely greater difficulties than in Sher Ali's time, and may necessitate the acceptance on our part of heavier responsibilities than would formerly have been necessary. Under these circumstances, what should England do? Should she continue the same policy which so signally failed to maintain her influence at Kabul in Sher Ali's time, or should she endeavour to enter into closer relations with the present Amir, or with the people of Afghanistan? To many of those who are intimately acquainted with Afghan affairs, it would seem that England's only chance of preventing Russian influence from becoming, sooner or later, supreme in Afghanistan (*and thus making an invasion of India possible*), lies in her speedily substituting a bold and firm policy for the half-hearted proceedings of the past, and by endeavouring, in every possible way, to place ourselves in some satisfactory relationship with the people of Afghanistan. They must be assured that we have no designs upon their country, and that even should circumstances require a British occupation of Kandahar, the direction of all internal affairs would be left in their hands; we must guarantee them the integrity of their kingdom; we must be prepared to hold out advantages as great as they might expect from Russia; and they must be made to see that their interests and ours are identical, and that our policy would, under no circumstances, be liable to change, as it has hitherto changed.

The situation is no doubt a very complicated one, and will require skilful and delicate handling; but we ought to be successful, if we can convince the Afghans that we are determined to adopt a fixed and resolute policy with Russia in the matter, and that while they have as much to fear from England as from Russia if they refuse our overtures, they have much to gain and nothing to fear from England in the other case. Were Abdur Rahman certain of keeping the Amirship, and were he all-powerful in Afghanistan, our task would be a comparatively easy one, if we could succeed in attaching him to our side; but he has little or no control in the northern provinces of Afghan-Turkestan and Herat, and there is always the danger that our endeavours to keep him on the throne may stir up the nation against us.\* He is, besides, known to be thoroughly unpopular, and, even with the support and assistance he receives from us, he would probably have considerable difficulty in holding his own, were Ayub Khan, Ishak Khan, or any other rival to appear on the scene. The strong, friendly, united Afghanistan that we hope to form by subsidising the ruler of Kabul does not exist; indeed, it has never existed, except for very brief and exceptional periods. Ahmed Shah and Dost Muhammad Khan, the strongest and most astute rulers that Afghanistan has ever known, only succeeded in establishing their supremacy over the whole country after years of turmoil and rebellion; the latter, indeed, did not get possession of Herat until shortly before his death in 1863, immediately after which event, the kingdom he had taken a lifetime to consolidate, fell to pieces, and passed through 5 years of anarchy and civil war before it became re-united under Sher Ali, on whose death it dissolved again.

The task of uniting Afghanistan under a single ruler would seem from experience to be so hopeless, that we should consider whether it would not be better for us to accept the fact that the country is actually in a state of disintegration, and to endeavour to deal with it as so many distinct provinces. Even then the problem would be a very difficult one to solve; the difficulty increasing in proportion as the provinces are distant from our own frontier. The most effectual method, perhaps, of gaining a hold over the country, without offending the susceptibilities or incurring the dislike of the Afghans, would be to convince them of the benefits they would derive from their commercial system becoming closely connected with that of Hindustan.

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\* Since this was written Abdur Rahman has considerably strengthened himself throughout Afghanistan; in a great measure by the help of our money and arms.—R., 10th September, 1897.



This could best be done by employing carefully selected Officers to carry on our dealings with them, and by encouraging them to trade freely with us. Money would be better spent in this way than by trying to support an Amir whom we cannot trust, and who has no real hold over his own subjects. Nothing is likely to appeal so forcibly to the cupidity of an Afghan as the filling of his pockets, and nothing will do this so effectually as the completion of the railway\* to Quetta and

\* In support of the commercial prospects such a line of railway would possess, I would refer to the increase that has taken place in the revenue and trade of Sibi and other places in Baluchistan, since order was restored and communications improved by our occupancy of that part of the country. In 1875, when a British Officer was first permanently placed at Kalat, the trade through the Bolan pass was estimated at about 6 lakhs of rupees per annum. By 1880-81 it had increased to 15 lakhs. Directly the war ceased and the Harnai route was opened, the whole of the trade took that road in order to avoid the dues levied by the Khan of Kalat in the Bolan; and between the 1st September, 1881, and the 1st September, 1882, the value of the through-trade amounted to 32 lakhs. This large increase was owing partly to the freedom from tolls, and partly to peace and good order in the country. The railway at Sibi had also something to say to it, though not so much as might be supposed. It does not come far enough yet to be of much use to traders. A merchant who has brought his camels all the way from Kandahar to Sibi (232 miles) thinks nothing of taking them on to Shikarpur (139 miles further), which is the great depot for all Central Asian trade. As a matter of fact, a very large portion of the *kafilas* prefer marching across the desert to the rail; it only takes them 5 or 6 days to reach Shikarpur, and almost as much time is spent in weighing at the station and in the transit by rail. The rail, therefore, at present does not give much advantage, and its effect has scarcely been felt yet; nevertheless, the trade continues to increase enormously. During the past 12 months, ending 1st September, 1883, the value of the total trade, *via* the Harnai and Bolan routes, was estimated at 56 lakhs, or an increase of more than 50 per cent. on the trade of the previous year. It seems doubtful whether the increase will continue at this rate for the reasons that the amount of carriage in the country is limited, and trade only exists during half the year, *viz.*, from 1st October to 1st April; not because there is any deficiency in articles of commerce, but simply that neither Pathans nor their camels will face the heat of the lower Bolan and Harnai routes in the summer months. Directly the railway reaches Pishin the terminus would be in a cool climate, and the trade would go on steadily all the year round. Merchants, who are now prevented by the distance from making more than one trip, as a rule, from Kandahar, Kalat-i-Ghilzai and the Helmand, &c., to Sibi, would be able to make four, five, or even six trips to Pishin. Besides this distinct advantage, there is the probability of opening out resources of trade which do not exist at present. The principal articles of export from Kandahar are wool, madder, skins, *assafoetida*, pistachios, and dried fruits. The spring crops of wheat, barley, and other grains contribute nothing to the trade, for grain is too heavy to carry so far as Sibi or Shikarpur on camels and donkeys; besides, in the cold weather all the carriage is wanted for more important and valuable articles. If the railway reached Pishin it is believed there would be a large export of wheat. The want of a market prevents more now being grown than is required for local use. Were sufficient inducement offered new *karez*s would be opened out, and cultivation extended; the several districts of Kandahar could produce wheat in very large quantities, and Quetta and Mastung would contribute a considerable share. As an instance of the change a railway effects, a very large export of wheat now takes place from the Bellport station on the Sibi—Jacobabad line; the place itself is a desert, but the railway has attracted wheat from Bagh, Gandava, and other places in the neighbourhood, which never before produced more than enough for their own consumption. It is impossible to predict what effect on the trade a railway to Pishin would have; but it seems certain that it would increase it very largely, and most probably to an extent quite beyond our expectations. Besides the private trade, there would be the trade on account of Government contractors, supplies for the Commissariat and Public Works Departments, &c., which would be fairly considerable. But there are other ways in which the State would gain financially, the most important of which is the large increase that would immediately result in the revenue under the heads of excise, court fees, stamps, and registration—sources of revenue which at present do not exist at all, for Pishin would become the centre of the Central Asian trade, and all the large Shikarpur firms would start branch establishments there. Sibi is an instance of what might be expected at Pishin. The revenue of the district, when we took possession of it a very few years ago, was 10,000 rupees a-year, it is now 1,25,000 rupees, half of which is due to the sources above named, notwithstanding that Sibi is very small, and labours under the disadvantage, as explained above, of the trade going through it to Shikarpur. So with Quetta, when we took charge of the district the revenue was 10,000 rupees; it is now over 1,25,000, one lakh of which is derived from sources other than land revenue. In Pishin the land revenue is 50,000 rupees; it is believed that if the railway were extended there the revenue would, in one year, reach two lakhs, and that another lakh would be gained between Harnai, Sharogi, and Sibi. This increase of revenue would go on swelling as trade expands, and would soon reach the sum required to pay the interest of 1½ millions, the estimated cost of the railway from Sibi to Pishin. All that the Government of India has to proclaim is free trade. Unfortunately, it insists on recouping itself for the money spent in buying up the Khan of Kalat's right to tax, by levying a due of one rupee upon every camel passing along the Bolan or Harnai routes. This is a most mistaken policy, and will tend more than anything to discourage traders; it is the curse they have been afflicted with from time immemorial. We have free trade at all the ports in India, we have abolished import duties on cotton, and we are endeavouring to persuade the rulers of Native States to give up transit duties; why then levy protective duties on the North-West Frontier, the very place where every possible encouragement should be given to a trade which is only just beginning to feel its legs?

Pishin,\* and onwards to Kandahar, as soon as the consent of the Afghans can be obtained. It is unlikely that any Amir would ever consent to his country being thus opened out; but an officer, with tact and conciliatory manners, would not be long before he had persuaded the ruler of the province of Kandahar of the advantages such an extension of our railway system would be to him and his people. Once the railway approached Afghanistan, its civilising influence would be felt all through the country, and instead of finding the bazaars in Kabul and Kandahar dealing chiefly in Russian articles, English goods, and eventually English traders, would find their way into the country, while the very tribesmen, who would harass our line of communication were we to make any onward movement now, would, with an advancing railway, be found handling the spade and the pick in preference to the uncertain livelihood to be obtained by the matchlock alone.

Should this policy be successful, we could view with comparative equanimity the consolidation of Russia's power north of Afghanistan.

The answer to the question "Is an invasion of India by Russia possible?" would seem then to depend entirely on our relations with Afghanistan. If our influence is paramount there, it would be an impossibility—with Russian influence supreme, a probability. Any able, ambitious commander, acquainted with Asiatics, would be only too glad to have the chance of undertaking such an enterprise.

It now behoves England to consider what are the measures she ought to adopt—

- (1.) With Afghanistan on her side.
- (2.) With Afghanistan against her.

Under the first supposition, no time should be lost in defining the northern boundary of Afghanistan. It should run from the Tajand river near Sarakhs, to Panjdeh, and thence to Khwaja Salar, or any other point that will include all the cultivable portion of the Afghan Khanates. Russia cannot justly claim any voice in the settlement of this boundary,† for, according to their own official statement, her frontier now ends at Babadarma, west of Deragez. She should be made clearly to understand that she will not be permitted to interfere with Afghanistan, and that any encroachment on the northern boundary of that country would be a *casus belli* with England. Further, it is necessary that England should have reliable information of Russia's movements, so that she may get the earliest possible intelligence of any intended advance. To secure this, British officers should be located at Meshed on the Persian, and, as soon as possible, at Herat on the Afghan frontier; the approaches to Chitral and Kashmir should be carefully watched; our position at Quetta should be strengthened, and that outpost should be brought into communication with the railway system of India, so that, in the event of Russia making any onward movement, and thus threatening Herat, we could rapidly re-occupy Kandahar, and complete the line of rail between that place and Quetta. How long we may retain command of the situation, it is impossible to say. Russia may at any moment declare that political exigencies require her to annex Merv‡ and the Turcoman colonies on the Murghab. This would

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\* The railway to Quetta and Pishin was pushed on soon after this was written; and sufficient material to extend the line to Kandahar was stored at the Chaman terminus a few years later. B.

10th September, 1897.

† The boundary between Russia and Afghanistan was defined soon after this was written. B.

10th September, 1897.

‡ Merv was annexed soon after this was written. B.

10th September, 1897.

practically give her possession of Sarakhs—a far more important place than Merv, in a military sense. Once at Sarakhs, a Russian general would have no difficulty in precipitating matters, and seizing Herat by a *coup de main*. As M. Terentyeff says in “Russia and England in Central Asia”—“Russian subjects are killed, and retaliation is unavoidable.” Anyone who studies the map must fully realise the value of the position Russia is so rapidly gaining. It is not necessary to be told by the late General Skobelev of the “immense importance of a *place d’armes* at the gate of Herat and Afghanistan, at a given period in history.” It is but too apparent.

The question as to what line of action, besides the re-occupation of Kandahar and the completion of the railway to that place, we might find it necessary to take in the event of Russian forces moving across the borders of Afghanistan, is one that cannot be decided beforehand, and must necessarily, like all operations of war, depend upon circumstances. If the integrity of our allies’ dominions were threatened, there is more than one way in which effectual aid could be afforded them. It might be advisable to occupy Afghanistan, or a portion of it, for a time, or it might suffice to supply the Afghans with money, arms, and ammunition, and to send some enterprising officers (both British and Native) to assist their troops. With Afghanistan on our side our task would be an easy one, while that of Russia would be correspondingly difficult.

Before proceeding to inquire what would be the best course for us to pursue under the second supposition (with Afghanistan against us), we must consider—

1st.—In what way our loss of Afghanistan as an ally would benefit Russia?

2nd.—What line of advance would Russia most likely adopt, were an invasion of India determined upon?

3rd.—What would be the probable strength of the forces Russia could bring against us?

With regard to the first point, it seems tolerably certain that if Afghanistan should refuse our overtures, it will be because she has come to an understanding with Russia. Such an understanding would doubtless mean permission for Russian troops to pass through Afghanistan, and to draw on the supplies of the country, co-operation on the part of some or all the principal people; and sanction for Russian officers to go to Kabul, Ghazni, and Kandahar, from which centres they would be free to send their emissaries amongst the frontier tribes, and from whence their secret agents could be encouraged to carry on their work in India. The permission to advance through Afghanistan, and draw on the supplies of that country unmolested, would be a factor of such vital importance to a commander bent on the invasion of India, that without doubt the Russian authorities would make great concessions, and still greater promises, to attain it. The restoration of the old Afghan territory, stretching from Peshawar to Lahore as it did in the reign of Ahmed Shah in 1762, would most likely be the promised reward—an arrangement as profitable to the Afghan exchequer as it would be gratifying to Afghan vanity; and no difficulty would be found in forming a large column of warlike and adventurous spirits to take part in an enterprise offering such a dazzling and attractive prospect.

With reference to the line of advance it would be most advantageous for Russia\* to adopt, we must suppose that she is in possession of the fertile valley of the Hari Rud

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\* Russia’s position in Central Asia is so completely altered since this was written, that it seems likely her main army would make for Kabul and not Kandahar, after she had consolidated her power in Afghan-Turkestan.

and of Herat itself, for, if Afghanistan is with her, this could not be prevented. Simultaneously with the occupation of Herat, a second, though much smaller and more lightly equipped column, would in all probability, proceed from Bokhara and Samarkand in the direction of Balkh and Kabul.

Balkh is about 370 miles from Herat.	
270	" " Bokhara.
300	" " Samarkand.
357	" " Kabul.

Sir Henry Norman has stated that "if Russia really intends to injure us in India, which, of course, would involve war in Europe, my impression is, that she is at least as likely to make an advance from the direction of Tashkend towards Afghan Turkestan and Kabul, as to move forward by Herat." This conclusion is not borne out by history. With the exception of Baber, who came *via* Balkh and Kabul, all the great conquerors from the north have invaded India by Herat and Kandahar.

The distance from Tashkend to Kabul is as follows :—

	Miles.
Tashkend to Samarkand .. .. .	184
Samarkand to Balkh .. .. .	300
Balkh to Kabul .. .. .	357
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About ..	841
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Little is known of the route which Sir Henry Norman thinks Russia is likely to take, except that between Tashkend and Samarkand the road is reported to be good, and to pass through a fertile and well-watered country. For the next 130 or 140 miles, as far as Karshi, there is said to be cultivation, but onwards to the Oxus, upwards of 150 miles, a sandy desert has to be traversed. Between Balkh and Kabul the road is extremely difficult for the greater part of the way, and the passes over the Hindu Kush are closed for many months in the year, according to the severity of the season; forage for camels and horses is scarce, and supplies are only procurable in small quantities and at few places. Owing to the difficult nature of the route, the idea of an invasion by Balkh may be dismissed as out of the question, although, as suggested above, it would probably be used by a small auxiliary force for the purpose of gaining rapid possession of Kabul. Up to that place a Russian Commander would not hesitate to advance, for once at Kabul, his influence would be felt all along our border; but he would scarcely venture to make any further movement, until he had joined hands with the main army, which, it seems tolerably certain, would take the Herat-Kandahar line. Hence the reason for Kandahar being to us a point of the very greatest strategical importance.

To the east of Balkh there are other routes leading towards India *via* Chitral, Kashmir, and Ladak; these, however, present too serious difficulties to be attempted by an army provided with a siege train, such as would be required for the invasion of India. They might, nevertheless, be made use of by officers, and possibly small bodies of troops, in order to gain a footing in Kashmir, which, from its position on the flank of the Punjab, would be of incalculable advantage to an invader.

From the foregoing, it may be concluded that the main body of an army destined for the invasion of India would certainly advance by Herat and Kandahar. Between these places there are two routes; the northern, leading direct through Girishk, is 369 miles in length; the southern, which passes through Farah and Sabzawar before

reaching Girishk, is longer by 31 miles. We know, from the recent passage of Ayub Khan's army, that the latter route is easy for guns, and that supplies, forage, and water are procurable.

Once at Kandahar, a great authority (Sir Edward Hamley) has stated his belief, that while Peshawar and other posts of our north-west frontier would be threatened by a Russo-Afghan army from Kandahar, *viâ* Ghazni and Kabul, the main body would continue its advance *viâ* Quetta and the Bolan pass. Sir Edward Hamley gives weighty reasons for his opinion—much the same reasons, indeed, that will be urged later on for the adoption of this line by us as one of defence. Whilst hesitating to differ with one who has so carefully studied the "Art of War," I must point out three very important reasons, which would seem to militate against the adoption of the Bolan route by an invading army:—

- 1st.—Strategically and politically it is the line which would be the easiest for us to defend.
- 2nd.—It enters upon a poor and unimportant country, the occupation of which would be of little value, and which would not form a convenient base of operations. It is true that Karachi would place the invading army in direct communication with the sea; but so long as England maintains her naval supremacy, Karachi or its neighbourhood would be the last place at which the Commander of such a force would like to find himself.
- 3rd.—It is the furthest point from the several passes leading from Afghanistan to the Punjab, which province it would be the object of the invader to seize first. By doing so, he would have at his disposal the resources of a well-cultivated country; he might reckon on the assistance of the many warlike tribes inhabiting the passes leading to the Punjab; he would be at the greatest distance from any reinforcements we could receive from England; and, if successful, he would probably attract to his standard the Sikhs, Dogras, and Punjabi Mahomedans, by far the bravest of all the races in India.

From Kandahar, it would, therefore, appear most likely that the main army would move towards Ghazni and Kabul, and from these places make its descent upon the plains of India.

It is not easy to form any conclusion as to the strength of the force which Russia could bring into the field in the neighbourhood of Herat and Balkh, for this would depend, not so much on the number of men available, as on the amount of transport that could be collected, and we have no accurate data by which this can be estimated. From the direction of Turkestan, reliable authorities agree that an army of about 25,000 to 30,000 men, with some 30 guns, could be despatched towards Afghanistan. From Russia itself, and from the army of the Caucasus, a practically unlimited number of men could be sent; but unless their supply of transport animals is greater than that at our disposal in India, it seems probable that Russia would not be able to actually mobilize at Herat more than about 70,000 men, with perhaps 150 guns. This would give her, say, 100,000 men and 180 guns, with which to begin the campaign—a force formidable enough, and with the power to replace casualties from the almost inexhaustible army of the Caucasus.\* Hundreds of Turkoman light horse (as fervent

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\* It may be urged that if we were at war with Russia, some ally might possibly find European employment for a large portion of the army of the Caucasus, but is it altogether certain that we should have an ally? The affair might be one between Russia and England alone, brought about on account of Russian interference with Afghanistan. Moreover, is it wise to depend on allies?

allies of the Russians now, as they were brave enemies 3 years ago), and large hordes of Persian irregulars, armed with modern breech-loaders, and trained by European officers, would doubtless accompany the advancing Russian columns in the hope of plunder. These would prove valuable auxiliaries, either for the protection of the Russian lines of communication, or for the purpose of harassing ours; while, as we have shown above, little difficulty would be experienced in getting any number of volunteers from Afghanistan to join this apparently overwhelming array.

From the foregoing sketch of the advantages to Russia which an Afghan alliance would carry with it, the inevitable conclusion must be that with Afghanistan against us, our position in India would be, to say the least, extremely critical. We must be prepared in this case for an expenditure of life and money, such as we have never yet experienced in India, for we shall have to face the probability of an invasion, and the certainty of constant disturbances and scares on our frontier, and within our own territory.

I have shown the dangers to British interests which would arise from a Russo-Afghan alliance; I have discussed the routes by which Russia would, in all probability, advance to invade India, and I have stated what it is believed would be the approximate strength of the forces Russia could bring against us. We are now in a position to consider what measures should be taken under the second supposition, *viz.*, with Afghanistan against us. In such a case, we should be altogether in the dark as to what might be taking place in and beyond that country, and the first thing we should hear would most likely be, that Russian officers were at Kabul and Kandahar, and that a Russian commander was mobilizing an army at, or near, Herat. We should now endeavour to determine at what point, on or beyond our frontier, we could most successfully oppose such an army with the force we might hope to have at our disposal.

It is certain that, in the event of hostilities with Russia, heavy demands would be made on England's small army. Egypt would have to be occupied in strength, to prevent any obstruction in the Suez Canal; while Russian intrigues would doubtless contrive to involve us in complications elsewhere. We must not, therefore, calculate on receiving reinforcements, to any very great extent, from the mother country, but she must be prepared to assist to the utmost of her power, for the strength of the army that could be raised in India,\* having due regard to the proper proportion of Europeans and Natives, would not admit of it sustaining such a strain as the war we are now contemplating would entail. The actual amount of the force that could be put into the field would depend upon a variety of circumstances; but, looking to the undesirability of raising more than a certain number of Native troops, to the difficulty about transport, and to the necessity of holding all the strategically and politically important places throughout India in considerable strength, I calculate that about 40,000 men, with 130 or 140 guns, are all that would be available.†

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\* The Army in India has been increased since this was written, and, considering the altered position of Russia in Asia, a still further increase, especially of British soldiers, would be required to enable us to meet the Russians on anything like even terms in Afghanistan.

10th September, 1897.

R.

† In the former part of this paper reference has been made to "the compact, highly-equipped and disciplined army," on which full reliance is to be placed. It must not be forgotten, when shaping our policy, that the Native portion of that army is composed entirely of mercenaries. Pay them well, and be successful, and they may generally be depended upon; but we cannot, and dare not, hide from ourselves the possibility of wholesale desertions, if not of actual treachery, amongst our Native troops, should events occur to test their loyalty too severely. It is not a pleasant task, nor an easy one, to point to this regiment or the other as being unfit for any particular service. It is, however, of the utmost importance that the capabilities of the soldiers we depend upon to fight our battles should be accurately gauged, and nothing could be more dangerous than that we should be under the impression that the whole of our Indian army could be relied

The numerical weakness of such a force, even if it were composed of the very best material, and augmented by such troops as England could spare, would, in my opinion, necessitate the sphere of its operations being confined to a single line, in order that its strength might not be frittered away in detached columns. That line should be the one which presents the least difficulties in a political and physical sense;\* it should require the minimum number of men to hold it, and should admit of the maximum number of men being concentrated at its extreme point, whence we could take the offensive, and strike a blow with our fullest strength, as soon as the opportunity for action arrives.

The different passes leading from Afghanistan to India are now so well known that there ought to be no difficulty in deciding which line would be most suitable for our purpose. We have four to choose between, *viz.*, the Khyber, the Kuram, the Ghoilari, and the Bolan. Of these, the Bolan, leading through Baluchistan to Kandahar, undoubtedly offers the advantages we are in search of; the other three present difficulties which would be almost insurmountable. During the late war, it took 25,000 men to keep open the communications on the Khyber line between Peshawar and Kabul, and to hold the latter place; a much larger force would have been required, if the tribesmen had had the advantage of being assisted by a few enterprising European officers to keep them together, and organize their raids. The same argument applies equally to the Kuram and Ghoilari routes. In each, as in the Khyber, the road lies through very difficult country, peopled by tribes as fanatical as they are numerous and warlike, and whose assistance would be the greatest possible help to an invading army. Kandahar is evidently then the goal which we should make for. It can be reached with comparative ease, safety, and rapidity, and fewer men would be required to maintain communication between it and India, thus leaving the greater portion of our force free to act on the offensive.

The strategical value of Kandahar has already been pointed out; it has the additional advantages that it can be connected by rail with the rising seaport of Karachi and the main railway system of India; the tribes which inhabit the

upon in any war in which England may be engaged. No one can appreciate the many good qualities of Native soldiers more than I do. I have studied them carefully. I have been with them under various circumstances, and I would go anywhere with those in whom I believe. But I should be extremely sorry to find myself in command of an army, beyond the limits of India, taken promiscuously from the three Presidencies. When the sepoys of the old army had only to fight against an enemy of much the same calibre as themselves, they could be relied upon fairly well, assisted (as they *then* were) by a large number of British officers and serjeants. On many occasions, indeed, they distinguished themselves greatly, but when they came into collision with the hardier races of the North, it was evident that they were overmatched. It is not a question of efficiency, but of courage, physique, and military instinct; in these three essentials the sepoys of Southern India are wanting. Fortunately, there are in the Native Army some troops, whose fitness for war is unquestionable, and of whose loyalty I would have no sort of doubt, so long as they see that we are confident in ourselves and do not intend, under any circumstances, to suffer any foreign nation to become all-powerful in Afghanistan. It must not be supposed from all this that I would advocate any permanent increase to the number of regiments composed of the more warlike spirits to be found in Upper India, or that I desire any reduction to be made, at present, in the ranks of the less martial material, out of which our more southern corps are formed. Such changes would be impolitic, and, moreover, if sufficient time is given, we should probably be able to increase the numbers of the best fighting regiments to any extent that might be deemed safe or desirable; Goorkhas excepted, as it would take 1 or 2 years at least to raise a regiment of them. Our several armies are each useful in their different ways, and will prove valuable instruments in our hands, or the reverse, according to the way we make use of them. Madras sepoys would make excellent pioneers, and, with their comrades from Bombay and Lower Bengal, might advantageously be employed on such work, or at the base of operations, and in suitable positions on the lines of communication; but it would not, in my opinion, be safe to trust them in the van, which should be composed exclusively of Europeans and picked Native regiments.

\* The altered position of Russia since this was written necessitates a change in our plans, and as remarked before, Kabul, not Kandahar, is the most important place in Afghanistan. We should need to occupy both, and to hold the line Kabul—Ghazni—Kandahar.

country between it and the Indus are nothing like so warlike nor so fanatical as those along the Khyber, Kuram, and other routes, while the country itself presents infinitely less physical difficulties. It completely separates Western Afghanistan from Kabul proper, and effectually commands the road from Herat to Kabul and India. There, our troops could be massed to meet the invaders coming from Herat; while, should the Russian commander decide on moving by the far more difficult route, *via* Balkh, he would do so with the disquieting knowledge that a hostile force was directly on his flank, and that his onward progress from Kabul would be attended with great risk, until he had disposed of it. The country round Kandahar itself is more open, and is consequently better adapted for military operations than the neighbourhood of Kabul or Ghazni. The resources of the valley of the Arghandab alone are sufficient to maintain a large force, and, with good management, supplies would be readily procurable from Seistan and other neighbouring districts.

It would doubtless be necessary to hold certain points at or near Kandahar\* ; *but under no circumstances should we be persuaded to send an army beyond Kandahar*, except for the purpose of fighting a battle, and dealing the enemy a crushing blow on ground which we could previously select.

*An advance to Herat is now altogether out of the question.* With Afghanistan friendly to us, such a measure should be unnecessary; with Afghanistan against us it would be unadvisable. Under the last-named condition, we could not reach Herat before the Russians, and its distance from India would necessitate the employment of a force infinitely larger than we could hope to mobilize.

To facilitate the movement of our army towards Kandahar, the following measures should at once be taken:—

The proposed bridge over the Indus at Sukkur should be constructed; the railway should be completed to Quetta and Pishin, and sufficient materials stored at these places to admit of the line being pushed on to Kandahar at short notice.† This would enable us to forward supplies and reinforcements with the greatest rapidity, and with the least expense, and would leave our transport animals available for any force which might eventually have to take the field.

It will be seen from what has been already stated, that, in my opinion, we should confine our offensive operations to striking vigorously on the Kandahar side, and only act on the defensive on our North-West frontier. The proposals, however, which have at times been made to block the eastern issues of the Khyber and other passes leading to India, do not commend themselves to me. The garrison of Peshawar is, at certain seasons of the year, so sickly that it is with difficulty the ordinary guards can be relieved; and Jamrud, a small fort built by the Sikhs at the mouth of the Khyber, about 11 miles from Peshawar, has had to be abandoned more than once on account of its unhealthiness. Moreover, the water-supply at Jamrud can be cut off at any moment by the Afridis, and the Sikhs, who endeavoured to obtain water inside the fort, failed to tap it after boring 180 feet. Besides these objections, a fort placed at the main issue of the Khyber can be turned, and the same may be said of the Ghoilari

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\* Our position is so very different now to what it was when this paper was written, 6 years ago, and it seems to me of such vital importance that the Russians should not be allowed to approach nearer to India than they are at present, that I would not hesitate to send an army beyond Kandahar, even to Herat, if necessary, to turn the Russians out of Afghanistan. At the same time my opinion still is that it would be unadvisable for us to make any permanent advance beyond Kandahar and the line of the Hindu Kush.

*8th January, 1890.*

F. R.

† These proposals have been carried out.

*10th September, 1897.*

B.



and Kuram passes. For these reasons, moveable columns, composed of troops brought up from the many healthy stations cis-Indus, would, I believe, defend the issues of the Khyber, Kuram, and Ghoilari passes, far more effectually than sickly garrisons in entrenched camps. To enable these troops to proceed expeditiously in the direction of Kohat, Bunnu, Dera Ismail Khan, &c., roads should be made from Khushalgarh and Mooltan towards these places; and, above all, a good military road should be constructed along the Deraját frontier.

It does not enter into the scope of this paper to discuss the precautions necessary to be taken in India itself, to meet the possibility of disturbances in our midst, while our main army would be fighting for our very existence in the East, at distant Kandahar, or on the southern slopes of the Hindu Kush. The subject is, nevertheless, one of the greatest importance. Our military railway system is far from perfect; our fortifications are in a state of neglect; our arsenals and magazines are insufficiently protected; and our forts are practically undefended. Railways and roads are grand civilisers, and nothing would strengthen our frontier so much as a judicious expenditure of money on such works. The necessity of keeping our fortifications in an efficient state, and of affording adequate protection to our arsenals, magazines, and ports, should not require to be brought to notice. In all important stations, where they do not already exist, and, in out-of-the-way places from which the residents could not quickly make their escape, entrenchments, or places of refuge should be constructed, in which the non-combatants, &c., could be sheltered until succour arrived.

Russian officers are free to traverse India, and, doubtless, furnish full information to their Government as to all our weak points. Of the strength and resources of the Russian armies in Central Asia we know literally nothing, and we are dependent upon such news as the Amir of Kabul may think fit to let us receive, as to the movements of the Russians, and as to his own relations with them. If such a state of affairs is allowed to continue, we shall find ourselves negotiating, or fighting at a distinct disadvantage. British officers should be encouraged to spend their leave in travelling throughout the Russian possessions in Central Asia, and our Government should endeavour to obtain for them the like freedom which we accord to Russian military men. If we decide on continuing our present relations with the Amir of Kabul, we should come to a clear understanding with him, that we must have correct and early information of all that passes in and on the frontier of Afghanistan; and we should have some guarantee that the money now to be paid to him annually will not be expended (as the subsidy we gave Sher Ali was) in maintaining an army and in manufacturing munitions of war to be used against us. It is time for us to throw off the feeling of confident security in which we seem to be living, and to realise the fact that an ambitious Power, confident in the might of her two millions of armed men, is approaching nearer and nearer to our borders, gathering strength with every onward movement.

No nation loses by being decided and independent. Over and over again England has been saved from war by showing a bold front, and by letting other countries see that she was fully prepared to assert her rights and defend her possessions, while, on the other hand, she has ere now drifted into war through a vacillating and shrinking policy.

“Si vis pacem para bellum.”

FRED. ROBERTS.

## III.

MINUTE ON THE MILITARY PRECAUTIONS TO BE ADOPTED IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY  
IN THE EVENT OF A WAR WITH A EUROPEAN POWER, MORE ESPECIALLY WITH  
FRANCE.

OOTACAMUND,  
28th April, 1885.

As it does not seem improbable, from the recent Cairo telegrams, that our somewhat strained relations with France may result in war, it appears desirable to consider what military precautions should be taken in this Presidency to meet the possibility of an attempt on the part of the French to land troops at any point on this Peninsula.

2. The three French Settlements—Mahé on the West, Karikal on the South, and Pondicherry on the East Coast—would, no doubt, be the primary objectives. The first is a small fishing village, which could be occupied in a few hours, and held securely, by a small detachment of troops from Cannanore. Karikal could be similarly occupied by troops from Trichinopoly.

3. Pondicherry has no military importance at present, but, being the seat of the French Government in Southern India, its occupation by French troops would have an extremely bad political effect. The French, no doubt, would hasten to throw troops into it, but I hope that we should be beforehand with them; and I would propose that immediately war was declared between France and England, we should send a British force to hold Pondicherry. We could, no doubt, take the place after French troops had landed, but it is very desirable that it should be occupied without bloodshed.

4. Supposing that no French troops had landed, a force of the strength as per margin\* would, in my opinion, be sufficient to maintain order in Pondicherry and to prevent either a French force from landing there or hostile war vessels from coaling.

5. The conduct of this operation might be entrusted to Brigadier-General A. Johnson, who could return to Madras so soon as matters had been settled at Pondicherry, where a specially selected officer could be appointed by Government to succeed him.

6. I have purposely detailed the troops from stations away from the coast, as I think it very desirable that the garrison of Madras itself should remain intact, in order that sufficient troops may be available to admit of a moveable column being formed, which could be rapidly moved to any point on the coast where its presence might be necessary.

7. I would propose that this column should consist of—

One Field Battery.  
Half battalion British Infantry.  
One and a-half battalions Madras Infantry.  
One squadron native Cavalry (from Bangalore).

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\* One battery Field Artillery from Bangalore; half battalion British Infantry from Bangalore or Bellary, if the British Infantry battalion lately removed from Bangalore be not replaced in time; one regiment Madras Infantry from Bangalore; one regiment Madras Infantry from Trichinopoly.

8. The Volunteers could be utilised to assist the detachment of British Infantry and battery of Royal Artillery left in the Fort, and one and a-half battalions of Madras Infantry would be available for duty in and about Madras itself. Should more troops be required, Artillery could be brought from Bangalore, and a battalion of Madras Infantry from Bellary.

9. As it is, of course, not impossible that the French might attempt to land simultaneously at other places besides Pondicherry, such as Beyypore, Tuticorin, Negapatam, &c., it seems desirable to form a moveable column at Trichinopoly, where it would be well placed. It should consist of a battery of Field Artillery, a wing of British Infantry, and a squadron of Native Cavalry from Bellary, which, with the regiment of Madras Infantry already at Trichinopoly, would suffice.

10. It is very desirable that Fort St. George should be made as strong as possible, and, at the same time, rendered capable of being defended by a limited number of men. With this view, I have already recommended that the outworks should be demolished. I would now again urge that this should be done without delay.

11. The armament finally decided upon for Fort St. George is only intended for the enceinte, and the outworks interfere with the proper working of some of the guns. The enceinte alone would require a considerable number of men to defend it, and if the outworks have also to be manned, not only must this number be materially increased, but several more guns must be added to the armament.

12. I have already addressed the Government on the advisability of removing the arsenal now in Fort St. George somewhere inland. Arconum would be the most central place; but as there is no fortified position there, I have suggested Vellore as a convenient locality. It is only 80 miles from the Presidency Town, with which it is connected by the Madras Railway. It would necessarily take some time before permanent accommodation could be provided for the arsenal and for the guard, which should not consist of less than two companies of British Infantry; but temporary shelter might perhaps be found for the troops and for such portion of the stores as it might be desirable to move at once from Fort St. George. However inconvenient it might be to make the change hurriedly, I would strongly advise this being done, if possible, before we find ourselves at war with one or more European powers.

13. A cruiser armed with long-reaching guns could destroy the arsenal in Fort St. George without much danger to herself from the two batteries recently constructed on the beach, the extreme effective range of which is under 5,000 yards.

14. During the war between Chili and Peru in 1879-80, the Chilian Government purchased in Europe a swift merchant steamer, the "Angamos," armed with one long-range heavy gun, an 8-inch breech-loading Armstrong, 11½ tons, 18 feet 4 inches long. On the 29th February, 1880, the "Angamos," escorted by the turret ship "Huascar," appeared off Arica and opened fire at a range of 8,000 yards. She bombarded the town for 6 days and fired over 100 projectiles without the slightest injury to herself or the gun. Some of the shells which did not burst ricocheted a mile inland. To show the accuracy with which firing was maintained at this extraordinary range, I may add that, on a subsequent occasion, when the "Angamos" attempted to destroy the Peruvian corvette "Union" in the port of Callao, firing from 20 to 25 shells a day, the people of the place became so accustomed to this daily target practice that crowds would assemble about 300 yards on each side of the corvette, to watch the effect of the shells. The Peruvian forts were quite unable to reply to the fire of the "Angamos."

15. It is to be hoped that our naval arrangements would be such as to prevent so

serious a calamity as the bombardment of an important place like Madras; but it is quite possible that, at the commencement of any war in which we may be engaged, hostile cruisers might inflict considerable damage on our ports and commerce in consequence of our Navy being, at the outset, unable to meet the many demands that would be made upon it.

16. When it is remembered that the whole of the reserve ammunition for the troops of this Presidency is now in Fort St. George, I feel sure the Government will agree with me that it is advisable to take such timely precautions as prudence suggests to remove all anxiety for the safety of the main arsenal in Southern India.

17. St. Thomas' Mount is quite unprotected, and as it seemed unwise to leave the second line of wagons belonging to the batteries at Bangalore, which had been placed there for want of accommodation in Fort St. George, it has been arranged to send them to Bellary. A commencement has been made, and the work should be pushed on, as it is very undesirable that any ordnance stores should be left in so defenceless a position.

18. The main powder magazine at St. Thomas' Mount must remain there for the present, as no other place exists where such a large quantity of powder\* could be stored.

19. Gunpowder is a difficult thing to deal with. It must necessarily be in some isolated position, and unless a suitable site for the main magazine could be found somewhere in the neighbourhood of Vellore, it would, perhaps, be better still to leave it where it is.

20. The loss of so much powder would be serious. Still, beyond injury to some of the houses in the cantonment and bazaar of St. Thomas' Mount, no other damage would probably be done if the magazine were to be blown up.

21. The powder factory, which is in the heart of Madras itself, is a far more important place, and is not, in my opinion, sufficiently well protected. I would recommend that a committee of experienced officers should be assembled at once to report upon its defences, and that the Government of India be solicited to sanction the expenditure of such a sum of money as may be required to make the factory perfectly safe.

22. In order to limit our responsibilities as much as possible inland, I would advise that the ordnance magazine now at Secunderabad be removed to Bellary, and that all ordnance stores be taken away from the old fort at Bangalore. The ammunition is being placed in the newly-constructed entrenchment at Agram, and when the stores have been got rid of, there will be no occasion for the two guards now in the Bangalore fort.

23. These guards are too weak to be detached to a distance of nearly 3 miles from the cantonment. The Trimulgherry entrenchment, in which the Secunderabad ordnance magazine is located, is commanded on all sides, and is certainly not the place in which any large quantity of ammunition or ordnance stores should be kept. The old fort at Bellary affords all the security that could be desired, and I would advise that the magazine now at Secunderabad be removed there without delay. If these proposals are approved of, all the ordnance stores would be collected at Vellore and Bellary.

24. If the foregoing suggestions are accepted, we should be ready to meet any attempt on the part of a European enemy to land troops on our coasts. I need not,

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\* 3,469 barrels containing 367,386 lbs. of powder.

however, point out how very desirable it is that any such attempt should be made impossible by our having a sufficient number of heavily-armed fast-steaming cruisers to guard our seaboard.

25. A few steamers of the type of the "Angamos" would do this effectually, and I would urge the Government to press upon the Government of India the necessity of such vessels being provided in good time, and thus avert the bad political effect that would undoubtedly be produced throughout the whole of the Empire if the natives of India became aware that European troops, other than British, had obtained a footing, even for a short time, on these shores.

26. In this memorandum I have omitted all mention of Burma, as I understand that the question of the defence of that province is being considered by the Government of India in direct communication with the Local Government. I may, however, mention that if we should unfortunately find ourselves at war with France, I would at once strengthen the garrison of British Burma by one British and two regiments of Native Infantry. French emissaries would scarcely fail to take advantage of our being engaged in the North-West Frontier of India, and disturbances might be instigated from Mandalay with which the normal garrison of British Burma might not be able to cope.

27. To give effect to these proposals no increase to the normal garrison of the Madras Presidency would be required.

28. The troops marginally named,\* and which have been told off for service on the North-West Frontier of India, would still be available for that duty; but the five battalions of Infantry,† which have also been warned for service, would have to be replaced.

29. One (the Kamptee battalion) would be available for Burma, and the other four battalions would be required at Pondicherry, Trichinopoly, or at other places as occasion might require.

30. The two additional Native Infantry regiments for Burma might be taken from Secunderabad and Kamptee.

31. Should there be no war with France, we might view without anxiety a considerable temporary decrease in the number of British troops usually located in this Presidency.

32. A war with Russia alone would entail certain risks being run throughout India; but I believe that so long as we are acting boldly and *successfully* on the North-West Frontier, we may depend thoroughly on the loyal feeling which now in such a remarkable and perhaps unexpected manner pervades the whole of India.

33. If my view of the situation is a correct one, I think we might be satisfied if two out of the five battalions of British Infantry now warned for service were replaced by fresh regiments from home, to be stationed, one at Cannanore and the other at Secunderabad.

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\* "E" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery; "Q" 1st Battery, Royal Horse Artillery; 12th Royal Lancers; Three Companies Queen's Own Sappers and Miners; 1st Regiment, Madras Infantry; 23rd Regiment, Madras Infantry; 24th Regiment, Madras Infantry.

† The Royal Fusiliers from Cannanore; The Oxfordshire Light Infantry from Bangalore; The Hampshire Regiment from Secunderabad; The Middlesex Regiment from Secunderabad; The Munster Fusiliers from Kamptee.

34. The latter station might be further strengthened by half a battalion of British Infantry from Bellary, which place would be securely garrisoned by the remaining half battalion.

35. Kamptee and Bangalore could do very well for a time without British Infantry.

FRED. ROBERTS.

(True copies.)

(Sd.) KENNEY-HERBERT, *Lieut.-Colonel,*  
*Officiating-Secretary to Government.*

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*From Lieut.-Colonel A. Kenney-Herbert, Officiating Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, Military Department, to Colonel G. Chesney, Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department—dated Ootacamund, 6th May, 1885, No. 2398.*

I am directed to forward, for the consideration of the Right Honourable the Governor-General in Council, copy of a Minute by his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, Madras Army, dated 28th April, 1885, detailing the military precautions to be adopted in the Madras Presidency in the event of a war with a European Power, more especially *with France*, and to state that his Excellency the Governor in Council agrees to all the proposals made by Sir Frederick Roberts, with the exception of that regarding the outworks of Fort St. George, the demolition\* of which would be a long and costly undertaking, while the time and money so used could be better employed in carrying into effect rapidly his Excellency's other proposals, on the completion of which the question of the outworks of Fort St. George might be taken up.

2. I am to invite the special attention of his Excellency the Viceroy in Council to the Commander-in-Chief's remarks in paragraphs 13 to 19, 24 and 25, and to say that the Government of Madras would urge upon his Lordship the grave necessity for some arrangement with the naval authorities for the protection of the seaboard of this Presidency, and the safety of the port of Madras.

3. With reference to paragraphs 12 and 21, I am to mention that this Government have already ordered committees of experienced officers to assemble to consider the question of transferring the military stores, now kept in the Fort St. George arsenal, to Vellore, and of deciding on a system of defence for the Gunpowder Factory, Madras.

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\* Sanctioned in paragraph 2 of Military Department letter, No. 633 M. W. (*Defences—Fortis*), dated 7th September, 1883.

## IV.

## WHAT ARE RUSSIA'S VULNERABLE POINTS? AND HOW HAVE RECENT EVENTS AFFECTED OUR FRONTIER POLICY IN INDIA?

HEAD-QUARTERS, MADRAS ARMY,

22nd May, 1885.

Should we find that a settlement of our present difficulties with Russia is impossible without an appeal to arms, it seems desirable to consider—

- (1.) Has Russia any vulnerable points? if she has, where are they?
- (2.) How could these vulnerable points best be reached?
- (3.) What changes are necessary in our Frontier policy in India, consequent on the recent advance of the Russian troops to the borders of Afghanistan?

In considering these questions, we are confronted at the outset with the difficulty that England would have, if she hoped to bring any pressure to bear on Russia by land. Russia is exposed along her frontiers to possible hostilities on the part of Germany, Austria, or Turkey, but in a war with England alone, she would enjoy almost as great immunity from attack as we do ourselves in our sea-girt isle.

We can of course blockade her ports, but now that the Continent of Europe is a vast network of railways, blockading, though inconvenient, causes but little injury. We can take her ships, ruin her sea trade, and give her considerable trouble in the Baltic, Pacific, and other seas, but there is no part of Russia on which an English army could be placed without its having to pass, either by sea or land, through territory belonging to some other Power. It is impossible, therefore, for us to attack Russia without forming an alliance with the Power through whose country we should have to pass, or being prepared to force our way through that country should she prove hostile. The Baltic Sea, though it is not a *mare clausum*, is no exception, for I think it will be generally admitted that it would be out of the question for an English army to attempt a landing anywhere on the shores of that sea, unless we had the Germans as our allies.

Russia's most vulnerable point is undoubtedly the littoral of the Black Sea, but to get into the Black Sea and effect a landing, it is essential that Turkey should be on our side. I have always hoped that this would be the case, and that even if England had no other allies, she would be able to depend upon the Turks in the event of a war with Russia. I am, however, advised by one who has had the best means of forming a correct opinion on this very important subject, that it is extremely unlikely England would now enter into an alliance with the Porte on account of the serious responsibilities which such an alliance would entail. English war vessels could no doubt force their way through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, but the defences of the former are very different now to what they were in 1807, when the fleet, under Admiral Sir John Duckworth, entered the Sea of Marmora; and if our ships of war could not reach the Black Sea without being seriously crippled, what would be the fate of the many transports which must necessarily follow them? How could supplies and forage be procured with Turkey, as well as Russia, against us? And how could we reinforce our army to enable it to cope with the vast number of troops that would

be rapidly moved to the coast from the heart of Russia itself? Everything indeed would seem to depend on our relations with Turkey. If we cannot form an offensive and defensive alliance with her, it appears to me that we must give up all hope of being able to operate against Russia in the Black Sea. Even with Turkey as our ally, it must be remembered that an English fleet in the Black Sea would be powerless to prevent Russian troops being moved to Odessa, Perikop, the Crimea, or any other of the ports on its northern shores; and though it might delay, it could not prevent troops being transported by land to Poti and Batum on the southern coast, or to the Caucasian provinces.

So long as Russia's operations are confined to Asia, and there is no wish on her part to interfere with the Danubian Principalities, we must not calculate on receiving any assistance from the two great Central States of Europe, whose susceptibilities and jealousy would not be in any way excited by Russia's movements in the East. Turkey is the only Power such movements would affect, and, from a military point of view, it must be considered a grave misfortune that her position in Europe should have become so precarious as to preclude the possibility of our entering into an alliance with her.

We could no doubt check Russia's progress for a time, and injure her to a certain extent, if we sent a force against her through Afghanistan, but this route, like all the other routes open to us, is attended by difficulties infinitely greater than is that *viâ* the Black Sea, and it is in this latter direction alone that we could deal Russia an affective blow. That this statement is correct will, I think, be apparent if we consider all the possible routes between the Black Sea and Afghanistan by which a British army could advance against the Russians.

The first route to consider has the Mediterranean for a base. It would start from the Gulf of Iskanderun, and take the shortest line towards the Russian possessions in Asia Minor, passing through Aleppo, Biredschik on the Euphrates, and Diabekir to Erzeroum, a distance of 550 miles, from which latter place, Kars on the Russian frontier is about 100 miles. Although this line presents considerable physical difficulties, it might be feasible for a properly-equipped army during the 7 months it is open, *viz.*, from about 15th April to 15th November; but the fact that for its entire length it runs through Turkish territory, would appear to render it unavailable for the march of an English army so long as the Porte remained neutral.

The routes we next come to by which an advance against the Russians would be practicable, are by the Persian Gulf, and up the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris respectively.

The Euphrates Valley route may be dismissed with a few words, for although it has been twice traversed by armies, *viz.*, by the famous 10,000 and afterwards by the Emperor Julian when he invaded Persia, the conditions under which a modern army takes the field and carries on a campaign are very different to what they were 2,000 years ago. The local difficulties, although not altogether insuperable, are very nearly so; moreover, should it ever be necessary to send a force to the head-waters of the Euphrates, it would be better to move it by sea to the Gulf of Iskanderun, and thence by land to its destination.

As to the Tigris route, it would only be used—

- (1.) In the event of its being desirable to operate northwards from Diabekir, and supposing that a force could not reach that place *viâ* the Gulf of Iskanderun owing to the Suez Canal being blocked; or,
- (2.) If a movement eastward from Bagdad, or from some other point lower down the river were contemplated.



As regards the first supposition, it may be said that it would be almost as difficult for an army to reach Diabekir by the Tigris as by the Euphrates Valley. The route crosses the Taurus range of mountains in "about its most difficult and impracticable part," and traverses a country "cut up by a succession of precipitous ravines, mountain torrents and impracticable defiles."

From Bagdad eastward a force might move—

- (1.) Towards Tabriz, distant about 640 miles;
- (2.) Towards Resht, distant about 600 miles;
- (3.) Towards Teheran, distant about 500 miles.

These three routes pass over the same country as far as Hamadan, which town is 313 miles from Bagdad *via* Kermanshah. Of the nature of the country beyond Hamadan, except in the direction of Teheran, we have but little information; between Bagdad and Hamadan British Officers have travelled, and all say that even a small military force would find it very difficult; in the summer the heat is great, while in the winter the cold is excessive, the hills being covered with snow for "full three months."

There are two more routes which lead towards Russian territory from the Persian Gulf, and which, while avoiding the 500 miles of river which divide Bagdad from Mahamra, have the advantage of starting with the Persian Gulf as a base, *viz.* :—

- (1.) From Mohammerah through Shuster and Kum to Teheran, distance 622 miles;
- (2.) From Bushire through Shiraz and Ispahan to Teheran, distance 810 miles.

I am not aware whether an army has ever marched along the Mohammerah-Shuster line, but we know that in 1856 a Persian force did move *via* Shiraz towards Bushire.

Both routes present considerable difficulties as regards the road, supplies, forage and water, that *via* Mohammerah being apparently the least difficult of the two, while it is nearly 200 miles shorter. Mohammerah, moreover, is a good port for disembarking men and matériel, while at Bushire ships have to lie some 3 or 4 miles from the shore. We could reach Teheran by either of these routes, as well as by the two easternmost ones from Bagdad, and once there, we should threaten Russia's line of communication *via* the Caspian, *viz.*, at Resht and Astrabad, distant from Teheran only 211 and 170 miles, respectively; but at each of these points Russia could collect a far larger force than we could ever hope to place there.

As I have said before, it would be possible no doubt for a well-equipped British army to move by all the above routes, except by those through the Euphrates and Tigris Valleys towards Diabekir, but the physical difficulties of all are enormous, and, under the most favourable circumstances, months must elapse before our troops could reach any of the objective points above named. The country throughout belongs either to Turkey or Persia, and without the assistance of the former Power, no movement could be made *via* Bagdad. In the same way, before any force could be sent from Mohammerah or Bushire, we must be able to rely on the friendly neutrality, if not the active co-operation, of Persia. The first condition would, perhaps, be secured by the mere fact of our occupying the southern portion of her country; but considering the dominant position Russia now holds with regard to Persia, we could hardly hope for her active co-operation. Supposing, however, that Persia were to throw in her lot with us, the march of an army through her territory would be an undertaking far more

serious than England has ever yet been engaged in, and at the end of the journey it would certainly have to meet a Russian army vastly superior to it numerically, for although we might have the sympathies of the Persians, they would be powerless to prevent Russian troops occupying their capital.

From the foregoing it seems clear that, without the assistance of Turkey, and even supposing that we have the Persians on our side, we could not hope to injure Russia in Europe, Asia Minor, or in the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea. It now only remains for us to see whether an effective blow could be dealt against her from the direction of India.

There are four main passes by which an army can enter Afghanistan from India, *viz.* :—

The Khyber, the Kuram, the Ghoilari, and the Bolan.

By three of these routes our troops have moved of late years, and the fourth (the Ghoilari route) was traversed by Major Broadfoot of the Bengal Engineers in 1839-40. Their comparative advantages, considered either from a military or political point of view, are now so well known that it is unnecessary for me to discuss them here. There seems to be a general consensus of opinion that the Bolan is the route we should adopt; it presents the fewest difficulties, and the completion of the railway through it to Pishin will bring our frontier post at Quetta within a few hours rail of Karachi. From Shebo, the proposed railway terminus in Pishin, to Kandahar, the distance is only 115 miles, and, with the exception of the Kojak range, there are no obstacles to the rapid construction of a railway. Herat is 350 or 400 miles beyond Kandahar, according to the route taken, either way being practicable for wheeled guns, and at most seasons of the year a fair amount of grain and forage can be procured. The time a force would take to move from Quetta to Herat would depend, in a great measure, on the attitude of the tribes along the line of route. No serious local opposition need be expected, but even passive resistance would considerably increase the difficulty of procuring supplies. Looking to the distance to be traversed (about 500 miles), a force consisting of from 25,000 to 30,000 men could not hope to reach Herat under 6 weeks—I would prefer to say 2 months; and if, as is possible, the Russians were to get possession of Herat before the arrival of an army from India, a much longer time might be required. The Russian outposts would certainly be pushed on towards Farah (164 miles from Herat); they would endeavour to raise the country against us, and if they were strong enough, would probably give us battle at some selected position in advance of Herat. We have apparently no reliable information as to the strength of the Russians on the Caspian-Askabad-Sarakhs line, or how far they may be prepared as regards transport and supplies; moreover, we are unable to predict which side the Heratis themselves would favour. Of one thing we may be sure, that while we were putting forward our main strength in the direction of Herat, the Russians would most certainly move into Afghan-Turkestan from their base at Tashkend and Samarkand. They would occupy Maimana, Balkh, Faizabad, Khum, and Kunduz, probably without much opposition, for the inhabitants of these districts would welcome any Power which would free them from their present detested Afghan rulers. Thus, while our thoughts are turned so much towards Herat, we must not lose sight of Afghan Turkestan. There most assuredly Russia will appear in strength, and, as soon as she has gained a footing in that province, she will be in a position to bring considerable pressure to bear upon an army advancing from Kandahar towards Herat. I have stated\* that to hold the line from Quetta to Herat 23,000 men and 58 guns would

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\* Memorandum showing the number of troops that could be put into the field in the event of its being decided to send a force from India to Herat.

be required, but this opinion was formed before there seemed any possibility of our coming into collision with Russia until after we had reached Herat. If, however, Russia obtains possession of the Herat and Afghan-Turkestan provinces, and if we propose to send such a force against her as will drive her back across the Afghan frontier as it now exists, and at the same time inflict upon her a blow that will paralyse her movements in Central Asia for many years to come, we must be prepared to put a very much larger Anglo-Indian army in the field than has as yet been contemplated. Our troops would not only have a powerful Russian army to deal with, but they would be obliged to hold in force a line of communication, several hundreds of miles in length, lying through a country the treachery of whose inhabitants is proverbial.

Having noted the line which would seem to be the best suited for our purpose should we endeavour to reach Russia through Afghanistan, it seems desirable that we should briefly consider the peculiar political, military, and ethnological difficulties of our relations with the latter country and what should be our future action consequent on Russia's forward movements in Central Asia.

A glance at the map shows us that Kabul is divided from Afghan-Turkestan by the Hindu Kush and other lofty ranges, which run in a south-westerly direction towards Herat and Kandahar. Although the inhabitants on both sides of these mountains are known by the generic name of Afghans, there is a very considerable difference between those dwelling respectively upon the northern and southern sides. The true Afghan is chiefly to be found on the south of the Hindu Kush, whereas the population on the northern slopes of that range is composed of Uzbeks, Parsiwans, Kizilbashis, Tajiks, Aimaks, Hazaras, and Kafirs. Some of these have no affinity whatsoever with the Afghans, while others, though resembling them in language, features, and certain customs, are rejected by them as brethren and assigned a different origin. The Uzbeks of Afghan-Turkestan, for instance, numbering about 300,000, are far more nearly allied to the tribes north of the Oxus than to those south of the Hindu Kush. The Badakhshies (55,000) are believed to be of Caucasian origin, as are the Tajiks (500,000) who are scattered all over Afghanistan; both these races speak Persian, as do the Aimaks (250,000) and the Hazaras (150,000), the two latter, however, being apparently of Tartar origin. The Kafir Siahposh, or inhabitants of Kafirstan, are, so to speak, a unique race in Asia; little is known of their origin; in appearance they differ totally from their neighbours; their language is derived from the Sanskrit, and they practise a gross idolatry. Every tribe in Afghanistan has its own clannish feelings and prejudices, and every Afghan, as soon as he is old enough to bear arms, attaches himself to some Chief. These Chiefs usually reside amongst their tribes in fortified villages; they will, as a rule, sell their services to the highest bidder, without feeling any compunction or incurring the least disgrace; and "they are as ready to revolt against their sovereign when they find or think they have the smallest interest in doing so, as they are prompt to defend him when a good understanding exists between them."

With so many heterogeneous elements, it is not to be wondered at that there is no real cohesion throughout Afghanistan. Indeed, as Sir Charles MacGregor truly remarks,\* "It may be said that in Afghanistan there are as many sovereigns as sirdars. . . . There is no unity, nothing is permanent: everything depends on the pleasure or caprice of a number of despots, always at variance with each other." It is conceivable of course that in time and with a succession of able, just, and humane rulers, the different tribes might become welded into a united

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\* Central Asia Gazetteer, Part II, Afghanistan.

kingdom, but hitherto this has never been the case, except for very brief and exceptional periods.

In the Provinces of Herat, Hazarajat, and Afghan-Turkestan, the tyranny of a succession of corrupt rulers has produced its natural effects; numbers of the Uzbegs of Afghan-Turkestan especially have migrated northwards across the Oxus, while those who remained have been longing for the time of their release. All these tribes, if they cannot regain their independence, would prefer becoming subjects of Russia to remaining under the hated Afghan yoke.

There is another difficulty in connection with the Afghans, more especially those residing south of the Hindu Kush, that must not be overlooked. As a race they are very tribal in their instincts, and most intolerant of any kind of outside interference. The mere fact of their Amir having any dealings with a Kafir would be sufficient to make his fellow-countrymen regard him with suspicion, and it appears to me by no means unlikely that the assistance which we have given to Abdur Rahman Khan may have had the undesirable effect of alienating the sympathies of his own people from him, and of increasing their natural dislike to us. Like many other Oriental potentates, Abdur Rahman Khan has only assured himself in his present position by the committal of a series of cruel murders. Apparently this system has its advantages, for the present Amir now lives in such security as may be attained by the death of all those who, from their position and influence, could possibly be suspected of being ill-disposed towards him. But his reign is, at the best, a reign of terror. The most able men in the country have either been murdered or are fugitives from their homes. He has no one to whom he can look for counsel and support, and, were it not for the money and arms which he gets from us, his position would be untenable. His health is bad, and if the native doctor who attends him has correctly diagnosed the disease from which he is suffering, his death may be looked for at no very distant date. This would be the signal for a general disturbance. The several tribes would each espouse the cause of the claimant to the throne from whom they hoped to obtain the greatest advantages, and unless we interfered, there would, in all probability, be several years of anarchy and rebellion, as was the case after the death of Dost Mahomed Khan in 1863, up to the time when his son, Sher Ali Khan, was able to secure the throne for himself in 1868.

I was so much impressed, during the two years I was in Afghanistan, with the hopelessness of uniting the various races and tribes, and of finding a ruler who was likely to be acceptable to the nation generally, that I strongly urged the advisability of disintegrating the country, and of letting the people of Kabul proper choose their own Amir. It seems to me that the policy, which we adopted in 1880, cannot fail to make the Afghans feel that we are strengthening their ruler's power of oppression, while at the same time it furnishes a text on which the fanatical and disaffected can preach against us. Had it not been for our gifts of arms and money, Abdur Rahman Khan would long ere this have lost his hold over Afghan-Turkestan and Herat.\* The allegiance of the former province, especially to the Amir of Kabul, has been little more than nominal, and, unless we intervene, the substitution of the sway of the Russian Czar for that of the Afghan Amir seems now only a matter of time.

When we look at the extraordinary strides made by Russia during the last few years, and see how she has consolidated her power in Central Asia, we cannot fail to realise, that should nothing occur to check her advance, the people of Afghan-Turkestan and

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\* It is only of late years that these provinces came into the possession of the ruler at Kabul. Balkh was taken in 1850; during the next 9 years Shibarghan, Sar-i-Pul, Maimana, Badakshan, Wakhan, Khum, and Kunduz submitted to the Afghan Governor of Balkh, but it was not until 1863 that the Amir Dost Mahomed Khan finally conquered Herat.

Herat will as certainly pass under her rule as have the Turkomans and the other Trans-Caspian tribes. Once Russia has determined upon annexation, the country in question rapidly becomes as complete an integral portion of the Russian Empire as if it were in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg itself. Hitherto, the Russians have had the good fortune to annex such populations only as are but little inferior in natural ability and manliness to themselves, whereas the vast hordes whom we have subjected are of a distinctly lower moral and physical type. This is a great advantage to Russia, and, I think, it may be fairly assumed that if the choice were given to them, the Turkomans and Afghans generally would prefer to become Russian subjects to being absorbed into India. In the one case, they could pride themselves on being the members of one of the most powerful nationalities in the world, differing but a degree in colour from their fellow subjects in the older portion of the Czar's dominions; in the other, they would have nought in common with the dark-skinned inhabitants of Hindustan, but the fact of their being equally members of a subject dependency. As bearing on this subject, it may be interesting if I quote the words of an Afghan gentleman, a friend of mine, who holds a high position under the Government of India. He said, "If the Afghans find they must yield to one Power or the other, they would choose the Russians in preference to the English; firstly, because they don't know the Russians; and secondly, because they understand tyranny better than the English form of justice. The Afghans know that we will not allow Nawabs and Khans to oppress their people, or murderers and robbers to go unpunished, whereas they think that the Russians would let them do pretty well as they liked, and that so long as they acted loyally by the Russian Government, they would be permitted to live much in the same way as they have hitherto done."

Were Afghanistan the united kingdom it has been our policy for some years past to create, and which it is commonly supposed to be, Russia's task might not be an easy one; but as I have endeavoured to show, Afghanistan is very far from being "united," and while some think that the people in the northern provinces would welcome us were we to occupy their country, and release them from the Afghan oppressor, it seems to me almost certain that they would join the Russians, if we were to go amongst them as the friends and supporters of the Afghans.

It is, I am aware, supposed by some that the regular army of the Amir could offer successful resistance to the Russians. This is a fallacy which may be at once dismissed from our minds. His army is recruited almost entirely from south of the Hindu Kush, and from recent experience we know that it has little value in a military sense. The tribesmen fought most stubbornly in 1878-80, but on no single occasion did the regular regiments stand up for any time against us. No number of troops that the Amir might send, even if assisted to the utmost with British arms, ammunition and money, could now, I fear, stop the Russians from occupying Herat and the whole of Afghan-Turkestan.

If my views of our relations towards the Afghans, of the condition of Afghanistan itself, and of the position which Russia now holds in Central Asia are correct, it would appear—

- (1.) That there is no united Afghanistan.
- (2.) That Abdur Rahman Khan has no real hold over the country, and that without the help he gets from us, his reign would be but a brief one.
- (3.) That the very help we give the Amir is very likely to put the people of Afghanistan against us.
- (4.) That the races to the north of the Hindu Kush are closely allied ethnologically to the Turkomans and the other tribes in Central Asia, who, during the last few years, have come under the protection of Russia.

- (5.) That, consequent on years of oppression and misrule, these races would eagerly cast off their allegiance to the Amir.
- (6.) That the regular Afghan troops, even with our aid in money, arms and ammunition, could not hope to stop a Russian advance into the Herat and Afghan-Turkestan provinces.
- (7.) That the despatch of an English Army to those provinces would be attended by very serious risks, unless it were on a much larger scale than has as yet been contemplated.

Under these circumstances, what should England's future policy be?

The question is beset with difficulties, many of them of our own making. We have steadily refused to believe in the power of Russia, and in her determination to advance to Afghanistan, while we have implicitly accepted her assurances that she had no designs on that country. We have buoyed ourselves up with the hope that Afghanistan would become a strong united kingdom, capable of acting as a buffer on our North-West Frontier, and also of resisting Russia should it so happen that the boundaries of the two nations became conterminous. In consequence of these illusions, we have undertaken responsibilities, the fulfilment of which will involve us in serious complications. We have, in fact, been living in a fool's paradise, and we now find ourselves face to face with a condition of affairs from which it will be difficult to extricate ourselves without a loss of dignity and prestige.

By the engagements we have entered into with the Amir, and by the statements made in the House of Commons by Her Majesty's Ministers, we are pledged before the world to prevent any foreign Power interfering with Afghanistan, and so long as Abdur Rahman Khan carries out his part of the agreement, we cannot honourably attempt to evade the sacrifices that may have to be made to guarantee the integrity of his kingdom. All Central Asia is eagerly watching to see if we can or will make good our words, now that Russian troops have forced an Afghan frontier post. If we tacitly acquiesce in Russia's advance into Afghanistan, the result will be that the unparalleled and spontaneous loyalty which has of late been displayed by the independent Princes in this country, and by our fellow-subjects of all creeds and races, will speedily be replaced by a feeling of mistrust in our power to protect them, and of uncertainty as regards their future.

The whole secret of our successful rule in the East is that our supremacy has never yet been doubted, either by our own subjects or by our neighbours, and our very existence in India demands that we should speedily come to some decision with Russia regarding Afghanistan. *We must fix the line beyond which we are determined that Russia shall not pass.* We must inform Russia that any movement on her part beyond that line, or any interference, directly or indirectly, with the people occupying the country to the south of that line, will be equivalent to a declaration of war—a war that we will prosecute with the whole strength of our Empire; and above all, we must take such timely measures as will enable us to prove, when the occasion arises, that our threat has not been an idle one.

It is of great moment to us to prevent Russia occupying the northern provinces of Afghanistan, for when once she obtains a footing there, we shall never be free from anxiety and trouble in India. I have said that I am afraid these provinces must eventually fall into Russia's hands, but we should do all in our power to postpone the evil day, not only in support of the pledges which we have publicly made, but also to enable us to strengthen the frontier beyond which Russia must, under no circumstances, be allowed to pass.

Between Hindustan and the Russian possessions in Central Asia, nature has herself

placed three great physical obstacles—the River Oxus, the ranges of the Hindu Kush, and the River Indus; and the merits and defects of each as a frontier to our Indian Empire have often been discussed.

Until quite recently it has been understood that we should not allow Russia to advance beyond the Oxus, and that she had promised to respect this limit, but with the occupation of Merv this belief was shattered, and, while we have been deprived of the great advantage of having a large tract of desert between the Russian possessions in Central Asia and the frontier of Afghanistan, Russia has gained immeasurably by the transfer of her base from the Orenburg—Tashkend line to the Caspian. It is in this transfer that lies the great danger to India, for it is by means of this line that Russia will eventually be able to assert her determination to annex Afghan-Turkestan. The railway from the Caspian is being pushed on through Merv to Burdalik, and, when completed, any number of Russian troops can be moved by rail and steamers to Kilif, on the Oxus, a distance of only 40 miles from Balkh. Though I still hope that it may be found possible to prevent, or at any rate delay, for several years to come, Russia's movements in this direction, there is no use in disguising the fact that having lost the line of the Oxus we must now take, as a frontier, either the River Indus or the ranges of the Hindu Kush. Fortunately, we are still in a position to decide which of these two we shall adopt.

The Indus seems to me an impossible frontier for the following reasons:—

From Attock to Karachi is a distance of nearly 1,000 miles, and a long river can never form a satisfactory line of defence. Between the Indus and the Hindu Kush are a succession of mountain ranges, and unless we could be certain of what was happening on "the other side of the hill," it would be impossible to prevent an enemy from crossing them, and debouching on the plains of India when and where he pleased. Last, but not least, any retrograde movement on our part would have the worst possible effect both in India and Afghanistan.

Even with our present frontier, we have laboured under the serious disadvantage of utter ignorance as to Russia's doings in Central Asia, and were we to retire to the Indus, we should be quite as much in the dark as to her movements in Northern Afghanistan. By fixing our frontier on the Hindu Kush, however, we should be in a position to know all that was going on beyond that range, and be able to frustrate at once any attempt to force it. In fact, with the Hindu Kush in our possession, we ought to be able to defy Russia.

If we decide that our frontier is to be fixed on this range, the next step for us to consider is how this line should be defended. In the first instance, it would only be necessary for us to hold Kandahar and certain strategical points in its vicinity. The advantages of Kandahar have long been recognised, and a British army would be well placed there to oppose any onward movement by Russia, and to influence the tribes of Western Afghanistan. Kandahar should be strongly fortified, and connected by rail with the main railway system of India, and roads should be opened out, leading up to and along the proposed frontier. Our position would be considerably strengthened if we could win over the Hazaras, who occupy the tract of country which separates Kandahar from Afghan-Turkestan. They are of the Shiah persuasion of Mahomedanism, and hold the Afghans, Aimaks, and Uzbegs in detestation for being Sunis. They have always been well disposed towards the British, and could be usefully employed in guarding the passes over the Hindu Kush. We must also watch carefully the eastern portion of our frontier line, for although it is believed that no large body of troops could at present be moved against us from that direction, we do not know enough of the country to be certain that it could not be made passable in time. At any rate, we must expect that Russian explorers (the inevitable forerunners of every Russian advance) will endeavour by all means in their power to gain influence amongst the

tribes, and if they can accomplish this, we are certain to have trouble in the neighbourhood of Peshawar and the Punjab. The most important of these tribes is the Siahposh Kafirs, whose territory lies directly in the way of an intruder from the Badakhshan and Kunduz directions. With their assistance, and with the chiefs of Chitral, Yasin, and Kashmir as our friends, the Russians ought to find it very difficult, if not impossible, to penetrate the mountainous country which bounds the whole of the north of India.

All our efforts, however, for the protection of India will be of no avail, if we cannot make certain that our influence at Kabul is paramount; if this be not assured, the Russians are certain to obtain a footing there, with the result that we shall lose the only safe frontier now left to us. Abdur Rahman Khan may, or may not, be thoroughly loyal, but even if he is, has he the power to carry out any agreement that he may make with us? He rules by fear alone in a kingdom divided against itself; it seems probable that, without our prompt intervention, he will shortly lose his two northernmost provinces; and if we remain inactive while he is vainly endeavouring to stem the onward march of Russia, the whole of his territory must inevitably fall into the possession of that Power. It is, of course, most desirable that we should do all we can to smooth the path of the present Amir, but, at the same time, we must not forget that in this question is involved not only the dignity of the British nation, but the welfare of over 250,000,000 of people, for whom we are directly responsible. If Abdur Rahman Khan is unable or unwilling to give us that full support we have every right to expect, and if we cannot find a successor to him who will heartily and honestly assist us to carry out the defence of the frontier that has been forced upon us, we shall have to occupy Kabul, and to administer the whole country to the south of the Hindu Kush. The task, though difficult, will not be nearly so serious as many might suppose, once it is known that we are determined to stay in the country. One of the chief causes of our troubles in Afghanistan in 1878-80 was the uncertainty of the length of our sojourn there. "Are you going to remain here?" was, as a rule, the first question asked me. If I could have replied in the affirmative, many of the influential chiefs and tribesmen would have sided with us, instead of holding aloof or joining the different combinations against us. However unwilling we may be to force ourselves upon the Afghans, we cannot afford to remain passive spectators of a struggle on the result of which our future in the East may depend. For close on 200 years Russia's dream has been to gain possession of India. During the last decade she has made such vast strides that the prize must now seem almost within her grasp. The time has come, however, when she must learn that between her and the fulfilment of her ambition lies a barrier that may not be passed—the might of Imperial England.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## V.

## MEMORANDUM ON "THE RANGOON RIVER DEFENCES."

RANGOON,

*25th February, 1886.*

My visit yesterday to "Monkey Point" and "Chokey Point" confirmed the opinion which I formed as to the defensive powers of these positions, when I inspected them in January, 1882.

2. A great deal has been done to both places since that time. The old battery at Monkey Point has been removed, and a new one for five heavy guns is in course of construction; the difficulties as regards a secure foundation seem to have been overcome, and it is expected that the battery will be finished early in 1887. The position is excellent, and, whether defences are placed lower down the river or not, there must be a battery at Monkey Point. The only objections I have to the site are, that it is somewhat cramped, and that a vessel coming up the river would be end on until it got quite close to the battery. For these reasons, I would prefer to divide the battery, and to place two of the five guns on the opposite bank of the river at King's Point; not only could a cross fire be brought to bear on an approaching ship by this arrangement, but a smaller mark would be offered to an enemy's fire than if all five guns were massed in one battery. The Monkey Point battery may be too far advanced to admit of any change now being made, except at a great sacrifice of money; but if this is not the case, I would strongly urge two of the guns being placed at King's Point instead.

3. At Chokey Point, guns have been mounted during the last few months, so that I was better able to judge of the capabilities of the position than was possible during my former visit, when it was nothing but a jungly swamp. It is now quite apparent that the battery must be open to an oblique, if not to an enfilade, fire; but a more serious objection is, that the broadside of a fast cruiser coming up the river would be visible for a few minutes only, and at such a distance from the battery, that it would need guns of exceptional power and precision to do her much damage. The first objection appears to be an insuperable one, and, from the turns in the river, is common to all, or nearly all, of the positions on the river below Monkey Point. The second would entail an expenditure which at once condemns it; not only would the guns themselves be costly, but, from the nature of the soil, the platforms for working the guns would be very expensive. Under these circumstances, a battery at Chokey Point, for defensive purposes, appears to me to be out of the question. If, however, it is decided that the channel at Chokey Point affords the most suitable position for a submarine mine-field, it would then be necessary to have a protecting battery at the Point itself. This should be carefully concealed, and should consist of guns of moderate calibre, not the heavy guns on unwieldy carriages, such as are now in position at Chokey Point.

4. The question of a battery anywhere near the mouth of the river may, I think, be at once dismissed; for not only would the work of preparing a site on the mud be great, but the stream is so liable to change its course, it is quite possible we might find, on the completion of the battery, that the channel had shifted to the other side

of the river: while the precautions necessary to guard the battery from encroaching tides would be a never-ceasing source of expense. Moreover, any battery at a distance from Rangoon would be very isolated, and would necessitate the construction of an enclosed work and a large garrison to protect it from a land attack.

5. It appears to me that, in this and other similar cases, we must not regard the construction of fortifications as a *sine qua non*. I admit it is quite possible than an enemy might send a fast-steaming, heavily-armed cruiser to attempt the passage of the Rangoon river, but that she would commit an iron-clad to the winding, dangerous channel, seems to me very doubtful, more especially as the known presence of mines in the river would always have a deterrent effect, however unreliable such a system of defence might prove on trial. For our rivers and harbours I would trust more to an *active* than a *passive* defence.

6. At Rangoon, I would be content with batteries at Monkey Point and King's Point, armed with five powerful guns (25 tons or 43 tons breech-loaders), and with a battery of 25-prs. or 40-prs. at Chokey Point to protect the submarine mines. For the rest, I would trust to gunboats and torpedo vessels, aided by such steam launches and armed barges as could be rapidly fitted out at Rangoon.

7. Everything should be prepared beforehand; the kind of guns best adapted for the launches and barges should be determined; the required number of them should be stored in the arsenal at Rangoon, and care should be taken that the appliances for mounting them and fitting out the boats are always kept in readiness.

8. Whatever vessels, whether gun or torpedo, be ordered from England, their plans and specifications, both as regards construction and armament, should be submitted for the approval of the Government of India before they are actually ordered.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## VI.

## MEMORANDUM ON THE BOMBAY HARBOUR DEFENCES.

HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE ARMY IN INDIA,  
27th February, 1886.

The points for consideration with reference to the Bombay harbour defences would seem to be the following :—

1st.—Are the existing works, or those sanctioned, sufficient to prevent a heavily-armed, fast-steaming cruiser from entering the harbour?

2nd.—If they are not, could they be made so at any reasonable cost?

3rd.—If they could not, what additional defences are required?

4th.—Should these be—

(a.) Of the nature of a permanent work or works? or

(b.) Would it suffice to properly arm the “Magdala” and “Abyssinia” turret ships, and moor them at the entrance to the harbour? or

(c.) Would it be better to have an ironclad or a vessel of the cruiser type? or

(d.) Could we depend on submarine mines, torpedoes, gunboats, steam launches, armed barges, &c.?

2. With regard to (a) Some few years ago, Colonel (now General) Sir William Jervois fixed upon a site near the main channel, which, I believe, is acknowledged to be the only one possible for a permanent work. Is there reliable information to show that this site possesses a rock foundation large enough for a suitable work, or that the required foundation could be obtained at a reasonable cost? The expense of the work, which Sir William Jervois proposed to construct, would, it is calculated, be nearly 250,000*l.* Is it certain that such a work would prove an effectual barrier, or would it be possible, under favourable conditions as regards wind, weather, and tide, for a vessel to steam past it and get into the inner harbour?

3. If, for any of the above reasons, any permanent work or works (a) be decided against, which of the floating defence schemes, (b), (c), or (d), would be preferable, or would it be better to have a combination of any two or of all three?

4. With regard to (b). It has been doubted whether vessels could be moored at the entrance to the harbour securely enough to resist the south-west monsoon. Is it, however, likely that an enemy would venture to attack during this season? If naval men decide that it is likely, then we must be sure that vessels could be kept in the selected positions all the year round. If, on the other hand, it is agreed that the harbour is practically safe from attack during the monsoon, we should only have to satisfy ourselves that moored vessels could be relied upon to protect the harbour at the other seasons of the year; and, if they could not, to enquire whether this duty could be better performed by a ship of the cruiser class.

5. A fast cruiser would, no doubt, be a great addition to our Indian marine; it would serve as a transport, and could be utilized in many other ways; and if it were never allowed to leave the Indian seas, it is unlikely that it would be out of the way in the hour of need. I understand that a vessel of this kind, fitted up with guns, &c., could be built for about 100,000*l.*, or less than half the cost of any permanent work. It would, however, be expensive to keep up, as a large proportion of the crew would have to be Europeans.

If, on other grounds than as a harbour defence, a vessel of the cruiser class is considered necessary, its capability for effectually protecting the harbour is an additional, and a very strong reason, for our possessing one; but if it is not required for the general marine service of the Government of India, I do not think that we should be justified in incurring the expense which a first-class vessel would entail. The general impression seems to be that the two turret ships now at Bombay, and which were built expressly for the defence of that harbour, are quite good enough if they were armed with better guns. It is true that, from want of speed, these vessels could scarcely venture to meet an enemy's ship outside the harbour; but for any service inside the harbour, they could be made very formidable. They possess one great advantage over any permanent work, inasmuch as they could follow a vessel which might have given them the slip and got into the harbour; and they have another very decided advantage in these days of financial difficulty, viz., that they exist.

6. Whether we have permanent works, or turret ships, or an armed cruiser, there seems to be a very general opinion that we cannot do without submarine mines, torpedo vessels, and gunboats. Submarine mines are, I am aware, not altogether satisfactory, even under the most favourable conditions; but with time and practice we shall learn better how to prepare them, and, as their moral effect is very great, I would strongly advocate their being used at Bombay. Gunboats and torpedo vessels also are essential; they should be of the best make, and designed especially for the service required of them. In time of trouble, the gunboats might, with advantage, be supplemented by such steam launches, flats and barges as could be locally provided. A large number of these would be forthcoming in Bombay, and, with the gunboats, would form a very formidable "mosquito fleet," as a collection of small armed boats has been appropriately called. It would, of course, be necessary to determine beforehand the kind of guns best adapted for these launches and barges, to have the required number of them stored in the arsenal at Bombay, and to take care that the appliances for mounting them and fitting out the boats are always kept in readiness.

7. From what I have written, it will be perceived that I do not consider the existing batteries really protect the harbour of Bombay, or that any additional permanent work or works would be worth the money they would cost. My opinion is that no *passive* defence we could adopt would be so effective or so economical as an *active* defence; and, in this view, I would entrust the safety of the harbour to the two turret ships, armed with the most powerful breech-loading guns they can carry, and to a well-organized "mosquito fleet," aided by such defence as the present batteries could offer and by submarine mines. An electric search-light, fitted in a small vessel, would also be a useful adjunct, especially in defence of the minefield.

8. At the same time, I think that the batteries are likely to prove a most valuable defence to the town of Bombay itself. For this purpose, however, there are more than enough guns arranged for already, and the additional battery proposed to be built at Colaba Point seems to me unnecessary. I think, also, that the battery now being constructed at Malabar Point would be more effective if two of the guns were placed on the rising ground immediately to the north of Government House. All

the batteries seem to me to be more or less crowded. I would reduce the number of guns in them, and arm them with more powerful guns, such as the 18 tons, 25 tons, and 43 tons breech-loaders; and I would provide more protection for the guns and gunners by increasing the thickness of the parapets and building more traverses.

9. The batteries on Cross Island, middle ground, and oyster rock should be complete in all respects; but for the shore batteries, I would only build such works as are required for the actual working of the guns. With the almost unlimited resources at the disposal of the Ordnance Department in Bombay, there ought to be no difficulty in extemporising any additions that might be necessary on an emergency.

10. If these proposals are agreed to, little or no expense, beyond that which has been already sanctioned, would have to be incurred; and I believe that the town and harbour of Bombay would be made practically secure in case of an attack from the sea.

11. Whatever vessels, whether gun or torpedo, be ordered from England, their plans and specifications, both as to construction and armament, should be submitted to the Government of India before they are actually ordered. This will prevent disappointment and dissatisfaction.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## VII.

## NOTES ON "PROPOSALS FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER, BY THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE IN 1885."

SIMLA,  
22nd June, 1886.

*Proposals for the Defence of the North-West Frontier, by the Defence Committee in 1885.*

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief\* desires the measures to be considered which will make India in the North-West Frontier as safe as it can be rendered by an expenditure reasonably proportionate to the interests at stake.

The subject naturally divides itself into the improvement of communications, both direct and lateral, and the construction of defensive works at important strategical points.

But before discussing what should be done under both heads, it would appear desirable to define precisely the present object in view, and the prospective development of operations, both offensive and defensive, which the precautions now carried into effect would subserve.

1. It is understood that no occupation of Afghan territory is contemplated, but that, while the roads issuing from the northern passes will be strongly held by entrenched positions, the advanced line of the Khwaja Amran mountains will be rendered impregnable; Kandahar fortified by the Amir under British advice; and it and Girishk connected, if possible, with India by an extension of the Sind-Pishin Railway, so as to admit of their immediate occupation, should occasion arise.

2. Further, that by means of roads and railways, concentration will be rendered

1. I doubt the possibility of a railway being made to Kandahar and Girishk without a British occupation of the country through which the line would run. Meanwhile, we should determine the direction such a line would take and arrange for the collection of material accordingly.

2. It is most desirable to perfect our communication by road and rail, and we

\* General Sir Donald Stewart.

*Proposals for the Defence of the North-West Frontier, by the Defence Committee in 1885.*

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

rapid and easy at the points which are open to attack, or whence future offensive operations must be initiated; while at the latter, depôts of ordnance and commissariat supplies, protected by adequate fortifications, will be established.

3. The position under these conditions would be identical with that advocated by General Hamley in 1878,\* as rupturing the enemy's front, threatening his line of communications and base, and almost precluding any hostile advance through the northern passes. It was considered by him an advantageous one, even with Herat and Kabul in the enemy's hands; so that with Herat suitably strengthened and armed, and the terminus of the Sind-Pishin railway established on the right bank of the Helmand, it will probably be admitted that no attack by Russia, except in overwhelming numbers, and after lengthened preparation, need be apprehended.

4. The precautions to be taken should include the means of meeting, or forestalling, an isolated attack in Kashmir; the choice of either holding the debouchure of the Khyber, or of reinforcing Kabul; the power of concentration and defence at the mouths of the Gomal and the Kuram; the construction of a strongly - entrenched position and depôt at a point commanding the passes through the Khwaja Amran range, and the completion of ample railway communication therewith.

should carefully consider the points which are open to attack, and from those which offensive operations could best be undertaken. The latter should be well to the front; depôts for supplies, stores, &c., well to the rear. A combination of the two, as has been contemplated at Syed Hamid, is, in my opinion, impracticable.

3. It is impossible to threaten Russia's base, but we should do all in our power to keep it as far away as possible. It is chiefly on this account that I set great value on the labours of the Afghan Boundary Commission.

4. We should have political control over the country round Chitral and Gilgit in order to secure the approaches to the former by the Dorah Pass, and to the latter through Wakhan. To defend the Khyber Pass we must hold both outlets, but (as I have endeavoured to show later on in this paper) the main defence would have to be at the western end. Kabul can best be threatened through Kandahar and Ghazni, and the eastern exits of the Gomal can most effectually be defended by our being in force in the Zhob and Tochi valleys. There is no suitable site for an entrenched position commanding the passes through the Khwaja Amran range; if turned out of that range we could not stay in Pishin, but would have to retire on the Kach-Takatu-Quetta position.

\* Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, Volume XXII., page 1034.

*Proposals for the Defence of the North-West Frontier, by the Defence Committee in 1885.*

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

5. To these may be added the fortification and arming of Kandahar; the extension of the railway to Kandahar and Girishk, and the bridging of the Helmand, should the Amir consent; or, if not, the collection in Pishin of the material needed for the bridge and railway and of the armament for Kandahar.

5. If we ever reoccupy Kandahar, a first-class fortress will have to be constructed there and brought into railway communication with India. As it seems probable that this communication will be *viâ* Nushki and Argutai, it is desirable that the material for the Kandahar extension should be collected at Sir-i-ab or some other convenient point on the Bolan Railway, and not taken to Pishin. It may be found necessary to bridge the Helmand, but I think that, in the first instance, we had better trust to pontoons. A permanent bridge would take a long time to construct, and pontoons have the great advantage over any other temporary arrangement, that they are comparatively independent of variations in the depth of the water.

I would also advise that at least a couple of the stern-wheel Yarrow boats recently used with such success on the Nile, should be sent up with our forces to the Helmand. They only draw a few inches of water; they can mount a machine-gun on a high upper deck, and carry about 200 men. So long as artillery was not brought against them, a couple of these boats would give us command of the littoral of the Helmand for long distances, and would be invaluable in spreading our influence into otherwise inaccessible places.

6. With these preliminary remarks, the measures to be taken may be considered in detail.

First, communications, subdivided into railways and roads.

#### *I.—Railways.*

(a.) Beginning from the north, unless the expense and local conditions are prohibitive, it would seem most desirable to extend the Punjab Northern State Railway from Peshawar towards Kabul.

On consulting Colonel Limond, under

6. (a.) A railway from Peshawar to Kabul would be very expensive, and does not seem necessary at present.



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whose orders the greater portion of the road was constructed during the last campaign, it has been ascertained that the road alignment is not suitable for a railway, the difficulty and cost of obtaining a proper gradient being likely to prove enormous.

Such a line would hardly cost less than 20,000*l.* per mile, or a total from Peshawar to Kabul of about 4,000,000*l.*

But the action of nature has probably cleared a channel with a moderate gradient and a fairly direct course from Michni to Kabul; and, in the absence of any reliable survey, it would seem abstractedly almost certain that an adherence to the right bank of the Kabul river, at any rate up to the Tezin nullah, would give by far the easiest alignment for railway extension.

Of course, the active co-operation of the Amir would be essential; but, with this assured, tribal difficulties may easily be exaggerated, more especially as the Afridi or Pathan, if receiving his share of profit and not excited by religious fanaticism, has sufficient common sense fully to appreciate pecuniary advantage.

(*b.*) The next line comprises the conversion of the Lala Musa-Miani Railway from the narrow to the broad gauge; the bridging of the Jhelum near Miani; and the extension to Darya Khan opposite and about 13 miles from Dera Ismail Khan.

It would appear advisable to align the extension somewhat to the north to a point opposite Isakhel, so as to facilitate communication with Bannu. A steam ferry and a temporary railway across the sandy approaches to the Indus from Darya Khan are essential features in this scheme.

(*b.*) It is very desirable to convert the Lala Musa-Miani Railway from the narrow to the broad gauge, to bridge the Jhelum near Miani, and to extend the line to Darya Khan opposite to Dera Ismail Khan. It is even more important to take a branch line from Mianwali towards Isakhel or Kalabagh and Bannu. Kalabagh would probably be found a good position for a bridge, which would be completely covered by the impassable Shukurdara tract of country. Bannu is of great strategical importance, and it is very desirable that we should be able to concentrate troops there, so as to advance either on Kabul by the Kuram or Tochi valleys, or to fall on the flank of an enemy advancing from Kandahar or Ghazni, *viâ* the Gomal pass, on Dera Ismail Khan.

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(c.) A metre-gauge line from Dera Ismail Khan to Gomal at the mouth of the pass would prove of great service in a military point of view, and would probably pay commercially.

(d.) The extension of the existing line from Mooltan to Sher Shah through Muzuffargarh to Kurashi Ghat opposite Dera Ghazi Khan is needed to connect the latter station with the Sind, Punjab, Delhi and Indus Valley Railway system. A steam ferry to carry railway wagons over the Chenab, and an ordinary steam ferry at Kurashi Ghat, will form a part of this scheme.

(e.) Lateral cis-Indus communication between the extension (b) and (d) should be provided by a broad-gauge line connecting the terminus at Darya Khan with that at Kurashi Ghat.

(f.) Ferozepore being the arsenal which supplies the whole of the North-West Frontier, its connection with the frontier railway system by means of a bridge across the Sutlej, in continuation of the Raiwind branch, is indispensable; and the work should be undertaken without delay.

(g.) The break at Sukkur is most prejudicial in a military point of view; and every effort should be made to expedite the supply of the ironwork for the span over the Rohri channel.

(h.) As the traffic on the Ruk-Rindli line would be seriously impeded in case of emergency by the distance apart of the crossing stations, additional ones should be provided as soon as possible.

The liability of this railway to injury or destruction from the floods, which are believed occasionally to submerge the "put," is a matter which should be enquired into, and, if necessary, guarded against.

(c.) I would have a 5-ft. 6-in. and not a metre gauge, as it seems likely that a broad-gauge railway from somewhere on the Indus near Dera Ismail Khan will be the future Indo-European line.

(d.) Agreed; except that I believe a bridge over the Chenab would in the end prove cheaper than a steam ferry, and would certainly be more convenient.

(e.) Approved.

(f.) Approved.

(g.) Very true; unfortunately, however, there seems but little chance of this bridge being completed until the middle of 1888.

(h.) Additional stations should be provided where necessary, but I would recommend two short lines being constructed, one from Shikarpur to Sukkur, which is infinitely better placed than Ruk as the junction of the Indus Valley and Sind-Pishin Railways; and the other from Mittri to the Nari bridge, about 6 miles out of Sibi on the Rindli line. These two extensions would be very valuable in the event of increased traffic,

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Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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(i.) The temporary line which is being laid up the Bolan should, if practicable, be converted into a permanent one. It is understood that from Mach to the Dasht the haulage will be effected by winding engines; but from the latter point to Quetta and onwards there will be no serious difficulty in arranging for easy gradients.

(j.) The Sind-Pishin and Rindli-Quetta Railways would converge most conveniently at some central point in Pishin, covered by an entrenched position, which would also command the passes through the Khwaja Amran range.

(k.) The line thence would pass under the Kojak through a tunnel, the exact alignment of which should be decided on, and work commenced without delay. Meanwhile, as this tunnel would probably

and would obviate the necessity of doubling the whole line by allowing empty vehicles to get clear of the junctions at Sibi and Sukkur.

It is very desirable that careful enquiry should be made as to the damage done to the railway between Ruk and Sibi, and also to the country between Shewan and Lamkhana in 1882, in order that we may ascertain exactly how the floods acted, and what to be prepared for.

(i.) It is most desirable that a line should be made from Rindli to Quetta and Bostan, to supplement the Sind-Pishin Railway, and to admit of a free circulation of the rolling stock, which is impossible on a single line with such steep gradients and sharp curves as exist on the Sind-Pishin Railway. I doubt, however, whether it would be prudent to convert the present temporary Bolan line into a permanent one; the break of gauge which exists between Hirok and Darwaza is a serious drawback from a military point of view; moreover, it seems to me that this line could never be relied upon, owing to the liability to injury, if not destruction, by heavy floods.

(j.) It would be very difficult to find any point in Pishin which would both cover the Sind-Pishin and Rindli-Quetta Railways, and also command the passes through the Khwaja Amran range. It is, however, most desirable that the ground in front of Bostan, the junction of these two railways, should be carefully studied, in view to an entrenched position being constructed, which would serve to cover this important junction, and at the same time be a valuable outwork to the Kach-Takatu-Quetta position.

(k.) (l.) The question of extending the railway in the direction of Kandahar to the Khwaja Amran range is now under consideration, and various schemes have been proposed to meet the difficulty. A

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take 2 or 3 years to complete, it is for consideration whether an alternative route *viâ* the Gwajha should not be proceeded with.

(1.) While the Rindli-Quetta and Sind-Pishin lines are being rapidly pushed to the utmost limit of the frontier, it is hoped that arrangements might be made with the Amir to permit of an eventual extension as far at Kandahar at least, and, preferably, to the further bank of the Helmand at Girishk. But should this prove impracticable, the requisite materials for such extension should be collected, under cover of the entrenched position, in Pishin.

tunnel through the range would be very expensive, would take several years to construct, and would always be liable to destruction. From all I can learn, an alternative line over the range would be unsatisfactory, and very costly. There remains a third scheme—that of carrying the railway from Sir-i-ab, or some other point on the Rindli-Quetta Railway, to Nushki, and thence to Argutai. As regards the physical difficulties, a good deal of this line has been surveyed, and it appears that there are but few obstacles to its rapid construction, which, it is estimated, could be effected in half the time and at a considerable reduction in cost to either of the proposed lines, through the Kojak or *viâ* the Gwajha. From a military point of view, this line possesses advantages which, in my opinion, outweigh the fact of its having to make the detour *viâ* Nushki. The actual movements of troops would not be affected if the railway took some few hours longer to reach the common point, for, as a rule, troops would march by the military roads across the Khwaja Amran range; on the other hand, should it be deemed desirable to throw a force on the flank of an enemy who might be advancing from Kandahar, this railway would enable such a movement to be rapidly carried out, while our dispositions would be screened by the range itself. Moreover, as regards its safety, such a line would give us far less anxiety than would the tunnels, bridges, and high viaducts on a mountain line across the range. The Nushki-Argutai Railway would necessarily pass through Shorawak, and every endeavour should be made to induce the Amir of Afghanistan to part with this district. Its position on the immediate flank of Baluchistan is a serious danger, and we should enter into negotiations with the Amir to purchase it from him outright, or to pay him the revenue he now receives from it. The first would be the most satisfactory solution,

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and the one which would probably be the most acceptable to the Amir. It was, I believe, open to doubt whether Shorawak really belonged to Afghanistan or not.

As, however, this has recently been decided in the affirmative, it may not be desirable to reopen the question, beyond putting it forward as a reason why Abdur Rahman Khan should not be paid an exorbitant price. Even should His Highness object to parting on any terms with this outlying portion of his territory, it is probable that he might be induced to acquiesce in a railway being made through it, by being offered handsome concessions for every mile constructed. The whole of Afghanistan is ringing with accounts of the gold mine a railway opens out, and with his lust for money, it is unlikely that the Amir would long forbear to take his share of the pickings. If properly managed, he might become a large contractor; at any rate, negotiations with the Amir for a line from Nushki to Argutai would have the effect of finding out what His Highness's views are with reference to a Kandahar railway extension.

(*m.*) Finally, it would appear most desirable to supply the link between the important base of Bombay and the Indus Valley system by constructing a metre-gauge extension of the Rajputana line *viâ* Jodhpore and Jeysulmere to Rohri.

(*m.*) It is unquestionably desirable that Bombay should be brought into more direct railway communication with the Indus, but from a military point of view the matter is not one of great urgency, as Karachi must be the main base of any operations that may have to be carried out on the North-West Frontier. Whenever the line is made, I trust it will be a broad and not a metre-gauge one, as the conversion of the Rajputana Railway to broad gauge would seem to be merely a question of time.

## *II.—Roads.*

(*i.*) Beginning again from the north, the first road which calls for attention is that from Rawal Pindi *viâ* Murree to Srinagar. This work has already been commenced,

## *II.—Roads.*

(*i.*) A road from Rawal Pindi to Kashmir is very desirable. Onwards towards Chitral the road might no doubt be improved, but it must always be extremely

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*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

and should be completed in the form of a good cart-load without delay. From Srinagar towards Chitral a cart-road would probably be found impracticable and unnecessary, and a good mule-road would suffice.

(ii.) The second road, which has already been sanctioned by Government, is that starting from Dera Ismail Khan *via* Bannu to Kohat, and thence to the Indus at Khushalgarh. The scheme includes bridges over the Kuram and Gambela rivers, and, should the Salt Range line extension, alluded to under I. (b), take the direction proposed with respect to Bannu, will place that, as well as the other frontier posts, in a very advantageous position, both as regards direct communication with India and lateral communication with each other.

(iii.) The third road is the one thought necessary to cover the Sind-Pishin Railway on the north, starting from Dera Ghazi Khan by Fort Munro to the Pishin plateau. Nothing beyond a fair military road will be requisite, the object being first, to protect the railway, and, secondly, to afford a supplementary route for troops and supplies. As, however, its utility for the latter purpose will terminate on the completion of the line, no heavy expenditure to secure easy gradients should be incurred.

The second division of the subject under consideration refers to defensive works; and regarding these the general principles of construction are clearly defined in the official "Instruction in Military Engineering," 1880; "defensive positions," (c) "defile works and mountain passes," and (d) "Entrenched camps and depôts,"—in either case the idea being to occupy certain pivots, or salient and supporting points, by strong and heavily-armed redoubts with moderate normal garrisons. These works practically enclose and secure

difficult on account of the heavy falls of snow, and would be usually closed from November to June.

(ii.) A very important road, and should be completed without delay.

(iii.) This road is of the highest importance and should be pushed on.

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a sufficient interior space for the field army and for provisions, transport, and supplies, the intervals being afterwards, wholly or partially, filled in, should the necessity arise, by shelter-trenches, obstacles and like.

(A.) Beginning, as before, from the north, an entrenched position of the sort contemplated is obviously requisite at the mouths of the Khyber, so placed as to render it necessary for the enemy to carry it before he could advance on Peshawar, and so well armed and designed as to give the field force manœuvring under its support every chance of success against troops trying to deploy on issuing from the defiles of the pass.

The re-establishment of an ordnance dépôt at Peshawar, of sufficient capacity to supply two army-corps for 3 months, forms an essential feature in the scheme; and is the more necessary owing to the already congested state of the Rawal Pindi arsenal.

Railway extension from Peshawar towards Kabul will, of course, involve defensive works—certainly at the point where the line will enter the hills, probably at Jalalabad, and possibly elsewhere. But any forecast respecting the extent and nature of such defences would be premature, inasmuch as the guiding local conditions are at present unknown.

(B.) The debouchure of the Kuram Pass should be held by detached works on a smaller scale than those at Peshawar.

(C.) A strong position should similarly be constructed at the Gomal, commanding the mouth of the pass, and covering the terminus of the metre-gauge railway from Dera Ismail Khan.

(A.) The defence of the Khyber Pass depends more on political than military considerations; we ought to hold both outlets, but, as I shall endeavour to explain in the latter part of this note, the main defence must be at the western end.

I am not in favour of the re-establishment of an ordnance dépôt at Peshawar; it would cost a considerable sum of money to arrange a magazine, and the position of the old mud fort, immediately adjoining the city, is in the highest degree objectionable. Rawal Pindi is distant by rail only 100 miles from Peshawar, and though I consider the position of the arsenal there extremely faulty, it has been accepted by the Government, and is not likely to be changed. The interior space is certainly cramped, but I understand this can be remedied, and that a proposal for increasing the area has been submitted.

Any idea of extending the railway from Peshawar towards Kabul may, I think, be laid aside for the present.

(B.) (C.) I do not think that the Kuram route would ever be used, except perhaps by a small force, but I see advantages in placing a fort somewhere near Thal. At the mouth of the Gomal, on the other hand, it would, I think, be wasting money to construct a strong position. This pass can, as I have explained above, be taken in reverse both from the Zhob and the Tochi valleys; and as there are three, if not four, distinct outlets at the eastern extremity, it would require a series of extensive works to block them all.

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(D.) An ordnance depôt to hold stores for 30,000 men for 3 months should be re-established at Mooltan, the importance of which, as a base of supply, will be much enhanced by the proposed frontier railway Mooltan-Sher Shah-Kurashi Ghat-Darya Khan.

It seems questionable whether a strong defensive position should not be prepared at Mooltan, consisting of the post already under construction, supplemented by two or more heavily-armed redoubts.

(E.) The necessity for a second class arsenal at Quetta need hardly be pointed out; and the Miri defences, when improved and properly armed, supported by one or two detached redoubts, should serve to render the position adequately secured.

(F.) In Pishin, a strong entrenched position covering the junction of the two railways and commanding the passes in front will be wanted, and will probably take the form of three or more heavily-armed redoubts, garrisoned by half a battalion each, and protecting a space sufficient to accommodate a considerable field force, and to admit of the storage in walled enclosures of ordnance and commissariat supplies for 60,000 men for

If ever a railway is made from Dera Ismail Khan, I trust that it will not be on the metre gauge.

(D.) I am not in favour of re-establishing an ordnance depôt at Mooltan, although I readily admit the importance of Mooltan as a link between the Punjab and the Derajat. The trace of the work now being constructed at Mooltan is not strong enough to warrant a magazine being located within it, and it is undesirable to increase our responsibilities by the formation of more depôts and magazines than are absolutely necessary.

The construction of the Sutlej Bridge at Ferozepore, and connection of that arsenal with the railway system of India, has to a great extent done away with the need of an advanced depôt; but if one is considered necessary, I would place it on the island of Bukkur, under cover of the magnificent defensive position at Sukkur; the most perfect bomb-proof buildings could be made at Bukkur, which consists of rock covered with 20 to 30 feet of earth.

(E.) It is very desirable that there should be a second-class arsenal at Quetta; the old fort there is now being cleared for this purpose, and its defences are being improved. Money would be well laid out in making this place thoroughly strong and capable of giving shelter to large quantities of ordnance and commissariat stores.

(F.) As I remarked before, there is no suitable site in Pishin for such a position as is here contemplated; moreover, the idea of pushing our matériel and commissariat supplies in front of Quetta does not commend itself to me. All our stores, both for the troops in the field and the Kandahar Railway extension, should be kept in safety well behind the naturally strong position Kach-Takatu-Quetta Chiltan.



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3 months, together with the material needed to extend the railway as far as Girishk, should the Amir decline to permit of its construction previous to the outbreak of hostilities.

(G.) The defences of Kandahar are at present seriously defective, both as regards works and armament; and it would seem most important to insist on the requisite improvements being effected by the Amir without delay under the periodical inspection of British officers.

The "Ark," properly strengthened, and supplemented by two powerful detached redoubts flanking the city walls will probably suffice to secure Kandahar itself against a *coup de main*; but the occupation of the kotals and ridge in advance of the city by sangars, block-houses, and field entrenchments, including measures for protecting the water-supply from the Arghandab, is of fully equal moment.

(H.) Under the supposition that the Amir will co-operate in the extension of the railway to Girishk, and that a bridge will be thrown over the Helmand at that point, a bridge-head will be needed and would doubtless take the form of an advanced redoubt on the low trans-Helmand bank, flanked by two powerful enclosed works on the high cis-Helmand bank.

(I.) Having thus briefly detailed the improvements to communications and the defensive works which appear absolutely essential to render the North-West Frontier adequately secure, it remains to give a very rough forecast of the expense likely to be involved with respect to the latter.

The cost of most of the roads and railways mentioned is included in the sum of 5 millions believed to have been already sanctioned for their construction by the Home Government; and as regards the remainder, time has not permitted of any

(G.) The defences of Kandahar will need very careful study. At Kandahar itself, we should require a first-class fortress, and the position on the Helmand would, no doubt, have to be strengthened by a series of entrenchments. It would be most advantageous if these could be commenced at once with the Amir's permission; but unless the works could be designed by, and constructed under the direction of, competent British officers, it would only be wasting money to begin them.

(H.) Some protection would certainly be required to any bridge we might throw over the Helmand; what form it would take would depend on a variety of circumstances, and could only be determined on after a careful examination of the locality.

(I.) I hope that it may be found possible to construct all the fortifications that may be considered necessary for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions sterling; but I suspect that such works as would be required at Kandahar and on the Helmand would make a considerable hole in that sum, and would cost more than 20 lakhs of rupees.

The cost of the roads and railways will certainly exceed 5 millions; the Sind-Pishin Railway between Sibi and Quetta will alone come to 3 millions, and the temporary Bolan line to  $\frac{3}{4}$  million, leaving only  $1\frac{1}{4}$  millions for the Sind-Sagar

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information being obtained on which even an approximate estimate could be based.

The cost of the proposed fortifications would be somewhat as follows:—

	£
(a.) At Peshawar, 30 lakhs ..	300,000
(b.) At Kuram, 10 lakhs ..	100,000
(c.) At Gomal, 20 lakhs ..	200,000
(d.) At Mooltan (exclusive of the redoubts), 1 lakh ..	10,000
(e.) At Quetta.—Defensive works, 10 lakhs. 2nd class arsenals, 15 lakhs.	} 250,000
(f.) At Pishin, 25 lakhs ..	250,000
(g.) At Kandahar, 15 lakhs ..	150,000
(h.) At Girishk, 5 lakhs ..	50,000
	1,310,000
If two redoubts be constructed at Mooltan, add 8 lakhs ..	80,000
	1,390,000
Add 10 per cent. for contingencies .. ..	139,000
	Grand total .. 1,529,000

or, say 1½ millions sterling.

W. G. NICHOLSON, *Major, R.F.,  
Sec. to the Defence Committee.*

18th May, 1885.

*Note by the Inspector-General of Military Works (Colonel McLeod Innes).*

7. I agree, but would, in addition, advocate a complete line cis-Sutlej and Indus, *i.e.*, a line from Ferozepore to Bahawalpore and from Rohri to Hyderabad; also a strong entrenched position at Sukkur.

18th May, 1885.

J. J. McL. I.

Railway, and the many frontier roads which seem to me essential.

7. I do not see any military necessity for a line between Ferozepore and Bahawalpore, or from Rohri to Hyderabad. I fully agree that Sukkur should be made thoroughly secure.

*Note by the Deputy Adjutant-General,  
Royal Artillery, in India.*

8. I consider the proposals sound, and, if sanctioned in full, adequate.

I shall be glad of the opportunity to hear it discussed.

Sukkur should be made strong.

Too much defence is demoralizing to an army, I would not advocate a cis-Sutlej line.

20th May, 1885.

M. E.

*Note by the Inspector-General of Royal  
Artillery (General Leslie).*

9. I agree with all that is proposed. Sukkur should be made strong. I think the cis-Sutlej line might at any rate wait. I would strongly urge the conversion of the Rajputana line from narrow to broad gauge. I believe this would pay even in a commercial point of view—doing away with the great delay which now takes place at Ahmedabad, owing to break of gauge.

G. L.

21st May, 1885.

*Note by the Director-General of Ordnance  
in India.*

*(Major-General Hughes.)*

10. I differ on some few points from these proposals.

I.—I would not bridge a river so far in advance of our frontier as the Helmand. I should prefer to keep a good pontoon train with the engineer park at Quetta.

II.—I would advocate a complete cis-Indus railway communication from Khushalgarh to Hyderabad.

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts,  
Commander-in-Chief in India.*

8. The note by the Deputy Adjutant-General, Royal Artillery, seems to call for no remarks from me.

9. I quite agree with the proposal to convert the Rajputana line from narrow to broad gauge, especially in view of the great importance of the extension to the Indus Valley Railway being a broad gauge.

10.

I.—I fully agree.

II.—The country on the left bank of the Indus from Khushalgarh as far as Kalabagh is most difficult, and a railway would be very expensive. For the present, I would be contented with a branch line from Mianwali to Bannu *via* Kalabagh or Isakhel; troops can reach

*Note by the Director-General of Ordnance  
in India.  
(Major-General Hughes).*

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*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts,  
Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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both these places in a few hours from Attock and Khushalgarh by water, and with a line from Mianwali it would be possible to concentrate troops very quickly at Bannu, either to cover the Kuram route, to advance upon Ghazui, or to threaten the flank of an enemy moving along the Gomal Pass.

The cis-Indus line forms our third line of defence, and is not of pressing importance, whereas the trans-Indus (our second line of defence) would be quite incomplete without the power of rapidly concentrating at Bannu.

III.—I cannot see how facility of communication on internal lines would be demoralizing to any army; and I would advocate a line from Ludhiana through Ferozepore to Bahawalpore.

This could be made much more rapidly than the bridge over the Sutlej at Ferozepore; but that should also be constructed, of course.

IV.—If the extension which I have proposed for Rawal Pindi arsenal is sanctioned, I do not think an arsenal is required at Peshawar. But a railway siding should be carried into the arsenal at Rawal Pindi.

V. Instead of establishing what is called an "ordnance depôt" at Mooltan (which to supply stores for 30,000 men must be a second-class arsenal), I would propose to have a first-class arsenal (in lieu of a second class, as at present) at Karachi.

When the Sutlej is bridged at Ferozepore, that arsenal will be only 10 hours or so by rail from Mooltan; and the Quetta arsenal might be most cheaply fed with stores from Karachi, at which place reinforcements from home for the North-West Frontier will, I presume, by-and-by be landed and equipped.

Both Karachi and Quetta (more especially the latter) should, I think, be brought into the Bengal Ordnance Circle.

III.—Facility of communication on internal lines is of the greatest possible value, and I most thoroughly agree with the late General Hughes that it could not in any way demoralize an army; at the same time I see no great military advantage in a railway from Ludhiana through Ferozepore to Bahawalpore; commercially it might be useful.

IV. & V.—I am quite against anything in the shape of an arsenal, magazine, or depôt being formed at Peshawar. Nor do I think Mooltan well situated for the purpose. As I said before, if any ordnance depôt is considered necessary between Ferozepore and Quetta, or Karachi and Quetta, I would establish it on the island of Bukkur.

*Note by the Director-General of Ordnance  
in India.  
(Major-General Hughes.)*

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts,  
Commander-in-Chief in India.*

VI. I would not advocate a collection of ordnance stores in advance of Quetta, as proposed.

If a second-class arsenal is established at Quetta, it will contain all stores necessary to equip an ordnance field park for 30,000 men at the shortest notice; and in advance of Quetta this field park will be the source of supply for an army-corps; while, with the aid of a railway, Karachi and Ferozepore will at once reinforce Quetta with the munitions required for a second and third army-corps, if necessary.

With the above exceptions, I concur in the proposed scheme.

I would only beg that in arming our new strong places, we remember that, to be of any use, they must be prepared to resist an attack from an enemy who is just now in possession of a stronger siege artillery equipment than that of England herself; and we must, therefore, not be content without procuring from home for this particular purpose ordnance of the newest type.

I think the cost of the additions to Quetta depôt to convert it into a second-class arsenal has been put at much too high a figure at 15 lakhs.

The first-class arsenal at Ferozepore cost only 120,000*l.* in all.

If a couple of lakhs could be spent at Quetta and the remainder at Karachi, the Ordnance Department would be well provided for.

T. E. H.

22nd May, 1885.

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in  
India (Major-General Sir Charles  
MacGregor).*

VI.—I fully agree as to the undesirability of collecting stores in advance of Quetta. There we must have an arsenal, and money ought to be freely spent to render the position thoroughly secure. I cannot draw attention too earnestly to the remarks of the late General Hughes on the necessity of our fortifications being provided with the most suitable armaments; we must have guns of the newest type, and a sufficient number of trained artillery men to work them.

I cannot offer any opinion as to the estimate for the arsenal at Quetta, but judging from the cost of labour and material at the two places, I should think that building would be at least three times as expensive at Quetta as at Ferozepore.

11. (1.) I think the proposals are good, as far as they go; but I sincerely trust that they do not foreshadow the adoption of a purely defensive policy in this Russian

11. I fully agree with all that Sir Charles MacGregor has urged in the first seven paragraphs of his Note. "Defence, not defiance" may be a good motto in

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).*

question. History proves that a purely defensive attitude in war is folly; and I think for us to adopt it, as an answer to Russian advances, would be nothing short of absolute madness. I therefore wish to put on record my opinion that as long as such measures are only part and parcel of a great offensive and defensive plan of operations against Russia, I approve of the spirit of these proposals.

(2.) The question which is now before us is a very great one—it is, in fact, the greatest that Englishmen have ever had to face, because on the decision arrived at and the measures taken will depend not only the maintenance of our rule in India, but our existence as a first-class Power.

(3.) On the supposition, therefore, that these proposals are only part of a great offensive-defensive plan to avoid these calamities, I now address myself to a consideration of the Secretary's note. This is entitled "Proposals for the defence of the North-West Frontier." In order to consider this properly, we must put before ourselves as accurate an idea as possible of the probable state of affairs which will exist when we are driven to fall back on a line of positions on our North-West Frontier. The Secretary's note does do this for us, but does so in a way to which I must take strong exception. He says that "no occupation of Afghan territory is contemplated, but that Kandahar is held by the Amir and connected with India by an extension of the Sind-Pishin Railway." Now, to leave Kandahar to be defended against Russia by any Amir, or any Afghan, simply means that, sooner or later, it will be lost—most probably by treachery, certainly after a very inferior defence; and if it is in such danger of being lost, the sooner it is *not* in connection with the Sind-Pishin Railway the better.

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

Europe, but it is entirely inapplicable to Asia, and I believe that should any hostile shadow be permitted to loom over India from the crests of the Suleiman range, the country would speedily become un-governable.

Were India approachable through Baluchistan alone, nothing more would be required than to make ourselves secure in that province. This would be effected by the construction of such works as might be found necessary to supplement the natural fortresses which already exist, and by the completion of good roads and railways. Unfortunately, however, there are other entrances to India, and we are taught by the history of the past, as well as by the political and military arguments which would probably influence a Commander of the present day, that these entrances are more likely to be adopted than the passes leading through Biluchistan. There is but little doubt, that once an enemy had established himself at Kandahar, his object would be to join hands with such portions of his army as might have advanced simultaneously upon Ghazni and Kabul. Having effected his junction (although he would certainly threaten Baluchistan), the further advance towards India would be made at leisure by either the Gomal, Kuram, and Khyber routes, or by all three of them, as might be found most convenient. The idea, so readily accepted, both in India and in England, that Russia would find the occupation of Afghanistan a matter of danger and difficulty, may be dismissed at once and for ever. The country to the north of the Hindu Kush, including Herat and Afghan Turkestan, is practically Russian already; and unless we intervene, she would experience no more difficulty in gaining possession of Kabul and Kandahar than we did in 1879. Having occupied those places, she would be assisted in her onward movement towards India by the Afghans, and the thousands of warlike

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).*

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(4.) Therefore, it seems to me that, to talk of the defence of the North-West Frontier of India, while we so neglected the most important point in that defence, is quite inadmissible. Whatever differences of opinion there may be about other points, I do not know any man who does not hold to the vital importance of Kandahar; but even if there *was* no one else on my side, I would still hold that, unless we strain every nerve to make Kandahar absolutely secure, we must indeed be afflicted with the blindness and the madness which betoken decay.

(5.) Still it is within the range of possibility that, after doing all we could, we might lose Kandahar. Such an event I regard as in the very highest degree improbable. Yet it might happen; and no doubt a plan of operations for the defence of India worthy of us must provide for this as for all other eventualities.

(6.) Consequently, what we have to consider seems to me to be this. If the Russians are in possession of Kandahar, Kabul, and Chitral, what defences should we have ready to prevent their successfully putting the finishing stroke to their advance on India?

(7.) If an enemy is in possession of the above three points, we must give him credit for some knowledge of war, and must take for granted that he will make no further move till his communications to the rear are perfected—till his arsenals and magazines in the front are full, till he has made himself intimately acquainted with the whole country to his front, till he has made satisfactory arrangements with the Afghans—in fact, till he is ready.

men who inhabit the mountains between Afghanistan and the Indus. Nothing that we could then do would prevent the Russians from debouching on the plains of India. No forts that we might have constructed would be of any avail; indeed, I much doubt if they would delay Russia a single day, once Afghanistan was in her possession. Her advance might be expected to be slow and gradual; nothing would be attempted by surprise; she would most likely wait until she had thoroughly consolidated her power in her newly-conquered country and gained over the tribes between it and India; meanwhile her emissaries would be busy everywhere, rousing the restless, discontented spirits which are to be found in every province in India, and tampering with the loyalty of our native soldiers. The result of such action on her part, combined with what would appear to every native in India as weakness and timidity on ours, would inevitably leave us without any friends in the country; our troops would be harassed by incessant raids from one end of the frontier to the other; the native portion would be convinced of our inability to resist the Russians, and, eventually, when they appeared in vast numbers at the heads of the several passes, we should find ourselves deserted by the very men upon whose assistance we depend for the defence of India. It may be asked, why could not the passes be barred by suitable forts? The answer is, that the passes themselves are too far apart for any defensive works placed at their exits to be able to depend upon each other for support; while on the other hand, if we were to construct a line of forts that would be of real strategical value, it would necessarily be an extended one, and would have to consist of exceedingly strong works, armed with powerful guns, and garrisoned by considerable bodies of men. With our limited army, we cannot

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).*

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*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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afford these large garrisons; and even if we had money enough to build, and men enough to garrison the several large forts that would be required for the defence of the Indus, they would not include any important town, and consequently would not prevent an enemy availing himself of the resources of the country.

We require all our soldiers to take the field, and we should not waste a single man in a fort except where an arsenal has to be protected, or where the position is very far advanced—as Kandahar, for instance, were we to occupy it. In such cases forts are essential, but, looking to the necessity of fostering the morale of our troops, especially the native portion of them, the less we have to do with permanent fortifications the better. As it will generally be found that in most places entrenchments sufficient for the purpose can be rapidly constructed when required, the building of permanent works would be about as wise as the shouting of *All's well* at nights by sentries on service, which only serves to show the enemy where the sentry is, and how to avoid him. Thus, it seems clear that Baluchistan, though extremely defensible in itself, does not in any way cover the northern approaches from Afghanistan to India; that we cannot hope to secure India by making the Indus our frontier and erecting forts at the mouths of her several passes leading from Afghanistan; and that by remaining on the defensive below these passes we might drive the Afghans and the frontier tribes into the arms of Russia, while we should run a very serious risk, not only of seeing our fellow-subjects turn against us, but of losing the service of our native soldiers.

In order to defend India, we must inevitably advance beyond our present frontier; and although time alone can decide when we ought to advance, and how far we ought to advance, the consideration of these questions might appropriately find a place in a note dealing



*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major - General Sir Charles Mac Gregor).*

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

with the defence of the North-West Frontier of India.

To be really strong, to be able to regard with comparative indifference the movements of Russia, and to secure the safety of India, we require to have—

1st. Such a hold over the Afghans and the warlike tribes of the frontier as would ensue their throwing their lot in with us;

2nd. Complete command of all the approaches leading from Afghanistan to India;

3rd. Our frontier contracted to such a length as would admit of its being defended by a reasonably-sized army.

There is only one place the occupation of which would fulfil these requirements—*viz.*, Kandahar. Once there, our influence would rapidly spread all over Afghanistan; it alone covers the several roads to India; and our frontier on the Helmand would not be more than 130 to 150 miles in length.

We cannot, of course, occupy Kandahar or move beyond our present frontier so long as our existing engagements with the Amir continue, or unless we are obliged to do so in self-defence, but no proposals for “the defence of the North-West Frontier” would, in my opinion, be complete that did not contemplate the occupation of Kandahar and the country beyond as far as the Helmand. The Amir’s authority will not last for ever; he may die at an early date; the tribes may take heart and rebel; or, what is more probable, the Russians may find some excuse for violating the frontier.

It is for these occurrences we ought to be fully prepared. It will not do to wait until the Amir is dead, or the Russians reach Herat. Herat is now part of Afghanistan; a month after its occupation by Russia, her Cossacks would be on the Helmand, or even in Kandahar, and the Afghans irretrievably turned against us.

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).*

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*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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We must have everything prepared, so that on the very first intimation of the Russians crossing the Afghan frontier or (if considered necessary), of the Amir's death, we may be able to advance without a day's delay on Kandahar, and occupy the whole of the country up to the Helmand.

In all proposals for the defence of India I would treat the question of Kandahar as if its loss lay beyond "the range of possibility," and I would act on the assumption that, happen what may, we must hold on to it. Meanwhile, I would devote all our energies and money to perfecting our communications up to the valley of the Indus and onwards to the Helmand as soon as circumstances will admit of our doing so; to improving our relations with all the frontier tribes from Gilgit to Seistan; and to constructing such fortifications as would ensure the safety of our ordnance depôts and commissariat stores, as well as the many costly bridges, tunnels, and viaducts which exist on the frontier railway.

(8.) Then when he is ready, by what lines can he advance? I will begin from the north. I do not think there is much danger of any advance through Kashmir; but it is undoubted that a small Russian force which had advanced to Chitral could be gradually increased to, say, 5,000 men, and that, if the plunder of the Peshawar valley was offered them, there would be few men amongst the inhabitants of the Yusafzai valleys south of Gilgit and Chitral who would not be ready to join them. These, united, would make a formidable force, and one that could not be ignored. They would be a wild, irregular mob, it is true; but they would swarm over—from Panjkora, from Swat, and Buner—by every goat's path; and so it would be as useless to attempt to stay their advance by erecting forts at the mouth of passes as to dam a flood in the

(8.) Quite true; but I fear that when difficulties arose this graphic description would be found applicable, not only to the Peshawar frontier, but to the entire border from Hazara to Baluchistan, thus vitiating the whole idea of sealing up passes and positions with fortified works. In the north as in the south we must keep the enemy at a distance. Although no army could enter India by any known route to the north of the Khyber, small bodies (as Sir Charles MacGregor says) might venture to do so, and as even a brigade of Russian troops appearing at Chitral or Gilgit would be the signal for a general rising of all the tribes on our extreme northern frontier and would cause considerable excitement throughout Kashmir and the Punjab, we cannot afford to leave these places unwatched. There is only one pass, *viz.*, the Dorah, by

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).*

Himalayas by putting up a few posts in its course. Forts or no forts, they would get into our territory; and if we met their advance by shutting ourselves up in forts, they would spread all over the district, and get round in rear of our position near Peshawar. No; the way to meet such foes is to let them trickle over the passes how they may, collect a bit, and by the sufficient and energetic use of cavalry utterly destroy them.

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

which the Russians could reach Chitral; this presents considerable difficulties, but for 5 or 6 months every year it is passable for laden animals, and is then frequently used by kafilas. It would be almost as great an undertaking for us to send a small force to Chitral as it would be for the Russians to do so from Badakhshan. Of the three roads which lead to it from India, the first, through Kashmir, is usually closed from November to June by snow; the second, *via* Swat, is out of the question so long as we are unable to effect some change in the hostile attitude of the tribes who inhabit the country, through which it passes; and the third through the Khyber Pass, would be only possible if we were holding Landi Kotal and had the Afridis with us. Under these circumstances, our best plan would be to raise a local force at Chitral, and place it under the command of a military-political officer, whose business it would be to gain over all the neighbouring tribes and to put the Chitral-Dorah position into a state of defence.

A similar arrangement should be made at Gilgit, which might be threatened by a small force through Wakhan. We must keep our hold over Kashmir, and we should insist on the efficiency of the Maharaja's few troops at Gilgit and Astor, which should be placed under the general control of the military-political officer. It is worthy of consideration whether it might not be desirable for us to supply breech-loading rifles and mountain guns to the Chitral levies, and to such of His Highness's troops as garrison Gilgit and Astor; for, unless we can depend on them to defend this part of the frontier, we may be obliged to despatch British troops there at a time when we shall require our soldiers for more important work.

(9.) The next road by which an advance might be made is from Kabul by

(9.) To block the Khyber Pass we ought to hold both outlets, but the main defence

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*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

Jalalabad. As far as the longitude of Pesh Bolak, an army could advance by three roads. After this, there is only one road practicable for guns, though there are many paths practicable for infantry. There is no doubt an enemy advancing by this road must take the Khyber road; and if that is blocked by a strong entrenched position, on which a strong field army could pivot, it ought to be very difficult for them to make good their entry into the Peshawar valley. Therefore, one such position should be placed so as to command the exit from all the passes and cover Peshawar.

must be at the western end, where the three roads alluded to by Sir Charles MacGregor join; there, the pass would have to be forced, it cannot be turned or masked like any ordinary fortress; indeed the position could be more practically impregnable by having a couple of small forts, one at Landi Kotal, the other at or about Chinar in the Bazar valley, with a good road connecting them. At the eastern end of the Khyber, the present post at Jamrud is all that is, in my opinion, needed, for with an enemy in sufficient force, no post (however strong), either there or in any other part of the Peshawar valley, would avail us much. Any such position could easily be turned or masked by a portion of the invading army, while the main body made straight for the Indus, crossing that river above or below Attock, and completely paralyzing the whole upper trans-Indus defence. Moreover, in the defence of such a fort, not only should we lack the assistance of the Afridis, but in all probability we should find them arrayed against us; for, even if they could be induced to oppose the Russians in the first instance, the latter, by proving themselves able to force the Khyber, would turn the scale, and the Afridis would certainly join them, if only to share in the loot of the Peshawar valley. The defence of the Khyber Pass and the possession of Peshawar, would, I consider, depend on our relations with the Afridis. With them against us, we could not defend the pass at the only place where a defence is possible; and once the Russians reached the eastern outlet, assisted as they then would be by the Afridis and the neighbouring tribes, our position in the Peshawar valley would be untenable. We should have to fall back upon some position where a small force could hold a large one in check. The position I would select is on the right bank of the Kabul river from Khirabad to Akora, thence *via* the Kunna-Khel Pass

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and the old camel road to India, into the re-entering angle of the Indus at Nilab. This forms a very strong compact position, and the only one I know of in the Peshawar valley that could not be turned by superior numbers. Scarcity of water is the only drawback to it that I am aware of, and I would urge the early construction of tanks or reservoirs. These would cost little; with them, and by taking advantage of and improving, where necessary, the physical features of the ground, we should have a strong position, where, aided by a movable force located in the neighbourhood of Campbellpore, we might hope to dispute successfully the passage of the Indus, and hold our own until we could resume the offensive, which we ought to do on the first opportunity, both from Khushalgarh *viâ* Kohat, and from Bannu *viâ* Thal or Kohat.

Kohat and Bannu thus become very important places, especially Bannu; it is within 10 or 12 marches of Ghazni; from it a force would threaten the flank of an enemy who ventured to move towards Kabul or Kandahar, the Gomal Pass and Kuram could be taken in reverse, while it is well placed to support the defence of the Indus near Attock. Kohat is favourably situated to aid in the defence of, or in offensive movements towards the Khyber, and it is very desirable that it should be connected with the Peshawar valley by a good military road.

(10.) From Kabul an enemy might also advance by Logar, the Shutargardan, and Peiwar Passes down the Kuram valley to Kohat or Bannu. If he seized either place in force, he would be exceedingly well placed as regards our communications from Peshawar to Lahore. Therefore, it is evident that another position must be selected, which will cover the roads to Kohat and Bannu.

(10.) I cannot think that the Kuram route would be used except, perhaps, by a small force, as the Shutargardan Pass is closed for 3 or 4 months every year, and a force moving by it would be liable to be attacked on the flank from Bannu through Khost. However, it is certainly advisable that we should have a fortified post in the neighbourhood of the Kuram valley, and somewhere about Thal would be a good place for it, as it could be readily supported from Bannu, to which a good road should be made.

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(11.) There is a road down from the Ghilzai plateau by Khost to Bannu, but it would not be likely to be used; besides, our position near Thal above mentioned and the one now to be noted would sufficiently close it.

(12.) From Ghazni to the plains of India, the easiest and most direct road is through Shilgar, Zurmat, and Dawar to Bannu; and this should, undoubtedly, be closed by an entrenched position somewhere to the south of Edwardesabad.

(13.) South of this there are roads through the Waziri hills; but they are so bad as not to be available for an army with guns, so that the next point to be considered is the Gomal Pass. This is of the last importance; for roads from Kabul, Ghazni, Kalat-i-Ghilzai, and Kandahar all converge on to it, and it leads direct on Lahore—a very important strategical point. Thus it is certain this route would be used, and its exit in the plains must be blocked by a strong position in the Gomal valley.

(14.) If we exclude the tracks which debouch into the plains opposite Luni, Draband, and Chaodwan, all of which are very difficult, there is no practicable road till we come to Vihowa.

(15.) We next come to the Sangarh Pass, through which leads a road up to Pishin. But this road, the Fort Munro and Thal, the Marri and the Dera Bugti roads, could not be used by any army as long as we held our own in Pishin; and therefore I do not think any fortifications are necessary opposite their exits at present.

(16.) We now come to Pishin, which is perhaps the next most important position to Kandahar. An impregnable position should exist here, on which our army, driven from Kandahar, could pivot so as to command and dominate all the roads

(11), (12), (13), (14), (15). The Gomal is certainly the most important of all the routes leading from Afghanistan towards the Derajat, but there are several other passes, all of which are practicable for camels, and most of them for wheeled artillery, as has been proved by the several expeditions which have been made into the Waziri country. It will not suffice, therefore, to block only the Gomal Pass; to make our fortifications really effective, we should require, as I mentioned before, a very extended line of exceedingly strong works, armed with powerful guns, and garrisoned by considerable bodies of men. Moreover, as I have already stated, the best way of preventing the Gomal being used against us would be to take it in reverse *via* the Zhob and Tochi valleys.

(16.) It is of the first importance that we should be in strength on this part of the frontier, and although I trust that our army will never be driven from Kandahar, I fully admit the necessity of our having an impregnable position in the vicinity of

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).*

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

which lead from Kandahar and Kalat-i-Ghilzai to India, whether to the north or south of the Kojak.

Quetta. Suppose, however for the sake of argument, that the Russians were in possession of Kandahar, then, in my opinion, it is not to the Pishin plain, but the Kach-Takatu-Quetta-Chiltan, position, on which we must pivot to support our outposts on the Khwaja Amran range, and command "all the roads which lead from Kandahar and Kalat-i-Ghilzai, whether to the north or south of the Kojak." Fortunately, the position, of which Quetta is the centre, is peculiarly strong, and if no serious political complications arose, it could be made impregnable by the construction of good roads and strategic lines of railway, and of such works as might be found necessary to supplement the natural fortresses which exist.

The Khwaja Amran is the outpost of this position; the country south of a straight line connecting the Gwajha with the Ghazaband Pass is so difficult as to be practically impassable to, and easily defended against, a European army; to the left, a desert extends from Shahrud to the Helmand, a distance of about 125 miles; and on the right, the Takatu mountain presents a perfect barrier from Quetta to Kach. The position is further strengthened by the Sind-Pishin Railway and the road now under construction from Dera Ghazi Khan to Pishin: these will effectually protect the right flank by enabling troops to be rapidly concentrated in the Bori and Zhob valleys. Suitable sites should be selected for outposts on the Khwaja Amran, and to support them two good roads from Quetta are required, one through the Ghazaband Pass, Gulistan Karez and the Gwajha Pass to Argutai; and the other through Kila Abdula and the Kojak to Chaman; while some kind of fortification might with advantage be placed in front of Bostan (the junction of the Sind-Pishin and Belan Railways), and also between the Margha Kotal and the Ghazaband Pass. To protect the extreme

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left flank (the weak part of the position) we require a railway from some point on the Bolan line through Nushki and Shorawak to Argutai. Whether we eventually advance to Kandahar and the Helmand or not, this railway seems to me essential, for even if a line could be constructed across the Khwaja Amran within a reasonable time, and at a fairly moderate cost, it would not, strategically, be of such value as one *via* Nushki, which would have the additional advantage of being on the direct route for the Helmand, to some point on which a branch line may eventually be found necessary.

With the assistance of the Sind-Pishin and Nushki-Argutai Railways, we ought not only to hold our own on the Khwaja Amran, but also to threaten the Russian communication between Kandahar and Chaman; but if we were driven off that range, we should have to fall back on the great Kach-Takatu-Quetta-Chiltan position. Forts on the open Pishin plain would be of no avail in arresting the progress of the enemy; they could be masked and their garrisons starved into submission. On the other hand, the position, of which Quetta would be the centre, would be unassailable so long as its flanks were protected, and would effectually bar any hostile advance towards India from the west.

In any scheme for the defence of the North-West Frontier of India, the political aspect of the question must not be overlooked; in fact, in the study of this all-important problem, military and political considerations are inseparable. This, of course, adds considerably to our difficulties, and, under certain circumstances, might compel us to subordinate strategical considerations to political necessities. It was for this reason that I alluded to the possibility of the defence of the Quetta position being affected by "serious political complications," but so long as the tribes of Biluchistan are with us, we might, as I



*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).*

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*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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have said, make ourselves absolutely secure at Quetta.

There is a saying amongst the Baluchis "that he who holds the elbow of the Helmand grasps the waist of Baluchistan;" the meaning of which, applied to ourselves, is that, to be masters of Baluchistan, we must never permit an enemy to approach the neighbourhood of the Helmand. Should the Russians establish themselves on that river, our rule in the eyes of the Baluchis and their Khan would be at an end. The whole province would inevitably become disturbed; difficulties about supplies and transport would at once arise; our communications would be threatened, and our position in front would be in serious danger.

Any advance beyond the Khwaja Amran would certainly entail the occupation of the country as far as the Helmand, from which position we should effectually cover the left flank of Kandahar (its weak point), and we could threaten the Russian communications in the direction of Meshed and Herat and prevent them pushing their way through Western Baluchistan towards the Persian Gulf. We have hitherto comforted ourselves with the belief that the Registan desert would prove an insurmountable object to an army, and it has been generally accepted (without perhaps giving the matter much thought) that it would be impossible to make a railway across it, but the experience gained by the Afghan Boundary Commission proves that it does not present such difficulties as has been supposed, and that its passage would be scarcely more troublesome than that of the Kachi desert before the railway was made from Sukkur to Sibi. We know that in 1839, "the Army of Afghanistan," with its crowds of followers and enormous trains of baggage, crossed this latter desert, and we may be certain, after the exploits of the Russian brigades under General Verëvkin and Colonel Lomakin in 1873, that a Russian commander would not be

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*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

(17.) If we were driven out of Pishin, we should have to fall back on Sibi and Gandava, where positions would have to be got ready, as well as at the exits of all the passes from Vihoa south.

(18.) This, to my idea, completes a consideration of all the country which need be treated of here; which is simply that of the trans-Indus border of British India, and, therefore, only one part of the problem of the defence of India, and all we are ask to consider. In front as well as in rear of this line are others which likewise require earnest consideration.

(19.) Having now pointed out the points which, I think, should be held, I will, before turning to the question of communications, allude to two other points. The Secretary says we are to render the North-West Frontier (really the trans-Indus border) as safe as it can be by an expenditure reasonably proportionate to the interests at stake. In regard to this, I will only say that the expenditure of our last farthing would not be disproportionate to the interests at stake.

(20.) And a much more important point is not alluded to at all in this note—the number of men we should require to make good such a defence as I have sketched. Fortifications can be improvised and railways can be laid down hastily, but soldiers cannot be ordered by a stroke of the pen; and, therefore, to make even this limited programme complete, we should consider

deterred by physical difficulties, or slow to take advantage of our want of foresight should we leave the Nushki gateway open and unprotected.

(17.) If we were driven off the Khwaja Amran, we should have to fall back upon the Kach - Takatu - Quetta - Chiltan position, and if we were beaten out of that, we could not hold on seriously at Sibi and Gandava, but would have to retire as far as the Indus, where gunboats might be made use of, and where we ought to be able to make a good stand with a desert in front of us, and protected by the strong position which I hope will be formed in the vicinity of Sukkur.

(18), (19), (20.) Sir Charles MacGregor is, I think, mistaken in saying that railways can be laid down hastily; we cannot hope to get ground like the "put" everywhere, and should not delay making such lines as are urgently required.

I admit that entrenchments sufficient for the purpose, if not fortifications, can generally be constructed at the time of need; and what I would now recommend is that we should carefully examine all positions likely to be used in war, to ascertain how they could best be defended, and connect them by roads where necessary.

The other point noticed by Sir Charles MacGregor, *viz.*, "the number of men we should require to make good such a defence as I have sketched" is most important. Much has been done during the last 12 months to improve the Army, and an addition of 10,000 British and 16,000 Native troops has been sanctioned. But even with these extra troops (considering the responsibilities which the recent occupation of Upper Burma impose on us) we should not be in a position to undertake a great campaign without a still further increase to the British portion of the army in India, and the formation of some system of reserves, which in time of war would

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carefully the number of men required to defend our positions.

(21.) In regard to communications, it will be necessary to look at the map. There we see the advanced points are—(1) Pishin, (2) Sibi, (3) Gandava, (4) Harrand, (5) Vidor, (6) Mangrota, (7) Vihoa, (8) Gomal, (9) Edwardesabad, (10) Thal, (11) Peshawar, (12) Mardan. These naturally divide themselves into groups. The three first are properly supported from Karachi and Mooltan; the next four from Mooltan; the next two from Lahore; and the last three from Rawalpindi.

(22.) The railway from Karachi to Sibi, and from Mooltan to the same place, already provides sufficiently for the first; but the Sukkur bridge should be completed at once. The railway from Mooltan to Sibi provides for the next batch; but it is very urgent that the Ruk-Rindli section should be provided with more crossing stations, and precautions against its being damaged by floods should be taken. At present the railway can only provide four troops trains per diem; and it would take 27 days to send the first army-corps to Rindli. The line from Rindli up the Bolan should be continued as far as possible, as it is very advisable we should have a double line to Pishin.

(23.) A line from Lahore to Dera Ismail

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

provide a certain number of Native soldiers for duty with the colours, and also for garrison work within the frontiers of India. A well-considered scheme dealing with this subject was prepared by my predecessor, and I would earnestly deprecate any further delay in giving effect to it.

(21.), (22.) I would arrange the advanced points in groups as follows:—

1st. To be supported mainly from Karachi and partially from Lahore;—the Khwaja Amran range, Pishin, the Kach-Takatu-Quetta position, Nushki, the Bori valley and Sibi.

2nd. To be supported from Lahore:—Dera Ghazi Khan, the road thence through Bori to the Khwaja Amran, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu and Thal.

3rd. To be supported from Rawal Pindi and Campbelpore;—Kohat, Peshawar, Landi Kotal, Mardan, and the Khairabad—Akora—the Kanna-Khel Pass—Nilab position.

The railways from Karachi and Lahore to Sibi, and thence through Harnai to Gulistan Karez and Kila Abdula, with the assistance which the temporary Bolan line can afford, provide, to a certain degree, for the first group. On these lines the following measures would seem to be the most important: the bridge over the Indus at Sukkur; the two loops from Sukkur to Shikarpur; and from Mittri to the Nari bridge; the extension of the Sind-Pishin Railway from Bostan to Gulistan Karez and thence to Kila Abdula; a permanent railway from Rindli to Quetta, with a branch from Sir-i-ab, or some other convenient place on this line to Nushki. Every possible precaution should be taken against the Sukkur-Sibi line being damaged by floods.

(23) and (24.) The railways from Lahore

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Khan would be the best to support the latter place; but as it would have to cross so many rivers, it would be very expensive; therefore, I would accept the extension of the line from Miani. This should be taken, first, as far in the direction of Bannu as possible, unless the line, which should run from Dera Ismail to Gomal, threw out a branch from Kulachi by the Bain Dera pass to Bannu.

(24.) The line from Shersshah should be continued to Koreshi Ghat; and there should be steam ferries over the Indus and Chenab on this road.

(25.) The Peshawar line should be continued at least as far as Landi Kotal at once. I do not agree that it would be impracticable to make a line onwards, and think that a line up the Kabul river would be extremely difficult. Beyond Landi Kotal, by keeping to the hills on the north or south, and not descending into Landi Khana, I think a good gradient could be found. Once the plains beyond were reached, I should fancy a line could be made as far as She Baba with some ease. I do not know what the ascent of the Haft Kotal from the Tezeen stream is like; but if this is practicable, there is no difficulty from the crest of that ridge to Kabul.\*

(26.) The Mari-Srinagar road should be pressed on, and it should be taken on as far as possible towards Gilgit; and from the point where the cart road ends a good mule and camel road should be continued to Gilgit.

(27.) The passage of the Indus at Bunji should be fortified. The passes of the

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

through Mooltan to Shersshah and from Lahore through Lala Musa by the Sind-Saugor line partially meet the requirements of the second group, but much more is required—a steam ferry or bridge should be provided over the Chenab at Shersshah, the road from Mooltan to Dera Ghazi Khan should be metalled throughout, and there should be a steam ferry over the Indus at Kurashi. The road from Dera Ghazi Khan through the Bori valley to the Khwaja Amran range should be made without delay, as should the roads from Khushalgarh through Kohat and Bannu to Derajat and from Bannu to Thal. A branch line should be made from Mianwali to Isakhel or Kalabagh and across the Indus to Bannu.

(25.) The railway from Lahore through Rawal Pindi to Khushalgarh and Peshawar is probably sufficient for the present to meet the requirements of the third group; the line might be continued from Peshawar to Jamrud, but I do not think it a necessity, while a railway onwards to Kabul would, in my opinion, entail an expense quite out of proportion to any advantages we should derive from it.

Good roads should be made from Lawrencepore through Campbellpore to the bridge over the Indus at Attock, from Gumbut on the Khushalgarh-Kohat road to Khairabad opposite to Attock, from Kohat through the pass to Peshawar and from Jamrud to Landi Kotal, and thence to Chinar in the Bazar valley.

(26), (27.) It is very desirable that a good road should be made from the Punjab, through Kashmir, to Gilgit, and that the proposed railway to Kashmir should be pushed on. The defence of the Chitral and Gilgit positions should be carefully considered and taken in hand by the military-political officers who will, I hope, be appointed to these places.

\* There is a road from Shabkudar by Gandao to Goshta on the left bank of the Kabul river, which is said to be very easy.

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).* —

Hindu Kush into Chitral should be prepared for defence by field-works. This might be brought to Colonel Lockhart's notice.

(28.) In regard to roads, I think that a fair road practicable for camels and mules should be made on the most direct line between Dera Ghazi and Pishin. A good road should be made from the position in Pishin by Balolzai into Zhob, and also one from Gomal up the Ghoilari Pass at least to the junction of the Zhob river. I think that the sooner all the country belonging to the Kakars is thoroughly explored the better; and it should be ascertained if there is a practicable road from Vihoa through the Musa Khel country to Pishin and Zhob.

(29.) I do not attach so much importance to a road along the frontier as some people do. What is wanted for the frontier is that there should be easy roads to the rear—to Pindi, Lahore, and Mooltan.

(30.) With regard to communications more to our rear, I prefer that a railway be made from Ludhiana through Ferozepore to Adamwahan. I think this is better than bridging the Sutlej at Ferozepore.

(31.) Another important line is one from, say, Pali through Jodhpur and Jaisalmir to Rohri.

(32.) I have not in this Paper considered any lines of defences behind that on our trans-Indus border; but it is clear that if we were driven from that, our next line must be on the Indus. To do this, we should require to hold in strength all the main crossings, and provide a fleet of light-draught gunboats. A line from Lahore to opposite Dera Ismail Khan would become necessary, and also a line from Attock to Muzuffargarh behind the Indus. In the same way the other rivers—the Jhelum and Chenab, the Ravi and Sutlej—would form our next lines of defences.

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.* —

(28), (29.) The road from Dera Ghazi Khan through Pishin to the Khwaja Amran range is, I have said before, most important, as are its connections with Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, and Kohat to the north and Mooltan to the east, for however complete our rail communication may be, and however much the several lines leading towards Quetta and the Khwaja Amran might assist in the concentration of the army-corps on the frontier, they would be quite incapable of conveying all the troops with their numbers of baggage animals, tents, followers, &c.; indeed, the large majority would have to march. It is very desirable that this should be thoroughly understood, so that the construction of the frontier roads may not be delayed, on the plea that they are rendered superfluous by the railways.

(30), (31), (32.) I quite admit that it is very desirable that the communications in rear should not be lost sight of, and the more perfect they are the better; but for the present, I would devote all available funds to making roads and railways trans-Indus, except in such places cis-Indus where lines are already in course of construction; as for instance, the Sind-Sagar Railway and the two sections (the importance of which I have more than once dwelt upon), viz., from Mianwali to Bannu, and from Mooltan to Dera Ghazi Khan.

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).*

(33.) I agree with the Secretary that Mooltan should have a strong position; it is a very important point.

(34.) A strong position would be required at Rohri; and I think that a depôt should be formed here in preference to Karachi (which, being on the sea, is not a suitable site for an arsenal) or Mooltan. Another position to cover the bridge at Adamwahan and the junction of the Indus Valley and Ferozepore Railways would be required.

(35.) The defences of Kandahar should be made very strong indeed. Of course, I think it should be held by British troops alone; but even if such folly as relying on the Afghans were committed, still it should be made strong, as it may be hoped that such madness would disappear before it had been lost.

(36.) Stores of all equipment for 30,000 should be kept at Peshawar, Pishin, and Rohri.

(37.) I will now only notice a few of the points remarked on by my colleagues. I am glad to see that Colonels Innes and Elliott and General Leslie agree about the necessity for a strong position at Rohri, and that I have the support of the former and last about the railway from Ludhiana to Adamwahan. There is, of course, no use bridging the Helmand, unless we contemplate offensive operations beyond that river.

(38.) I do not think the line from Hyderabad to Rohri recommended by General Hughes very pressing, though I have always thought the Sind Railway should have taken on the left bank from Hyderabad. I would not have an arsenal at Peshawar; only an ordnance depôt. I have already said that I consider Karachi is not a suitable place for an arsenal, any more than Bombay or Madras is. Of

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

(33.), (34.) Already dealt with.

(35.) As I have said before, we should require a first-class fortress at Kandahar and very extensive field-works on the line of the Helmand.

(36.) All necessary stores should be kept at Rawal Pindi and Quetta, with a depôt at Rohri, if one is considered necessary; but I would have no magazines at Peshawar or Pishin.

(37.), (38.), (39.) seem to require no further remarks.

*Note by the Quarter-Master-General in India (Major-General Sir Charles MacGregor).*

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course, all our positions should be armed with stronger guns than the enemy are likely to be able to bring against us.

(39.) In conclusion, I repeat my conviction, that to take up a purely defensive attitude is pure madness. Militarily speaking, the best defence of India is to attack Russia at her most vulnerable point. I also hold that our position in India demands that we keep her out of Herat. Both measures together form the true solution. If these measures are unsuccessful, we can then adopt the Kabul-Kandahar line, and continue our defence at all the other lines noted above in succession.

C. M. M.

23rd May, 1885.

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*Note by the Adjutant-General in India.*

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12. (1.) For the defence of India, I assume—

- 1st. That the position to be taken up by our troops would be an offensive-defensive one trans-Indus.
- 2nd. That, should Russia advance into Afghanistan, Kandahar must be occupied by our troops; and
- 3rd. That any direct attempt on the part of Russia to gain possession of Herat must be considered as a *casus belli*; and, in that case, Kandahar would be occupied by our troops.

(2.) I quite concur in the general principles advocated in the memorandum of the Secretary, *viz.*, that, under existing circumstances as regards Russia's position, our right flank should be refused by closing, as far as possible, all passes leading from Afghanistan into India to the east of the Bolan, and that our main line of operations would be by Pishin, with a force in

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts, Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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12. I agree generally with these recommendations made by the Adjutant-General in India; the points on which I differ with him have already been fully entered into.

*Note by the Adjutant-General in India.*

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some central position, say about Dera Ismail Khan, ready to assume the offensive should Kabul be threatened.

(3.) The first consideration, therefore, is our communications, lateral, as well as those from the front to the rear.

(4.) With regard to our extreme right, no serious attack can come from that direction; although, in case of war with Russia, it is more than probable that it will be threatened.

(5.) The Khyber is accordingly the first point of importance on the lines by which an advance could be made. This pass will have to be blocked by the construction of a strongly-entrenched position at its mouths, with an advanced post in the vicinity of Lundi Kotal. On the Kuram line a defensive post will have to be constructed in the vicinity of Thal, which would cover the roads leading to Kohat and Bannu.

(6.) A strong position should be selected to close the Gomal pass, which would appear to be a line of much importance to ourselves for offensive movements, should Kabul be threatened.

(7.) With regard to the proposed arrangements in connection with the defence of the Pishin line, I quite concur. And a strongly-entrenched position will also have to be constructed on the Kojak.

(8.) Kandahar itself, I consider, must be placed, and maintained, in a state of defence, similar to what it would be if on the frontier, and posts should be re-established between Kandahar and Quetta and Kabul and Peshawar.

*Arsenals.*—I do not advocate the formation of an arsenal at Peshawar, but consider that it would be sufficient to enlarge that at Rawalpindi, and to place it in direct railway communication with the main line. An ordnance depôt, capable of holding stores for 3 months for one army-corps, would suffice at Peshawar.

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts,  
Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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*Note by the Adjutant-General in India.*

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts,  
Commander-in-Chief in India.*

The establishment of a second-class arsenal at Quetta is, of course, absolutely necessary.

The removal of the arsenal from Karachi is not, I consider, necessary, if direct railway communication be established between Sukkur and Ferozepore.

The question of a second and third line of defence, which is afforded by the Rivers Indus and Sutlej, is not before us at the present time. But I would strongly advocate the necessity of considering, with the defence of the North-West Frontier, that of the augmentation of the army in India (British as well as Native), as it forms a most important factor in these calculations.

T. D. B.

24th May, 1885.

13. From the foregoing it will be seen that I agree generally with the Defence Committee, and more particularly with the opinions expressed by the late Quarter-Master-General in India, Sir Charles MacGregor. Where I differ is, that I consider the improvement of our communications of greater importance than the immediate construction of forts and entrenchments. It must not be supposed from this that I underrate fortified positions; on the contrary, I most fully recognise their value, but considering the great expense of building and maintaining such places, and the necessity of providing suitable armaments and sufficient garrisons for them, I hesitate to recommend the erection of a single work without feeling tolerably confident that it will be required. There are certain well-defined positions, the strategical value of which are unchallenged and unmistakeable; on these I would spare no money. There are others, the pressing importance of fortifying which is more open to argument, and which, it is possible, may never be required.

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts,  
Commander-in-Chief in India.*

These latter I would leave alone for the present, satisfying myself with a careful study of the localities, and determining how they could best be defended. Meanwhile, I would push on our communications with all possible speed; we must have roads and we must have railways; they cannot be made on short notice, and every rupee spent upon them now will repay us tenfold in the day of trouble. Nothing will tend to secure the safety of the frontier so much as the power of rapidly concentrating troops on any threatened point; and nothing will strengthen our military position more than opening out the country, and improving our relations with the frontier tribes. There are no better civilisers than roads and railways, and although some of those now being constructed on the frontier may never be required for military purposes, they will be of the greatest assistance to the civil power in the administration of the country.

14. The places where, in my opinion, posts should be at once built, are—

Lundi Kotal and Chinar in the Bazar valley, Thal, and the new cantonment in the Bori valley.

The positions which I would carefully study, and, if necessary, strengthen by means of redoubts or entrenchments, are—

The Khairabad-Akora, the Khana Khel Pass-Nilab position.

The junction of the Sind-Pishin and Bolan Railways at Bostan.

The Kach-Takatu-Quetta-Chiltan position.

The Khwaja Amran range, and Sukkur.

The post of Quetta should be made strong enough to ensure the safety of the arsenal which is to be maintained there, and the area of the arsenal at Rawal Pindi should be increased to enable it to provide for the ordnance requirements of an army-corps.

All the principal bridges, viaducts, and tunnels on the frontier railways should be protected by blockhouses. It will not

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts,  
Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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suffice to place them, as has been done at Attock, at one end of the bridge, where they are practically useless, for, like the bridge itself, they are commanded from neighbouring heights. Blockhouses are required to command the approaches to the bridge, viaduct, or tunnel, and should be erected on carefully selected sites, where, if possible, they, themselves, are not in their turn commanded.

15. The railways which seem to the most important are—

- (1.) The extensions from Bostan to Gulistan Karez and Kila Abdulla.
- (2.) A permanent line from Rindli to Quetta.
- (3.) A branch from Sir-i-ab, or some other convenient point on the Bolan line to Nushki, and thence through Shorawak to Argutai.
- (4.) From Mianwali through Isakhel or Kalabagh to Bannu.

16. And to perfect our military communications, the following roads seem to me indispensable :—

- (1.) From Lawrencepore to Campbellpore and thence to the railway bridge near Attock.
- (2.) From Peshawar to Lundi Kotal and thence to Chinar in the Bazar valley.
- (3.) From Khushalgarh through Kohat, Bannu, and the Derajat to Rajanpur.
- (4.) From Gumbat on the Kohat-Khushalgarh road, *viá* Nilab to Khairabad on the Indus.
- (5.) From Kohat to Peshawar through the Kohat pass.
- (6.) From Bannu to Thal.

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts,  
Commander-in-Chief in India.*

- (7.) From Bannu towards the Gomal Pass *viá* the Tochi valley.
- (8.) From Dera Ghazi Khan through Rakhni, Anambar, and the Bori valley to Pishin.
- (9.) From Harrand through the Sham plain and Thal Chotiali to the Bori valley.
- (10.) From Mooltan to Dera Ghazi Khan : the main difficulties on this route are the passages of the "Chenab" and "Indus"; it is most important that these should be made practicable at all seasons, and bridges or steam ferries established.
- (11.) From Quetta *viá* Pishin to Kila Abdulla, and through the Ghazaband Pass to Gulistan Karez, and onwards *viá* the Kojak and Gwajha Passes respectively, to Chaman and Argutai.
- (12.) From the Sind-Pishin Railway at Harnai to Bori, and thence into the Zhob valley somewhere near Alizai.
- (13.) From Quetta to Kach, both by the front and rear of the Takatu range.

Some of these roads are under construction, others are mere country paths; all should be made good military roads and metalled for a certain width throughout; for, after heavy rain, especially in the trans-Indus district, the country is quite impassable.

17. With the completion of the forts and fortified positions, and the several roads and railways I have recommended, the frontier would be well protected, and our communications almost perfect. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance

*Note by General Sir Frederick Roberts,  
Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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of these works ; and, as their construction must, under the most favourable circumstances, take a considerable time, I cannot too strongly urge that those which have been already begun should be pushed on without delay, and that those which have not yet been commenced should be taken in hand at once.

F. R.

*22nd June, 1886.*

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## VIII.

MEMORANDUM ON THE DESIRABILITY OF MAKING A MILITARY ROAD THROUGH THE  
KOHAT PASS.

SIMLA,

17th August, 1886.

Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, in his Despatch No. 271, dated 15th October, 1885, replying to the various proposals submitted by the Government of India for the defence of the North-West Frontier, has referred to the Kohat Pass, and suggested (paragraph 11) whether "advantage might not be taken of the present opportunity for re-shaping the arrangements now in force in regard to the Kohat Pass, in view of a good military road being made through it, and such measures being adopted as may give to the Government of India more complete control over it."

Before proceeding to discuss the particular point at issue, it may be useful to consider briefly the geographical position of the Kohat Pass and its connection with the great Afridi tribe.

The distance from Kohat to Peshawar is 37 miles, the whole of which, with the exception of 10 miles from near Aimal Chabootra to the Kohat Kotal, which belongs to the Afridis, is within British territory. So long as we are on good terms with this tribe, these 10 miles are kept open for us, but when they wish to annoy us they close it on the slightest pretext; on such occasions all communication between Peshawar and Kohat has to be carried on either by Rawal Pindi, a distance of 200 miles, or Attock and the Nilab Gasha (at present only a camel track), 117 miles, or Cambellpore, 149 miles. The conveyance of salt to Peshawar and elsewhere is the principal occupation of the Kohat Pass Afridis; they have, in addition, a tolerable trade with Peshawar and Kohat in wood, charcoal, and the mazarai or dwarf-palm, the leaves of which are used in making matting, and it is chiefly on questions affecting this traffic that our complications with the Adam Khel Afridis have arisen.

The districts of Peshawar and Kohat came under the control of the British Government during the years 1848-49. These two districts completely command the northern and southern outlets of the pass; and by energetic and continued action on our part the trade by which the pass-men exist can be completely stopped. Their strength is contemptible, and the only assistance likely to be given them, in case of complications with us, would come from the sections of the Afridi tribe residing in the immediate neighbourhood of the pass. Under any circumstances these sections could not produce more than 7,000 fighting men, but with the Jowaki expedition to guide us, we need not anticipate having more than half that number arrayed against us. Notwithstanding the military operations of 1850, which resulted in the destruction of some half-dozen villages, the closing and blockade of the pass in 1853, and again in 1875-76, when the Gallai and Akhorwal sections made their submission and promised to repair a certain portion of the road—a compact never actually carried out by them, or insisted upon by us—the condition of the Kohat Pass is now exactly what it was under the Sikh rule, except that in the interim the inordinate vanity of the tribe has been fed by the protracted and unprofitable negotiations which our local officers have from time to time, carried on with them. After all these years the British Government finds itself in a position as curious as it is unenviable; it has neither the power nor the means to

insist on the smallest repair being made on the road which connects two stations, politically and strategically of the highest importance. It seems impossible that this anomalous state of affairs can be allowed to continue much longer, or that a petty tribe should be permitted to annoy us whenever it chooses.

In 1878, when complications with Afghanistan seemed likely to arise, the unsatisfactory nature of our relations with the frontier tribes became at once apparent and the Kohat Pass question forced itself into notice; it was then decided that our relations with the Afridis were intolerable and humiliating, and that, with or without their leave, a good military road should be made from one end of the Kohat Pass to the other, and a force was actually detailed to ensure this work being carried out. The Afghan war put a stop to the undertaking, and nothing has been done since.

It would appear imperative on political as well as military grounds that this undesirable state of affairs should cease, and that, as the Secretary of State suggests, "some arrangement less anomalous and inconvenient than the present should now be arrived at."

It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that if negotiations are only carried on firmly with the Kohat Pass Afridis, difficulties, imaginary or otherwise, would melt away as they did in the case of the Khyber Afridis and various sections of the Baluchis. As a formidable obstacle, either in a military or political sense, the Kohat Pass cannot be compared with the Khyber, and yet we have not experienced any difficulty in getting the control of the latter completely into our hands. Some 8 or 9 years ago such a result would have been deemed impossible; any proposal to accept so great a responsibility would have been pronounced extremely dangerous and certain to lead to serious complications, and the gravest consequences would have been predicted. The events of 1878-80, however, plainly showed the Khyberis that when we found it necessary to use the pass as our main line of communication, it concerned us little whether they disapproved of our action or not; they soon quieted down, and are now content to pocket their annual subsidy, and keep the road open and safe for travellers. This desirable result has been brought about, not by force of arms but by judicious political arrangements, facilitated no doubt by a sense of self-interest on the part of the pass-men, and their being shrewd enough to perceive that we were determined on carrying out the measure, if not with their consent, without it.

In some characteristics the Baluchis, no doubt, differ from the Afridis, yet in our dealings with these two powerful tribes, we have found that they resemble each other sufficiently to make our experience on the Sind frontier very valuable to us in dealing with the Afridis. It is only within the last few years that British officers have been seen beyond the Dera Ghazi Khan border; indeed, their going there was always put a stop to, and anyone who crossed the frontier on any pretext whatever was severely punished. Yet, when once the matter was boldly faced, the supposed danger of free intercourse with the tribes rapidly disappeared, like many other popular superstitions.

I myself, in the month of April last, rode from Dera Ghazi Khan to Pishin, through the heart of the Baluch country, with Sir Robert Sandeman, our only escort being a Duffadar's party of the 14th Bengal Lancers. The Khans themselves accompanied us, and mounted our party on their well-bred little mares. As we rode along, the main topic of conversation was the change that had come over the country, the impetus given to cultivation, and the security to life and property since the British had put down with a firm hand the internecine war which for generations past had been the bane of the country. Every day we passed unarmed parties of merchants taking their goods on camels and donkeys to the plains, and numbers of Peshawaris and others hastening towards the Sind-Pishin Railway for employment. On all sides there was an unmistakable appreciation of the change our rule had brought about.

Later on in the same month, I rode from Peshawar to Landi Kotal with a small escort of sowars, and there, as in Baluchistan, I was greatly struck with the peace and harmony which prevailed. During the present month, Major Warburton, the Political Officer in charge of the Khyber, has been wandering about the Afridi hills, where he has been received in the most friendly manner by the headmen of the villages. The Afridi, with all his fanaticism, is second to none in good common sense, and quickly perceives when dealing with a power which has proved itself stronger than himself, what is best for his own interests.

We must expect that the Kohat Pass men will at first resist all our overtures towards making a good road through their country; they know that the neighbouring tribes are watching them, and they think themselves in honour bound to maintain their imaginary "pardah." They will most likely adopt the same tactics which have been successful for 38 years, thinking that, as before, we are not thoroughly in earnest, and that if they reject our overtures steadily and defiantly, we shall not proceed to force. But if they are once convinced that we mean real business, and that we will certainly have recourse to arms to enforce our demands, I feel sure that they would give in at once.

To revert to the immediate point at issue, *viz.*, the desirability of our having a good road through the Kohat Pass. It is much to be regretted that the Lieutenant-Governor had not an opportunity of reading the whole of the Secretary of State's despatch, instead of that paragraph only which alludes to the Kohat Pass; had his Honour been able to study, in its entirety, the correspondence connected with the defence of the North-West Frontier, I think it possible he might have come to a different conclusion, for I observe that Sir Charles Aitchison says—"if, for instance, the question of revising the whole scheme of frontier defence is before the Government of India, the exigencies of such a project might possibly be strong enough to override all other considerations, and it might be necessary, as a part of such a system, to have a good military road through the Kohat Pass at all costs."

I gather from the reports of the Punjab officials that the main objections to the construction of a road through the pass are:—

- (1.) The dislike of the Afridis to have their country opened out or raise the "pardah," which it has been their boast to maintain from time immemorial between them and the outside world.
- (2.) That any attempt at coercion might excite on behalf of the Afridis the sympathetic hostility of the independent tribes, and that any action which might result in disturbing the present quiet of the frontier is to be deprecated.
- (3.) That together with other highly valued privileges, they would be denied the luxury of murdering and robbing their neighbours, except at the risk of being dealt with judicially.
- (4.) That the Afridis would not accept the construction of the road unless they were bribed with a sum of money totally disproportionate to the advantages to be gained, from a solely political point of view; and that the money would be far better spent in bridging the Indus at Khushalgarh, in extending the railway to Kohat, and making the road on the right bank of the Indus, to connect Khushalgarh with Attock or Nowshera.
- (5.) That the Kohat Pass can be occupied by British troops when required, while no amicable arrangement made with the tribes could be relied upon in times of disturbance.



The first two of these objections have, I think, been sufficiently discussed by me in the foregoing remarks. With regard to the third, it is surely inconsistent that a great civilizing nation should allow it to be taken into consideration.

As to the fourth objection, it is a matter for us, not the Afridis, to settle. We ought to determine what would be a fair sum to pay for having our own way, and we should then let the pass-men know that they would receive that amount and no more. The bridge at Khushalgarh would certainly simplify our trans-Indus communications, as would the extension of the railway to Kohat, but neither of these are urgently required as military works, and either of them would cost considerably more than making a road through the Kohat Pass. A road on the right bank of the Indus to connect the Kohat-Khushalgarh line with Attock or Nowshera is necessary, and will have to be made irrespective of the Kohat Pass road.

It is true, as stated in the fifth objection, that a British force could occupy the Kohat Pass at any time, but what a strange position for the British Government to have to force its way from Kohat to Peshawar, after it had been in possession of those places for nearly 40 years, perhaps too at a critical time when the services of each man employed to keep the pass open would be specially needed and a loss to our ranks!

I have endeavoured to reply directly to the several points raised by the Punjab Government, but they lead to the consideration of a much broader and more important subject than the mere construction of a road through the Kohat Pass. The more closely the vital question of the defence of our North-West Frontier is studied, the more apparent it will be that the attempt to separate military from political considerations is quite hopeless. So long as we had only to deal with Afghanistan and the border tribes, our best policy was, no doubt, to keep aloof from them. The near approach, however, of a European Power forces us to consider, not only the defence of the North-West Frontier, but of the Indian Empire itself, and it is admitted by the many experts who have been consulted in the matter, that to defend India, we must have command of the northern outlets of the passes, that we must, in fact, "be able to see the other side of the hill." To effect this, it is essential that we should have with us the tribes who occupy the intervening country, their attitude towards us is the essence of any scheme for the defence of our North-West Frontier; if they are with us, we need have no anxiety; if they are against us, we shall be in serious straits. It is of such vital importance that we should get hold of the tribes, that I strongly advise a reconsideration of the policy which has guided us during the last 38 years, and which has resulted in our knowing little more about our neighbours in the hills than we did when first we occupied the Punjab, and in our being absolutely uncertain as to whose side they would be upon, in the impending struggle between Russia and England. Such an unsatisfactory state of affairs should not be allowed to continue longer. There may not be much time left us. It is of the utmost importance that we should come into closer relations with the tribes, and as this would seem to be hopeless under the present system of administration, the traditions of which are altogether averse to our being in any way mixed up with them, would it not be better to change it, and separate frontier politics from the Punjab Government, as was proposed to be done in 1877-78? It may not be possible to form a Frontier Commissionership on the exact lines then contemplated. The Punjab Frontier Force has since been removed from the control of the Punjab Government, and could not now be placed under the orders of the Frontier Commissioner. His status would have to be somewhat modified; instead of having complete civil and political control of Hazara, and all the trans-Indus districts, the civil administration might be left with the Punjab Government, and political power only placed in the hands of the Frontier officer, who would devote his whole time and attention to the business, and who would not be, as all the frontier district officers now are, weighed down by civil duties. The approaching change in

the Lieutenant-Governorship of the Punjab affords a convenient opportunity for making any alteration that might be considered desirable. We ought to know all about the Gomal Pass, the Tochi Valley, and the roads leading from Bannu through Khost and Daur; also about Buner and Swat, and the country between these places and Chitral. There are only two ways of doing this, either by utilizing the boldness and dexterity of our political officers, or by military expeditions. Military expeditions are expensive, troublesome, and leave a feeling of soreness behind them; while able and intelligent political officers soon gain influence over the people, and obtain the necessary information by going quietly about the country.

If this matter should be taken up, as I now venture to suggest it may be, I am very confident that it will soon be found practicable, not only to make a good road through the Kohat Pass, but to place our relations with the tribes on a very different and more satisfactory footing than they are at present.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## IX.

## ON A PROPOSAL THAT SOME CHANGE SHOULD BE MADE IN THE CIVIL AND MILITARY ADMINISTRATION OF THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER.

SIMLA,

26th September, 1886.

I have long been of opinion that some change was desirable in the administration of the North-West Frontier, and I hope, on a review of these papers, that the Viceroy will approve of the question being taken up as a whole, and not leave the matter to be worked out only so far as the military arrangements are concerned. The two points are closely connected, and it will be satisfactory if the military requirements should lead to a speedy settlement of the civil part of the question. As regards the military arrangements it seems to me essential that the command of the frontier from Abbottabad to Karachi should be in the hands of one man, *viz.*, the Commander-in-Chief in India. This opinion is borne out by the experience of the Afghan Campaign, and it would be impossible, under any other system, to carry out in a satisfactory manner the extensively combined movements that would be necessary in any large concentration of troops at or beyond Quetta. I would leave the Peshawar district and the Punjab Frontier Force to be commanded by Brigadier-Generals, as at present, and I would make Sind and Baluchistan into a division, the head-quarters of which should be at Quetta, with a Brigadier-General at Karachi.

To avoid increase of expenditure by this arrangement, I would reduce the Sirhind command from a division to a district, and the Sind command from a district to a brigade. As it is most desirable that the Bombay Army should have a share of frontier duty, I would let the native portion of the garrisons in Sind and Baluchistan be furnished, as now, by that Army, but I would give them a local character, and enlist them from the frontier tribes, Baluchistan and the Punjab. The ordinary Bombay sepoy is quite unfitted for service in a climate like that of Quetta and Pishin; it is most distasteful to him, and he counts the days until the order comes for him to recross the water and proceed to Bhooj, Surat, Poona, or some other congenial station. More than a fourth of the Bombay Army is now quartered in Sind and Baluchistan, *viz.*, three regiments of cavalry and seven of infantry; it would be a great addition to the fighting strength of the Indian Army if these were composed of the most warlike classes—a measure which could be readily carried out by making these corps local, and never requiring them to proceed further south and east than Karachi, except in case of war. The sphere of enlistment to which the Bombay Army is now restricted is, I know, a source of grievance to the officers; until lately many of their men came from Oudh and the Punjab, and though they were seldom of the same stamp and physique as the sepoys in Bengal regiments, they compared favourably with the average recruit of the Deccan, and were consequently in great request. If instead of 37 regiments being required, as now, to be maintained by recruiting in Bombay proper and certain tracts of Rajputana, only 27 regiments had to depend on those localities, and the remaining 10 were allowed to enlist men from the Punjab and all the trans-Indus tribes, it is reasonable to suppose that the whole of the Bombay Army would be benefited. It is difficult to devise any scheme for the control of the troops in Sind and Baluchistan that would be altogether satisfactory—a difficulty that is considerably

increased by the civil administration being divided. The best solution for this would appear to be to add Sind to the Punjab, and thus place the whole frontier under the Government of India. The troops, though still continuing part of the Bombay Army, and under its Commander-in-Chief, could then be subject to the control of the Commander-in-Chief in India—an arrangement which would be scarcely possible so long as Sind remains under the Bombay Government. There is no reason to anticipate that friction or inconvenience would arise from the dual military control that I have proposed, any more than it does now in Burma, or whenever troops of different presidencies are required to serve together; questions of discipline would be dealt with by the Bombay Commander-in-Chief, but the general control would be in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief in India, and all important matters would be referred through Army Head-quarters to the Government of India.

**FRED. ROBERTS.**

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## X.

LETTER TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE W. H. SMITH, M.P., PROPOSING COMBINED OPERATIONS OF THE HOME AND INDIAN ARMIES IN THE EVENT OF A WAR WITH RUSSIA.

MANDALAY,  
31st January, 1887.

MY DEAR MR. SMITH,

When I had the pleasure of meeting you at Balmoral in September, 1885, you spoke to me about a plan which had been prepared for the despatch of one or two army-corps from England to the Black Sea or Asia Minor in the event of a war between England and Russia.

You will doubtless remember that at the time I pointed out the difficulties which an English army would have to encounter in carrying on operations so far from its own country, especially if these operations included an advance to any distance from our base on the sea: and you may, perhaps, have noticed that in my speech at the Mansion House dinner a few days later, I dwelt upon the impossibility of an army being successful in the field unless it could move rapidly and was thoroughly equipped in all respects.

Since those days, war has more than once appeared imminent. I have thought the matter over most carefully, and I have come to the conclusion that with the small army which England possesses, and the number of places it is incumbent on her to protect, it would be extremely difficult for her to place more than one army in the field; and to render that army mobile and sufficiently powerful to undertake extended operations, it would have to be composed of the best troops that could be provided. England would send the main portion of the fighting material: while India would contribute the transport, a certain proportion of the commissariat and medical requirements, and a very valuable contingent of light troops.

It is for Her Majesty's Government to consider where such a force could be most advantageously employed. If I am rightly informed, people at Home (especially military men) would urge "somewhere on the confines of Europe and Asia." In this country the large majority (including all our own countrymen) would be in favour of the "North-West Frontier of India." I feel quite sure that neither the Home nor the Indian army would be able by itself, or without receiving assistance one from the other, to operate successfully either on the confines of Europe and Asia or on the North-West Frontier of India. Troops from Home would be very helpless in any part of Asia without the aid which India could give in the matter of transport, &c.; indeed any attempt on the part of England to thrust a handful of troops upon the shores of the Black Sea or into countries accessible to the vast armies of the Continental Powers, would, in my opinion, be most dangerous.

On the other hand, India would be quite unable to meet a Russian army in Afghanistan without a considerable addition to the number of British soldiers in this country, and it seems very doubtful if we should get this addition; for if my information is correct, we must not expect that even the reserve men belonging to the battalions serving in this country would be sent out in the event of our being at war with Russia.

If we could limit offensive operations in the neighbourhood of the Black Sea, Asia Minor, or wherever it might be considered advisable to concentrate troops from England and India, we might perhaps be able to collect a force sufficiently powerful to meet the Russians in their own country; but the physical difficulties of that country are great; we should be operating at a considerable distance from our base; and if we were in any way dependent upon the Turks, we should be trusting to an ally on whom we know from experience that no reliance could be placed.

Russia is in a very different position now to what she was during the Crimean war. Our ultimate success then was not owing so much to the victories we gained, as to the loss of power and melting away of troops in the transfer of the Russian battalions to the scene of action. This could scarcely happen again, as by the system of railways which Russia has lately completed, almost any number of troops could be transported from the heart of the country to the Caucasus, or even further; while we, on the other hand, are no better prepared in the matter of transport than we were 30 years ago, when we were unable to move even a few miles from the place where we first landed.

But I maintain that it would be impossible for us to limit our offensive measures to the confines of Europe and Asia; and that however much we might wish to act on the defensive only, in the direction of Afghanistan, we should be forced to adopt an opposite policy. Anyhow, we must be prepared to take the offensive for the protection of the only frontier which England possesses. So long as she is mistress of the seas, she need be under no apprehension for any other part of her Empire, but this one frontier must be defended at all hazards—a task which would be extremely difficult without a considerable addition to the British force now in this country, and which would be scarcely possible if India had previously been required to assist the army from England either with men or transport animals. I will not take up your time by giving the reasons which have induced me to think that an active policy on our North-West Frontier would be necessary. I have gone into the question very carefully in the papers which I am sending to you in a separate cover. The extent of our troubles will depend on whether the Afghans are with or against us. They are perfectly well aware that their days as an independent nation are numbered, and that ere long they will have to choose between England and Russia. If they see that we are fully prepared and determined not to allow the Russians to cross the Hindu Kush, in all probability they would side with us; but if we hold back, they would certainly attribute our inaction to fear, and would consider the advisability of joining the Russians as the stronger Power.

We may not be able to prevent Russia seizing Herat and occupying Afghan-Turkestan; but if we could only succeed in getting the Afghans to join us heart and soul, we should have no difficulty in preventing any further advance, and ought, I think, to be able to force the Russians back across the Oxus—a movement which would go far to discourage them in Europe, and would probably raise the tribes of Central Asia against them.

If by any chance Russia were engaged in a European war at the same time that she threatened us in Afghanistan, it might not be easy for her to reinforce her Central Asian army to any great extent; under such circumstances an offensive policy would seem to be the best for us to adopt. But there are other reasons which I would urge in support of such a measure. If we remained on the defensive our Native soldiers would certainly begin to doubt our power to deal effectually with the Russians, and there would be a general feeling of alarm and disquietude throughout India, which would necessitate our having to keep much larger garrisons at all the important places than we now contemplate.

Our best, indeed our only, chance of gaining the good-will of the Afghans, of

ensuring the loyalty of the Native army, and of retaining the confidence of the people of India is to play the bold game. When the Russians advance, we must go to meet them, and in sufficient strength to satisfy the Afghans that we do not intend Russia to occupy their country ; to impress upon our sepoy's that our supremacy is in no whit diminished, and to convince the Natives of India that a Russian invasion is still a very remote contingency.

Believe me,  
Yours sincerely,  
FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XI.

## NOTE ON MILITARY PREPARATIONS NECESSARY IN THE EVENT OF OPERATIONS BEING UNDERTAKEN ON, OR BEYOND, OUR NORTH-WEST FRONTIER.

SIMLA,

*23rd May, 1887.*

The Honourable General Chesney has ably pointed out in his note "Military Preparations" the various measures which appear to him necessary to enable the Army in India to move rapidly and act with vigour, in the event of its being called upon to undertake Military operations on, or beyond, our North-West Frontier. At the conclusion of his note the Honourable Member asks the Governor-General in Council to consider the proposals he has put forward, and he expresses a hope that should these be deliberately approved of, the Financial Department may be empowered to grant the necessary funds for each proposal as it becomes sufficiently matured to be put into execution, without the Military Department being "placed on its defence to justify the necessity for that particular proposal."

It seems unnecessary to discuss the general line of policy involved in this question, for, as my Honourable Colleague points out, both the Home Government and the Government of India have decided that our Army and our frontier defences should be placed on a proper footing. With the sanction of these high authorities, large sums of money have been spent during the last 3 years on our frontier roads, railways and fortifications, and also on the Army. And with a due appreciation of the gravity of the situation these same authorities have directed the formation of two Committees: one, a Mobilization Committee, to enquire into the needs of our Army, in view to its being in readiness to take the field; the other, a Defence Committee, which for some time past has been busily engaged in working out the details of a scheme by which our frontier could best be secured against attack, and our territories protected from the humiliation of an invasion. The members of these two Committees include the Military Advisers of the Government of India and those officers on whose professional attainments and experience the fullest reliance can be placed. The duty of these Committees is to consider the several points brought before them with the utmost care, and to recommend only such measures as seem to them absolutely necessary to ensure the efficiency of the Army or the safety of the Empire. Not one of their recommendations, however, can be given effect to without the sanction of the Government of India, on whom, as a matter of course, rests the responsibility of accepting or vetoing them.

General Chesney has given a brief sketch of the various measures the Mobilization Committee (so far as it has gone) has shown to be necessary before even one Army-Corps could take the field. Each measure is essential for the carrying out of this object, and none of them could be omitted without seriously impairing the efficiency of this single Army-Corps. But, as I have already remarked, the Government of India alone must decide whether it is necessary to have this Army-Corps in readiness, and whether the measures to render it so are worth the money they will cost. All such measures must be costly, but at the same time I am confident that it would be far more economical to carry them out quietly in time of peace than when a war scare occurs. It is impossible to improvise a military machine. Much, no doubt, can be



done by lavish expenditure when the crisis arrives, but our experience of late years, as General Chesney points out, is that, even with the most lavish expenditure of money, the result obtained was painfully inadequate to the outlay.

Hitherto our isolated position, both as regards England and India, has saved our having to trouble ourselves about such matters, or to deal with a problem which every European nation, except ourselves, has had to consider for many centuries past. Like England's wooden walls and the "silver streak" which separates her from the rest of Europe, the deserts beyond Afghanistan have hitherto guaranteed India against foreign invasion. This barrier no longer exists. The strides which Russia has made in Central Asia during the last 5 or 6 years have, for all practical purposes, made her frontier and ours on the north-west continuous. Our situation is that of a continental nation, and however we may dislike the idea, and whatever expense it may entail, the fact remains that we are now near neighbours of a Power notoriously hostile to us, and one which possesses in her vast numbers of trained soldiery a mighty weapon of offence.

Should it be asked why we deem it necessary to make all these preparations, and expend so much public money when there is no certainty that war is imminent, or of our armies having to take the field at an early date, I would rely in the well-known words "Si vis pacem para bellum," and I would appeal to the military history of the world to bear out the truth of this maxim. As we have won India by the sword, so must we be prepared to hold it; but it must be remembered that in our previous Indian experiences we have never been brought face to face with a first-class European Power as our foe. In all our campaigns in this country (except the great Mutiny of 1857) we have been prepared for what was coming, and have been able, at the outset, to put forth such strength as the occasion demanded. This has been the secret of our success in India, and if we wish to be as successful in the future, it is of vital importance that the more formidable enemy we may at any time have to meet should find us in a still more perfect state of preparedness. The constitution of our Army in India is such that we could not venture to run the risk of a defeat, or even of a temporary reverse, on our frontier.

The fact of our Army being thoroughly prepared for war, and of our frontier being made secure, could not fail to have the most reassuring effect on the people of this country, on the tribes beyond our border, and above all on our Native troops; while the knowledge that we are in a position to quickly and decisively repulse the advance of an enemy, would do more than anything else to avert the chance of a collision.

I cannot agree with the Financial Member that there is danger in being thus prepared, or that, as he expresses it himself, "if we polish our thunderbolt, we may find great difficulty in restraining ourselves from hurling it." This might be true if we were the aggressive Power intending to invade our neighbour's territory on the first convenient opportunity, but this reasoning is not applicable to us. We are merely waiting for an attack which, if it were possible, we would avoid altogether. We know it is certain to come, but whether sooner or later, we are unfortunately in complete ignorance.

I do not think either that the action of Government in making timely preparations is at all likely to be misunderstood. I am frequently being asked by Native gentlemen, unconnected with the Army, and by our own Native officers, why we do not increase our Army, as they consider it far too small to meet the Russians. Besides, the Defence Committee is no secret; the work it is engaged upon is very generally known, and in proportion as its several recommendations are carried out, so will our fellow-subjects in this country realise that so far from our desiring to embark in a war, all our foresight and energy are being employed to avert such a calamity.

If we do not put our house in order when we have leisure to do so, it is impossible

to foretell what may be the expenditure of blood and money when the storm comes. The Mutiny taxed the resources of the Empire severely, but the demands made upon them by the Mutiny would fade into insignificance when compared to what would be required should our frontier be threatened by a Russian Army.

That a severe strain will be thrown upon the Financial Department is as deeply to be regretted as it is inevitable. No one recognizes more distinctly than I do the unadvisability of imposing more taxes on the country, and I most sincerely trust that some other means may be devised to meet the proposed expenditure. It is only natural that suggestions for the curtailment of civil expenditure, in order to provide for military measures, should meet with considerable opposition. I would remark, however, that the feeling which would prompt this opposition is not confined to those who are more directly responsible for the prosperity and well-being of the people. Soldiers, equally with civilians, appreciate the benefits of an enlightened civil administration. But, under conditions such as we are now considering, may it not be prudent to determine upon certain civil economies, and devote the money thus obtained to the Army? For it must be remembered that a liberal civil administration is only possible when the Army and defences of a country are in such a state of preparedness as to be able to afford the Government necessary protection.

I would also submit for the consideration of my Honourable Colleagues, whether the rulers and nobles of native states, as well as the independent princes residing within our own territories, might not fairly be called upon to bear their share of the expenses that may have to be incurred; either by money contributions, or by being required to keep up an efficient number of troops, to be at the disposal of Government in time of war. In some instances, possibly, both these measures of assistance might be demanded. It seems to me only reasonable that everyone in this country should pay their share towards a policy which has for its first object the integrity of the Indian Empire and its immunity from insult and attack.

The defence of India and the consequent security guaranteed to the wealth and possessions of the native states are one and the same thing.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XII.

## ON REVIVING OUR MILITARY INFLUENCE IN PERSIA.

SIMLA,

31st May, 1887.

The proposals contained in the Foreign Secretary's note seem to me very valuable, and to have been made at a most opportune time. By reviving the military organization of the Persian Telegraph Department, we should increase our influence in Persia; we should provide an admirable school at a trifling cost for the stamp of men whose services would be most useful in the event of troubles with Russia; we should obtain better information of what is going on, and we should know more of the military resources of the country.

We should give a very tangible proof of our interest in the country, and thus strengthen the Persians in their good feeling towards us, as evinced in the remarks of Prince Malcolm Shah and of the Shah himself.

The Zil-es-Sultan should be encouraged in every way, and, considering the small amount at stake, I think it would be well for the Indian Government to share with Her Majesty's Government the responsibility of giving the necessary guarantee for the Ahwaz-Teheran Railway and the Karun Navigation project.

Every means should be taken to strengthen our influence in Persia, and nothing can do this more effectually than locating selected British Officers at certain places and bringing British produce and British money into the country.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XIII.

## MEMORANDUM ON THE PRESENT POSITION IN CENTRAL ASIA.

SIMLA,

13th June, 1887.

I have read Mr. Durand's able and comprehensive Memorandum on the present position in Central Asia with the greatest possible interest; and I quite agree with him that, while the "position is full of uncertainty, if not of danger, it behoves us without delay to map out, as far as possible, a plan of operations to meet the various eventualities of the future."

For the sake of convenience, I propose to discuss Mr. Durand's Memorandum paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraph 1 I agree with entirely.

Paragraph 2.—I think, with Mr. Durand, that in "working out our future line of action" in Central Asia, we should not take into account any assistance we might possibly receive from Turkey, Persia, or China. Turkey must always be a doubtful ally, and, as Mr. Durand says, "Turkey is wholly outside the sphere of action of the Indian Government." I readily admit the advantage it would be to have Persia on our side; but Persia is now so completely dominated by Russia, that I much fear, even if we were to gain her sympathy, we could hardly hope for her active co-operation. The only way in which China could help us would be from the direction of Kashgar and Yarkand. The presence of a Chinese force on his flank would doubtless hamper a Russian commander; but, from what I hear, the rulers of these distant provinces are, practically speaking, independent of the authorities at Pekin, so that even if we were on the best of terms with China, we could not depend on assistance from her Viceroy in Eastern Turkestan. Moreover, we have reliable information that the Chinese garrison of that province is in a deplorable condition as regards armament, organization, and discipline. It would seem therefore that, for the present at any rate, we must prepare to settle the Central Asian question ourselves without external aid.

Paragraph 3.—The policy of entering into closer relations with the tribes who inhabit the mountainous tract along our frontier, and of "transforming that great natural obstacle, which has hitherto been a barrier against ourselves, into a barrier against our enemies," is one which strongly commends itself to me, and one which I have warmly advocated for some years past. The Afghans and the frontier tribes will be factors in the coming struggle, whose importance it is impossible to exaggerate. If they join the Russians, the advance of the latter will be comparatively easy; anxiety for their long line of communications will be minimized; they will be able to count on getting supplies without the employment of force, and their fighting strength will be most materially increased by the vast numbers of irregular levies that will swell their ranks as they advance.

On the other hand, if the tribes are with us, the advance of the Russians will be proportionately difficult; their movements will be hampered at every step, and by raising the clans on their flanks and rear, and at the same time bringing the whole strength of the Empire to bear on their front, the result could not be doubtful; and we

might confidently hope to inflict upon them such a crushing defeat that their advance in Central Asia would be thrown back for many years to come. In fact, if we can only gain over the tribes, we need have no anxiety or fear that the Russians would ever cross the Hindu Kush. We should therefore, as Mr. Durand points out, do all in our power to gain the friendship of the various tribes along our frontier, and by degrees introduce a system which will permit us to organize them in some degree for purposes of defence, and, in my opinion, for purposes of offence also.

Paragraph 4.—I fully concur in Mr. Durand's proposals regarding Gilgit. I would re-establish the Agency at that place under an English officer, or officers, with some Dogra troops from Kashmir, and "some levies on the Baluchistan or Khyber system, raised from the small Mahomedan chiefships of the neighbourhood." Such a force might be modelled on the system of the Corps of Guides, and a battery of mountain artillery would add materially to its efficiency. In a recent note on "Military Preparations" I have given it as my opinion that Native States may reasonably be required to pay their quota towards maintaining the Army, which secures their prosperity and indeed their very existence; and in such a scheme the wealthy province of Kashmir may fairly be included. The maintenance of a small well-equipped and well-disciplined corps of Dogras for the defence of her frontier would probably not cost Kashmir so much as the number of irregular troops she now keeps up, and would be more efficient in every way.

It seems most desirable, if possible, to make friends with the Kafirs—indeed I am in accord with all Mr. Durand's suggestions in this paragraph; for although I believe the physical difficulties of the country would render it impossible for anything like a large force to approach India from the direction of Chitral and Kafiristan, yet if the tribes in this region were to permit the location of even a Russian brigade in their neighbourhood, the effect throughout the Punjab and Northern India generally would be most disquieting, and would in all probability turn all the tribes on our Northern frontier against us. It also seems most important that we should have free communication by the road to Chitral through Dir, as under certain circumstances we might not be able to go there *viâ* Kunar. As regards the inhabitants of Bajaur, Swat, and Buner, I was confidently assured by a Native gentleman last year, on what he considered good grounds for forming such an opinion, that with a little trouble and kindness we should have no difficulty in making friends of them; and within the last few days I have heard, on what appears to be reliable authority, that the Aman-ul-Mulk, Ruler of Chitral, has given out publicly that he holds his country in trust for the English. If I have been rightly informed on these points, we ought to have no difficulty in gaining the influence which, as Mr. Durand remarks, is so desirable.

As regards the tribes in the Khyber, I would suggest that the admirable system which has been so successfully worked by Major Warburton should be still further developed. At present the Afridi levies are only sufficient for the Khyber route; but if their numbers were somewhat increased, we should be able to deal with the Bazar Valley as we now do with the Khyber. This increase together with the erection of a fortified post in the Bazar Valley would effectually cover the approaches to Peshawar from the direction of Jalalabad. During my recent visit to Peshawar, I learnt that there would be no difficulty in carrying these measures into effect.

It appears to me that the time has come to consider the desirability of placing the Afridis of the Kohat Pass under the Officer who administers the Khyber, and forming a levy for the security of that pass, similar to the one which now holds the Khyber. Recruits would doubtless be forthcoming, and we should get the control of the pass into our hands without having recourse to any unpopular measures of coercion.

It is also important for us to maintain our connection with the Turis. They have been on friendly terms with us ever since we entered the Kuram valley in 1878, and circumstances might arise which would render it advisable to send troops *via* the Shutargardan Pass either to Ghazni or Kabul. It is also quite possible that the easiest route from Bannu to Ghazni may be found through the Kuram and Khost valleys.

It has been decided by the Secretary of State that the Gomal route shall be thoroughly explored this next cold weather. The Tochi route from Bannu towards Ghazni should, if possible, be examined at the same time; it is most important that the best line of communication between Bannu and Ghazni should be discovered and opened without delay. Such explorations would, I trust, result in the Waziris and the tribes inhabiting the country between the Kuram and the Zhob valleys becoming amenable to our authority as completely as have the warlike and suspicious Khyberis to the north.

By forming a certain number of levies from the several tribes along our border, we should have a powerful militia more than half drilled; and in the event of our suddenly wanting an increase to our Army, we could either form these levies into regiments, or draft large numbers of them into our ranks. The advantage of being able to count on considerable reinforcements of such splendid material need not be enlarged upon.

I cordially agree with the latter part of paragraph 4 and with paragraph 5.

Paragraph 6.—I would recommend the railway being extended from Peshawar to Jamrud, and the road onwards to Landi Kotal being made throughout easy for cart traffic. A fortified enclosure is to be built at Landi Kotal, and I would have a second one at Chinar in the Bazar valley ready for occupation by us when required; but I would not place any of our own troops beyond Jamrud at present. Time is required to make the tribesmen accustomed to us and our ways, and we must be most careful to avoid any measure which may tend to destroy the confidence we have gained with so much difficulty. Another great reason, to my mind, for not locating troops beyond our border is, that there might be danger in withdrawing them, should they be required elsewhere; and I think it is better to let the tribesmen feel they are responsible for their own part of the country.

Paragraph 7.—I most fully concur in Mr. Durand's views as expressed in this paragraph; but I would remark that I do not believe "an active policy among the frontier tribes" would have any chance of being successful, unless it were carried out under some specially selected officer, working directly under the orders of the Government of India. In this way alone could we be sure that a uniform system would be adopted in our dealings with the tribes from Chitral to Baluchistan. On the 17th August, 1886, while discussing the desirability of making a military road through the Kohat Pass, I expressed a strong opinion in favour of placing the political control of the frontier under one officer. No one can appreciate more than I do the past and present services of the various civil officers who have so ably administered our frontier; but as civilization increases, so does the work within their respective districts, and it is obviously impossible for them to combine a free intercourse with the border tribes with the execution of their many purely civil duties. Space does not permit of my dwelling on this point as fully as I could wish, but I would most strongly recommend that the entire control of our political relations with the trans-border tribes should be placed in the hands of one officer of high standing and experience. He should be a man of good judgment, good temper, possessing considerable force of character, and the manners and habits which attract natives; for without strong sympathy and constant intercourse no Englishman can ever hope to gain the confidence of Asiatics. His work should be confined to the

political control of the frontier, and he should be immediately responsible to the Viceroy for the proper conduct of our relations with the trans-border tribes. The administration within our borders would, as now, be left in the hands of the local civil officers, while the Frontier Commissioner, or whatever his designation might be, would be able to devote the whole of his time to the extension of our influence among the tribesmen.

Paragraph 8.—In this paragraph Mr. Durand raises the question, “What should be our policy in Afghanistan proper?” Should we give up all interference with Afghanistan? or “should we push forward in armed strength, and bring the question to a head by the annexation of Kabul and Kandahar?”

In the past it might, perhaps, have been better to have abstained from active interference in the affairs of Afghanistan, for we interfered to no purpose. We went there only to come back again. But now it seems to me that we have no option. The Russians are on the Murghab and the Oxus; and when they cross those rivers, if we do not occupy such places in Southern Afghanistan as will give us control of the country up to the Hindu Kush, they would speedily cross that range, and take possession of the whole of the Amir's territories. This would bring them to our own border, and soon afterwards they would be in a position to threaten India.

Whether the declaration of war by England would have the effect of checking the Russian advance, or whether England would go the length of declaring war in the event of the Russians entering Afghanistan, it is not for me to say, but I give it as my earnest and matured opinion, that if we wish to retain possession of India, we must move forward immediately Russian troops cross the Oxus, or march towards Herat. The true solution of the problem of the defence of India will be found in our troops holding the country up to the Hindu Kush mountains, and our being in force at such points as will enable us to frustrate any attempts of the Russians to gain an entrance into Afghanistan proper by the passes over that range, or by the easier route *viâ* the Helmand to Kandahar.

Paragraphs 9 and 10 require no special notice.

Paragraph 11.—I agree with every word. The fact of Northern Afghanistan being invaded by the Russians would be a most serious blow to our prestige; and should such an event happen, it would behove us to take the most active measures to restore throughout Asia confidence in our power. If we quietly acquiesced in annexation, not only would the Afghans and the trans-border tribes be convinced of our inability to protect them, but throughout the length and breadth of India, our fellow-subjects and the Native Army would consider us as half beaten and with reason. If only to prevent this feeling of doubt and uneasiness, it would be absolutely necessary for us to occupy in force the frontier beyond which we are fully resolved Russia shall not advance. We have often talked of such a frontier, and various limits have been laid down for it, and we have publicly and repeatedly stated that Russia would not be allowed to advance beyond those limits. Despite our assertions and her promises, she has moved on year by year, and we have never yet done anything but protest against her many breaches of faith. In the past we have played, so to speak, a game of brag, at which we have invariably come off losers; in the future we must back up our words by decided action, so that the line which we decide upon for our frontier shall be adequately defended.

Paragraphs 12, 13, and 14.—In reply to the several queries brought forward in these paragraphs, my opinion is that we should maintain the present relations with the ruler of Afghanistan so long as Abdur Rahman Khan continues to be Amir, and loyal to us. Should he die, be overthrown by his people, or prove treacherous to us, we

should be free to act as we might deem most desirable. In such a contingency, I would recommend the disintegration of Afghanistan, and taking the administration of the country practically into our own hands; for if Russia should invade the north of Afghanistan, and it is not considered a *casus belli* by England, we should have to accept the fact that the provinces of Herat and Afghan-Turkestan had passed beyond the control of any Amir that we might nominate, and that our safest and wisest policy would be to move up and defend that part of the country which was still left to the Afghans. I advocated the disintegration of Afghanistan as far back as 1879, in a paper which I attach to this Note, because it seemed to me hopeless to find any Amir who could satisfactorily rule his turbulent countrymen, and at the same time fulfil his obligations to us, and because I saw the difficulty of our being responsible for the maintenance of a frontier at a considerable distance from our own territory, and regarding which we laboured under the serious disadvantage of not knowing what might be going on beyond it.

Paragraph 15.—I cordially agree in the necessity for our having complete control over the ruler of Afghanistan; and to obtain this, we must, as Mr. Durand says, hold certain obligatory points. Time and experience will determine what these points should be. In the end, no doubt, Kabul would have to be one; but I would defer its occupation as long as possible. I do not deny the political importance of Kabul; but for many reasons (the significance of which I thoroughly appreciated when I was there in 1879-80), such as the fanatical nature of the people, the scarcity of food, and the fact that the country in its neighbourhood is ill adapted to the movement of large bodies of troops, I would avoid direct interference with the capital so long as without it we could ensure our influence there being paramount. In the first instance I should hope that it would suffice to occupy Kandahar and certain strategical points in its vicinity. Should it be found that our presence was required further eastward to oppose Russia's onward movements, we should have to extend our position as far as Ghazni, and from there hold some point or points on the Hindu Kush, from which all the approaches to Kabul from Balkh and Bamian could be defended. If our information about this part of the country be correct, there is no doubt but that some such position could be found. We need not, therefore, go to Kabul to keep the Russians out of it; and even if they were able to reach Kabul, they could not maintain themselves there, while we were in possession of Kandahar, any more than we could hold Kabul if the Russians were at Kandahar.

Kandahar, moreover, is better situated than Kabul for gaining an influence over the Ghilzais (the most powerful of all the Afghan tribes), and it is besides, in my opinion, strategically speaking, by far the most important place in Afghanistan. In the Kabul direction the country gets more and more difficult, until at last it becomes quite impracticable for any army approaching from the north. It is otherwise at Kandahar; there the country is, comparatively speaking, easy and open. From the earliest times the route through Kandahar from the west towards Ghazni and Kabul has borne the significant title of "the King's Road"; and though I admit that when the Russians are at Balkh they will endeavour to reach Kabul by the passes of the Hindu Kush, I am satisfied that no serious attempt to injure us in India would, or could, be made except through Kandahar. With the exception of Baber, who came *via* Balkh and Kabul, all the great conquerors from the north have invaded India by Herat and Kandahar.

Paragraph 16.—We must, I fear, accept the fact that Russia will ere long occupy "Turkestan and Herat, and then the Hazara country, and will impend upon our long line of strategical frontier from Farah to Chitral." It is indeed for this contingency



that we are preparing ; and to meet it, I trust that the Hindu Kush will be accepted as our frontier so soon as the Oxus is crossed by Russian troops.

Paragraph 17.—As I remarked in a previous part of this paper, I would disintegrate Afghanistan, should the death or flight of Abdur Rahman Khan afford us the fitting opportunity. Whoever takes his place as ruler of Kabul should be selected by the Afghans themselves ; but he would have clearly to understand that his continuance in power depended upon his being absolutely loyal to us.

Paragraph 18.—I fully agree that we should do nothing to precipitate matters, and that our policy should be to keep Russia at a distance as long as possible, while at the same time we lose no opportunity of improving our military and political position with reference to the Kabul and Kandahar provinces, by pushing on our roads and railways and doing all in our power to gain over the tribes.

Paragraph 19.—As matters now stand, I would not advance upon Kandahar until the Russians had crossed the Oxus or moved towards Herat. But then there ought to be no delay, unless indeed there were a chance of our receiving an invitation from the Afghans to help them, in which case it might be advisable to wait a few days. I admit that Herat is not “the key to India” ; in my opinion Kandahar has the best claim to that title : but I agree with Mr. Durand that “the fall of Herat will be regarded in India and Afghanistan and elsewhere as a serious blow to us,” and one demanding active measures to be taken by us at once.

Paragraph 20.—As will be gathered from the preceding remarks, I am fully in accord with the general principles laid down by Mr. Durand ; it is unnecessary for me, therefore, to comment further on the *résumé* he gives in this paragraph.

Paragraph 21 requires no remark.

Paragraph 22 represents my own views in regard to the action now to be taken towards the Amir and his rebellious subjects. We should not hesitate to seize any opportunity of offering our mediation. Such a course would show our desire to restore order in Afghanistan, and, so far as is compatible with our relations to the Amir, to encourage the friendly overtures which have been lately made to us by the Ghilzais. They are the true fighting strength of Afghanistan ; and if they were thoroughly with us, our present position would be materially strengthened.

Paragraph 23.—Mr. Durand, anticipating the possibility of the Amir being unable to stem the tide of insurrection and having to fly from Kabul, remarks that we could then dictate our own terms to him, but doubts “whether we should even then throw him over altogether and enter upon any wholly new line of policy.” In my opinion, it would be wisest for us to accept the fact that, after a protracted trial, and although his position had been strengthened by our liberal support for some years, Abdur Rahman Khan had proved his inability to rule the Afghans, and that a similar result might be expected if we reinstated him as Amir.

Paragraphs 24 to 28.—In these paragraphs Mr. Durand discusses the policy the Government of India might have to adopt in the event of Abdur Rahman Khan declining to agree to any fresh terms we might think it necessary to insist upon, or of his seeking our own or Russian protection, or disappearing altogether from the scene. In answer to all these possible contingencies, I would say:—Disintegrate Afghanistan, and take the administration of that part of the country we are resolved to defend practically into our own hands.

Paragraph 29.—As I have remarked before, I greatly doubt our finding any Afghan

powerful enough to reunite the kingdom on its old footing. Ishak Khan, owing to the influence which he is reputed to possess in Turkestan, might possibly, for a time, continue to administer that province; but if we invited him to take up the Amirship, and gave him our moral, if not direct support, while he is endeavouring to establish himself in Kabul, he would labour under many of the disadvantages that his cousin Abdur Rahman Khan did from the hostility of the Sher Ali faction, and from the dislike of the Afghans generally to have any ruler forced upon them; while we should only have exchanged one protégé of the Russians for another of still greater Russian proclivities. If, on the other hand, we took the opportunity of Abdur Rahman Khan's death or flight to break up Afghanistan, we might let the Russians understand that, although we should actively resent their annexing Herat and Afghan-Turkestan, we would raise no objection to their nominating Afghan rulers to those provinces.

Paragraphs 30 to 38.—After a careful consideration of the various possible candidates whose claims to the Amirship are described by Mr. Durand in these paragraphs, I have arrived at the conclusion that they are all more or less undesirable, and that the chief test, to my mind, of any one of the claimants would be his being acceptable to the people of Afghanistan. From what I saw of Yakub Khan in 1879, I have no hesitation in pronouncing against him as the future ruler of Kabul. He is weak, both physically and morally, and, even with our assistance, would never be equal to the task of restoring tranquillity to the kingdom. As Mr. Durand remarks, "Yakub could do nothing against Ayub." If, on the other hand, we selected Ayub, he would, in all probability, be quite as untrustworthy an ally as Abdur Rahman has been, while he would not fail to make as much capital as possible out of the memories of Maiwand. I am not aware that he has shown any marked ability; his military reputation and successes were, as Mr. Durand says, won for him by others, and his defeat at Kandahar in 1881 shows that he has not a strong enough following to hold his own.

Musa Khan is too young to be taken into consideration at present.

I had no opinion of Ahmed Ali Jan's capacity when at Kabul, and Mr. Durand has sketched his character very correctly. In the winter of 1879-80 he appeared to have no following; in fact, his one friend was a profligate Armenian, named Luke, who made a living by distilling spirits.

Hashim Khan, in my opinion, is a more desirable candidate than any of the foregoing. As Mr. Durand says, he is surly; but so long as he was with us he was straightforward, and seemed quite satisfied until Abdur Rahman Khan appeared on the scene, when, as he gave me to understand, he could not remain at Kabul with safety. He behaved well during the fighting in December, 1879, and I considered he was much stronger than either Yakub or Ahmed Ali Jan.

Both Wali Mahomed Khan and Sher Ali Khan may, in my opinion, be eliminated from the list of candidates. They are too old, and in addition it must be remembered that, as a ruler, each had a fair trial at Kabul and Kandahar respectively, and each failed. However, as I said before, I would have the tribes elect their own Ruler, confining our action to letting whoever may be chosen, clearly understand that his tenure of the Amirship of Kabul depended entirely upon his being absolutely loyal to us.

Paragraphs 39 to 41 deal with questions which depend more on the action of the Home Government than of the Government of India.

Paragraph 42.—I quite coincide with Mr. Durand's views as to the course we should adopt if the Amir were to "join Russia and show hostility to ourselves."

We should ascertain the wishes of the Afghans themselves as regards their future Ruler, we should prepare to exercise a general control over the country, and we should avoid any compromising alliances with Barakzai Sirdars. The episode of the *jehad* manifesto is interesting, as showing that Abdur Rahman Khan knows the old feeling

against the infidels is still to be counted on; and we can scarcely overrate the value such a jihad would be to us, if preached against the Russians by a leader selected by the Afghans themselves. The circulation of the present pamphlet appears to have fallen flat, and we might, I think, conveniently disregard it. I much doubt the one or two trifling affairs in the Bori Valley and neighbourhood being the results of any such pamphlet. With the whole country-side from Tirah to Kandahar in a state of ferment, we must expect an occasional border raid, and I confess I am surprised that our frontier has not been more disturbed.

Paragraph 43 requires no remark.

Paragraph 44.—I would give my warmest support to the general policy which is expressed in vigorous and concise terms in this paragraph. The only point, indeed, on which I would differ from Mr. Durand being in my conviction that our primary object should be to establish ourselves in Southern rather than Eastern Afghanistan, the occupation of Kandahar seems to me of overwhelming importance compared to the occupation of Kabul. No army could advance on the latter place by any routes east of Bamian and Kinjan, and these routes, as I have previously explained, we can block from Ghazni. We might have trouble in the Punjab if small bodies of Russian troops were to appear near Gilgit and Chitral; but we ought to be able to prevent the approach of such bodies with little trouble and small expense. In fact, we ought not to have any anxiety about our right flank, if ordinary precautions are taken. On the left we are very differently situated. There is nothing to stop an army from the direction of Herat and Khorassan occupying Seistan and Kandahar; and once the Russians were in possession of those places, it would not be long before they reached the Persian Gulf and drove us out of Baluchistan and Afghanistan.

Whoever occupies Kandahar and the line of the Helmand will dominate Baluchistan and the Ghilzai country, and will hold the only road by which an army could invade India.

Paragraph 45.—Having considered the possible contingencies which may arise, we ought now definitely to determine our future line of action and make all necessary preparations; we can then with confidence await the further development of the situation. But whatever decision we may come to, we may be certain of one thing—that all our diplomacy and all our endeavours to win over the tribes will be of no avail unless the natives of this country, the border tribesmen, and the Afghans are fully convinced that we intend to come victorious out of the impending struggle; and this they will never believe unless they see that we have the armed force ready at hand to enforce our resolves.

I gladly take this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging how much has been done of late towards making our Army in India efficient; much more, however, is required before we should be in a position to strike, at the very outset of the campaign, a blow from which Russian prestige in Asia would never recover. In India we are doing all we can to make ourselves ready; but when the war breaks out, it is imperative that our Army should be largely reinforced from England. I earnestly hope that this will be impressed upon the Home Government, so that they may be prepared to meet the demands of India before undertaking any expedition which would necessitate the employment of the whole of our small English Army in Europe, and that we in this country may be able to confidently calculate on receiving the necessary reinforcements from England whenever they may be required.

I estimate that we should need 20,000 men at first, and that very considerable drafts to replace casualties would have to be sent out from time to time so long as war should last.

I yield to none in my admiration for the gallant men who compose our Native Army; but I have never held but one opinion as to how a European enemy on the North-West Frontier would have to be met. The flower of our Native Army will doubtless bear their share in the struggle, while with a broader policy we may hope to see Afghans and tribesmen fighting as our allies; but to hurl the Russians back whence they came and hold intact this mighty Empire, we must place our main reliance on British soldiers and British bayonets.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XIV.

## ON THE ADVISABILITY OR OTHERWISE OF OCCUPYING CHITRAL AND GILGIT.

SIMLA,

14th June, 1887.

I agree with Mr. Durand. In my opinion it would not be well to defer getting control over the Gilgit-Chitral country. It is clear from the reports of Colonels Lockhart and Woodthorpe and Captain Barrow that, although a large army might not be able to reach India by this route, small bodies of troops could come by the Dorah and Darkot Passes. When the Russians are in possession of Badakhshan their influence will at once be felt at Chitral and Gilgit, and shortly afterwards in Kashmir. We should then find the Maharajah of Kashmir much more difficult to deal with than is likely to be the case now, and it is quite possible that we might have considerable trouble with the tribes in the neighbourhood of Gilgit and Chitral. Now, apparently, they would welcome us. I think we might reasonably insist upon the Kashmir Ruler furnishing a sufficient and efficient force to protect this part of his frontier. We have, as Mr. Durand says, every "right to take armed help from the Native States," and I hope that the Government will take this view, not only as regards Kashmir but throughout India. We want more troops to be at our disposal, without increasing our military expenditure, and it seems to me that we may legitimately require the Native States to furnish their quota.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XV.

ON A "MEMORANDUM ON THE RUSSO-AFGHAN QUESTION" BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL  
MACLEAN, DATED MESHED, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1887.

CALCUTTA,

8th January, 1888.

I have read Brigadier-General MacLean's paper with great interest. There is much in it with which I agree; the main points on which we differ are—

1. His proposal to abstain from occupying Kandahar even if we should be obliged to hold Herat.

2. His wish to disintegrate Afghanistan. The sketch which General MacLean gives in Chapter I. of the present Russo-Perso-Afghan frontiers is valuable, inasmuch as it places us in possession of the views of a man who from his position at Meshed is, so to speak, in closer touch with the people of Central Asia than we can be in India. I notice that General MacLean is of opinion that a strong hostile feeling against the Russians pervades the entire Turkoman nation; such a feeling might, if properly fostered, be of the greatest advantage to us in a campaign, and is in itself a strong argument on the desirability of keeping our prestige in Central Asia unimpaired.

In Chapter II., General MacLean discusses the question of the partition of Afghanistan between Russia and England. He points out the danger to India of allowing Russia to gain a footing in Afghanistan, and urges our making an infringement of the frontier a *casus belli*. He says—

"In short, the time seems now to have arrived to put a final stop to Russian advance. We must, in the interests of our own Empire, protect the integrity of Afghanistan; the frontier of Afghanistan must be included within the limits of the British Empire."

General MacLean explains that the inclusion of Afghanistan within the limits of British Empire does not necessitate the occupation of the country. He says—

"It means suzerainty rather than sovereignty. It means that we must occupy Herat and some other points outside Afghanistan, but sufficiently near to command the principal strategic points, and the rest of the country can be left to its own rulers, under conditions to be fixed by ourselves."

The conclusion arrived at by General MacLean as to the importance of not letting Russia approach nearer to India is one which has my warmest support, as I believe that in it lies the solution of the whole question. My hope is that the authorities in England will take this view of the position and will let Russia clearly understand that we are determined to keep Afghanistan neutral ground, and that so long as Russia remains where she is, we have no intention of occupying any portion of the country ourselves.

But that any violation of the Afghan boundary, as now laid down, will lead to war, and to a war which will not be stopped until we have broken the power of Russia in Central Asia.

I do not anticipate that it would be necessary for us to occupy Herat, or perhaps

any part of Afghanistan, so long as we can assure the neutrality of the country, but of this I am confident, that it would be out of the question for us to hold Herat *viâ* Seistan while we left Kandahar unoccupied. We certainly could not do so until we have a railway to the Helmand *viâ* Nushki, and Seistan has been brought within easy communication of India. If we could work *viâ* Seistan, it would for many reasons, be most desirable, for, in my opinion, the less we have to do with the Afghans, and the less we interfere with their internal administration, the fewer complications will arise. What we have to aim at is, to impress upon the Afghans that if ever we have to fight the Russians, we would wish to avoid the occupation of any more of their territory than is absolutely necessary, both in their interests and ours against the common foe. One of my chief reasons for advocating that our force should be mainly concentrated on the Kandahar side has always been, that by so doing we should only encroach on what may be considered as the border of the country, and would leave Afghanistan proper intact. Were political reasons alone to be considered, I would advocate our abstaining from the occupation of Kandahar, but the strategical advantages it possesses are so undeniable, that it would be impossible for us, in the event of war to forego them.

As regards the disintegration of Afghanistan which General MacLean recommends, I consider that as long as the present Amir continues to hold his own amongst his turbulent subjects, our wisest policy will be to maintain him in his present position. When the Amir dies or disappears from the scene, it will be time enough for us to consider the disintegration of Afghanistan. With no strong ruler at hand to take up the Amirship, as was the case in 1880, it might be desirable to advocate the disintegration of Afghanistan, as I did at that time; but with Russia pressing on the frontier it would be unwise, in my opinion, to disturb the *status quo* until we are forced to do so.

General MacLean speaks of the routes through the Taimeni mountains as presenting no insuperable difficulties for the advance of an army. This opinion is not supported by the members of the Boundary Commission, and in a conversation I had lately with General Daod Shah, he informed me that, though a lightly-equipped force might move through these mountains, there is no road at present fit for wheeled artillery. We must, however, expect that if ever the Russians become fairly established in Northern Afghanistan, their Engineers will rapidly improve the means of communication, and render roads, now impassable, easy for the movement of troops. The moral to be drawn from this is—Don't let Russia approach nearer to India than she is at present.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XVI.

## ON THE TRANSFER OF SIND TO THE PUNJAB GOVERNMENT.

CALCUTTA,

*8th January, 1888.*

As regards the Military side of this question, my note of 25th September, 1886 sufficiently expresses my present views. I observe that Sir Theodore Hope, while approving of my suggestion that the Bombay Regiments serving in Sind and Baluchistan should be more localised, recommends that more recruits for the Bombay Army should be drawn from the Deccan. He adds—

“It may prove as politically dangerous to have too many Punjabis and other Frontier men as it was to have too many Pandies.”

There may be some danger in increasing the number of the fighting classes in our Native Army, but it is a danger which must, I think, be now faced. On the Baluchistan side of the frontier we should in time, no doubt, be able to get men from the neighbourhood of Jacobabad, Sibi, Quetta, Pishin, &c., men who have little in common with Sikhs, Punjabis, and Pathans, who would fight as readily against these races as Mahrattas would, and who would be better fitted to meet a European foe. The two newly-raised regiments of Bombay Cavalry enlisted a certain number of Baluchis, and though some of these resigned owing to their finding the discipline too irksome, those who remained are likely to make excellent soldiers. From the foregoing notes it would appear that the transfer of the civil government of Sind to the Punjab could be effected without any serious administrative difficulties. I trust therefore, that the measure will be carried out without much delay, as it seems to me most desirable that there should be unity of administration along our whole North-West Frontier. The scheme which Mr. McDonell outlines in paragraph 4 of his note of the 5th August has, in my opinion, much to recommend it, and together with General Chesney's remarks on the difficulties arising out of the present system of Presidential armies, might be considered when the redistribution of the Central Provinces and portions of the North-West Provinces and Bengal comes under discussion.

FRED. ROBERTS.





## XVII.

## REGARDING KURAM.

SIMLA,

24th April, 1888.

The Amir, no doubt, has reason to complain of our delay in dealing with the Turis, and in replying to his letter of November last on the subject of a joint commission to settle the affairs of the Turis once and for all. The Punjab Government has been asked for its opinion, but as there may be further delay in receiving this, I would write to the Amir, express our regret for the delay that has occurred, and tell him that the matter is now engaging our earnest attention. When the reply of the Punjab Government is received to the telegram despatched on the 20th instant, we shall be in a position to know what our next course of action should be.

The question is not an easy one. In 1878, we practically took possession of the Kuram valley, and in December of that year we distinctly promised the Turis "that neither Sher Ali Khan, nor any other Amir of Kabul, will ever again be permitted to reign over Kuram." At that time we had doubtless every intention of permanently occupying this district. In 1880, however, it suited us to withdraw our troops from the Kuram valley, when the Turis were warned that they must give no pretext to the Kabul Government for disputes or encroachments, and they were informed that "in return for its recognition and support the British Government requires that the Turis shall conform in all respects to any advice which may be given them at any time on behalf of the Government." It was added at the same time that "regarding the internal administration of the district and its protection against neighbouring independent tribes, the British Government does not wish to interfere, and the Turis will be left free to make their own arrangements."

The Turis, however, were unable to carry on the internal administration of the valley satisfactorily, and in August, 1884, Extra Assistant Commissioner Shahzada Sultan Jan was deputed to Kuram on behalf of the Government to make a local enquiry and settlement of the many complaints that had arisen. His residence in the valley had the result that on the 8th February, 1885, he was able to report that an amicable adjustment of all disputes from the date of the Amir's succession up to the time of the settlement was effected with the consent of all parties.

Shahzada Sultan Jan shortly after this left Kuram and took up his quarters at Thal, as adviser to the Turis. He was succeeded in December, 1885, by Captain Egerton, who was succeeded in June, 1886, by Captain Leigh. These officers frequently visited Kuram and did their best to place the internal administration of the valley on a proper footing, but on the 13th April, 1887, Captain Leigh was compelled to leave the Kuram valley somewhat hastily, his efforts to establish some sort of order having signally failed. Thus, at the end of 9 years, we find that the Turis cannot govern their country, and that we are not inclined to govern it for them.

It would appear however, from the correspondence that the Turis in their independence have not behaved worse towards their neighbours, than the latter, who are under Afghan rule, have towards them. The Commissioner of Peshawar gives it as his opinion\* "that even without a regular administration, there is as much security

for life and property as will be found amongst all their neighbours, whether independent or so-called Afghan subjects."

As regards the Jagis, Khosties, Mangals, and other tribes with whom from time immemorial the Turis have lived at enmity, the reason doubtless is, that, in addition to the natural tendency of the Afghans to murder and pillage, the fact of the Turis being Shiah has caused their Sunni neighbours to combine against them.

It is probable that matters are no worse now in Kuram than they have been any time during the last 7 years, but the fact of there being no responsible form of government gives the Amir an excuse for interfering, and some reason for his statement that he is unable to redress the alleged wrongs of his subjects "because it depends upon another Power to do so."

It is evident that the motive which underlies the Amir's lengthy correspondence regarding the Kuram valley is his jealousy of our influence over the Turis, and his hope that in time the valley will revert to Afghanistan. His policy in this direction is based on the same lines which have guided his recent negotiations with the independent tribes on his eastern border, and he, no doubt, welcomes the news of any fresh raid committed by the Turis, in the hope that he may at length frame some reasonable excuse for taking the law into his own hands, and eventually of reassuming the government of the valley.

I believe that no native Governor that we could appoint would (for the present at any rate) succeed in bridging the various sections of the Jirga into anything like unity. For such work a British officer is requisite, and to prevent the possibility of the recurrence of last April, when our representative had to withdraw somewhat hastily to Thall, he should not be deputed to Kuram without a suitable escort.

The first step, however, is to settle affairs up to date, and the Commissioner of Peshawar should be empowered to inform the Turi Jirga that a joint Commission will be appointed to enquire into the recent raids, &c., and that we intend to enforce the awards of the Commission whatever they may be.

As regards the future government of the country, Mr. Merk's suggestions in his note\* R. No. 12845F, of the 24th August, 1887, commend themselves to me. I would raise a strong levy for which Kuram could well afford to pay. It should be under a selected Native Officer, a Shiah Mahommedan, with a political officer like Lieutenant-Colonel Warburton as his immediate superior. This officer would carry on the work which Captain Leigh was forced to abandon, and I have no doubt but that, by degrees, the more adventurous spirits, who have been the ringleaders in the recent raids, would be content to reserve their talents for the suppression of dacoity and the maintenance of order in the valley.

This would be an important step in a direction which I have more than once advocated, and which I hope is generally accepted by Government, viz., the policy of extending our influence, wherever opportunity offers, among the tribesmen on our immediate borders.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XVIII.

ON A COMPLAINT OF THE AMIR THAT A RAID HAS BEEN COMMITTED BY ZAKKA KHEL  
AFRIDIS UPON MOHMANDS WHO ARE SUBJECTS OF AFGHANISTAN.SIMLA,  
25th April, 1888.

I agree with the views taken on this case by the Punjab Government. There can be no doubt as to the inconvenience of such raids, but there is nothing novel about them, as might appear to any one unacquainted with the frontier, from reading the Amir's letter.

As Zakka Khel Afridis candidly admit, "our connection formerly used to be with the Amirs of Afghanistan, and we used to receive allowances from them. We always raided on the Amir's subjects and plundered their property and each side used to kill men from the other. In those days the Amirs of Afghanistan did not attempt to check and stop our depredations."

I notice that Colonel Warburton gives it as his opinion that the raiders from the Bazar valley could not venture into the Amir's territories without the aid of certain sections of the Amir's own subjects, and he makes the pertinent remark, that "beyond the assertion of both parties, I have not the means of knowing who carried out this raid, who participated in and shared its profits." So it appears to be a question whether or not the Zakka Khels were aided by some of the Amir's own refractory subjects.

We cannot gainsay the assertion of the Zakka Khels that "they are subjects of no government," and if proper precautions are not taken by the Amir to secure the property of his subjects, when they are within easy raiding distance of a clan whose profession is raiding, he must not expect us to move in the matter. We distinctly told the Amir in 1883 what our connection with the Afridis is, and in replying to him now, our letter should be based on similar lines.

The Amir threatens, in case he does not get proper redress, that he will attack the Zakka Khels. He may attempt to carry out his threat, but I confess I very much doubt his doing so. His predecessors have always winked at Afridi raids, but should he resolve on punitive measures, he would, if I mistake not, raise such a hornet's nest that he would be glad of a compromise before he had made any impression on the tribe.

I would not let this incident interfere with the raising of the New Bazar company of Khyber Rifles, but it would perhaps be as well to warn each member of it that in the event of his taking part in any conflict with the Amir's troops, his name would be struck off the rolls of the company.

Were we to take the Amir's view of the question, and threaten the Zakka Khels with the loss of their allowance, they would probably tell us to do as we pleased, and would close the pass until their allowances were restored to them. We have, in reality, but little hold over the Afridis, and so long as they faithfully observe the agreement they made with us, the less we interfere with them the better.

Any coercive measures are, I consider, quite beyond the question, for if we threaten we are bound to make good our words, and the only way we can do this would be to send a powerful force into the Afridi hills, with the certain result, that our policy of extending our influence over the tribesmen, which has made such rapid strides of

late years, would receive a severe check, and a considerable time would be required to restore that feeling of confidence in our relationship with them, which I have every reason to believe is being daily strengthened. I would tell the Amir plainly that he must take such measures to protect his own subjects as we have to do with regard to our own along our long lines of frontier, and inform him that he is at perfect liberty to chastise the Zakka Khels if he so thinks fit. The Afridi Jirga should also be informed of our decision.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XIX.

ON THE AMIR'S POLICY TOWARDS THE INDEPENDENT TRIBES ON THE  
PESHAWAR FRONTIER.

SIMLA,  
*4th May, 1888.*

This note is interesting, and shews the bent of the Amir's policy during the last few months. I agree with Mr. Durand that his movements should be watched, and measures taken, if necessary, to prevent his influence being gradually extended over the independent tribes which lie in the direction of Dir and Chitral. I would send a reassuring letter to Umra Khan of Jandol, and at the same time reciprocate the wish expressed by the Khan of Nawajai to be on friendly terms with the British Government. As is pointed out in the note, if we can bring the Khans of Jandol and Nawajai together on the mutual ground of being protégés of the British Government, they will be more than a match for Dir and Asmar.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XX.

## ON THE TRANSFER OF SIND TO THE PUNJAB GOVERNMENT.

(See Nos. IX. and XVI.)

SIMLA,

8th May, 1888.

I noted on this case on the 26th September, 1886, and again on the 8th January, 1888. Since those dates the question has been thoroughly discussed, and as the arguments advanced by the Bombay Government do not seem to me to be of sufficient weight to condemn the system of locating certain regiments of the Bombay Army above the passes, I concur with General Chesney that a definite proposal regarding the case should be sent to the Secretary of State. The three corps selected for this service might be somewhat on the lines of the Guide Corps or Central India Horse, an economy would be effected, and at the same time a new and valuable appointment would be created for the officers of the Bombay Army. A specially-selected officer should be appointed to command the corps, and the men comprising it should have as their Native officers men of good family of their own class. There should be no difficulty in getting officers to elect for this local service, if we may judge from the numerous applications that are made for service in the Guide Corps and the Punjab Frontier Force. The regiments should never be brought below the passes, except for service on any special occasion. The argument of the Bombay Government that the troops of that presidency would lose the advantage of a special training ground on the frontier is refuted by the remark in the Notes, "that the frontier duties of the Bengal Army have always been taken by a special force, and the Bombay Army would be no worse off in that respect."

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XXI.

## NOTE ON THE DEFENCE WORKS OF THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER OF INDIA.

SIMLA,

8th May, 1888.

The Secretary of State for India has asked for "the latest information as to the progress of our North-West Frontier defence works, and the probable time of completion." He also wishes to know "what step we should be prepared to take in case of any unforeseen change of circumstances."

## DECISION AS TO DEFENSIVE MEASURES.

The North-West Frontier of India may be said to extend from Chitral and Gilgit on the borders of Kashmir to the Khwaja Amran range which covers Baluchistan.

No new defence works have been commenced as yet, except in the immediate neighbourhood of Quetta, where considerable progress has been made; but all along the frontier, roads and railways have been pushed on, and the communications generally have been greatly improved.

The question of fortifying the whole length of frontier was carefully considered and was finally decided against. It was felt that the passes were too far apart for any forts placed at their exits to afford mutual support, unless the forts themselves were made of great strength, armed with powerful guns, and connected with each other by a series of extensive works. This would have entailed considerable expense, and required much larger garrisons than, with our limited Army, could be afforded. It was settled, therefore, that if the main issues, viz., Peshawar and Quetta, were strongly protected, and minor works erected here and there between these two points, nothing more in the shape of defences would probably be required. It was agreed, however, that roads and railways should be pushed on everywhere, and every facility given for the rapid assembly of troops wherever the frontier might be threatened.

## ROADS AND RAILWAYS.

It will be more convenient to discuss the roads and railways first, and then consider the defence positions, explaining in each case what has been, and what is still required to be done.

The accompanying general map shows the several roads and lines of railway leading to and along the frontier, and the two large-scale maps give the communications which are being constructed as part of the defence schemes.

*Roads completed or in progress.*

The roads which have been taken in hand during the last 2 years, and either improved considerably or made for the first time, are—

(1.) From Khushalgarh, through Kohat and Bannu, to Dera Ismail Khan; length, 201 miles.

This road has been newly made; some of the bridges and a good deal of metalling are still unfinished, but the whole will be completed throughout by the end of the year. From Peza to Dera Ismail Khan, a distance of 37 miles, water is scarce, but this want will be supplied either by sinking deep wells, or bringing water from a distance.

(2.) From Mooltan to Dera Ghazi Khan ; length, 41 miles.

This road is now in good order, and the communications between these places, and also between Bukkur and Dera Ismail Khan, have been greatly improved by the establishment of steam-ferris on the Chenab and Indus rivers. There will be a still further improvement when the bridge now under construction across the Chenab at Shersah is finished—about 2 years hence.

(3.) From Dera Ghazi Khan to Pishin, *viâ* Rakhni and Loralai ; length, 300 miles.

This is a very important road, as troops from the Punjab and Derajat can march by it direct to Pishin without going all the way round by Sind. The road, which has been newly made throughout, is not yet completed in all respects, but troops have marched by it. Water arrangements have to be improved ; some rock-cuttings in the Rakhni gorge are unfinished ; one bridge and some culverts are being made, and some miles of metalling are required, especially in the plains section.

(4.) From Loralai to Harnai ; length, 54 miles.

This road is new throughout. It is an excellent piece of work, and a very important road, as it connects the new station of Loralai with the Sind-Pishin Railway.

(5.) Quetta to Kach : length, 30 miles.

This is an important line, as it affords safe communication between Quetta and Kach in rear of the Takatu mountain. The roadway has been made throughout ; the metalling is being consolidated, and will shortly be finished. The branch roads from Saran Tangi to the junction with the Kach-Gharkai road, and to Fuller's Camp, distant respectively 10 and 11 miles, are under construction.

(6.) Quetta to Chaman, *viâ* Syed Yaru, Syed Hamid, Killa Abdulla, and the Kojak Pass ; length, 64 miles.

The section from Quetta to Killa Abdulla is new ; it is being metalled, and will be ready by October next. The latter portion over the Kojak has been greatly improved. The gradient has been reduced to 1 in 20, and the greatest curve has 50-foot radius. Field artillery will now be able to march over this road with full teams.

(7.) Pishin to Syed Yaru ; length, 6½ miles.

This road has been newly formed and metalled ; it connects the Pishin Fort with the Sind-Pishin Railway, and also with the main road to Quetta.

(8.) Pishin to Saranam ; length, 8½ miles.

A new road now being rapidly metalled. It connects the Dera Ghazi Khan-Pishin road with the Quetta-Chaman road.

(9.) Killa Abdulla to Gulistan Karez ; length, 9 miles.

An old road which has been improved and metalled. A valuable lateral communication in rear of the Khwaja Amran range, connecting the roads leading from the Pishin Valley through the Kojak and Gwajha Passes.

(10.) Gulistan Karez through the Gwajha Pass to the western slopes of the Khwaja Amran range ; length, 22 miles.

An old road which has been much improved. It is very desirable that the continuation of this road to Quetta *viâ* Segi should be taken in hand.



*Roads required.*

The following roads are still required to perfect the military communications on the North-West Frontier:—

(1.) From Campbellpore to the bridge over the Indus near Attock; length, 12 miles.

(2.) From Campbellpore to Khushalgarh; length, 52 miles.

These two roads are necessary to enable the reserve, which would be encamped near Campbellpore, to move rapidly to the Indus for the defence of the Peshawar Valley and the Derajat.

(3.) From Jamrud to Landi Khana; length, 21 miles; and thence to Chinar in the Bazar Valley, a further length of 15 miles.

As far as Landi Khana the road is fairly good, and does not require much to make it easy for wheeled artillery. Beyond Landi Khana no road exists at present, but for the defence of the Khyber Pass, it is necessary that one should be made to Chinar through the Zakhā Khel hamlets and Bori Kandao.

(4.) From Spersang or some other point in the Peshawar Valley, to Landi Kotal *viā* the Mullagori country; length, about 20 miles.

There is no road at present, but it is very desirable that one should be made; it would have the advantage of avoiding the Khyber Pass route, and, in the event of trouble with the Afridis, would enable us to reach Landi Kotal without passing through their territory. It would be a most useful road, and I understand that it could be made without any great difficulty, either political or physical.

(5.) From Peshawar to Kohat, *viā* the Kohat Pass; length, 37 miles.

Twenty-seven miles of this road lie without British territory, the remaining 10 miles, from near Aimal Chabootra to the Kohat Kotal, run through Afridi limits. So long as we are on good terms with this tribe, these 10 miles are kept open for us, but when they wish to annoy us they close it on the slightest pretext: on such occasions all communication between Peshawar and Kohat has to be carried on either by Rawal Pindi, a distance of 200 miles, or Attock and the Nilabgasha (at present only a camel-track), 117 miles, or Campbellpore, 149 miles. In his despatch No. 217, dated 15th October, 1885, the Secretary of State for India referred to this road, and enquired whether "advantage might not be taken of the present opportunity for reshaping the arrangements now in force in regard to the Kohat Pass, in view to a good military road being made through it, and such measures being adopted as may give to the Government of India more complete control over it." The road is in the same state as it was when this despatch was written, and the condition of the Kohat Pass is now exactly what it was under the Sikh rule; and, though the British Government has controlled the districts of Peshawar and Kohat for nearly 40 years, it has neither the power nor the means to insist on the smallest repair being made on the road which connects two frontier stations, politically and strategically, of the highest importance.

(6.) From Gumbat on the Kohat-Khushalgarh road, *viā* Nilab to Khairabad on the Indus opposite to Attock; length, 57 miles.

This road would be of great use in the event of reinforcements having to be sent to the Khairabad position from the Khushalgarh or Kohat direction.

(7.) From Bannu to Thal; length, 42 miles.

This road would be useful in the event of operations in the Kuram valley, and were Bannu brought into connection with the railway system of India.

(8.) From Bannu towards Ghazni and the Gomal Pass, *via* the Tochi valley.

As this route lies almost entirely beyond British territory, the time has not perhaps yet come to consider it in detail, but it is likely to be important in the future. As our frontier communications and our frontier policy progress, I have little doubt but that Bannu will become the base of one of our most important strategic lines of operations in Southern Afghanistan.

#### RAILWAYS NOW OPEN.

As regards railways, a great deal has been done during the last 2 years, and many works are still in progress, but much more is required before the several lines can be in a position to transport, with any degree of rapidity, large bodies of troops.

(1.) The Sind-Pishin Railway has been opened from Sibi to Quetta and Killa Abdulla; the length to Bostan, where the line forks, is  $121\frac{1}{2}$  miles; from Bostan, Quetta, and Killa Abdulla are distant, respectively,  $21\frac{1}{4}$  and  $35\frac{1}{4}$  miles. The line is now being pushed on from Killa Abdulla to the foot of the Kojak, under which a tunnel is being made which will complete the line to Chaman, our frontier post, a further distance by rail of  $25\frac{1}{2}$  miles. The tunnel, it is calculated, will take not less than 2 years, but it is hoped that the wire-rope inclines, now being laid over the Kojak Pass, will admit of the reserve material for the extension of the line to Kandahar being stored at Chaman by the end of this year. From the proposed terminus at Chaman, Kandahar is distant 78 miles.

(2.) The Bolan Railway has also been opened during the last 2 years. Its length from Sibi to Quetta is  $100\frac{1}{2}$  miles. One section of this line, *viz.*, from Hirok to Darwaza, a length of 10 miles, is narrow gauge, on account of the steep gradients; this is now being remedied, and it is understood that the whole line will be opened for traffic on the broad gauge by next October.

(3.) The Sind-Sagar Railway has likewise been opened within the last 2 years. The length of the main line, *i.e.*, from the west bank of the Chenab opposite to Shershab, to Lala Musa on the North-Western Railway near Jhelum, is  $332\frac{3}{4}$  miles. There are, besides, the following branches:—

	Miles.
Mahmud Kot to Dera Ghazi Khan ferry, <i>via</i> Koreshi .. ..	$13\frac{1}{2}$
Darya Khan to Dera Ismail Khan ferry .. ..	$5\frac{3}{4}$
Haranpur to Khewra Salt-mines .. ..	9

#### RAILWAYS IN PROGRESS OR PROJECTED.

The only unopened portion of the Sind-Sagar Railway is the branch between Kundian and Mianwali, opposite to Bannu, a length of 9 miles. A survey has just been completed of the country between Mianwali and Kalabagh on the left bank of the Indus, and as far as Bannu on the right bank, and also from Dera Ismail Khan to Bannu, with a view of determining how Bannu and the Derajat stations could most conveniently and economically be connected with the Sind-Sagar Railway. Bannu has great strategic value; it is within 10 or 12 marches of Ghazni—that is, of the heart of Southern Afghanistan; from it, a force would threaten the flank of an enemy who

ventured to move from Kabul towards Kandahar, or *vice versa*, the Gomal Pass and Kuram can be taken in reverse, while it is well placed to support the defence of the Indus, either towards Peshawar or the Derajat.

*North-Western Railway. Improvements sanctioned.*

To what extent the North-Western Railway can be used for troops, and the measures necessary for increasing its carrying power, have been carefully considered by a Committee of experts.

The following recommendations have been accepted by Government, and are being given effect to:—

(1.) Increasing the water-supply and arranging for crossing-stations between Ruk and Sibi, so as to admit of 12 trains running daily along this section.

(2.) Increasing the water-supply and laying third sidings at all stations on the Sind-Pishin Railway.

(3.) Extension of Quetta station to give sufficient accommodation for ordnance and commissariat stores.

(4.) Improving Bostan Junction.

*Further improvements required.*

The following additional measures have been recommended by the Committee, and as they are most urgent, it is hoped that funds will soon be forthcoming to carry them out:—

(1.) Increased number of sidings for ordnance and commissariat stores at Killa Abdulla, which must, for some time to come, be the advanced depôt, and the detraining point for all troops railed to Pishin.

(2.) Increase of passenger stock.

As has been shown above, the total length of railway which has been opened since the 31st December, 1885, is 636½ miles; of this 287½ miles belong to the Ghât lines, for which, as explained hereafter, special stock is required; for the balance of 368 miles (the Sind-Sagar line in fact), although there has been proportionate increase in the number of engines and wagons, a very slight addition has been made to the carriage stock; with the present number of passenger vehicles it would not be possible for more than eight trains a day to be run over the North-Western lines.

(3.) Special stock on the Ghât lines (Bolan and Sind-Pishin Railways).

Owing to the heavy gradients on these lines it is essential to safety that there should be powerful engines, that every passenger vehicle should be supplied with efficient brakes, and that, owing to the sharp curves, all the carriages should be made on the Bogie principle. At the present time, the number of passenger vehicles supplied with brake power is almost inappreciable, and there are only five composite and 35 3rd class carriages on the Bogie principle.

(4.) Rearrangement of the Sibi and Rindli Stations.

The existing sidings, &c., are most inconvenient for traffic.

(5.) Construction of a loop line from Mittri to Rindli.

This is necessary in order that there may be two points at which to break up trains for the Ghât lines. At present all traffic would be congested at Sibi.

(6.) Construction of a loop line from Sukkur to Shikarpur.

This is very desirable, and would greatly facilitate the traffic between Sukkur and Sibi.

(7.) Lessening the heavy gradients on the Jhelum and Rawal Pindi section, and arranging for crossing stations between Rawal Pindi and Peshawar.

Under existing arrangements trains of 30 vehicles each can run between Lahore and Jhelum, but between Jhelum and Rawal Pindi only 18 vehicles can be taken in one train; the carrying power of the line is therefore limited to this, the weakest section. During the past year 8 lakhs have been spent in flattening the gradients to 1 in 100, but 41½ lakhs more are required before the whole section will be reduced to this gradient. Some of the gradients at present are as much as 1 in 50. From Jhelum to Peshawar there is a great want of powerful engines suitable to heavy gradients.

(8.) Renewal of the permanent-way of the North-Western Railway where required.

It is essential that the whole of the North-Western Railway should be kept in serviceable condition. At the present time several miles of rail require renewing, and it is very desirable that this should be done while we are at peace, for, with the constant traffic which would be caused by a concentration of troops, it would be scarcely possible to change a large number of rails.

#### DEFENCE POSITIONS.

I will now show how we stand as regards defence positions on the frontier.

The two important points on our frontier are Peshawar and Quetta, and these present very different aspects, when the question of their defence against a European enemy has to be prepared for. It would be very difficult to secure the safety of the former if the Afridis and neighbouring tribes were against us, while Quetta, although the attitude of the tribes would be an important factor, could be made almost impregnable, even if they were hostile.

#### PESHAWAR DEFENCES.

With the Peshawar tribes on our side we could effectually block the approach from Kabul by having a couple of small forts, one on the Landi Khana Kotal, the other at or about Chinar in the Bazar Valley, with a good road connecting these places, and with easy communications to them from Peshawar, *viâ* the Khyber and Mulligoree routes. Landi Khana and Chinar are beyond British territory, but the Afridis have not only consented to the construction of a fortified serai at the former place, but afforded every assistance to the Engineer Officer deputed to survey the ground. No doubt they would do the same at the latter place.

#### *Landi Kotal.*

The site at Landi Kotal has been selected, and the design of the fortified serai has been approved.

	Rupees.
The estimated cost of the serai is .. .. .	1,62,502
Water-supply .. .. .	56,000
	<hr/>
Total .. .. .	2,18,502
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The work has been postponed in consequence of the reduction in the military estimates, but it is to be hoped that funds will soon be made available, for the tribes will never believe that we could be in want of money, and will certainly attribute the delay to indecision as to the line of policy we intend to adopt towards them.

#### *Jamrud Fort.*

Landi Khana and Chinar would be supported by the Jamrud Fort, which is situated close to the eastern outlet of the Khyber; by the entrenched position it is proposed to construct on the ridge from the Bara Fort through Harri Sing's Boorj, and the Takal villages to the Michni road, and by Peshawar itself.

Jamrud has been improved as much as possible. The fort is of such an obsolete type and weak profile, that it would be a waste of money either to enlarge it or do much towards strengthening it. It is possible, however, to materially increase its defensive value, by throwing up at a distance of about 800 yards to its front three or more outposts of field-work type with open gorges. These outworks, if armed with field or siege guns, would aid in keeping an enemy at a sufficient distance to prevent his doing much harm to the fort in rear; in conjunction with the fort they would guard the mouth of the pass, and they might be placed so as to assist in securing the water-supply. The question of these outposts has been dealt with by the Defence Committee, and is now under the consideration of Government.

#### *Peshawar Lines.*

The positions where entrenchments would have to be thrown up on the Bara-Harri Sing-ka-Boorj-Michni road line have been selected, and it is not proposed to do more at present. The villages through which this line passes are little forts in themselves, and the ground throughout is unusually favourable for defence. A good and ample water supply passes along the immediate front of the position, and the numerous mulberry and other trees planted round the villages would furnish excellent material for abbattis and other obstacles.

#### *Peshawar Fort.*

It was decided to do but little to the Peshawar Fort, as from its position immediately adjoining the city wall, and from its being commanded by buildings within the city, it was found impossible to utilise it except as a temporary "Place of refuge," and for the storage of ammunition, &c., and, in a measure, to overawe the city. Emplacements and platforms for the new armament and remodelling the angle bastions have been completed, and the north side of the railway, which runs just outside the fort, has been converted into a glacis. A new magazine for the armament and small-arms ammunition is much required, and the communications between the upper and lower defences ought to be improved; new gateways for the entrances are also necessary, as is the provision of a tank for a reserve supply of water.

As I have remarked before, the defence of the Khyber, and the possession of Peshawar, would depend on our relations with the surrounding tribes. With them against us, we could not defend the pass at the only place where a defence is possible, viz., Landi Kotal, and once the enemy reached the eastern outlet, our position in the Peshawar Valley would be untenable. For this reason it would be wasting money to build great forts, in the hope of blocking the Khyber Pass or covering Peshawar. No forts, however strong, would avail us, either there or in any other part of the valley, and with the tribes attacking all round, it would be necessary to fall back upon some position where, with a small force we could hold a large one in check, and where our communications with India would be safe.

*The Attock Position.*

Fortunately, such a position as we require exists in the low range of hills covering the Attock Fort and the railway bridge over the Indus. It extends from the right bank of the Kabul river near its junction with the Indus at Khairabad to Akora, thence *viâ* the Kunna-Khel Pass to Nilab. This forms a strong compact position, and the only one in the Peshawar Valley which could not be turned by superior numbers. Scarcity of water is its sole drawback that I am aware of. Nothing has been done as yet to this position except to construct a mule-road from the railway bridge head to the heights which overlook Khairabad. An accurate survey of the position is now, however, being made, and early next cold season the ground will be carefully examined, and the sites determined upon where batteries and entrenchments could be most suitably placed, and where tanks and roads should be constructed. It is very desirable that there should be no delay about the tanks and roads, but it would be premature, I think, to do more at present than to fix the positions for the batteries and entrenchments, and decide upon the kind of works that would be most suitable. The ground is peculiarly well adapted for defence, and with the aid of a movable force located in the neighbourhood of Campbellpore and Hazro, which would watch the fords\* across the Indus, and be well placed as a reserve either for Peshawar or the Derajat, we might hope to dispute successfully the passage of the Indus. Between Peshawar and Quetta no defensive works are being carried on, nor are any contemplated at present, except at Sukkur; the position here has been thoroughly surveyed, and the project for its defence has been prepared, but it is not intended to provide funds for it this year. The Sukkur channel bridge blockhouses have been finished some time ago, and the Rohri channel blockhouses will, it is hoped, be finished this year.

## PISHIN DEFENCES.

The conditions of Quetta are not only politically, but strategically very different from those of Peshawar. At Peshawar we should, in my opinion, remain chiefly on the defensive. Quetta, on the other hand, is the point from which we should have to act on the offensive, and move forward rapidly in the event of our presence being necessary in Afghanistan. It would become the great depôt of our supplies, ordnance stores, &c., and would, in fact, be our advanced base of operations. For these reasons it is essential that Quetta should be made as strong as possible, and that the lines of communication leading to it from India should be perfected so as to admit of the passage of large bodies of troops with ease and rapidity. The country between India and the frontier of Quetta presents great physical difficulties, but these same difficulties, which prevent roads and railways being made, except at a great expenditure of labour and money, render the position, of which Quetta is the centre, admirably well adapted for defence. When the works now under construction, to supplement the natural fortresses which exist, have been completed, the position will be practically impregnable.

The Pishin defences consist of three lines: first, the Khwaja Amran range, which is our boundary towards Afghanistan, and is distant about 60 miles from Quetta; second, the centre and main line, which runs from Amadun through Kach and the Takatu range to the Ghazaband Pass; third, Quetta itself.

*The Quetta "Miri."*

In the Quetta Fort, known as the "Miri," the arsenal is placed, and in the neighbourhood of the fort are the commissariat stores, transport lines, troops, barracks, &c.

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\* None of these are easy, but one or two between Torbela and Attock could be used by troops during the cold weather months.

The "Miri" in its original condition was quite unsuited for a large arsenal, and has had to be almost completely remodelled, to admit of heavy guns being mounted, and of the enceinte being enlarged sufficiently to accommodate the necessary buildings, magazines, &c. The mound, or inner defence, is now practically complete. Two 7-inch R.B.L. guns are mounted, and two 6·3-inch R.M.L. howitzers will be mounted shortly. There only remain to be constructed emplacements for the five machine guns, which will not entail much labour; moreover the guns are not absolutely essential to the defence of the mound.

There is besides in the arsenal a siege train consisting of—

- 5—40-pr. R.M.L. guns.
- 5—25-pr. R.M.L. guns.
- 5—6·3-inch R.M.L. howitzers.

In the outer defences the west face is well advanced. The alteration to the east face has not yet been commenced, but as the scheme is to improve the existing rampart and not to construct a new one, the work will not take long. The north face will be taken in hand at once. Delay has been caused owing to the line cutting into temporary buildings, which up to now have been required. The north-east corner, where the main gate will be, is still unfinished, owing to its not having been decided by what line the railway siding should enter the fort.\* The different works dovetail in so much, that many things are standing over until the siding question is settled. The outer defences, railway access, and all works connected with the fort itself, can easily be completed by the autumn. The arsenal will take longer—indeed, it is unlikely that it will be reorganized and settled in permanent buildings for 2 years to come. This is unfortunate, but can scarcely be avoided, as some of the new buildings cannot be constructed until old ones, still in use, have been levelled and removed. The chief want is a second magazine, and this I regret to say, has not been commenced. The existing magazine is insufficient for local reserves and for the sanctioned quantity of arsenal stock ammunition; the latter must, therefore, be kept at Ferozepore or some other distant arsenal. When the fort is finished the arsenal will be secured against any possible local disturbance, but taken as a whole it is necessarily weak, and could not be defended against a European enemy. It is to be hoped, however, that it will never be put to the test, for the works now being constructed in front of Quetta should render the whole position thoroughly secure.

#### *The Quetta-Kach position.*

This position, which may be referred to as the "Quetta-Kach position," extends from Amadun on the east, to the Mashalik range on the west, presenting a front, roughly estimated, of 45 miles. A great portion of this front, however, is practically inaccessible, and the remainder arranges itself into distinct sections.

The inaccessible portions are—

- (1.) The hills to the north-east of Amadun.
- (2.) The hills between Gharkai and Amadun.
- (3.) The north-east extremity of the Takatu range.
- (4.) The Takatu range.
- (5.) The Murghi Kotal spur.
- (6.) The Mashalik range south of the Ghazaband Pass.

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\* It is understood that this question has now been decided and that the works are proceeding.

The sections which require to be strengthened by defence works are—

(a.) The Amadun Pass.

The circumstances of this pass are peculiar. Although it must be considered as the extreme right of the "Quetta-Kach position," and if attacked would have to be defended, the conditions of an attack would imply so wide a turning movement as to constitute a set of operations, which lie outside a direct attack on the "Quetta-Kach position." Amadun is a strong position naturally, but if threatened it would be threatened in force, and would then have to be occupied in tolerable strength. But such a movement could not form part of an attack on the Quetta-Kach position, and would scarcely be combined with it.

(b.) The Gharkhai and Khanai gorges.

The physical advantages of these positions are so great, that it is not intended at present to construct any works here, but to lay out the communications, and draw up a scheme of defence, including the works that would have to be constructed when the occasion arises. Gharkhai will be defended at the gorge, but the main defence will be at Fuller's Camp. Khanai will be similarly defended at the gorge where emplacements for field artillery can be rapidly constructed, but the main defence will be at the Kotal above Zaurkard. This Kotal and Fuller's Camp ridge practically form one line of defence with one system of reserves, and secure the main road of communication between Kach and Quetta. If this position be carried, the defensive line is divided: the right falls back on Kach, the left on Saran Tangi, and the above road is exposed, but communication can still be kept up by an existing mule-road through the hills to the east.

(c.) The Murghi Kotal.

The defences of the Murghi Kotal position comprise an outer and an inner line. The former consists, first, of gun emplacements and a redoubt and breastworks for infantry of the latest field-work type at the western mouth of the pass, not only closing its entrance, but also bringing a flanking fire (more or less effective in proportion to the range and accuracy of the guns employed) to bear along a considerable portion of the front of the Baleli-Regi position. It consists, secondly, of communication in the form of mule-roads leading from the Kotal to the several tactical points in the hills to the north and west of the pass, commanding its mouth to the north, and guarding against any attempt at crossing the hills from the Kuchlak direction. Emplacements for mountain guns and infantry picquets are provided at suitable points, capable of being further developed and elaborated should occasion arise, and the several mule-roads are so aligned as not only to facilitate interior movement and reinforcement, but also to prevent the concerted operation and lateral communication of the enemy, in the event of his succeeding in capturing one or other of the more important heights overlooking the pass from the north. Care has been taken to bring the slopes of these roads under an effective artillery fire from guns disposed along the northern face of the ridge bordering the Murghi Rao to the south, so as to prevent their being of use to the enemy should he succeed in driving in the outposts.

The inner defences consist of an infantry redoubt and entrenchment, effectively closing the passage over the Kotal, and a gun bank to enable the guns to sweep the Rao as far as the debouchure of the pass. Artillery emplacements for the guns commanding the mule-tracks of the outer defences, and for the guns to defend the mouth of the pass from the ridge to its south, together with the roads leading thereto,



are included in the inner defence scheme. Adequate overhead cover against rifle and artillery fire is provided in the works both of the inner and outer line.

The proposed allotment of guns to this position, exclusive of those belonging to the field and mountain batteries forming part of the defending force, is as follows:—

Outer defences—

- 4 siege howitzers, 6·3-inch R.M.L.
- 2 field guns, 9-pr. R.M.L.
- 4 machine guns.

Inner defences—

- 2 light siege guns, 25-pr. R.M.L.
- 2 field guns, 9-pr. R.M.L.
- 2 S.B. howitzers, 8-inch.
- 4 machine guns.

(d.) Baleli-Regi position.

The Baleli-Regi defences are designed to close the gap between the southern end of the narrow ridge running south from the Murghi Pass and the Mashalak range to the west; and in conjunction with the works securing the Ghazaband and Murghi Passes, completely to cover Quetta and the Bolan Railway and road from an attack from the Pishin direction. Further, this defensive arrangement, supplemented by the obstacle of the inaccessible Takatu Mountain, the entrenchments closing the Gharkai and Khanai gorges, the communications and supporting works in connection therewith, and the provision of ready and safe means of communication between Quetta and Kach in rear of Takatu, secures the debouchure of the Sind-Pishin Railway on the Pishin plateau, and facilitates and screens a counter attack in force from either the Quetta or the Kach direction.

Commencing from the right flank, the Baleli-Regi defences comprise—first, two howitzer batteries on the ridge running south from the Murghi Pass, the western face of the ridge being scarped and rendered inaccessible throughout, where it is not so already. Secondly, three infantry redoubts with connecting lines of entrenchment, and two batteries in the intervals between the redoubts, each armed with two 40-prs. These works occupy a front of about 1,500 yards from the southern extremity of the ridge westward, between the Hanna stream and the Quetta Lora. Thirdly, a couple of connected infantry redoubts with detached emplacements for four 40-prs. and four 6·3-inch howitzers on the Baleli mound, some 2,600 yards further west. Fourthly, the measures necessary for placing the village of Baleli, which lies slightly in front of the general alignment, in a state of defence, and for utilizing the water of the Hanna stream to form inundations covering the Hanna redoubts from an attack from the north. Fifthly, a couple of connected infantry redoubts with detached emplacements for four siege guns, 2,100 yards west of the Baleli mound works, in the vicinity of the Karingao stream. Sixthly, similar redoubts and emplacements on the Regi mound, 3,900 yards west of the Karingao works, and completing the defensive alignment across the valley from east to west. Seventhly, between the last two sets of works, two infantry redoubts with connecting parapet, one on each side of the Karingao river, with a third redoubt slightly in rear to secure the ford.

The type of redoubt adopted for these defences is of a semi-permanent character, and resembles generally that known as the Twydall, with flat slopes hardly visible from even a moderate distance, and with a trace so adjusted as to afford adequate protection to the batteries outside, and to admit of the greatest possible development of rifle and artillery fire with the least possible exposure of the defenders. Each redoubt possesses

a suitable amount of overhead cover, and an efficient obstacle against sudden assault is provided in the form of iron pallisades surrounding the several works, and protected in front from hostile artillery fire by being fixed at the foot of the counterscarp.

A good military road, 50 feet wide, runs immediately in rear of the Baleli-Regi defensive allignment, and a similar road, 40 feet wide, runs from its left flank at Regi mound through the villages of Sher Killa and Ispungli to Quetta. cross communication from front to rear, in the form of 40-ft. roads, being provided between the two main lateral roads; first, from the Baleli mound works southward to Sher Killa; and second, from the Hanna works southward to Ispungli. It is intended eventually to construct a branch railway from the Sind-Pishin line, behind the 50-ft. road which traverses the main position, and also to provide a central retired work, or group of works, in support of the advanced redoubts and batteries, the site of which will be selected so as to admit of the rapid reinforcement of any threatened point.

The proposed allotment of guns to the Baleli-Regi position is as follows :—

Ridge on right flank—

4 siege howitzers, 6·3-inch R.M.L.

Hanna works—

4 heavy siege guns, 40-prs. R.M.L.

Baleli Mound Battery—

4 heavy siege guns, 40-pr. R.M.L.

4 siege howitzers, 6·3-inch R.M.L.

Karingao Battery—

4 heavy siege guns, 40-pr. R.M.L.

Regi Mound Battery—

4 heavy siege guns, 40-pr. R.M.L.

Infantry redoubts—

14 field guns (six of these guns would belong to the artillery holding the position).

Redoubts and batteries generally—

50 machine guns.

(e.) The Ghazaband Pass.

The Ghazaband Pass defences, so far as the eastern slope of the Mashalak range is concerned, may be regarded as merely a continuation, up to the Ghazaband Kotal, of the Baleli-Regi entrenched line. A natural scarp leading westward from the vicinity of Regi to the top of the ridge, and quite inaccessible on its northern face, is utilized as furnishing secure positions for gun emplacements, the fire from which will sweep the slopes and broken ground over which attack from the north-east is possible, although difficult. The gun emplacements on the ridge itself furnish a range of fire over the westward slopes as well as towards the north-east. A gun road lies immediately behind the natural scarp above referred to, and along the ridge to within about half a mile of the Kotal, from which point it is continued as a mule track. On the dominant point along the ridge, both south of the Kotal and north of it, up to the bifurcation of the ridge, breastworks or sangars communicating with the gun or mule road, and provided with arrangements for storing water, will be erected. As

regards the western defence of the Ghazaband Pass, the spur running out westwards immediately north of the Kotal furnishes a suitable site for two howitzer emplacements, and the actual western mouth is occupied by a battery of six field guns and fieldwork entrenchments, so disposed as to command the road and to sweep the slopes and hollows bordering it. The summit of the pass, the spring in its vicinity (the water from which is, however, quite insignificant in amount), and a few of the more important tactical points along the ridge, are secured by small infantry redoubts.

The guns allotted to the Ghazaband position are—

Along the scarp and ridge and on the hills west of Regi :

2 light siege guns, 25-pr. R.M.L.  
2 siege howitzers, 6·3-inch R.M.L.  
4 S.B. howitzers, 8-inch.

For the western defence of the pass, exclusive of guns on the ridge capable of firing west—

On the spur above the mouth of the pass :

2 S.B. howitzers, 8-inch.

In front of the mouth :

6 field guns.

The total number of guns required on the Quetta-Kach position is —

16—40-prs.  
4—25-prs.  
8—8-inch howitzers.  
14—6·3-inch howitzers.  
12—9-prs.  
58 machine guns.

All these guns are in India, in the several arsenals of the three Presidencies. It is most important that they should be conveyed to Quetta and stored there, together with the amount of ammunition decided upon for each nature of ordnance. Although the 12—9-pr. guns would probably be furnished from the batteries of the Army Corps, it is desirable that a certain number of this kind of gun should be in reserve at Quetta.

The Quetta-Kach position is divided into two parts by the peaks of the Takatu range, which may be termed respectively the “Quetta position” and the “Kach position.” The communication between the two positions lies through the Sarakulla Pass.

The “Quetta position,” covering the Arsenal and Cantonment, is the more open of the two, and here the principal defensive works are formed, but the “Kach position” is easier of approach from the Pishin valley. The fall of the “Quetta position” would doubtless entail the loss of the “Kach position,” but the reverse does not hold good, as the “Quetta position” can be isolated by a strong defensive work in the Sarakulla Pass near, and south of, Saran Tungi. This position, facing north-east, rounds off the Quetta defences, and thus forms a fortress protecting the Quetta Arsenal.

The independence of the “Quetta position” and consequently of the Bolan line of Railway, and the possibility of the “Kach position” being penetrated, point to the necessity for a retired work on the Sind-Pishin Railway, probably at, or about, the Chupper rift. This matter will be taken up next autumn, when I hope to pay the Quetta frontier another visit.

### THE KHWAJA AMRAN RANGE.

On the Khwaja Amran range or outer line, it is not proposed at present to construct any permanent defence works nor to make any road along the crest of the range. To secure the safety of the tunnel, it will probably be necessary to construct some kind of blockhouse at each end, but as the ridge lends itself so well for defence, and as no permanent stand could be made here, anything in the shape of fortification is not required. Although the road along the ridge will not be made, as it is thought that such a road would be of more use to the attack than the defence, everything is being done, as has been already explained, to render communication easy along the rear, and to the crest of the range.

#### *Strategical observations.*

The conditions under which alone contact with a European enemy in the Pishin valley could occur, would be the British force being overpowered at Kandahar and driven back on the Khwaja Amran range and Quetta. Between Kandahar and the Khwaja Amran range, a distance of 80 miles, intervenes an open plain with little water and no supplies, and an army could not be maintained there without great difficulty. This plain is bordered on the south-west by a desert, and on the north-east by low ranges of hills, intersected by valleys, which communicate with the Toba plateau, lying to the north of the Pishin valley. From the south-west corner of Toba (called Tabin) runs in a south-westerly direction the Khwaja Amran range, forming the western limit of the mountainous region which separates the Kandahar plains from the Indus valley.

An enemy who has dislodged the British from Kandahar might follow up the retreating force across the plain to the Khwaja Amran, but the range is difficult of passage, and delay on the western side would entail great difficulties as regards supplies and water. An alternative route, with abundant water and fair supplies, lies to the north-east across the mouths of the fertile valleys, and it is reasonable to suppose it would be preferred. The latter route, further, gives access to Toba, from which a descent can be made into the Pishin valley, thus turning the Khwaja Amran Passes. For this reason, it was decided that the retreat would have to be continued to the "Quetta-Kach" position, and that the Khwaja Amran range could only be looked upon as affording outpost and delaying positions, in case the enemy advanced directly from Kandahar. It was further considered unnecessary to construct defensive works on the range, as the two passes—the Kojak on the north-east (bordering on Tabin) and the Khwaja on the south-east (25 miles apart)—have great natural advantages for defence, and a small number of troops, with easy lateral communications along the rear, could be depended upon to arrest the progress of any force the enemy would be likely to despatch in this direction.

There are two roads from the Khwaja Amran to Quetta. That from the Kojak crosses the main drainage of the Pishin Valley at Syed Hamid, just below the junction of the Pishin and Surkhab Loras, and above the junction of this combined stream and the Kakar Lora. This point from its position apparently offers facility for defence, and it was here contemplated at one time to construct a strong fort. An examination of the ground has, however, proved that the site is ill-adapted for operations on a large scale. The point is nevertheless favourable for a rearguard or outpost position to protect the passage of the Lora, and, in case of retirement, to ensure the safe retreat of a force over the 6 miles of open plain to the rear. At Syed Yaru, the system of hills is entered which separates the Bostan Valley from Pishin, and here there is a good outpost position. To the south-west extends the Ajiram range, difficult of passage, but to the north-east the hills are low and easily traversed. This circumstance causes the

danger to the Kach position, as troops can be massed here unobserved. Once Bostan is gained, the road to Quetta lies through an open valley, but is barred by the Baleli-Regi lines and the Murgi Kotal works.

The second road from the Khwaja Amran to Quetta lies to the south-west of that just described. It traverses the range by the Gwajha Pass, and enters the Pishin Valley at Gulistan Karez. At Segi, about 6 miles below Syed Hamid, it crosses the combined Loras, and passing close to the south-west extremity of the Ajiram, leads direct to the Ghazaband Pass in the Mashalik range. It is barred by the western defences of the Ghazaband, and an army checked there would have to retire, owing to the scarcity and bad quality of the water. But an invading army would probably evade the difficulties of the Khwaja Amran Passes and routes thence to Quetta, by adopting the northerly line and gaining the Toba plateau. Once there, its descent into the Pishin Valley could not be disputed. It would probably establish itself along the foot of the southern slopes of Toba, where there is abundant water, there to recruit and collect supplies. In this event, our line of outposts would be thrown out from Saranam or Syed Yaru to Pishin, and north-east to the Surkhab, and with a force capable of keeping the field, Pishin might be held and further progress denied to the enemy. This would be the turning point of operations, for this is the last position which covers the railway communication with Quetta *viâ* the Sind-Pishin Railway, and the Pishin-Dera Ghazi Khan road; if it could be held till the arrival of reinforcements, the offensive could from here be advantageously assumed. If Pishin could not be held, the enemy must, sooner or later, penetrate to Bostan, when the retreating force would be driven within the Quetta-Kach position, the nature of which I have already fully described.

#### *Defensive-offensive measures.*

The third point on which the Secretary of State asks for information is "what steps we should be prepared to take in case of any unforeseen change of circumstances."

I presume that his Lordship refers to the Russians invading Afghan territory, and moving nearer to India.

The policy to be adopted in India on such an emergency has quite recently been carefully considered by the strategical committee.\* It was clearly pointed out that a "policy of inaction during the Russian advance ought not to be entertained"; and it was shown that, whether we decided to limit our operations to the line of the Hindu Kush, and acquiesce in the occupation by Russia of the northern provinces of Afghanistan; or to insist on the inviolability of Afghanistan, the first step should be the immediate occupation of Kandahar.

#### *Force required.*

The smallest force that could be sent in advance to Kandahar would be one infantry division and one cavalry brigade, and this would in all probability have to be followed within a short time by the remainder of the 1st Army-Corps.

Although, as I have already explained, I consider we should put all our strength on one line, and not fritter away our small Army by operating in different directions, it would be necessary, in the event of any forward movement towards Afghanistan, to strengthen our frontier generally. If, for instance, the advance were made by Quetta, additional troops would have to be sent to Peshawar. There would be considerable excitement all along the border, and a strong movable column would have to be formed in the neighbourhood of Peshawar, ready to act in any direction that might be required.

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\* Memorandum on the general strategical situation of Russia and England in Central Asia.

*Transport.*

The main difficulty in mobilizing even the small force I have named would be the want of transport. For one infantry division and one cavalry brigade, the following animals would be required :—

Mules .. .. .	4,843
Camels .. .. .	4,003
Bullocks .. .. .	1,198

In regard to bullocks no difficulty is anticipated, but only 460 camels could be furnished by the Transport Department, so that nearly 4,000 would have to be hired or purchased. This number might possibly be procured without undue delay, but if they had to be purchased, there would be considerable difficulty in getting the required number of experienced attendants. This is a matter which is engaging the serious attention of the Commissary General-in-Chief.

The main difficulty lies in the insufficient number of good mules. 6,245 mules are shown on the rolls of the Transport Department. Of these, 2,480 are under-sized and weakly, 624 are sick, and 1,500 are employed in Sikkim, giving a total of 1,641 really efficient mules. Assuming, however, that the undersized animals may be included, 4,121 mules are available at present. These are scattered all over India, and their sudden withdrawal from the several stations and concentration on the frontier would not only involve great expense in railing them to Quetta, but, in many instances, replacing them by hired transport. If the mules now in Sikkim were available, the requirements of one infantry division and one cavalry brigade could be met, but only at the hazardous sacrifice of denuding of transport all the frontier stations from Dera Ghazi Khan to Peshawar. Moreover, not a single animal would be left for the remainder of the 1st Army-Corps, or for forming a movable column in the neighbourhood of the Peshawar valley; nor would there be any provision for the carriage required to maintain our lines of communication, or for pushing on supplies for the maintenance of the force in the field, the number of animals I have given above only sufficing for the mere equipment of the troops, with supplies of tea, rum, sugar, and salt for 30 days; other ration articles for 5 days, and forage for 2 days.

*Other requirements.*

Other matters connected with mobilization are, I regret to say, in an equally unsatisfactory condition. For the artillery portion of the advance force, 233 horses are needed. This may seem a small number, but it must be remembered that no reserve of horses is kept in India, that none of the batteries told off for the 1st or 2nd Army-Corps could be indented upon, and that even this small number would render seven batteries inefficient until a fresh supply of horses could be furnished. If the whole of the 1st Army-Corps have to be mobilized we should require 616 horses, and for the 2nd Army-Corps 802 more, or 1,418 horses in all.

The reserve of ordnance stores, which was replenished in 1885, has since been allowed to fall so low that there would be great delay in completing the necessary saddlery, harness, and equipment. We have in reserve about 3,000 mule saddles, but there is no mule or camel gear, nor are there any camel saddles. Carts are another necessity; we should require 700 at least for working our internal lines of communication; 160 ambulance tongas and 338 stretchers are also required for one army-corps. There are no tongas, and only 229 stretchers. The 3 months' supplies of food and forage it was intended to store at Quetta have not been laid in, and, should emergency arise, these would have to be purchased hurriedly and railed to Quetta, at the

time when every vehicle would be required for the conveyance of troops, transport animals, &c. Apart from the delay, this arrangement would unquestionably lead to the supplies being of inferior quality and of abnormally high cost. The reserve of clothing it was proposed to store could probably be purchased locally, except waterproof sheets, which would have to be procured from England, and which would cause some delay.

*Time and cost.*

The Mobilization Committee calculated last year that, if all arrangements were made beforehand at an estimated cost of 18,08,000 rupees, a fully-equipped and mobile infantry division and cavalry brigade could be concentrated in Pishin within 40 days, and at Kandahar 6 or 7 days later. As matters stand now, a force of the same strength could be collected in Pishin in about 55 or 60 days and reach Kandahar 8 to 10 days later. It must, however, be borne in mind that, in addition to the delay that would occur in the force taking the field, it would arrive at Kandahar deficient in mobility, and unable to act with that promptitude and rapidity which is so essential to success, and which has been recognized as the only means by which the paucity of our numbers can be compensated for.

*Summary of requirements.*

It will be seen, from what I have stated, that, in addition to pushing on our communications by rail and road, and completing the defence works decided upon, we require, before even one army-corps could be efficiently mobilized—

- (a.) To lay in at Quetta a reserve stock of food, fuel, and forage.
- (b.) To make up a sufficient number of mule and transport carts and tonga ambulances.
- (c.) To provide bakery equipment suitable for mule transport.
- (d.) To have a reserve stock of mule and camel gear.
- (e.) To purchase a certain number of corn crushers and forage presses.
- (f.) To have a reserve stock of clothing, waterproof sheets, &c.
- (g.) To purchase about 5,000 mules or donkeys, every one of which it is most desirable should be procured outside India, so that we may have at hand in the country a reserve to fall back upon. This reserve, it is estimated, would not amount to more than 4,000 or 5,000 mules, some of which are scarcely large or strong enough for army transport work.

It is also very desirable that the re-arming of the artillery and infantry should be carried out with the utmost promptitude as soon as the change has been decided upon. The Field Artillery are to receive new guns, but only three batteries will be equipped this year, and possibly seven more during the first half of 1889; so that a year hence we shall still have 32 batteries of Field and 11 batteries of Horse Artillery armed with the obsolete 9-pr. If it be determined to give the British infantry the magazine rifle, I would strongly urge that a sufficient number be ordered to admit of the whole being re-armed at once, and that arrangements be made for giving the Henry-Martini rifle to the Native troops at the same time. I cannot conceive anything more likely to cause trouble and possible disaster than having an army in the field armed with different kinds of weapons.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XXII.

## IS IT NECESSARY TO FORTIFY MOOLTAN ?

(See No. VII.)

SIMLA,

21st June, 1888.

The question as to whether Mooltan should be fortified has now again been raised and, in the notes dealing with this subject, considerable stress is laid on the divergence of opinion held by the Defence Committee in the year 1882-83, and again in 1885, to that which prevailed in 1886. It seems, therefore, advisable to explain that at the first-named date both the Home Government and the Government of India were disinclined to entertain comprehensive proposals for securing India against external aggression, and that the scheme of defence for Mooltan, as originally put forward by the Defence Committee, was necessarily affected by the policy then predominant. But while recommending certain measures with the avowed and primary object of guarding against internal commotion, and possibly an outbreak of the frontier tribes, the Defence Committee did not ignore the advantages which at that period the establishment of a fortified position at Mooltan, protecting a reserve of ordnance stores and commissariat supplies, would have afforded in the event of an advance into Southern Afghanistan. Much, however, has been done since 1882-83, and even more since 1885, to prepare for such a contingency. Railways and roads between India and the Khwaja Amran range have been completed; an arsenal is being established at Quetta; fortifications are being constructed to cover Quetta and the railways and roads concentrating in its vicinity; the Sutlej has been bridged at Ferozepore, and the Indus and the Chenab are being bridged at Sukkur and Ramuwalla respectively; while the Derajat outposts have been connected with the North-Western Railway system. In fact, in 1882-83, and to a less extent in 1885, Quetta was a comparatively insignificant and isolated frontier station, while Mooltan was a natural centre for assembling and equipping a field force intended to operate in Southern Afghanistan. Quetta is now, or very soon will be, an advanced base fortified against attack, adequately provided with munitions of war and linked to India by two railways and two military roads. If regarded, then, merely in connection with a forward movement towards Kandahar, Mooltan has lost much of the value attaching to it some years ago, when our preparations were less mature and our policy still undecided.

In estimating its present military importance, it becomes necessary to consider the principles on which the defence of India against an attack from the north-west should be based, the probable direction of such an attack, and the offensive and defensive dispositions by which it could most effectually be repelled.

The defence of India is held to consist primarily in a well-devised scheme of offensive operations beyond our present frontier, and in the preparation of all that is necessary to enable this army to act with full effect. The essential conditions for efficiency are: a thoroughly well-equipped and mobile field army and a system of communications by road and rail, by which troops could be rapidly concentrated for offensive action, or, if acting on the defensive, to meet the enemy, in superior force, at any threatened point. The importance of fortifications rest on a different basis, and is relative to the manner and direction in which the field army may be operating. Fortifications are required for securing the advanced bases of operations, and for



the protection of our arsenals, strategical points, crossings of great rivers, and communications of any particular line of operations. They are specially necessary where a comparatively weak force is restricted to a defensive policy, but even under such circumstances strongly fortified positions should only be established at points of unquestionable strategical importance, and which, if occupied in force, could not be masked or evaded by the enemy without extreme risk.

Under the present aspect of trans-frontier affairs, should operations be undertaken in Afghanistan, it seems pretty certain that we should act offensively on our left, and more or less defensively on our right. This is the line of policy which has been put forward elsewhere\* as the proper one for us to pursue: and it is a policy with which I thoroughly agree; for, if we send the main portion of our field army into Southern Afghanistan, it is improbable that we should be able to collect a force sufficient to enable us to act on the offensive in any other direction. In this view it will be seen that the recent action of Government in regard to frontier defence has been consistent. Preparations for offence on the left have been looked upon as first in order of urgency, and consequently have been first to receive attention. Now that these are well advanced, we have to consider what should be done to meet the defensive requirements on the right of the position.

While urging that we should act offensively on a single line, and that that line should be the Kandahar one, I do not disguise from myself that an enemy attempting to invade India would, in all probability, operate in considerable strength through Northern Afghanistan. His object would be to gain possession of Kabul, and thence direct his army on the Punjab by the Khyber route. The political and other reasons which would weigh against our acting offensively by this route would all be in favour of an invader; for once he had established himself at Kabul the Afghans and all the frontier tribes would assuredly join him. Whether they would join us were we to move towards Kabul on the first outbreak or war, is, I think, under existing circumstances, extremely doubtful. We should not advance with the prestige which would attach to the Russians after they had conquered Afghan-Turkestan and crossed the great Hindu Kush range; and we should have no bait to offer them in the shape of a rich province like the Punjab. Anyhow, as I have said before, it would be scarcely possible for us to act offensively on more than one line; and it is essential that we should be in strength in Southern Afghanistan. Kandahar commands all the routes leading to India; and, unless the Russians were able to detain us there or drive us out of it, it would be impossible for them to move nearer India, or even, I believe, consolidate themselves at Kabul. One of the many advantages, then, of occupying Southern Afghanistan would be the necessity for Russia to divide her force and send a large part of it to drive us out of Kandahar. The possibility of her succeeding, and of our field army being forced back on the Quetta position, while we should have a comparatively weak army on the right (Khyber line), renders it imperative that our position on that side should be strengthened by a series of fortifications.

The principal line of defence against an advance from Kabul *via* the Khyber includes Landi Kotal, Peshawar, Attock, and Khushalgarh, supported by Rawal Pindi. The position of Peshawar, and the almost certain hostile attitude of the surrounding tribes in the event of a Russian advance through the Khyber, would render its prolonged retention in the event of superior force almost impracticable; and for this reason chiefly the idea of establishing a powerful entrenchment to cover Peshawar and block the Khyber has been abandoned. It would be essential, however, to delay the enemy in the pass as long as possible, in order to gain time for an orderly retirement from the

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\* Memorandum on the general strategical situation of Russia and England in Central Asia.

Peshawar Valley ; and for this purpose it is proposed to construct some field-works in advance of Jamrud, and to strengthen the position immediately in front of Peshawar by fortified villages and improvised defences. The defending force would eventually have to fall back on the Indus, where we must have a thoroughly strong position to admit of an obstinate and, it is hoped, a successful resistance being made. Under such conditions, Rawal Pindi would be of extreme importance: first, as supporting the defensive line of the Indus ; secondly, as containing the principal and indeed the only arsenal in Northern Punjab ; and thirdly, as covering Lahore and Ferozepore and the junction of the North-Western and Sind-Sagar Railways at Lala Musa. Although the Rawal Pindi position is not a very easy one to defend, it seems possible to form a strong entrenched camp by occupying the west ridge and the heights surrounding the present fort and arsenal, by works and batteries of semi-permanent or field-work type. The cost of a well-devised scheme of this nature ought not to be prohibitive, and there can be no doubt as to the necessity of fortifying Rawal Pindi.

In the event of Rawal Pindi falling into the enemy's hands, his objectives would be Lahore, Ferozepore, and Delhi ; and the existence of a fortress at Mooltan, though valuable as a centre for the concentration of reinforcements from England *via* Karachi, would not directly check his advance, provided he was, as he assuredly would be, in superior force.

As I have said before, Mooltan is no longer an advanced post ; and it can only be considered as a position of support under the supposition that the enemy were likely to advance by some or all of the routes leading direct to the Derajat, or the still more improbable contingency\* of his moving *via* Quetta and the Bolan, after having routed the field army. Under such circumstances, Mooltan would become of great strategic value ; but the chance of an attack by the Bolan or the Derajat Passes is so remote as compared to an advance by the Khyber, that, while the defence of Rawal Pindi is of vital importance, Mooltan must be classed as of secondary importance only. There is, of course, the possibility of an invader being strong enough to make a simultaneous movement on India by the Northern route and through the Central or Southern Passes ; under such conditions, time would be everything, and the existence of a fortified position at Mooltan, as well as a fortress at Rawal Pindi, might turn the scale by delaying the invader's advance to allow of the arrival from England and mobilization of the necessary reinforcements.

Admitting that a fortification at Mooltan is desirable, it is necessary to consider what extent and class of work would be suitable, and whether the existing entrenchment could be made to answer the purpose. The defensible enclosure at Mooltan consists merely of barrack buildings connected by a loopholed wall. The trace is a hexagon with 750 feet side. There are field or siege gun emplacements at the angles of the hexagon, and the post could be strengthened by throwing up a field-work parapet outside the present *enceinte*. The work is well designed for the object for which it was intended, viz., as a place of refuge in the event of internal disturbances, and also to provide sufficient barrack accommodation ; but it has no claims to be considered as a fort ; and, although it might be utilized as a subsidiary or intermediate infantry work in connection with a larger scheme of defence, it would require to be remodelled if it had to depend upon itself against the attack of a European Army.

There are two minor aspects in which the defence of Mooltan may be considered, viz., its prestige in the eyes of the natives, and the possibility of its becoming a centre of internal intrigue and disaffection. Its prestige among the natives is mainly a matter

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\* I have said the improbable contingency ; but if we were to take the fatal step of operating on more than one line, unless we received infinitely larger reinforcements than seems likely, the Russians might, without any great effort, bring an army not only large enough to drive us out of Southern Afghanistan, but to force the fortified position in front of Quetta, which would be impregnable with a sufficient force to defend it.

of sentiment, due to its relative importance and independence in the days of Sikh rule. The position of Mooltan, however, has been much changed by the development of the rest of the province, the annexation and settlement of Sind and the Derajat, and the completion of the frontier railway system. Against the chance of internal commotion, responsible provision has already been made, and nothing further seems necessary.

As I have already stated, there is so little chance of Mooltan being now required as a place of defence against a European enemy that I would not spend more money upon its fortifications, at any rate, for the present. Political considerations have facilitated our advance on the left, while they have equally retarded us on the right; the result being that Mooltan has been abandoned as an ordnance depôt, and our arsenal has been moved forward to Quetta, where it is adequately fortified. On the right, however, the Rawal Pindi arsenal, which is within a short distance of our main line of resistance, is without any power or defence; it seems to me, therefore, absolutely necessary that we should, without delay, render this position impregnable, and secure the safety of the main arsenal on the line by which we believe an invasion of India would be attempted.

At the present time there is not a single fort or entrenchment in India, except the newly-constructed position at Quetta, that could hold out for more than a few hours against a European enemy equipped with modern artillery. This state of things may have seemed unobjectionable so long as the advance of Russia in Central Asia was considered as chimerical. We have now to face the consequences of having her as our near neighbour; and the establishment of two strong *places d'armes*—one at Rawal Pindi, the other at Quetta—covering India against invasion from the North-West, cannot be looked upon as an extravagant precaution against possible, though perhaps improbable, eventualities.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXIII.

## WHAT PART SHOULD INDIA TAKE IN THE EVENT OF A WAR BETWEEN ENGLAND AND RUSSIA ?

SIMLA,  
22nd August, 1888.

In some recent papers,\* the present strategical situation in Central Asia, the progress made in our military communications and works of defence, the probable direction of any aggressive action on the part of Russia, and the offensive and defensive dispositions which could be made in India for repelling the same, have been briefly discussed. No clear and succinct description, however, has yet been given of our actual military capabilities at the present time; how these could most effectively be utilized; and what further measures, in addition to the equipment and mobilization of our field army, it would be necessary to take, in order to increase our military strength and enable us to act with rapidity and decision.

The proceedings of the Mobilization Committee show that, with the addition of five battalions of British infantry, India could place in the field two army-corps and a reserve division, amounting to about 90,000 men and 234 guns. With this force it has been calculated that, even supposing we received no direct support from the Afghans, we could, besides strengthening the Peshawar frontier, occupy the Kandahar district as far as the Helmand to the north-west and Kalat-i-Ghilzai to the north-east; and that if the Afghans and frontier tribes were with us, we should have available for an advance beyond Kandahar about 55,000 troops, 25,000 of whom would be British. This would be a formidable force; but to admit of extended operations which had for their object the expulsion of the Russians from Afghan territory, reinforcements to the extent of 30,000 men would be required from England, and drafts of sufficient strength, from time to time, to replace casualties.

Before discussing how the above forces could best be utilized, it seems desirable to consider the important change that has come over India and England owing to the position which Russia has gained in Central Asia.

In previous wars England, while secure herself from invasion and unassailable in her colonies and dependencies owing to her maritime supremacy, has been able to select a vulnerable point of attack in the enemy's territory, and, with the aid of her Navy and mercantile marine, to establish her base of operations in some foreign country. Unfortunately for England this is no longer possible. Not only is she now in the position of a Continental Power whose territory is liable to invasion, but she labours under the additional disadvantage of the threatened possession being defended partly by a mercenary army, and being peopled by an alien race, on whose loyalty it would not be altogether safe to rely in the event of any serious external aggression. What would be thought of a French strategist who proposed to take up an attitude of passive defence on the frontier between France and Germany, while he detached the most mobile and best-equipped portion of his army for an attack by sea on the coasts of that country? or what would be said of the Austrian strategist who determined to

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\* Secret memorandum of the Mobilization Committee, dated 3rd October, 1887.  
Note on the defence works of the North-West Frontier of India, dated 8th May, 1888.  
Is it necessary to fortify Mooltan? Dated 21st June, 1888.

await results on the Galician frontier, in order to set free the flower of the Austrian army for an attack on Russia in the Black Sea? Much more unreasonable and inexpedient would it be for an English strategist to advocate the passive defence of the North-West Frontier of India, in order to render an Indian contingent available for distant offensive operations, based on a foreign seaport, or to be carried on in a country, the friendliness of which would be, to say the least, extremely doubtful. It may be accepted as an axiom that when two Powers with a conterminous frontier go to war, both sides must conduct their operations either through, or on the immediate flank of, the frontier line. If either Power attempts a different course, it lays itself open to serious disaster—first, by losing the advantage of taking the initiative; secondly, by operating on exterior and circuitous lines; thirdly, by allowing the enemy to develop his attack at that point best suited to his purpose; fourthly, by the *morale* of the troops becoming deteriorated from being kept on the defensive, which necessarily results in the confidence of the civil population being shaken; fifthly, by multiplying the objectives of the campaign and frittering away the available military strength in endeavouring to attain them. In the case of India, the undesirability of what may be termed the insular military policy, as contrasted with the continental policy, is greatly augmented and complicated by the existence of the hitherto uncontrolled and hostile tribes inhabiting Afghanistan and our immediate frontier, to whom the plunder of India is an ever-present temptation, and also by the political and social condition of this country, where we are still, and ever must be, a foreign race governing by the sword and not really loved by the people, who accept our supremacy, only because we have shown ourselves to be their masters, and who are willing to abide under our rule, so long only as we are able to guard their interest and preserve them from internal misrule and external aggression. If it be urged that the frontiers of Russia and England in Central Asia are not actually conterminous, and that consequently the preceding argument does not hold good, I would reply, this is only technically correct. Afghanistan cannot stand alone; her frontiers have been delimited under our supervision, and for the integrity of those frontiers we are held responsible by the whole Eastern world. If we permit them to be violated with impunity, not only will the Afghans feel their interests betrayed, but the entire population of India, including the Native Army, will infer that we are afraid to meet Russia, and will act accordingly.

If then the radical change in the position of the British Empire caused by the advance of Russia to the confines of India be admitted, the most suitable policy to adopt in case of war with the latter Power can be discussed and determined.

The two objectives of Russia are believed to be Constantinople and India. Her action in Europe and Asia Minor in connection with the first of these two is brought more prominently before the English public from being nearer to them, and were there no India in the question, the insular military policy, which naturally finds favour amongst politicians and soldiers at home, would be the proper course for counteracting her advance. The possession of India, however, completely alters the situation, and makes it incumbent upon us to adopt what I have described as the continental policy. But India is a long way off, and, although the magnitude of the interests at stake is fully admitted by the home authorities, the local conditions and requirements of the political and military situation out here are, perhaps, somewhat imperfectly realized.

So long as we retain our naval supremacy, the British Empire, except on the North-West Frontier of India, is practically secure from attack. For India special arrangements must be made, and viewing England and Russia as Continental Powers in Central Asia, and recognising the singularity of our position in this country, the continental policy of direct and prompt offensive operations is regarded out here as essential to the maintenance of this great Empire.

If we take the British dominions as a whole, and examine the strategical problem from an Imperial standpoint, one course alone, considering our resources, appears to be advisable, *viz.*—

- (i.) To assume a vigorous offensive through Afghanistan, without attempting expeditionary operations elsewhere.

Were our Army sufficiently large, we might afford—

- (ii.) To combine offensive action from India with expeditionary operations elsewhere.

But the policy which seems to be the one generally approved at home is—

- (iii.) To maintain a defensive attitude in India, and attack Russia elsewhere than through Afghanistan.

Let us proceed to discuss these three courses.

Now it may be assumed that in the event of a war, England's primary object would be to safeguard her own interests, to preserve intact British territory, and to maintain order and loyalty throughout the British dominions. In order to effect this, and at the same time to inflict the greatest possible amount of injury on the enemy, it is essential that the limited military resources of the Empire should be utilized to the best advantage.

Which of the three courses above indicated is best suited to meet these obligations? Certainly not the last,\* for, as already pointed out, a defensive attitude in India would undoubtedly lead to very grave internal troubles, it would destroy the confidence of the Native Army and civil population, and undermine our prestige and supremacy in the East; further, instead of turning our available military resources to the best account, such a policy would render a large proportion of them inert.

In paragraph 27 of the Strategical Memorandum, it has been shown that a reinforcement from England of 30,000 men would enable 120,000 British and Native troops to take the field beyond the North-West frontier. No such force could be made available for operations on the Black Sea littoral or elsewhere; for even were it prudent to denude India of a single soldier, under the unfavourable conditions which a defensive policy in this country would assuredly entail, certainly not more than 10,000 men could be spared, while there is reason to believe that England herself would find the utmost difficulty in mobilizing two Army-Corps, or 70,000 men, for distant operations, a large number of whom might, under certain circumstances, be required to strengthen our position in Egypt, and possibly in South Africa also. Were it possible to make up an expeditionary force of some 80,000 † men between England and India, it could only be done at the cost of paralyzing the remainder of the Army in India, and thus seriously endangering our position in this country; for not only (as has been carefully explained in the Strategical Memorandum above alluded to) would a policy of inaction be misinterpreted, but any sacrifice that England might make by placing an army in the field at a distance from India, in the hope of relieving the hostile pressure on the North-West frontier, would be imperfectly understood and altogether unappreciated. Moreover, the problem has not yet been solved at home of how to provide an efficient land transport for an expeditionary force, and any drain on India for transport animals, such as took place for the Soudan, would be out of the question in the event of a war with Russia.

\* (iii.) To maintain a defensive attitude in India, and attack Russia elsewhere than through Afghanistan.

† I have placed the Army-Corps in England at the same strength as that of India, *viz.*, 35,000 men; but I believe that there would be great difficulty in bringing the Artillery and Cavalry of the Home Army-Corps to full strength.

Our policy may be reduced to a defensive one as regards the North-West, but unless our garrisons are mobilized they might as well be non-existent.

Let us now consider the second\* course. If this were feasible, it certainly would be worthy of adoption. It would combine all the advantages, of course (i.), with the additional advantage of engaging Russia elsewhere. But, unfortunately, its adoption at present, at all events, does not come within the range of possibility, owing to the numerical weakness of our Army.

Admitting that such operations would be advantageous if our resources, aided by those of our allies, would allow of our having two large armies in the field at the same time, they are not indispensable to secure the integrity of the Empire. Such operations ought, therefore, to be looked upon as secondary in importance to the initiation and maintenance of a vigorous offensive action beyond the North-West frontier of India.

The five possible directions † in which operations could be undertaken are set out in the margin, but there are certain obvious objections to all of them. The first three of these could only be carried out successfully, if we had at our disposal the whole of the resources of Turkey, and were able to rely implicitly on the hearty alliance of the Turks. In the same way, to a certain extent, the third, and certainly the fourth, would necessitate our being able to depend on the friendly neutrality, if not the active co-operation, of the Persians. All the routes present considerable obstacles as regards roads, supplies, forage, and water, and though, no doubt, it would be possible for a well-equipped British or Anglo-Indian Army to overcome them, the physical difficulties are enormous, and under the most favourable circumstances months would elapse before our troops could reach any of the objective points above named. One matter alone which seems to render it hopeless for an English Army to attempt any operations at a distance from the sea for a long time to come, is the almost total absence at present of land transport. Transport would have to be organized at the point of debarkation, but this would take time, and would enable the enemy to concentrate in overpowering strength and dispute any further advance. If India were called upon to help in the matter of transport, it would be impossible to move the army in this country, which would, in my opinion, be a most serious danger. Even if transport for an expeditionary force of reasonable strength could be provided, and the support of Turkey and Persia could be relied upon, the attack would unavoidably have to be made near the centre of Russia's resources, and where she would be able to take advantage of her great numerical superiority. Finally, operations, in any of the four out of the five directions above enumerated, even if successful, would only partially relieve Russia's hostile pressure on the Afghan frontier inasmuch as, unless we completely dominated the Caspian Sea, which we cannot hope to do, she would retain the power of reinforcing her Central Asian army, *via* Astrakan and Mikailovsk.

The fifth objective, Vladivostok, cannot, I think, be considered a really vulnerable point of attack. It has been developed by Russia mainly, if not entirely, as a *point d'appui* for destroying our China and Pacific trade by means of fast unarmoured cruisers. This is a very tangible danger, which was brought home to us in 1885, and in view of it, our weakness at Hong Kong and Esquimalt, and our relinquishment of Fort Hamilton are much to be deplored. But the question is a naval one

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\* (ii.) To combine offensive action from India with expeditionary forces elsewhere.

† (1.) Based on the Black Sea to attack Russia's line of communications with Trans-Caspia.

(2.) Based on the Mediterranean in the Gulf of Iskanderun, to move on to the Russo-Turkish frontier, and threaten Russia's communications with Trans-Caspia.

(3.) Based on the Persian Gulf, to move by the Tigris and Euphrates Valley routes as in (2).

(4.) Based on the Persian Gulf, to move on Teheran and threaten Russia's communications across the Caspian and in Trans-Caspia.

(5.) Based on the Pacific Ocean, to attack the Russian possessions at Vladivostok.

after all, and our action in that part of the globe should, in my opinion, be restricted to naval operations based on well-defended naval and coaling stations, aided, if possible, by an offensive alliance with China and a supply of good and enterprising officers to lead the Chinese troops. These could effectually harass and interrupt the long line of Russian communications leading to Vladivostok from the north along the Manchurian frontier. Vladivostok itself, except for the naval purposes indicated above, is not of high value to Russia, nor, if cut off from thence, would she be called upon to put forth her strength to retake it. She would probably trust to time and opportunity to get it back. It is different in Central Asia. There she could not afford to be beaten without a desperate struggle, for, her prestige once lost, the Khanates would throw off her yoke; her approach to her objective—India—would be indefinitely retarded, and the labour and expenditure of 30 years and more would be thrown away. If we attempted operations by land on a large scale against Russia in the Pacific, we should only be making, in an aggravated form, the mistake that we should commit if we attacked her on the Black Sea littoral. We should render inert a large portion of our slender military resources, and we should, as a Continental Power, neglect our vulnerable frontier, for the sake of striking a blow as an insular Power at a point where Russia, even if defeated, would be practically unaffected.

Let us now consider the first\* of the three courses, and see whether it would be more in accordance with the military resources of the Empire. As I have said before, so long as we maintain our naval supremacy, the British dominions are unassailable, except by an attack on India, or through disaffection in India. The adoption of offensive measures on our exposed frontier would not only ward off direct attack, but secure the country from internal disturbance, and, as previously pointed out, such a policy would utilize to the utmost our available military strength, and in the direction likely to be the most dangerous to Russia.

Russia is a Power with such an enormous extent of territory, and with so vast a population, that it is almost impossible to defeat her, except by a prolonged strain on her resources at some point where her numerical superiority would be unavailing. Owing to the inadequacy of her communications, and the serious defects in her military organization, which then existed, it might have been possible to have attacked Russia in the Caucasus in 1854–55, and, with the aid of the Turks, to have rescued the Circassians from the Russian yoke and re-established them in their own mountains, as a permanent safeguard against Russia's aggressive policy in Central Asia; but the communications, along the shores of the Black Sea, and from the heart of Russia to the Caucasus, and even to the Caspian Sea, have long since been perfected, while the army is now so organized as to admit of her placing not less than 2½ millions of men in the field. Any aid from the Circassians could no longer be looked for, while the Turks would be but doubtful allies; it follows, then, that what might have been a judicious plan of campaign 30 years ago would now be an extremely hazardous one, if not altogether impossible. The only point in Russian territory which appears to be open to an attack from us at present is the Trans-Caspian region, where difficulties in regard to supplies, water, and transport would affect the Russians equally with ourselves, and restrict their troops to a number with which we might hope successfully to engage. In fact, taken in connection with the pacification of the Caucasus, the expatriation, almost *en masse*, of the Circassian population, and the acquisition of Kars and Batoum, the effect of the last war between Turkey and Russia, and of the subsequent development of communications in Russia's newly-acquired dominions has been to shift the vulnerable zone of her frontier from the Black Sea to the east of the Caspian.

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\* (i.) To assume a vigorous offensive through Afghanistan, without attempting expeditionary operations elsewhere.



Before proceeding to the discussion of the question at the head of this paper, and the manner in which the Army in India could best be utilized, it will be instructive to consider what would be the probable attitude of Russia in Central Asia should war break out during the next few years.

Russia may either attempt a vigorous offensive *viâ* Herat and Balkh, or she may maintain a passive attitude along the Afghan frontier. In either case she would undoubtedly endeavour to raise the Afghans against us, and throw India into a state of ferment by means of emissaries. Under the former assumption we should have no alternative but to meet force by force. Under the latter assumption also we ought, in my opinion, to act on the offensive, whether Russia adopted this course because she felt herself unprepared to engage with England in a struggle for supremacy in the East, or because she hoped to lead us on to attack her with weaker numbers and insufficient transport. It might be contended that, under such conditions, to assume the offensive would be to play Russia's game. This is a plausible but mistaken argument. For years past we have been holding back for fear of Russia enticing us on to undertake military operations in the wastes of Central Asia, and, meanwhile, she has been gradually advancing her frontier 600 miles nearer India, consolidating her military strength, and perfecting her communications. If our Fabian policy of reserve and inaction is to be continued because an opposite policy presents certain difficulties and dangers, Afghanistan will inevitably be absorbed by Russia as the Khanates have been absorbed; and although an attack on India might not immediately follow, the political and military situation in this country would be rendered intolerable. If Russia's inaction were caused by feeling that she was unequal to cope with us (which seems to me very unlikely), by not taking the initiative we should lose our last chance of repairing past errors—*viz.*, to consolidate a friendly Afghanistan, to increase our prestige throughout Central Asia, to relieve Persia, or at least its Eastern portion, from Russian pressure, and to drive Russia back to the frontier of 1863.

There still remains one more point (perhaps the most important of all) to consider, before we can come to any satisfactory conclusion as to the manner in which the Army of India could best be utilized—*viz.*, the attitude likely to be adopted by the Afghans and border tribes.

Until within the last few years our policy towards Afghanistan was vacillating and, consequently, unsatisfactory. Vast sums of money were spent without result, because we never decided on any fixed line of action. There is no reason to think that the Afghans are more inveterately opposed to British rule than the inhabitants of the Punjab or other parts of India. They, like most Asiatics, undoubtedly prefer to be left to themselves; but if we have shown that, cost what it might, we intended to be predominant, there can be no question but that, in time, the large majority of the population would have acquiesced in our rule. Hitherto our operations in that country have been followed by evacuation and abandonment of our friends and well wishers to the tender mercies of their countrymen, at the very time when a little more resolution and a little further outlay would have rendered fruitful our previous military exertions and our lavish expenditure of blood and gold. This is much to be regretted, for there can be no doubt that the attitude of the Afghans, and to a lesser degree of the border tribes will form an important factor in the coming struggle. With the Afghans cordially supporting us, many of the difficulties confronting us in a Central Asian campaign would disappear; the country is by no means devoid of supplies and transport animals, and if our lines of communication were secure, the entire strength of the force available for field operations could be used for striking the decisive blow. Moreover, the Afghan, if decently armed and trained, is no despicable soldier. A certain number of such troops under British officers would add greatly to our offensive capabilities, and form a valuable adjunct to the Native Army. Unless we make use of

the Afghans, the Russians will be sure to do so, as they have already utilized the less warlike but equally unstable Turkoman tribes.

The difficulty of securing Afghan support is more apparent than real, provided we set about the task in a resolute manner and with definite aims and guarantees. The rulers of Afghanistan have always, and very naturally, distrusted us, because, not only have we shrunk from entering into a cordial and binding alliance with them, but because we have, at the same time, objected to their entering into alliances with other Powers. They have not failed to recognize that between Russia on the north and England on the south they cannot remain permanently neutral, and that if denied our active support, they have no alternative but to espouse the cause of Russia, whose gradual absorption of the Central Asian Khanates they cannot fail to have watched and appreciated. We have recent and unmistakable proof that the pressure of Russia in Asia has frightened the Afghans and driven them as it were into our arms, a consummation which seemed too good to hope for, even a few months ago. They now look to us for help. If we act wisely the feeling will ripen into one of friendship and trust; if we repulse them and hold them at arm's length, they will give us up in despair. What can they do? Afghanistan is, as the Amir Dost Mahomed Khan once said, "the earthen vessel between two iron pots."

Our present relations with the border tribes between India and Afghanistan is also a matter calling for early and serious consideration. Under existing conditions these tribes have free access to India, but no European's life is safe if he attempts to cross the frontier. Even within our own districts outrages have until lately been committed with impunity. There has been little improvement in this state of affairs since the annexation of the Punjab, except in the Khyber, where the policy of bringing the Afridis into friendly relations with ourselves and utilizing them to keep the pass open has been so successfully carried out. Hitherto punitive expeditions and blockades have been resorted to from time to time, but the former have seldom been effectively and thoroughly carried out, and the latter are notoriously inoperative, inasmuch as the blockaded tribe makes use of some neighbouring and unblockaded tribe to barter its produce for the necessaries it requires. The extremely satisfactory result of our recent policy in regard to the Khyber tribes points to the conclusion that the extension of the same policy throughout the frontier would tend to bring these lawless, isolated, and fanatical people under control, and would enable us so to gain their confidence, that we might rely on their assistance and loyalty in the event of war. In my opinion there are four guiding principles to be observed in our relations with the frontier tribes. First, we should punish outrage in such a severe and unmistakable manner as to make it clear that we are not afraid of them; secondly, we should insist on reciprocity as regards access into Indian and trans-border territory; thirdly, we should construct good military roads through the passes leading into Afghanistan, by which troops could be rapidly concentrated at points dominating the unsettled and almost unexplored region lying between that country and India; and, fourthly, we should make them understand that, if they treat us fairly and honestly, we shall protect them from injury and insult, abstain from interference in their domestic affairs and religious observances, and liberally recompense their service. It seems to me impossible to overestimate the importance of securing the support of the Afghans and border tribes and of our endeavouring to place our relations with them on such a footing as would enable us to utilize their services and to traverse their passes without molestation when we may find it necessary to send resources in time of war, and troops into Afghanistan. The present uncertain condition of the tribes not only prevents our making any definite plan of operations, but in the event of their siding against us (the estimated number of fighting men between Hazara and Dera Ghazi Khan is upwards of 200,000), would seriously diminish our effective fighting strength against Russia.

In the foregoing remarks I have endeavoured to show why a policy of inaction is impossible in India, and to demonstrate the inutility, owing to England being no longer an insular Power, of her expending her strength on expeditionary forces. I have discussed the probable attitude of Russia in Central Asia in the event of a war with England, and the importance of our placing our relations with the Afghans and border tribes on such a footing as would ensue their joining with, and not against, us. It now remains to consider what our actual offensive capabilities are, and how they should be utilized, under the following conditions.

Firstly, if reinforcements to the extent of 30,000 men are supplied from England, and we are cordially supported by the Afghans and frontier tribes.

Secondly, if the Home Government refuse to supply more troops than would replace casualties, and to maintain the army in India at its present strength, the support of the Afghans and frontier tribes being still assumed.

Thirdly, if the Afghans and frontier tribes side with Russia.

First, if the reinforcements to the extent of 30,000 men are supplied from England, and we are cordially supported by the Afghans and frontier tribes. Under such circumstances we could hope to maintain 60,000 men in the field for advanced operations, supported by a force of 30,000 men in the neighbourhood of Kandahar, and with an almost equally strong force to guard the right flank of our frontier. If half of these troops were British and half Native, we should have 40,000 British soldiers left to maintain order in India. If our alliance with Afghanistan were of such a nature as would admit of our organizing, equipping, and employing the Afghan troops, our offensive power would be materially increased, and the number of troops on the Peshawar frontier might with safety be diminished. Even under these conditions too much stress can hardly be laid on the desirability of restricting our offensive action to one line of advance, with one base, and with undivided command. I have a very strong opinion that that line should be based on Quetta, in the first instance, and should be continued *viâ* Kandahar and Herat. Every effort should be made to prevent Herat falling into the hands of Russia before we should be able to occupy it, and with that object, it is very desirable that arrangements for despatching British Officers to organize the defence should be made with the Amir beforehand. If we succeed in anticipating Russia in regard to Herat, much will have been gained, as it would afford a secure and fairly well supplied advanced base for operations in the Khanates. If we fail to secure Herat, we should have to turn the Russian out of it as a preliminary to further action. Apart from the obvious military advantages of a single line of operations, the selection of the southern route *viâ* Kandahar, rather than the northern route *viâ* Kabul, would enable us to follow up our advance with a field railway, would avoid complications with the Afghan and frontier tribes, should their attitude from any cause become doubtful, and would take us through an easier country, better supplied and with a more temperate climate. It would place us on the exposed flank of a Russian advance through Balkh on Kabul, and, in the event of our being successful, would cut off the Russian forces, east of Merv, from their base. At the same time, the chance of an attempt on the part of Russia to gain possession of Kabul should not be lost sight of, and should be guarded against, as far as possible, by organizing and equipping the Afghan troops, and by giving the Amir such assistance in other respects as it might be in our power to afford. Such an attempt, however, is hardly probable, so long as we initiate and maintain a vigorous offensive in the Kandahar-Herat direction. With our small army any other course would, in all probability end in a terrible disaster. It is manifest that our numerical strength is limited, so that were we

to attempt to stay Russia's advance by dividing our army into two comparatively weak forces, acting on two distinct lines, the superior resources of the Russians would enable them to overwhelm these forces in detail. If, on the other hand, we permit Russia to advance unopposed for a certain distance in one direction, we might reasonably hope that the pressure which we could bring upon the flank of the Russian army, by concentrating the bulk of our strength on one line, would check its advance without our having to risk a battle.

The second condition to be considered is the refusal of the Home Government to supply more troops than would replace casualties and maintain the Army in India at its present strength, the support of the Afghans and frontier tribes being still assumed. Under this condition we should be able to put between 80,000 and 90,000 troops in the field. Of these, 5,000 British and 10,000 natives would form a corps of observation in the neighbourhood of Peshawar; Kandahar could be held by a similar force; 55,000 troops, 25,000 of whom, as I said before, would be British, would be available for an advance beyond Kandahar; while 35,000 British troops could be left to garrison India. Our offensive strength, supplemented by such aid as Afghanistan could furnish, would still be formidable enough to enable us to seize and hold Herat, and consolidate our military position in the Herat province, although we should probably be unable to operate effectively against Russia in the Khanates.

The third condition is the possibility of the Afghans and frontier tribes siding with Russia. Under this assumption, even with the help of 30,000 troops from England, such a large proportion of the available field army would be occupied in guarding the lines of communication, and watching the whole length of the North-West frontier, to say nothing of the increased garrisons that would certainly, under such circumstances, be required in India, that any forward movement beyond the Helmand would be well nigh impossible, and our operations would have to be confined to holding the Kandahar province and the line of the Hindu Kush, and opening up communication thence to Ghazni, and between Ghazni and India. If securely established at Kandahar, Kalat-i-Ghilzai, and Ghazni, we should menace the advance of Russia on, and beyond, Kabul, and directly meet any forward movement based on Herat and Khorasan. At the same time our position in the midst of a hostile population, and with the frontier tribes harassing our communications and rear, while we confronted a European enemy, would be unfavourable in the extreme. In fact the more the problem is examined, the more essential does it appear to pacify and dominate the border tribes, and to enter into friendly relations with the Afghans, while we still have time and opportunity to do so. With them on our side, the defence of their country and of India against the common enemy becomes comparatively easy. With them against us, it is scarcely possible to overestimate the difficulties we should have to encounter.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XXIV.

## NOTE ON THE DEFENCE OF MADRAS.

SIMLA,

20th September, 1888.

In discussing this case it seems desirable briefly to consider, first, the interests at stake; secondly, the nature of attack to be apprehended; and, thirdly, the means by which such attack can best be guarded against within the limits of reasonable expenditure.

The interests at stake are by no means trivial. In addition to being the capital of a presidency, Madras is one of the largest cities in India, its population numbering over 406,000. Its sea-borne trade in exports and imports, as noted in the margin,\* is very considerable.

Moreover, bad as the Madras harbour may be, it is the only practicable harbour along 1,700 miles of seaboard.

It must further be remembered that the main arsenal of Southern India is located within Fort St. George, that a very large powder magazine is maintained at St. Thomas' Mount, and that there is an important powder factory in the very heart of the town.

So far then as material and commercial—and to some extent military—interests are concerned, Madras must be regarded as more important than Karachi or Rangoon, though less important than Bombay or Calcutta. Karachi, of course, possesses a peculiar strategical value as a maritime base for operations on or beyond the North-Western Frontier, but this need not here be taken into account.

The nature of attack to be apprehended in the case of Madras is that of one or more unarmoured or lightly-armoured cruisers, armed with long ranging and powerful guns. The object of these vessels would be to capture or destroy the shipping lying in the Madras harbour, to do what damage they could to the harbour itself and to bombard the town and fort with a view to exacting as heavy an indemnity as possible.

The correctness of the comparison instituted in the preceding note between the usual course adopted by vessels lying in the Madras harbour when a cyclone is expected, and their probable procedure, should an attack be apprehended, can hardly, in my opinion, be sustained. On the occurrence of a storm in the Bay of Bengal, the place of danger is on the eastern seaboard, and the place of safety out at sea, while in the event of hostile cruisers being about, the place of danger would be the open sea, and the place of safety an adequately-protected harbour.

Moreover, a naval attack on Madras would undoubtedly be delivered without the period of warning that barometric disturbance ensures in the case of a cyclone. The ships lying in harbour would have no opportunity for escape, even if they desired to run the imminent risk of capture or destruction.

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\* Year 1887-88—

Foreign trade, exports and imports, 914,79,034 rupees.

Coasting trade, exports and imports, 196,87,071 rupees.

Total trade, 1,111,66,105 rupees.

Total tonnage (steam and sailing), 1,699,034 tons.

Far, therefore, from ignoring the necessity for protecting the shipping in the Madras roadstead, I should be disposed to regard the security of trade and shipping as one of the most important factors in determining the defensive measures to be adopted.

It may, I think, be admitted that, if proper precautions are taken against conflagration, no very serious damage to property or loss of life would result from the distant bombardment of the town of Madras, and that the danger of an attack by landing parties is somewhat remote, so long at least as the internal peace and loyalty of the country are maintained and our maritime supremacy is unimpaired. On the other hand, the possibility of a close and unresisted attack on the town and harbour would paralyse the sea-borne trade of the Carnatic, would undermine internal confidence and contentment, and would severely injure British prestige throughout Southern India.

It would be unwise to ignore the possibility of such a hostile combination against us that we might be hard pressed on the North-Western Frontier by Russia, while liable to attack on the seaboard by France. In the event of a check or defeat in the north, our position would be critical, and there can be but little doubt that the existence of the turbulent Native State of Hyderabad in the vicinity of Madras would give cause for grave anxiety, and might facilitate hostile operations along the Coromandel coast.

Our commercial interests in the East are so vast, and, however contradictory the opinions of experts may be in regard to the efficiency and adequacy of the British Navy as a whole, the weakness of the naval squadron in East Indian waters is so notorious (Admiral Fremantle writes that he is "aghast" at it) that any measure of reasonable precaution that will tend to check internal disaffection, to secure our mercantile marine, and to set free our man-of-war to guard the ocean trade-routes must be looked upon as not only prudent but economical.

The question then arises whether the defensive scheme proposed by the Commander-in-Chief of Madras, and concurred in by the Defence Committee, can be regarded as extravagant, or whether it meets the requirements of the case.

It seems unquestionable that the proposed batteries, when completed and armed, would keep hostile cruisers at a sufficient distance to prevent their doing much harm to the harbour, town, or shipping. The guns of the defence, even if not more numerous, would be less vulnerable and more powerful and long-ranging than any the enemy would be likely to possess; and, under these circumstances, an attack would involve the possible destruction of the attacking vessels without affording them the chance of any countervailing advantage. It is true that the natural configuration of the coast line at Madras is unfavourable to the defence, but it is the art and business of the Military Engineer to overcome natural difficulties.

Out of the total armament proposed one 10-inch and two 6-inch B.L. guns are already available by transfer from Rangoon, and six out of eight 9-inch R.M.L. guns are at present mounted in the shore batteries at Madras, and would only need polygrooving and adapting for high-angle fire. Even were the more accurate 9·2-inch or 10-inch B.L. howitzers of the latest pattern, with H.P. disappearing carriages, substituted for the 9-inch R.M.L. polygrooved guns, the cost of the former is only 2,500*l.* or 2,800*l.* each.\*

Quick-firing and machine guns and search lights are not inordinately expensive, and the batteries themselves might be built of sand and of an inexpensive type.

I am inclined to agree with the Honourable General Chesney in thinking it inexpedient to provide a torpedo-catcher at present for the defence of Madras; not,

\* See Military Despatch No. 189, dated London, 9th August, 1888, page 7

however, because torpedoes are likely to be less effective in the Bay of Bengal than elsewhere, or because it is the duty of a torpedo-catcher to catch torpedoes. The rôle of a torpedo-catcher is to overhaul and disable hostile torpedo boats, but an attack by torpedo boats is hardly to be apprehended at Madras; and useful though a fast torpedo-catcher might be for intelligence purposes, there are serious difficulties in the way of manning a vessel of this type and keeping her fit for sea, apart from the initial cost, which would probably exceed 60,000*l*.

Assuming the outside cost of the proposed land works and armaments at Madras to amount to 20 lakhs, the interest on this capital outlay at 5 per cent. would be a lakh per annum, or less than one thousandth part of the value of the annual foreign and coasting trade of the port. In making this comparison the value of property, public and private, in the town and harbour of Madras, and of the shipping, exclusive of its freight, has been left out of account. Were this included, the comparative cost of the proposed defences would appear even more inappreciable.

Not only do I consider that Madras should be adequately protected in the manner proposed; but as an outlying defence to Madras, Calcutta, and Rangoon, I would urge very early steps being taken to render Port Blair secure. The Defence Committee have repeatedly brought to notice the importance of this harbour, and at their instance a defensive scheme of reasonable scope and cost has already been elaborated and only needs revision in matters of detail. If an enemy seized and temporarily established himself at Port Blair, irreparable injury might be inflicted, not only on our Indian but on our enormous China trade *via* Singapore.

I am aware that financial difficulties stare us in the face, and I am unwilling to recommend any unnecessary expenditure; but we cannot afford to run undue risks, and it is not wise for a great commercial nation to count the cost of defending itself so penuriously as to place its very existence in danger. The saying is as true now as formerly, "*Necesse est facere sumptum qui quærit lucrum.*"

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXV.

## ON A PROPOSAL TO DISMANTLE THE LAHORE FORT.

SIMLA,

16th October, 1888.

The Honourable General Chesney has adduced so many reasons for the demolition of the Lahore Fort, that looking at the subject from a purely military point, I should be inclined to agree with him. But, as his Honour the Lieutenant-Governor states, the people of Lahore and the Punjab generally attach a superstitious respect to the fort, out of all proportion to its value in a military sense.

In the absence of other suitable accommodation, the fort serves as a convenient field depôt, and, with the exception of the forts at Umritsur and Ferozepore, it is the only place of refuge available for the large European and Eurasian population of Lahore and surrounding districts in case of a disturbance.

I agree with Major-General Perkins that it is eminently desirable that "unless it be the intention to replace the existing fort by better works . . . it would be very unwise to dismantle the fort"—we have so much on our hands at present that it is unlikely sufficient funds could be forthcoming for some time for what is in my opinion most important, *viz.*, the construction of a strong fortified position at Lahore; until, therefore, our finances are in a condition to enable this to be carried out, I consider that we should hold on to the fort at Lahore and make the best of it.

Of its unhealthiness there would seem to be no doubt, but if the Punjab Government agrees to the Garrison Battery being removed, and only British infantry being located there, the effects of the unhealthiness will be minimized by relieving the detachment frequently, every week if found necessary.

FRED. ROBERTS.



## XXVI.

REPLIES TO SEVERAL QUESTIONS ASKED BY SIR CHARLES DILKE WITH REFERENCE TO  
THE MOBILIZATION OF A CERTAIN PORTION OF THE ARMY IN INDIA.

RAWAL PINDI,  
6th December, 1888.

1. Have you two army-corps organized?
2. What is the state of preparation of each?
3. As a test of preparation, how soon could you place them in line at Kandahar (or one at Kandahar and one at Kabul) or on board ship at Karachi for an expedition to Persian territory?
4. What proportions of white and what proportions of trustworthy Native troops would there be in the field army?
5. How many similar troops—that is, trustworthy troops—must be left behind in India?
6. Are the troops of your field army really ready with everything required for the field?
7. Are they becoming more ready year by year, and what advances are being made from year to year in the plan of mobilization?

During the last 2 years the subject of mobilization has been carefully gone into. We have taken stock of our deficiencies, and we now know exactly how much money is required to place a given number of troops in the field, and how that money can be most usefully expended. We have two army-corps and a reserve division organized on paper. That is to say, the stations from which the troops can be withdrawn have been selected; the departments know what troops would compose the two army-corps and reserve division; and the several routes by which each regiment and battery would proceed to the frontier have been laid down.

The strength of each Army-Corps is nearly 35,000 men and of the reserve division about 15,000 men, making a total of upwards of 80,000 men; half of the above are Europeans. All the Europeans are in India, except the six battalions of infantry required for the reserve division; these would have to be sent from England.

To enable the first army-corps to be mobilized without delay an expenditure of 22 lakhs is required, for—

- (a.) Transport.
- (b.) Additional horses.
- (c.) Equipment.
- (d.) Reserve supplies.

It would be more satisfactory if this money could be given at once, but (a) is being gradually provided, and sanction has been received for (b). In fact, in a few

months we ought to have nearly enough mule transport for the first army-corps, either belonging to Government or available for hire in the country. When this transport has been completed we shall be able to place one army-corps at Kandahar in about 6 weeks after receipt of the order; even now we could do so, but a proportion of the transport would be camels; not nearly so satisfactory as mules, as in the first instance, at any rate, the greater number of them would be from the Punjab and unequal to stand the severe climate of Afghanistan. The 6 weeks could be reduced if preliminary expenditure were at once made for certain perishable articles under (c) and (d) which, on account of expense, it has been decided not to keep up. The period of mobilization is, therefore, a commissariat and transport question, and that again is a question of cash expenditure.

The second army-corps would require a far larger expenditure of money than the first, before it could be mobilized, as fewer horses and transport animals would be at hand—but, after all, it is only a matter of money—the resources of India are quite sufficient to enable the mobilization of the second army-corps to be commenced as soon as the first army-corps had been put in the field; within 3 months or 4 at the outside, the second corps would be able to follow the first. The period can be reduced in proportion to the amount of preliminary expenditure which is sanctioned.

I estimate that to place a sufficient number of British soldiers in the field to meet a Russian army we shall require immediately (as shown above) six battalions, and within, say, 6 or 12 months, our demands would amount to 30,000 men, which number would have to be sent from England, besides sufficient drafts from time to time to replace casualties.

The number of Native troops left in India after the two army corps and reserve division had taken the field would be about 130,000. Some of these would be of the same stamp as the troops in the front and ready to take their places, or to

8. How many of the field army will be needed for the advance line of communication?

9. How many white officers are required to make up the deficiencies in Native regiments if the Native regiments have to face the Russians?

10. Supposing Russia to enter Afghanistan or the Herat province under pretext of civil war, what could you do?

reinforce the army-corps if more troops were required, while the balance would be sufficiently trustworthy to look after India. Besides the above number there are the armies of the Native States, the greater part of which I should propose to employ on the lines of communication.

The lines of communication up to the most advanced bases will be provided for independently of the field armies. Beyond the number of troops required depend on the length and exposure of the intervals to be guarded.

It is calculated that to place 80,000 men in the field, and to provide for the lines of communication the regiments, British and Native, not detailed for mobilization, will be reduced to nearly one half their regulated strength of officers. The number of officers required for the Indian regimental service cannot be stated accurately independently of the British service, but in all some 400 British officers would be required. To meet this demand we are organizing a reserve in the country to consist of young men in the several civil departments, and in such professions as tea and indigo planting, &c. We have not accurate enough data at present for me to state the number these sources would give, but it would be something large; then for transport and even for Native regiments we might depend upon getting a certain number of serjeants and young fellows now in the ranks in the hope of getting commissions.

It will be seen from the above that our plan of mobilization is progressing with very fair rapidity; the chief want is money; if that is provided and we receive the moderate help we expect from England we can do all we want as regards placing and maintaining at least 80,000 men in the field.

If Russia were to enter Afghanistan under pretext of civil war, I would occupy Kandahar at once, and endeavour to hold Herat by means of British Officers from Meshed and Teheran, &c., sending word to the Afghans that we were coming to help them to resist the Russians, and that our officers would be available to command

and lead their troops. The whole of Afghanistan should be roused without delay, and we should show by the rapidity of our own movements that we have no doubt as to the successful issue of the war. I would make it clear to Russia that we would not permit them to enter Afghanistan without a war being commenced which could only end with their utter defeat.

11. Have you considered the probability of Russia crossing the frontier with a very trifling force in order to lure us into Afghanistan?

This question belongs rather to politics than to war—what we should do directly Russia moves in earnest has been shown. What course to pursue while she is playing with us, is for the politician to decide. Our first step must be so arranged as to secure the good will of the Afghans and border tribes, and we can give the latter much substantial help before actually moving.

12. Have you settled yet what to do with the armies of the Native States?

The armies of the Native States are now being dealt with.

13. How long will Burma swallow troops from India, and how many?

Some battalions will be brought away from Burma this next spring, and each year should see the garrison reduced until its normal strength has been reached. The country is slowly but certainly settling down.

14. When are you to get rid of the separate Presidential armies? Are they not retained chiefly, like the Presidential system itself, because there are good appointments connected with them?

I hope the Presidential system has received its death blow; the matter is now with the Ministry in England.

15. Is the promotion in the staff corps simply by seniority?

Staff-corps promotion is by seniority at present, but a proposal will be placed before the new Viceroy that promotion to the rank of Major-General should be by selection only.

16. Do not all the best men go in for staff appointments, and the rest lose all energy and spirit, merely vegetate and become unfit to command against Russians in the field?

The best men no doubt, as a rule, go in for staff appointments, but the senior regimental positions in India are so well paid now that many good men are satisfied to perform regimental duty. Those who rejoin their regiments from the staff are more efficient from their staff training, and if a proper system of selection is carried out in the two higher regimental positions (commandant and second in command) there ought to be no difficulty in having our regiments commanded by

men who are quite equal to lead them against the Russians.

The question must be answered in the negative. There is nothing in the regimental service with Native troops to deaden men's faculties, and, as a body, the white officers with black troops are as efficient as the white Officers with white troops.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXVII.

SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE STEPS WHICH SEEM DESIRABLE TO BE TAKEN IN INDIA IN  
PREPARATION FOR A WAR BETWEEN ENGLAND AND RUSSIA.FORT WILLIAM,  
6th February, 1889.

In a recent note\* I indicated the principles upon which, in my opinion, our action should be based in undertaking military operations to counteract Russian aggression, in the event of British interests being seriously threatened by that Power, in connection with the maintenance of the integrity of Afghanistan and security of the Indian Empire. These principles comprise the recognition of the continental position of England in the East, as well as her insular position in the West; the necessity of concentrating our military strength on a point where Russia is really vulnerable, and can be permanently disabled, and where our limited military resources, both British and Indian, can be utilized to the best advantage, with some chance of their not being very inferior to those of the enemy; the restriction of the offensive to a single line of action under the supreme control of a single commander; and the selection of Central Asia as the battlefield where Russian aims can best be frustrated, and the security of the British Empire ensured.

In more immediate relation to the defence of India, reasons, which I believe to be conclusive, have been adduced for regarding Kandahar, supported by Quetta, as our advanced base for offensive operations, and for maintaining a defensive attitude on the right or northern flank of our present frontier. At the same time, the probable direction of Russia's advance would be, it is held, through Kabul towards the Punjab, and the defensive works and system of road and railway communications, which are now under construction, have been designed in view of such a contingency, not only to facilitate concentration and offensive action on the left, but to dominate the frontier passes from Dera Ghazi Khan to Peshawar, to secure the important crossings of the Indus, and to provide strong strategical supports in rear of the Indus, more particularly in the Northern Punjab.

Two essential conditions underlie these principles and their practical application to the defence of the Empire. These conditions are, first, that on political and military grounds alike, it is impossible to permit Russian influence to predominate in Afghanistan. On the contrary, it is indispensable for us to secure beforehand the co-operation of the inhabitants of that country either through their ruler or, if need be, without his assistance; by conciliation and diplomacy, if possible, but if not, by force of arms.

Secondly, the tribes bordering our frontier, who are still, with a few exceptions, as turbulent and fanatical as when the Punjab was annexed, must be brought under subjection. The traditional policy of the Punjab Government in dealing with these tribes has been one of masterly inactivity, together with payment of blackmail, futile blockades, and inconclusive reprisals. So long as this policy continues, and the rapacity and insolence of the Afridis, Waziris, and other clans remain unchecked.

\* What part should India take in the event of a war between England and Russia? Dated 22nd August, 1888.

military operations across the frontier must be most seriously hampered by the necessity for detaching a large proportion of the field army to guard the lines of communication.

The necessity for attending to these essential conditions cannot be doubted; some progress in this direction, as regards the latter has been made, perhaps, as much as could have been hoped for since the last Afghan war, but our policy towards Afghanistan and the border tribes is still a hand-to-mouth one, and no clear political aim seems yet to have been defined, towards which our present and future action should be directed. Material improvement has been effected during the last few years in bringing Baluchistan and the territory bordering that country on the north more completely under our influence, and in gaining the confidence of the Khyber Afridis; but these partial successes, valuable as they are, only tend to show how much more might have been attained had our policy along the whole frontier line been as firm, consistent, and well-directed as it has been at Quetta and Jumrood. As regards Afghanistan, our relations with the Amir have lately become more cordial, and were the co-operation of the inhabitants of that country dependent on the goodwill of their ruler, were the life, supremacy, and friendship of that ruler assured, and were his inclinations any guarantee for the loyalty of his successor, an improvement might fairly be claimed to have been made in this direction also. An alliance, however, to be worthy of the name, must depend on something more substantial than the evanescent predilections or fears of an eastern despot. Afghanistan cannot stand alone. Eventually, that country must either be incorporated by Russia or be brought under British control, and to endeavour to maintain a *status quo ante*, which served indifferently well before Russia had established herself in trans-Caspian regions, or to permit the continuance of an isolation which is based on ignorance and fanaticism, and is equally prejudicial to the Afghans and ourselves, can only lead to expense and embarrassment, if not to disaster, later on. We subsidize Abdur Rahman as we formerly subsidized Sher Ali. We supply him with arms and munitions of war as we supplied his predecessor; but we have failed to exact from him distinct pledges of alliance, guarantees of good faith, and facilities for mutual intercourse, with the result that our money may be wasted and our arms turned against ourselves.

It may be questioned whether the Amir is any more friendly to us at heart than to Russia. He will take whatever he can get from either Power, giving as little as possible in return; but, when the time for action arrives, he will side with the Power which he fears most, and which makes the biggest promises. In return for the support of the Afghans, and the assistance or neutrality of the border tribes, Russia would offer not only a share of the plunder of India, but the restoration to the Afghan kingdom of the trans-Indus provinces and Kashmir. Such an offer might be impossible to fulfil, but none the less would it be likely to produce the desired effect. On the other hand, an alliance with us against Russia would present few inducements to an Asiatic ruler, who prefers a paternal despotism which he can either direct or share to the *par Britannica* with its unsympathetic monotony, its free institutions, and its complicated and cumbrous system of civil government.

The secret of Russia's expansion and success since the days of Peter the Great is her persistent adherence to a definite aim in her foreign policy. She does not wait on opportunity to determine her action, but makes use of opportunity to serve her ends. Her administration may be venal, and her finances bankrupt; nevertheless, she clearly perceives and obstinately pursues what she wants, and, as in individuals so in nations, to apprehend one's object, and to make every sacrifice to attain that object, is the best means of ensuring success.

On the other hand, it is to be feared that the policy of England in regard to Afghanistan has hitherto been distinctly opportunist; we have advanced and retired,

we have blown hot and cold, to suit the convenience of the moment and the political exigencies of the party in power, rather than in pursuance of a determined and enlightened policy of civilization; we have consequently spent much treasure and wasted many lives with a result quite out of proportion to our exertions and sacrifices.

Unless the existing defects in our frontier policy be remedied and our relations with Afghanistan be improved, before a serious emergency arises, the most skilfully devised plans of military action for meeting Russian aggression may be rendered futile, however excellent our troops, however enterprising and able our generals, however mobile and well equipped our field army. To deal effectually with the border tribes and the ruler and people of Afghanistan, it seems essential that our position, resources, and communications along the frontier, and more particularly on its northern extremity, should receive at least as much attention as our preparations for offensive action on the southern extremity. The Kabul province is by far the most fertile and best populated portion of Afghanistan, and not only is the city of Kabul the natural objective of an enemy proposing to invade India from the north, but its temporary occupation by Russia, or even the predominance there of Russian influence, would confer on that Power a prestige so enormous that any display of activity on our part in Southern Afghanistan would in no way counterbalance it. Doubtless, under present conditions, if the Russian communications with the Caspian were threatened by a forward movement on our part based on Kandahar, a hostile advance on Russia's part through Afghan-Turkestan on Kabul would be a most hazardous, if not an impracticable, operation. In a few years, however, Russia will have had time to develop her Central Asian railway system, to augment her Central Asian army, and to consolidate her power within striking distance of Meshed, Herat, and Balkh. If meanwhile we remain inactive, she might then be able not only to secure her communications and to meet our offensive action in at least equal strength, but to attempt the seizure of Kabul. Under this assumption, if it be admitted that we could not tolerate the establishment of Russian influence at Kabul, either by means of a permanent mission or by armed occupation, it follows that, unless we take steps to forestall Russia in the Kabul direction, we shall eventually abandon to her the power of initiative. With Kabul in the hands of Russia, our primary object must necessarily be to drive her out of Kabul. With Kabul and Kandahar in our own hands, we are free to assume the offensive or defensive on one flank or the other, as may be thought desirable. It is indisputable that our offensive action can be best based on Kandahar, and our efforts to prepare for such action should not be relaxed for a moment; but this affords no reason for neglecting the defence of Kabul. On the contrary, by disclosing our intentions and developing our military preparations only on the left flank of our present frontier, the enemy is encouraged to make careful dispositions to counteract our schemes both of offence and defence, and more particularly to thwart the former by a turning movement through Persia, the first indications of which are beginning to manifest themselves.

It will doubtless be difficult to overcome native distrust and jealousy, and to cope with native treachery, in our dealings with Afghanistan. But almost everything worth doing at all presents certain difficulties and dangers. It was, perhaps, permissible to defer the day of action so long as Russia had not consolidated her power in the Caucasus, or crossed the Caspian. At that period Afghanistan might be regarded as a neutral and politically unimportant zone between India and Turkestan. Now, as then, Afghanistan is inhabited by a number of disunited, and frequently hostile, tribes—some Sunnis, like the Ghilzais; others, Shiahs, like the Hazaras—with but few national instincts, uncertain loyalty to their ruler, and with hardly any interests in common. Such a population possesses but little cohesion, and although each section might fight obstinately for its own independence, the integrity of the Afghan nation as a whole could not long be maintained without extraneous assistance, if threatened



by a hostile and unscrupulous European Power. Afghanistan has now come in contact on the north with the aggressive military despotism of Russia, while on the south and east it touches the commercial and pacific civilization of England. Unless, therefore, we take early steps to aid the Afghans in the defence of their country, not only by our military preparations in India, but by the consolidation and development of the resources available on the spot, we shall certainly see the initiative taken by Russia under the pretext of protecting her own subjects from the anarchy that will be alleged to prevail across the lately demarcated frontier. Active friendship and good-will on the part of the Afghans as a nation, or perhaps of any influential section of them, we cannot at first hope for. Fear must precede love, and for some years at least *Oderint dum metuant* must be our motto. If, however, we can gradually accustom the inhabitants to intercourse with ourselves, demonstrate to them that their religious prejudices will be respected, show them the benefits of civilization and enable them to share its advantages, help them to discipline their army, and mitigate by our influence the harshness of the rule to which they are now subject, we shall have done much towards gaining their respect and friendship.

The first preliminary is to come to a clear understanding with the Amir with regard to the amount of military support we could give him in the event of his country being invaded, and we must endeavour to make him recognize that we have no desire to interfere with his internal policy and administration. But the advantages of an alliance must not be all on one side. We placed the Amir on the throne, we supply him with arms and money, and we should exact some return for these benefits and some guarantees of good faith on his part. With due regard to our eventual requirements, I would urge that these guarantees can at the present time most conveniently and advantageously take the form of facilities for the extension of that great civilizer—the railway—from Chaman to Kandahar, and from Peshawar to Kabul. With Kabul and Kandahar linked to India, treachery on the Amir's part would become an impossibility and the ulterior action which might be forced upon us at any moment on account of the Amir's death, internal disturbance, or external attack, could be undertaken promptly, in adequate force, and with every chance of success. The subsequent prolongation of the railway from Kandahar *via* Girishk in the Seistan direction is also a matter which, in my opinion, should receive very careful consideration. The construction of such a line would greatly facilitate our offensive operations based on Kandahar, diminish our transport difficulties, and counteract any attempt at a flanking movement through Persia on Russia's part.

In arranging with the Amir for these railway extensions, which must be preceded by careful reconnaissances, it should be remembered that one of the ruling passions of an Afghan—if not *the* ruling passion—is avarice; and this passion we can afford to gratify. The Amir should get his percentage on the cost of the work,\* and each local chief or *malik* should benefit by the construction and maintenance of the line proportionately to his influence. Indigenous labour should be utilized, and the utmost care taken that labourers themselves are paid individually. In Afghanistan, as in most uncivilized and mountainous countries, the turbulent character of the people is mainly due to their poverty, and the difficulty they experience in disposing of their produce; and consequently a railway from Chaman onwards through Kandahar and from Peshawar to Kabul would enrich and pacify the neighbouring population both directly and indirectly—by providing lucrative employment, and by opening up fresh markets, cheapening transport, and enlarging the area which can be profitably cultivated.

While on this subject I would incidentally advert to the desirability of completing the railway system along our present frontier by the extension of the Sind-Sagar line

\* The approximate cost of a railway from Peshawar to Kabul may be roughly estimated at four millions.

from Mianwali to Kalabagh, and thence *viâ* Laki to Baunu. Bannu possesses considerable strategical importance, as commanding the debouchure of the most direct road from Ghazni to India through the Tochi Pass; and the power of rapid concentration at that point would not only strengthen our defensive position trans-Indus, but would also tend to the pacification of the turbulent tribes across our border to the west, as well as facilitate the opening out of the easier, but more circuitous Gomal route from Ghazni to the south.

I should hope that the opportunity may still be open to us for consolidating our position in Afghanistan, as it is possible—though to my mind, not very probable—that Russia, for the sake of her own credit, and to hoodwink the British public, will respect for some years to come the frontier line which has recently been demarcated, turning her attention meanwhile to other regions, such as Northern Persia, where British interests are not so palpably affected, or which have not been so specifically the subject of diplomatic action. Whether this prove to be the case or not, we have every reason to believe that the continuity of Russia's aggressive policy remains unbroken, and that India is her Asiatic objective: we should, therefore, take prompt advantage of the time and means at our disposal to render our works on the north-west equally strong for defensive and offensive action and to bring Afghanistan completely under our influence.

It may, perhaps, be objected that to extend our frontier railway system beyond Peshawar, first to Jalalabad, and eventually to Kabul, might, under certain imaginable conditions, facilitate hostile advance on India. But this danger, problematical in any case, could readily be guarded against should occasion arise, by the removal of rolling stock, the blocking of tunnels, and the dismantling of bridges.

Again, it may be urged that Russia by advancing on Kabul would involve herself in difficulties, and would be playing into our hands. This plausible but fallacious argument has repeatedly been made use of to excuse our indifference to Russia's annexations in Central Asia, the result being that her frontier is some 600 miles nearer India than it was 25 years ago. Russia does not vacillate, her policy is consistent and decisive, she rewards her friends and punishes her enemies without humanitarian scruples, and her conquests are invariably followed by annexation or absorption. Disaffection or revolt she ruthlessly represses, and it may be certainly anticipated that, within a short period after her occupation of Kabul, it would be brought as much under Russian influence as Bokhara and Samarcand have already been. Admittedly we cannot allow Russia to establish herself at Kabul, and, this being the case, is it not better, while we are still at peace to make such occupation impossible, rather than wait until she has got there and then have to drive her out by a lavish expenditure of blood and money?

There is another important consideration which must not be lost sight of. To maintain our Indian army as an efficient fighting force, we are compelled from time to time to make use of the semi-civilized races, whose warlike instincts are kept alive by the insecurity of life and property prevailing outside our frontier. The peace and prosperity that have attended the extension of British rule throughout India are excellent things, but are accompanied by a gradual deterioration of the fighting material wherewith to recruit our Native army. In former days and under native rule, life and property depended, more or less, on individual exertion and prowess. Under British rule, the population is ensured by the State against external attack and internal commotion, the sword has been exchanged for the ploughshare, and the spear for the reaping-hook. The soldiers of the Carnatic, who fought well even against a European foe, are now a distinctly unwarlike and sedentary race. The sepoys of the north-west Provinces and Oudh, who marched and conquered under Lake and Gough, can no longer be regarded as the equals of the Sikhs and Goorkhas. The Sikhs who helped

to quell the Mutiny, and who have defeated Afghans and Soudanese, are gradually becoming agriculturists and artisans, their fighting instincts are being dulled, and their love of military service is less pronounced. In a few years, unless the border tribes on the North-West Frontier are brought under British control, and the Afghan army is disciplined by British Officers, we shall look in vain for the splendid irregular troops India has furnished ever since our annexation of the country began. On the other hand, if not utilized by us, the admirable fighting material, now at our disposal will assuredly be converted by Russia into a weapon against us. Should our indecision or indifference lead to such a result, India could only be defended by materially increasing the proportion of British troops in our field army.

In conclusion I would draw attention to two points connected with our foreign policy on the North-West Frontier, which in my judgment, demand prompt consideration and decision.

The first is whether the system should be continued by which the Government of India controls through the intervention of the Government of the Punjab, the trans-Indus districts and frontier affairs beyond our border. This system of dual responsibility is theoretically indefensible, and its practical results are only too apparent. Circumlocution, friction, and want of unity in the administration have borne their natural fruits. To quote Lord Lytton's words, "the North-West Frontier presents, at this moment, a spectacle unique in the world; at least I know of no other spot where, after 25\* years of peaceful occupation, a great civilized Power has obtained so little influence over its semi-savage neighbours that there is no security for British life a mile or two beyond our border."

To what may be termed the prevailing anarchy, there are exceptions in the Baluchistan Agency and in the Khyber Pass, where the Government of India have been able to enforce a resolute and enlightened policy without, or in spite of, the obstruction of a subordinate administration. The success of our rule in Baluchistan is no doubt due, in great measure, to the development of communications with India by road and railway, and also to the exceptional qualifications of the Agent to the Governor-General for dealing with a half-civilized population; but it is also due to the unity of purpose and freedom of initiative which Sir Robert Sandeman's direct subordination to the Foreign Department has ensured. Similarly, apart from his own personal aptitude for the task, Lieut.-Colonel Warburton's success in establishing friendly relations with the Khyberis must be ascribed to the determination of the Government of India no longer to tolerate a system under which a few ill-disposed tribesmen were able to interrupt communication between Peshawar and Kabul, as they still, I regret to say, are allowed to do between Peshawar and Kohat.

If suitable officers are selected for the task, there seems to be no reason for doubting the feasibility of bringing the tribes that hold the Kohat, the Gomal, and other passes as much and as quickly under our influence as those occupying the Khyber, provided the same procedure be followed; and if the trans-Indus districts of the Punjab were placed on the same footing as the Baluchistan Agency, there would be some chance of an equally satisfactory result being attained. It would be superfluous here to recapitulate the arguments in favour of a supreme and undivided authority for dealing with the North-West Frontier, so clearly and conclusively set forth in Lord Lytton's Minute of the 22nd April, 1887.† I would observe, however, that during the last 11 years the conditions of the frontier problem have been somewhat modified by the complete pacification of Baluchistan up to the Kojak on the west and towards the Zhob Valley on the north. The transfer of Sind to the Punjab,

\* Now 37 years.

† Enclosure of Foreign Department letter No. 86, dated 17th May, 1877, to the Secretary of State.

or its retention by Bombay, has now become a purely civil question, the settlement of which, one way or the other, has but little bearing on our foreign policy and military requirements. The Baluchistan Agency also is now so extensive, and its administration has been so successful, that any alteration in its present arrangements and scope of action is, I think, to be deprecated. All that appears necessary is to transfer the trans-Indus districts of the Punjab from the Government of that province to the direct control of the Government of India, acting through an Agent to the Governor-General, whose head-quarters might be Peshawar, and whose jurisdiction and powers would be of the nature described in the Minute referred to above.

Secondly, the time is fast approaching when the advisability of appointing British officers as residents at Herat and Balkh, and, if possible, at Kabul and Kandahar, will have to be seriously considered. So long as our communications along and across the frontier were deficient and incomplete, the position of residents in Afghanistan would have been precarious, and their utility doubtful; but in proportion as our railway extensions approach Kandahar and Kabul, the safety of the representatives of the Government of India will become assured and their influence be rendered predominant. The employment of natives as our agents in Afghanistan is at best a makeshift, the character and prestige of a British officer being incomparably higher in Afghan eyes than those of a native of India, however capable and trustworthy the latter may be. But the chief advantage of appointing British Residents lies in the guarantee which such a measure would afford to Afghanistan, and the warning it would convey to Russia, that we were no longer halting between two opinions, but had determined to recognize the former country as coming within the legitimate sphere of our civilizing mission; that we intended to use it, not as the buffer, but as the bulwork of our Indian Empire; and that in future Russian aggression and intrigue on its borders would be exposed, and if necessary checked by military force.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XXVIII.

## NOTE ON ATTOCK DEFENCES.

SIMLA.

*2nd June, 1889.*

I agree generally with the proposals made by Colonel McG. Stewart's Committee. The question of the defence of the Attock position has been most carefully considered and the matter should now be pressed upon Government. It would be a fatal error, in my opinion, to wait until hostilities commence to commence the works. All that would take time and require skilled labour should be carried out without delay. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the Attock position, and I thoroughly endorse all that Colonel Sanford has urged as to the desirability of taking the defence in hand at once. The construction of a bridge-of-boats must be looked upon as an important part of the Defence Scheme, and all necessary arrangements for its being rapidly put up should be made beforehand. I think Colonel Sanford's suggestion about the Attock boatmen a valuable one. They are a class by themselves and could not be replaced. My fear is that unless some Government work and employment are found for them they will disappear.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXIX.

TRANSFER OF SIND FROM BOMBAY TO THE PUNJAB, TOGETHER WITH A PROPOSAL FOR  
THE REORGANIZATION OF THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER.SIMLA,  
4th June, 1889.

As regards the military aspect of this question, I have nothing special to add to my notes on this subject of the 26th September, 1886, 8th January, 1888, and 8th of May, 1888. For, from a military point of view, the transfer has been effected. The Quetta division has been placed under the Commander-in-Chief in India, who has now complete military control along the frontier, since, practically speaking, the frontier line no longer runs through Sind, but in a north-westerly direction on leaving Dera Ghazi Khan.

I gather from the correspondence that the advantages of attaching Sind to the Punjab are not commensurate with the many difficulties which would be caused by the transfer. The subject has been very thoroughly gone into, and as its inexpediency seems established, I am of opinion that no further action should be taken in the matter. I now turn to the concluding portion of his Excellency's minute, in which he outlines a scheme which I believe to be indispensable to the satisfactory carrying out of the future frontier policy of the Empire.

Twelve years have passed since various changes in the administration of the Frontier were recommended by Lord Lytton, in his minute of 22nd April, 1877, to which his Excellency draws attention, and although at the time it might have been deemed by some that his Lordship's proposals were rather too forward and required modification, viewed in the light of the experience which the past 12 years have given us, they would appear to have been sound, for the Viceroy of to-day thus remarks on the suggestions of his predecessor: "The reasons for making a change of this kind are, I think, stronger now than they were then."

Apart from the interest which must be felt in this important subject by all who have studied the question of our frontier policy, I may be permitted to remark that it is a topic of engrossing interest to me personally, as in 1878 I had the honour of being nominated by Lord Lytton for the post of Chief Commissioner of the Frontier, and I was to have entered upon my new duties on the 1st April, 1879. Owing, however, to the outbreak of hostilities in Afghanistan, the scheme fell through, but, whenever occasion offered, I have lost no opportunity of advocating a measure which I consider would so materially help us in a campaign beyond our border. I would invite the attention of my colleagues to various extracts from former minutes of mine which refer to the matter at issue, and which are printed as an appendix to this note; and I would suggest that a copy of Lord Lytton's minute of 22nd April, 1877, should be circulated with the file, for the information of such honourable members as may not have had an opportunity of perusing it hitherto.

In this exhaustive paper, the pros and cons of the line of policy suggested are put forward with a clearness which leaves nothing to be desired, and that it was generally concurred in by Her Majesty's Government is evident from the reply of the Secretary

of State,\* in which the Marquis of Salisbury issued final orders determining the measures he was prepared to sanction, as described in the 7th paragraph of his despatch.

An outline of this is given in a letter, No. 1178-P., dated Simla, 10th June, 1878, from the Foreign Secretary, to the Government of the Punjab, as follows: ". . . the Province of Sind is to be attached to the Punjab, and the whole of the trans-Indus country is to be placed under two Commissioners; of whom the Northern Commissioner is to be the superior, and is to reside at Peshawar, as Governor-General's Agent and Frontier Commissioner. In respect to internal affairs, both Commissioners are to be under the orders of the Punjab Government, while the Frontier Forces are to be under the Governor-General's Agent."

Before discussing the suggestions made by his Excellency as to how the proposed changes in our frontier administration can best be carried out, I would refer to a remark made by the Honourable Sir David Barbour, where he says: "A single controlling authority is no doubt necessary, but, in my opinion, that authority must be the Government of India, acting in Baluchistan through the Agent to the Governor-General, and on the rest of the frontier through the Punjab Government." The Government of India must of course always be the controlling authority; but what I contend is that there should be only one Agent, responsible direct to that authority for our relations with the tribes both in Baluchistan and on the rest of the frontier.

In Baluchistan, the system of civil administration is so simple, when compared with the elaborate machinery which is required in more settled districts, that the Governor-General's Agent is able to devote the greater portion of his time to considering the political conditions of his charge. The Lieutenant-Governorship of the Punjab, on the other hand, although, as Lord Lytton remarks, "it is inferior to those of Bengal and the North-Western Provinces, as regards population and revenue," carries with it a civil jurisdiction amply sufficient to tax the energies of its Lieutenant-Governor, even without the task of administering political affairs along the length of its frontier. It would appear therefore that, except at the expense of his other and more legitimate duties, it is almost impossible for him to concentrate his attention on the study of the politics and administration of the frontier.

As regards this point, it appears to me that, what applies to the work devolving on the Agent to the Governor-General for Baluchistan, and the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, applies equally to the officers serving under their immediate orders. In Baluchistan, the frontier officers have a minimum of purely routine duties, and can therefore spend a considerable portion of their time in acquiring a personal knowledge of those they govern. In the Punjab, the civil work of an officer holding a frontier district is in no way less onerous than that which obtains in other Provinces, while he has the additional strain of important political duties to perform. The Deputy Commissioner of Kohat exemplifies the unadvisability of one officer having to perform two distinct duties. In addition to managing his own district, he has charge of our relations with the Turis and other tribes in, and bordering on, the Kuram Valley, as well as the control of the Afridis of the Kohat Pass, Jowaki, &c., with the result that our being able to use the Kohat Pass still depends on the temper of the Afridis, and no one can assert that our relations with Kuram are satisfactory.

I believe I am correct in stating that of late years the routine work of civil officers throughout India has increased rather than diminished. If such be the case, some idea may be formed of the labours of an officer administering a district in the Punjab nowadays, by a perusal of the following extract from Lord Lytton's Minute: "I have before me now a minute by Major James, formerly Commissioner of Peshawar, in which, as the result of 13 years' frontier experience, he expresses himself most strongly

as to the absolute impossibility of combining a proper intercourse with the border tribes with the execution of his ordinary civil duties. The then Lieutenant-Governor, and Lord Lawrence, hinted, indeed, that this incompatibility of functions was Major James's own fault; yet from all quarters I hear Major James spoken of as one of the ablest and most active administrators the frontier has known, and one who, but for his untimely death, had a brilliant career before him."

If the evidence furnished on this point by Major James is accepted as reliable, the necessary inference to be drawn from it is, that the political and civil charge of a frontier district is beyond the powers of one man, and is therefore incompatible with a thorough discharge of both duties. This difficulty could of course be removed by increasing the staff of officers in the frontier districts, but, in common with Lord Lytton, I base my objections to the present system on broader grounds than the question of the amount of work thrown upon the executive, for I consider that it is at variance with the principle of the direct management of our Imperial policy along the length of the frontier by the Government of India.

Lord Lytton thus clearly describes the situation on page 11 of his note: "If there be one department of the Government, for the administration of which, more than of any other, the Viceroy is directly responsible, it is the Foreign Department. This department he directs, not merely as head of the Government of India, but, unlike all other departments, personally as head of the department itself. This, therefore, is, above all others, the one department in which the selection of officers should rest entirely in the hands of the Viceroy. Under the present system, however, the Viceroy has to carry out the most important and delicate of all the duties devolving on him, not through agents of his own selection, but through officers selected for him by the Punjab Government, and looking to that Government for their advancement. I am aware that it is urged in favour of the present dual system, that it has worked well hitherto. But on this point the Viceroy is necessarily the best authority; and with the fullest appreciation of the loyalty and ability with which I have been served by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab and the Commissioner of Peshawar, I am bound to say that, from my assumption of office up to the present moment, the existing system has been to me a source of grievous embarrassment. Under this system, either the Lieutenant-Governor must be made the channel of all correspondence on frontier matters—and, in that case, the most delicate, confidential, and urgent communications can only be sent through him with a risk of misconception, a certainty of delay, a greatly increased chance of publicity, and no compensatory advantage whatever; or else he feels himself slighted, kept in the dark about important matters closely affecting his own duties, and entitled to complain that his subordinates have been practically withdrawn from dependence on his orders. By the growth of this system, the Punjab Government, though inferior in status to others which are necessarily subordinate to the supreme administration, has now virtually become the Foreign Office of the Government of India; and a Foreign Office more inconveniently situated, or organized, could not possibly be devised."

Again, on page 18, his lordship remarks: "If the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab was specially selected for his knowledge of frontier affairs, then he would naturally be the best advisor of the Government of India on these matters. If, on the other hand, an exceptionally qualified frontier officer is sent to Peshawar, and the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab is selected rather with a view to his special qualifications for the administration of the more settled districts, then the whole argument falls to the ground."

" . . . so long as our relations with the trans-frontier States are carried on by an officer of comparatively subordinate position, there may be reasons why he should communicate with the Local Government rather than directly with the Government of



India. But, if the conduct of these relations be transferred to an officer whose official rank is little below that of the Lieutenant-Governor himself, it is, in that case, difficult to imagine what advantage could be gained by reserving to the Punjab Government any share in the conduct of them. All unnecessary links in an administrative chain admittedly weaken the strength of it. The frontier officer has all the local knowledge necessary, to enable him to form and submit an opinion, or to frame a line of policy, for the consideration of the Government of India. "The Government of India reviews the information and opinions thus submitted to it with a knowledge of British and Imperial interests, as also of the military and financial conditions of India, far wider and more accurate than that of any local administration. But what new light can the Punjab Government throw on the matter? It has not the local knowledge of the Chief Commissioner on the spot; and it has no knowledge of Imperial policy and political conditions which the Commissioner does not equally possess."

So far, I have quoted from Lord Lytton's minute some extracts which bear on the present system of administration, and a careful consideration of the arguments adduced in 1887 leads me now to the same conclusion which his Excellency the Viceroy has arrived at, "the reasons for making a change of this kind are stronger than they were then."

I will now proceed to discuss how, in my opinion, this change can best be carried out, and it appears to me that the following alternatives naturally present themselves for our consideration:

1. That a frontier district should be formed\* "under a Chief Commissioner or Governor-General's Agent, having the management directly under the Government of India of all our frontier business and trans-frontier relations."

2. That two Commissioners should be appointed—the one to administer the Pathan frontier, the other the Baluch border land. The senior of these two Commissioners to be styled the Governor-General's Agent and Frontier Commissioner. He would have entire charge of the frontier, civil as well as political, and would be responsible to the Viceroy alone for the performance of his duties.

3. That two officers should be appointed—the one to administer the external and internal affairs of Baluchistan, as at present; the other, as political agent in charge of our external relations with the Pathan tribes. Both officers to be under an officer of high standing, who would be styled the Frontier Commissioner, and who would be directly under the Viceroy's orders.

As regards proposal No. 1, Lord Lytton suggested that the Indus should form the boundary of the new Government along almost the entire length of its jurisdiction. This, however, was under the supposition that Sind would be transferred to the Punjab Government. If it be decided that Sind shall remain under the Bombay Government, as at present, and that the proposed frontier district should comprise the six frontier districts of the Punjab and Baluchistan, we should gain, it is true, increased unity of purpose and action in our frontier policy, but I believe it would be found that the purely routine work of district officers would practically remain unchanged, and the result would be an increase of cost in the administration of the frontier, without any corresponding result.

Proposal No. 2 is practically that sanctioned by the Secretary of State in his despatch of 29th November, 1877, to which I have previously alluded, with the exception that the senior of the two Commissioners would be under the direct orders

of the Viceroy, instead of reporting to the Punjab Government; but this dividing principle does not fall in so conveniently with the main object in view, namely, to bring the two different Frontier systems under one local chief, while, unless the executive staff is increased, the pressure of routine work on the district and divisional officers will remain as before. Again, I doubt whether much unity of system could be ensured, for if the Southern Commissioner happened to be the senior, he might possibly insist on the system obtaining in Baluchistan being followed on the Pathan Frontier, or *vice versa*. In fact, for some time to come the Frontier administration would in all probability be conducted on the Baluch or Punjab system, according to the school in which the Senior Commissioner for the time being might have received his frontier training.

The third proposal, on the other hand, appears to me more likely to secure the end we have in view, for it ensures, not only comparative immunity from routine work to the Frontier officials, but also places the entire management of our Frontier affairs in the hands of one officer.

The existing régime in Baluchistan might remain unchanged for the present, while the Political Agent in charge of our Pathan border should have under his orders as many Political Officers as may be found necessary to deal with trans-Frontier affairs in the six Frontier districts of the Punjab. Both he and the officers under him should be exempted from any share in the civil administration within our borders, but should have entire control of our trans-Frontier affairs, and be responsible that proper precautions were adopted to ensure the safety of our subjects within the border. The Frontier Commissioner would exercise a general control over the arrangements on both the Baluchistan and Pathan borders, and thus, by degrees, a uniform system of frontier administration would be introduced. Later on, as Baluchistan becomes more settled, it may be found desirable in like manner to detach the Political Officers in that province from their purely administrative work, so as to give them leisure for more direct intercourse with the tribesmen.

It will no doubt be urged that, if the district officers in the Punjab are deprived of all share in the political control of our relations with the tribesmen, they will find it impossible to carry on satisfactorily the work of internal administration, and that a cardinal principle of Frontier management is, that the external and internal affairs along a border are so intermixed, that they can only be properly administered by the same officer. I admit that there is much to be said from this point of view, but as a matter of fact, I believe it will be conceded that under such a system we do not appear to have made much progress in gaining the confidence and good will of our Pathan neighbours since the Peshawar valley and neighbouring districts came under British rule in 1848-49. On the other hand, it will, I think, be readily admitted that in the only case where a specially qualified Political Officer has been appointed to the duty of conducting our external relations with the tribesmen, the results have been most eminently satisfactory, for the present altered condition of affairs in the Khyber may be attributed solely to the tact and personal influence of one man, Lieutenant-Colonel R. Warburton.

In April, 1877, Lord Lytton remarks:\* "I believe that our North-Western Frontier presents a spectacle unique in the world; at least, I know of no other spot where, after 25 years of peaceful occupation, a great civilized power has obtained so little influence over its semi-savage neighbours, and acquired so little knowledge of them, that the country within a day's ride of its most important garrison, is an absolute *terra incognita*; and that there is absolutely no security for British life a mile or two beyond our border."

In April, 1889, a writer in the *Fortnightly Review* (Sir Charles Dilke) describes a trip which he took through the Khyber Pass in December last—" . . . we failed to keep the pass quiet when we employed large numbers of our own troops and have succeeded splendidly since we have employed and trusted the Afridi levies, and laid all questions respecting pass arrangements and the security of the road before a combined council of the tribes. Even the worst of former robbers, the Zakha Khel of the Bazar Valley, are now joining our service in considerable numbers."

Yet despite of the good work which has been done in the Khyber Pass, in which the Political control has been vested in the hands of one Political Officer, I am not aware that the civil administration of the Peshawar District has in any way suffered. It is true that Lieutenant-Colonel Warburton has reported direct to the Commissioner of Peshawar, but for all practical purposes he might have communicated with the Foreign Secretary, since final orders on any point connected with our relation with the Afridis are given, not by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, but by the Foreign Secretary, acting under instructions from the Viceroy.

In reply to the Honourable Sir David Barbour's query, "Would anything be gained by managing Chitral affairs through an officer at Quetta, or Quetta affairs through an officer at Peshawar?" I would suggest that, since it is proposed there should be one controlling authority over Peshawar, Chitral, and Quetta, we can determine hereafter where this Agent should reside, but as the main portion of his work would lie in frequently visiting all parts of the frontier, he would seldom remain long in one spot: the question, therefore, of where he should have his head-quarters when not on tour is, comparatively speaking, a minor consideration.

Time does not permit of my doing more than sketching briefly the outlines of a scheme for the reorganization of our frontier policy. The details of any such scheme must necessarily be left for careful future consideration, but believing as I do that such a change is of vital importance, I will only add that as his Excellency the Viceroy has proposed that the matter should be discussed in Council, I trust that no time may be lost in bringing the question definitely forward.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## APPENDIX.

*Extract from a Memorandum on the desirability of making a Military Road through the Kohat Pass.*

SIMLA,  
17th August, 1886.

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The more closely the vital question of the defence of our North-West Frontier is studied, the more apparent it will be that the attempt to separate military from political considerations is quite hopeless. So long as we had only to deal with Afghanistan and the border tribes, our best policy was, no doubt, to keep aloof from them. The near approach, however, of a European Power forces us to consider, not only the defence of the North-West Frontier, but of the Indian Empire itself, and it is admitted by the many experts who have been consulted in the matter, that to defend India, we must have command of the northern outlets of the passes, that we must, in fact, "be able to see the other side of the hill." To effect this, it is essential that we should have with us the tribes who occupy the intervening country; their attitude towards us is the essence of any scheme for the defence of our North-West Frontier: if they are with us, we need have no anxiety; if they are against us, we shall be in serious straits. It is of such vital importance that we should get hold of the tribes, that I strongly advise a reconsideration of the policy which has guided us during the last 38 years, and which has resulted in our knowing little more about our neighbours in the hills than we did when first we occupied the Punjab, and in our being absolutely uncertain as to whose side they would be upon in the impending struggle between Russia and England. Such an unsatisfactory state of affairs should not be allowed to continue longer. There may not be much time left us. It is of the utmost importance that we should come into closer relations with the tribes, and as this would seem to be hopeless under the present system of administration, the traditions of which are altogether adverse to our being in any way mixed up with them, would it not be better to change it, and separate frontier politics from the Punjab Government, as was proposed to be done in 1877-78. It may not be possible to form a Frontier Commissionership on the exact lines then contemplated. The Punjab Frontier Force has since been removed from the control of the Punjab Government, and could not now be placed under the orders of the Frontier Commissioner. His status would have to be somewhat modified; instead of having complete civil and political control of Hazara and all the trans-Indus districts, the civil administration might be left with the Punjab Government, and political power only placed in the hands of the Frontier officer, who would devote his whole time and attention to the business, and who would not be, as all the frontier district officers now are, weighed down by civil duties. The approaching change in the Lieutenant-Governorship of the Punjab affords a convenient opportunity for making any alteration that might be considered desirable. We ought to know all about the Gomal Pass; the Tochi Valley; and the roads leading from Bannu through Khoist and Daur; also about Buner and Swat, and the country between these places and Chitral. There are only two ways of doing this, either by utilizing the boldness and dexterity of our political officers, or by military expeditions. Military expeditions are expensive, troublesome, and leave a feeling of soreness behind them; while able and intelligent political officers soon gain influence over the people, and obtain the necessary information by going quietly about the country.

If this matter should be taken up, as I now venture to suggest it may be, I am very confident that it will soon be found practicable, not only to make a good road through the Kohat Pass, but to place our relations with the tribes on a very different and more satisfactory footing than they are at present.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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*Extract from a Memorandum on the Present Position in Central Asia.*

SIMLA,  
13th June, 1887.

Paragraph 3.—The policy of entering into closer relations with the tribes who inhabit the mountainous tract along our frontier, and of "transforming that great natural obstacle, which has hitherto been a barrier against ourselves, into a barrier against our enemies," is one which strongly commends itself to me, and one which I have warmly advocated for some years past. The Afghans and the frontier tribes will be factors in the coming struggle, whose importance it is impossible to exaggerate. If they join the Russians, the advance of the latter will be comparatively easy; anxiety for their long line of communications will be minimized; they will be able to count on getting supplies without the employment of force, and their fighting strength will be most materially increased by the vast numbers of irregular levies that will swell their ranks as they advance.

On the other hand, if the tribes are with us, the advance of the Russians will be proportionately difficult; their movements will be hampered at every step, and by raising the clans on their flanks and rear, and at the same

time bringing the whole strength of the Empire to bear on their front, the result could not be doubtful; and we might confidently hope to inflict upon them such a crushing defeat that their advance in Central Asia would be thrown back for many years to come. In fact, if we can only gain over the tribes, we need have no anxiety or fear that the Russians would ever cross the Hindu Kush. We should, therefore, as Mr. Durand points out, do all in our power to gain the friendship of the various tribes along our frontier, and by degrees introduce a system which will permit us to organize them in some degree for purposes of defence, and, in my opinion, for purposes of offence also.

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Paragraph 7.—I most fully concur in Mr. Durand's views as expressed in this paragraph; but I would remark that I do not believe "an active policy among the frontier tribes" would have any chance of being successful, unless it were carried out under some specially selected officer, working directly under the orders of the Government of India. In this way alone could we be sure that a uniform system would be adopted in our dealings with the tribes from Chitral to Baluchistan. On the 17th August, 1886, while discussing the desirability of making a military road through the Kohat Pass, I expressed a strong opinion in favour of placing the political control of the frontier under one officer. No one can appreciate more than I do the past and present services of the various civil officers who have so ably administered our frontier; but as civilization increases, so does the work within their respective districts, and it is obviously impossible for them to combine a free intercourse with the border tribes with the execution of their many purely civil duties. Space does not permit of my dwelling on this point as fully as I could wish, but I would most strongly recommend that the entire control of our political relations with the trans-border tribes should be placed in the hands of one officer of high standing and experience. He should be a man of good judgment, good temper, possessing considerable force of character, and the manners and habits which attract natives; for without strong sympathy and constant intercourse no Englishman can ever hope to gain the confidence of Asiatics. His work should be confined to the political control of the frontier, and he should be immediately responsible to the Viceroy for the proper conduct of our relations with the trans-border tribes. The administration within our borders would, as now, be left in the hands of the local civil officers, while the Frontier Commissioner, or whatever his designation might be, would be able to devote the whole of his time to the extension of our influence among the tribesmen.

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FRED. ROBERTS.

## XXX.

REMARKS ON THE HONOURABLE LIEUT.-GENERAL CHESNEY'S NOTE ON THE DEFENCE  
OF ATTOCK AND RAWAL PINDI.

12th June, 1889.

I concur generally in the views expressed in the Honourable General Chesney's note on the defences of Attock and Rawal Pindi. In fact they differ in principle but slightly from those I put forward last year when the construction of a defensive position at Mooltan was under discussion.

I am inclined, however, to doubt whether the fortifications erected by Continental Powers with conterminous frontiers can properly be compared with those we are constructing along the North-Western Frontier. In the former case the object is not only to protect military depôts and important strategical points, but also to preclude the development of a hostile movement except in such force that time would be afforded for the mobilization of the opposing troops in at least equal strength, or the initiation of a counter-attack. In the latter case, the Afghan zone stretches between the British and Russian boundaries, and, if the integrity of Afghanistan is to be maintained, the defensive scheme now in hand can only be looked upon as provisional and supplementary in relation to the advanced frontier line, conterminous to that of Russia, which will have to be occupied and defended later on.

If, on the other hand, Russia be permitted gradually to absorb Afghanistan, the present scheme for guarding the North-Western Frontier would be quite inadequate, it would have to be extended at enormous cost, and even when completed from Karachi to Peshawar I should doubt its securing India from invasion.

While, therefore, I am strongly in favour of constructing and arming the works that have been decided on with the least possible delay, I would deprecate any idea of finality in our defensive policy until we are in a position to protect Afghanistan externally and control her internally. From this point of view it is, perhaps, to be regretted that more active steps have not been taken of late years to bring the border tribes under our influence, and to obtain the consent of the Amir to the extension of our railway system from Peshawar to Kabul on the north and from Chaman to Kandahar on the south.

Turning from principles to details, I am unable to agree with the Military Member of Council in considering the Attock position a strong one defensively from the side of India. The extraordinary intricacy of the ground trans-Indus, its command over the cis-Indus bank, and the impossibility of maintaining a bridge-of-boats opposite the old fort when the river is in flood, are factors which render the defensive problem a particularly complicated and difficult one. Similarly at Rawal Pindi the natural features of the ground generally favour the attack, and, owing to this circumstance, the position that has to be taken up is somewhat too extensive for the actual requirements of the case, or for the garrison likely to be available. Still it is the art of the military engineer to overcome disadvantages of site, and I feel sure that our Engineer Officers will not be found wanting in the present instance.

One very important question raised in General Chesney's note is whether defensive works, the necessity of which, in the event of emergency, is admitted, should

be completed in peace time, or be left unfinished until war appears imminent. To my mind there can be only one answer to this. The effect we seek for in fortifying our frontier, and the supporting points in rear of it, is partly moral and partly material. So far as moral effect is concerned paper defences are wholly inoperative, and in regard to material effect there is every reason to assume that works, however carefully designed in peace, will either not be completed at all, or be completed in a perfunctory and imperfect manner, in the hurry and confusion which the preparation for a great struggle necessarily entails. In my opinion, if it is worth while to defend Attock and Rawal Pindi at all, the requisite works, including communications, water supply, gun emplacements, field redoubts and entrenchments, overhead cover, &c., should be completed in peace time, and the armament and its ammunition should be stored in readiness in the vicinity of the works. To confine our preparations within the narrow limits proposed in the Note might save money for the moment, but would be likely to involve an extravagant expenditure hereafter, while failing to produce the anterior moral effect both in India and on Russia, which is one of the main objects of our present frontier policy.

I cannot let this opportunity pass to point out the desirability of taking very early steps to procure from home the field, siege, and machine guns of the latest type needed for arming the defences of the North-Western Frontier. A list of our requirements in this respect was submitted to Government by the Defence Committee in their letter No. 172 of the 5th July, 1888, but I understand that the Secretary of State has not yet been addressed on the subject. This delay seems unfortunate, as whatever works we may construct their value will be seriously impaired if they have to be armed on occasion arising with artillery of a comparatively inferior and antiquated type.

I would note, in conclusion, that the cost of fortifying Rawal Pindi is roughly estimated, in paragraph 17 of Military Department Despatch No. 163 of the 7th September, 1888, at from 20 to 30 lakhs. I should be inclined to hope that the latter sum would suffice to complete the defences both of Attock and of Rawal Pindi.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXXI.

## NOTE ON THE DEFENCE OF THE CROSSING OF THE INDUS AT ATTOCK.

SIMLA,  
3rd August, 1889.

I concur in the views expressed by the Honourable General Chesney, and I trust that the scheme advocated by the Defence Committee may receive early sanction, and be carried into effect with as little delay as possible.

The appointment of a Commission of Engineer Officers, for the purpose of reconsidering this question, as suggested by Major-General Collen, does not commend itself to me. The proper authority for considering and formulating the general principles on which schemes of defence, whether coast, inland or frontier, should be based, appears to me to be the Defence Committee. When the proposals of this Committee have been examined and approved by Government, the preparation of the designs and the carrying out of the work should then be entrusted to the Inspector-General of Military Works. It is the business of the Defence Committee to make sure that they have sufficient information before them, to enable them to arrive at a correct conclusion. In the present instance, as the question is one of great importance, particular care was taken, both by personal inspection of the ground and by the collection of reliable reports and reconnaissances, to satisfy themselves in this respect. Except under special circumstances, Commissions of the kind suggested by the Secretary to Government would only tend to delegate responsibility and cause delay without any compensating advantage.

With reference to the concluding portion of General Chesney's note, I think my honourable colleague is mistaken in considering the natural features of the Attock position as strong defensively against attack from the west. The extraordinary intricacy of the ground trans-Indus, its command over the cis-Indus bank, and the impossibility of maintaining a bridge-of-boats opposite the old fort when the river is in flood, are factors which render the defensive problem a singularly difficult and complicated one. Still it is the art of the Military Engineer to overcome the disadvantages of site; and I feel sure that our Engineer Officers will not be found wanting in the present instance.

I may also mention that the necessity of being prepared to hold the Attock position with a few troops in the event of internal commotion was not lost sight of by the Defence Committee. The tactical occupation of Khairabad, Thanda Bir, and the old fort would, it is believed, be an adequate precaution against such a contingency, and at the same time would guard the railway bridge from injury, provided that the use of the roadway is strictly guarded against. This condition, I trust, will never be lost sight of, in time of trouble, not only at Attock, but with regard to all the great railway bridges which have roadways as well.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXXII.

## DEFENCE OF THE RAWAL PINDI POSITION.

SIMLA,  
*3rd August, 1889.*

I concur in the views embodied in the Honourable General Chesney's note. In my note on the Attock case, I have strongly deprecated the appointment of a Commission of Engineer Officers to reconsider the proposals of the Defence Committee in regard to that position, and I hold the same opinion with regard to the Defence Committee's for the Rawal Pindi entrenchment. I quite agree to the defensive proviso suggested in the paragraph of General Chesney's note. It is unfortunate that at Rawal Pindi the natural features of the ground generally favour the attack, and owing to this circumstance, the position that has to be taken up is somewhat extensive for the actual requirements of the case, or for the garrison, likely to be available. This disadvantage is, however, unavoidable, and will doubtless be minimised by our able Engineer Officers. I attach great importance to the acceptance of the principle set forth in paragraph 13 of the Defence Committee Proceedings, and I trust it will commend itself to the Governor-General in Council, as nothing, in my judgment, can be more dangerous and extravagant than to defer the construction and proper armament of our defences until the enemy is at our gates.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXXIII.

REMARKS ON MAJOR-GENERAL SIR JAMES BROWNE'S NOTE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
A MILITARY ROAD FROM CHERAT TO NILAB-GASHA AND OUR DEFENSIVE POLICY ON  
THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER.

10th October, 1889.

The Quarter-Master-General in India has prepared a Note, dated the 14th August, 1889, dealing primarily with the construction of a military road from Cherat to Nilab-Gasha, but also reviewing at considerable length the strategical considerations which, in his opinion, ought to guide our defensive policy on the North-West Frontier of India.

As Major-General Sir James Browne has submitted his Note for the consideration of his Excellency the Viceroy, and has, I believe, shown it to most of my honourable colleagues, as well as to other officials of high standing, I think it desirable to offer a few remarks on his proposals; as these, in the absence of comment on my part, might perhaps be regarded as having been put forward under my direction, and as consequently carrying the weight of my full concurrence.

With regard to the advisability of providing lateral communication between the roads converging on Khairabad from Peshawar and Kohat, but little need be said, as the matter has been referred to the Defence Committee, whose views will shortly be laid before the Government of India. The question really is a very simple one, and its solution depends on the point of view from which the problem is examined. If, on the one hand, it be determined to make an obstinate stand in the vicinity of Peshawar and Kohat against an attack down either or both of the valleys of the Kabul and Kuram rivers, lateral communication in rear of Peshawar and Kohat would seem tactically advantageous. On the other hand, if under such circumstances it be decided to fall back on the Indus, without engaging in any serious attempt to defend Peshawar and Kohat, lateral communication in front of the Indus would not facilitate our retirement, while it might aid the enemy's concentration on one or other of the river-crossings.

Apart from this defensive detail, the scope and probable effect of the measures advocated by the Quarter-Master-General should, I think, be viewed in their relation to the general policy which Government may determine to pursue in its dealings with Afghanistan. The important consideration that arises is whether our attention at the present moment should be chiefly directed to strengthening the retired line of defence along the Indus; or whether, while taking reasonable precautions on that line we ought to be preparing, so far as political exigencies will permit, for the occupation of what I believe to be our best, if not our only, defensive front, if India is to remain a British possession.

An ideally perfect defensive frontier between two countries consists of an impenetrable line of natural obstacles, with openings in it for purposes of international communication so few in number and so naturally strong, or capable of being so artificially strengthened, that they can be securely guarded by a comparatively small force. To facilitate offensive action or the reinforcement of a threatened flank, lateral communications should be provided along, and in rear of, the frontier line, and each of the important strategical centres included in that line should be connected as directly as possible with the retired bases in rear.

Inner lines of defence may doubtless prove of high value under certain contingencies. These, as a rule, should be as nearly parallel as possible to the defensive frontier; in preparing them full advantage should be taken of natural obstacles, such as large rivers, waterless or mountainous tracts of country, &c.; and the communications between them and the frontier alignment should be direct rather than diagonal, inasmuch as a road or railway traversing the front of an inner line of defence facilitates an extended attack, instead of confining it within definite limits.

Fortunately for India, a frontier almost ideally perfect exists along the line from Kabul through Ghazni to Kandahar, the front being impenetrable, and the flanks being secured by mountains on the right and by a desert on the left. To occupy and adequately strengthen this frontier is, I consider, our primary military requirement both for offence and defence. The first inner line of defence is the Indus from Sukkur to Attock—a line incomparably inferior to the Kabul-Kandahar line, but still capable of being obstinately held, if the points along it giving access to the interior of the country are suitably guarded.

And here I would remark that, in speaking of the line from Kabul to Kandahar as an almost perfect military frontier, I am far from admitting that, should the portion of Afghanistan lying between our present boundary and the Kabul-Kandahar alignment come under our control, we might safely allow the remainder of the country to be absorbed or dominated by Russia. On the contrary, I am of opinion that the recently delimited frontier should be strictly adhered to, that we should be prepared to defend it, and that the whole of Afghanistan should be regarded as coming within the sphere of British, and outside the sphere of Russian influence. If we were firmly established at Kandahar and Kabul, we should be as favourably placed in a military sense for protecting India, and fulfilling our obligation to maintain the integrity of Afghanistan against Central Asian aggression, as we are unfavourably placed at present.

Owing to the unfortunate mistake that was made when we retired from Kandahar, we have been obliged to treat Quetta as a provisional outpost or advanced base on the left flank of the existing frontier. Its use is, first and foremost, to facilitate the occupation of Kandahar; secondly, to act as a support to Kandahar as soon as that city is in our hands; and, thirdly, in the event of our being driven out of Kandahar, to preclude or delay hostile advance from that direction on the valley of the Indus, *i.e.*, on our inner line of defence.

To speak, then, of our inner line of defence as stretching from Quetta *viâ* the Zhob Valley and Kalabagh to Torbela is, I think, hardly correct.\* Such a line would run for a considerable portion of its length through a mountainous country, where the defenders would possess no special advantages of ground or position over their assailants, and, even when the debouchure of the Gomal Pass is reached, there is, to say the least, no greater probability of the enemy attempting to force the Paniala defile, or of his penetrating the inner defensive line between Kalabagh and Attock, than that he should turn south and cross the Indus at Dera Ismail Khan or elsewhere.

If the foregoing remarks in regard to our advanced and retired lines of defence are accepted, it follows that, theoretically speaking, the requisite lines of communication are, first, the direct ones, *viz.*, from Peshawar to Kabul, and from Quetta to Kandahar; and intermediately either from Khushalgarh through Kohat and Thal, or preferably from Kalabagh *viâ* Bannu, up the Kuram Valley to Ghazni, and from Kalabagh *viâ* the Gomal and the Zhob Valley if possible to Kalat-i-Ghilzai, or should this be found impracticable, to Pishin. If the Zhob Valley could be entered from Dera Ghazi Khan, such an alignment would be more correct strategically, though the crossing of the Indus at that point is likely to be attended with such difficulties as may render it

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\* Quarter-Master-General's Note—end of paragraph 1.

obligatory to adhere to the Kalabagh crossing. Secondly, the lateral communications needed are those from Karachi to Sukkur, and thence behind the Indus from Rohri through Kareshi to Mari opposite Kalabagh. If the cost is not considered prohibitive, it would be highly advantageous to prolong the Sind-Sagar line from Mari to Khushalgarh, and thence eventually to Attock. From Makhad to Attock a road already exists, and should be extended to Mari, should the construction of a railway be negatived or deferred on financial grounds. As soon as our direct communications have reached Kabul and Kandahar, a lateral railway will be required between those places through Ghazni and Kalat-i-Ghilzai.

Turning now to the minor question of the defence of the Indus between Torbel and Dera Ismail Khan, I observe that the Quarter-Master-General appears to lay stress on the facility with which the river could be crossed at or near Goratrope; and he proposes a bridge covered by a bridge-head at that point, as well as at the Attock, Khushalgarh, and Kalabagh or Kafir Kot crossings. Although the stream is very narrow at Goratrope, it is proportionately swift, and it seems extremely doubtful whether its rocky bed would afford holding ground for the requisite anchorages, should an enemy attempt to cross by a floating bridge. As regards any other sort of bridge, its construction, which must in any case be a lengthy operation, would be almost impossible if the cis-Indus bank of the river were properly watched and guarded.

It is, I think, very unlikely that an enemy advancing on Attock would attempt to turn that position by a movement in force through the very difficult country south of Attock. On the other hand, the enemy, if very superior in numbers, might perhaps transfer a portion of his troops from the Peshawar to the Kohat line of operations, and, while endeavouring to effect a crossing north of Attock with his main body, might attempt a simultaneous advance on Rawal Pindi through Khushalgarh. If Attock and Khushalgarh are rendered sufficiently defensible, and if good road or railway communication is provided along the cis-Indus bank between these points, I consider that additional intermediate crossings, involving additional defences, would be superfluous, and indeed open to objection as tending to fritter away our fighting strength.

If, as is hoped, it be decided to bridge the Indus at Kalabagh, which is an extremely strong natural position, suitable defences will be needed at that point also. Here perhaps it should be noticed that, though a crossing at or near Kafir Kot might possess the engineering advantage of materially shortening the distance by rail between the Gomal Pass and the Sind-Sagar system, this advantage is likely to be more than counterbalanced, first, by the very much larger cost of a bridge some 6 miles in length; secondly, by the delay that must necessarily occur in constructing it; and, thirdly, by its comparative indefensibility when completed. Nature having furnished a short and easy crossing and an almost impregnable position at Kalabagh, it would seem injudicious not to take advantage of it.

With respect to the defences proposed by Sir James Browne at Paniala, the position seems an excellent one so far as it gives us command of both banks of the river and would thus facilitate counter-attack. At the same time, its occupation would materially assist in protecting the Kalabagh bridge, and the line thence up the valley of the Kuram to and beyond Bannu, should a railway in that direction be eventually decided on. Should an enemy, considerably superior in numbers, advance down the Zhob Valley and enter the Derajat through the Gomal Pass, it may perhaps be questioned whether the Paniala defences would be of much use in the absence of railway communication between Kalabagh and Khushalgarh; and for this reason the extension of the Sind-Sagar line from Mianwali to Langar seems to me to be a work of high importance. Under the assumed contingency either masking or ignoring the Paniala entrenchment, the enemy would probably try to cross the Indus near Dera

Ismail Khan, and to move thence on Khushab and Lahore. Such an attempt could only be frustrated by the field army, which, indeed, is by far the most important factor in guarding our inner as well as our outer line of defence on the North-West, and which might operate with great advantage from the Rawal Pindi base on the enemy's flank, either trans-Indus from Paniala or cis-Indus from Mari.

There is only one other point which appears to call for remark. In paragraph 18(d) of his note, the Quarter-Master-General speaks of a railway from India to Europe through Herat, and appears to contemplate its construction with equanimity. Such a railway, which must obviously be connected with the Russian railway system on the borders of Afghanistan, would equally facilitate Russia's aggressive policy and add to our defensive difficulties and expenses. It will probably be admitted that a proper system of internal communications adds enormously to the defensive strength of a country. On the other hand, railways crossing the frontier of conterminous and hostile States unquestionably assist the power which is the stronger numerically, is the better prepared for war, and is the more unscrupulous and decisive in its policy. It is fortunate for India that the gauge in this country differs from the Russian gauge, and it is to be hoped that we shall be satisfied with our maritime facilities without playing into Russia's hands by connecting our railway system with her Central Asian and European one. Such a connection would inevitably oblige us very largely to increase our army in India, both British and Native, besides which a great portion of the profits of our carrying trade in the East would be transferred to foreign capitalists. Whether a railway from Kandahar through Persia to the Mediterranean would be advantageous to us or not, and in the former case what its general direction should be, are different questions, which it would be out of place to discuss in this paper.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXXIV.

## NOTE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CARRYING OUT THE SCHEME OF ARMY MOBILIZATION IN INDIA AND OF COMPLETING OUR INLAND AND FRONTIER DEFENCES.

CALCUTTA,

17th January, 1890.

In some recent discussions on the subject of our coast and frontier defences, and our scheme of army mobilization,\* more than one of my honourable colleagues have expressed the opinion that it would be advantageous rigidly to limit expenditure on the former to an aggregate amount of five crores of rupees, and that although very considerable cost has already been incurred in carrying out the latter, we are still in the position of being unable to put a single properly-equipped army-corps into the field. My honourable friend Mr. Scoble, indeed, expresses his feeling of despair at comparing the enormous sums we have been spending year after year on military preparations with the results we have hitherto attained. As these views appear to me to be based on a mistaken anticipation of finality in measures of military precaution, and on an inadequate appreciation of the cost of such measures, I will endeavour briefly to show that a recurrent outlay on frontier defences and communications is to be expected for some time to come; and that the requirements connected with army mobilization, which are so vital to the security of our rule, that almost any financial sacrifice should be made to meet them, are not likely to involve an outlay that can be considered as in any way excessive or extravagant.

To find an historical parallel to our rule in India—a rule based on military superiority, but built up on a system of impartial laws, universal toleration, and ever-widening civilization—we must look back nearly 2,000 years to the time when Rome was gradually bringing Gaul and Britain under her sway. In many respects, at any rate before Russia had established herself within striking distance of India, the relations of the British Empire towards the inhabitants of this country closely resembled those of the Roman Empire towards the inhabitants of Britain. For 300 years the Roman rule was paramount in Britain, and the Roman sword secured order, civilization, and peace, accompanied by a wide and rapid prosperity. These results were primarily due to the marked superiority of the Roman troops in the field; secondarily, no doubt, to an equitable and judicious system of civil government, and to the affiliation of a weaker and barbarous race to one stronger and more highly civilized. But the consolidation and development of the Roman conquest in a material sense is to be chiefly ascribed to the construction of a network of magnificent roads, and the fortification of all the more important strategical points throughout the country. It is to be observed that the policy of Rome in regard to Britain and her other outlying dependencies was uniformly successful, as well as beneficial to the subject races; and that the ultimate downfall of the Empire was due to internal decay at the centre of the national life, rather than to external aggression or provincial disaffection.

Similarly, when India was being converted into a British dependency, the Roman procedure was instinctively adopted, and the success of our arms was followed by the

\* Military Department Office Notes, Register No. 277 M. W., pages 26 to 50, and Register No. 208 B., pages 113 and 114.

acquisition or construction of defensive works at the principal strategical points, and the improvement of communications between those points. After the annexation of the Punjab, however, it seemed to be thought that all internal danger was at an end, that the line of the Indus was a sufficient protection against tribal depredations on the North-West Frontier, and that, so long as the army was fairly efficient, and means of communication throughout the country were being improved, fortifications might be regarded as superfluous, if not actually mischievous. The fallacy of this view was conclusively demonstrated during the Mutiny, three phases of which may be cited as illustrating the evils of too exclusive a reliance on our superiority in the field, and too implicit a trust in the fidelity of alien races and mercenary troops. At Delhi, which might naturally have been regarded as a probable centre of political intrigue, the palace and fort were left in the hands of a Native Prince, our ordnance depôt was isolated within the city walls, and the British cantonment occupied a position outside, dominating neither the city nor the fort. The result was that the capital of the Mogul dynasty fell at once, and without the possibility of resistance on our part, into the insurgents' hands, the magazine was blown up by the officer in charge, who lost his life in his devotion to duty, and it cost us a severe and protracted struggle to recover the ascendancy our own carelessness had done so much to imperil. At Cawnpore, another important political and strategical centre, an ordnance magazine existed at the northern extremity of the area enclosed between the Grand Trunk and Cantonment roads; and had the general in command been a man of exceptional vigour, resource, and tenacity of purpose, or had a proper plan of defence been matured beforehand, it seems possible that this magazine might have been converted into an entrenchment where the garrison and non-combatants could have held out until they were relieved. As no plan or place of defence had been prepared, and as the officer in command was a man of ordinary capacity, the result was a vacillating defence, followed by the massacre of the entire European population. At Lucknow, the capital of a recently-annexed and unsettled province, a similar disaster might have occurred, but fortunately a leader was forthcoming, possessed of remarkable perspicacity, peculiar local knowledge, and wonderful influence over his fellows. Bravely and obstinately as the Lucknow Residency was defended and gallantly as it was relieved, it can hardly be questioned that much unnecessary hardship was endured, and many valuable lives were sacrificed, because the possibility of a Native rising had not been recognized and guarded against. These examples tend to show that had proper arrangements been made for internal defence before the Mutiny broke out, its extent and the difficulties we experienced in repressing it would have been greatly diminished. The lessons taught by the Mutiny are, however, fading from men's minds; we are apt to forget what a price we had to pay for our over-confidence in the loyalty of the Natives and neglect of defensive precautions; and it is not perhaps sufficiently borne in mind that the whole fabric of our civil administration rests, not on the sympathy, affection, or even the self-interest of the subject races, but on our own military predominance and preparedness. Even were the Russian frontier as far from India as it was 40 years ago, I should be disposed to regard a reasonable expenditure on works of internal defence, and on the improvement of interior military communications, as money well spent.

The rapid advance of Russia, has, however, introduced a new factor into the problem. In the event of complications arising with that Power, a hostile Afghanistan would enormously increase our difficulties, while a single reverse beyond the North-West Frontier would undoubtedly undermine the confidence of the natives in the stability of our rule. In my opinion, therefore, the main object of our policy ought to be, not only to provide for defensive and offensive operations in the field, but to render India secure from the risk of internal disaffection, and gradually and quietly to bring Afghanistan and the border tribes under our influence and control. In carrying out

such a policy I consider the first essential to be a well-equipped and mobile field army while the second is a system of communications by which that army can be concentrated and utilized to the best advantage. Hardly less important, however, are those inland and frontier defences, the occupation of which will keep our communications open, prevent internal disturbances, and facilitate such offensive action as circumstances may demand.

As regards finality in the expenditure on the coast and inland defences of the Indian Empire, it seems reasonable to hope that within the next few years the several ports and interior strategical points will have been rendered adequately and permanently secure so far as works are concerned. The continual changes in the type of guns now being manufactured are likely, however, to necessitate a periodical revision of armaments. With respect to works of defence and lines of communication on our North-West Frontier, no definite forecast can be framed, as the construction of these depends on the features of the country which has not yet been fully explored, and on political equally with military considerations. The most that can be said is that the defences need not be of an expensive nature, as semi-permanent works similar in principle to those covering Quetta, but varied to suit the different localities, will probably meet the requirements of each case.

Plainly as history and our own experience teach us not to neglect any of the precautions which will aid us in securing our own possessions and those of our Afghan ally against internal disruption or external attack, the peculiar organization of the Indian army furnishes another and a powerful argument in favour of supplementing our forces in the field by such defensive positions as will facilitate our movements, protect our advanced bases, and guard our lines of communication. Political exigencies, and I may add the conservative traditions and instincts of those who deal at home with Indian affairs, have led to a large portion of our military expenditure being devoted to the maintenance of certain classes of Native troops on whose *physique* and fighting qualities it would be unwise to rely in the event of a struggle with a European Power. It must, I fear, be admitted that the less efficient of the Bengal, Madras, and Bombay regiments are markedly inferior to their Sikh, Goorkha, and Pathan comrades, and that their employment in the field trans-Indus. should, if possible, be avoided. This being the case, it is obviously the truest economy so to develop our defences, and so to apportion the duties that are likely to devolve on the Native army, as not only to turn the less reliable element to good account, but also to set free for active operations as large a number as possible of the superior regiments. The feasibility of utilizing as garrisons for works of defence and for posts on lines of communication, the Native soldiers, whose loyalty may be unquestionable, but whose endurance and aptitude for war have been impaired by years of peaceful inactivity, is confirmed by the opinion of Napoleon the Great, which I quote *verbatim* from a very able and instructive paper on the defence of London, written about 18 months ago by Colonel Ardagh, C.B., R.E.:—

“At the time of great national disasters, Empires frequently stand in need of soldiers, but men are never wanted for internal defence, if a place be provided where their energies can be brought into action.

“50,000 National Guards, with 3,000 gunners, will defend a fortified capital against an army of 300,000 men. The same 50,000 in the open field, if they are not experienced soldiers, commanded by skilled officers, will be thrown into confusion by a few thousand horse.”

It is true that Napoleon here refers more particularly to the assistance a weak or defeated army might derive from a well-devised system of field-works or other fortifications, capable of being held by comparatively untrained Volunteers or National Guards. His remarks, however, appear equally apposite in their bearing on the



problem we have to face in India of a probable deficiency of British soldiers at the commencement of a serious struggle, coupled with the certainty of a proportion of our Native troops, as at present organized, being practically non-effective for field service beyond the frontier.

I will now offer a few brief observations on the financial aspect of the subject under reference. Recognizing, as we can hardly fail to do, the continental position that India is assuming owing to the proximity of Russia, remembering the peculiar conditions under which we hold the country, and which oblige us to guard against internal disaffection as well as external attack, and keeping in view the enormous importance to the British Empire of the continuance of our rule in India, I must own to a feeling of surprise that the very modest precautionary measures which have been forced upon us by the progress of events in the East, and by threatening political complications in the West, should be regarded as already complete, or as having involved an expenditure in excess of what might have been anticipated. The possession for example, of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine can hardly be considered of greater moment to Germany or to France than the maintenance of our Indian Empire is to England; yet the cost of the preparations for war which Germany and France are elaborating year by year, the one with the object of keeping and the other with the object of regaining these provinces, is to be counted not by millions, but by tens, if not hundreds, of millions. In addition to the charges for the maintenance and equipment of their army, the French have spent 155,000,000*l.* on the defences of Paris and their eastern frontier since the termination of the Franco-Prussian war; and these works and armaments are not yet complete. Germany has spent comparatively little on fortifications, but her total extraordinary military expenditure during the same period, chiefly for mobilization purposes, probably almost equals the French outlay. The military expenditure of Russia falls little short of that of France or Germany, and has obviously an aggressive aim and one hostile to British interests. The attitude of Russia towards England is at present pacific, and there is possibly no likelihood of an early rupture between the two countries. Still our efforts to be in readiness to meet such a contingency should not be relaxed until all the troops we propose to employ in the field are thoroughly mobile and well equipped, until the requisite military communications have been constructed, until our system of inland and frontier defences is complete, and until our ports are secure from bombardment.

It may, perhaps, be contended that the Germans in perfecting their communications, and increasing the mobility of their army, are wiser than the French, who are spending enormous sums on frontier and internal defences. This is a question to be decided in great measure by the rapidity with which a nation can reasonably expect to place its troops in the field, the principal object of defensive works being to delay an enemy's advance long enough to give time for the development of the full military strength of the opposing force. If the conditions of national life, an autocratic government, and a perfect military organization enable a thoroughly-equipped army to be concentrated without delay, and in overpowering numbers, at any desired point, frontier defences may perhaps be regarded as of minor importance. If, on the other hand, local and administrative difficulties stand in the way of a rapid and extensive mobilization, the value of frontier defences can hardly be overrated. In India particularly, where long distances have to be traversed by road and rail before even an Infantry division can be collected, where troops cannot move without elaborate commissariat and transport arrangements, and where at least a month must elapse before reinforcements of British soldiers can be supplied from home, the advantages, both for offence and defence, of contracting as far as possible our too extended and vulnerable frontier by means of artificial obstacles, are too obvious to need comment. My views on this subject are embodied in the first four pages of my Note of the 10th October last,

in which I briefly reviewed certain proposals put forward by the Quarter-Master-General with respect to our defensive policy on the North-West Frontier. Holding as I do that the Indus can only be regarded as an inferior and inner line of defence, and that we should make every preparation in our power for eventually occupying in strength the frontier line stretching from Kandahar through Ghazni to Kabul, I consider that our direct and lateral communications connecting India with that alignment should be pushed forward unremittingly, and that our trans-Indus roads and railways should be adequately protected by defensive works, both intermediately and at the more important strategical junctions and termini.

The estimated cost of the defensive works which have already been decided on by the Government of India amounts, inclusive of armaments, to 5 crores, or approximately  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millions sterling. The expense of mobilizing and equipping an army-corps may roughly be taken at from 40 to 50 lakhs, equivalent to 350,000*l.*, and consequently a million sterling would more than suffice for the mobilization of the two army-corps and reserve division available in India for field operations. In proportion to the number and nature of the works to be constructed and armed, and to the force it is proposed to mobilize under the exceptional conditions of Indian service, these figures would, I believe, compare favourably with similar military expenditure on the part of any foreign Power; and they speak well for the efficiency of the departments of the army in India, and its economical administration. When we take into consideration the magnitude of the interests we have at stake, our national wealth, and the extent of territory we have to guard, and when we compare our cautious and tentative efforts with the sacrifices both in men and money other and poorer nations are making to defend their own possessions, we can hardly doubt the propriety, though we may doubt the adequacy, of the measures of reasonable precaution which have been so satisfactorily commenced in this country, and which will, I trust, be carried out to their legitimate conclusion.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXXV.

## NOTE ON THE FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES WHICH STAND IN THE WAY OF ANY LARGE INCREASE IN OUR MILITARY EXPENDITURE.

CALCUTTA,

18th February, 1890.

In a Note, dated the 17th January, 1890, I invited attention to the importance of a firm and consistent policy in dealing with the military requirements of the Indian Empire. The conclusions which I drew from an examination of the peculiar conditions of our rule in this country, and of the dangers we have to face, were briefly as follows:—

- (i.) History and our own experience in India teach us the risk we run if we trust too implicitly to the loyalty of alien races and a mercenary army, and if we neglect any of the means at our disposal to strengthen our position in this country against the chance of internal disaffection or external attack.
- (ii.) The advance of Russia to the confines of India has introduced a new and dangerous factor into the problem; her policy and interests in the East are antagonistic to ours; and though immediate hostilities may be unlikely, it would be folly on our part to ignore the possibility of their occurrence. The measures of military precaution which are requisite to place our field army on a satisfactory footing, and to complete our system of communications and defences, have already been commenced at very moderate cost, and expenditure thereon should be continued until a state of reasonable security and preparedness has been attained.
- (iii.) The peculiar composition of our Native army furnishes a strong argument in favour of employing works of defence to supplement our forces in the field. These works can be garrisoned by the comparatively inferior regiments, and the pick of the Native troops can thus be set free for active operations.
- (iv.) The delay that must necessarily occur in developing our actual military strength on the North-West Frontier of India, and in obtaining reinforcements of British troops from home, renders it particularly desirable to have recourse as much as possible to such military obstacles and defensive expedients as will serve materially to retard an enemy's advance, and to restrict the front liable to attack.
- (v.) Under the assumption that our main strategical frontier must eventually extend from Kabul to Kandahar, we should make every effort to push forward our direct and lateral communications towards that alignment, and to secure our hold on the intermediate country and the border tribes by means of properly-defended positions, more particularly in the vicinity of our principal roads and railways.
- (vi.) Our probable expenditure on the coast and frontier defences (inclusive of armaments) which have already been sanctioned is estimated at about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millions, while the cost of mobilizing two army-corps and a reserve division will probably amount to about 1 million. These sums appear almost inappreciable when compared with the extraordinary military expenditure of the great Continental Powers, whose wealth, population, and resources do not exceed those of the British Empire, and whose persistent preparations for war impose on us the corresponding duty of self-defence.

(vii.) The cost of carrying into effect the complete scheme of Army mobilization has to be met, besides which a very considerable additional expenditure on frontier communications and defences must be regarded as unavoidable. What the approximate amount of the latter may be can only be conjectured, as the country is comparatively unexplored, and political as well as military and engineering considerations are involved.

My previous Note was so far incomplete that, in advocating a consistent and vigorous policy of preparation for war as the best guarantee of peace, I did not advert to the grave financial difficulties which stand in the way of any large increase in our military expenditure; and on this subject, therefore, with his Excellency the Viceroy's permission, I would now desire to offer a few remarks.

The indebtedness of India is small compared with its revenue, the country is fairly prosperous, and taxation is light; but, on the other hand, as the population is chiefly an agricultural one, with an extraordinary propensity for hoarding instead of investing its gains, the revenue remains somewhat inelastic, while the incidence of taxation bears most heavily on the poorer classes. The great anomaly and misfortune of our financial system is that the classes who benefit most from the peace and prosperity which have accompanied our rule contribute least, in proportion to their means, to the cost of our administration. It seems well worthy of consideration whether this anomaly must be accepted as inevitable, or whether it could not be partially rectified, so far at least as the richer portion of the native community is concerned. The Native Princes, in particular, who formerly had to spend a large portion of their incomes in defending themselves against the attacks of neighbouring States, have now been relieved from all anxiety and expense on this score, and are able to accumulate or squander enormous wealth without being called upon to share in the maintenance of the army on which their very existence depends. In our present financial position, we should, I think, be actuated by justice rather than by generosity; and unless insuperable political objections stand in the way, it would appear both equitable and expedient that the Native Princes, whose relations to the Supreme Government are of a distinctly feudatory nature, should be induced to contribute towards the defence and development of the Empire a reasonable proportion of their net incomes, after deducting the cost of the internal administration of the States which they are permitted to control.

The effect on our finances of the preference of the natives for hoarding rather than for investing their savings has not, I think, been fully realised. At page 865 of the *Nineteenth Century* of November last, Mr. Giffen states that about one-third of the total annual production of gold, and about one-fourth of that of silver, is absorbed by India for purposes other than reproductive investment. Again, the following paragraph appears in the *Times* of the 29th November, 1889:—

“The net import of gold to India last year was 2811-3 lakhs and of silver 9242-3. During the 30 years since 1859, says Mr. O'Connor, India received and retained of the precious metals 113½ millions sterling of gold and 227 millions of silver, all the gold being practically withdrawn from circulation to be hoarded or converted into ornaments. Altogether since 1834 Mr. O'Connor estimates that 442 millions sterling of the two precious metals have been received and retained by India.”

Now, to compare small things with great, in private life the estate of the miser is as badly managed as that of the spendthrift. Everything is taken out of the property and nothing is returned to it, the result being that its value and productiveness remain at a standstill. In India centuries of misgovernment have led the people to distrust

the good faith and permanence of the paramount power; and in spite of the benefits they have derived from our supremacy, the wealthier classes, with a few exceptions, still collect and secrete as much of the precious metals as they can, without joining hands with us in our endeavours to turn the great natural resources of the country to the best account.

The loss to India and to the Indian revenues from this cause is enormous. The 442 millions sterling hoarded since 1834 would give a return of at least 5 per cent., or 22 millions a year, if employed on fairly profitable agricultural or commercial undertakings; and this profit, with its attendant advantages, is absolutely thrown away. It may, indeed, be doubted whether the law and order which we have introduced have not somewhat aggravated the evils of the hoarding system. Under previous governments, a man who had accumulated considerable wealth became the object of envy and intrigue; he was imprisoned or put to death on some trivial pretext; and his property was seized and eventually redistributed. In those days, consequently, there was less incentive to hoard money, though perhaps there was no greater inducement usefully to invest in.

In regard to the measures that might be taken in hand to remedy the present state of things, I would observe that the more thoroughly we can imbue the native mind with a belief in our will and ability permanently to maintain our supremacy in India, the better chance we have of inducing the subject races to turn their savings to good account, and the more prosperous the country is likely to become by the aid of private enterprise. Natives have a somewhat exaggerated respect for material defences in the shape of forts and guns, and for this reason I consider that such outlay as may be necessary to render us internally and externally secure is not only advantageous from a military point of view, but is likely to be indirectly reproductive in a financial sense.

On the other hand, I fully recognize the fact that, unless there is a decided improvement in the rate of exchange, and provided no reduction is possible in the cost of the civil administration of the country, increased expenditure on military requirements may either entail a deficit or necessitate additional taxation. As the Finance Member of Council recently pointed out, it rests with the Government of India, as a whole, to determine which alternative should be adopted. Personally I am inclined to think that fresh taxation would be justifiable, if an impost could be devised of such a nature as to leave the labouring classes untouched, and to oblige the richer classes to share with the State the unearned increment they now appropriate. This, however, is a question which more properly falls under the consideration of my Honourable Colleague Sir David Barbour, and I therefore abstain from offering any suggestions on the subject.

There is one point to which, in concluding this note, I would desire incidentally to refer. It is the extraordinary temptation the chance of a successful attack on India must present to an unscrupulous and impecunious Power. India is often spoken of as an impoverished country, while in reality, owing to the balance of trade and the hoarding propensities of the people, her wealth is continuously accumulating in the form most accessible to an invader.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXXVI.

REMARKS ON THE MEMORANDUM BY LIEUTENANT-GENERAL BRACKENBURY AND MAJOR-GENERAL NEWMARCH, DATED THE 19TH AUGUST, 1889.

SIMLA,  
30th June, 1890.

On reading this memorandum I am principally struck by the change of tone which has come over the Intelligence Department of the War Office since its talented Director has had the opportunity of examining the proposals put forward by the Strategical Sub-Committee of the Indian Mobilization Committee in their secret memorandum of October, 1887. Before these proposals had been considered, it was evidently the intention of the military authorities at home, that India should act solely on the defensive along our present frontier, without advancing, or preparing to advance, into Afghanistan; and it is gratifying to find that the opinion we then recorded, combined perhaps with the march of events, has had the power of modifying the views previously held by certain prominent strategists who possessed no recent or practical knowledge of the peculiar conditions on which the maintenance of our rule in the East depends.

As the suicidal policy of inaction, which was rejected by us in 1887, is now universally recognized as impracticable, it need not further be discussed. The alternative lines of action which we then represented to his Excellency the Viceroy as being equally feasible, though very far from being equally advantageous, were—

- (a.) That we should acquiesce in the annexation by Russia of Herat and Afghan-Turkestan, and the advance of her outposts as far as the Hindu Kush, while we contented ourselves with occupying the line stretching from Kabul through Ghazni to Kandahar, or at any rate arranged for the security of Kabul whilst holding Kandahar and Ghazni: or
- (b.) That we should consider any advance into Afghanistan on the part of Russia as a *casus belli*, and determine to put forth the whole strength of the British Empire in order to preserve the inviolability of our ally's territory and the security of our own.

We recommended the adoption of the second of these alternatives because it seemed to us, that, however costly and arduous a task it might be to drive Russia back across the desert zone bordering Afghanistan on the north, such an attempt, if successful, possessed at least the merit of finality, while the first alternative, which is the one Generals Brackenbury and Newmarch recommend, could only postpone the eventual struggle for a limited period, and meanwhile would involve us in a large and constantly increasing expenditure for the purpose of strengthening our army and multiplying our precautions against internal disaffection as well as external aggression.

It is curious to note that, while the writers of the present memorandum condemn in the strongest terms the alternative which commended itself to the Strategical Sub-Committee in this country, they remark towards the close of their paper:—"We are well aware that the policy we recommend will allow the process of consolidation and assimilation of Northern Afghanistan by Russia to go on unchecked locally; and that

“ the result of Russia’s establishing herself here will be to enable her a few years later to advance upon Kabul and Kandahar in greater strength than that with which she could now advance. But we consider there is no method of preventing Russia from advancing in greater strength upon Kabul and towards Kandahar than that with which she could now advance short of declaring war against Russia, and employing the whole strength of the British Empire to injure her, and its whole wealth to purchase allies against her, so that by successes elsewhere we may force her back in “ Central Asia.” In other words, Generals Brackenbury and Newmarch admit that the policy they urge on Her Majesty’s Government would not preclude, though for a time it might possibly retard, the disintegration of Afghanistan, and that far from lessening, it would eventually aggravate the dangers to which India is exposed.

It would appear to be the main object of the memorandum under reference to impress on the responsible authorities that, in the event of a war with Russia, no military operations could be entered upon from this country except with the force now maintained in India; that unless an actual invasion were imminent, we could not rely on receiving assistance from home; and that all the available British troops out of India might be, and probably would be, employed in some other quarter of the globe. Until recently the Intelligence Department of the War Office undoubtedly contemplated expeditionary action being undertaken by the home army in Eastern Europe or on the Black Sea littoral; but in consequence of the repeated warnings, which I believe have emanated chiefly from this country, that no operations could be undertaken in such a direction unless Turkey actively exerted herself on our behalf, and that on political grounds it was quite impossible for us to enter into a binding offensive and defensive alliance with that Power, it now seems that the experts in England are in favour of a combined naval and military attack on the Russian possessions in the North Pacific.

I have dealt so frequently and so exhaustively with the military and political aspects of the problem under discussion that, without repeating myself, it is difficult to add anything to my previous remarks. I would specially invite attention to my paper of the 22nd August, 1888, in which I adverted to the insular or expeditionary policy, that still, I regret to find, finds favour at home, as having become an anachronism now that our Indian frontier and that of Russia in Central Asia are virtually, if not nominally, conterminous. I examined the three courses open to us in the event of war with Russia, and enumerated the several directions in which operations could be undertaken with any chance of success. I urged that it was the primary duty of a civilized Power to safeguard the integrity of its own dominions and the interests of its own subjects before embarking on desultory offensive operations directed against some distant portion of the enemy’s territory. Finally, I pointed out the supreme importance to us of obtaining control over the border tribes along the north-west frontier, and of entering into friendly relations with the Afghans and their ruler. In a subsequent paper, dated the 6th February, 1889, I endeavoured to bring to notice the advantages of adopting as soon as possible a more vigorous and decisive course of political action on and beyond our present frontier, and of pushing forward, in co-operation with the Amir, the communications both by road and railway which would be indispensable to us should war break out. I was gratified to learn from the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava before he left India that my views on this very important subject commended themselves to him. I trust that they will meet with the general approval of his distinguished successor, the present Viceroy, and I earnestly hope that sooner or later they may be accepted by Her Majesty’s Government.

It is, however, one thing to indicate what our policy in the East ought to be, and quite another thing to overcome the practical difficulties which stand in the way of carrying it into effect; and for this reason I sympathise with the military authorities at home in their embarrassment at being called upon to provide for the defence of

the United Kingdom and our Colonial Empire, and at the same time to keep a large contingent in readiness to supplement the British troops serving in India. With a short-service regular army of very limited numbers, with an inadequate reserve the efficiency of which depends on an annual training which has hitherto been periodically postponed, with a militia which is certainly not gaining in strength or popularity, and with a volunteer force which, however patriotic and well-disposed, is only partially equipped and organized, the obstacles in the way of the continental policy on which I believe the security of the Indian Empire to depend, and which in its turn depends for success on an ample supply of British soldiers, seem almost insuperable. That these obstacles are not insuperable in reality, but on the contrary removeable without any great addition to our present military expenditure, has long been my opinion; and until recently I hoped to have had an early opportunity of laying my proposals on the subject before His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State for War.

In any case I would venture to urge that my notes of the 22nd August, 1888, and 6th February, 1889, may be considered by the Cabinet before a final decision is come to on the memorandum drawn up by Generals Brackenbury and Newmarch. The latter paper is doubtless an able exposition of the views of a military expert from a purely technical standpoint, but it fails to take into account the very peculiar conditions which underlie our supremacy in the East. If, after having demarcated the Afghan frontier, and publicly guaranteed the integrity of the Amir's dominions, we were to acquiesce in the occupation by Russia of any considerable portion of that country whether it be north or south of the Hindu Kush, our prestige as an Eastern Power would disappear, the Afghans and the border tribes would undoubtedly cast in their lot with our opponents, the fidelity of our Native troops would be seriously shaken, and we should have to guard against intrigue and disaffection in rear as well as to face an unscrupulous and powerful enemy in front.

In conclusion I would desire to comment on one or two minor points which call for notice in the memorandum of our Strategical Sub-Committee and in that by Generals Brackenbury and Newmarch which we are now considering. In paragraph 23 of the latter, one of the recommendations contained in the former is stated to be inconsistent with an opinion expressed in the same paper. I doubt, however, whether, in putting forward this criticism, Generals Brackenbury and Newmarch, have correctly apprehended the meaning of the passage they quote in its connexion with the context. In paragraph 25 of our report we urged that the inviolability of Afghanistan should be insisted on and discussed the action that should be taken in the event of an advance on Russia's part while we were in strength at Kabul and Kandahar. We said that, if Russia were rash enough to cross the Hindu Kush before she had attempted to develop her communications, complete her commissariat and transport arrangements, and consolidate her power in Afghan-Turkistan, the more disastrous to her would be the consequences of defeat, and the easier for us it would be to inflict a defeat. But, we added, such a course would hardly conform to the traditional procedure of Russia in similar cases. In all probability she would endeavour, in the first instance, to gain a secure footing north of the mountain barrier, and we ought therefore to be prepared in such a case to assume a vigorous offensive, based on the strategical alignment stretching from Kabul to Kandahar.

In paragraph 9 of Generals Brackenbury and Newmarch's memorandum, Sir Charles Brownlow's opinion is quoted apparently with a view to demonstrating the serious natural obstacles Russia would have to encounter in moving on Kabul as a preliminary to the invasion of India. Yet in paragraph 39 of the same paper these obstacles are shown to be insignificant.

Again, in paragraph 42, it is stated that one infantry division and one brigade of



cavalry would suffice for the occupation of both Jalalabad and Ghazni, because, even if the Afghans were hostile to us, they would be equally hostile to Russia. Such an assumption, if I may be excused for saying so, indicates the absence of a correct appreciation of the character of Asiatics in general, and of Afghans in particular. If threatened by two hostile nationalities, each superior in organization, numbers, and *morale* to themselves, the Afghans would unquestionably side with that Power which offered most for their support, and which they considered most likely to be victorious. It would be hopeless for them to dream of maintaining their independence, and, unless my Indian experience entirely misleads me, no one would more strongly object than an Afghan to be ground to powder between the upper and nether mill-stones of Russia and England.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XXXVII.

## ON THE UNADVISABILITY OF ADDING TO THE EXISTING DEFENCES OF BOMBAY.

SIMLA,

11th July, 1890.

I regret that I am unable to concur in this draft reply to the reference from the Marine Department, as it appears to me that the fundamental principle which should govern harbour or coast defence has not been sufficiently recognized. In fortifying a harbour the first thing to do is to determine the nature of probable attack, and the second thing is to arrange for the defenders being superior to the assailants in the event of attack. Absolute immunity from risk or damage cannot be hoped for in the event of a hostile squadron attempting to enter the port of Bombay, any more than it could be expected in an engagement with the enemy in front of Quetta. The object in view in defending Bombay is first that in the event of war our opponent may appreciate the risk of attacking at all, and secondly, that if he attacks he may get the worst of it.

The material damage likely to be inflicted and the moral effect likely to be produced by a naval bombardment seem to me to be greatly overrated. Our own experience at Alexandria, as well as that gained during the war between Chili and Peru, tends to show that, under the most favourable conditions, the assailants' artillery fire could produce but little effect on land-works or substantial buildings; and I certainly should hesitate to recommend a heavy expenditure for the purpose of absolutely precluding the chance of a bombardment, which in no case could be prolonged, and which probably would not be very effective.

As matters stand, we are surrounding what I may term the vitals of Bombay with a protective screen of long-ranging batteries; we are providing a floating defence and submarine mine fields over selected areas; and in addition we propose to construct high-angle fire batteries with an effective range of 10,000 yards. Yet because vessels of light draught or torpedo-boats might possibly, under favourable atmospheric conditions, enter the harbour unperceived during the night, it is now suggested that our whole scheme of defence should be enlarged so as to include works at Karinja and on Worlee Hill.

I do not know what really serious harm a torpedo-boat could do if it succeeded in entering the harbour. It could not stop there for any length of time, and while there the damage it could effect would be trivial compared with the risk it must run of destruction or capture. Similarly, as regards vessels of the "Forbin" type, referred to by General Sanford with only 200 tons of coal and large sail area, if they approached Bombay, which would only be feasible during the monsoon, I should doubt their leaving that port except under the British flag.

If, as seems possible, the defence of the eastern entrance to the Bombay harbour needs strengthening, I should prefer an addition to our floating defences rather than a multiplication of coast batteries.

I shall be glad if the Secretary will re-circulate the case with the foregoing expression of my opinion.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XXXVIII.

## ON A PROPOSAL TO CONSTRUCT AN AUXILIARY WORK IN SUPPORT OF THE BALELI-REGI ALIGNMENT IN FRONT OF QUETTA.

SIMLA,  
19th July, 1890.

In dealing with this question it should, I think, be borne in mind that the defensive works covering Quetta have intentionally been designed of a field or semi-permanent type, the object in view being to provide beforehand a position which an attacking force must penetrate in order to reach Quetta, and which, if occupied in adequate strength, would either be so strong as to deter the enemy from attempting its capture at all, or, if the attempt were made, would render almost certain the enemy's decisive repulse. We are not preparing a large fortress into which a defeated army could retire and stand a prolonged siege, but we are arranging such accessories in the way of works and guns as will materially aid our troops in holding, should the necessity arise, a selected position covering the advanced base on the left flank of our present frontier. From this point of view, which I conceive to be the correct one, I should be inclined to provide the supports needed for the force holding the Baleli-Regi alignment mainly in the form of troops rather than of works of defence, the former of course taking every advantage of the cover which villages, shelter trenches, and natural obstacles might afford.

At the same time, the Baleli-Regi defensive line is a long one, and having regard to the possibility of its being forced at some point between the detached works, it was originally proposed that a supporting work armed with powerful artillery should be placed behind its centre near Sherkilla or Naoshar. Such a work would undoubtedly strengthen the weaker or left half of the alignment stretching from Baleli Mound to Regi, as, in the event of the enemy's success in that direction, we could still occupy, with a probability of retrieving our fortunes, the redan of which Baleli Mound would form the salient, and Naoshar and Baleli Point the extremities.

On the other hand, if the enemy penetrated the front line between Baleli Mound and Baleli Point, the supporting work near Naoshar would be comparatively useless, as it could do little to assist in the defence of Ispungli, or to prevent an immediate advance on Quetta. To guard against such a contingency the work on the site Y, with a powerful battery at X, is obviously preferable.

I think that General Colvin's objection to a second line of defence being traced at right angles to the front line is correct, provided the latter is of fairly equal strength throughout. But, without asserting that the Baleli Point—Murghi Kotal section of the front line is impregnable, I am disposed to regard it as materially stronger than the rest of the line, and consequently it becomes permissible to use that section as a pivot in arranging for a second line of defence, more particularly as it blocks, in conjunction with the proposed works at X and Y, the entrance into the Quetta valley.

My own view, then, is briefly this. I consider that the enemy, if successful anywhere will probably force the left half of the front line. To meet this contingency a reserve of sufficient strength must be stationed at Sherkilla and Naoshar. A project should be prepared for utilizing these villages and for making shelter trenches and gun-pits at the time in suitable positions in front of these villages, and between them and Baleli Mound.

In order to provide a second line of defence, I think the proposals of the Defence Committee might be accepted, subject to the financial restriction suggested by Sir George Chesney, in whose remarks I generally concur. If our engineers will bear in mind the essential difference between the works such as have been constructed in front of Quetta and a large, self-contained fortress, and will endeavour to make use of the simplest possible expedients consistently with the object in view, I feel sure we shall get inexpensive and yet effective designs for the redoubt at Y and the battery at X. Excessive elaboration or extreme permanence of construction is quite out of place in defences of this description, more particularly where they cover, as in the present instance, an advanced base which is distinctly provisional in its character, and which we hope and expect to see pushed forward in a few years as far as Kandahar.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XXXIX.

THE ADVANTAGES FROM A MILITARY POINT OF VIEW OF A GOOD UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN  
THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND THE RULER AND PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN.

4th August, 1890.

In October, 1887, the Strategical Sub-Committee of the Indian Mobilization Committee discussed at some length the three courses of policy open to Her Majesty's Government in the event of a further advance towards India on Russia's part. There was the policy of inaction, which we unhesitatingly condemned; the policy of compromise, which we regarded as certain to lead to graver difficulties and dangers in the near future; and the policy of careful preparation, obstinate resistance, and actual reprisal, which we recommended as the only one likely to maintain our prestige as an Asiatic Power, to ensure the fidelity of the races subject to our rule, and to save India from the intolerable strain of constant apprehension and ever-increasing precautions against attack from without, and disaffection within.

In August, 1888, I examined the problem of the defence of India from an Imperial, rather than from an Indian point of view, the conclusion I arrived at being that not only was the adoption of the third course of policy desirable, and indeed essential, so far as the continuance of our rule over this country was concerned, but that it afforded us the best chance of permanently checking Russian aggression, and of safeguarding British interests generally, both at home and abroad. Assuming that either the second or the third course must eventually commend itself to the home authorities, I pointed out the supreme importance to us, especially in the latter case, of obtaining control over the tribes bordering our North-West frontier, and of entering into friendly relations with the Afghans and their ruler. Admitting that the isolation of Afghanistan might have been desirable when Russia was distant several hundreds of miles from the Afghan frontier, and when her advance beyond the Caspian was believed to be unlikely, if not impossible, by some of our leading statesmen, I endeavoured to show that as soon as Russia and Afghanistan had become conterminous, a continuance of our previous estrangement from our trans-frontier neighbour was incompatible with the safety, not to say the existence, of our Indian Empire. Further that, however much we might desire to maintain the *status quo*, it was out of our power to do so consistently with our obligations to Afghanistan, as that country, if not controlled and protected by us, would inevitably be absorbed by Russia.

These views I reiterated in a paper dated the 6th February, 1889, in which I urged the advantages of entering into an agreement with the Amir with the object of constructing the road and railway communications linking India to Afghanistan, which would be indispensable alike to him and to us should war with Russia break out, and which would also tend to the civilization and prosperity of the Afghan people.

I now propose to consider what preliminary military action we should be called upon to undertake at the present moment, in the event of a violation of Afghan territory on the part of Russia, whether the second or the third course of policy be

adopted. In either case it seems to be generally admitted by almost every military authority who has studied the question at home or in India, that our advanced strategical front, by which I mean the alignment containing and connecting our advanced bases of military action, should stretch from Kabul to Kandahar. The advantages of such a front appear to be unquestionably greater, and its defects fewer, than those of any other position we could take up under existing conditions. In the first place, it is much shorter than any of the other lines that might be occupied for the purpose of covering India on the north-west, and it can be brought into communication with the main railway system of India by comparatively short lines of railway and without prohibitory expense: secondly, its flanks rest on the two principal cities of Afghanistan, situated in the midst of fertile districts whence supplies are readily procurable; thirdly, these flanks are protected on the north by impenetrable mountains, and on the south by a tract of almost waterless desert country; and fourthly, the front for the greater portion of its length is screened by the Hindu Kush range, the passes through which are few in number and capable of being held by a moderate force.\* Whether, therefore, we are prepared to acquiesce in the annexation by Russia of Herat and Afghan-Turkestan, provided that Power formally recognizes our control over Afghan territory south of the Hindu Kush, or whether we are determined to consider any advance into Afghanistan on the part of Russia as a *casus belli*, it seems unquestionable that the first step we should have to take would be the occupation with the least possible delay of the line from Kabul through Ghazni and Kalat-i-Ghilzai to Kandahar. And here I would parenthetically observe that there is, of course, the third contingency to be considered of Russia respecting her engagements in regard to Afghan territory but of serious internal complications arising in Afghanistan itself, owing to the Amir's death, or from some other cause. Under such circumstances, we might at any moment be obliged to occupy the same advanced position, as we should have to do in the cases referred to above.

Our communications between India and the Kabul-Kandahar alignment are at present so imperfect that, assuming that the Afghans and border tribes to be well-disposed, it would take us at least 31 days to concentrate a division, and 46 days to concentrate an army-corps at Kandahar. We could assemble a division and march it from Peshawar to Kabul in about 40 days; and we could advance with an infantry brigade as far as Kalat-i-Ghilzai, 90 miles beyond Kandahar, and to Ghazni, about the same distance beyond Kabul, in 48 and 59 days respectively. After having established ourselves at these points, moved up our supplies, ordnance stores, and transport and prepared for an onward movement, the next step would be to push on outposts to Girishk from Kandahar, to Bamian from Kabul, and to the Besud District from Ghazni: probably also cavalry outposts as far as Farah in the Herat direction, and towards Lash Juwain on our extreme left flank. It would take us at least 11 days to reach Bamian from Kabul, and 7 or 8 days to reach Girishk from Kandahar. Our further movements would necessarily depend, not only on the number of troops at the disposal of Russia, their distribution, and the objective she had in view, but also on the decision Her Majesty's Government might arrive at in regard to the extent and nature of the

\* The position would be immensely strengthened by the construction of a railway from the Persian Gulf to Seistan, to be joined to the railway system of India, *via* Girishk and Kandahar. Where this railway would leave the coast must depend on the nature of the country, but so far as our present information goes, there seems to be no reason why it should not start from Gwadar or Panni—or possibly and preferably from Karachi—and be continued in Baluchistan territory throughout its entire length. Rough surveys of the greater part of this country have been made, and I understand that the physical difficulties are far less than would have to be overcome if we went further to the west. Besides, beyond Gwadar we enter Persia, where political obstacles might be even more serious than physical ones. A railway to Kashmir would also be of material assistance, seeing the great distance our troops would have to travel before reinforcements from India could reach Gilgit and Chitral, so long at least as we are unable to use the shorter route *via* Dir.

operations to be undertaken. In any case, we should probably be obliged to wait in this position, until our communications had been improved, and our field force strengthened, before we attempted offensive action across the Hindu Kush or towards Herat.

If, on the other hand, the Afghans and border tribes were against us, our difficulties would be enormously increased. Not only would our advance be seriously retarded, but a large proportion of our troops would have to be employed in guarding the lines of communication. We should need at least two divisions to hold Kabul and the adjacent district, while a third division would be required to protect our communications between Kabul and Peshawar. Kandahar, with Girishk and Kalat-i-Ghilzai, and the communications between them and to the rear, we might possibly hold with one cavalry and two infantry divisions. We should thus expend every soldier available in India for field service; and, without reinforcements from England, we should be unable to occupy the line between Kandahar and Kabul beyond Kalat-i-Ghilzai, to watch the passes across the Hindu Kush, or to garrison Gilgit and Chitral. Under such conditions, our position would be an extremely faulty and dangerous one, as the enemy would be able to concentrate unperceived on either flank behind the screen of the Hindu Kush, while we should be tied down to our two advanced bases with no power of communicating between them, or of advancing to any considerable distance beyond them for purposes of observation or counter-attack. Whether, therefore, we decide to adopt a defensive or an offensive policy, it seems unquestionable that effectively to hold the strategic alignment, which it is generally agreed, we shall have to occupy in the event of Russia's advance, the good-will of the border tribes and the cordial co-operation of the Afghans and their ruler are well nigh indispensable.

The establishment of friendly relations between ourselves and our frontier neighbours would not only be of the utmost value to us throughout the period of actual hostilities, but would also afford us the opportunity of completing beforehand a system of trans-Indus communications, which would greatly facilitate and expedite the concentration of our field army along the front we propose to occupy on occasion arising. On comparing the time that would be taken in moving a division between specified points under present circumstances, and under the improved conditions I hope to see introduced, before we are called upon to undertake military operations in Afghanistan, it has been calculated that a railway between Chaman and Kandahar would save 7 days, a railway between Peshawar and Kabul would save 17 days, a railway between Kalabagh and Ghazni would save 20 days, and a railway between Kandahar and Kabul, *via* Kalat-i-Ghilzai, and Ghazni would save 30 days. Success or failure in war frequently depends on rapidity of movement; but, apart from this consideration, there are other obvious advantages in railway as compared with animal transport, on which it would be superfluous to enlarge.

In considering the vital importance to us of coming to a satisfactory understanding with the Amir, and being thus enabled to provide adequate communications between India and our advanced strategic position, I would remark that our relations with successive Amirs of Afghanistan have been of a very peculiar kind. Each party seems to have desired to get as much as he could out of the other, without definitely committing himself; an outward friendship has concealed an inward distrust; and the nominal alliance which at present exists, has imposed on us weighty responsibilities, without affording us the requisite facilities for fulfilling them. A strong and friendly Afghanistan is essential to us, if we desire to keep Russia in check, but we cannot become friends with people with whom we are unable to associate, and whose country we are debarred from entering. The existing political situation is so unsatisfactory, and so likely at any moment to involve us in the gravest political and military complications, that I believe it to be well worth our while to make almost any sacrifice

to dispel the Amir's suspicions, and to secure his hearty assistance in the measures we may decide upon as necessary to our joint interests. Whether a dynastic guarantee or pecuniary inducements are likely to be more efficacious in attaining this end, or whether a combination of both will be requisite, is a question for the consideration of the Government of India in concert with Her Majesty's Government. All that I desire to urge is that, whatever be the means adopted to gain the Amir's consent, we should not rest satisfied until we have obtained easy access by road and railway to the principal strategical points in Afghanistan, which we should have to occupy in the event of war.

I admit that we are not likely to obtain concessions of the nature indicated above, without prolonged negotiations, demanding high diplomatic skill, indomitable resolution, and intimate acquaintance with the Asiatic character. These qualities, however, have rarely been found wanting among the more eminent administrators of the Indian Empire; and although considerable delay may occur in concluding a satisfactory agreement with the Amir, much can be done meanwhile in anticipation and support of our eventual action. In my opinion, the time has now arrived for pushing forward our outposts within our own territory, as far as political exigencies will permit. We should do this, if possible, with the Amir's concurrence, which I hope we should have but little difficulty in obtaining, if the object of our frontier policy were clearly explained to Abdur Rahman; but, even without His Highness' concurrence, we should exercise our undoubted right to take every internal precaution in our power against the dangers to which our own possessions are at present exposed.

The tract of country which it is necessary for us to bring under control in the first instance, if we desire to proceed with the construction of the Zhob Valley railway, as well as to bring effective pressure to bear on the Waziris, Kakars, and other independent, though petty tribes, which are at present a continual source of anxiety and annoyance, is bounded on the south by the Gomal River, and lies west of the Waziri country and nearly equidistant from Mukur and Ghazni on the one hand, and from Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu on the other. Without encroaching upon recognized Afghan territory, it would seem to be perfectly practicable for us to establish strong frontier garrisons near Domandi on the Gomal River, and near Urgun or Saiyadkot, some 70 miles north of Domandi; and thus not only to facilitate the pacification of our turbulent neighbours on the border and to protect our railway, but also to keep a compact and well-equipped force of all arms in readiness for immediate movement on Ghazni and Kabul in one direction, and on Mukur and Kandahar in the other.

The gradual extension of our civilizing influence over the border tribes will doubtless entail a re-adjustment of the territorial limits of the military commands concerned, viz., those of the Punjab Frontier Force and of the Quetta and Peshawar districts. This, however, is a detail which must be left for future consideration.

There is one other point on which I would wish to remark. It may perhaps be said that the foregoing proposals are wanting in finality; that they contemplate the preliminary occupation at great cost of an advanced front, some 200 miles beyond our present boundary; but that, even should we succeed in acquiring this strategical line of defence, no indication has been afforded of the limits of our forward policy, or of the expenditure consequent thereon. I would reply that, while I am of opinion that it is equally our duty and our interests to preserve the integrity of Afghanistan, I regard the Kabul-Kandahar alignment as the position we should definitely and finally accept for the defence of India, and as being the only secure base from which we could act offensively against Russia. If we permanently advance beyond it, we shall fall into the same difficulties from which we are endeavouring to escape by advancing towards it—difficulties resulting from an extended, ill-defined, and vulnerable frontier. However serious a defeat we might be fortunate enough to inflict on Russia in the event of a war



with that Power, and whatever pledges and indemnities we might be in a position to exact from her in regard to her future policy in Central Asia, I should deprecate the occupation with our own troops, except as a temporary measure, of any position north of the Hindu Kush. The Afghan troops, if properly organized under the supervision of British officers, should be quite capable of guarding the northern frontier of their own country in peace time, more particularly if we are prepared to support them, should the necessity arise, from Kabul and Kandahar.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XL.

## DEFENCE OF THE ATTOCK POSITION.

SIMLA,

3rd September, 1890.

This discussion has reached such a length that it may perhaps be convenient if I briefly summarise the principal points that have to be considered in disposing of the question at issue.

On the original assumption that we intended not only to guard the crossing of the Indus at Attock, but also to make an obstinate stand in the vicinity of Peshawar, and if requisite of Kohat, against an attack through the Khyber or down the valley of the Kuram river, the Defence Committee in 1883 recommended the provision of good road communication from Khairabad to Nilabgasha, and thence *viâ* Cherat to Nowshera or Pubbi.

Subsequently, it was decided in 1886 that, if an enemy in any considerable strength succeeded in forcing his way through the Khyber into the Peshawar valley, we should have to fall back upon some position which would secure the main crossing of the Indus, and enable a comparatively small force to hold a large one in check; and the position which best fulfilled these conditions appeared to be that stretching from Khairabad through Akora to Nilabgasha.

The abandonment of the idea of occupying in force a strong and extensive position in front of Peshawar, and commanding the eastern debouchure of the Khyber, involved a reconsideration of the proposal to provide lateral communication *viâ* Cherat between the roads converging on Khairabad from Peshawar and Kohat. It was noticed that such communication would not materially facilitate our retirement or aid us in defending the selected position in front of the Indus, while it might render great assistance to the enemy in his endeavour to concentrate on one or other of the river crossings, or on one or other flank of our defensive line. This point, therefore, was again discussed by the Defence Committee, who have recently come to the conclusion that the lateral communication in question ought not to be completed, but that Cherat should be regarded as an outpost of the Khairabad position, and be directly connected therewith by a good mule road through the hills.

Major Grant, in noting on the case, strongly urges the necessity of providing a second line of retreat from Peshawar to the Indus *viâ* Jalozaï, Cherat, Mirkalan, and Nizampore. Although arguments of considerable weight are adduced in support of this proposal, I am disposed to agree with General Collen in thinking that the construction of a road along the above alignment would be more advantageous to the attacking than to the defending force, more particularly as the garrison of the Khairabad position would not entirely, or even mainly, consist of the troops driven back from the Khyber and Peshawar.

In continuing the discussion, General Collen invites attention to the original proposal made by Sir Edward Hamley to construct a great entrenchment in the Peshawar valley, so placed as to cover Peshawar and close the eastern outlet of the Khyber. If this be finally rejected, he would regard the Khairabad position merely as a bridge head, and prepare a strong entrenchment in the vicinity of Campbellpore, as suggested by the Secretary of State.

While I admit that there is considerable force in what General Collen advances, I am unable fully to concur in his views. In a note, dated 22nd June, 1886, I pointed out that, although we ought to hold both outlets of the Khyber Pass, the main defence

should be at its western end, where the construction of comparatively small defensive works at Landi-Kotal and at or near Chinar in the Bazar valley, with a good road connecting them, would render the position practically impregnable. The occupation of an extensive entrenchment in front of Peshawar, as advocated by General Hamley, appeared to me to be advantageous in theory, but impracticable on political grounds. If an enemy succeeded in forcing the western defences of the Khyber, and gaining an entrance into the Peshawar valley, not only the Afridis, but the other and even more fanatical tribes, bordering the valley on the north, such as the Momunds, Swatis, and Buerwals, would assuredly turn against us, and our position in front of Peshawar would at once become dangerously isolated. Under such conditions our best course would be to fall back in an orderly manner on Khairabad, checking meanwhile the enemy's advance to the utmost of our power, and concentrating reinforcements at Attock, Khushalgarh, and Campbellpore.

The problem of how best to defend this, equally with other sections of our north-west frontier, is as much a political as a military one. If we could implicitly rely on the loyalty of the population inhabiting and surrounding the Peshawar valley, we might adopt whatever course seemed most desirable on purely military grounds; but as a reverse in the Khyber would almost inevitably turn the hill tribes against us, it seems wise to recognize beforehand that, until strongly reinforced, we should have to fall back on, and hold on to, the line of the Indus.

General Collen draws attention to the defects of the Khairabad position as being composed of tangled and confused hills, and as capable of being turned either by fords above Attock, which are passable, at all events, during several months of the year, or by the crossing of the Indus at Khushalgarh. The first defect undoubtedly exists, but it is to be remembered that ground of the nature described is to some extent an advantage to the defenders, who may be supposed to have thoroughly explored it beforehand, to have prepared a scheme of defence, to have constructed fieldworks and gun emplacements at selected points, to have provided the necessary roads and mule tracks throughout the position, and to have arranged a proper system of communication both by telegraph and signalling between the outposts, supports, and reserves.

As regards the second objection, I would observe that, in anticipation of the possibility of a retirement on Khairabad, one of our first precautions would be to remove all the available boats to the left bank of the Indus, and that, without boats and bridging superstructure, the river is impassable by any considerable force either at Khushalgarh, or between Khushalgarh and Attock. To ford the river above Attock would be an extremely difficult and hazardous military operation, so long as we retained our hold on the Khairabad position, and were able to threaten the enemy's communications therefrom. Moreover, even if the enemy succeeded in advancing across the Indus either by Khushalgarh or to the north of Attock, he would be exposed to an attack in flank by the field army which we should have concentrated in the vicinity of Campbellpore and on the Hazro plain.

With respect to the specific point to which the Military Department notes refer, I agree with Sir George Chesney in thinking that the road from Khairabad to Nilabgasha should be improved at a cost of 69,000 rupees; and I am also of opinion that neither the road from Cherat to Nilabgasha, nor the direct mule road from Cherat to Khairabad, should be undertaken. The Defence Committee have recommended the construction of the latter on account of the value they set on Cherat as an outpost to the Khairabad position, but I am inclined to adopt Sir George Chesney's view that the disadvantage of providing means of access to the key of the defensive alignment in front of Attock, considerably outweighs the possible benefit we might derive from the occupation of Cherat, even were its prolonged occupation feasible under the implied conditions.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XLI.

## ON THE DEFENCE OF THE HOOGHLY RIVER.

SIMLA,  
9th September, 1890.

This is a question of considerable importance, which has been discussed over and over again, and unless new conditions have arisen justifying a modification of the accepted scheme of defence, I should regret to see the conclusions previously arrived at upset.

It was originally proposed to construct three batteries along the left bank of the Hooghly, below Fort William, one at Fulta, another at Fulta Point, and a third at Chingree Khall; but the location of the second of these was reconsidered, and I think no one who refers to Proceedings A, April 1889, Nos. 153-155, more particularly to the demi-official letter from Admiral Fremantle recorded therein, can doubt that the transfer of the battery originally sanctioned for the Fulta Point site to Hooghly Point was a measure which commended itself on naval as well as on military grounds. It is now suggested that neither the Fulta Point nor the Hooghly Point is really needed in view of the difficulties of navigation and the existence of batteries at Fulta and Chingree Khall; but on the other hand, no objection is apparently raised to a new long-range battery at Hospital Point between Chingree Khall and Hooghly Point.

I have no recollection of the circumstances under which the battery at Hospital Point has again been proposed, and, as I gather, approved by the Government of India, but it will, no doubt, be remembered that this battery was negatived by Government on the advice of the Defence Committee; and of the two works, I should certainly regard the Hooghly Point battery as much more valuable than a battery at Hospital Point. Admiral Fremantle evidently shares this opinion.

As regards the defence of Bombay, to which Sir George Chesney alludes, it seems to me that our immediate care should be to provide an adequate *personnel* for the turret-ships, gunboats, and torpedo boats, as well as a sufficient number of gunners, to man the shore batteries.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XLII.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN INDIA, IN THE EVENT OF A WAR WITH FRANCE, IN THE WAY OF PROVIDING AN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE FOR THE PURPOSE OF REDUCING THE FRENCH SETTLEMENTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

SIMLA,

14th October, 1890.

I agree with Sir George Chesney in thinking that the only action which can at present be taken is to invite the attention of the Secretary of State to the proposals and correspondence we have already sent home on this subject. The Cabinet resolution would seem to indicate that the views of the Government of India, and of the naval and military authorities in this country, have not come under the consideration of Her Majesty's Government in its corporate capacity, although one of our most important recommendations, to the effect that confidential communication should be entered into between India and the Australian Colonies in regard to their co-operation for purposes of mutual support in the event of war, was peremptorily negatived by the Colonial Office last December.

It is, if I may venture to say so, very much to be regretted that greater efforts are not being made to overcome the difficulties which seem to stand in the way of adopting a comprehensive scheme of Imperial military federation. While matters remain in their present state, although the potential strength of the British Empire is enormous, its actual strength, except indeed in India, is limited by the capabilities in regard to men and material resources of the mother-country, on which is thrown such an undue share of expense and responsibility in protecting its dependencies, that the interests of the outlying portions of Her Majesty's dominions are apt to be ignored or set aside. If the present policy is persisted in, it seems not unlikely that the Colonies, which have no effective means of impressing their views on the Home Government and consequently see matters of vital moment to themselves treated as of local rather than of Imperial importance, will be reluctant to assist the mother-country in guarding the Empire against the common dangers to which individually they may not be specially exposed.

As noted above, I am of opinion that the revision of the project for the capture of Réunion and the French ports in Madagascar can hardly be taken in hand until we receive a definite expression of the views of Her Majesty's Government of our previous proposals. There are, however, one or two points on which I would desire to offer a few remarks:—

1st.—With regard to the necessity of seizing an enemy's isolated ports and coaling stations in the event of a naval war, as urged in paragraph 3 of Quarter-Master-General's letter, No. 874 I., dated 10th July, 1889, I am aware that the recent manœuvres at home have demonstrated the possibility of coaling a fleet at sea in smooth water, and in reasonable proximity to its own coast. As, however, the success of such an operation depends on favourable weather, and on the undisturbed meeting of the colliers and men-of-war at a pre-arranged point, it is obvious that its difficulties would be immensely increased by the distance to be traversed before a meeting could

be effected. It follows, therefore, that though coaling at sea may occasionally be practicable, it cannot be relied on except as a subsidiary and precarious method of supply to squadrons or cruisers in foreign waters, and for this reason I adhere to my previous opinion that the best and cheapest way of protecting our commerce in eastern seas is to be prepared to capture, without delay, when hostilities seem imminent, the naval bases and coaling stations in the vicinity of our principal trade routes.

2ndly.—In view of the uncertainty of our being able to use the Suez Canal in the event of a naval war, I think we should endeavour to impress on the home authorities the desirability of recognizing India, rather than England, as the strategic centre of our military and naval operations in the East. Indian dockyards and arsenals should supply the current requirements of our navy and army east of the Cape, and the garrisons of Mauritius, Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, and possibly of Hong Kong should be affiliated to the army in India, the regiments serving at these stations taking their ordinary turn of Indian service like the garrison of Aden. The possibility also of associating Native with British troops in the Colonies under reference should not be lost sight of.

3rdly.—In Quarter-Master-General's letter of the 10th July, 1889, I pointed out that, in the event of a war with France, it would be extremely hazardous to reduce the strength of the British Army in this country for the purpose of seizing Réunion or Madagascar. The requisite proportion of Native troops might probably be spared, provided the Home Government would engage to supply beforehand the three British Infantry battalions needed to complete the expeditionary force. I regard it as a *sine quâ non* that these battalions should be included in the normal British garrison of India, first, because there might be great difficulty and delay in sending them out to this country, when hostilities had commenced; and secondly, because the number of British soldiers serving in India is at present inadequate. In 1885 Her Majesty's Government in concert with the Government of India decided that military exigencies, particularly on the North-West Frontier, rendered it absolutely necessary to increase the British Army in India by three Infantry battalions; but since that date Upper Burma has been annexed, and as its obligatory garrison has absorbed the augmentation sanctioned in 1885, without reductions being possible elsewhere, we are now no stronger offensively or defensively than we were before.

4thly.—I would beg again to draw attention to the weakness of the East Indian squadron, and the absence of proper arrangements for equipping and manning the improvised cruisers on which, in the event of a naval struggle, we should have in a great measure to rely for the protection of our own commerce and the destruction of our enemy's.

5thly.—I would venture to hope that, on a reconsideration of the question in all its bearings, Her Majesty's Government may be disposed to allow me, under the orders of the Government of India, to consult in strict confidence the Colonial authorities who would be best qualified to advise as to the feasibility of arranging for the military co-operation of India and the Colonies, should circumstances render concerted action desirable. Personally, I believe that, if the Colonies were treated with tact and appreciative sympathy, they would willingly share in the duty of Imperial as well as of local defence; and if the enquiries I propose to institute confirm this opinion, I would suggest as a first step towards initiating joint military action, that the Colonies might be invited by the Government of India to send a battalion or larger body of Australian troops to this country to take part in the manoeuvres at the camp of exercise which it is hoped to assemble in the winter of 1891-92. Supposing the

experiment to prove a success, it would then be comparatively easy to prepare for the approval of the Home Government a comprehensive scheme for the mutual military support of India and Australasia; and supposing it to prove a failure, we should at any rate be no worse off than we are at present. It is unnecessary to enter here into the details of the foregoing proposal. The expenditure involved would be moderate, and some portion of it would in all probability be defrayed by the Colonies concerned; while the political, moral, and material advantages that might result from the association in peace time of Colonial troops with the army in India can hardly be exaggerated.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XLIII.

SUMMARY OF A CONVERSATION HELD BY MAJOR-GENERAL SIR JAMES BROWNE, QUARTER-MASTER-GENERAL IN INDIA, WITH WAZIR SHAH MAHOMED, A GHILZAI, AND FORMERLY WAZIR TO THE AMIRS SHER ALI AND YAKUB KHAN.

RAWAL PINDI,  
12th December, 1890.

I did not think your Excellency would care for my speaking with a refugee like the Wazir, about our present relations with the Amir, to whom I only alluded in a very general way; but I chiefly tried to get at the Wazir's opinions regarding our present relations with the independent frontier tribes.

He most strongly supported the belief that there was a most radical change in the whole feeling of Yagistan (the frontier fringe of tribes) towards us, from Gilgit to Baluchistan; and that, in this respect, the iron was hot for striking.

He had heard (from the papers apparently) of the Suleiman Khel tribe, to which he belongs, having misbehaved and killed coolies at Apozai; but maintained that the perpetrators were merely the "budmashes" to be found in every tribe; and that the Ghilzais, on the whole, were far better disposed towards us than at any previous period. He said, what I have often heard from the Kakars themselves, that, for practical purposes, the Kakars were a "sept" of the Ghilzais: and that their unconditional surrender to, and acceptance of, our rule, had marked the first step towards a general wish amongst the Ghilzais to be treated likewise.

He confirmed the view that the whole district about Nawa, Mukhur, and Abistada was the centre, whence political pressure could at all times be put on the Amir and whence we could either help him, by forbidding any disturbance in rear of Kabul, or by fomenting and supporting such disturbance, make him feel the grip we had on him by being within easy reach of Ghazni. He spoke very highly of Wano and Murwuttai, as equally commanding the Ghilzai and Waziri country.

I then asked him about the state of affairs in Bajaur and Dhir, &c. He thought the present a favourable time for coming to some arrangement with Umra Khan for opening to us the Peshawar-Chitral line. He thought no man, in the whole country, could compare with Umra Khan in power, brains, and influence. He said that at present there were two reasons for his wish to stand well with us—(1) he was greatly in fear of immediate attack by the Amir before his power was consolidated; (2) he thought that if he thwarted us now, we would support Mahomed Sherif Khan of Dhir, who, although much his inferior in ability and power, alone prevented him at present from conquering Swat, Nawagai, Asmar, &c.

He (Shah Mahomed) thought that if we did not come to some arrangement with Umra Khan at an early date, the opportunity would go by; as he did not think the Amir really meant to attack Umra Khan in face of our known wish to have none of his interference in those parts. He mentioned incidentally that at present a very small subsidy, 1,000 rupees a month, would probably quite secure Umra Khan's services, but



that as soon as Umra Khan thought himself secure against the Amir, he would forthwith increase his demands and pretensions. Shah Mahomed used a vulgar Pushtoo proverb illustrative of a man's head being turned by success; and said that if once Umra Khan imagined he could get on without us, we should have two Amirs on our hands instead of one; and that Umra Khan would endeavour to make out of the Peshawar-Chitral route a milch cow for which he would expect us to pay as much as we were paying for the Khyber.

He confirmed the belief, that the two routes from Chitral, *via* the Malakand Pass and *via* the Lekaudeh Pass, to Peshawar through Swat and Bajaur respectively, were comparatively so thickly peopled, and so well cultivated, as to form an excellent highway for an invading army, and for turning the Khyber.

I myself have always been of opinion that as the rock of Aornos (Ranighat in Yusufzai?) lies directly on the line from both these routes to the Indus, Alexander most probably came that way.

Shah Mahomed did not deny that our subsidizing Umra Khan would probably annoy the Amir, but maintained that it would annoy him exactly in proportion to the amount of the subsidy, which would increase yearly with every year's delay in our offering it. He thought the Bajauris, Swatis, &c., would much prefer being governed by Umra Khan rather than by the Amir, who, even if he overran the country for a time, was quite incapable of maintaining himself in it, or of ensuring to us the use of the Peshawar-Chitral routes, even if most anxious to do so. On the other hand, Mahomed Shah seemed to entertain no doubt whatever of Umra Khan's power to do so, if he had even slight support from us.

He confirmed what you doubtless long since know, that for meeting an enemy coming from Badakshan, the Dorah Pass and Chitral, we were, from a base at Peshawar, some 4 days' less marching to Chitral than from a base at Gilgit; and by much easier routes in every way—roads, climate, provisions, population, &c.

I need scarcely say that Gilgit could never be in the same parish as Peshawar as a base of military operations, even if we had got out of it the very utmost it was capable of as a base, and even with the enormous stretch of imagination required to conceive its ever being a railway terminus (!)

Shah Mahomed said the Swatis, as a whole, were well disposed with the exception of Abdul Khalik (*alias* Chota Meagul), son of the great Akhund of Swat, who was a sour fanatic, with less influence than four other men, who were not priests at all, and were favourably inclined towards us. He said he thought the Mea Khels (Papa Mea's tribe about Akora), who have the whole trade of those countries in their hands, had lost so much of late in their timber trade that they would now be only too glad to put their religious feelings into their pockets, and support us heartily in reopening the Chitral-Peshawar routes, and with it the timber trade. These Mea Khels who are all saintly (?) characters are quite able to counteract any religious opposition we are likely to meet with from the party siding with the descendants of the Akhund of Swat.

This view is confirmed by what I heard from one of the wealthiest Hindu timber merchants in Peshawar, who told me the Mea Khels would probably do their best towards promoting anything which would help to revive their trade profits in those regions.

On the whole, I was very glad to find that an intelligent Afghan like Shah Mahomed had so keenly appreciated the great change which had come over our relations with the fringe of frontier tribes, and seemed to anticipate such great further advantages from the extension to the Peshawar-Chitral region of the same system, the effects of which we are now seeing on the Derajat border and in the Khyber.

He laid special stress upon keeping European Officers in constant contact with the tribes, and in common with every Afghan I have ever spoken to on the subject,

seemed to be quite incapable of appreciating or understanding the advantages of the "closed border" system, either in our own interests, or in those of the tribes concerned.

The conclusions forced upon us by the late Attock manœuvres make it more than ever imperative on us to secure the border tribes, of whom, paraphrasing what Macgregor said of Sarakhs, we may much more emphatically say that "if we do not use them for defence, Russia will assuredly use them for offence," and then—*Le Déluge?*

J. B.

## XLIV.

QUESTION OF THE SUITABILITY OF THE 38-TON GUN FOR THE ARMAMENT OF THE  
HOOGHLY DEFENCES.

CALCUTTA,

25th January, 1891.

I hope that no change will now be made in the proposed armament for the Hooghly defences, and that three 38-ton guns will be brought from Bombay and placed at Chingree Khal.

The Honourable Sir George Chesney remarks :—

“It is, I believe, generally accepted that 38-ton guns are misplaced in a position like Chingree Khal, and, therefore, he proposes to substitute a lighter type of gun.”

Subsequently he says :—

“It is a great question whether any 38-ton guns should be placed in the Hooghly, as it is doubtful if the soil will stand the weight, and the gun is slow and cumbersome to work.”

and finally he says :—

“I cannot find a single Artillery Officer in favour of the arrangement.”

It is true that the Hooghly, like all rivers, requires “guns that fire quickly and are handy,” but these are provided in the medium 6-inch guns (B.L.) carrying the 100-lb. shell, and it is in accordance with the recognized principle for all coast defence batteries that a certain proportion of the armament should be heavy guns. It is accepted that a battery shall be armed with—

- (a.) A few very powerful guns ;
- (b.) Twice to four times as many medium guns, such as 6-inch B.L. ;
- (c.) A certain number of quick-firing and machine guns,  
and
- (d.) Sometimes a few howitzers or field guns for flanking or moveable defence.

Each of these classes has its own special duty to perform, and no one class can do the work of the other.

For instance—

- (a.) Is required to disable or sink a ship ;
- (b.) Is required because the rate of fire of (a) is slow, and the fire itself is expensive; also to keep up a more continuous and rapid fire at the unarmoured ends, steering and conning towers, &c., and generally to worry and shake the nerves of the ship's crew by a fire more annoying than actually crippling.
- (c.) Is required to reply to a similar armament in the ship's tops, which would otherwise often prevent the guns (a) and (b) from being served at all.

This principle has been adhered to in all the proposals for Chingree Khal hitherto, and no reasons have been adduced that would, in my opinion, justify any departure from it.

In 1866 a Committee, presided over by Sir John Adye, proposed eight of the heaviest known guns for Chingree Khal, four of them to be 38-ton.

In 1885 the Committee presided over by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, the late Sir Rivers Thompson, proposed to arm Chingree Khal with two 12-inch B.L. guns, the most powerful then known. This was afterwards modified on the score of economy to four 38-ton guns, because they were already in the country; eventually this number was reduced to three, at which it now stands.

The proposal to have B.L. guns was a move in the right direction, because not only is it necessary to have the smashing power of the large shell, but the Chingree Khal battery being specially designed as a guard to Diamond Harbour, distant 4,000 yards, where a ship must not be allowed to anchor in order to seize the railway head to Calcutta, and also to prevent a ship anchoring higher up the river towards Hooghly Point, preparatory to forcing the mine fields, a long-ranging gun is necessary.

It was, I believe, chiefly owing to the change from the 12-inch B.L. gun to the 38-ton gun that the Director-General of Military Works urged that an intermediate work should be constructed between Chingree Khal and Hooghly Point, *viz.*, at Hospital Point. It has been decided that Hooghly Point need not be fortified at present, and that no work is to be constructed at Hospital Point. In this decision I have agreed, but the absence of works at these places is an additional reason against weakening Chingree Khal, and I hope that the three 38-ton guns will be mounted in this latter battery, and fitted for high-angle, as well as for direct fire.

If it is the case that the soil is unlikely to stand the weight at Chingree Khal, what will be the case in the Rangoon river forts, where the soil is even more treacherous than it is on the banks of the Hooghly, and where 10-inch B.L. guns are to be mounted? It is true that these only weigh 32 tons, but whereas the charge for the 38-ton gun is 165 lb. of powder, that for the 10-inch B.L. is 252 lb. and the recoil of firing is far more trying to the emplacement than the dead weight of the gun and mounting.

If it be decided to reduce the power of the armament of Chingree Khal, we shall be trusting more and more to the line of inner defence, and to the mine field at Fulta. Further experience with mines and other defensive appliances dependent on electrical communications confirms the opinion that they are so liable to fail when most wanted that it would be very unwise to rely mainly on them. As a second string to our bow they are admissible and desirable, but so far as they have yet gone, our most reliable weapon for attack of even 2nd class ships are guns carrying heavy shells, supplemented by medium and quick-firing guns, and these latter will not stop a ship by themselves. If the above considerations carry any weight, then the armaments for the Hooghly defences, as already sanctioned, should be allowed to stand. An additional reason is that the emplacements, the magazines, shell and cartridge stores are all complete, and the guns are already in India.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XLV.

THE DANGERS TO WHICH A REVERSE WOULD EXPOSE US IN THE EVENT OF WAR WITH  
RUSSIA, AND THE BEST MEANS OF GUARDING AGAINST SUCH AN OCCURRENCE.

CALCUTTA,

27th January, 1891.

In previous Notes I have endeavoured to point out that India must be defended from Ludia, and that our best, if not our only, chance of successfully preserving our Eastern possessions lies in our being prepared boldly to assert our own rights and promptly to repel any attempt at foreign interference with the subject and allied races over which our legitimate influence extends. I have explained how impossible a defence of India would be from our existing frontier; how desirable it is that an advance should be made to a position which would facilitate our offensive and defensive action; and how supremely important it has become that our relations with the Afghans and border tribes should be of such a character as would, in all probability, cause them to stand by us. I have shown the very delicate nature of our hold over the Native portion of our Army, and how essential it is that the British portion of that army should be largely increased on the first signs of any onward movement on the part of Russia; and I have dwelt on the comparative ease with which the Russians could invade India, once they had obtained a footing in Afghanistan, and been allowed to consolidate their power in that country.

There is, however, one subject on which I have as yet only lightly touched, and that is the possibility of a serious reverse occurring to our army while operating in Afghanistan. My silence on this momentous question has not been caused by any want of appreciation of the danger to which such an event would expose us. I well know that our position in India would become grave in the extreme; and while I have not concealed this from myself, my object hitherto has been to induce the authorities to adopt the policy which, in my opinion, will go far to secure us against the risk of defeat in the field. That I have not been blind to the possibility of our meeting with a disaster in Afghanistan is proved, I think, by the persistent manner in which I have urged the construction of fortifications in front of Quetta, and in the neighbourhood of Peshawar and Rawal Pindi. These works when completed should fulfil a double purpose, not only serving as valuable supports to our armies acting in the front, but also providing a second line of defence, should we be driven out of our advanced position on the Hindu Kush. It has ever been my sincere hope that the latter eventuality may never arise. We ought not, however, to ignore its possibility; or to neglect any of the expedients and precautions which would enable us, under such circumstances, to make a stand until we were prepared to resume the offensive.

In the event of our meeting with a serious repulse in Afghanistan, by far the most important matters for consideration would be—

- (a.) The condition of the country generally in our rear.
- (b.) The extent to which our British troops had suffered, and the number of the same ready at hand to reinforce the field army.
- (c.) The effect which the reverse had had upon our Native troops.

The condition of India generally will depend on the precautions that may have been taken, and the sufficiency or otherwise of British soldiers to guard the forts and strategical points, and to overawe the great cities. So long as we were successful, it is unlikely that there would be any serious disturbances in this country, but the news of a reverse in the front would be the signal for the ill-disposed to give trouble; and at the very time when more British soldiers would be required with the field army, their presence would be more than ever needed at the principal centres throughout the country. No one could of course foretell the extent to which our British troops might suffer, on the supposition that we were forced to retire from Afghanistan, but we may be certain that the brunt of the fighting would fall upon them, and that the Native portion of our army would, under such a contingency, afford but little assistance. Strong reinforcements would therefore be necessary to replace casualties, and to enable us to delay the hostile advance even for a time. Every march the enemy came nearer to India, their numbers would be considerably increased; and when they reached the Khwaja Amran range in front of Quetta, and debouched from the Khyber Pass at Peshawar, their ranks would have been swelled by almost every Afghan capable of bearing arms, and by a very large proportion of the 200,000 fighting men bordering our present frontier.

There is no doubt in my mind what the effect of a reverse to our arms would be on the Native army. In all our plans for the defence of India, we have calculated on having the help of a large number of Native soldiers. That we could depend upon their help so long as we were successful, I have no doubt, but I feel equally sure that, in the event of a disaster, they would fail us. How indeed could it be otherwise! We are aliens in this country, and however successful we may have been in our administration, and however efficiently we may have trained the various nationalities of India into fighting machines, their loyalty could only be expected to last so long as they firmly believe in the permanence of our rule and in our military predominance. It would, no doubt, be possible to make good the losses which the British troops in Afghanistan might have suffered, and also to considerably increase the total strength of the British force in India. But with the Native army it would be very different. Were we to meet with a disaster in Afghanistan, enlistment would practically cease, and even if we could induce a certain number of recruits to take service by offers of bounty and high pay, we most certainly could not depend upon their fighting for us in the way I hope our Native army will fight when they see we are determined not only to maintain our supremacy, but also to prevent any encroachment on Afghan territory by a foreign Power. I believe that I have correctly gauged the feelings with which Native soldiers would view any serious defeat inflicted on us by the Russians, and I am sure that these feelings would be shared by our own subjects in India, as well as by the Afghans and border tribes. The situation would without doubt be extremely critical, and it is not to be expected that the inhabitants of India, much less those of Afghanistan, would run the risk of sacrificing themselves and their own interests on our behalf.

We are in a position in which no nation has been placed since the fall of the Roman Empire, and the task before us is one which will put to a severe test the whole of England's resources, great as they are. If the territories we had to defend were peopled by men of our own or some kindred race, on whose loyalty and hearty co-operation we could implicitly rely, even under the most adverse circumstances, we might watch the gradual approach of Russia towards Afghanistan and India with tolerable equanimity. Instead of this being the case we hold India by the sword, and our relations with the Afghans and border tribes are as yet far from satisfactory. The only soldiers on whom we could absolutely depend are limited in numbers, and more than half the 70,000 now in India would be required to garrison the arsenals and other

important places throughout the country. The only escape from the danger which is assuredly in front of us is to convince the people of India and Afghanistan that we shall come victorious out of the struggle with Russia, and the only way to bring this conviction to their minds is to adopt that forward policy which I have so long and so earnestly advocated.

I am aware that the opponents of that policy base their objections to it on the grounds that, by concentrating all our strength within the limits of our present frontier, and by not interfering with the tribes beyond those limits, we should be more likely to carry the people of India and our Native troops with us, while we should escape the very dangers to which I have above drawn attention. My reply is that it is impossible to defend India from our existing frontier extending as it does from Chitral to Karachi, a distance of about 1,100 miles, on account, not only of its length and strategical weakness, but also of the warlike nature of the tribes which occupy the whole of this long line, and whose aid would make a Russo-Afghan army so formidable as practically to become overwhelming. The continuance of our present anxiety as to the attitude of the Afghans and border tribes in the event of war depends a great deal upon our own actions; if we recognize our responsibilities, and by a bold and confident policy convince our Asiatic neighbours that we have no intention of allowing anyone but ourselves to be supreme in Afghanistan and India, there is every probability of their assisting us in our struggle with Russia. Such an alliance would give us a chance and a very good chance of success, whereas were it to be known that we intended to fight the battle for the possession of India on the banks of the Indus, and were prepared to acquiesce in the occupation of Afghanistan by the Russians after all our protestations to the contrary, not only should we bring the strength of Russia, in combination with the Afghans and the border tribes, against us, but our own Native troops and the people of India would certainly look upon our cause as hopeless. No one who is acquainted with the characteristics of Eastern races can doubt that they would regard any hesitation on our part in meeting a Russian advance as a tacit acknowledgment of our inferiority in the field and a preliminary to our eventual defeat. Under such circumstances they would endeavour, either openly or secretly, to ingratiate themselves with what they believed to be the winning side; and before a blow had been struck or a shot fired, our adoption of a purely defensive attitude would almost certainly have rendered Afghanistan hostile and India disaffected. This result would be disastrous, not only from a political but from a military point of view, as the success of the operations we may be called upon to undertake for the defence of India must in a great measure depend on the cordial assistance of the Afghans and the unshaken confidence of the inhabitants of this country.

It has frequently been urged by those who look at the question under discussion from a purely theoretical point of view, that the further we advance beyond our present frontier to meet the enemy whose designs on Afghanistan and India it is our object to frustrate, the more troops we should have to employ in guarding our lines of communication, the greater chance there would be of alienating the Afghans and border tribes, and the weaker we should become at the point of contact with the enemy. The same argument is made use of to justify a passively defensive attitude on our part in the event of Russia invading Afghan territory. It is said that her continually lengthening communications would so deplete her available forces as to render her repulse certain and disastrous on her arriving within striking distance of our troops, while we should be able to concentrate in the most favourable positions for engaging an army wearied and harassed by a long march through a difficult and hostile country. Such anticipations, however, depend for their fulfilment on conditions which are practically non-existent. Afghanistan is not inhabited by a homogeneous race so attached to its own independence, so skilled in modern warfare, and so numerous, as to

be able and willing to offer an effective opposition to the progress of a strong military Power without extraneous assistance; and even though our presence in their country might be distasteful to a few of the more fanatical among the Afghans, it seems hardly possible that the population as a whole would reject the aid we could afford them in their efforts to repel Russian aggression. Moreover, the traditional policy of Russia is to advance slowly, consolidating her strength with every step she takes, and absorbing or expatriating the inhabitants of the territory she has acquired. There is no reason to suppose that Russia would attempt the invasion of India from her present frontier. On the contrary, it seems almost certain that she will first endeavour to occupy Herat and Afghan-Turkestan, and at the same time make a forward movement through Khorassan on Meshed. If she succeeds in this enterprise, her next advance will be on Kabul and Kandahar; and once firmly established at these political and strategical centres, she will be in a position to prepare for an attack on our Eastern Empire with every prospect of success.

So far, then, as Russia is concerned, the danger to which her army would be exposed by operating at a long distance from its base through a hostile country is not likely to arise, if we permit that Power to advance unchecked into Afghan territory. On the other hand, so far as we are concerned, the danger will be reduced to a minimum if we are prudent enough to arrange beforehand for the immediate occupation in the event of emergency of those positions in Afghanistan which will give us complete control over that country, and prevent it from coming under Russian influence. In short, our struggle with Russia for predominance in the East will be decided in the field, and what we have to consider is whether it will be better to wait until we are obliged to fight Russia on the immediate confines of India, with the Afghans against us and the people of India disposed to come to terms with our opponents; or whether we shall take such prompt offensive action outside India as will induce the Afghans to side with us, and convince our own subjects of our military superiority.

It will be perceived from what I have said that the question as to the strength of the reserve we should require, and how that reserve should be composed, depends entirely on the line of policy we adopt. If we act boldly from the first and carry the people of India, the Afghans, and the border tribes with us, we shall be so powerful in the front that not only shall we be able to maintain ourselves on the Hindu Kush, but we ought to have no great difficulty in forcing the Russians to evacuate Afghanistan. The reinforcements we should require from time to time would not unduly strain our resources, and might safely be composed of Native as well as British troops. On the other hand, if we have the Afghans and border tribes against us, and the people of India disaffected, little or no dependence could be placed on Native soldiers, and our army would have to be formed mainly or altogether of Europeans. I am quite unable to say what the strength of our army in India under this last-named condition would have to be—very great certainly, greater I am inclined to think than the authorities in this country and at home have ever contemplated. On the other hand, if the forward policy is given effect to, and we thereby secure the adhesion of the Afghans and frontier tribes, I can make a fairly accurate calculation as to the number of troops we should have to place in the field, and the strength of the reserve that would have to be maintained.

In a campaign in the direction of Herat or Afghan-Turkestan the number of troops that can be employed on either side is limited by the resources of the country, on which, in the absence of facilities for supplementing them by means of a proper system of railway communications, the supply of a field army at any considerable distance from its base must mainly depend. Assuming that we occupied Kandahar, Kabul, the alignment connecting those cities through Ghazni and Kalat-i-Ghilzai, and our present communications therefrom to our retired bases in India with a force of



60,000 troops, commissariat and transport difficulties would probably preclude our taking forward more than 60,000 men for offensive operations. There would thus be 120,000 men altogether beyond India, half of these being British and half Native troops. Half of the former, or 30,000 British soldiers, might be drawn from the existing garrison of India, leaving 40,000 in India, inclusive of the regiments in Burma. To undertake, therefore, offensive operations under existing conditions, a reinforcement of at least 30,000 British troops would be required from England in the first instance, and a further constant supply would be needed to replace casualties. But as our field army advanced, and as the enemy's plan of operations unfolded itself, our continually lengthening lines of communication would have to be held, unforeseen dangers would have to be guarded against, and arrangements would have to be made for rapidly concentrating in superior force at what might prove to be the decisive points of impact. To meet these requirements, our railways would have to be rapidly pushed forward, and a second reinforcement, which I may roughly estimate at not less than 30,000 British troops, would be necessary, if we determined to carry the contest to a permanently successful issue; and as it would be injudicious to reduce the British garrison left behind in India, these additional British soldiers would have to be supplied from the home army, or possibly in part from the Colonies. The arrival in this country of the above reinforcement would enable us to mobilize at least an equal number of the Native troops available in India, and to raise the strength of the force holding Kabul and Kandahar, and operating against Russia in the field, from 120,000 to 180,000 men.

It will, I trust, be clearly understood that, while I am strongly in favour of prompt and vigorous offensive action should Russia violate her engagements, I am equally anxious that no defensive precaution which it is in our power to take in peace time should be neglected. The stronger we make ourselves defensively the less likely it appears that we shall be called upon to act offensively. Defensive precautions, however, are not in themselves sufficient. The maintenance of British supremacy in the East depends ultimately on our army, the native element in which, if called upon to meet a European enemy, could only be depended on, as I have endeavoured to show, if it was firmly convinced of our ultimate success; and even with that belief would have to be associated with at least an equal proportion of British soldiers. Unless, therefore, the latter are forthcoming in adequate numbers, the most carefully devised schemes of military action must fail to effect a complete and permanent settlement of the Central Asian question. That the British Empire, with its enormous latent resources, its rapidly increasing colonial population, and its traditions of conquest and dominion, would not be able and willing to supply such reinforcements as India might require is almost inconceivable, although I admit that our present system of army organization appears to be hardly attractive or elastic enough to meet the requirements of a grave national emergency.

Before bringing this note to a close, I would wish briefly to refer to a question which is gradually coming within the range of practical politics, and on which there is likely to be a considerable diversity of opinion—I mean the connection of the Indian and Russian railway systems. To such a connection I am opposed on the following grounds. The recent history of the Continental Powers seems to prove almost conclusively that facilities of international communication in no way lessen international jealousies or pacify international animosities, while on the other hand, they are advantageous to the Power which is best prepared for immediate conflict with its neighbour. As a nation we are notoriously unready for war, and it would therefore be extremely unwise on our part voluntarily to diminish the difficulties our antagonist would encounter in concentrating and supplying his forces within striking distance of our own troops. I am disposed to think that on the Continent of Europe nations were

individually more secure against sudden attack before railways had been introduced; and that the enormous increase in the size of modern armies is in a great measure due to the facilities for concentration and supply in a neighbour's territory that railways provide. The belt of sea dividing England from the Continent, and the absence of railway communication beneath it, have hitherto enabled us to regard with comparative unconcern the rapid growth of the armies of our European neighbours; and similarly, the wide tract of poorly cultivated and desert country, extending from the northern boundary of Afghanistan to the vicinity of Kabul and Kandahar, saves us from the necessity of taking immediate steps to meet a Russian advance in force. In other words, the completion of railway communication between India and Russia would bring ourselves and the Russians face to face, and without any corresponding advantage, would necessitate additional and costly precautions against risks to which we are not at present immediately exposed.

On the Continent the construction of railways has been due to social and commercial exigencies. On the other hand, in Asia the intercourse between the inhabitants of India and Trans-Caspia is not likely for many years to come to be of sufficient importance to justify the large expenditure that improved means of transit would involve; while from a commercial point of view a connection between Indian and Russian Railways would be distinctly detrimental to England, as tending to divert a considerable portion of her sea-borne traffic, and to open Indian markets to Russian commodities without any equivalent benefit to India in regard to Russian markets, the latter being closed by high protective duties. While, therefore, I would push on our railways in peace time up to the extreme defensive front we intend to hold permanently in the event of a conflict with Russia, and would be prepared in time of war to construct such temporary lines as might be required to facilitate our offensive action against that Power, I should strongly oppose any compact which would admit of the approximation or junction of the Russian and Indian railway systems.

In expressing this view, I am well aware that there are some who still believe that Russia is actuated in her Central Asian policy by disinterested and philanthropic motives; that closer intercourse between the Russians and ourselves is likely to avert mutual misunderstandings; and that the possibility of India being invaded from the North-West is the dream of a fanciful alarmist. I hold a very different opinion; and being intimately acquainted with India and the races that inhabit it, and knowing what invaluable assistance the Afghans and border tribes would render to whichever side they espoused in a struggle for supremacy in the East, I have no hesitation in recording the conclusion at which I have arrived after mature consideration and long experience, that once Russia has obtained a footing in Afghanistan, and has been allowed to consolidate her power in that country, the invasion of India is merely a matter of time. The demand on our resources in men and money which the policy of careful preparation in peace time, and of prompt offensive action in the event of war may be expected to entail will, I feel assured, be almost inappreciable when compared with the efforts we should be forced to make if we were unwise enough to await the Russian advance on our present frontier, with defective communications, with an impaired *prestige*, and with doubtful allies.

In conclusion, I would reiterate my conviction that the one factor in the Central Asian problem, the importance of which it is impossible to overestimate, is the attitude of the Afghans and the border tribes in the event of war. If by firm and judicious treatment we succeed in gaining their confidence and goodwill, we shall be supported in our struggle with Russia by a race of hardy mountaineers, which already supplies some of the best soldiers in our Indian army, and which possesses fighting qualities pre-eminently fitting it to supplement that army in the defence of its own country. If, on the other hand, our inaction or vacillation induces the Afghans and the border

tribes to throw in their lot with our opponents, we shall be hemmed in on the north and west by the most warlike and predatory Mussulman population in Asia; that portion of the Native army which is most valuable for military operations on and beyond our frontier will disappear; and some of the best fighting classes in India itself will waver in their allegiance. The choice that we have to make is whether we shall pursue the bold and resolute, yet really pacific, policy which seems most likely to ensure the independence of Afghanistan and the tranquillity of India; or whether we shall passively await the course of events, in the hope of evading difficulties which are partly due to our former disregard of Russia's aggressive tendencies, and which will rapidly increase with every step we permit that Power to take in her projected advance from the Oxus to the Indus.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XLVI.

ON A PROPOSAL TO TRANSFER TO THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT THE CONTROL OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF ADEN AND OF THE AGENCIES NOW MAINTAINED AT THE COST OF INDIA ON THE SOMALI COAST.

CALCUTTA,

31st January, 1891.

I am unable to concur with the Honourable Sir David Barbour and Sir George Chesney in their view that it would be desirable for the Government of India to propose the transfer of Aden to the Home Government, while agreeing to pay the present cost of its administration. The value of Aden mainly depends on its exceptionally favourable position not only as a coaling station in peace time, but also as a naval base for defending the communications between England and India in the event of war. The Colonies share to some extent in the advantages which the British Empire derives from the occupation of Aden; but if the Colonies alone were concerned, I should doubt whether the Home Government would have consented to spend any considerable sum on the defence of this important harbour.

I am inclined to think that it would be a very grave mistake to do anything which would tend still further to centralize our military establishments in the mother country. Geographically and strategically speaking, India is the proper administrative centre for our garrisons throughout the east, and I should be glad to see the troops at Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore, Hong Kong, and possibly the Cape placed on the Indian establishment for purposes of relief and the supply of ordnance stores.

From a financial point of view, it is true that our continually increasing Empire entails proportionately larger expenditure on the outlying possessions, the retention of which is essential to the corporate welfare. I venture to doubt, however, whether the national income does not more than keep pace with the national expenditure both here and at home, and so long as this is the case, and so long as India is not unduly burdened by involuntary contributions towards objects in which she is not immediately or even proximately interested, I should deprecate any measure which would divest the Government of India of its responsibility as the embodiment of the British Power in Asia.

As a minor detail, I would remark that the transfer of Aden to the home authorities would cause considerable inconvenience in regard to the garrison, the Native portion of which would either have to be replaced by British troops at a much higher cost, or would be brought under the control of officers quite unaccustomed to deal with them.

For the foregoing reasons I am in favour of adhering to paragraph 4 as it stands in the printed draft, except that I would substitute the words "an equitable proportion of" for the word "half" in the sixth line. I should also be disposed to omit the sentence A—A in Mr. Cuninghams note, although under the conditions indicated its insertion or omission appears to be immaterial.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XLVII.

ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE ON THE DEFENCE OF THE  
CROSSING OF THE INDUS AT ATTOCK.CALCUTTA,  
*2nd March, 1891.*

I do not entirely concur in the Honourable Sir George Chesney's views. In the first place I think he is mistaken in supposing that an armament has now been proposed more expensive and extensive than that originally set down. An eventual armament, differing but slightly from that now advocated, appears to have been suggested in Defence Committee's letter No. 172, dated 5th July, 1888, and the Committee never intended that the provisional armament, which they regarded as sufficient to meet the exigencies of the moment, should be permanently adhered to. The question is one of range, accuracy, and shell power; and in these respects the provisional armament is far inferior to the proposed eventual one. It is perhaps questionable whether 6-inch B.L. guns should be substituted for 5-inch in the battery near the Attock dāk bungalow, but with this exception the proposed armament, consisting as it does of siege and field guns and howitzers of a modern type, appears to me to be suitable and moderate.

2. It has always been the intention of the Defence Committee that the armament for the Attock position should be parked inside the existing fort at Attock, and not be mounted in the works until the necessity arises. The excessive accumulation of stores, armament, and ammunition in a small and crowded arsenal, such as that at Rawal Pindi, would almost inevitably lead to great confusion and delay in the event of emergency, and I am consequently in favour of distributing sanctioned armaments in all cases where there are troops to look after them and a safe place to keep them in.

3. With regard to the bridge-of-boats, a proposal involving very moderate outlay was put forward last autumn in the Adjutant-General's Department for utilising the pontoon section of the Bengal Sappers and Miners, in concert with the native boatmen who live in the vicinity of Attock. The idea was that the Sappers should be practised periodically in throwing a bridge across the Indus or Kabul river, the boats and boatmen being hired on each occasion, but the requisite superstructure being made up and stored in the Attock fort ready for use. This scheme should, I think, be considered before any expenditure whatever on a bridge-of-boats is negatived.

4. In accepting Sir George Chesney's view that a revised and detailed project should be prepared before further expenditure is sanctioned, I would express a hope that a reasonable limit of time may be fixed for the completion of the designs and estimates, and that these may be worked out in strict accordance with the conclusions of the Defence Committee, as approved by Government. In the case of the Rawal Pindi defences, 2 years have been wasted because the Military Works Officers departed from, and have had to revert to, the original scheme propounded by the Defence Committee, and accepted by the Government of India. In the present

instance, also, there appears to have been a tendency to enlarge the scope and augment the cost of the defensive project beyond what is absolutely requisite, or was at first contemplated.

5. I am not prepared to say that the sum of 6½ lakhs for completing the defensive works at Attock is excessive, as I notice that the cost of the scheme submitted last September by the Director-General of Military Works amounted to 10 lakhs, of which apparently 1½ lakhs have already been spent. I think, however, that General Sanford might be asked to pay the utmost attention to economy in elaborating the project under reference.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## XLVIII.

## ON THE DEFENCE OF RAWAL PINDI.

CALCUTTA,

*5th March, 1891.*

I consider the defence of Rawal Pindi most important, and am of opinion that the present preliminary project should at once be submitted to Government with a view to sanction being obtained to the acquisition of the sites required for the works and communications.

The distribution of the redoubts and batteries appears to me to be generally judicious and in accordance with the approved scheme of defence. The estimated cost also, amounting to 27½ lakhs, only exceeds by 10 per cent. the sum mentioned in paragraph 3 of Military Department letter No. 1292 M. W., dated 29th May, 1890.

On the other hand, the armament now proposed seems somewhat excessive, and should, I think, be reconsidered by a sub-committee consisting of the Director-General of Ordnance, Inspector-General of Artillery, and Director-General, Military Works, the principle to be kept in view being that the Rawal Pindi position is intended to be held by a strong field force, including a due proportion of armed field artillery. The only guns, therefore, to be independently provided are siege guns and howitzers and Q.F. guns, the number and cost of which, and the amount and cost of the ammunition for which, should be ascertained and reported to Government. I would suggest for the sub-committee's consideration whether the 6-inch B.L. howitzer might not be substituted for the 8-inch, the latter being perhaps of an unnecessarily heavy and costly a nature.

The preparation of the working designs and estimates for the several works should be proceeded with at once, in anticipation of the acceptance by Government of the present proposals.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## XLIX.

## ON THE DEFENCE OF KARACHI.

CALCUTTA,  
*5th March, 1891.*

I agree with the Adjutant-General and Director-General, Military Works, in thinking that the idea of retreating from the batteries to Keamari should be abandoned. The retention of a single 9-in. R.M.L. gun with Woolwich rifling in No. 1 battery seems to me a mistake, and I am of opinion that a polygrooved gun of the same calibre should be substituted as soon as it is available.

An increase in the number of electric searchlights might be urged on Government.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## L.

ON A DOUBT EXPRESSED BY THE HONOURABLE LIEUT.-GENERAL BRACKENBURY, AS TO THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION RECEIVED BY THE BRITISH CONSUL-GENERAL AT MESHED, REGARDING RUSSIAN MOVEMENTS IN CENTRAL ASIA.

SIMLA,  
9th May, 1891.

It is reassuring to hear from so well-informed an authority as the Honourable General Brackenbury that there are grounds for believing Russia's present attitude in Central Asia is purely pacific. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the advance of that Power towards Afghanistan and India has been continuous and persistent, and has so far involved a very large unproductive expenditure both of men and money.

The personal character of the present Czar and of his predecessors has not stopped Russian aggression either in Europe or in Asia; and a nation which involves itself in financial difficulties in pursuance of a specific object, whether that object be increase of territory or increase of wealth, or both, generally expects an ample and early return for the sacrifices it makes.

Both Russia and England have lately been constructing strategical railways at very considerable cost, the former on the northern and the latter on the southern confines of Afghanistan—a country which Russia herself admitted a few years ago to be outside the sphere of her legitimate influence—and it will no doubt be generally admitted that, while our railways on the North-West frontier are intended for purposes of defence, the Trans-Caspian Railway System of Russia is mainly designed for purposes of offence.

My own opinion is that it would be unwise to expect Russia to show greater respect for her engagements in the future than she has shown in the past; and that, whenever a favourable opportunity offers, she will certainly attempt the annexation of Northern Afghanistan as a preliminary to a further advance towards this country.

I do not pretend to possess an intimate knowledge of the internal condition and resources of the Russian Empire; but the history of the last half century leads me to the conclusion that her military action depends more on the personal interests and ambitions of her leading soldiers and statesmen than on the character and predilections of her titular ruler.

On one point I entirely concur with the Honourable Military Member, viz., that it is essential in the interests of India to preserve the integrity of Afghanistan and to be prepared to take steps with that object at the shortest notice. This, in fact, is what I have been continually urging since 1882. There is also the contingency referred to by his Excellency the Viceroy of our having temporarily to occupy Afghanistan for the purpose of maintaining or restoring internal tranquillity.

General Brackenbury alludes to the reported collection of supplies by General Kuropatkin as a natural and proper precaution on his part against the disorders which might occur in Afghanistan in the event of the Amir's death. But, so far as the chance of internal disturbance is concerned, Russia has expressly disclaimed any intention of interfering with Afghan politics, and surely an attack on Russia by the Amir's successor, or by any pretender to the Afghan throne, cannot be seriously

contemplated. Russia has already more than sufficient troops stationed in close proximity to the Afghan frontier to guard her own territory and subjects, and if additional military preparations are being made, their ultimate object can hardly be other than aggressive.

General Maclean can scarcely be blamed for attaching a perhaps inordinate importance to the reports he receives of Russian activity in the neighbourhood of Zulficar, Sarakhs, and Panjdeh. The Panjdeh incident and its effect on India and Afghanistan are probably fresh in his memory; but at any rate it is his business to keep the Government of India and Her Majesty's Government fully informed of what he hears, provided he considers the news fairly reliable. Only those at the head of affairs are in a position to judge what weight should be attached to a local concentration of troops and collection of supplies.

In India it is possible we may feel inclined, as my Honourable Colleague implies, to take too restricted a view of the general political situation. The nearer a danger is, the more formidable it appears; but, on the other hand, a distant danger, however real, is apt to be ignored.

The first cry of "Wolf!" produced, it is true, a needless alarm, but the disregard of its repetition led to the destruction of the flock.

In compliance with the Viceroy's suggestion in his Excellency's note of the 6th instant, I will have a scheme prepared for a rapid advance from India towards Kabul and Kandahar.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## LI.

## ON THE DESIRABILITY OF COMPLETING THE FORTIFICATIONS PROPOSED AT RAWAL PINDI.

SIMLA,  
25th May, 1891.

However desirable it may be to keep the cost of the works proposed for the defence of Rawal Pindi within reasonable limits, I sincerely hope that the question of the nature and disposition of these works will not be re-opened.

2. In my note of the 21st June, 1888, on the necessity or otherwise of fortifying Mooltan,\* I pointed out the extreme strategical importance of Rawal Pindi, and the absolute and urgent necessity of strengthening our position at that point in support of the right flank of our present frontier. My views were accepted by the Governor-General in Council, and the Director-General of Military Works was directed, on the 12th September, 1888, to co-operate with the Defence Committee in drawing up a general scheme of defence.

3. With the concurrence of the Director-General of Military Works, the General Officer Commanding the Rawal Pindi District was thereupon desired by me to have the question investigated, and a preliminary report prepared locally; and he was asked to have the latter ready, if possible, for consideration on the spot by the Defence Committee, on the occasion of my visit to Rawal Pindi during my approaching tour.†

4. Alternative projects were accordingly elaborated under Sir Thomas Baker's orders, and were carefully examined by the Defence Committee in December, 1888, the whole area which it was proposed to defend being personally and minutely inspected by me, accompanied by the Director-General of Military Works, the Inspector-General of Artillery, and the other members of the Committee.

The Proceedings embodying the conclusions arrived at were submitted to Government in June, 1889,‡ and were fully accepted by the Governor-General in Council in August, 1889, the Director-General of Military Works being instructed on the 23rd of the latter month to prepare a detailed project for carrying the scheme into effect.

5. During the winter of 1888-89 General Chesney visited Attock and Rawal Pindi, and recorded his views regarding the defence of these positions in a note, my copy of which I have unfortunately mislaid, nor does one appear on this file, although the note is referred to by the late Military Member at page 5 of Pro. A, September, 1889, Nos. 166-169.

I replied to this note in a paper, dated 12th June, 1889, a copy of which is appended.

6. In October, 1889, the apportionment of the grant for Special Defences came under discussion in Council, and in voting on the case I proposed that the immediate

\* Pro. A, October, 1888, Nos. 100-108, pages 16 to 18.

† Pro. A, October, 1888, No. 186.

‡ Pro. A, September, 1889, Nos. 166-169.

expenditure on the Rawal Pindi defences should be limited to the sum of 12 lakhs for works, exclusive of armament.\* My suggestion was accepted at the time by the Government of India, but a year later the Secretary of State was informed in Despatch No. 209, dated 14th October, 1890, that the probable cost of defending the Rawal Pindi position would amount to 25 lakhs.

Pro. A, November, 1890, Nos. 111—117, do not indicate the grounds on which it was determined to incur a much larger initial expenditure on these works, and no reference was made to me on the subject. When I recommended the cost of this important project being kept within 12 lakhs, I understood that a difficulty had arisen in providing the requisite funds; but, as this difficulty appears to have been overcome, and the sanction of the Secretary of State has been accorded, there can, I think, be no question as to the desirability of completing all, or almost all, the works and communications before an emergency actually arises.

7. Turning now to the project itself, I would observe that the recommendations which the Defence Committee put forward in 1889, and which were fully concurred in at the time by the Director-General of Military Works, were clear and specific; but the detailed project, prepared in 1890 by the Officers of the Military Works Department, under Brigadier-General Sanford's orders, differed in several important particulars from the original proposals. On visiting Rawal Pindi last winter I again went over the whole position, accompanied by the Director-General of Military Works, the Adjutant-General, and the Quarter-Master-General. On this second occasion Brigadier-General Sanford concurred with the two principal Staff Officers of the Army and myself in thinking that the scheme advocated in the first instance by the Defence Committee, and approved by the Government of India, should be adhered to; and the Military Department was informed accordingly in Defence Committee's letter, No. 278, of the 23rd December, 1890.

8. It is, I think, much to be regretted that an unauthorized deviation from the instructions communicated by Government to the Director-General of Military Works in August, 1889, should have been allowed to occur, the result being that the completion of the project, and commencement of work thereon, have been delayed for at any rate 18 months, and probably for a couple of years.

9. The estimated cost of the Rawal Pindi defences, exclusive of armament, is stated to be 27½ lakhs, against a sanctioned allotment of 25 lakhs. This is an excess of only 10 per cent., and may possibly be counterbalanced by savings on other subheads of the grant for Special Defences. But, as I remarked in October, 1889, it is not imperative to complete all the works in question at present; and although the scheme should be elaborated in its entirety, such of the less important items might be left for future execution as would keep the expenditure on this position within the prescribed financial limits.

10. The cost of the armament is not included in the estimate for the defence of Rawal Pindi; nor can it be ascertained until the somewhat extravagant proposals of the Director-General of Military Works on this head have been considered by a Sub-Committee of the Defence Committee. The finally approved estimate for this requirement would presumably be debitable to "Armaments for Frontier Defences," Item 30, page 6 of the Statement accompanying Pro. A, April, 1890, No. 337.

11. In conclusion, I would remark that the authority which I understand the

\* Pro. A, April, 1890, Nos. 336—341.  
Notes, pages 46 and 47.

Government of India to recognise as their responsible adviser on the larger questions of coast, frontier, and inland defence, is the Defence Committee. This Committee is composed of the most experienced military officers and professional experts available in India; and when, under the orders of Government, the Committee has propounded a scheme after the most careful and protracted investigation of local conditions, and the scheme has been specifically accepted by the Governor-General in Council, it appears to me to be very questionable whether the propriety of the Committee's proposals should be regarded as open to discussion, except from a financial point of view.

I am inclined, therefore, to regard the criticisms of the Assistant Secretary for Military Works on the technical details of this defensive project, which has been prepared by the head of his own department in accordance with the recommendations of the Defence Committee and the orders of Government thereon, as being somewhat out of place.

With respect to the armament for the works, which is also referred to by Captain Dallas, I am distinctly of opinion that B.L. guns are requisite at Rawal Pindi, and I should be extremely sorry to see the previous decision on this point reversed. As regards Attock, Government have recently intimated their acceptance of the armament of R.M.L. guns recommended by the Defence Committee merely as a provisional arrangement made nearly 4 years ago, in preference to the B.L. armament for which the works have been designed. This question I propose to deal with in a separate note.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## LII.

ON THE DESIRABILITY OF B.L. GUNS BEING INCLUDED IN THE ARMAMENT OF THE  
ATTOCK POSITION.SIMLA,  
29th May, 1891.

With reference to the decisions recorded in Military Department Pro. B, April, 1891, Nos. 111—113, in regard to the scheme for defending the crossing of the Indus at Attock, a further consideration of the subject induces me to revert to the opinion expressed in my Note of the 2nd March, 1891, and to withdraw my assent to the proposal of the late Military Member, that the provisional R.M.L. armament should be accepted as the permanent armament for the works in question, and that the eventual B.L. armament recommended by the Defence Committee should not be provided.

My reasons for thinking that it would be better to adhere to the original orders of Government on this point are as follows :—

In the first place, I understand that the B.L. guns required for the works at Attock were demanded from England some time ago, that unless counter-ordered they will shortly reach India; and that provision can be made for their cost in the current year's allotment for Special Defences.

Secondly, it has been brought to my notice that the Attock defensive scheme has been prepared under the assumption that guns of a certain range, power and accuracy would be available for mounting in the works. If an entirely different armament is to be made use of, the whole project must be recast, the batteries must be brought closer together, and if the area to be defended remains unaltered, more batteries, more guns, and more gunners will be needed effectively to defend it.

The economy, therefore, of employing inferior guns because they happen to be on the spot is more apparent than real.

Thirdly, it appears to me to be very necessary that we should have in India, in readiness for any emergency that may arise, a reasonable proportion of light siege and heavy field guns of the most improved and powerful type. So much difficulty and delay have been experienced since 1885 in procuring from home the modern armament indented for by the Government of India that it would, in my opinion, be extremely imprudent to trust to the chance of getting such guns and ammunition as we might require, on hostilities becoming imminent. The moderate number of B.L. guns proposed by the Defence Committee for arming the defences of our present frontier will certainly not deteriorate by being kept in this country; and as our frontier gradually advances, they can be moved forward into the positions which may progressively assume greater immediate importance, fresh guns being indented for from England to replace them in the more retired works in which it is intended to mount them in the first instance.

After carefully considering this question in all its bearings, I am decidedly of opinion that the B.L. armament for our frontier defences should be procured with as little delay as possible, and distributed in the manner suggested by the Defence Committee.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## LIII.

PROPOSAL TO STACK A CERTAIN NUMBER OF MILES OF SUITABLE RAILWAY MATÉRIEL AT  
PESHAWAR, IN VIEW TO FUTURE USE TOWARDS JAMRUD AND MICHNI.

SIMLA,  
5th June, 1891.

I cannot too strongly urge that the Quarter-Master-General's recommendations should be accepted. We may have to send a force to, or towards, Kabul at short notice, and as it is tolerably certain that another force would be despatched at the same time from Quetta towards Kandahar, the strain on our transport resources would be considerable—not only as regards animals, but also railways.

It seems absolutely certain that—

- (a.) We must have a large number of sidings at Peshawar.
- (b.) That the railway will be extended to Jamrud until the main line by the Kabul river has been made, and
- (c.) That a railway will be made from Peshawar, *viâ* the Kabul river to Dakka and Jalalabad.

It is impossible to over-estimate the value these sidings and lines would be in the event of war, nor the importance of having everything so prepared as would admit of their being constructed with the least possible delay.

To effect this, embankments should be made to Jamrud and opposite Michni, sufficient permanent way should be stored at Peshawar to enable rails to be laid on these embankments, and the 5 miles of sidings urgently required at Peshawar for mobilization purposes should be completed at once.

These are matters which, in my opinion, deserve the earnest and the earliest consideration of Government.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## LIV.

ON THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE EXISTING GARRISON OF INDIA TO MEET OUR ACTUAL AND PROSPECTIVE MILITARY REQUIREMENTS, IN THE EVENT OF RUSSIA INVADING AFGHANISTAN, EVEN THOUGH THE ADVANCE MAY BE ONLY INTENDED TO DIVERT OUR ATTENTION FROM HER REAL OBJECT OF ATTACK.

SIMLA,

8th June, 1891.

In a recent letter to his Excellency the Viceroy, the Secretary of State for India remarks as follows :—

“I have read with the greatest interest the papers you sent me as to future Afghan policy and military preparations. Supposing a real struggle with Russia in that part of the world, I quite agree that the best first line of defence would be the line from Kandahar to Kabul, but this would involve a railway to Kaudahar, an easy matter, and also one to Kabul, or at all events to Jalalabad, a more difficult one. There is, however, a very serious subject to be considered, namely, the amount of British troops required. If Russia were really to make this point the real object of attack, of course the whole strength of the Empire would be at our disposal; but I do not think that either the Foreign Office or the War Office contemplate the probability of such a state of things. Their view is that the real object of attack would be in the direction of the Bosphorus; that the Russians are not likely to stir save at some favourable opportunity, when they have secured the assistance of France, in which case the forces of the Empire would be very largely and principally required at home, the Afghan attack being used by them mainly with the object of distracting our attention and dividing our forces. General Brackenbury will fully explain the difficulty of relying on too much assistance from British troops, save in the case of a determined attack. I think, therefore, that it would be well were Sir F. Roberts to draw up another memorandum on the basis of such a state of things as I have sketched out.”

What has to be considered then is the action of the Government of India would propose to take, if we were engaged in hostilities with Russia, and possibly with Russia and another Power combined, on the supposition that the Russian advance into Afghanistan was intended to distract our attention from the real object of attack, and that the Home Government would find it difficult to augment the British force now in this country.

As regards the first assumption, I would observe that it appears to me to be practically immaterial, so far as the effect on India is concerned, whether Russia commences the conflict with the idea of creating a diversion, or of making a serious attack on our Eastern Empire. In either case, unless the advance of Russian troops across the Afghan frontier were promptly and vigorously repelled, our *prestige* would be destroyed, the Afghans and border tribes would side with our opponents, the best part of the Native army would waver in its allegiance, and our rule in India would, without doubt, be shaken to its foundations. Moreover, the enormous military force at Russia's disposal would enable her, without restricting her operations or materially



weakening her armies in South-Eastern Europe and Asia Minor, to put into the field as many soldiers as the Afghan theatre of war could support. I am confirmed in this opinion by the conclusion arrived at by the Mobilization Committee towards the end of 1887. After a careful study of the capabilities of the area in question as regards supplies and transport, the Committee estimated the force that Russia could maintain in Northern Afghanistan at 60,000 men. And that such a number would be available for an advance across the Afghan frontier is shown in a War Office memorandum, dated 4th May, 1888, drawn up by Captain J. Wolfe Murray, R.A., and countersigned by my Honourable Colleague, General Brackenbury, in which it is stated with reference to General Kuropatkin's scheme for the invasion of India, that—

“The forces proposed to be set in motion for the first portion of the campaign, *i.e.*, the capture of Herat and Afghan-Turkestan, amounted, roughly, to 35,000 or 40,000 from the side of Trans-Caspia, and about 20,000 men from Turkestan. This, it may be conceded, is well within the power of Russia, under almost all circumstances, to accomplish from her present position.”

This total of 55,000 or 60,000 men is, after all, an insignificant fraction of Russia's estimated war strength for 1891, which amounts to over 2,200,000 combatants; and it is less than a thirteenth of her army on a peace footing, which numbers 814,000.

Russia has gradually consolidated her military strength and developed her resources and communications in Central Asia since 1888, and will doubtless continue to do so. Taking this fact into consideration, the conclusion I arrive at is that the number of troops Russia could spare, with the object of distracting our attention in the East, is, or soon will be, equal to the maximum number she could operate with under present conditions, if she attempted to annex Northern Afghanistan.

I would further point out that, supposing Russia's military action in Central Asia to be confined in the first instance to what may be termed a diversion, it is almost, if not absolutely, certain that, in initiating such action, she would hope to be successful; and that in proportion to her success she would take steps to convert a feigned into a real attack.

In my opinion, therefore, the preparations that have to be made to meet a Russian advance into Afghanistan are not appreciably affected by an hypothesis which in no way modifies the political conditions of the problem with which we have to deal, and can only modify its military conditions to a very limited extent. Whether the hypothesis prove to be correct or incorrect, it will hardly be disputed that we cannot allow Afghanistan to be overrun by Russian troops, with whatever intention they may be set in motion; but that we must arrange beforehand for the rapid occupation in the event of war of a position in advance of our present frontier which will enable us to protect Afghan territory from foreign aggression, to maintain our hold over the Afghans and border tribes, and to guard against the intrigue and disaffection that are sure to arise in India itself, if we show ourselves unable or unwilling to meet Russia in the field.

The second question to be considered is whether a position can be found to fulfil these requirements, and whether it could be effectively occupied without reinforcements from home.

The change in our political and strategical situation as an Eastern Power caused by the advance of Russia to the northern boundary of Afghanistan has been repeatedly discussed by me in previous papers. I have explained the danger of awaiting attack in the valley of the Indus, and I have endeavoured to show how supremely important it is that we should be prepared to occupy the strong and comparatively short

alignment stretching from Kabul to Kandahar, whether for defensive or offensive operations.

If, as I have reason to believe, my views on these points are concurred in by the Government of India as well as by Her Majesty's Government, the question asked by Lord Cross virtually means—Is it possible for us to meet our actual and prospective military requirements with an army which consists of 70,000 British and 150,000 Native soldiers? These requirements are, first, to maintain peace and order amongst the conflicting elements which we dominate within India itself; secondly, to guard our extensive land frontier against tribal attack, and our seaports against a foreign enemy; and, thirdly, to be ready to advance at short notice and in adequate strength to the most favourable position for holding Russia in check.

It must be remembered that, when the relative and aggregate strength of the British and Native troops composing the Indian army was decided on some 30 years ago, the responsible authorities were chiefly concerned with the risk of internal disturbance, which the recent experience of the Mutiny had proved to be a very real and formidable danger. No serious external trouble was then to be apprehended; and no civilized European Power had at that time gained a footing in Central Asia.

Of late years the improvement in communications throughout India by means of railways has greatly facilitated the rapid concentration of troops at any threatened point, and proportionately reduced the chance of organized revolt among our own subjects. Unless, therefore, some special disturbing influences were at work among the disaffected classes in India, while we were engaged in hostilities outside India this increased mobility of our army would enable us to control the country with smaller garrisons, quartered in fewer and more central stations.

On the other hand, the annexation of Upper Burma and the establishment of a protectorate over Baluchistan have greatly increased our responsibilities by adding extensive and unsettled provinces to our Eastern dominions. These provinces will necessarily require for some time to come a considerable military force, and their acquisition to a great extent absorbs the 10,000 British and 20,000 Native soldiers by which our army was augmented in 1885, in consequence of the threatening attitude assumed by Russia at Panjdeh. Moreover, the advantage we have gained in a military sense by the development of our railway system is more than counterbalanced by the rapid advance of Russia to the northern frontier of Afghanistan. This movement has entirely changed the military and political conditions with which we have to deal. Our acquiescence in it has disposed our own subjects and our Asiatic neighbours to question the permanence of our rule; and, while the protection of India from the external attack of a civilized enemy has assumed paramount importance, the risk of internal disaffection, and of complications with the tribes bordering our 5,000 miles of land frontier, is increased rather than diminished.

I do not propose to enter here into the question of the defence of the principal Indian harbours against naval attack, or of the expeditionary action that might be based on India, with the object of capturing an enemy's ports and coaling stations in Eastern seas. These are important matters calling for very careful consideration, but their discussion in the present note would tend to complicate the problem placed before us by the Secretary of State, which, as I understand it, is how to maintain tranquillity within India itself—uphold our supremacy over our semi-civilized frontier neighbours—and oppose the invasion of Afghanistan by Russia—with a force practically no larger than what was thought necessary 30 years ago, when the first two of these objects had alone to be kept in view.

Taking the three requirements in order, I consider that the obligatory garrison of India, Burma, and Baluchistan, could not be safely reduced below 40,000 British and

80,000 Native troops, leaving a balance available for field operations of 30,000 British and 70,000 Native soldiers. Were our prestige to be diminished by the adoption of a purely defensive attitude towards Russia, or by permitting that Power to occupy Afghan territory without opposition, or were we to suffer a reverse in the field, the British element in the obligatory garrisons of India would have to be largely increased, and in the absence of reinforcements, our field army would be proportionately weakened.

As regards our relations with our frontier neighbours in the event of war with Russia, I am of opinion that the tribes bordering India from Burma to Peshawar on the north, and from Peshawar to Karachi on the west, will be guided by our action, and by what they think is likely to be the result of the struggle between Russia and England. If our policy is prompt and decided, if we show a bold front, and if we advance in sufficient strength, we may reasonably hope that the tribes bordering India will not give us much trouble, at any rate unless Russia appears likely to gain the upper hand. If, on the contrary, our action is dilatory and vacillating, or if, owing to insufficiency of troops, our lines of communication are so weakly guarded as to invite attack, we may rest assured that the tribes on the North-West Frontier will harass our convoys and impede our movements, and that a hostile attitude will be rapidly adopted along our whole frontier line. This line extends, as I have already remarked, some 5,000 miles; it is vulnerable for almost its entire length; and the uncivilized tribes that skirt it are for the most part warlike. I have no hesitation in saying, that, if our Asiatic subjects and the races conterminous to India were to imagine that our power was on the wane, at least four times 40,000 British soldiers would be required to keep India quiet and our frontiers intact.

We now come to the most difficult part of the question—the possibility of advancing with our present army in sufficient strength to admit of our occupying the Kabul-Kandahar alignment. Under the most favourable internal and frontier conditions, the force available would consist of only 30,000 British and 70,000 Native soldiers; whereas it would certainly not be prudent to operate in the field against Russia with a smaller proportion of European than of Native troops, except perhaps on the lines of communication, which might possibly be held by a force composed of British and Native soldiers in the proportion of one to two. During the last Afghan war the frontier tribes and the inhabitants of Afghanistan were not generally well disposed towards us, but, on the other hand they were not persistently or universally hostile. Although they were without cohesion, organization, or skilled leadership, it was no easy matter to keep them under control. Their poverty, their predatory instincts, and their uncertainty as to the duration of our stay in Afghanistan induced them to attack our troops and plunder our supplies, whenever they thought they could do so with impunity. Out of the 25,000 troops employed on the Khyber line, no less than 2,134 cavalry and 15,545 infantry, with 34 guns, were distributed between Peshawar and Butkhak, one march from Kabul, leaving only about 8,000 troops available to hold Kabul and operate in its vicinity; while 829 Cavalry, 5,313 Infantry, and 19 guns were required to maintain our hold over the Kuram Valley from Kohat to Alikhel. In the Kandahar direction the country is more open, the population sparser and less warlike, and our permanent occupation of Quetta had already begun to produce a quieting effect on the Baluchis and inhabitants of Peshin. Nevertheless, it was found necessary to employ a large proportion (about 40 per cent.) of the troops engaged in Southern Afghanistan in guarding the lines of communication through the Bolan, and between Quetta and Kandahar.\*

\* The returns for May, June, and July, 1880, show the following mean distribution:—

Garrison of Kandahar .. .. .	4,150 men
"   "   Kalat-i-Ghilzai .. .. .	852 "
"   "   Quetta .. .. .	1,362 "
Employed on lines of communication .. .. .	4,348 "

To hold Russia in check along the Kabul-Kandahar alignment, without attempting actively offensive operations against her beyond the Hindu-Kush, would, in my opinion, require a force of at least 30,000 men at Kabul and the outposts in its vicinity, half as a garrison, and half as a field force—the same number, similarly distributed, at Kandahar—and not less than 20,000 men to occupy Kalat-i-Ghilzai and Ghazni, and keep communications open through those points with Kandahar on the left and Kabul on the right. As noted above, the troops employed in the front ought to be half British and half Native.

Provided the defensive alignment were occupied in the strength indicated, the lines of communication might be held by 15,000 troops between Kabul and Peshawar, and by 9,000 troops between Kandahar and Quetta and onwards to Girishk, where an outpost would have to be established; but both Quetta and Peshawar and the principal stations in the Derajat would have to be reinforced. Two-thirds of the force thus employed might consist of Native soldiers.

Supposing, therefore, that India itself were tranquil and the remainder of our frontier undisturbed I calculate that we should require at least 48,000 British soldiers to take up and hold on to the line of defence which has been accepted as necessary to the security of India, while the number at present available for field operations is only 30,000. To attempt the occupation of the Kabul-Kandahar alignment in inadequate strength would be to court disaster; and what a single serious disaster would mean to us, as the rulers of India, may be easily imagined—I have endeavoured to explain it in former notes. The loss of our *prestige* would involve the disappearance of the best part of our Native army, and the disruption of our civil administration; our difficulties throughout the country would be increased a hundredfold, while our capacity for overcoming them would be proportionately diminished.

My reply, then, to the question propounded by Lord Cross is, that I regard it as impossible to defend India in the event of a conflict with Russia except by the occupation of the strategic front stretching from Kabul to Kandahar; and that it seems to me equally impossible to occupy that front with any reasonable certainty of being able to maintain ourselves there, without a considerable augmentation of the British army in this country. I certainly would not willingly undertake such an operation without the reinforcements I have stated to be necessary; for, if we attempted to operate in Afghanistan in insufficient numbers, or with an undue proportion of Native troops, we could hardly hope to be successful, and any serious defeat would imperil our hold over India.

The existing establishment and organization of the Army in India were, as I have already said, intended to meet the requirements of the Empire under entirely different conditions from those which hold good at present; and it is hardly reasonable to expect that army to undertake the far greater responsibilities and duties now devolving on it, until its constitution has been remodelled by the abolition of the presidential system of command, until the inferior fighting material of which some of our Native regiments are composed has been eliminated, and until arrangements have been made for increasing the number of British soldiers serving in this country on war becoming imminent.

I am fully alive to the difficulties that stand in the way of raising the home army to a strength commensurate with the calls which would be made on it in the event of war with one or more of the Continental Powers. I hope that much may be done to overcome these difficulties by improving the organization and training of our regular and reserve forces, and by developing and utilizing our auxiliary and colonial forces to the fullest extent. But, whatever steps may be taken in this direction—and it is obviously impossible for England to carry on war either in Europe or Asia with our home army on its present peace establishment—it appears to me to be hardly prudent

to ignore the critical position we occupy in the East, and hardly reasonable to expect the Government of India to control a population of 286 millions of aliens, guard an exposed land frontier of 5,000 miles (to say nothing of a sea frontier of the same extent), and oppose a great military nation with only 70,000 British troops.

A portion of our Native army is composed of excellent material, which can be largely relied on so long as it believes itself to be fighting on the winning side. But if British Infantry had not been superior to Native, we should not at present be the rulers of India; and it is a somewhat hazardous assumption to regard any except our very best Native regiments as being equal to Russian troops. If we engage in hostilities with such a number of British soldiers as will give our Native subjects and Asiatic neighbours confidence in us, we shall not only be freed from anxiety as to internal tranquillity and immunity from local frontier disturbances, but we may be tolerably certain that the Afghans and border tribes will join us, and that we shall be able to make full use of our Native army. If, on the other hand, the inadequacy of the British force at our disposal induces the inhabitants of this country and the tribes on its borders to distrust our power, the fabric of our Eastern Empire will rapidly crumble away, and its reconstruction will demand a sacrifice of men and money, the extent of which it is hardly possible to estimate.

In the foregoing statement I have put down the obligatory Native garrisons of India at 80,000 men, and I have assumed that 40,000 Native troops would be required to occupy the Kabul-Kandahar alignment, and 16,000 to guard the lines of communication between that alignment and India. This gives a total of 136,000, leaving an available balance or reserve of only 14,000 out of our aggregate Native force of 150,000 men. So small a reserve would obviously be insufficient to make good the casualties on field service—much more to strengthen any point along our extended frontier, which might be threatened by the border tribes during our conflict with Russia. It would therefore be essential to take measures for increasing the Native army by at least 50,000 men, on the first indication of a Russian advance.

As remarked above, I am distinctly of opinion that under existing conditions it would be extremely hazardous for us to attempt to defend India, or to meet the advance of Russia into Afghan territory, without an immediate reinforcement of 18,000 British troops. This reinforcement would be required for field operations beyond our present North-West Frontier; but, to provide for unforeseen contingencies both in India itself, and along its exposed sea and land frontier, I consider that there should be a reserve at hand of not less than 12,000 men. It would be necessary, therefore, to arrange for, *at the very least*, 30,000 British soldiers being supplied, on war becoming imminent; in addition to which, drafts would be needed periodically to keep up to full strength the army of 100,000 men which would then be serving in India.

There is one method open to us which would improve our strategical position, and somewhat reduce our demand on the home Government for British soldiers; and that is the extension of our railway system to the principal points we should admittedly be obliged to occupy in the event of war. The construction of trans-frontier railways would, I firmly believe, produce political and military results the value and importance of which can scarcely be exaggerated. In the first place, the Afghans and the tribes on our North-West Frontier would clearly perceive that we are determined to maintain our supremacy throughout the territory traversed by those railways, and to prevent the annexation of their country by Russia. They would gradually be brought into contact with us and would be subject to our civilizing influence. By being provided with a fair recompense for their labour and a lucrative outlet for their agricultural produce, they would have inducements to abandon their predatory habits, which are due in a great measure to their poverty. In short, the best if not the only means of bringing Afghanistan under our control, without undermining its independence, is to establish

railway communications between it and India. In the second place, it would be superfluous for me to enlarge on the advantage we should gain in a military sense by being able at once to occupy the Kabul-Kandahar alignment by means of railways instead of roads. The force holding our lines of communication might be reduced by at least two-thirds, commissariat and transport difficulties would be lessened, and the mobility—and consequently the efficiency—of our field army would be materially increased.

In previous papers I have referred to the inducements which might probably lead the Amir to consent to the early construction of the main lines of railway needed to link Afghanistan with India, and I venture to hope that my views on this subject may commend themselves to the Government of India and to Her Majesty's Government. India is well worth a capital expenditure of many millions, if by such expenditure we can compensate in some measure for our deficiency in British soldiers, utilize the troops at our disposal in the most advantageous manner, and regain the position of comparative predominance over Afghanistan which we lost by abandoning all we had acquired in 1878-80, and by subsequently allowing Russia to absorb the Khanates and to advance to the Afghan frontier.

Should it be urged that Russia will view with suspicion any development of our railway system in the proposed direction, and that the policy I advocate will precipitate our inevitable struggle with that Power, I would reply that Russia has formally acknowledged Afghanistan to be outside the sphere of her legitimate influence, and therefore she has no right to object to any action we may think fit to take within that country, subject to the consent of the Amir. Our leaving Afghanistan alone will not prevent Russia pushing on her preparations to the extreme limits of her own territory, as she is steadily doing. Moreover, Russia is at present obliged to devote her attention in a great measure to her European frontier, and has not yet been able thoroughly to consolidate her strength in Central Asia. It seems, therefore, distinctly to our advantage to take the necessary steps for protecting Afghanistan and resisting the further advance of Russia now, rather than to wait until the completion of her trans-Caspian and Siberian railways, and a change in her relations with the Powers of Central Europe, may give her the opportunity of crossing the Afghan frontier in such force and with such rapidity that, in the absence of improved railway facilities on our side, it would tax our resources to the utmost to hold her in check.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## LV.

## REGARDING THE PROPOSED MISSION TO KABUL.

SIMLA,

14th June, 1891.

I think the Amir's last letter, dated 24th March, 1891, has not been quite fairly considered by the Foreign Office. To my mind the most important part of it is the paragraph in which he says, "The limits between the territories of . . . are not known. These should be known by the careful scrutiny and thorough investigation of the officers and officials of both sides." His Highness does not say the limits should be now fixed, but, in reply to the Viceroy's request to let him know "the places at which you wish for a delimitation of the tribes, . . . which you regard as properly included within Afghan territory;" and to submit "a clear statement of the special questions which you desire to dispose of." He says (I think quite straightforwardly) that neither he nor the English know what these limits are; and that, consequently, he is not in a position to say anything which would amount to a clear statement and clear demands regarding limits which are admittedly unknown to both parties, and anything but clear.

If we had been asked by the Amir to make a clear statement of where we wanted our boundary, say about Kuram, Khost, Daur, &c., we would probably have replied that the limits in those parts were not known; and the Amir might have urged that we were fencing with the proposal. The truth is that the limits are not known to either of us.

It is fully admitted that the Amir was reasonable at the time of the Panjdeh incident as regards limits, and made concessions which prevented war with Russia. Why should he not be equally reasonable in his concessions on our side of his kingdom? He knows we have but to give the signal to turn the Ghilzais against him; and that had we done so during their rebellion, the ending would, in all probability, have been very different.

He also knows that the Russians assisted Ishak Khan. These two circumstances must have made it clear to him where his danger really lies.

I would, therefore, read his letter in the sense in which I believe it was written, viz., that both he and ourselves must first see and know the country before the limits of the two kingdoms can be fixed. And I would agree to a joint exploration of it as a preliminary measure. It is scarcely possible to over-estimate the advantage this would be to us.

We want to know the country west of Thatun in Khost along the course of the Shamil river and over the Jhadran range. I visited this to some distance beyond Thatun in January, 1879, and I was pointed out a "nick" in the range by which I was told there was a fairly easy road to Ghazni. I have marked the general direction of the road with blue pencil on the map, the "nick" probably being the Kotanni Pass.

I would take the Amir at his word and say, as all this country is unknown, we want to see it in his interests and ours. If it proves indispensable to us, as being the easiest and best route to Ghazni from Bannu or Dera Ismail Khan, we must be prepared to buy it outright. If it is not a good line, we need not trouble ourselves more about it.

The Tochi route should be treated in the same way. Give it up if it turns out to be of no use; offer to buy it if suits us.

Similarly, with reference to Wano, if it can be proved that we agreed to recognize it as Amir's land, and we require it, we should offer to buy it, and we should make no secret of our willingness to pay fairly and handsomely for every yard of land we want, whether for a cantonment, road, or railway. But that we must see it before we buy it.

Again, from the Kotanni Pass southwards to Shakni, it would be of great value to us merely to ride along the so-called Afghan boundary as far as Domandi; we could then decide whether there are any good cantonment sites for protecting the proposed line of railway through Zhob, and whether the country marked with a red pencil dotted line from Mir Ali Khel on the Zhob river through Domandi, Birmul and Katanni to Ghazni is worth paying for or not. If it is not, we might then enquire about a route direct from Domandi to Mukur (about halfway between Ghazni and Kalat-i-Ghilzai), and see on what terms that could be acquired. Working entirely on the basis of the Amir's contention that the country is unknown to both of us, I would tell him plainly where we wanted to make our railways, place our cantonments, &c., and let him clearly understand that we were willing to pay him handsomely for any concessions we might have to ask him to make. We have nothing to gain by secrecy, and the Amir is quite clever enough to appreciate—

1. That he has before him prospects of great gain.
2. That it is hopeless for him to expect to realize it unless we can see for ourselves what we are going to pay for.

I agree with Sir Mortimer Durand that we cannot give the Amir any land concessions that would satisfy him, while it is very likely "we shall have to insist upon claims which will greatly displease the Amir"; but, in either case, I think we shall be able to satisfy Abdur Rahman, provided we are prepared to put our hands in our pockets.

Our unceremonious occupation of New Chaman will, no doubt, be brought forward. As his Excellency the Viceroy says, "That extension must have seemed a very high-handed proceeding to the Amir"; we may now have the opportunity of making an *amende honorable*, and we should offer to pay for it, or withdraw altogether, should it be found that a more suitable grade for the railway exists in the Kadani direction, as I observe the Viceroy anticipates may be the case. On the Khyber side we can concede nothing, or at any rate nothing worth having. The same with the country about Chageh.

I may be mistaken, but I am under the impression that the Amir has never been plainly told what roads and railways we think should be made to help him to protect Afghanistan against the "Dragon" he alludes to, and I believe greatly fears. We should, I think, tell the Amir everything and frankly ask his advice, whilst offering to pay handsomely for every inch of ground we take up. Money is the only thing that will help, and perfect frankness.

We must run some risks; but if we do not accept the Amir's present proposals, we may be running into greater risks than those we seek to avoid.

In my opinion, it is essential to our being able to oppose a Russian attack on Afghanistan, or, in other words, to arrange for the defence of India, that we should have a railway from Quetta to Kandahar, and also from Peshawar to Kabul; and that a line safe from floods and other physical mishaps should be made from the valley of the Indus towards Kandahar on the one side, and Ghazni and Kabul on the other. But, without coming to an understanding with the Amir, we cannot advance the



Quetta-Kandahar line one yard beyond New Chaman, nor can we extend the North-Western railway beyond Peshawar, or in the direction of Zhob, without exciting the Amir's suspicions, and probably making him, as the Viceroy observes, "positively hostile to us in his language and demeanour."

These railways are really worth our paying almost any sum for, and it is so important they should be commenced without delay that I would suggest our offering the Amir rupees 10,000 or even Rupees 15,000 for every mile of railway made within his territory. This would, I believe, have the desired effect, and would not materially increase the cost.

It would be a good plan if the Amir would, in the first place, send a confidential agent to Simla to discuss matters with his Excellency the Viceroy, and to accompany our envoy to Kabul. I see many advantages in such an arrangement if the Amir would agree to it. I would not, however, make his acceptance of this proposal a condition as to our meeting his wishes. I would only throw it out as a hint, and would tell him, in reply to his last letter, that, as the frontier between India and Afghanistan is unknown, we agree with him it should be defined, and that we will send an envoy to arrange with his Highness for its exploration, and to discuss such other matters as will, it is to be hoped, result in a satisfactory understanding between the Amir and ourselves, and provide for the mutual support and protection of the two Powers. Our polemical letters leave no impression on him, beyond making his mind more foggy than ever as to our actual requirements.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## LVI.

## ON A PROPOSAL THAT CERTAIN QUESTIONS OF DETAIL REGARDING THE DEFENCES OF BOMBAY SHOULD BE REFERRED TO THE AUTHORITIES AT HOME.

SIMLA.

17th June, 1891.

I fully share in the interest with which his Excellency the Viceroy has read the Honourable Military Member's note; and it is very gratifying to observe that the principles which would have guided General Brackenbury, had the defence of Bombay been referred to the Colonial Defence Committee when he was a member of it, are practically identical with those which have been recognized and acted on by the Indian Defence Committee and the Government of India in dealing with the question under reference.

2. Before adverting to the several points raised in this case, I should like to correct a misapprehension which seems to have arisen in regard to the functions of local Defence Committees, and the propriety of the action of the Committee over which I preside in commenting on the rehearsal of the Bombay defensive scheme. The local Defence Committee at Bombay was established under the orders of the late Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay Army, apparently with a view to assisting the General Officer Commanding in the preparation of the scheme for defending Bombay harbour with the means actually available. A reference to Pro. A., March, 1888, Nos. 59—65, will show that the Defence Committee were opposed to the formation of permanent local Committees, their objections being recorded in paragraph 3 of their Proceedings of the 17th November, 1887. From page 5 of the notes in this case, it would appear that the late Military Member and the late Viceroy concurred in the opinion expressed by the Defence Committee on this point, and that the Government of Bombay was informed accordingly. The orders of the Government of India seem, however, to have been lost sight of, as we find the General Officer Commanding signing the "Report on the measures to be taken to defend Bombay against an attack by sea—15th May, 1889," as "President, Bombay Defence Committee;" and the report of May, 1890, takes the form of the proceedings of a Committee, the members of which are specified by name.

3. So far as the preparation and revision of local schemes of defence based on existing conditions are concerned, I adhere to the opinion I expressed in November, 1887, and consider that the responsibility should rest, not with a permanent Committee, but with the General Officer Commanding. The same view was apparently entertained by the home authorities in 1887, the confidential instructions issued by the Adjutant-General to the Forces to the General Officers Commanding at home and abroad leaving the form and method of drawing up the several schemes to the discretion of those officers, but insisting on their personal supervision of the work. If permanent local Committees have since been substituted for General Officers Commanding, we have received no intimation of the fact.

4. Apart, however, from this question, it is to be remembered that not only has a scheme been prepared for the defence of Bombay, but it has been put into practice, the

first rehearsal having taken place in March, 1890. A report on this rehearsal was duly prepared, and to it was appended a revision of the Bombay defence scheme, dated 25th April, 1890. Both these papers were drawn up by the local Defence Committee, and embodied their proposals for improving the defensibility of the port against naval attack. The above papers were submitted to the Government of India and by them referred last September to the Defence Committee for consideration. The Defence Committee, after consulting the heads of departments concerned, as desired by Government, sent in their report last month. This report, as noted by General Collen, undoubtedly re-opens the question of the permanent defence of Bombay; but it necessarily does so, because the correspondence dealt with therein contains proposals involving important changes in the general defensive scheme. If it was desired to exclude these proposals from the consideration of the Defence Committee, I think that it would have been more convenient to have communicated the restriction when forwarding the papers for opinion.

5. I will now turn to the several points raised by the Honourable Member, referring *seriatim* to the several paragraphs of his note.

6. Paragraph 2.—I quite agree that the attention of the local authorities should be directed to the elaboration of practical schemes based on the existing means of defence, and to the periodical revision and occasional rehearsal of these schemes. On this subject I have nothing to add to the remarks of the Defence Committee recorded in the previously quoted proceedings, except to express my regret that the necessity for undivided military control in the defence of a seaport has not yet been admitted by the home authorities.

7. Paragraph 3.—It might be inferred from this paragraph that hitherto the Government of India have not sufficiently consulted the naval and military authorities at home, as well as the local naval authorities, in regard to the defence of Bombay; and have failed to realize the nature of the attack to be reasonably apprehended. This inference, however, is not borne out by the facts of the case.

In a memorandum, dated Calcutta, the 4th January, 1872, Sir. W. F. D. Jervois, then Deputy Director of Fortifications, and an expert in whose judgment the War Office placed the utmost reliance, reported at considerable length on the defence of Bombay, his estimate of the cost of the works and armament he recommended amounting to 907,000*l.*, or about one crore and 25 lakhs of rupees.

In November, 1879, the Defence Committee, which as then constituted was presided over by Rear-Admiral Bythesea, submitted a report on the general scheme of coast defence for India, having previously drawn up a more detailed report on the defence of the harbour and town of Bombay. The first and second parts of the general report consist of a review of the defence requirements of the coasts of India, and an enquiry into the nature of attack to be provided against.

In 1886 Lieut.-Colonels C. H. F. Ellis, R.A., and G. Barker, R.E., were deputed by the War Office to visit the principal Colonial harbours and coaling stations; and the Government of India took advantage of this opportunity to obtain their opinion on the defence of Bombay. These officers submitted a report, dated 6th April, 1886.\*

In May, 1886, Rear-Admiral Sir F. W. Richards, Naval Commander-in-Chief, East India Station, whose views on the defence of Bombay had been asked for by the Government of India at the instance of the Defence Committee, forwarded a memorandum† expressing his general concurrence in the proposals of that body. The 8th, 9th, and 12th paragraphs of Admiral Richards' memorandum are well deserving of

\* Pro. A, April, 1887, No. 87.

† Pro. A, April, 1887, No. 92.

attention in view of the action subsequently taken to put Bombay into a defensible state.

Lieutenant-Colonels Ellis and Barker's report and the Naval Commander-in-Chief's memorandum were subsequently referred to Lieutenant-General Sir C. Arbuthnot, at that time Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay Army, and his Excellency's opinion thereon, dated 19th July, 1886, is recorded in Pro. A, April, 1887, No. 94.

In October, 1886 the Defence Committee laid their final proposals before Government,\* and these were accepted in November, 1886, and have since, with some slight variations been carried into effect.

In 1887 the defence of Bombay was considered by a War Office Committee, of which the present Director-General of Military Works was President, and which included among its members Captain C. C. Drury, R.N., and Major D. O'Callaghan, R.A. The report of this Committee was considered by the Assistant Director of Artillery, Deputy Director of Fortifications, Director of Artillery, and Inspector-General of Fortifications, and was eventually forwarded to the Government of India. On its being referred to the Defence Committee, that body objected to the much larger area which the home authorities proposed to defend by the construction of batteries at Karanja (called Carija in the War Office report) and on Worlee Hill, and adhered to their previous conclusions. The Government of India considered that the Defence Committee had fully succeeded in establishing the soundness of their views, and saw no reason for modifying the previous orders on the case.† The Secretary of State was informed and the Director-General of Military Works instructed accordingly, and the Bombay defensive scheme was put in hand and is now approaching completion.

Had it been possible to obtain it, the opinion of Rear-Admiral the Honourable Sir E. R. Fremantle, late Naval Commander-in-Chief, would have been asked for on his assuming command of the East India Station: but owing to the complications that arose on the east coast of Africa, he had no opportunity of inspecting the Bombay defences until he was on the point of handing over his duties to his successor.

His demi-official letter, however, recorded in the file under note is very satisfactory, showing as it does that the proposals which have been accepted by Government are fully concurred in by this distinguished naval officer.

8. It may, I think, be concluded from the foregoing history of the case, first, that the naval authorities have been repeatedly consulted in regard to the defence of Bombay; secondly, that the same question has been periodically reported on by home experts from 1872 to 1886, to an extent which induced Sir George Chesney to remark: "We have at any rate the satisfaction of knowing, so far as the writing of reports goes, the subject has been treated exhaustively;" and, thirdly, that when the Defence Committee were called upon to prepare a scheme for the defence of Bombay, the first thing they considered was "the nature of the attack to be met."

9. Paragraphs 4 to 7.—I agree with General Brackenbury in thinking that Bombay is not seriously exposed to land attack, and that the danger to be guarded against is the possibility of its being bombarded by two or three fast cruisers. I do not, however, entirely concur in the view taken by the Honourable Member that, in the event of war with Russia and France combined, we should be able to watch hostile vessels, and guard our own commerce in Eastern waters, without a material increase to our navy, whether such increase were to consist of men-of-war or of improvised cruisers. We may be certain that our enemies will make use of every means in their power to prey on our

\* Pro. A, April, 1887, No. 97.

† Pro. A, August, 1887, Nos. 11-14, notes, page 3.

mercantile marine, and the precautions we have taken as regards both *personnel* and *matériel* to guard against such a contingency appear to me to be quite inadequate. It would be out of place to discuss in this note the important questions of maritime policy on which General Brackenbury touches. I will only say that I fear he takes somewhat too sanguine a view of our naval strength, and underrates the resources which an enterprising enemy might turn to good account.

10. Paragraph 8.—The Military Member is inclined to think that Bombay is rather over-defended, but regards an excess of defensibility as an advantage. On the other hand, I look upon the defences of Bombay as reasonably proportionate to the danger to be guarded against. There is, therefore, no practical difference of opinion between us. I will only remark that, if the proposals of home experts had been accepted by the Government of India, the defences of Bombay would be much more extensive and costly than they are at present. It is mainly due to the practical common-sense and experience of the Defence Committee and of the local naval authorities that the works and armament sanctioned for this port have not largely exceeded the requirements of the case.

11. Paragraphs 9 and 10.—The points referred to by my Honourable Colleague are technical naval details, in regard to which it would doubtless be advantageous to consult the Admiralty. It is, I think, to be regretted that the decisions of the Admiralty on matters of Imperial importance are not communicated as a matter of course to the several Governments with whom it would rest to carry such decisions into effect.

12. Paragraphs 11 and 12.—The preceding remark is equally applicable to the laying of submarine mines. Instructions on this head, however, would presumably be issued by the War Office, submarine mining being a military, and not a naval service. I am surprised to hear that the Navy propose to undertake the duty of watching harbour entrances in time of war. I have always understood that the recognised rôle of our fleet was to pursue and attack the enemy and to protect our own commerce on the high seas, and this opinion is shared by no less an authority than Vice-Admiral Sir F. W. Richards, who emphatically remarks: "The squadron on the station ought not to be called upon to lock up a single man for harbour defence."

13. Paragraph 13, Sub-head 1.—On a reference to Pro. A, March, 1891, Nos. 1564-70, my Honourable Colleague will observe from letter No. 5970, dated 6th August, 1890, from the Adjutant-General in India, paragraphs 4, 9, 10, and 11, that it is only proposed to provide three-fourths of a single relief of gunners to work the armament of the Bombay defences and in calculating that proportion, only the skilled members have been counted as artillerymen. This estimate accords with paragraph 12 of my note of the 1st January, 1891 (page 25 of the office notes in the above Proceedings), and has been accepted by the Government of India. The home rule referred to by General Brackenbury is more liberal, and if adopted out here would involve a further augmentation of our garrison artillery. In view, however, of other and more immediately pressing requirements, I am not prepared at present to urge the re-opening of this question, which was settled on a fairly satisfactory basis by the order in Council of the 13th March, 1891.

Sub-head II.—No remark.

Sub-head III.—Marine Department Pro. A, November 1887, Nos. 2495-2505, show that the question of picquet boats was thoroughly gone into in September, 1887, and that the Admiralty, which was duly consulted on the subject, recommended the use of

vessels of the "turnabout" type, a speciality of Mr. White, of Cowes. The Secretary of State was accordingly requested to procure and send out to India two "turnabout" boats of different sizes, to serve as patterns for the subsequent construction in this country of the full number required. I am inclined to think that if these boats are no longer thought necessary for the protection of the mine-field—on which point the Government of India have not been favoured with any recent information by the home authorities—they would still be very valuable for watching the harbour entrance in time of war, the boats locally procurable being neither fast, handy, nor seaworthy enough for this duty.

I do not quite understand how creeping and countermining can be guarded against without employing picquet boats, but probably this question has been fully considered by the War Office authorities, to whom a reference might be made.

Sub-head IV.—I concur in the temporary postponement of a decision on this point.

14. In dealing with the case generally, as his Excellency the Viceroy and the Military Member of Council concur with me in thinking that no additional defence works are at present required at Bombay, I would suggest that the decision of Government to that effect be communicated to the Defence Committee and the departments concerned. As regards Sub-heads I. and II. of paragraph 13, no action appears to be necessary; and as regards Sub-heads III. and IV., the home authorities might be asked for the latest information and orders on the subject.

15. I do not entirely concur in the draft despatch, as I consider, with reference to its opening sentence, that no difference of opinion exists, so far as the Government of India are concerned, as to the sufficiency of the existing defences of Bombay.

With reference to paragraph III., as submarine mining defences are regulated by the War Office, not by the Admiralty, I think we should ask for the decision of the former authority. As regards paragraph IV., I am strongly of opinion that the defence of a seaport should be conducted under the undivided control of the military commander. I am aware that the home authorities have not yet come to a decision on this point, their latest utterance being—\*

"No definite rules as to the co-operation of the naval and military forces in the defence of a seaport have ever been laid down, nor have the relative spheres of the two been determined. As there are no rules for co-operation, so there are none for subordination and command. The Army and Navy are entirely independent as regards the defence of a seaport, and their working together depends solely on their respective commanders."

If a system of divided and indefinite responsibility is adopted by the Admiralty and War Office, to avoid offending the susceptibilities of the local representatives of the naval and military services, I sincerely trust the same system will not be extended to India.

16. I have noticed in current professional literature, and to some extent, I fear, in the recent proposals of the home authorities, a tendency to lay stress on the mutual independence of the sister services, which, though hitherto formally recognized, has not infrequently rendered the conjoint action of those services abortive in former periods of our history. As instances in point, I would mention the Expedition against Carthage

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\* Despatch No. 150, dated India Office, 14th August, 1890.

in 1741, described by Smollett, and the Walcheren Expedition in 1789, the vacillating and divided command of which gave rise to the well-known lines—

Lord Chatham, with his sabre drawn,  
 Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan ;  
 Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,  
 Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham.

In all warlike operations, whether they be naval, or military, or naval and military combined, the undivided control of a single chief appears to me to be an essential preliminary to success. An attack on one or other of our Indian ports presupposes the absence of a defending squadron, and consequently the absence of naval officers of superior rank; and as the main elements of harbour defence are of a military nature, I am in favour of adhering in this country to the principle laid down in paragraphs 5 and 6 of Pro. A, March, 1888, No. 60, viz., that the land, submarine mining, and floating defences allotted to the port attacked should remain wholly at the disposal of the military authority in chief local command.

17. I must apologise for the length of this note, but the subject is an important one, and I have thought it desirable to show as clearly as possible that the defences of Bombay have not been undertaken without due consideration of local conditions and requirements, or without consulting the home authorities, as well as the naval authorities on the spot.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## LVII.

ON A PROPOSAL THAT CERTAIN QUESTIONS OF DETAIL REGARDING THE DEFENCES OF BOMBAY SHOULD BE REFERRED TO THE AUTHORITIES AT HOME.

SIMLA,

26th June, 1891.

I am glad to find that there is a substantial agreement between the Honourable Military Member and myself in regard to the several important points raised in this case.

2. With reference to paragraphs 2 and 3 of my note of the 17th instant, all that appears to me to be necessary is for the Government of India to call the attention of the Governments of Madras and Bombay, and of the Adjutant-General in India to the orders of the Governor-General in Council on paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Defence Committee's Proceedings, dated 17th November, 1887.

3. As regards paragraph 4 of my note, I concur with the Honourable General Brackenbury in thinking that instructions of the nature proposed by him should be issued by the Government of India.

4. Paragraphs 7 and 8 of my previous note.—My Honourable Colleague is doubtless correct in stating that, until very recently the War Office authorities based their schemes of defence on the assumption that every port had to be secured against the most powerful naval attack. I observe, however, that Sir A. Clarke, late Inspector General of Fortifications, held more enlightened views as long ago as 1885\*; and it must be remembered that, in considering the nature of attack to be provided against at Bombay, the conclusion arrived at by the Indian Defence Committee, and embodied in their report dated November, 1879, was practically the same as that recorded by the Military Member in his note of the 27th May last.

5. Paragraph 9 of my previous note.—I would ask General Brackenbury to read paragraphs 4 and 7 of the accompanying letter† from the Defence Committee to the Government of India, from which it will be seen that the adequacy of the arrangements made by the Admiralty for improvising cruisers at foreign stations on the outbreak of hostilities seems open to question. Our commerce in Eastern Seas certainly could not be protected by means of unarmoured merchant vessels armed with short-ranging R.M.L. guns.

I am distinctly of opinion that naval equipment and armament of a superior description should be substituted for the comparatively obsolete "matériel" at present stored at Bombay, and presumably elsewhere; and that arrangements should be matured in peace time for supplying the "personnel" needed to man the improvised cruisers. I am, therefore, in favour of consulting the Naval Commander-in-Chief on this subject, and of subsequently addressing the Secretary of State.

6. Paragraphs 14 and 15 of my previous note.—I concur in the draft despatch as altered in red ink.

FRED ROBERTS.

\* Pro. A, April, 1887, No. 95, page 25.

† No. 276, dated 12th October, 1889.



## LVIII.

ON A COUNCIL NOTE BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY REVIEWING MY MEMORANDUM OF THE 8TH JUNE, 1891, "ON THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE EXISTING GARRISON OF INDIA TO MEET OUR ACTUAL AND PROSPECTIVE MILITARY REQUIREMENTS, &C., &C."

SIMLA,

26th August, 1891.

I must thank the Viceroy for his cordial appreciation of the general tenor of my memorandum. The three contingencies against which we have to provide are clearly set forth in his Excellency's Note of the 22nd instant, and as regards the first and second, I have nothing to add to what I have stated in my paper of the 8th June last and previous papers on the same subject.

With reference to the third contingency, I fully concur with the Viceroy in thinking that Russia could occupy Herat and Northern Afghanistan without much opposition on the part of the inhabitants, the greater portion of whom are only nominally Afghans, and would allow themselves to be incorporated in a stronger nationality with indifference, if not with satisfaction.

I dealt with this point at some length at page 5 of a paper dated 22nd May, 1885, and entitled "What are Russia's vulnerable points, and how have recent events affected our frontier policy in India?" a copy of which I append.

As I have frequently stated, the political effect of our acquiescence in the occupation of Afghan-Turkestan by Russia would be disastrous to our prestige as an Eastern Power. We have publicly proclaimed that we will permit no interference with Afghanistan; we have formally delimited the Afghan frontier; and we cannot now disavow our responsibility for the protection of Afghanistan against foreign aggression. Were we to do so, the whole eastern world would assume, and not without reason, that we were unwilling or unable to fulfil our engagements at the risk of a conflict with Russia: and the inevitable result would be that the Afghans, the border tribes, and the more warlike races in India itself, would turn against us and endeavour to make the best terms they could with our opponents.

Intrigue and disaffection would rapidly spread throughout our dominions, and the entire military force at our disposal would barely suffice to maintain tranquillity within our own frontier. In short, without having been defeated we should experience all the moral and political effects of our defeat.

I have said in the memorandum under discussion that I regard it incumbent on us to occupy the strategic front stretching from Kabul to Kandahar whenever the Russians move into Afghan-Turkestan. This move would, I consider, be necessary—

- (a.) Whether Russia's immediate object were to push her frontier forward up to the Hindu Kush;
- (b.) Whether she were seriously attempting the invasion of Afghanistan as a preliminary to an attack on India; or
- (c.) Whether the advance were only made to distract our attention and divide our forces.

This opinion is, I am delighted to see, shared by the Viceroy, and the only point on which we apparently differ is that, while I think we could not venture to undertake

such an operation without a material augmentation to the British Army in this country, his Excellency conceives that "we might find ourselves constrained to do this at a time when our armies were actively engaged in another part of the world, and when we could not depend upon obtaining a single man from home."

My object in writing the memorandum under discussion, as well as the several papers which I have submitted from time to time to the Viceroy of India during the last 7 or 8 years, has been the desire to bring forcibly home to the authorities in England the extreme danger to India from the near approach of Russia; the hopelessness of attempting to stop the progress of Russia by an attack or attacks upon her elsewhere than from India; and the impossibility of our undertaking to oppose Russia from India without a considerable increase to our Army in the shape of British soldiers.

If I have not written in vain, there ought to be no chance of our finding ourselves in the predicament which the Viceroy has supposed, for once Her Majesty's Ministers have been made aware that India could not be left to her own resources in the event of the Russians crossing the Afghan frontier, they assuredly would make the necessary arrangements to meet our requirements before despatching troops to any other Theatre of War.

My impression is that this question has never been placed before the authorities in England from the Indian point of view; it is not altogether surprising, therefore, that its importance should have been overlooked, and that our necessities should have been disregarded.

I hope that my efforts to this end will receive the warm support of my honourable colleagues. They all admit that to oppose Russia effectually, we must advance as far as the Hindu Kush, and if I know anything of Afghanistan, India and our Native Army, they may believe me when I say that we dare not enter upon such an operation with the Army as it now exists in this country.

What we have to guard against is not so much the actual strength of the force which the Russians could bring against us—though that may be a very real and considerable danger—as the effect such an enemy's approach would produce on our own subjects, and on the inflammable, predatory, and credulous races which inhabit Afghanistan and skirt our land frontier from Karachi to Bhamo.

The contingency to which the Viceroy alludes should be an impossibility if the Council accept my views and place them in unhesitating language before the Cabinet. I have long been aware that the Military advisers of Her Majesty's Government have been in favour of leaving India to do the best she could with the number of British troops already at her disposal, and of employing any Army England could put in the Field, beyond those required for Home Defence and for obligatory foreign garrisons, as an expeditionary force in South-Eastern Europe or Asia Minor.

I have lately had the opportunity of reading a Cabinet Minute, dated the 8th December, 1888, in which Her Majesty's Government defines the object for which the British Army is maintained, and I was not surprised to find that the reinforcements India would require in the event of war with Russia are not included in the list of obligations.

No doubt, the first duty devolving on the British Army is that of home defence; its second duty being the protection of the outlying colonies and dependencies of the Empire, inclusive of India. After these requirements have been fully met, ulterior action may be undertaken, if troops are available, in furtherance of our own interests or in support of our allies.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## LIX.

## ON THE BURMO-CHINESE AND THE BURMO-CHINESE-SIAMESE FRONTIERS.

SIMLA,

*3rd September, 1891.*

I have read the Viceroy's note of the 22nd August with great interest, and I may say, with reference to the question asked of me in paragraph 8, that I see no objection to Lieutenant Colomb being employed as proposed to explore the country to the north of Bhamo, in order that some satisfactory conclusion may be arrived at as to the proper boundary between ourselves and the Chinese on the frontier immediately to the east of Assam.

The precise object of Lieutenant Colomb's mission would be, I understand, to find out whether the Irrawaddy runs as shown on the accompanying map with a corner at A and at the two kotals marked in red; or whether A is the real source of the Irrawaddy and the two kotals are non-existent. Should A prove to be the source of the Irrawaddy, it is possible that the Salween runs right up to the On-chu river. It seems to me of considerable importance for us to know whether the On-chu is the Irrawaddy or the Salween; if it is the latter, it disposes of the Chinese claim to Bhamo as a port belonging to them, and the question of the navigation of the Salween would have to be settled between the Chinese and Siamese. If, however, the On-chu should turn out to be the Irrawaddy, the question of the navigation of the Irrawaddy is one for settlement between the Chinese and ourselves.

If A be the real source of the Irrawaddy, our frontier would run along the red line to A, and thence roughly towards Sadya in Assam, and we should be justified in claiming possession of both banks of the Irrawaddy from the sea to its source at A. If, on the other hand, the source of the Salween is at one of the kotals, we may have to allow the Chinese claim to the upper waters of the Irrawaddy extending towards and beyond B.

This point Lieutenant Columb will, I hope, be able to determine. While I admit the desirability of this exploration being undertaken, it seems that, however interesting from a geographical point of view, and however valuable in regard to our relations with China, it may be to settle the source of the Irrawaddy, it is infinitely more important, both in a political and military sense, that we should come to an understanding with China as to the definition of her frontier in the direction of Siam and Tonquin, in order to prevent the French advancing up the Mekong north of the 22nd, or what would be better still, the 18th parallel of latitude.

We should endeavour to get China to tell France exactly where she must stop, and to fix the boundary between the two States so distinctly that there may be no repetition on our south-eastern frontier of the Russian action on the Pamir.

I concur with his Excellency the Viceroy that we should do all in our power to keep on good terms with China. Our boundaries approach each other for a distance of about 1,500 miles, and at many points along this great length the Chinese might prove extremely troublesome neighbours.

I would be "generous and conciliatory" in our attitude towards China, and I would endeavour to induce her to fix her boundary as marked in blue on the map, from longitude 100 degrees 45 minutes to longitude 103 degrees, in latitude 21 degrees 36 minutes, and thence trending south-eastwards towards some point in longitude 105 degrees and latitude 18 degrees. This would eventually stop the French advancing beyond Prabang, at which there is no doubt (disclaimers notwithstanding) they are nibbling, and which Siam apparently cannot help their appropriating.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## LX.

ON THE NECESSITY OF ADHERING TO THE NORTH-EASTERN BOUNDARY OF AFGHANISTAN, AS DEFINED IN 1873; OF DEMARCATING THE FRONTIER BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND CHINA; AND OF MAINTAINING THE INDEPENDENCE OF TRANS-OXUS SHIGHNAN AND ROSEAN.

SIMLA,

16th September, 1891.

On examining Mr. Henvey's Review and Captain Younghusband's précis of the correspondence relative to the North-Eastern Frontier of Afghanistan, I am unable to concur in the view expressed by Sir Henry Rawlinson in 1884, that the language used by Lord Granville in 1873 was so ambiguous as to invalidate the agreement concluded at that date.\* In 1873, Her Majesty's Government did not claim Shighnan as Afghan territory; partly, no doubt, on account of defective information, but partly also because that district was not then under the Amir's rule, except so far as it may have been tributary to Badakshan, which in 1859 acknowledged the supremacy of Dost Muhammad.

2. In negotiating with Russia in 1873, Her Majesty's Government defined a river frontier as bounding Afghanistan, and bordering Wakhan and Badakshan on the north. This frontier started from the Sarikul, followed this branch of the Oxus or Panja to Kala Panja, and thence followed the main stream of the Oxus, *via* Bar Panja and Kala Khum, to the junction of that river with the Kokcha. An unfortunate hiatus was left between the Sarikul and Aktash on the Chinese frontier in the Tashkurghan direction, and this has given Russia a pretext for extending her explorations between the 74th and 75th parallels of longitude as far south as the Hindu Kush. It is, however, to be observed that, although the Oxus was described in 1873 as bounding Wakhan and Badakshan throughout its entire course from the Sarikul to its junction with the Kokcha, it was not stated that the whole of Wakhan was bounded on the north by the Oxus, and indeed such an interpretation would ignore the fact that Wakhan extends eastward up to the Chinese frontier. This fact was specifically admitted at the time by the Russian Government, when in November, 1872, General Kaufmann's memorandum was forwarded to the Russian Ambassador in London for communication to Her Majesty's Government. General Kaufmann in discussing the boundary proposed in Lord Granville's despatch objected to it on the ground that its acceptance would render Afghanistan conterminous with the possessions of Yakub Beg (*i.e.*, Kashgar and Yarkand) on the north-east. But if, as has subsequently been urged by certain Russian officials, it was intended by Russia and England that Afghan territory should not extend eastward of the Sarikul, General Kaufmann's objection, which was endorsed by the Cabinet of St. Petersburg, would have been meaningless unless it be conceded that Chinese territory extends as far westward as the Sarikul. In other words, by the Russian Government's own showing, the undefined hiatus must belong either to Afghanistan or to China.

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\* The word "*forming*" in Clause I, page 3, of Captain Younghusband's précis is obviously equivalent to "*which forms*."

3. As regards Shighnan, the précis shows that this province was formally occupied by Afghan troops in 1883, in spite of the remonstrances of the Government of India. The Russian Government in 1884 protested against this breach of the agreement entered into in 1873; but in view of the friction which arose in the Herat direction during the demarcation of the Afghan frontier in 1885, the matter was allowed to drop. Since that date, however, Russian exploring parties have from time to time penetrated Shighnan, the ownership of which district is under dispute, and which Russia is now understood to claim as coming within the sphere of her influence.

4. The question is by no means an easy one to deal with. In the first place, if the boundary defined in 1873 was an incorrect or incomplete one, it may be urged that it was our business to take measures for rectifying it as soon as we became aware of its defects. And in the second place, if, as is contended by Russia and has been partially admitted by ourselves, Shighnan being a trans-Oxus district was not included in Afghan territory under the agreement of 1873, the Amir's occupation of it was almost certain to lead to complications in the near future.

5. At page 114 of the "Gazetteer of the Afghan Provinces of the Upper Oxus," dated Simla, 1888, it is alleged that Shighnan, like Wakhan, seems to have been tributary for very many years to the *de facto* rulers of Badakshan, although it may also have been tributary to both China and Bokhara; and it is pointed out that since 1883 Shighnan and Roshan have become Afghan districts by the right of conquest and occupation.

It would, however, be useless to deny that, in laying claim to trans-Oxus territory, the Amir acted in opposition to our wishes, and to the understanding come to with Russia on his behalf in 1873; and the Russian Government made a very strong point in June, 1884, when they referred to the formal recognition of Wakhan as a frontier province of Afghanistan, and argued that, if it had been intended to include Shighnan among the districts tributary to Badakshan, Wakhan could only have been considered as an internal, and not as a frontier province.

6. At the same time it must be remembered that in the note of the 31st December, 1883, presented to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg by the Russian Government, it is specifically stated that "the principality of Shighnan and Roshan has always enjoyed an independent existence"; and consequently any interference in its affairs by Russia or Bokhara is as opposed to the agreement of 1873 as is its titular occupation by the ruler of Afghanistan.

So far as I am aware, no Afghan outposts are quartered at present in Shighnan or in the trans-Oxus portion of Roshan; and although Abdur Rahman may regard as his subjects the few nomad Tajiks who wander over the steppes of this desolate, inclement, and barren region, he has taken no steps to bring them under control, nor has he in any way menaced the frontier of Bokhara.

7. A further complication arises from the fact that the Chinese are understood to lay claim to the Alichur Pamir, and to that portion of the Great Pamir which lies north of the Sarikul. This claim, if it could be substantiated, would be highly advantageous to us, as it would materially reduce the area of independent territory south of the Murghab, and widen the zone between Russia and the Hindu Kush.

8. After the most careful consideration of the whole case, I am of opinion that our proper policy is to adhere to the agreement of 1873, and to the declaration made by Russia on the 31st December, 1883; in other words, to insist on Badakshan and Wakhan, bounded on the north by the Oxus, being recognised as Afghan territory, and the trans-Oxus portion of Roshan, Shighnan, and the Alichur Pamir (unless the last

can be shown to be Chinese territory) being recognised as independent territory conterminous on the east with China. I think we should arrange with Russia, China, and the Amir for the joint demarcation of the Chinese frontier up to its point of junction with the Afghan frontier east of the Sarikul; and that we should insist on the right of access to the independent zone above referred to, bounded on the south by the branch of the Panja which rises in the Sarikul, on the north by the Murghab or Aksu, on the east by China, and on the west by Badakshan. By this means we should not only satisfy the legitimate demands of Russia, but in all probability we should be supported by China; and, in any case, we should interpose a definite barrier between the former Power and the non-Afghan districts of Hunza and Chitral.

In the settlement of this question I would deprecate any importance being attached to the precise origin or nationality of the inhabitants of the provinces bordering the Oxus and its branches. A wandering Tajik will be just as contented and prosperous whether he retains his independence, or owes a nominal allegiance to Afghanistan, to China, or to Bokhara.

9. There is, of course, the alternative, which doubtless would be acceptable to the Amir, of claiming trans-Oxus Roshan, Shighnan, and the Alicur Pamir as Afghan territory, and inviting Russia to substitute the Aksu for the Panja in the agreement arrived at in 1873. I fear, however, that Russia would not consent to such a revision, unless compelled to do so by force of arms; and I am not sure that we should be justified in embroiling ourselves with that Power merely because the Amir, in persistent disregard of our advice, has attempted to annex certain trans-Oxus districts which were not included in the territory we secured for his predecessor in 1873.

10. While I doubt the propriety of supporting the Amir in pretensions which could only be substantiated by a manifestly disingenuous interpretation of the agreement of 1873, I am strongly in favour of maintaining the integrity of the northern provinces of Afghanistan, and the independence of trans-Oxus Roshan, Shighnan, and that portion of the Alicur Pamir which does not belong to China. It seems to me of the utmost importance that we should defend the acknowledged territorial rights of the Amir, even at the risk of offending the Russians. In the inevitable struggle for supremacy in the East, Russia must be our enemy, and we should certainly do all in our power to prevent the Afghans combining with that Power against us. A policy of concession and conciliation towards Russia will not check her advance; indeed it will only encourage her to press forward more rapidly. At the same time, by yielding to Russian demands, we should run the great risk of alienating Afghanistan, and of thus losing the support which its inhabitants could undoubtedly afford either to ourselves or to our antagonists.

However clearly we may enunciate our object and intentions, I anticipate considerable difficulty and risk in negotiating with Abdur Rahman in regard to the trans-Oxus districts mentioned above. Nothing is more distasteful to an Eastern despot than to be asked to relinquish territory which he believes or claims to be his own. Accustomed to the tortuous policy which is regarded by Asiatics as the highest form of statesmanship, he has no idea of abstract justice or of international comity; and if called upon by a friendly Power to adhere to a compact which he has contrived to evade, he is apt to conclude that his interests are being betrayed and his dignity sacrificed to serve some hidden purpose. The Seistan incident afforded a striking exemplification of this characteristic. In order to put an end to a dispute which had arisen about Seistan, we agreed in 1872 to arbitrate between Persia and Afghanistan; and our decision in favour of the former State was undoubtedly impartial, and presumably equitable. Sher Ali placed the matter in our hands, because he hoped that the friendly attitude we had assumed towards him would ensure our awarding the district in question to Afghanistan;

and when we failed to do so, his belief in our good will and good faith disappeared, as he could not conceive it possible that we should decide against him, except to gain some advantage from his opponent. The ex-Amir, Yakub Khan, referred to this incident more than once when discussing Afghan affairs with me at Kabul in 1879, and he declared that his father lost all confidence in us after the adverse decision about the Seistan boundary. There is consequently a grave danger of estranging the Amir, if we oblige him to renounce the trans-Oxus territory which he has been foolish and headstrong enough to lay claim to. This danger, in my opinion, can best be guarded against by fully acquainting Abdur Rahman with our motives and policy; and I should hope that His Highness will send a satisfactory reply to the letter inviting him to visit India, so that the frontier question may be explained personally to him by his Excellency the Viceroy. Should the Amir refuse the invitation, it seems essential that an official of high standing should be sent to Kabul, in order to place this very important subject before Abdur Rahman, and give him such guarantees as he may reasonably demand. Whichever alternative may be adopted, I trust that it will be found possible to dispel the Amir's suspicions, and to promote that mutual confidence and hearty co-operation between him and the Government of India, without which our most strenuous efforts to defend Afghanistan against Russian aggression may be rendered unavailing.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## LXI.

ON THE DESIRABILITY OF CONSTRUCTING A RAILWAY THROUGH THE ZHOB VALLEY AND CONNECTING IT WITH THE INDIAN SYSTEM OF RAILWAYS BY MEANS OF A STEAM FERRY AT DERA ISMAIL KHAN.

SIMLA,

29th September, 1891.

In the Viceroy's note of the 11th instant his Excellency asks whether "it is established without doubt that a railway from the Indus to Quetta must follow the Gomal river."

2. It seemed so desirable to give a definite reply to this question that I asked the Quarter-Master-General to assist me to answer it. The annexed memorandum, dated the 23rd instant gives in fullest detail, all the information we possess regarding the country, described by Sir James Browne in the 3rd paragraph as "the water partings between the main Indus and Helmand basins," and in my opinion it sets at rest any doubt as to the "engineering superiority" of the Gomal route.

3. In addition to the "engineering superiority" the Gomal route has the following advantages:

- (a.) It is the most direct line from the Punjab to Quetta and Kandahar; and
- (b.) It commands the whole of the country between Kandahar and Ghazni.

4. If the "engineering superiority" of the Gomal route be proved, I gather from the notes on this file that the desirability of its being used for a railway is admitted, but that it is considered we have time to spare before a war with Russia will render a railway through the Gomal indispensable, and that, for financial reasons, it is not considered prudent to incur so large an expenditure as 700 lakhs, which it is estimated that a railway from Bhakkar to Khanai, with a steam ferry over the Indus, would cost. If we could be certain that we should not be at war with Russia during the next 5 years, we might, with undue risk, arrange so as to have the Zhob Valley Railway completed by that time. This would allow of the 700 lakhs being distributed over 5 years, or at the rate of about 140 lakhs a-year, and I would gladly accept this solution of the question rather than postpone the commencement of the work. Five years, however, is a long time to look forward to, and it is not impossible that we may find ourselves at war with Russia long before. The Amir's death or the violation of the Afghan boundary might bring about hostilities without there being any complications in Europe, and if trouble did arise, I think I can safely assert that one of the many expenses we should have to incur would be the construction of the Gomal Railway. It would then have to be pushed on in a hurry, with great waste of life and money, and with bitter regrets at its not having been undertaken while there was time to do it at a comparatively moderate cost.

5. My great hope is that when the struggle comes we shall have the Afghans on our side, but it is quite possible that the Amir may play us false, and if the Ghilzais fell in with his views (and who can say that they would not with the plunder of India

before them?), the Zhob valley, without a railway, would be a source of considerable weakness to us. We should be threatened all along its border (some 300 miles in length) by hordes of Suleiman Khel and other tribes of Ghilzai extraction.

6. Should it be considered impossible for the whole project to be undertaken at once, I would strongly urge that—

- (1.) A steam ferry be established over the Indus at Dera Ismail Khan.
- (2.) The line of railway be made from Dera Ismail Khan to Martaza.
- (3.) The road from Martaza *viá* Brinj to Khanai be made in such a manner as would enable it to be utilized, without material alteration of level, for a railway hereafter.
- (4.) Sufficient material be stored at Khanai to enable the railway to be extended to Brinj, as soon as funds become available, or the prospects of war prove the necessity for the same.

7. A cart road through the Gomal to Khanai would undoubtedly produce a civilizing effect on the neighbouring tribes, and it would also be useful for military purposes; but, in calculating the quantity of supplies that can be conveyed by animal and cart transport over given distances, it must be remembered that, in a wild and uncultivated country like the Zhob valley, this quantity varies inversely to, and in a higher ratio than, the distances to be traversed. Thus, although it might be possible, to arrange for the daily delivery of 12,000 maunds at Brinj, a distance of 74 miles, probably not much more than a fifth of that quantity could be delivered daily at Khanai, a distance of 258 miles from Martaza.

8. As regards the general question of the urgency and importance from a military point of view of providing direct railway communication between Attock and Pishin, I would venture to observe that the point at issue is not so much the ultimate defence of India as the proximate defence of Afghanistan. His Excellency the Viceroy anticipates that Russia is likely to make further encroachments upon Afghan or Persian territory long before she attempts a serious attack on India, and from this view there will, I think, be few dissentients. But it is precisely to guard against the former contingency that the construction of the Zhob Valley Railway is urged. It is, I believe, admitted that in the event of Russia advancing across the Afghan frontier, we should have to occupy the Kabul-Kandahar alignment in adequate strength; and to enable our troops to concentrate unperceived on either flank of this line, or to be transferred from one flank to the other with certainty and rapidity, it is most desirable that lateral communication should be provided in rear of the selected strategical position. As the Honourable General Brackenbury points out, the facility of movement thus afforded "would be worth many thousands of troops to us." Our resources in the way of troops being far inferior to those of Russia, it seems hardly advisable to neglect any expedient which would enable us to utilize the force at our disposal to the best advantage.

9. With respect to the financial aspect of the case, I speak with considerable diffidence, but it appears to me that, in view of the active railway policy pursued by Russia in Central Asia, ordinary prudence imposes on us the duty of developing as far and as quickly as possible our trans-frontier railway system. Unless we do so in peace time, we shall be placed at considerable disadvantage when war breaks out. Under these circumstances, I am in favour of taking such precautions as will go far to ensure the integrity of Afghanistan and the safety of India, and it would seem only right that the cost of these precautions should be distributed by a loan over a considerable period

of time. The danger we have to guard against is certain, though it may not be immediate; and as posterity will probably reap the benefit, should it not share the cost?

10. So long as India was not threatened externally, the policy of paying for unproductive works out of revenue was undoubtedly a sound one, but the different conditions at present existing, would seem to justify a deviation from this financial rule. If, during the last century, our predecessors had refrained from pledging the credit of their descendants, we might have had no national debt, but we certainly should not be in possession of our present Empire.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## LXII.

ON A MEMORANDUM DRAWN UP IN THE INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT, LONDON, ON THE  
SUBJECT OF THE RUSSIAN EXPEDITION TO THE PAMIRS.

MEERUT,

*1st January, 1892.*

The Intelligence Department memorandum seems to be based on a fundamental misconception of the nature of the country under discussion.

The Pamirs are elevated rolling downs or steppes, not in the least Alpine in their characteristics, and in country of such a nature, a river is an infinitely superior boundary to an ill-defined watershed.

The writer of the memorandum ignores the fact that, under the 1873 Agreement, Shignan and Roshan were recognised as independent territory both by Russia and England.

FRED. ROBERTS.

## LXIII.

ON A DECISION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE THAT THE DEFENCE OF INDIAN PORTS IS TO BE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE ROYAL NAVY.

CALCUTTA,

6th February, 1892.

I.—I concur with the Honourable General Brackenbury in regard to points 1 and 2. With respect to the third point, it appears to me that the action of the home authorities has placed the Government of India in a very unfortunate position. Recognizing the necessity of providing for the floating defence of the Indian ports, we have spent a large sum of money in purchasing the requisite vessels. It has been decided, in direct opposition to our views, that these vessels are to be officered and manned by the Royal Navy, and to come under the control of the Naval Commander-in-Chief. But though the entire cost of the crews is to be borne by India, the Admiralty absolutely decline to bind their officers to any concerted plan of operations in the event of a port being attacked; they disclaim all responsibility for the defence of any port, and they have entered into no arrangements for watching a defended port's entrance. The result is that the expenditure of the Government of India on floating defences will not add to the security of the Indian ports, except so far as it tends to strengthen the Royal Navy in Eastern waters at the cost of the Indian tax-payer.

I can see no object in making fresh arrangements and incurring still further expenditure for the purpose of watching the entrances of our defended ports. I think we should clearly point out to the Secretary of State that, as the home authorities have insisted on handing over to the Navy the means we have provided and are maintaining for the floating defence of the Indian ports, the Government of India must hold the Admiralty responsible for the due performance of the duty which they have undertaken.

II.—I concur in the view expressed by his Excellency the Viceroy and the Honourable General Brackenbury; but as I have already remarked in noting on the case dealing with Secretary of State's Military Despatch, No. 174, dated 26th November, 1891, I think it should be clearly understood that if we pay for the "personnel" provided by the Navy for manning the floating defences of the Indian ports, the Government of India must hold the Admiralty responsible for the due performance of the duties for which these floating defences are maintained.

FRED. ROBERTS.

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## LXIV.

## REGARDING OUR FUTURE POLICY ON THE GILGIT FRONTIER AND THE INCREASE OF THE GILGIT FORCE.

SIMLA,

14th April, 1892.

I have read these two files with considerable interest. Sir Mortimer Durand defines the questions at issue to be as follows:—

“(1.) Whether the military authorities consider it desirable to increase the British garrison at Gilgit:

“(2.) Whether they consider it desirable to enter on the operation of opening up the Indus Valley road.”

2. My first impression on reading Lieut.-Colonel Durand's letter, No. 224 of the 3rd February, was that it would be right to meet his demands, and that the Gilgit garrison should be increased to the extent he proposes. Since then the Resident in Kashmir has shown me two papers; one being the preliminary report drawn up by Captain Yeilding on the question of transport required to feed the Gilgit garrison; the other, Colonel Prideaux's own letter when forwarding the report to the Government of India.

3. It is quite apparent from these papers that the difficulties of supply and transport are infinitely greater than were anticipated, and it is a question for consideration whether, instead of increasing the garrison now at Gilgit, it can be maintained at its present strength. Captain Yeilding shows clearly that it is impossible within the time during which the passes ordinarily remain open, viz., 100 days, to convey to Gilgit more than 27,942 maunds; of this amount, 5,000 maunds will be taken up with plant for the bridge over the Indus near Bunji, and the balance will only suffice to feed the present garrison. It does not provide for any reserve of grain, nor for the extra 12,600 maunds of food which would be required for the reinforcements proposed by Lieut.-Colonel Durand for Astor and Bunji. Unless, therefore, more supplies than are now expected can be procured locally, I do not see how it would be possible to add to the number of troops now at Gilgit.

4. The cost of the transport to convey the above amount (27,942 maunds) is estimated by Captain Yeilding at over 8 lakhs of rupees; and what is perhaps even a more serious matter than this large annual charge is his statement that, owing to the short time the passes are open, it would take 5,000 pack animals to convey the grain. All, or nearly all, of these must be drawn from the Punjab, a certain number of animals would inevitably perish, and a steady drain would thus be established on the transport resources of the Punjab.

5. I notice that Lieut.-Colonel Durand recommends an increase to the strength of the Gilgit garrison for the following reasons (paragraph 7 of his letter):—

(1.) The possibility of Russian raiding on the Pamirs, which means watching the Ishkaman route, etc., etc.

(2.) Attempted Chinese interference in Hunza.

(3.) Shinaki trouble.

6. It is, of course, absolutely necessary that we should be strong enough at Gilgit to prevent anything like the possibility of a disaster, such as would be brought about if Russia could turn us out, or come in force sufficiently near to raise the tribes against us. It seems, however, clear from what we know of the country itself, the great distances to be traversed, and the absence of supplies and forage along the whole route, that only small parties could, under existing conditions, reach the neighbourhood of Gilgit.

Osh, the nearest Russian cantonment, is nearly 500 miles from Gilgit; while Gilgit is only 194 miles from Bandipur, 320 miles from Abbottabad, and 383 miles from Rawal Pindi; so that if we have difficulties, those of the Russians (even allowing for their wants being less than ours) would be considerably greater; and until they have succeeded in gaining some position on the Taghdumbash Pamir, which presumably is Chinese, in Shighnan, Roshan, or the Dorah pass leading to Chitral, we need not fear that they will seriously threaten Gilgit.

I do not suppose that the British Government would acquiesce in the Russians establishing themselves in any of the places I have just named, or indeed on any part of this frontier, regarding the ownership of which diplomatic questions have still to be discussed. I trust that, if Russia enters any of these regions, war will at once be declared, so that we may be prepared to attack her from some other portion of our frontier where our difficulties would be less, and where we could place a sufficiently strong force in the field.

7. With reference to Colonel Durand's second reason—attempted Chinese interference in Hunza—I should hope that, now Hunza and Nagar have been dealt with, and we are on friendly terms with China, there is no likelihood of any interference on her part in the direction of Gilgit. At any rate nothing serious could take place without previous warning.

8. As regards the third reason, "Shinaki trouble," I appreciate, in common with Dr. Robertson and Lieutenant-Colonel Durand, how desirable it is that all these tribes should be brought under our control, and that the main communication with Gilgit should be along the left bank of the Indus. On the other hand, I recognise that this would be a difficult and prolonged operation. It would in all probability rouse the trans-Indus tribes, and might involve us in such troubles as would not only entail the employment of a very large force for the campaign itself, but also the permanent location of several regiments and batteries in that country. All this might take place too at the very time when every available man and mule were required elsewhere.

9. I much wish that this part of the frontier could have been brought under our control in days gone by.

To attempt to conquer the country now would, it appears to me, be playing directly into the hands of the Russians. In the scheme for a "Russian advance on India," drawn up by General Kuropatkin, the enterprising Governor of the trans-Caspian Provinces, the possibility of our being tempted to involve ourselves in difficulties in the direction of the Pamir has not been overlooked, for, in referring to the part which the Russian troops in the Ferghana district would play, General Kuropatkin says, "They will remain stationary, ready to enter Kashgar after the operations in Afghanistan; or, in case of necessity, they would direct their movements by the mountains of the Alai to the Pamir, in order to subdue the natives and attack part of the British army."

10. We are very much in the same position now as when I addressed the

Government of India through the Quarter-Master-General in a letter,\* in which I pointed out the undesirability of holding Gilgit and its Chitral outposts by a brigade of regular troops, and suggested that the frontier might be defended by a force to be raised locally on an irregular basis: "The admitted object of such a force to be desultory, and the acquisition by England of the political influence otherwise likely to accrue to Russia from direct contact with Kashmir territory."

11. I still abide by this opinion, which is considerably strengthened by the information afforded by Captain Yeilding's report. I consider that Lieut.-Colonel Durand's duty should be to get a general control over the frontier, and that if at any time a movement is necessary towards the passes over the Hindu Kush, it should only be made by small parties for the purpose of observation. Colonel Durand should carefully avoid anything that might lead to a collision with the Shinaki tribes. When the time comes for dealing with these tribes, operations will have to be undertaken from Hazara as a base and not from Gilgit.

12. I understand that it is the intention of Government to hold a conference at Simla during the next few months to discuss the general question of our frontier policy. It seems to me very desirable that in any such discussion the question of the Gilgit and Chitral frontiers should not be omitted. It would be advantageous not only to have Lieut.-Colonel Durand's assistance, but that of the Resident in Kashmir or of some officer deputed by him.

It is of the utmost importance that we should have accurate information as to the resources of Kashmir in the matters of supply and transport, so that it may be determined whether Kashmir could not be the base instead of the Punjab. I understand Colonel Prideaux contemplates everything, or nearly everything, required for Gilgit coming from British territory, and it is apparently on this supposition that Captain Yielding has prepared his report.

It is difficult to believe that a magnificently fertile country like Kashmir, maintaining a population of between 300,000 and 400,000, could not find supplies for the 4,000 additional men stationed at Gilgit. It is also equally surprising that forage for the animals required to transport the food to Gilgit could not be provided locally. It may be necessary to assist forage arrangements by sending compressing machinery to Kashmir, but surely the forage itself ought to be procurable in the valley.

ROBERTS.

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\* No. 5,660A, dated 4th August, 1891



## LXV.

ON THE NECESSITY FOR REINFORCING THE BRITISH GARRISON OF INDIA, IN THE EVENT OF A RUSSIAN ADVANCE INTO AFGHANISTAN, AND THE DESIRABILITY OF TAKING EARLY STEPS TO RENDER THE ARMY IN THIS COUNTRY BETTER FITTED TO MEET A CIVILIZED ENEMY.

SIMLA,

13th June, 1892.

In discussing this important despatch and the almost equally important note in which General Brackenbury has stated his views as to our present military position, it will, I think, be most convenient first to deal with the several points raised by the Secretary of State for India, and secondly to consider how far the proposals put forward by my honourable colleague seem likely to meet the requirements of the case.

2. In my paper, dated 8th June, 1891, which led to the Secretary of State being addressed in Military Department Despatch No. 180 of the 15th September, 1891, I strongly urged both on political and on military grounds the necessity of our being determined and prepared to fulfil the engagement we had deliberately entered into to protect Afghanistan from foreign aggression; and I recorded my opinion that, in the event of war with Russia, or possibly with Russia and France combined, and even supposing the advance of the former Power to be mainly intended to distract our attention and divide our forces, it would be impossible to safeguard our interests in the East without a considerable augmentation of the British army in this country.

3. Without recapitulating the arguments on which this contention was based, I would observe that the real question at issue, as clearly laid down in the minutes submitted to the Secretary of State, has hardly been touched upon in his Lordship's reply. We are assured that we may rely on receiving every possible assistance in the event of any serious danger threatening India; but we are not told whether Her Majesty's Government concur in, or dissent from, the view that the unopposed violation of Afghan territory on Russia's part would most seriously endanger the stability of our rule in this country. Until this essential point has been settled, it is almost, if not quite, impossible to formulate any scheme for the defence of India which can be free from the fatal defect of uncertainty as to the precise interests to be guarded, and the strategic front to be occupied as a preliminary to ulterior action.

4. With reference to the fourth paragraph of the despatch, it is unquestionably the case that India could not be reinforced from home unless we possessed the command of the sea; but as the continuance of hostilities with one or more of the Continental Powers would necessarily be contingent on the maintenance of England's naval supremacy, the risk of communication between India and the mother country being interrupted during a struggle with Russia, except perhaps for a very brief period, need hardly be taken into account.

5. In paragraph 5 of the despatch we were informed, first, that our plans for the defence of India must be based upon the actual strength of the force available in this country; secondly, that no forward policy necessitating the supply of reinforcements

should be laid down without consulting the Home Government; and, thirdly, that the complement of British troops to be maintained in India should be fixed irrespective of the aid to be derived from England.

With regard to the first two principles enunciated by the Secretary of State, it is to be remembered that no movement of troops, either British or Native, beyond our present frontier can be ordered without the Secretary of State's sanction, and consequently no forward line of policy, whether it contemplates the necessity of reinforcements from England or not, can be carried into effect without consultation with Her Majesty's Government. I would further point out that in my note of June last, as well as in several previous papers, I fully explained my reasons for believing that the security of India depended on our arranging beforehand for the rapid occupation of a position which would enable us to protect Afghan territory against foreign aggression, and that this position could not be occupied with any reasonable prospect of our being able to maintain ourselves there without a considerable augmentation of the British army in this country. My views were generally accepted by his Excellency the Viceroy and my honourable colleagues, and were laid before Her Majesty's Government. The consultation prescribed in the despatch has therefore taken place, but no indication is afforded in the Secretary of State's reply as to whether the line of policy thus set forth is approved or disapproved by the home authorities; and, if the latter, the grounds of disapproval are not stated, nor is any alternative policy suggested. In fact, while the Secretary of State neither discusses nor attempts to refute the arguments embodied in the correspondence submitted for his consideration, he calls upon the Government of India to assume the responsibility of proposing a scheme of defence under conditions which that Government has already shown to be impracticable.

6. The third principle which Lord Cross desires to impress on the Government of India is that the British army in this country should be fixed at a strength proportionate to our defensive requirements, irrespective of the aid to be derived from home. This virtually means that the British army in India should be permanently maintained on such a footing as would enable it not only to keep order within and on the immediate confines of India, but to counteract the aggressive designs of the European Power which has established itself on the northern frontier of Afghanistan. It seems to me that the acceptance of this principle would impose on India a financial burden which no other country in the world is called upon to bear. So far as I am aware, no European or Asiatic Power maintains its army in peace time on a war footing. Every nation makes use of one or other of the numerous reserve systems which enables it to augment and mobilize with more or less rapidity the troops composing its field army. But in India, from the very nature of the case, we can have no reserve of British soldiers, and no local expedient can be devised which will provide for the adjustment of our British garrison in accordance with our peace and war requirements. If we cannot rely on that garrison being reinforced when the necessity arises, we shall be compelled either to leave India without adequate means of defending itself, or to incur large unproductive charges for the sake of meeting a danger which, though real and formidable, is indeterminate so far as its extent, its incidence, and the date of its occurrence are concerned.

7. It is true, as pointed out in paragraph 6 of the despatch, that in 1885 the Government of India were in favour of strengthening the establishment of British and Native troops so as to be in a position rapidly and temporarily to repel or anticipate Russia's action on the Afghan frontier. But I view the increase that was then proposed and sanctioned as a precautionary measure which was necessitated by the approach of one of the great military Powers to the confines of India. The Indian garrison had to be augmented proportionately to the disturbing influence likely to be produced on the

native population by the proximity of Russia, and to the risk of her attempting to seize some portion of Afghanistan by a *coup de main*. I doubt, however, its having been intended or implied by Lord Dufferin's Government that India should engage in hostilities with Russia without receiving, as soon as they could be supplied, considerable reinforcements from home, or that she should involve herself in grave financial embarrassment for the purpose of maintaining in peace time a force of British troops fully equal in strength to her probable requirements in the event of war. This view is fully confirmed by paragraph 62 of Military Department Despatch No. 135, dated 14th August, 1885 (Pro. A, August, 1885, Nos. 28 and 29).

8. In the last paragraph of the present despatch the Secretary of State invites the Government of India to take into consideration the existing establishment of the British and Native army in this country, with special regard to the occupation of Upper Burma and the formation of the Native States' contingents. If it be thought expedient to increase the proportion of British troops, we are requested to submit specific and detailed proposal to that effect.

9. The question thus raised is a wide and extremely important one. Assuming, as I think I am justified in doing, that the present state of our finances will not admit of any very considerable addition to the military budget, the points to be dealt with are (i) whether the organization of the army in India is such as to enable us to utilise our limited resources to the best advantage, (ii) to what extent the annexation of Upper Burma has absorbed the troops which were added to our army in 1886, (iii) whether the Imperial Service troops could take the place of a certain number of our own Native regiments, and, if not, (iv) whether expenditure could be reduced in any other direction, and the saving applied to increase the proportion of British troops, supposing that proportion to be inadequate.

10. As regards the first point it is obvious that, so long as Her Majesty's Government decline to abolish the obsolete presidential system, the Government of India are precluded from taking steps to ensure the efficiency for fighting purposes of a large portion of the Native army. Certain regiments of that army are notoriously unfit to meet even an uncivilized enemy, and the cost of maintaining more of them than are needed for local purposes is so much money wasted. This fact must be as well known to the Secretary of State and his advisers as it is to the authorities in this country; yet the moderate proposals which the Government of India have repeatedly put forward for reforming the organization and improving the composition of our Native troops, more particularly in Madras and Bombay, have only been very grudgingly and partially accepted by the India Office and War Office.

11. Secondly, I find that, exclusive of the troops quartered in the Rangoon district, about 3,000 British and 11,200 native soldiers are employed in Burma; and consequently the increase in our fighting strength of some 10,000 British and 16,000 Native soldiers which was carried into effect in 1886, has to that extent been rendered inoperative. In my note on "The present state of Burma, the distribution of its garrison, and its future administration," dated 29th February, 1892, I proposed that the garrison of Upper Burma should in future consist of 3 battalions of British infantry, 1 British and 1 Native mountain battery, and 11 regiments of Native infantry, aggregating some 3,000 British and 9,400 Native troops. In view of the extended obligations which the occupation of Upper Burma has imposed on the army in India, and of the possibility of complications arising at an inopportune moment with China on the north or France on the west of our recently acquired territory, I am strongly in favour of strengthening our present military establishment by the equivalent of the force forming the obligatory garrison of this outlying province.

12. Thirdly, we have to consider whether the Native States' contingents could take the place of an equal number of the less efficient troops belonging to our regular army. I am of opinion that they could not do so, unless they were permanently brought under military control, and trained and commanded by British officers. In fact, I doubt our being able to make much use of the Imperial Service troops, as at present organized, in the event of war with Russia. So long as they are officered exclusively by Natives, it would be impossible—and even if possible, it would be politically dangerous—to raise these contingents to the same high standard of efficiency as our own regiments composed of similar material; and but little reliance could be placed on their fighting qualities, if not regularly disciplined and led by men of the governing race. Judging from past history and our own experience, nothing is more certain than that the value of Native troops, even of those drawn from the warlike inhabitants of Northern India, in a great measure depends on their association with and subordination to British officers, and I can see no reason for supposing that the Native States' contingents would prove an exception to the general rule. It may perhaps be urged that British officers could be posted to these contingents on their being ordered on field service. Such an arrangement, however, would hardly meet the requirements of the case; first, because it would be of little use suddenly to bring Native troops under the control of officers with whom they were absolutely unacquainted; and, secondly, because we have no reserve of spare officers available for the duty in question. If the Imperial Service troops are to be included in the effective fighting strength of the Indian Empire, I regard it as essential that a proper complement of British officers should be permanently attached to each corps in peace time; but I doubt whether any such alteration in the constitution of this irregular force would be acceptable to the feudatories concerned, or politically expedient. In the formation of the Native States' contingents our object was to render the armies maintained by the Native princes of India innocuous to ourselves, rather than formidable to our enemies. We have accordingly endeavoured to reduce the numerical strength of these armies by increasing the cost of certain portions of them, and it is our intention in time of disturbance to compromise the states externally and weaken them internally by promptly removing their better trained soldiers to some position, not in the fighting line, where they may be of use in guarding communications or holding in check the uncivilised tribes bordering our land frontier. From the foregoing remarks it will be seen that, in my opinion, the existence of the Native States' contingents will not enable us to reduce our own Native army; but on the other hand, if the training and strength of the contingents be restricted within carefully defined limits, and if their formation be accompanied by a sensible reduction in the less disciplined portions of the armies of the Native States concerned, I do not think that their existence, irrespective of other considerations, necessitates the re-adjustment of the establishment of British troops in India.

13. The fourth point is whether any economy is possible, which would admit of the establishment of British troops being increased, assuming the present number to be insufficient.

And here the question arises as to the suitability under existing conditions of the proportion between British and Native soldiers, which was decided upon after the Mutiny, and has since been adhered to. At present the strength of the British Army in India is about 70,000, and that of the Native army about 150,000, the ratio being approximately as 1 to 2. In my note of the 8th June, 1891, I showed that we should require 80,000 men, half British and half Native, to occupy the defensive alignment stretching from Kandahar to Kabul, and that some 24,000 men, one-third British and two-thirds Native, would be needed to guard the lines of communication between Quetta and Kandahar and onwards to Girishk, and between Peshawar and Kabul.

Taking the obligatory garrison of India at 40,000 British and 80,000 Native troops, I calculated that the aggregate strength of the Army, in the event of war with Russia, would be 224,000, of which 88,000, or about 40 per cent., would be British, and 136,000, or about 60 per cent., Native. In other words, we should need 18,000 more British troops than are now available in India, and we should possess a surplus of 14,000 Native troops. If my views as to the strength and composition of the force we should have to employ in meeting a Russian advance are accepted, it follows that we should endeavour gradually to increase the proportion of British to Native troops serving in this country from the present ratio of 1 to 2 to the proposed ratio of 2 to 3. This change in the composition of our army is necessitated by the proximity of an aggressive civilized Power, and the more completely it can be carried out in peace time without unduly depleting the Indian exchequer, the more prepared we shall be to defend our possessions and fulfil our engagements when the emergency actually occurs.

14. In paragraph 24 of my note above referred to, I estimated the strength of the Native army at 150,000 men. From an interesting return prepared in January last by the Accountant-General, Military Department, of which I append a copy, it appears that the established strength of the Native troops under the military authorities, inclusive, however, of the regiment of Central India Horse, is 133,130, to which number have to be added the troops, other than the above regiment, under the orders of the Government of India. These aggregate 17,320, and raise the total to 150,450. There is therefore, as already stated, a surplus of 14,000 over our prospective war requirements, if we leave out of account the reserve of 50,000 men which we should have to raise on the first indication of a Russian advance. And here it may be noted that the average annual cost of a British soldier in this country is entered in the Accountant-General's return at 890 rupees, but to this about 100 rupees should be added as the proportionate charge for barrack accommodation. Approximately speaking, the British soldier costs nearly three times as much as the Native soldier, who is put down at 343 rupees a-year, and the same ratio would probably apply to the cost of the latter as compared with that of the Native reservist.

15. In a note dated 1st February, 1892, dealing with a representation made by the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army, regarding what his Excellency considered to be undue reductions in the number of Native troops at his disposal, I explained my reasons for thinking that 7 Madras Infantry regiments out of 32 might safely be disbanded, the remainder being amply sufficient to garrison the southern Presidency and Burma. I consider also that the numbers of Bombay infantry regiments might be reduced from 26 to 22, no Native infantry being required at Kirkee, only two regiments at Poona, only one at Mhow, and a wing instead of a regiment being sufficient at Bhuj and Rajkot respectively.

16. We have thus a somewhat difficult problem to solve. On the one hand, it is manifestly desirable to increase the proportion of British troops in India; and as a certain number of our Native infantry regiments are superfluous in peace time and unreliable for fighting purposes, the saving in cost resulting from their disbandment might be applied to pay for additional British soldiers. On the other hand, the present establishment of Native troops is only slightly in excess of our peace requirements, and would have to be augmented by at least 50,000 men in order to meet our war requirements in the event of hostilities with Russia. I have already pointed out that no civilized nation can afford permanently to maintain its army on a war footing, and that India should not be called upon to do so in regard to its British garrison. It seems to me that the same principle is applicable to the Native army, and that while

its peace establishment might be reduced to the extent indicated above, every effort should be made to raise an efficient infantry reserve of the strength requisite for war. From time to time attempts have been made to form such a reserve, but for reasons which need not here be specified, they have not been very successful, the total number of Reservists being at present under 10,000. Moreover, the important principle has not been recognized that a reserve system, to be really effective, should not only admit of the reinforcement of the battalions of the regular army at the commencement and during the progress of hostilities, but also provide the means of rapidly embodying fresh battalions. A system of territorial class regiments, composed of two or more regular battalions and a corresponding number of reserve battalions, would, I think, add largely and in the most economical manner to the potential strength of the Native army. In peace time one or more of the regular battalions should invariably be stationed at the regimental head-quarters, to which also a colonel commanding and a suitable staff of British and Native officers would have to be appointed for the training of the reserve battalions and recruits. I should not be inclined to extend this system, at any rate for some time to come, to the infantry of the Punjab Frontier Force, to the Burma regiments of the Madras army, or to the local corps under the Government of India; and owing to the conditions of their enlistment, it would not be applicable to Gurkha regiments.

17. The number of Native troops needed to meet ordinary demands in India itself, inclusive of minor frontier expeditions, may probably be taken at about 124,000 men: and if a regular army of that strength were kept up in addition to the troops under the orders of the Government of India, and if at the same time a thoroughly trained reserve, numbering 50,000 men, could be formed and a material increase made in the British garrison of India, it can hardly be doubted that we should be much better prepared for a serious war than we are at present. In 1885, the Government of India were in favour of raising a Native reserve force 23,000 strong, to be subsequently augmented should circumstances render an augmentation desirable. This proposal was accepted by the Secretary of State, and consequently my present recommendation involves no deviation from the policy which was laid down under Lord Dufferin's administration. The cost of a reserve exceeding its present strength would be an additional military charge, but one which was foreseen in Military Department Despatch, No. 135, dated 14th August, 1885, paragraphs 64 and 68.

18. After a careful consideration of our present military and financial position, I propose the following changes in the establishment of the army in India. The British infantry to be increased by the equivalent of the force in Upper Burma, that is to say, by 3,000 plus  $\frac{9,400}{3}$  or 6,130 men. The Native infantry to be reduced by 9,130, the difference between 133,130 and 124,000, equal to seven Madras and four Bombay infantry regiments. The British infantry to be further increased by the equivalent of this reduction, that is to say, by  $\frac{9,130}{3}$  or 3,040 men. The British garrison would thus be raised to a strength little short of 80,000, or nearly two-thirds of the Native force of 124,000. The Native infantry reserve to be reorganized and gradually raised to a strength of 50,000 men. Until the reserve exceeds the proportion laid down in 1885, no extra expense would be entailed that has not already been contemplated. The financial effect of these changes, at any rate for some time to come, would thus be restricted to the increase in cost due to 6,130 additional British soldiers, and this at 990 rupees each would amount to about 60 lakhs a year.

19. It may perhaps be objected that such a sum is by no means inconsiderable, and cannot be provided without an undue strain on the finances of India. There seems, however, to be every prospect of a rapid growth in the prosperity of Burma generally and of Upper Burma in particular; and the surplus revenue of the province will be available to meet the cost of the troops which its occupation has withdrawn from the effective strength of the army in this country. I cannot give the figures for 1891-92 as they have not yet been compiled, but for the two preceding years I find that in Upper Burma the excess of expenditure over revenue was more than 89 lakhs in 1889-90 and only 72 lakhs in 1890-91. On the other hand, the excess of revenue over expenditure in Burma as a whole was about 82½ lakhs in 1889-90 and about 126½ lakhs in 1890-91. The total military charges in Burma during the 2 years under reference amounted to 210½ lakhs, and the excess of revenue to 209 lakhs, leaving a deficit of only 1½ lakhs. We may reasonably expect a progressive increase in the surplus revenue, more particularly when the projected irrigation works in Upper Burma have been undertaken, and a corresponding diminution in military charges if the country becomes more settled and prosperous. I conclude, therefore, that in a very few years' time the surplus revenue of Burma will much more than suffice to meet the extra charge on account of the proposed increase of British troops.

20. The foregoing recommendations are only put forward in a preliminary form and, if accepted by the Government of India, will have to be worked out in detail before the Secretary of State is addressed on the subject. There are several minor questions on which I have not touched, such as the selection of the Madras and Bombay regiments for disbandment, the choice of stations for regimental head-quarters, the affiliation of battalions so as to facilitate the formation of an efficient reserve and the disposal of the British officers who would be displaced from regimental employ. As regards the last, a certain number of them would be required for duty at the head-quarters of the several territorial regiments, and the services of the remainder might be utilised by increasing the proportion of wing commanders and officers at present allotted to Native corps.

21. Turning now to General Brackenbury's note of the 13th ultimo, I would remark that about 2 years ago I had the advantage of perusing the joint memorandum which was drawn up in August 1899 by my honourable colleague and Major-General Newmarch, and which is now quoted by the former in connection with the despatch under discussion. On reading this important paper I was rejoiced to find that the suicidal policy of awaiting Russia's attack behind our present frontier, which at one time had prominent supporters at home, had been recognised as impracticable by no less an authority than the Director of Military Intelligence, and that, in the event of Russia crossing the Afghan frontier, the necessity was admitted of a corresponding advance on our part to Kandahar, Jalalabad and Ghazni. On the other hand, the policy of compromise which the memorandum advocates, and which would enable Russia to gain a secure foot-hold in Afghanistan, appears to me to be fraught with the most serious danger to our Indian Empire. The paper is undoubtedly a very able exposition of the views of those military experts who regard the defence of India from a purely technical standpoint, but in my opinion it fails to take into account the very peculiar conditions which underlie our supremacy in the East. If, after having demarcated the Afghan frontier, and publicly guaranteed the integrity of the Amir's dominions, we were to acquiesce in the occupation by Russia of any considerable portion of that country, whether it be north or south of the Hindu Kush, our prestige as an Eastern Power would disappear, the Afghans and the border tribes would cast in their lot with our opponents, the fidelity of our Native troops would be seriously shaken,

and we should have to guard against intrigue and disaffection in rear as well as to face an unscrupulous and powerful enemy in front. This, indeed, is to some extent admitted in the memorandum, in paragraphs 45 and 46 of which we are told that, if we acquiesce in Russia's annexation of Northern Afghanistan, she will be enabled a few years later to threaten Southern Afghanistan—and consequently India—in greater strength than before, and that we shall have to increase our military expenditure *pari passu* with the extension of her influence and the improvement of her communications. Still these evils are held to be less than those which would attend any attempt on our part to fulfil our engagements and prevent the occupation of Afghan territory by a foreign Power. I fail to see what possible advantage would be gained by adopting the course indicated in the memorandum. I can understand a policy the object of which is to gain permanent security by exertions and sacrifices, involving a large temporary increase of military expenditure; and I can also understand a policy which endeavours to postpone such exertions and sacrifices on the ground that the danger to be apprehended is remote and uncertain. What I cannot understand is a policy which, while recognising the certainty of the danger, would allow that danger to become more imminent and formidable, with the result of rapidly and continuously augmenting the heavy military and financial burden that India already has to bear.

22. I have dealt so frequently and so exhaustively with the military and political aspects of the problem under discussion that, without repeating myself, I find it difficult to add anything to my previous remarks. I would note, however, with reference to paragraph 42 of the memorandum that, in estimating the force to be detailed for the occupation of Kandahar, Jalalabad and Ghazni, the number of troops required to keep communications open between these places and India do not seem to have been taken into account. On this point I would invite attention to paragraphs 16 to 18 of my note of the 8th June, 1891, as showing what a large proportion of the field army would be employed in guarding the trans-frontier lines of communication, even if we held our advanced positions in much greater strength than that proposed by Generals Brackenbury and Newmarch.

23. The theory put forward in the same paragraph of the joint memorandum, that the Afghans would display a simultaneous hostility towards ourselves and the Russians, appears to me to be entirely opposed to what we know of Asiatic races. If threatened by two hostile nationalities, each superior in organization, numbers and *morale* to themselves, the Afghans would unquestionably side with that Power which offered most for their support, and which they considered most likely to be victorious. That there is no real cohesion or national sentiment among the heterogeneous tribes owing allegiance to the Amir, is fully explained in paragraphs 18 to 25 of my note of the 22nd May, 1885, entitled "What are Russia's vulnerable points, and how have recent events affected our frontier policy in India?\*

24. With regard to the acceptance of the joint memorandum by the Secretaries of State for India and for War, alluded to by the Honourable General Brackenbury in the second paragraph of his note, I can only say that, if the views set forth in the memorandum are approved by Her Majesty's Government, a distinct intimation to that effect should be communicated to the Government of India. So far as I am aware a copy of the memorandum was sent privately to the Viceroy by Lord Cross without any authoritative expression of opinion; and until we are informed in an official manner of the decision, if any, arrived at by the Cabinet on this important question, I think we should be extremely unwise to assume the responsibility of adopting a line of policy to

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\* Pro. B, November, 1891, Nos. 78—80.



which I am strongly opposed, and from which I venture to hope that his Excellency the Viceroy and the majority of my honourable colleagues dissent. Moreover, although the joint memorandum may have commended itself to the War Office and India Office in 1889, it would be premature to assume that a fuller knowledge of the subject, and a more correct appreciation of the consequences likely to result from the unopposed advance of Russia, might not induce the Cabinet to adopt the bolder, but I feel convinced the safer, course advocated in my note of June, 1891.

25. In the third paragraph of his note General Brackenbury accepts the Secretary of State's view that a distinction should be drawn between the expeditionary action which the Government of India could take *proprio motu*, and that for which the sanction of the Home Government would be requisite. So long, however, as telegraphic communication between England and India remains intact, I cannot conceive an emergency arising which would necessitate or justify an advance in force across the frontier, before the approval of Her Majesty's Government had been obtained. India is a dependency of the British Empire, not an allied and self-contained state; and in matters of Imperial concern, such as military operations of the nature indicated, the ultimate responsibility and final decision do not, and cannot rest with the Government of this country.

26. I have already dealt with the points raised in the fourth paragraph of General Brackenbury's note in my remarks on the Secretary of State's despatch, paragraphs 5 and 6 of this paper.

27. With reference to the concluding paragraph of the note, I think it will be generally admitted that the army in India, taking it as a whole, is somewhat too strong for our peace requirements, and a good deal too weak for our war requirements in the event of hostilities with Russia. I concur in my honourable colleague's opinion that it would be inadvisable at present to propose any large addition to our military expenditure, except so far as the replacement of the troops occupying Upper Burma by an equivalent force is concerned; but, as I have pointed out above, steps might be taken to readjust the organization and composition of the army so as to render it better fitted for employment against a civilized enemy.

ROBERTS.

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## LXVI.

## ON THE INEXPEDIENCY OF ACKNOWLEDGING THE SUZERAINTY OF THE AMIR OVER ANY PORTION OF WAZIRISTAN.

SIMLA,

29th June, 1892.

Having carefully considered this important question, I am distinctly of opinion that it is most desirable we should lose no time in taking decided action with reference to the Amir's occupation of Wano.

Before alluding in detail to the various issues raised in these notes by my honourable colleagues, I would wish to state generally my views on several of the more important points. First of all I would record my firm conviction that the acknowledgment of the Amir's suzerainty over any portion of Waziristan is absolutely and entirely incompatible with the maintenance of direct communication between us and the Waziris. I am induced to lay special stress on this point because I notice that several honourable members, as well as the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, whilst admitting the necessity for direct relations with the tribes, seem to imagine that His Highness would be content with a mere nominal authority over them while relegating all real authority to us. From this view I must most strongly dissent, for I feel sure that Abdur Rahman would be satisfied with nothing short of absolute control, and in proof of this I would draw attention to his recent action with reference to Mr. Donald's letter to certain Waziri Maliks. Even were the Amir sincerely friendly to us and honestly satisfied with such an arrangement, which he evidently is not, the occasions for quarrels and misunderstandings which it would afford would be numberless, and I firmly believe that in a short time we should find ourselves as much cut off from direct communications with the Waziris as we now are with the Ghilzais, Hazaras, or any other tribe in Afghanistan proper. Moreover, in the existing state of affairs, any *modus vivendi* of this kind is even less feasible than it might be under other circumstances; the Amir is clearly inimical to us; his object in asserting his pretensions is the opposite of a friendly one; and even if he could be induced to accept such a compromise, I see no prospect whatever of his loyally adhering to it.

Another proposal with which I am unable to agree is that, while retaining our direct control over the Mahsud Waziris, we should recognise the Amir's right to the Darwesh Khel portion of the tribe. In the first place, such an arrangement would deprive us of all power of dealing direct with the latter clan—a power which I believe to be absolutely essential for us to possess. Secondly, the two clans would most certainly quarrel among themselves, and did we restrain the Mahsuds, they would be at the mercy of the Darwesh Khel, and we should be compelled to interfere with the latter, and therefore with the Amir. At present the two portions of the tribe fight their own battles without causing any undesirable complications between us and the Amir, and this, I believe, to be the most satisfactory arrangement; any division I consider impracticable.

In proof of the necessity for our retaining the power to restrain the Darwesh Khel, I may mention what occurred last October, when that tribe attacked the Mahsuds and, having severely punished them, actually crossed over to our side of the Mahsud territory, finally entering the Gomal, and thence proceeding to join their flocks in the Bannu district!

Regarding my honourable colleagues' notes on the first of these two files, I regret that I am unable to endorse the Honourable Sir C. Crosthwaite's opinion, expressed in his minute of the 6th instant, that we have no ground for complaint regarding the Amir's action at Wano. On the contrary, it seems to me to have been distinctly taken in a spirit of hostility to us. His Highness has nothing to gain from the tribe in the way of revenue; the country is of no value to him; and I believe he has made the forward move simply and solely with the object of annoying us. This to me is so clear that I consider the presence of Afghan troops to be a most serious menace to us. Such, I am convinced, it is intended to be, and we cannot afford to ignore it. The Amir's conduct is so openly unfriendly to us that we cannot permit him to come nearer to India than he is at present, and no one knows better than himself that we shall certainly disapprove of his attempting to do so. The object of our policy in opening relations with the tribes is to get them on our side, thus enabling us to reach Afghanistan without delay in case of need, both for its protection against Russia and for the defence of India. This is above all things essential; and to ensure easy access to Afghanistan, the tribes must at any rate not be hostile to us. If they are the Amir's subjects, can we doubt for a moment what their attitude will be? As long as there is no special danger threatening from the north, and as long as we are unable to come to an agreement regarding the frontier, so long will our relations with the Amir be unsatisfactory, and the tribes under his control unfriendly. Were war to break out with Russia, what would happen no living man can say. It is possible the Amir might ask us to help him; but even supposing he were to do so, our ability to aid him would very largely depend on our having secured a firm hold over the intervening tribes. If we allow them to come under the Amir's influence, it is highly improbable that they would understand His Highness's sudden change of front; and were they actively or even passively to oppose us, our position would be most serious.

On the other hand, for all we know to the contrary, the Amir's attitude towards us may be due to his deliberate intention to throw in his lot with Russia from the belief that she will be the victorious Power. If this should turn out to be the case, all the more does it behove us to keep him at arm's length. I maintain that our direct relations with the Darwesh Khel in no way act prejudicially towards the Amir. We are actuated by friendly feelings towards him, and have given him convincing proofs of this by our readiness to assume large responsibilities for the protection of his throne. Therefore I consider that his recent action at Wano is unjustifiable, and that we must regard it as such.

The Honourable Sir D. Barbour, in his note of the 7th instant, refers to the declaration of abstention from interference in tribal affairs made by the Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ismail Khan in 1883. But I would point out that this action was taken in pursuance of, and was perfectly consistent with, the policy which just at that time was in favour with Her Majesty's Government—a policy which caused us to leave Afghanistan in hot haste, to tear up the rails of the Bolan Railway, and to seriously consider the advisability of evacuating Quetta and retiring to the Indus Valley—a policy, however, which the same Government found it necessary to reverse when as yet it had scarcely been given effect to, and every nerve had to be strained to reconstruct a railway to Peshin and to strengthen our position at Quetta. This reversal of the original policy regarding our position above the Bolan entailed, *ipso facto*, a change in our attitude towards the border tribes. This has ever since been fully recognized; and I do not think we need consider the declaration referred to by my honourable colleague as affording a precedent which it is incumbent upon us to follow. During the last 9 years circumstances have so greatly changed that the action then taken can hardly be considered as a guide now, seeing that it would be inconsistent with our subsequent policy.

In this connection I would draw the attention of my honourable colleagues to the fact that to allow the Amir to have control over any portion of Waziristan is to reverse the policy which, after mature consideration, was deliberately adopted in 1889, and which has received the sanction of the Secretary of State. Once His Highness gains a footing in the district, he would have no more difficulty in stirring up the tribes than his Commander-in-Chief has recently had in Bajaur; and instead of our being able to remain at peace with the Amir, as I hope we shall when we have come to some decision with him about the frontier, we shall assuredly be drawn into war, for it will be impossible for us to keep clear of the troubles which must result from his interference.

Moreover, the question is not, as my honourable colleague seems to suppose, one of what the Waziris can or cannot do to protect themselves; but of whether we can afford to allow the Amir to increase his influence over them. I contend we cannot afford to do so without its resulting in constant annoyance to us in the immediate future, and in serious danger eventually.

While agreeing generally in the Honourable General Brackenbury's note of the 8th instant, I would remark that I think we should be more likely to derive advantage from the juxta-position of our respective territories, were the boundary line drawn between Waziristan and Afghanistan proper, than if it cut in two the Waziri tribe. By this I would not be understood to advocate annexation or any active interference on our part in Waziri affairs. To such action I am entirely opposed, but I do believe that the protectorate, guarding but not harassing the tribes, which I shall allude to later on, will prove the best possible means of ensuring the result which my honourable colleague hopes to attain, and I cannot think that the fact of the Amir establishing his authority over them would, however harsh his rule, tend to incline the tribes to side with us. He would have too many inducements to offer them to adopt a contrary attitude; the prospect of the plunder of India is a tempting bait when held out by a powerful ruler unlikely to brook opposition to his will, to say nothing of the incalculable influence which an appeal to religious sentiment would certainly exercise.

I most fully and unreservedly endorse my honourable colleague's view regarding the desirability of our frontier relations being placed under one control. I have on several occasions expressed a strong opinion on this point, and would in particular refer to my note of 4th June, 1889, in which I have detailed my views at some length. It is hardly necessary for me to enlarge here upon the drawbacks of the existing arrangement, as the case under discussion has fully exemplified them.

The Foreign Secretary's note of the 5th instant seems to me to show conclusively that we have never admitted any distinction to exist between the Wano District and the rest of Waziristan in its relation to the Amir. We have on several occasions asserted our intention not to occupy Wano, and, similarly and simultaneously, not to interfere with Afghan territory; but I am far from thinking that the former resolution was in any way intended to be the result of the latter, for we have taken every opportunity of insisting that Waziristan, in which Wano is included, is not dependent on the ruler of Kabul. I can fully endorse also what Sir M. Durand states regarding the opinion of the frontier officials. I carefully informed myself last autumn on this point, and found them unanimous in their views as to our policy. They know well that it is quite impossible for the Waziris to avoid entering our territory, as without the supplies they procure from it they could not exist. This being so, we must have relations with them, and it is to our interests to control these relations ourselves, rather than to run the risk of having them complicated by the Amir's interference.

As regards the Honourable Sir P. Hutchins' note of the 16th instant, I have already pointed out that the maintenance of independent relations with the Darwesh Khel is, if they are under the Amir's control, as impossible as his suggestion that we should

also be prepared to guarantee them immunity from oppression at the hands of their acknowledged ruler. I fear, too, that the presence of the Amir's official at Wano will do little to hasten the delimitation of the boundary line; he is altogether too small a person to perform such an important function. We should not recognize a frontier fixed by, say, a Deputy-Commissioner or subordinate Political Officer, and I feel sure the Amir would have no hesitation in repudiating any action of the kind taken by Sardar Gul Muhammad Khan.

As regards the Honourable Sir D. Barbour's note of the 20th instant, I may say again that I am by no means an advocate of annexation; such a course has to my mind nothing to recommend it; and I most distinctly assert that we ought not to adopt it ourselves, or allow the Amir to do so. I concur with my honourable colleague in his views regarding Sir D. Fitzpatrick's proposal to pay tribute for Waziristan to the Amir; but I am not so sanguine as he is that his troops will withdraw to their own country of their own accord. The Amir having ordered them to remain, nothing short of direct and very open force is likely to cause them to disobey his commands, however disagreeable they may find their position.

I am quite in accord with the Honourable Sir C. Crosthwaite regarding the necessity of dealing with the Waziris as a whole, and in this view would unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative his question, "Are we to give tribal service and protection against the Amir's interference to them all?" We cannot give up those whom we have already promised to protect, and even some of those to whom we have not pledged ourselves are in our pay, and we have everything to gain by protecting them also; whilst such action is perfectly consistent with our policy for several years past of trying to do everything in our power to maintain relations with the tribes. We must throw our ægis over the whole tribe or over no section of it. I cannot admit that the Amir has any right whatever to act against the Waziris as he has done; and his claim that their country has always been joined to Ghazni and Kabul is not in accordance with facts, the inhabitants of the latter being distinct from the Waziris in customs and nationality, and having far less in common with Waziris than the latter have with the adjacent tribes in British territory.

As regards the two letters from his Excellency the Viceroy referred to by my honourable colleague, I would remark that they both assert our intention of holding direct intercourse with the Waziris, and at the same time of not interfering with His Highness's territories, thereby, it seems to me, clearly implying that our relations with these tribes do not necessarily affect any subjects of the Amir. That we drew a distinction between the arrangements we had concluded with the Kakars of Zhob, and those we proposed to make with the Waziris, was, I think, perfectly comprehensible—in the one case we had occupied their country; in the other, we had not done so, and did not intend to do so, and it was clearly desirable that His Highness should know this latter fact, as it was hoped it would tend to allay any irritation or alarm he might have felt. Zhob we had annexed, and it obviously required different treatment from Waziristan. At the same time, having determined to open out the Gomal, it became necessary for us to protect our communications through it, and we well knew that this would be difficult, if not impossible, were the adjacent country Afghan territory. We did not intend to occupy Waziristan, but we did intend to consolidate our influence over it; and we considered, as I still consider, that this course could be followed without violating His Highness's dominions.

As regards Dawar, the case is different. We have plainly admitted the right of the ruler of Kabul to the district; but it is so important that the Amir should not control it that I would be prepared to make large concessions in money or the equivalent in land elsewhere to induce him to renounce his claim. The situation of Dawar makes it practically impossible to separate it politically from the country of

the Darwesh Khel; and I would therefore recommend no special allusion being made to it in any communication we may address to the Amir until we are in a position to discuss the general question with His Highness. While I fully agree with Sir C. Crosthwaite that we must deal directly with all Waziris, I regard it as impossible, as I have already shown, for us to resign a part of the tribe to the Amir; and I confess I cannot follow the honourable member in being ready to maintain direct relations with this tribe, and yet unwilling to afford it protection. Such a course seems to me a half-hearted measure with nothing to recommend it. We cannot surely subsidise a tribe and at the same time let it be plundered by the Amir. I would again point out that guaranteeing their safety does not imply, nor do I intend it to lead to, annexation.

I fear that the suggestion of the Honourable Lieut.-General Brackenbury in his last note on this case, that we should fix the boundary line without reference to Abdur Rahman, is hardly feasible.

I agree with much that is urged by Sir D. Fitzpatrick in his note of the 1st instant; and I can assure his Honour that he has formed by no means an exaggerated estimate of the value to us of this country in a military sense. It affords us direct access to the centre of the position which has been accepted by the Home Government as the only one from which we can effectively defend India—an advantage which it is not easy to over-estimate. Unless we can secure this tract of country and arrange in peace time for our communications through it direct to Ghazni, we should have, in the event of trouble threatening us at one end of the line, to send reinforcements all the way from the other end. In addition, I can imagine occasions when the power, which the possession of this district gives us, of holding Ghazni and Kandahar without occupying Kabul, might have the best possible effect on the attitude of the Afghans towards us.

I am quite in accord with paragraphs 5 and 6 of his Honour's note, and, as regards paragraph 7, would remark that I see no occasion for anticipating any "promenading." I would simply pay the tribes for keeping the road open, guarantee their safety, and leave them to themselves. I fully agree with paragraphs 9 and 11 of the Lieutenant-Governor's note, and also concur in paragraph 10. The military advantages to be gained are great, and but little risk need be run in order to obtain them.

I am not prepared to endorse his Honour's views in paragraph 12. The Amir and his tribes are by no means the same thing. I believe that a large number of people in Afghanistan would welcome us gladly.

I have already shown that Sir C. Aitchison's proposal (paragraph 14) would be likely to lead us into very troubled waters, and involve us in constantly recurring complications.

The first portion of paragraph 17 is quite correct. The Amir would undoubtedly object, because he is our enemy and not our friend, as he ought to be, seeing all he owes to us.

I hardly know what Sir D. Fitzpatrick alludes to in the latter portion of paragraph 17; but, so far as I am aware, no idea of threatening the independence of Afghanistan has entered the minds of any of the authorities who have discussed the question of the defence of India. To the best of my belief, the object in view has always been how to keep Afghanistan independent of us while providing against its occupation by Russia.

I fear the proposal put forward by his Honour in paragraph 18 would not prove feasible, while I cannot but anticipate that danger might arise from putting it into the power of the present or any future Amir to assert that we had acknowledged his authority to the borders of the Derajat.

I cannot admit (paragraph 21) that the presence of the Amir's troops at Wano is unimportant; the opposite view commends itself to me. While agreeing in paragraph 22, I am not disposed to acquiesce in the Amir remaining at Wano. We do not want the place ourselves, but he must not be permitted to occupy it. Yagistan it is, and Yagistan it ought to remain.

To sum up my views as to our line of conduct, it seems to me that the all-important point is that a definite understanding be arrived at with Abdur Rahman. Until this be arranged, it is absolutely impossible for us to know our exact position with regard to him, and his procrastination is doubtless intended to be, and should, I think, be considered by us, a proof of his unfriendly feeling towards us. In this view then I would address His Highness on the lines suggested by Sir D. Fitzpatrick, and would be prepared, in the event of his reply not being prompt and satisfactory, to insist on the immediate evacuation of Wano. To obviate, however, if possible the necessity for this latter action, I would allow the words which his Honour has put in brackets to stand; they seem to me to clearly explain our views, and it is well not to give the Amir any chance of misunderstanding us. Another point, moreover, which I would take pains to make very plain is that we shall not allow the Afghan troops to advance, either here or on any other part of the frontier, one single yard until we have thoroughly discussed the whole question; and that if they do advance we shall turn them back. Also that, pending an agreement being arrived at, his troops must retire from Wano and Gulkach. It is not his territory, and by allowing him to retain it, even under protest, we should to some extent prejudge the question against ourselves. I should deeply regret a rupture with Afghanistan, but, with reference to this point I would express my concurrence in the views put forward by the Foreign Secretary in his note of the 5th instant, and would also fully endorse every word of Sir Mortimer Durand's minute of the 9th instant. The friendship of the Afghan people is by no means synonymous with the friendship of the Amir.

ROBERTS.

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## LXVII.

ON THE NECESSITY FOR COMING TO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE AMIR OF AFGHANISTAN ON THE FRONTIER QUESTION, AND FOR MAKING HIM UNDERSTAND THAT HIS ATTITUDE OF RESERVE AND ISOLATION CAN NO LONGER BE TOLERATED.

SIMLA,

1st July, 1892.

I think that we are ourselves in a great measure to blame for the Amir's present very unsatisfactory attitude towards the British Government and his insolent treatment of the British Agent. My reasons for forming this opinion, however, differ considerably from those which have caused several of my honourable colleagues to arrive at a somewhat similar conclusion. It was we who made Abdur Rahman Amir of Afghanistan; it is our money which enables him to pay his troops; we supply the rifles and ammunition with which, to a great extent, these troops are armed; it is our constant and firm support which alone enables him to retain his position against internal revolts; whilst, most important of all, it is we who guarantee him against foreign aggression. It was our careful abstention from giving the slightest assistance, either directly or indirectly to the Ghilzais (although we were appealed to by them) that prevented their rebellion of 1886-87, becoming a serious danger to the Amir; and but for the knowledge that our friendship guaranteed peace on this side of the Hindu Kush, he would never have ventured to remain absent from his capital for two whole years after he had quelled the revolt of Ishak Khan in Afghan-Turkestan. In a word, had our policy been at all less declared in his favour than it has been, Abdur Rahman would long ere this have lost his throne, if not his life. Even now, were we to let it be known that we should remain neutral, his position would soon become untenable; while our declared hostility, even without moving a single British soldier, would ensure his speedy downfall. We have but to let loose one of the candidates for the throne of Kabul to bring about such a result.

2. All these facts must be quite as patent to the Amir as they are to us, probably far more so; and he would, without doubt, be our humble servant now, had we not systematically acted towards him in a manner calculated to make him forget his obligations to us and our power to enforce them. Ever since we placed him in his present position, we have treated him with an amount of courtesy and forbearance which has encouraged in him an overweening and altogether unjustifiable opinion of his own importance. We have patiently borne his fits of temper, his unfriendly acts, and at times his almost open hostility. We have regularly continued the payment of his subsidy, and although it is true that we have occasionally had to remonstrate with him, we have done so, not in the language of a suzerain to a dependent state, but in terms which, though employed by the civilized nations of Europe in their negotiations with each other would never be used by an Eastern potentate unless he stood considerably in awe of the power with which he was dealing.

3. In addition, we have allowed the immediate and more obvious advantages to be derived from our treaty with Abdur Rahman to be almost entirely on his side. Not only is the safety of his throne guaranteed, but he is permitted to monopolize, to



any extent he pleases, the commercial benefits and facilities for mutual intercourse which we ought to share equally with him. While Afghans can enter our dominions at will, few British subjects and no Europeans can cross his border without his special permission; while Afghans can buy and sell in India as freely as do the natives of this country, the duty on all Indian goods entering Afghanistan is almost prohibitive; and while the Amir's agent in India is lodged sumptuously, and can send his master full information regarding events of importance as they occur, these notes show how discourteously our representative is treated, and what precautions are taken to prevent his obtaining news. The result is that we know little of what goes on in Afghanistan, and that even the vague accounts of events which have taken place there are not sent to us until long after their occurrence.

4. All this is well known to Abdur Rahman and his subjects, and our complaisance has produced the effect which might have been anticipated. The Amir imagines that we place an inordinate value on an independent Afghanistan, and are prepared to pay heavily for its existence; and he now regards himself as the sovereign of an entirely independent nation in alliance with the British Government, and views this alliance as one which it is more to our interest than his to maintain. We see this belief, or at any rate the pretence of such a belief (which is quite as undesirable as the reality), in all his recent acts; he speaks of himself as the equal of the Shah of Persia; he claims to correspond directly with Her Majesty Government; and like a true oriental ruler, he goes as far as he dares in the endeavour to display his power to his own subjects by showing indifference to our wishes, by studied insults in Bajaur, Kuram, and the Gomal, and by his unbecoming treatment of our representative.

5. I am aware that several of my honourable colleagues are of opinion that our interference with, and in certain cases our support of the frontier tribes is, to some extent, the cause of the Amir's hostility. My contention is that, being answerable for the safety of India, it was quite impossible for us to abstain from such interference, and that, if Abdur Rahman's feelings towards us were friendly, he would not object to our dealing with the tribes; his co-operation in this matter is surely a very small return to make for all that we have done for him. It has been our recognised policy to gain such influence over these tribes as would prevent them ranging themselves on the side of Russia, and thereby materially facilitating her advance; the only possible way to achieve this object is by establishing friendly relations with them. Had the Amir carried on unreserved intercourse with us, it would have been easy to explain to him the motives actuating our frontier policy, and to have made clear to him the fact that his hearty co-operation was as necessary for the protection of his own possessions as for the defence of India. His arrogance, however, has been fostered by our acquiescence in his attitude of reserve and isolation, and he now presumes to object to our pursuing a course which is at least as beneficial to him as it is to us. Moreover, the fact must not be lost sight of that we have every right to take such steps as seem necessary, even to the extent of proposing that British officers should reside in his dominions, to enable us to carry out the pledges we have given to preserve the independence of Afghanistan against Russian aggression. The responsibility which these pledges entail upon us is enormous, and should ever be kept prominently in view when discussing our Afghan policy. It appears to me inconceivable that a stronger nation, guaranteeing the inviolability of a weaker one, should not only be unable to have free access to his territory, but even to take the necessary action to ensure proper information regarding the common enemy. Surely it is only simple wisdom to do all we can to render the difficult task to which we are committed as easy as possible. The case of Nepal, alluded to by the Honourable Sir D. Barbour, is altogether different, seeing that we are not in

any way responsible for having placed the ruler of that country on the throne, or for the maintenance of its independence.

6. I cannot admit either that our action in Bajaur was in any way a threat to Abdur Rahman; he has nothing whatever to do with that district, and has been told so over and over again. Had he not interfered in Bajaur, our policy in that quarter would not have affected him in the least; it was only when, for his own ends, he endeavoured to extend his authority over these Khanates that he found our influence inconvenient.

7. The supposition that non-interference on our part with the frontier tribes would allay the Amir's suspicions, and lead him to enter into really friendly relations with the Government of India, is proved to be fallacious by the fact that in 1883, shortly after our retirement from Kandahar and the abandonment of the railway to Quetta, he began the aggressive action which he has lately renewed in the direction of Bajaur and Dir. I would call to mind too the constant obstacles which Abdur Rahman threw in the way of the commission for demarcating his northern frontier. So vexatious and continual were these that it required great tact and much forbearance on the part of our officers to ward off a quarrel which would have effectually prevented the accomplishment of their task; and yet in this instance, at any rate, it must have been evident, to an intelligent man like the Amir, that our efforts were directed solely to the preservation of the integrity of his kingdom. In addition to these instances, it is clearly shown in the Foreign Secretary's note of the 8th instant (paragraph 8) that his Highness's aggressive action all along the frontier, and towards Bajaur specially, began long before we adopted our present forward policy.

8. I am convinced that any break in the pursuance of that policy now would have the most serious results: it would confirm not only the Amir but the whole of the frontier tribes in the idea that we were afraid to risk the consequences of a rupture with the Afghan ruler; and it would, more than any other course of action, ensure a continuance of the present most undesirable state of affairs, and postpone indefinitely any satisfactory agreement with Abdur Rahman; even if it did not, as I think very likely it would, land us in an open conflict with His Highness. That any want of firmness or yielding on our part would result in improving the Amir's attitude towards us is absolutely opposed to all our experience of the Asiatic character, and would most certainly have the opposite effect. It seems to me that the time has now arrived for us to show a very much less conciliatory spirit, and I do not at all share the fears of those who are of opinion that our acting in this way is likely to promote a rupture. On the contrary, I believe that the course I advocate will tend more than any other to secure the Amir's alliance, which will be all the more lasting if based upon respect not unmingled with fear, rather than upon avaricious motives combined with contempt.

9. I think we should now decide definitely what frontier is necessary to secure peace along the border, and enable us to occupy with rapidity and certainty the line of the Hindu-Kush—a position which it is admitted to be essential for us to hold if we are to defend India successfully.

To gain such a frontier should be our first object, and to gain it, if possible, with the consent of the Amir, at any rate without active opposition from him. This, I believe, to be feasible; but so essential do I consider the rectification of our frontier that, should Abdur Rahman prove more obstinate and less alive to his own interests that I anticipate he will be, the rectification must be made without his concurrence.

10. In pursuance of the foregoing remarks, I will now proceed to discuss *seriatim* the questions placed before us by his Excellency the Viceroy.

(a.) The letter which has been sent to the Amir regarding Bajaur, agreeably to the decision arrived at in Council on the 27th ultimo, does not go quite so far as Sir Mortimer Durand's note of the 8th *idem*, with the conclusions of which I am in accord. Pending the receipt of a reply to that letter, we cannot directly order Abdur Rahman out of Bajaur; but, as I have stated above, I consider that there being no justification for his action in this quarter, we should, when writing to him on the general question of his relations with us, impress very strongly upon him that he has no business there. The argument he has put forward, that the betrothal of his son to a sister of the ex-Khan of Asmar warrants his interference is absolutely untenable. To allow its force is tantamount to an admission that were an Afghan prince to contract an alliance with a relative of the ruler of any independent state—say the Mehter of Chitral—the Amir would be within his legitimate rights in attempting to guide the affairs of that state. Even if Asmar were not, as I believe it to be, a portion of Bajaur, the presence of Afghans there would be a constant menace to the independence of that state; and as long as they remain, there must be trouble, in which Umra Khan of Jandol, the most powerful chief of Bajaur, will necessarily be implicated. This cannot but lead to complications with us, as we have insisted on the independence of Bajaur.

It having been considered advisable to enter into relations with Umra Khan, it is impossible now for us to break them off, and it is equally impossible for us to tell Umra Khan that he has nothing to do with Nawagai and Asmar; were he to let them go their own way they would certainly combine to crush him. It seems to me that we can very well leave these petty chiefs to manage their own affairs, which it will be impossible for them to do so long as Abdur Rahman is allowed to interfere with them. It is not enough to tell him that he must not attack Umra Khan; he must be forbidden to take any action whatever against Bajaur.

(b.) The Waziri case has been dealt with separately.

(c.) As regards the Turis, we have guaranteed their independence, and, if necessary, I would send a force into their country, to protect them from the Amir's interference and to prevent them from raiding across the Afghan border. I object to employing our own troops, unless it is absolutely necessary, because it locks up a certain number of men who can ill be spared. If, however, the valley cannot be controlled politically, no other course seems open to us.

(d.) I should content myself with informing the Amir that the Afridis and Orakzais are beyond the sphere of his influence, and that his action in intriguing with them must lead to friction between him and us.

(e.) and (f.) I would animadvert strongly on the acts of discourtesy towards our agent in the communication which I am about to propose should be sent to the Amir.

(g.) It seems to me that, as the Amir declines to leave Afghanistan, all idea of a meeting between his Excellency the Viceroy and His Highness is at an end; but I do not consider it hopeless to arrange a meeting with an official of high rank deputed to represent his Excellency; and I am entirely in favour of our doing everything in our power, consistently with the maintenance of the dignity of the Government of India, to arrange such an interview. Abdur Rahman has already expressed his willingness to discuss matters with us, and I believe myself that we shall never arrive at a satisfactory understanding with him until we can do so. A conference would enable us to explain to His Highness the motives for our present frontier policy

and make him understand that we have never harboured designs, either directly or indirectly against the independence of Afghanistan. Were His Highness convinced of this, subsequent negotiations would be simplified.

11. In the letter to the Amir proposing this interview His Highness should be informed in clear and decisive language, admitting of no possible misconception, exactly how he is situated with regard to us. It should be pointed out to him the extent to which he is dependent on us, and the ease with which we could bring about his downfall. I would tell him that it is painful to us to address him in such a tone, but that he has brought it upon himself by his long-continued and repeated acts of discourtesy, indeed downright hostility, which I would mention in detail. I would say we feel that the existing strained relations cannot be tolerated any longer, and that we are plainly stating the case to him, in order that he may appreciate the necessity for arriving at a definite agreement with the Government of India; and I would add that the most important of all questions is that of the boundary, which we believe cannot be satisfactorily settled without personal communication. That on this account we much regret that he is unable to visit India; and that as the Viceroy, for reasons which he has already explained, cannot leave this country, we propose that His Highness should meet and discuss matters with an officer of high rank, nominated to represent the Governor-General, at Jalalabad, or any other place in Afghanistan convenient to His Highness. I would say we are prepared to give the fullest consideration to any points he may wish to bring forward; and that should it be shown we have acted in too high-handed a manner, we are willing to make complete reparation, and we feel sure that he will meet us in an equally conciliatory spirit. I would tell him that the present state of affairs, when hardly a day passes without disturbances amongst the tribes which separate the two countries, cannot be allowed to continue; and that if he does not accept the opportunity which we now offer him of having a voice in the settlement of the frontier, we shall take such steps as may seem necessary to fix it without consulting his wishes. I would endeavour to convince the Amir that we should take such a course with extreme reluctance, as it would be almost equivalent to breaking off relations with His Highness. I would further express our regret at having to inform him that we shall regard his refusal to meet our reasonable request as evidence of unfriendly feeling on his part, and that it will be incumbent on us to regulate our future conduct towards him accordingly. In conclusion, I would give him to understand that, pending the result of the conference, no forward movement must take place anywhere along the frontier, nor any interference with the independent tribes between India and the Afghanistan to which he succeeded in 1880.

I think that, in the interests of both parties, the proposed meeting should take place on the earliest possible opportunity.

12. If the Amir declines our advances, or even if he consents to meet the Viceroy's representative, and then makes such preposterous demands that no *modus vivendi* can be arrived at, we shall be no worse off than we are at present. On the contrary, we shall stand in a much better position, provided that—and on this point I lay great stress—we are ready to take immediate action as soon as it becomes necessary to break off negotiations. His Highness's attitude, which is at present somewhat doubtful, will have become clearly defined, and no further delay need occur in our taking the requisite steps to safeguard our own interests. Moreover, it appears to me to be most conducive to the attainment of our object, and absolutely essential to the maintenance of our prestige as an Asiatic Power, that we should make it perfectly

plain to the Afghans, the border tribes, and our own subjects that our endeavours to effect a peaceable settlement are not inconsistent with a determination to enforce our just demands.

13. It would be well if it could be arranged to settle generally beforehand the points to be discussed and the lines on which they are to be dealt with ; but I doubt this being possible, as it is not likely the Amir will care to show his hand, and I would not run the risk of the conference falling through by pressing this matter.

14. I hardly think the Amir will treat our envoy with open discourtesy, unless he has deliberately made up his mind to provoke our active hostility, and to throw in his lot with Russia. If he has, the sooner we know it the better. Anything is to be preferred to the existing state of affairs ; it would for many reasons be safer and more advantageous to have a declared enemy than a secret one on the throne of Kabul. The present arrangement is expensive ; it ties our hands in our dealings with the frontier tribes, and is in every way so opposed to our interests that I do not see how we can possibly allow it to continue. In my opinion we are not justified in wasting public funds by the payment of a subsidy from which we derive no commensurate benefit, and we are not free from a charge of neglecting our trust if we do not take every step in our power to acquire privileges and rights in proportion to the obligations we have incurred.

ROBERTS.

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## LXVIII.

## ON THE AMIR OF AFGHANISTAN'S INTERFERENCE IN BAJAUR.

SIMLA.

7th July, 1892

I confess I am unable to understand the process of reasoning which induces the Punjab Government and several of my honourable colleagues to advocate so persistently the cause of the Amir as opposed to that of Umra Khan. They seem ready to justify, or at any rate to condone, all offensive measures adopted by the Afghan Commander-in-Chief, while any action taken by the Khan of Jandol, to safeguard the interests of Bajaur, is looked upon as unwarranted, and provocative of a continuance of the existing quarrels.

2. To me the matter presents itself in an entirely different light. I look upon the presence of the Amir's troops at Asmar, where they have no right whatever to be, as the direct cause of the present disturbances. As I have pointed out in a recent note, their retention of that place is a standing menace to the independence of Bajaur; and two facts in particular seem to me clear from these notes; first, that the Afghans fully intend to use Asmar as a base whence they can operate against the remainder of Bajaur; and secondly, that all the independent tribes composing the "Yagistan" which we know by the name of Bajaur are becoming fully aware that this is the object which the Amir has in view.

3. I agree entirely with the remarks of his Excellency the Viceroy on this case. The Afghan Commander-in-Chief had clearly taken offensive action against Bajaur (quite irrespective of the occupation of Asmar), and I am distinctly of opinion that the independent tribes were justified in opposing him. To find fault with Umra Khan because he assisted the Mamunds, and because in the fighting which followed he allowed some of his "lashkar" to advance beyond his own territory, is, from a military point of view, absurd in the extreme. Nothing more certain to bring about his own destruction than the adoption of a contrary line of conduct can well be conceived. The Mamunds, had he not joined them, would unquestionably (they themselves admit it) have been swallowed up by the Afghans; and Jandol's turn to undergo similar treatment would have come next. I certainly cannot blame Umra Khan because he had sufficient prescience to ward off the evil day by adopting an offensive-defensive attitude, while able to do so with some chance of success.

4. I see no reason to regret our recent action with reference to Umra Khan. As long as we adhere to the policy we have decided upon, and insist upon Afghan abstention from interference in districts to which the Amir has not the shadow of a just claim, I believe we are acting in a manner more likely than any other to conduce to peace in this part of the border-land.

ROBERTS.

## LXIX.

ON A LETTER FROM THE AMIR REFUSING TO GIVE UP ASMAR, OR NOT TO INTERFERE  
WITH BAJAUR AFFAIRS.

SIMLA,  
25th July, 1892.

I agree with Sir Mortimer Durand, and I would insist on the Amir's territories being kept within the limits of the Afghanistan which he received from us in 1880.

If we permit the slightest extension in one direction, it will be difficult to refuse it in another.

Let us tell the Amir plainly, that unless he abides strictly by the terms of the agreement we made with him, we shall consider ourselves absolved from all responsibilities incurred by those terms, and will take such action as may seem to us necessary.

ROBERTS.

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## LXX.

ON THE UNCERTAINTY EXISTING AMONG THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES AT HOME AS TO THE DUTIES LIKELY TO DEVOLVE ON THE BRITISH ARMY IN THE EVENT OF WAR, AND THE DESIRABILITY OF IMPRESSING ON HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT THAT, SHOULD RUSSIA INVADE AFGHANISTAN, IT WOULD BE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO THE SECURITY OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE TO SUPPLY A CONSIDERABLE REINFORCEMENT OF BRITISH TROOPS TO THE ARMY IN THIS COUNTRY; AND ON CERTAIN OTHER POINTS RAISED IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S DESPATCH NO. 18, DATED THE 8TH APRIL, 1892.

SIMLA,  
25th July, 1892.

There are several points in the minutes which have followed mine of the 13th June last, to which I think it desirable to invite the attention of his Excellency the Viceroy and my honourable colleagues; and although I believe it is hardly in accordance with the customary procedure for me to note a second time on a case with which I have already dealt, I would beg his Excellency's permission to do so in this instance on account of the fresh issues that have been raised in the discussion of the despatch under consideration.

2. Turning first to Sir D. Barbour's note of the 20th ultimo, I would remark, with reference to paragraph 7, that the question before us is hardly one of retaining 30,000 men at home for the defence of the mother country, or of sending these men to India to protect Afghanistan from Russian aggression. So long as we maintain our naval supremacy, the invasion of the United Kingdom is impossible. If we lose our naval supremacy, we shall have to come to terms with our opponents whether England is invaded or not. Moreover, if the regular and auxiliary forces were properly organized, which admittedly they are far from being at present, there would be a considerable surplus available after meeting all possible demands for home defence. The question is really as to the disposal of this surplus, and whether the supply of the reinforcements required by India should take precedence of the expeditionary action in support of continental allies, which is understood to find favour with certain military authorities at home.

3. The Secretary of State's reply, which is referred to at the end of this paragraph of my honourable colleague's note, appears to me to be merely an evasion of the question at issue. Plans for the defence of India can hardly be based upon the force at present maintained in this country, considering that it is admitted by the home authorities, as well as by General Brackenbury\*, that, in the event of any serious danger arising, we must look to England for assistance. For the reasons I have repeatedly placed on record I regard the advance of Russia into Afghanistan as constituting an extremely grave danger to India, and I am therefore justified in urging

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\* Paragraph 23 of his second note, dated 27th June, 1892.



that, when this contingency occurs, reinforcements should be supplied to us from home. The warning given by the Secretary of State that no forward line of policy should be laid down without consulting the Home Government has absolutely no significance, as I have already pointed out in paragraph 5 of my note of the 13th June last.

4. As regards paragraph 12, I am decidedly of opinion that the cost of Special Defence Works should not be included in our normal military expenditure. These works have been undertaken as a precaution against Russian aggression, just as non-productive railways have been constructed as a precaution against famine; the expenditure on them is not annually recurrent, and in my opinion, in which I believe the late Military Member of Council concurred, they ought to be charged to capital outlay. On the same grounds I think that the expense of periodically re-arming our artillery and infantry with guns and rifles of an improved type should be met by a loan repayable by means of a sinking fund within a reasonable limit of time. This principle is acted on in all municipal and commercial undertakings on a large scale by every civilized community, and I have never been able to understand why the Government of India should consider it contrary to sound policy to equalise financial burdens by spreading non-recurrent military expenditure over a series of years.

In paragraph 19 my honourable colleague states that he is not aware of any good reason for altering the existing proportion of British to Native troops. I endeavoured to explain the reason in paragraph 13 of my note of the 13th ultimo, and I should be glad to know, as Sir D. Barbour does not tell us, in what respect he has found that reason inconclusive or unsatisfactory.

5. Adverting next to Sir C. Crosthwaite's note, I venture to doubt whether the principle enunciated in paragraph 2 is altogether a sound one. The due administration and prosperity of the Indian Empire are matters of the highest importance, and ought to be the one great object of our policy, but these cannot exist unless the country is preserved from external attack and internal commotion. Of what avail will it be, either to us or to the inhabitants of this country, that we have done our best to develop its resources and to improve the condition of its people, if our work of progress is abruptly put a stop to by our being driven out of India? Or if, by the neglect of timely precautions, we lay ourselves open to a reverse in the first phase of the inevitable struggle with Russia, and thus destroy the confidence of the natives in our ability to defend ourselves and to maintain the stability of our rule, careful administration and material prosperity will not suffice to uphold the prestige which we now possess, and which alone enables us to govern many millions of Asiatics with a force at our back of less than 70,000 British soldiers. We have won India by the sword, we hold it by the sword, and with the sword we must defend it.

6. I am gratified to notice in paragraph 5 that my honourable colleague is in favour of reducing inefficient Native regiments, and of proportionately increasing the number of British troops in this country. I trust also that he would be prepared to support a renewed representation to the Secretary of State regarding the abolition of the presidential army system.

7. I have no remarks to offer on the Honourable Sir P. Hutchins's and Sir A. Miller's notes, except to express my satisfaction at finding that their views accord in some respects so closely with my own. I will, therefore, pass on to the paper dated the 27th ultimo, in which General Brackenbury discusses the opinions expressed in my note of the 13th *idem*.

8. At paragraph 17 the Honourable Military Member refers to certain opinions regarding the possibility or otherwise of the British army being able to respond to the

demands which might be made upon it in the event of war, and these, he says, have been the subject of constant discussion from 1886 to 1891 between the highest naval and military authorities at home. I can only express my surprise at the very vague conclusions which appear to have been arrived at. During his examination on the 6th May, 1891, before Lord Wantage's Committee, Sir Redvers Buller, Adjutant-General to the Forces, was asked by the Chairman (Question 92) what would constitute an adequate reserve. He replied:—"We have always, from the military side of the administrative part of the army, desired to be told what the duties of the army are; what the country expects the army to do; but we have never been exactly informed on these points. We do not know what are supposed to be the potentialities and duties of the British army."

Lord Wolseley, in evidence which has been omitted from the published Minutes, informed Lord Wantage's Committee (Question 4697) that "we have never got from the Government a statement showing what the Government thinks the army ought to do." His Lordship expressly repudiated the authority of a Cabinet Minute, dated 8th December, 1888, which, however, was read to the Committee by His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief (Question 2004\*) as an authentic and valid document. In this Minute no reference is made to the necessity for reinforcing India in the event of war, although, in addition to the three army-corps stated to be necessary for home defence, it is proposed to organize for expeditionary action abroad, two complete army-corps with cavalry divisions and troops for the line of communications. When the Duke of Cambridge was asked (Question 2030) whether out of these five paper army-corps a single one could be mobilized at short notice even for home defence, he replied—"I doubt it"; and Lord Wolseley admitted (Question 4398) that the equipment for one army-corps would not be immediately forthcoming. It thus appears that, in spite of the constant discussion which has taken place at home, the highest military authority doubts whether the army on its present footing is prepared to perform even a small portion of the duties assigned to it by Her Majesty's Government, while the two authorities who come next in order of seniority are of opinion that no duties have as yet been assigned to the army. I lay particular stress on this point, as I think it very desirable that my honourable colleagues should recognize the uncertainty which prevails at home as to the military action to be taken in order to safeguard our own interests, and the unpreparedness of the British army to fulfil the obligations that would assuredly devolve on it in the event of war. By bringing forward our own requirements, we may possibly impress on Her Majesty's Government the necessity for a careful consideration of the dangers to which the Empire is exposed, and of the measures to be adopted to guard against those dangers. If we succeed in doing so, we shall have rendered a great service, not only to India, but also to the British nation.

9. I refrain from discussing the policy which would endeavour to secure continental intervention or assistance in the event of a war between ourselves and Russia, or Russia and France combined. This policy in its various forms has been strongly advocated by one party in England, and as strongly decried by another, from the time of Queen Anne up to the present day. Judging from past experience, we may, I think, rest assured that we should have to pay a very heavy price for an alliance with the Powers of Central Europe, and that any help they might afford us would be strictly regulated on the *do ut des* principle so openly avowed by Prince Bismark. My own opinion is that, however valuable alliances might be, if they could be based on anything more permanent than the self-interested motives for the time being of each of the parties

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\* The original question and the reply to it have been entirely altered in the published Minutes of Evidence.

concerned, the British nation should be prepared to defend its possessions by its own exertions and out of its own resources. If it is unable or unwilling to do so, and relies on extraneous assistance, the loss of its possessions is merely a matter of time. In confirmation of this view I would invite attention to a very able article entitled "England's Policy" by Mr. Spenser Wilkinson and Sir C. Dilke in the *United Service Magazine* for the current month.

10. I am delighted to notice that in paragraph 20 of his note, my honourable colleague disclaims any idea of compromise with Russia, should that Power invade Afghanistan. I think, however, that such an intention might fairly be inferred from the Joint Memorandum, in which a certain course of action is adverted to as follows:— "We are well aware that the policy *we recommend*\* will allow the process of consolidation and assimilation of Northern Afghanistan by Russia to go on unchecked locally; and that the result of Russia's establishing herself here will be to enable her a few years later to advance upon Kabul and Kandahar in greater strength than that with which she could now advance."

It now appears that the policy in question is not recommended by the Honourable General Brackenbury, but, on the contrary, some other policy which he does not precisely define, but which I understand to depend in a great measure for its success on problematical alliances with the Continental Powers, and on expeditionary action elsewhere than in the Afghan theatre of war.

11. With reference to this note generally, and paragraphs 20 to 25 in particular, I observe with regret that the plain issues before the Government of India have been somewhat obscured by General Brackenbury's discussion of the proposals of the Indian Strategical Committee. These issues I take to be—(i) whether it would be prudent to attempt the occupation of the advanced front, which it is generally acknowledged that we should have to occupy in the event of a Russian advance, without a material increase in the number of British troops at present quartered in India; (ii) supposing the necessity for this increase to be admitted, whether the British army in India should be permanently augmented to the required extent in peace time, or whether we should rely on receiving reinforcements from home on the occasion arising; (iii) whether the proportion of British to Native troops which was decided on after the Mutiny is still appropriate, or whether it should be readjusted in accordance with our actual and prospective requirements; (iv) whether the organization and composition of the army in India is such that we get the best possible value for our military expenditure; and (v) whether the annexation of Upper Burma, and the consequent absorption of a portion of the troops added to the army in 1886, impose on us the obligation of making a further and equivalent addition to the force at our disposal for the defence of the North-West Frontier.

My note of the 6th June, 1891, was written with a full knowledge of the views put forward in the Joint Memorandum, dated the 19th August, 1889, in which my honourable colleague and General Newmarch criticised the course of action recommended by the Strategical Committee. In several of the opinions expressed in the Memorandum I did not concur, but I thought that nothing would be gained by drawing attention to the points of difference. On the other hand, I was glad to find that the policy of inaction, which found favour at home some years ago, had been abandoned, and that the necessity was admitted for our occupying a position which would enable us to hold Russia in check, until we were prepared to drive her out of Afghan territory. I considered, however, that the troops with which it was proposed

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\* The italics are mine.

to occupy this position would be quite insufficient for the purpose, and I thought it my duty to lay before the Government of India and Her Majesty's Government an estimate of the force which, in my opinion, would be required to ensure the forward movement being executed with a reasonable prospect of success. I based my estimate upon my own experience of Afghan warfare, and I pointed out that the attitude of the border tribes and of the inhabitants of Afghanistan would mainly depend upon our advancing in sufficient force to impress them with a belief in our superiority to Russia. My honourable colleague prefers his own estimate, and the present state of the home army may possibly dispose Her Majesty's Government to accept any plan of operations which will free them from the onerous obligation of arranging in peace time to reinforce the army in India in time of need.

12. And here I will repeat the explanation I gave General Brackenbury in a letter, dated the 15th ultimo, of the considerations which have guided me in dealing with the frontier question :—

“My object in this note (*i.e.*, my note of 13th June, 1892), as in all previous ones, has been to make it clear to the Government, both out here and at home, that the presence of Russia on the frontier of Afghanistan is a very real danger, and that the only hope of being able to cope with it satisfactorily is—(a) by letting Russia understand that we will not allow her to permanently occupy any part of Afghanistan; and (b) by getting the Afghans and border tribes to side with us. I admit that our being able to give effect to (a) depends on our being successful in regard to (b); and it is for that reason that I have been so anxious that we should come to a friendly understanding with the Amir, and have so urgently insisted on the necessity for our extending our influence over the border tribes.

“In 1883, when I first took up the question—‘Is an invasion of India by Russia possible?’—I gave it as my opinion that the answer depended entirely ‘on our relations with Afghanistan. If our influence there is paramount, an invasion of India would be an impossibility—with Russia supreme, a probability.’

“I have never said that the Russians would invade India from their present base. I know this is an impossibility, but I am equally sure it would be quite a feasible operation, once they had established themselves in Northern Afghanistan. All India would expect them to come; we should be discredited by everyone in the country, and, what is worse still, by our own Native soldiers.

“Nearly 10 years have passed since I first wrote on this subject, and the more I have heard it discussed, and the more I have thought it over, the more sure I feel that the conclusions I then came to were correct, and that the only course open to us is to insist on the absolute independence of Afghanistan so far as Russia is concerned, and to come to such an arrangement with the ruler and people of Afghanistan as will satisfy them that, while we are determined no other Power shall possess their country, we have no desire ourselves to occupy more of it than is essential to enable us to give effect to our determination.

“I quite understand that there is no continuity in our foreign policy, and that what one Ministry may agree to, their successors may disclaim. At the same time it seems to me to be our distinct duty to point out what course we think should be adopted.

“The occupation of Kandahar, Ghazni, and Jalalabad would, no doubt, be moves in the right direction whenever Russia crosses the northern boundary of Afghanistan, but to stop there and let all the world know that we acquiesced in the occupation of any portion of Afghanistan, after we had publicly declared it would never be allowed, would, in my opinion, be the forerunner of our downfall. We should satisfy no one. Russia would have it all her own way, and in her next onward move would assuredly

be assisted by the Afghans and by all the other inhabitants of the country lying between the Oxus and the Indus.

"My desire is to place the whole matter clearly and forcibly before the authorities in England. If they will not, or cannot, be persuaded to take our view of the situation, the responsibility will rest with them. We shall have done our duty, and can only trust that something unforeseen may occur to lessen the danger of which we have endeavoured to warn them.

"I am not without hope that success may attend our efforts. A few years ago it was believed by the home authorities that India could best be defended on the line of the Indus, and that she was quite able to look after herself in the event of war with Russia. Now, the necessity of an advance to Southern Afghanistan is admitted, and I sincerely trust that, before the occasion arises, the nation will have been educated to understand that we must go still further, and that the only safe course for us to adopt is the one I have for many years past so strenuously urged."

13. As regards an immediate advance on Herat, I agree with my honourable colleague in thinking that, unless we were assured of the hearty co-operation of the Amir, it could not be undertaken under present circumstances without running a considerable risk of failure. Since 1885 Russia has greatly consolidated her position and improved her communications along the northern frontier of Afghanistan, and offensive action on our part which would have been feasible then would be much more hazardous now. For the same reason a stronger force would be required to occupy the Kabul-Kandahar line in 1892 than would have been necessary in 1885. After occupying that line our proper course would be to strengthen ourselves there, and to improve our communications with India, before attempting any further advance in force. At the same time, although the Amir's attitude may render it impossible for us to throw troops into Herat and defend it against Russia on the outbreak of hostilities, we should be none the less determined not to leave that city in Russia's hands when peace is concluded with that Power. To do so would be tantamount to acknowledging our inability to fulfil our engagements with Afghanistan and to meet Russia in the field. I will deal at greater length with the Herat question in noting on Major-General Collen's paper on the subject, which is being circulated with the present case.

14. In proposing a re-adjustment of the proportion of British to Native troops in the army of India, my object is to render that army in peace time better fitted to undertake the duties which would devolve on it in the event of war. The existing proportion was fixed under very different conditions from those which hold good at present, and I doubt whether anything is gained by ignoring this fact. I doubt also the prudence of enlarging our Empire without providing additional means for its defence, and I have therefore advocated an increase in the establishment of British troops equivalent to the garrison of Upper Burma, and chargeable to the surplus revenue of Burma. Whether this increase would be held by the War Office to necessitate a corresponding augmentation of the home army seems to me very questionable, and I am certainly not prepared to accept as final the conclusions arrived at on this point by Lord Wantage's Committee and Sir A. Haliburton.

15. In paragraph 9 of my note of the 13th ultimo I deprecated any considerable addition being made to the military budget, and pointed out that it was the duty of the home army to provide adequate reinforcements for India in the event of war. The proposed change in the proportion of British to Native troops is a measure quite distinct from the supply of reinforcements from home, and not a part of the latter measure as assumed by the Honourable General Brackenbury.

16. It would appear from paragraph 27 of my honourable colleague's second note that the views put forward in my note of the 13th June last have not been fully understood. It is true that in paragraph 14 of that note I used the expression "a surplus of 14,000 over our prospective war requirements, if we leave out of account the reserve of 50,000 men, which we should have to raise on the first indication of a Russian advance." At the same time I pointed out in paragraph 10 that a considerable proportion of the Native army, as at present constituted, is unfit to meet even an uncivilised enemy. There is, therefore, nothing inconsistent on my part in urging, on the one hand, an increase in the efficient element of which the Native army is partially composed, and in advocating, on the other hand, a reduction in the inefficient element.

17. With reference to his Excellency the Viceroy's note, I would express my entire concurrence in the view held by his Excellency that the violation of Afghan territory by Russia should be regarded as a *casus belli*, and that our first step should be to occupy the Kabul-Kandahar line in sufficient force to be able to maintain ourselves there, and secure our communications with India. I am, however, inclined to think that some misapprehension exists as to the proposals of the Strategical Committee, alluded to in paragraph 9. It is true that in paragraph 24 of the Strategical Memorandum it was said that Kandahar and Jalalabad might be occupied in the first instance without any previous increase to the Indian army; but this statement was made under the assumption, first, that the advance of Russia into Northern Afghanistan was not considered a *casus belli*, and secondly, that the troops employed in Upper Burma had been replaced by an equivalent force. It was further pointed out by the Strategical Committee that the occupation of a front including Ghazni would necessitate a reinforcement of at least 15,000 British troops, even supposing war not to be declared against Russia, "while further reinforcements would be inevitable on war becoming imminent. A large increase to the Native army would also be necessary." It will be seen, therefore, that the view held by the Strategical Committee in 1887 is virtually identical with that expressed by me in my paper dated the 8th June, 1891.

18. As regards the 10th paragraph of his Excellency's note, I am strongly in favour of making another representation to the Secretary of State, urging the abolition of the presidential army system and the disbandment of the less efficient regiments of Madras and Bombay Infantry. I trust that this important question may come under the very early consideration of the Government of India.

19. In conclusion, I will only say that in a country with an exposed land frontier, such as India, the primary requirement is to ensure its safety from foreign aggression by arranging in peace time for a sufficient military force being available when the necessity arises. The continuance and development of internal prosperity are absolutely dependent on external security. That this principle is fully recognised by the Continental Powers is seen by the immense sacrifices they make in order to be fully prepared to defend themselves against their neighbours. Our position in India is gradually approximating to that of a Continental Power, with the additional risk caused by the entire absence of unity of interest and motive between the governing and governed races; and if we neglect the reasonable precautions which would enable us to meet Russia on equal or superior terms, we shall run considerable risk of losing our Eastern Empire.

ROBERTS.

## LXXI.

ON THE POSSIBILITY OR OTHERWISE OF OUR ASSISTING THE AMIR TO DEFEND HERAT  
AGAINST RUSSIA, ON THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES WITH THAT POWER.

SIMLA,  
26th July, 1892.

In the Honourable General Brackenbury's note of the 2nd instant he quotes a paper which he wrote on the Report of the Indian Strategic Committee when it first came before him in 1888. In this paper he observed that the Committee's recommendation to advance to Herat was the more remarkable, because in paragraph 25 of their Report they said that, provided Russia was not allowed to advance to Kabul or Kandahar, the nearer to India the decisive action could be brought about the better it would be for us. A similar remark is made in the Joint Memorandum drawn up in August, 1889, by my Honourable Colleague and Major-General Newmarch, in paragraph 23, of which the following passage occurs:—

"We do not hesitate to condemn, as in the highest degree dangerous and unsound, the policy advocated in that report (*i.e.*, the Report of the Strategic Committee), *viz.*, that we should attack Russia at Herat and continue the war until we have severed her communications between the Caspian and Turkestan. Nay more, we are quite unable to reconcile that recommendation with the sound and indisputable statement made in paragraph 25 of the Report."

The statement referred to is quoted at length in paragraph 6 of General Brackenbury's Note.

2. With regard to the foregoing criticism on the proposals of the Strategic Committee, I venture to doubt whether my honourable colleague has correctly understood the meaning of the statement quoted, in its connection with the context. It was urged in paragraph 25 of the Report that the inviolability of Afghanistan should be insisted on, and the action which should be taken in the event of an advance on Russia's part while we were in strength at Kabul and Kandahar was discussed. It was said that, if Russia were rash enough to cross the Hindu Kush before she had attempted to improve her communications, complete her commissariat and transport arrangements and consolidate her power in Afghan-Turkestan, the more disastrous would be the consequences of defeat to her, and the easier it would be for us to inflict a defeat. But, it was added, such a course would hardly be in conformity with the traditional procedure of Russia in similar cases. It seemed more likely that she would endeavour in the first instance to gain a secure footing north of the mountain barrier, and we ought therefore to be prepared in such a contingency to assume a vigorous offensive, based on the strategic alignment stretching from Kabul to Kandahar.

3. The principle which finds such favour with the Honourable General Brackenbury is doubtless a sound one, if it be applied with due regard to the object to be attained, as compared with the risks to be run in attaining them. Carried to an extreme, it would lead to a strategic *reductio ad absurdum*. Two Powers at war with each other in approximately equal force would be tied to their respective

bases in order that each might be able to concentrate in preponderating strength at the decisive point, and escape the danger of being disastrously defeated. That the principle in question has occasionally and very properly been ignored by the most successful commanders of ancient and modern times is sufficiently obvious to every reader of history. I need only refer to the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, and Napoleon in confirmation of this statement. As they advance further and further from their base the risk of failure was undoubtedly increased, but the reward of success was proportionately augmented. I am not, therefore, prepared to accept the conclusion drawn from this principle, that it would be hopeless for us to attempt to drive the Russians out of Herat or under certain conditions, to assist the Afghans in holding that city until we were able to reinforce its garrison.

4. In paragraphs 5 and 6 of his Note General Brackenbury implies that the country between Girishk and Herat is practically desert. I believe, however, that this is not the case, and that water, forage, and other supplies are fairly plentiful. This appears to be proved by the description of the route (No. VI) in the Afghan Boundary Commission Routes, Helmand Series, 1889. It is also to be remembered that, with the exception of Baber, all the great conquerors from the north have come *viâ* Herat, and that in 1880 Ayub Khan advanced from Herat on Kandahar without experiencing any difficulty, so far as is known, in feeding his troops.

5. The point raised by Major-General Collen is whether it would be possible and desirable to arrange beforehand for the defence of Herat against Russia in the event of war with that Power. It seems to me that, if possible, it would certainly be desirable to prevent Russia occupying a position which would greatly facilitate her further advance, and which we could not leave in her hands without violating our solemn engagement to protect Afghanistan against unprovoked aggression.

In the opinion of the Governor-General of the Caucasus, whose words are quoted by my honourable colleague, it would be essential for Russia, if engaged in hostilities with England in Central Asia, to obtain control over Khorassan and to occupy Herat with the object of converting that city into a base of supply for the troops operating in North-Western Afghanistan. This shows the extraordinary value attached by Russia to the possession of Herat; and if we succeeded in keeping her out of that place, we should have won the first and most important move in the game.

6. It should not be forgotten that the defences of Herat are by no means contemptible, and if held by fairly good troops, should suffice to secure that city against capture by a *coup de main*. Plans for improving the fortifications were drawn up by the Defence Committee in 1885, and after being submitted to, and approved by, the Amir at Rawal Pindi, were carried into effect with some slight modifications under the supervision of the engineer officers attached to the Afghan Boundary Commission. An armament of smooth-bore guns and howitzers was also provided, and it was intended at the time to supply a certain number of machine guns for flank defence.

7. That Afghan soldiers can fight well under the direction of British officers is proved by the siege of Herat in 1837-38, when the Persians, though aided by Russian engineers, and in much greater force than the garrison, were defeated through the exertions of Eldred Pottinger, a subaltern in the Bombay Artillery, who inspired the defenders with his own courage and resolution. The Persians regarded Pottinger's presence in Herat as equivalent to an army.\*

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\* Kaye's History of the War in Afghanistan, Vol. I, page 279.



8. After carefully considering Major-General Collen's proposals, I am of opinion that the feasibility of our anticipating Russia at Herat depends almost entirely upon the attitude of the Amir. If His Highness can be brought to understand that his own interests in the matter coincide with ours—if he will allow us to extend our railway to Kandahar, or at any rate do his utmost to facilitate the rapid advance of our troops from the present railway terminus on the outbreak of hostilities—if acting under our advice, he will organize his own troops for the defence of Herat, keep the fortifications in proper repair, and provide an adequate supply of food and ammunition—and if he will arrange with us for a few British officers being in readiness to enter the city on the first sign of a Russian advance\*—I think there is good reason to believe that we might prevent Herat falling into the hands of Russia. If, on the other hand, the Amir will do none of these things, but maintains his present suspicious and unfriendly attitude, it would, I fear, be hopeless to attempt to forestall Russia at this point, however advantageous it might be to deprive her of the advanced base she requires for her operations in Northern Afghanistan.

9. I sincerely trust that an opportunity will soon occur of explaining to the Amir what course must be adopted in this and in other matters, if he expects us to render him effective assistance in the event of unprovoked aggression on the part of Russia. Meanwhile, I think that the thanks of the Government of India are due to Major-General Collen for bringing this important question so prominently to our notice, and I hope that the policy he so ably advocates will not be negatived until the Amir's attitude has been definitely ascertained.

10. As regards the concluding paragraph of the Honourable General Brackenbury's note, I can only repeat what I said in my paper, dated the 13th June last. Assuming the Joint Memorandum to have been unanimously approved of at home by the high authorities mentioned, it appears to me that it would have been the natural and proper course for the Secretary of State for India to have informed the Government of India or his Excellency the Viceroy to that effect. No such intimation has, however, been received, and, as I have pointed out in paragraph 8 of my second note on the accompanying file, considerable uncertainty seems to exist among the responsible advisors of the War Office as to the duties likely to devolve on the British army in the event of war. Under these circumstances, I feel some doubt as to the weight to be attached to the concurrence of certain unspecified military authorities in the views expressed in the Joint Memorandum. In any case, it is clearly out of the question for the Government of India to accept this document as conveying the decision of Her Majesty's Government on a question of the highest military and political importance, in the absence of any official or even unofficial declaration of its authoritative nature.

ROBERTS.

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\* The officers might be attached to the British Consulate at Meshed.

## LXXII.

ON A SUGGESTION FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE WHETHER, IN THE EVENT OF RUSSIA NOT AGREEING TO APPOINT A JOINT COMMITTEE TO DEFINE THE BOUNDARY ON THE PAMIRS, IT WOULD NOT BE ADVISABLE FOR HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT TO SEND A COMMISSION OF EXPLORATION THEMSELVES.

SIMLA,

31st August, 1892.

This is indeed a difficult question. It seems to me that we may discard all idea of being able to send, *viâ* Kashmir and Gilgit, a force large enough to cope with the one which Colonel Yanoff apparently has with him. The difficulty and expense of transporting supplies of all sorts and munitions of war for even a small party would be very considerable, and, as Sir Mortimer Durand points out, the troops would have to go at once and wait at Gilgit until the spring.

There are two other routes by which the Pamirs could be reached, one *viâ* Bajaur to Chitral, the other *viâ* Kabul. The second of these could not be adopted without the Amir's concurrence, and the first would entail arrangements being made with the several independent tribes who occupy the country between Peshawar and Chitral, and now that Afghan troops are at Asmar it would probably be necessary to come to terms with the Amir. Were either of these routes then to be adopted, the Amir is a factor which could not be overlooked, and even were His Highness on the best of terms with us, I should doubt, in the existing condition of Afghanistan, whether he could secure the safety of a small party travelling *viâ* Kabul.

It seems to me then that all we can do from India now is to send officers to the Hindu Kush to watch the passes from the Baroghil to the Mintaka or Kirisht, for the purpose of reassuring the people in that part of the frontier and of endeavouring to ascertain the exact strength of Yanoff's party. Above all, I consider it essential that we should have an officer permanently stationed at Chitral, and in the first instance it seems desirable that Dr. Robertson should go there, as he is known to have influence over the Mehter.

It would be necessary to request the Amir to warn his officers in the north-east frontier of Afghanistan that they must receive in a friendly manner any British officer who may be travelling in their neighbourhood, and assist them in every way instead of treating them as the commander of the post at Sirhind treated Lieutenant Malony last year.

This seems to me all we can do from India in the direction of the Pamirs. The question is one which must be dealt with from home, and we should, I think, strongly urge upon Her Majesty's Ministers the necessity for taking a firm stand and telling the Russians that their sending troops across the Pamirs, and seeking a collision with the Afghans, are indefensible acts, and distinctly contrary to the promises repeatedly made during the last few months by M. de Giers to our ambassador at St. Petersburg. I would say we cannot admit that there has been any change in the Pamirs, as asserted by M. de Giers, to warrant such action, and that any further advance of the Russian troops must end in a quarrel with us. We might add that after what has happened we cannot place any faith in the promise that Yanoff will "not pursue his reconnaissance

beyond the Yashikul," especially as our information leads us to believe that he has himself reached Langar Kisht, close to Kala Panja, the head-quarters of the Deputy Governor of Badakshan, while part of his force is at Bozai Gumbaz threatening the Ashkoman valley leading to Gilgit.

My own belief is that the Hazara insurrection and Yanoff's advance across the Pamirs are both part of the same plot, and that unless we act with decision we shall shortly hear that the rebellion is spreading in Afghanistan. It is certainly difficult to ascertain whether, and to what extent, the Russians are implicated in the Hazara business. They can afford the tribe valuable assistance without appearing on the scene at all, and if they are helping it, we may be sure that they will not permit the Amir's troops to get the better of the Hazaras.

Such a state of affairs cannot last long, either the Amir must coerce the Hazaras or he will find his whole country in rebellion against him.

I have said it is extremely difficult to know what part the Russians are taking on the north-west frontier of Afghanistan, but we have tolerably good information as to their action on the north-east frontier, and I would tell them plainly that unless Yanoff and the whole of his party clear off the Pamirs, until the boundary in that direction has been delimited, we shall advance into Southern Afghanistan.

We can do but little on the Pamirs, nothing in fact to check Russia; but moving troops to the neighbourhood of Kandahar, or even letting the Russians know that we were preparing for such a move would, in all probability, make them hesitate to interfere further at present with Afghan affairs.

I would explain to the Amir exactly how we stand in reply to his letters of the 12th and 16th August on the subject of the collision between his men and Colonel Yanoff's troops, so that he may clearly understand that we can do nothing by force in the direction of the Pamirs, and that, if negotiations fail, it will be necessary, both for his sake and our own, that we should advance troops to the neighbourhood of Kandahar.

ROBERTS.

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## LXXIII.

ON A PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE STRENGTH OF THE ESCORT OF THE BRITISH AGENT  
AT GILGIT FROM 200 TO 400 NATIVE INFANTRY.

SIMLA,

*20th September, 1892.*

I agree with his Excellency's the Viceroy's note of the 19th instant.

It seems to me very desirable that the strength of the Gilgit escort should be increased by 200 more men. The road from Gilgit to Chitral passes through Yasin territory, and unless the British Agent is in a position to keep this road open, it would be impossible to send an officer to Chitral, or even to communicate with that place.

Troops are habitually stationed in Cherkilla, the principal fort of Puniyal 20 miles to the west of Gilgit, and a detachment is now, and has been for sometime, in the fort of Gakuch, 20 miles still further to the west. This fort is at the embouchure of the Ashkoman valley, down which the road from the Kohra-Bohrt and Ashkoman passes; it also bars the road to Chitral. It is essential that it should be strongly held, for in case of trouble in Yasin, and of the Indus valley States espousing the cause of the refugee Mukaddas Aman who belongs to the old Yasin ruling family, we must be in a position to prevent raiding into Kashmir territory. The fact that this fort was not held when disturbances occurred in Major Biddulph's time at Gilgit resulted in its capture, and in the overrunning of Puniyal as far as Cherkilla by the insurgent tribesmen. If, owing to the Mehtar of Chitral's death, and the fighting which is almost certain to take place for the throne, the frontier is disturbed and the Indus valley tribes, who have shown signs of uneasiness lately, rise, we may expect Hunza and Nagar to be disturbed, and the officer commanding at Gilgit ought to be in a position, by holding such points as he considers necessary, Gakuch for example, to forestall the danger. If it is known that from Bunji to Gakuch the country is firmly held, the chances of disturbance will be much lessened.

ROBERTS.

## LXXIV.

## ON THE STRATEGICAL IMPORTANCE OF RAWAL PINDI, AND THE DESIRABILITY OF COMPLETING THE WORKS AND PROVIDING THE ARMAMENT PROPOSED FOR ITS DEFENCE.

FORT WILLIAM,  
27th December, 1892.

In considering the case of Rawal Pindi and its defences, it is desirable to bear in mind that, with the exception of the advanced position at Quetta and the two bridgeheads at Sukkur and Attock, India does not possess a single strong place along a frontier more than 1,000 miles in length measured by the Indus from Karachi to the Pamirs.

Our yearly extending knowledge of this frontier shows that the difficulties of access to it from the direction of Central Asia are by no means so formidable as they were formerly believed to be. The principal obstacles lie in the districts nearest to ourselves, and until they have been overcome, not only tend to isolate Afghanistan from India and to impede the action we might be called upon to undertake for the protection of the Amir's dominions, but form a screen behind which an enemy established in Afghanistan could make his preparations, unobserved and undisturbed, for a further advance.

With India itself, nature has made the southern section of our present frontier very strong. It is hardly to be imagined that an invader would attempt to cross the arid tracts of Bahawalpur and Rajputana, while somewhat further north he would certainly avoid having to cross the rivers of the Punjab, if he found it possible to do so. So long as Quetta is held, Sind and Karachi are reasonably secure against a hostile advance.

All considerations point to the extreme North-West as the probable scene of operations, and to Lahore as their primary objective. This is the line which most directly leads to the wealth of India through fertile districts having good and ample communications, and it is the line by which an invader would be most sanguine of raising local disaffection in his favour. If attacked on this line, with the exception of Rawal Pindi, we have not a single prepared position from the Indus to the Hooghly, in which an army could hold the enemy in check with all possible advantages previously arranged in its own favour. Every consideration, historical, political, and military, points to the dangerous, if not the hopeless, results which would ensue if a war of invasion were permitted to drive our forces behind the Sutlej. It is therefore incumbent upon us to be in readiness to make our stand as close to our frontier as possible, and to omit no reasonable precautions which may aid in making that stand a successful one. It is a common and dangerous fallacy to suppose that the determination to be strong on our present frontier implies a decision to adopt a passive defence. Yet this is without question one of the ideas prevalent in India on this subject, and the fortification of the frontier is too often assumed to be opposed to the offensive-defensive policy which is undoubtedly the preferable course. A very slight study of the persistent efforts of almost every European nation to fortify its frontiers, concurrently with the determination to carry the war across them, will show that this assumption cannot be substantiated; and it may be added that such study is

becoming daily of more importance to us, inasmuch as upon our frontier we shall be opposed in the future, if not to European enemies entirely, yet to troops directed, armed, and at least partially disciplined by Europeans.

In the view of continental nations a strong frontier and well protected advanced bases are held to be essential to the success of forward movements, so long as these can be made and sustained. But it must be remembered that the offensive-defensive is not always possible, nor can it be maintained for an indefinite period. Inferiority in strength, delay in receiving timely aid from England, reverses in the field, or long and insecure lines of communication would impose a limit on advances which might otherwise be feasible and desirable. It is also material to consider the possibilities of internal disorder, while the armies of this country are engaged far from their own territories, especially when the population in rear of them is neither homogeneous nor patriotic. The history of Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812-13 is a marked instance of this risk.

During the periods in which a forward movement cannot be attempted, a strong frontier retards if it does not prevent, the advance of the enemy, and facilitates the preparations of the defender. Or when the forward movement fails, or is exhausted, the consequent retirement can be made in comparative security and order on known points, and a retreat is not likely to degenerate into a rout.

It is held by some that the construction of fortifications induces natives to think us doubtful of the continuance of our supremacy, and gives rise to alarmist views. Very possibly ideas of this sort are propagated in India by interested persons, but their effect on the minds of the people will be proportionate to the status of those who give countenance to them. This argument against frontier defences, however, hardly bears examination. The possibility of external attack is freely discussed in every newspaper. Russian movements and frontier difficulties are known and commented on in every bazar. The construction of fortifications in support of the ruling Power has been an oriental practice from time immemorial, and our action in this respect is at least as likely to instil the idea that we mean to retain our Eastern possessions at any cost, as to give an impression of weakness. There is nothing in the action that is being taken for the defence of the frontier which is not thoroughly consonant with the principles which have guided the Government of India in dealing with other matters of a similar nature. Every thoroughly educated native knows that coast defences are intended to prevent a repetition of the strife, based on the ocean, of a century ago, and native traders are daily becoming more fully alive to the necessity for protecting commerce. In addition to the long established disarmament of the civil population, the construction of defensible posts, and the protection of our arsenals and railway bridges, have been going on for years, while great encouragement has been given to volunteering. It is not held that these measures have produced feelings of alarm, but rather that they show our intention to keep India under a subjection far more real than that of 1857. The progressive reorganisation and mobilization of our army are also well known to have reference to frontier service, and we have extended our confidence in this respect to Native princes by encouraging them to train their own troops and place them in line with ours for this purpose.

The cost of the Rawal Pindi defences is a subject much commented on. It is said that the money expended on them would be better devoted to the *personnel* and *matériel* of the field army. There is a speciousness about this which needs remark. Forty-nine lakhs of rupees would, no doubt, be of considerable value to the army; but, in the first place, the money is granted specifically for defence works, and cannot be transferred in aid of the ordinary Military Budget. Even if it could be, it would not support and strengthen the frontier in the way that a position at Rawal Pindi will do. A similar outlay at Quetta undoubtedly did much to give us about 7 years of

freedom from scares, and has thus enabled our communications to be pushed forward, and arrangements to be made for the rapid concentration and equipment of our troops. The position of Rawal Pindi is of the same nature and will conduce largely to the same advantages which the expenditure on defensive works at Quetta is acknowledged to have attained.

The outlay on Rawal Pindi is held to be excessive. Now the estimated figures actually are—

	Rupees.
For Works .. .. .	28,00,000
For Armaments .. .. .	20,91,428
TOTAL ..	<u>48,91,428</u>

Or, taking 14·7 Rupees as equal to 1l.—

	£
For Works .. .. .	190,000
For Armaments .. .. .	142,274
TOTAL ..	<u>332,274</u>

It will, perhaps, be conceded that what is really the key to our North-West Frontier is at least as valuable to us as Heligoland is to the Germans. Yet the German naval estimates, 1892-93, provide no less than 375,000*l.* for the fortification of Heligoland. Again it may reasonably be contended that Rawal Pindi is as valuable to us as one battleship is to the British navy. Yet the cost of the "Sanspareil" is as follows—

Debitable to Naval Estimates—	£
Hull .. .. .	537,444
Propelling machinery .. .. .	111,018
Gun mountings .. .. .	55,636
Torpedo gear .. .. .	10,980
Fittings .. .. .	40,000
	<u>755,078</u>
Debitable to Army Vote—	
Guns .. .. .	70,390
	<u>825,468</u>

Or, as compared with Rawal Pindi—

The ship herself .. .. .	699,442
The works at Rawal Pindi .. .. .	190,000
The ship's guns and mountings .. .. .	126,026
The guns and mountings at Rawal Pindi ..	142,274

The effective life of such a ship is from 20 to 25 years, and she may be lost at any moment like the "Howe" now on shore at Ferrol (whose cost without armament was 667,000*l.*). The effective life of Rawal Pindi is far beyond this limit. It cannot be lost by accident, while the attempt to take it by siege would, if unsuccessful, prove the ruin of the invaders, and even if successful, should certainly cost them millions of pounds and many thousands of lives.

Besides containing the principal arsenal in Upper India, Rawal Pindi possesses

singular natural advantages for the purpose it is intended to fulfil. It is not trammelled by the juxtaposition of a native city of any great size or political importance, and it lies in a district of comparatively small population and cultivation. The climate is good, and there is a good water supply and ample accommodation for troops, for whom the surrounding country gives special facilities for training, while the proximity of the hills enables a very large number of them to enjoy excellent summer stations.

Its strategical advantages are no less marked. A strong position here absolutely throttles all movement on India from Kashmir on the east, round to Kabul on the west. No force crossing the Indus between Torbela and Khushalgarh could possibly neglect Rawal Pindi. That is to say, any enemy entering the Peshawar Valley from its north or west sides has not only Attock to deal with, but owing to the great difficulty of the country on both sides of the grand trunk road and the North-Western Railway, he could not avoid coming through the Margalla Pass with Rawal Pindi immediately and closely behind it. It is almost axiomatic that no military position exists which cannot be turned in the broadest sense of the term. But turning movements are only dangerous within certain limits of space and time. Beyond these limits they become mere independent operations, and as such are frequently as dangerous to the attacking as to the defending force. Rawal Pindi is exceptionally safe against turning movements. On the north and east any advance for this purpose from the Eastern Russian provinces of Ferghana and Semiretchiusk is highly unlikely. Chinese territory would have to be crossed, and the Kuldja difficulty of some years ago will doubtless act as a deterrent. This Chinese territory extends to the Pamirs and covers almost the entire northern frontier of Kashmir. No doubt troops from Ferghana, Samarkhand, and Bokhara could move into Kashmir by the Pamirs, Badakshan and Kafirstan, but these routes are far from easy for forces of even moderate strength, and such an advance could be checked in Kashmir, where it is clearly our interests to make timely arrangement with this object in view. Rawal Pindi, with its communications through Murree to Abbottabad and Srinagar, offers an excellent base for such operations, and it may be well aided from Jhelum, Sialkot and Dalhousie, all these garrisons having railway communication with the trunk line of the Punjab.

From the west and south a turning movement in combination with direct attack is far more probable. Operations starting from the line Kabul-Ghazni or even from Kandahar might be directed by the Kuram, and the passes south of it as far down as the Gomal, upon the Indus from Kalabagh to Dera Ismail Khan, and these considerations give a remarkable importance to this section of the frontier. But in operations from such an extended base, convergence at the point of attack is a most essential condition, and such convergence might be looked for in the Bannu District. From Kabul up to this point the range of the Safed Koh would prevent all intercommunication between a force south of it and one operating by Jalalabad and the Khaibar. If the southern force succeeded in reaching the Indus, it is most unlikely that it would attempt to push across the Doabs and rivers of the Punjab on any direct line from Dehra Ismail Khan to Lahore, which would be the objective. It is almost a certainty that it would take a more northerly direction and join hands with the troops operating directly on Rawal Pindi. Both sections of these troops would be useless until Rawal Pindi had fallen. The portion directly attacking could not pass that position, while the turning force could not safely advance into the Punjab, until the capture of Rawal Pindi had opened the direct road for stores and munitions. It is conceivable however, that with this intention a push might be made from Mianwali along the line of the Salt Range Railway to Jhelum, but this could hardly succeed if the Salt Range itself were disputed. Admitting then that there is danger at and opposite the mouth of the Gomal which Rawal Pindi does not absolutely prevent, it yet exercises a very marked control over a movement from this direction, and it may be confidently stated



that the central position of Rawal Pindi is of very singular strength in respect of the whole North-West Frontier above the Gomal and right round to and including Kashmir. Its powers of observing and controlling the outlets from this great and dangerous arc would be enormously increased by the completion of the railway cis-Indus from Mianwali to Abbottabad and Kashmir.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that, so long as our present frontier remains unaltered, the military value of Rawal Pindi as an advanced base and point of support to the northern section of that frontier almost, if not quite, equals the value of Quetta in relation to the southern section. Also that, even if our frontier were eventually to be advanced to a more scientific alignment, the fortifications in question would still be invaluable as safeguarding our communications in case of advance, and our retreat in case unforeseen circumstances should ever render this necessary.

I trust that the foregoing explanation of my reasons for attaching so much importance to the preparation of a strong position at Rawal Pindi will remove any doubts that may exist as to the desirability of completing the works and supplying the guns needed for its defence.

ROBERTS.

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## LXXV.

ON THE NECESSITY FOR MAKING THE AMIR UNDERSTAND THAT WE DO NOT INTEND TO  
BE TRIFLED WITH ANY LONGER.

CALCUTTA,

16th February, 1893.

Of the alternative policies set forth by the Viceroy at pages 3 to 5 of his Excellency's note, dated the 6th instant, I am strongly in favour of the former. We have distinctly warned the Amir that, under certain contingencies, we should be obliged to adopt a specified line of action,\* and I agree with the Honourable General Brackenbury in thinking that it would be most inexpedient for us to do nothing when the contingencies referred to have actually occurred. Moreover, in the general review of our relations with Abdur Rahman, which was submitted to the Secretary of State in Foreign Department Despatch No. 155, dated the 16th August, 1892, it was stated, paragraph (18), that a definite settlement of the frontier questions enumerated in the despatch could no longer be deferred, paragraph (34), that the state of things upon the frontier was becoming intolerable, and that the risk of alienating the Amir by the course of action indicated in paragraphs 32 and 33 was, in our opinion, less than that of allowing matters to drift. These conclusions were arrived at no longer than 6 months ago, after protracted discussion and deliberation, and it appears to me that it is incumbent on us to adhere to the policy we then agreed to, unless we are over-ruled by Her Majesty's Government.

2. I dealt so fully with the case in my note of the 1st July last, to paragraph 12 of which I would specially invite the attention of his Excellency the Viceroy and my Honourable colleagues, that I have but little to add on the present occasion. I would merely point out that the present state of affairs is a source not only of grave anxiety, but also of useless expense. The cost of the force employed at Kajuri Kach amounts to 1,11,000 Rupees a-month, and that of the force in the Kuram Valley to 50,000 Rupees a-month; while, if the Amir insists in his intention of quartering troops opposite New Chaman, our own garrison at that out-post will have to be correspondingly increased. Moreover, as noted by Sir Mortimer Durand, the Amir's interference at Asmar menaces the safety of the mission we have sent to Chitral, and is likely to give rise to very unpleasant and dangerous complications in the near future.

3. The course of action which I advocate, as being the only one consistent with the dignity and interests of the British Government, is that described in paragraphs 6 to 8 of his Excellency the Viceroy's note.

4. I believe that if we make it clear to the Amir that we do not intend to be trifled with any longer, and that our repeated warnings are not empty threats, our relations with him will rapidly improve. We have only to study the history of India to convince ourselves that it is a fatal mistake to adopt a temporizing policy in dealing with Asiatics. Our present embarrassment is chiefly due to our yielding in the past to the Amir's unjustifiable pretensions, and if we again give way in the present instance, we shall run a grave risk of inciting him to commit acts of provocation so serious as to probably result in open rupture.

ROBERTS.

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\* See paragraph 3 (1) of his Excellency the Viceroy's note. See also letter, No. 145, P.O.D., 29th August, 1892, to the Amir, in which it is observed—"I have now to inform Your Highness that it is impossible for my Government to allow this state of things to continue for an indefinite time."

## LXXVI.

MINUTE OF DISSENT FROM A MILITARY DESPATCH RECOMMENDING THAT THE WORK ON  
THE RAWAL PINDI DEFENCES SHOULD BE STOPPED.

CALCUTTA,

13th March, 1893.

The project for the defence of Rawal Pindi was decided upon by the Government of India after full enquiry and careful deliberation, it has been sanctioned by the Secretary of State for India, and for political as well as military reasons I am strongly opposed to leaving it unfinished. I also doubt whether the saving likely to be effected by postponing the completion of this defensive scheme will afford any appreciable relief to the finances of India.\* In matters of fortification as in other matters there is room for a great diversity of opinion, but it appears to me to be contrary to sound policy to re-open questions which have already been dealt with by competent authority. In the present instance financial embarrassment is put forward as the ground for stopping the construction of the batteries and cancelling the demand for their armament. I desire, however, to record my opinion that the reason thus advanced is not sufficient to justify a postponement of the completion of works which were deliberately decided upon by the Government of India and sanctioned by Her Majesty's Government, and which, in my belief, are essential to the safety of the Empire.

The propriety of defending Rawal Pindi has been so repeatedly discussed during the period of my command in this country that it is impossible for me to adduce fresh arguments in support of my dissent from the present despatch. It will suffice if I briefly recapitulate the recorded views on this subject of the Government of India and its responsible advisers.

In a memorandum dated the 21st June, 1888, and entitled—"Is it necessary to fortify Mooltan?" I remarked as follows:—

"The principal line of defence against an advance from Kabul, *viâ* the Khaibar, includes Landi Kotal, Peshawar, Attock, and Khushalgarh, supported by Rawal Pindi. The possession of Peshawar and the almost certainly hostile attitude of the surrounding tribes in the event of a Russian advance through the Khaibar would render its prolonged retention in the face of superior force almost impracticable; and for this reason chiefly the idea of establishing a powerful entrenchment to cover Peshawar and block the Khaibar has been abandoned. It would be essential, however, to delay the enemy in the Pass as long as possible, in order to gain time for an orderly retirement from the Peshawar valley; and for this purpose it is proposed to construct some field works in advance of Jamrud, and to strengthen the position immediately in front of Peshawar by fortified villages and improvised defences. The defending force would eventually have to fall back on the Indus, where we must have a thoroughly strong position to admit of an obstinate and, it is hoped, a successful resistance being made. Under such conditions Rawal Pindi would be of extreme importance; first, as supporting

\* The cost of the works at Rawal Pindi is estimated at 28 lakhs. Of this sum about 13 lakhs will have been spent by the end of the current financial year, and of the balance 1½ lakhs are due for land which has already been taken up, so that by indefinitely postponing the completion of the works only 13½ lakhs will be saved.

the defensive line of the Indus; secondly, as containing the principal and indeed the only arsenal in the Northern Punjab; and thirdly, as covering Lahore and Ferozepore and the junction of the North-Western and Sind-Sagar Railways at Lala Musa. Although the Rawal Pindi position is not a very easy one to defend, it seems possible to form a strong entrenched camp by occupying the west ridge, and the heights surrounding the present fort and arsenal, by works and batteries of semi-permanent or field-work type. The cost of a well-devised scheme of this nature ought not to be prohibitive, and there can be no doubt as to the necessity for fortifying Rawal Pindi.

“In the event of Rawal Pindi falling into the enemy’s hands, his objectives would be Lahore, Ferozepore, and Delhi; and the existence of a fortress at Mooltan, though valuable as a centre for the concentration of reinforcements from England, *viâ* Karachi, would not directly check his advance, provided he was, as he assuredly would be, in superior force.

“As I have said before, Mooltan is no longer an advanced post; and it can only be considered as a position of support under the supposition that the enemy were likely to advance by some or all of the routes leading direct to the Derajat, or under the still more improbable contingency\* of his moving *viâ* Quetta and the Bolan after having routed the field army. Under such circumstances Mooltan would become of great strategic value; but the chance of an attack by the Bolan or the Derajat passes is so remote as compared to an advance by the Khaibar that, while the defence of Rawal Pindi is of vital importance, Mooltan must be classed as of secondary importance only. There is of course the possibility of an invader being strong enough to make a simultaneous movement on India by the northern route and through the central or southern passes. Under such conditions time would be everything, and the existence of a fortified position at Mooltan, as well as a fortress at Rawal Pindi, might turn the scale by delaying the invader’s advance long enough to allow of the arrival from England and mobilization of the necessary reinforcements.

“As I have already stated, there is so little chance of Mooltan being now required as a place of defence against a European enemy that I would not spend more money upon its fortifications, at any rate for the present. Political considerations have facilitated our advance on the left, while they have equally retarded us on the right, the result being that Mooltan has been abandoned as an ordnance depôt, and our arsenal has been moved forward to Quetta, where it is adequately fortified. On the right, however, the Rawal Pindi Arsenal, which is within a short distance of our main line of resistance, is without any power of defence; it seems to me, therefore, absolutely necessary that we should, without delay, render this position impregnable, and secure the safety of the main arsenal on the line by which we believe an invasion of India would be attempted.

“At the present time there is not a single fort or entrenchment in India, except the newly constructed position at Quetta, that could hold out for more than a few hours against a European enemy equipped with modern artillery. This state of things may have seemed unobjectionable so long as the advance of Russia in Central Asia was considered as chimerical. We have now to face the consequences of having her as our near neighbour, and the establishment of two strong *places d’armes*—one at Rawal Pindi.

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\* I have said the improbable contingency; but if we were to take the fatal step of operating on more than one line, unless we received infinitely larger reinforcements than seems likely, the Russians might without any great effort bring an army not only large enough to drive us out of Southern Afghanistan, but to force the fortified position in front of Quetta, which would be impregnable with a sufficient force to defend it.

the other at Quetta—covering India against invasion from the North-West, cannot be looked upon as an extravagant precaution against possible, though perhaps improbable, eventualities.”

My opinion, as above recorded, was concurred in by the Governor-General in Council, and the Secretary of State was addressed accordingly in Military Despatch No. 163, dated the 7th September, 1888, to paragraphs 12 to 18, of which I would specially invite attention.

On resigning the Office of Viceroy the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava drew up a Minute, dated the 8th December, 1888, in which his Lordship laid stress on the necessity for continuity in our military policy in the following words:—

“One of the most important and significant measures which the Government has originated and developed during my Viceroyalty has been the creation of the defences of the Empire. With respect to those which are in process of construction at the various ports I need say but little here. They will, I am sure, be pressed on to completion, and practical effect will be given to the schemes of defence which have been drawn up; while the commercial communities at these ports will doubtless lose no occasion to urge on the Government the necessity for the speedy and perfect fulfilment of the work which has been begun and which is generally well advanced. It is rather in connection with the frontier defences that I desire to record my opinion here, for in their case it is the Government of India alone which is interested and responsible for their completion. Some of the changes which have taken place in military opinion in respect to certain technical questions, either as to the style of fortification to be erected or the position of the works themselves, have taken place for good and sufficient reasons. But unless overwhelming reasons indicate a contrary course, we shall, I hope, steadfastly adhere to the recommendations which were originally made and accepted for the defence and protection of the various passes leading from the uplands of Afghanistan to the plains of India.”

Early in 1889 the preliminary scheme for constructing an entrenched position at Rawal Pindi was laid before the Defence Committee,\* and in paragraph 13 of its Proceedings, dated the 20th June, 1889, as quoted below, the Committee pointed out in clear and forcible language the inexpediency of vacillation or delay in dealing with this and other measures necessary for the protection of the North-West Frontier. It was remarked—

“In conclusion, the Defence Committee would urge that the defensive works at Rawal Pindi, the necessity of which in the event of emergency is admitted, should be completed without delay, and that the guns required for arming them should be procured as soon as possible and stored in readiness for use. The Committee would strongly deprecate any idea of elaborating the defensive scheme now, and leaving it to be carried out when war might appear imminent. The effect sought for in fortifying the North-West Frontier, and the supporting points in rear of it, is partly moral and partly material. So far as moral effect is concerned, paper defences are absolutely inoperative; and in regard to material effect, there is every reason to apprehend that works, however carefully designed in peace, will either not be completed at all, or be completed in a perfunctory and imperfect manner, in the hurry and confusion which the preparation for a great struggle necessarily entails. In the opinion of the Defence

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\* The Defence Committee is presided over by the Commander-in-Chief in India, and its members are the Adjutant-General and Quarter-Master-General in India, the Director-General of Military Works, the Director-General of Ordnance, and the Inspector-General of Artillery. It thus represents the highest military opinion available in this country.

Committee, if it is worth while to defend Rawal Pindi at all, the requisite arrangements should not only be elaborated but be carried into effect while time and opportunity admit. To confine our preparations within narrower limits might save money for the moment, but would almost certainly involve an extravagant expenditure hereafter, while failing to produce the anterior moral effect, both in India and outside her borders, which is understood to be one of the main objects of the present frontier policy of Her Majesty's Government."

The views of the Defence Committee commended themselves to the Government of India; the Director-General of Military Works was directed to prepare a detailed project for the defence of Rawal Pindi; and when this had been submitted and examined, the Secretary of State's sanction was asked for in Military Despatch No. 209, dated the 14th October, 1891. The requisite area of land was ordered to be taken up in anticipation of the sanction of the Home Government, which was accorded in the Secretary of State's Military letter No. 25 of the 11th February, 1892, and work was commenced immediately after that date.

Before vacating the post of Military Member of Council, Sir George Chesney wrote a Minute on "the Indian Army and Military Administration," dated 14th April, 1891, in paragraph 56 of which he pointed out the extreme importance of preparing a defensive position at Rawal Pindi. He said—

"Defence works for Rawal Pindi may be claimed as another exception to the general rule, that we should reserve the preparation of defensive works within India until the development of events shows the points where they are most needed. Rawal Pindi contains our advanced arsenal, and is the point at which our concentration would probably take place in the event of our having sustained a repulse or disaster beyond the Indus. It would indeed be a vital point in the defence of India, to which we should hold on at all costs. It is in the middle of a warlike population, among whom, in case of a reverse, all the elements of turbulence and insurrection might be found to arise. Strategically the position is a strong one, and may be made vastly more so by a not unreasonable expenditure. Between Rawal Pindi and Allahabad there is not a single place of arms which could stop a brigade, and it is therefore no more than a reasonable measure of precaution to have at least this one place of arms for the protection of the Indian Empire. As the late Lord Napier of Magdala said in one of the last letters he ever wrote, the defence of Rawal Pindi needs no defence."

In October last, when the possibility of reducing military expenditure came under consideration, I earnestly deprecated the reversal of previous orders on the subject of the Rawal Pindi defences, and in a memorandum, dated the 27th December, 1892, of which I attach a copy, I explained my reasons for regarding these defences as essential to the security of our present frontier.

It will be seen from the foregoing history of the case that the undermentioned administrative and military authorities have been in favour of the early completion of the scheme under reference, viz., the Secretary of State for India in Council, the Government of India up to the year 1893, the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, the late Lord Napier of Magdala, General Sir George Chesney, the Defence Committee, and myself. I trust that this strong preponderance of opinion will be held by Her Majesty's Government to justify my dissent from the conclusion arrived at by my honourable colleagues.

ROBERTS.

## LXXVII.

ON THE DESIRABILITY OF CLEARLY DEFINING THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ARMY IN INDIA SHOULD BE BASED, AND OF PERSEVERING IN THE POLICY WHICH HAS GUIDED THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA OF LATE YEARS IN ITS EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN OUR MILITARY POSITION IN THIS COUNTRY.

JEYPORE,

*1st April, 1893.*

I am anxious before I lay down my office as Commander-in-Chief in India to place, before His Excellency the Viceroy and my honourable colleagues some observations relative to those measures for the improvement of the army which have been undertaken within recent years, and especially to lay stress on the necessity for preserving a continuity of policy in the directions I shall venture to indicate. Great progress has been made in developing the fighting efficiency of the British and Native armies of India; it is of the highest importance that our efforts in this respect should not be relaxed, and that no change of policy should be allowed to interfere with a work which has been begun, but which cannot in the nature of things ever be regarded as complete. Our object must be to press forward steadily along the path of improvement upon which we have entered, and in order to do so, it is essential that each successive Government and Commander-in-Chief should have before them well-defined aims for increasing the efficiency of the whole army.

2. The maintenance of peace and order in India, and its defence from aggression, must mainly be founded upon the strength of the British army in this country. We must make the best use of the material which is furnished us from England, and must endeavour by every means in our power to render the troops at our disposal thoroughly fit for field service. The training of the troops at camps of exercise is an important means to this end, and I trust that the Government of India will assist my successor in the future, as they have done me in the past, to carry on the practical education of the army. A constant attention to the equipment, armament, and training of the troops, combined with strict discipline, will go far to secure the object we all have in view which is to have in readiness for field operations, whenever and wherever they may be required, the largest possible number of British troops in the highest possible state of efficiency. We must never allow all those questions which have come into public prominence within comparatively recent years to be lost sight of, and we must never relax the efforts which are being made to diminish and prevent disease by sanitary measures, by improvement in the soldiers' rations and in the mode of preparing them, by extending the supply of pure water to all cantonments in India, and by elaborating the arrangements which have been initiated for the supply of pure milk—a matter of great importance in the prevention of enteric fever.

3. Time will show whether venereal disease can be materially reduced by the establishment of cantonment hospitals where complaints of every kind are dealt with, and where efforts are being made by gentle and considerate treatment to induce the voluntary attendance of sufferers from this class of disease. At all events, it is our

obvious duty to follow the policy which the Home Government has laid down, and on the score both of humanity and the well-being of the army to try every means of lessening the disease and its terrible effects. Rational employment and amusement in and near the barracks, in the shape of gymnasia, gardens, workshops, &c., will all contribute to prevent the soldier from passing his leisure in the bazar, and I believe that nothing will be more effective in this direction than the regimental institutes which are now thoroughly established as part of the regimental system. The cost of these institutions will be well repaid by the improved health and greater contentment of the men. It is impossible, without large expenditure, to remove all the sanitary dangers and difficulties which are created by densely populated bazars in the military cantonments in India, but it should be recognized as a principle that every opportunity should be taken to discourage the growth and improve the sanitation of these bazars. Wherever large bodies of men have been collected together for many years, dangers to health are likely to accumulate and become intensified. This is specially the case in this country, where the native population of bazars, which are the unavoidable concomitants of all military cantonments, were in former days left without the minute and constant sanitary supervision that the progress of medical science has now shown to be necessary. As existing dangers cannot be removed without a large expenditure, the Government of India has been asked to sanction large sums of money for the improvement of cantonment conservancy, and whatever funds may be forthcoming for this purpose, the military and medical authorities must be held responsible that they are laid out to the best advantage. A great deal has been done to recruit the strength and energies of the British Army serving in this country, by the creation of stations in the hills and the formation of hutted camps where the troops are removed from the debilitating effects of the hot weather. I trust that the Government of India will continue to establish as many of these health resorts as possible, consistently with the location in the plains of such British garrisons as may be required to maintain internal tranquility.

4. In the Native army important changes have been effected, and others are impending, to improve its average quality by the substitution of men drawn from the fighting races of India for the less warlike material of which certain regiments in each Presidency were formerly, and are still, composed. While no effort should be spared in this direction, we must accept the fact that it is impossible that every portion of our Native forces can be brought up to the highest standard of fighting efficiency, and we must recognize the necessity for only employing on service, across the North-West Frontier, troops of the hardiest and most warlike races, if we are ever engaged in a campaign against a European enemy. A great deal can be done to increase the fighting power of the Native army by an improved system of recruiting, and it is satisfactory to know that the appointment of district recruiting officers is likely to result in our obtaining a better class of men. The development of the regimental centre system and the formation of class regiments will also tend to add to the efficiency and contentment of the army.

5. Inseparably bound up with the organization of the active army is the question of the reserve, which has not as yet reached any considerable proportions, I hope that it will be gradually developed and that every legitimate means will be taken, without weakening the active army, to promote its strength and usefulness. It should never be forgotten that the Native army of India, loyal as it may be at the present time, is composed of mercenaries, and is therefore always subject to those influences which affect soldiers who are serving alien masters. Its very existence must be dependent upon its belief in England's power, and upon the knowledge that we are determined to hold India against the aggression of any foreign nation, more particularly



that of Russia, whose approach is, I firmly believe, discussed not only in every regiment and every cantonment bazar, but in the principal centres of civil life throughout the country.

6. The hutting of the Native army is a question of great importance, and I am glad to think that the Government of India have already taken the matter into favourable consideration. It is admitted that the sanctioned amount of infantry hutting allowance is no longer sufficient to properly house the Sepoy, and I trust that on the conclusion of the experiments which are now in progress at Mian-Mir, Jullundur and Delhi, a satisfactory solution of the question will be arrived at, and that we shall be freed from the reproach of having our troops housed less comfortably in many cases than are our departmental followers. In the cavalry too the difficulty in connection with hutting has become recently more acutely felt than it was formerly. The fact that a regiment spending a large sum on its barracks has little chance of getting good value for its money on leaving a station has always been a source of difficulty and discontent. Of late years, moreover, the universal rise in prices has aggravated the evil, and made the intervention of Government more necessary than ever. It is my firm belief that this difficult and important question will not be satisfactorily disposed of until the principle is unreservedly recognized, that, in the case of all arms, Government should provide the materials and skilled labour for hutting, while the men themselves should assist so far as is possible by furnishing the unskilled labour required. I think too that all lines should be built on standard plans, to avoid complications when regiments change quarters.

7. Everything should be done to secure the contentment and loyalty of the Native army by a scrupulous regard for their customs and their religion, and by adjusting their pay to meet the altered circumstances of the times. There can be no doubt that the efficiency of the Native cavalry has been greatly improved by the increase of pay which they have received, and the other advantages which have been conferred upon them, and I have frequently stated my opinion that the time is fast approaching when similar benefits must be granted to the Native infantry. It is unreasonable to expect the Sepoy to remain content, unless his scanty wages are increased in proportion to the higher price which civil labour commands. Wages have risen so much of late years all over India as to greatly counterbalance the prospective advantages of the Sepoy's pension; and I would impress on the Government of India the necessity for taking this matter into consideration without loss of time.

8. The training and discipline of the Native army is, I feel sure, in excellent hands, and I am confident that the officers of the Staff Corps will continue to maintain their reputation as a devoted and hard-working body of earnest soldiers, who serve Her Majesty in this country for long years, often in remote and unhealthy stations, on what has now become very small pay. These officers look to the Commander-in-Chief and the Government of India to guard their interests against all the changes which time brings about, and I trust that they will receive every consideration to which they are entitled. In the periodical readjustments of commands and staff appointments, care should be taken lest deserving officers are deprived of a fair chance of advancement and distinction. In our anxiety for economy we may perhaps have gone too far in reducing the number of the higher appointments, and I trust that this matter will receive early attention in the interests, not only of the officers of the Indian Service, but of the whole Army in India. It is essential that we should have a sufficient number of young and able commanders, and of well-qualified and active staff officers.

9. We should steadily persevere in the improvement of the Native officer, at the same time remembering that very few can be trusted to act without the leading and

support of British officers in time of difficulty. I have always encouraged the appointment of Native officers to levies and in similar positions, because I believe that if we choose good men, such a course may develop the sense of responsibility and power of initiative; and I hope that in the future, as we gradually consolidate our influence over the tribes of the North-West frontier, this policy will be continued and extended. But, whatever we may do to improve the Native officers (and I believe that this improvement can mainly be effected by regimental training and military education in the regiment) it must never be forgotten that we must rely upon the British officer serving with Native troops for the well-being and loyalty of the army in peace, and for its efficiency for war. We may make changes for the better, such as I have lately proposed, in the tactical and administrative organization of battalions of Native infantry; we may improve the Native cavalry by securing them the best equipment, by mounting them as suitably as possible, and by training them in the highest way; and yet, if we have not a sufficiency of British officers for the Native army, we shall find that under the stress of a great war we shall be surrounded by difficulties which may lead to disaster. The subject is not an easy one to deal with, but statistics show the great diminution in the number of British officers available for duty with Native troops within the last 20 or 30 years; and I am convinced that the question must be faced before very long, for we have now not only no reserve of officers, but have not even sufficient to complete the complement sanctioned for Native regiments in time of war, to say nothing of those required for staff and departmental appointments.

10. In regard to the strength of the Native army, I earnestly trust that those portions of it upon which we must mainly depend in time of war will be increased and not diminished. Indeed, on a careful review of the existing conditions of the country, of the extension of the Empire in Burma and on the North-West Frontier, and of the consequent absorption of a large portion of the increase sanctioned in 1885, I cannot believe that there is one battalion too many, even for the ordinary peace requirements of India. We may redistribute the garrisons in certain portions of the country, and we may replace battalions of indifferent fighting power by those which possess more warlike qualities, but I affirm that the number of battalions in the army should not be reduced. The Imperial Service troops, well drilled, disciplined, and equipped as they are, cannot replace any portion of the Native army, but they can furnish a valuable auxiliary force, with a minimum of risk, so long as the policy is steadily pursued of insisting on the reduction of the residue of the Native States armies.

11. It is scarcely necessary for me to speak of the plan of mobilization, except to express the hope that no opportunity will be neglected for its improvement and for perfecting it in every detail. Those who are responsible for the maintenance of the British power in this country should recollect that our dominion must be based on our ability to place a sufficient body of troops in the field as quickly as possible, and on these troops being thoroughly equipped and provided with the means of movement in any direction. Such a result cannot be obtained without the expenditure of money, but if the Empire is to be retained that money must be spent, and I look forward with hope to the whole field army, and not merely a portion of it, being placed in such a state of preparedness that it will be ready to move at the shortest notice.

12. I have consistently urged that no great campaign against a European enemy can be undertaken from India without a larger number of British troops in this country than we at present possess, and without the means of rapidly increasing the Native army. As to the first point, my views have been repeatedly placed before the Government of India and have been communicated to Her Majesty's Government. With regard to the second point, the formation, training, and equipment of an

adequate reserve, and the provision of British officers to command it when mobilized, must to a great extent be questions of expenditure, but they are questions which will have to receive very earnest consideration the nearer the danger approaches, for at the present time the army is on a limited peace establishment, and as I have pointed out before, the number of British officers is dangerously low.

13. The Government of India is, I am well aware, fully alive to the importance of developing the volunteer movement. Since 1885 the number of efficient volunteers has risen from 14,000 to 24,000, and we should not rest satisfied until every man capable of bearing arms is enrolled in an organization which adds so materially to the stability of our position in India. I regard it as of supreme importance to be prepared beforehand to maintain order within India itself, when we may have to face trouble from beyond the frontier; the development of the force of volunteers and the safe-guarding of vital points and our lines of communication are measures which must be considered in any plan for providing for the security of our possessions. Most important of all these vital points are the railway bridges across our great rivers. The destruction of even one of these, especially if situated in the Punjab or on our immediate frontier, would for a time completely paralyze our mobilization arrangements. It is impossible to believe that an enterprising enemy would not at the commencement of hostilities strain every nerve and spare no expense to thus cripple our movements. The first step I would recommend, on war becoming imminent, is to place guards of Europeans, regulars or volunteers, at either end of every bridge, and to stop all traffic other than by rail. Constant patrolling both along and below each bridge would also be essential to ensure its safety.

14. If the means I have indicated enable us to have an efficient British and Native army, capable with the aid of obligatory reinforcements from home of taking the field and maintaining order in India, there still remains to be considered the question of the support which a field army can derive from works of defence, and the power which they confer of maintaining our control over a country so vast as India, with its land frontier stretching for over 5,000 miles, and its long lines of communication. The defence of India must rest primarily on a well devised plan of operations and on the preparation for carrying out that plan, and in the second place on the adequate fortification of chosen strategical points. After the fullest consideration and many years investigation of this question, I am convinced that the plan of defence which has been proposed in this country and approved by Her Majesty's Government should be fully carried out. The fortified positions on the North-West Frontier contribute greatly to our power of offensive war, and the defence of Quetta and other positions, by a comparatively small body of troops, would leave our field army free to move in any direction. The idea of strengthening certain strategic points is not a new one; the fortification of Mooltan was discussed a great many years ago, and the conversion of Quetta and Rawal Pindi into strong *places d'armes* is not an extravagant precaution. Quetta is an advanced base from which we might have to operate, while the fortifications which have been erected at other places fulfil the object of all such works of defence—that is to reduce the probability of attack in those directions. The result, however, which we in India have especially endeavoured to attain in fortifying positions on the frontier and supporting points in rear of it is as much moral as material, and in view of the tremendous issues involved I earnestly trust that the Government of India will carry out the policy which has been approved for many years past, and which has been fully accepted by Her Majesty's Government. I can conceive nothing worse than embarking upon a policy of this kind and then drawing back, or failing to carry it out in its entirety.

15. As to the fortifications of the ports, they may be considered to be nearly complete, and, with pre-arranged plans of defence, the safety of those important points would be assured even if our naval means of defence were for the moment absent.

16. But it is not enough that we should have efficient bodies of troops, that we should be able to move them rapidly, and that we should support them by well planned works of defence. The power by which all these measures are set in motion must have the springs of life and action within itself; but so long as the system of presidential commands remains, so long will the central military authority be hampered and embarrassed in its action. It is, I hope, needless for me now to dwell upon this subject, except to say that during my long experience I have received the most complete evidence of the unsuitability to our requirements of the present system and of the necessity for its abandonment. Our aim should be to consolidate administrative control, to decentralize within safe limits all the executive military business of the country, and to ensure the armies of India being maintained in separate bodies, divided by racial and territorial differences, and with no tendency to combine.

17. I have not touched upon many important details, for it would require the enlargement of this minute to unreasonable dimensions if I were to allude to all of them. The continued efficiency of the army departments, the steady improvement in our transport organization, the constant progress in our mobilization arrangements, and a more efficient and harmonious system of administration, will enable the fighting power of the Indian army to be raised to the highest pitch of perfection. The extension of roads and railways within and beyond India, the security of our great bridges on our trunk lines, the gradual consolidation of our influence over the tribes beyond our present frontier, will all contribute to the maintenance of the power of the British Empire in this country—a power which I believe to be generally exercised in a manner conducive to the well-being and happiness of the millions of people who live under its control. That power cannot be preserved without the maintenance of a strong and efficient army, and such an army cannot continue in existence without being supplied with its essential requirements, involving considerable military expenditure. The outlay of the state cannot fail to be large upon an army such as that of India, garrisoning an enormous area of territory, defending thousands of miles of sea and land frontiers, preserving peace among millions of people of different races and religions, and keeping watch and ward against foes from without and possible disaffection within. I have always endeavoured to enforce every economy which could usefully be practised, and to avoid all unnecessary expenditure; but I must record my opinion that the amount required to keep up an adequate, contented, and efficient army is the price which must be paid for the maintenance of the British Empire in this country.

18. In conclusion, I would venture once more to impress upon the Government of India, that, though I have insisted in season and out of season upon the necessity for perfecting our military arrangements, which I believe to be absolutely essential to the maintenance of our power in this country, yet without the hearty co-operation of the people themselves we shall find it difficult to preserve our position intact. I believe the country to be at present generally loyal, for the vapourings of an emancipated press, which takes advantage of a liberty it can neither appreciate nor understand, though highly pernicious, do not represent the feelings of the vast majority of the people of India. This loyalty I think it is in our power to retain, first by showing, as I have said above, that we intend to be true to ourselves, and, secondly, by making it clear, not only by words but by deeds, that we are ready to trust the natives. Native volunteers, it is true, I have always set my face against, for to put arms into the hands

of large numbers of disaffected Bengalis or Mahrattas, intoxicated with that little knowledge which is proverbially dangerous, would be nothing short of madness. To do so would be practically to repeal the Arms Act and to put rifles into the hands of men who could only use them in a manner dangerous to us. But short of this I would do my utmost to meet their legitimate aspirations. In this view I am a strong supporter of the scheme for Imperial Service troops, as I believe that nothing will induce the Natives of India to side with us more certainly than the knowledge that we intend them to assist us in defending the country. Our doing so may involve risk, but risk is inseparable from our position in India, and I believe that in this case the risk is one well worth incurring. Moreover, these Imperial Service troops give us an opportunity of gratifying such military ambition as the Natives of India possess in a suitable and appropriate manner. Such an opening cannot be afforded in our own army. As I have often explained, a just and impartial government, a careful regard to the incidence of taxation, an evident desire to do our utmost to meet the wishes and promote the prosperity of the people of our great Asiatic Empire; these coupled with the belief of our subjects in our military predominance and preparedness, will prove in the future as they have done in the past the surest guarantees of England's supremacy in the east.

ROBERTS.

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## LXXVIII.

GENERAL ORDER BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN INDIA.

HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE ARMY IN INDIA,

BOMBAY,

8th April, 1893.

As the period of my Indian Service has now drawn to its close, I desire to place on record my appreciation of the work that has been accomplished by those serving under me in the 7½ years during which it has been my privilege to hold the chief command of Her Majesty's Forces in this country.

During my tenure of office considerable changes have been made in the training of the artillery and infantry, with the object of impressing upon these services the supreme importance of accurate, rapid, and disciplined shooting. The remarkable improvement which has been effected in marksmanship and fire discipline, and in artillery practice, has increased the fighting efficiency of the army in India to an extent which it is difficult to over-estimate; and I take this last opportunity of urging officers to concentrate their attention and energies as earnestly as heretofore upon the means of producing the most powerful fire effect, this being beyond all dispute the great essential to the success of infantry and artillery in modern war.

In the cavalry, as in the other arms, great progress has been achieved and this is mainly due to the cheerful readiness shown by all ranks to comply with the orders pointing out to them the necessity for becoming practised horsemen and adepts in the use of their weapons. My last word to the British and Native branches of this splendid service is an assurance that, so long as they continue to possess skilful and daring leaders, and so long as the officers and men are determined to reach the highest possible standard of proficiency in their respective duties, they need never fear that opportunity will be wanting in time of war for them to take their full share in the dangers and successes of a campaign.

Since November, 1885, no great wars have disturbed the peaceful development of this country. Nevertheless, in Burma large numbers of troops have been employed, and many chances of earning distinction have presented themselves to young officers and small parties of non-commissioned officers and men. These chances, I am glad to say, have been taken full advantage of, and many soldiers have made names for themselves and proved that they can be depended upon in time of need. No part of our Indian Empire is now more orderly or prosperous than the central districts of Burma, and if their present condition reflects credit on the civil administration, the army, whose duty it was to suppress an organized system of dacoity and to protect the lives and property of the well-disposed inhabitants, assuredly deserves its meed of praise.

In neither the Zhob, the Samana, nor the Black Mountain Expeditions was there much actual fighting; yet these small campaigns were of sufficient importance to show that the labours of the Mobilization Committee have produced good results, and that our transport and commissariat services may now be regarded as in a highly efficient state.

Whilst I have held my present appointment, military communications, both by road and railway, have been considerably improved and extended, the principal Indian

ports have been fortified, and the North-West Frontier has been strengthened by the construction of defensive works at the most important strategical points. While much has thus been done to add to the permanent security of our Eastern Empire, the utmost care has been taken by the responsible advisers of the Government of India to avoid extravagant expenditure on either works or armaments; and special credit is due to the Defence Committee for the moderate cost, as well as for the completeness, of the schemes which it has put forward.

I should be losing sight of a very important matter, did I fail to draw attention in this order to the marked improvement in the conduct of the British soldier, which has of late years become noticeable. This, no doubt, is due in a great measure to the increasingly good education imparted, year by year, to boys of all classes in the United Kingdom, but also, I feel convinced, to the greater consideration with which the soldier is now treated. The soldier's life in this country has been rendered less irksome and more attractive than it used to be, but much yet remains to be done before a military career can become thoroughly acceptable to young men of good education and character. I desire, therefore, to bring this question once more to special prominence by most earnestly commending the British soldier in India to the care of his officers. No one appreciates more than the soldier acts of kindness and sympathy on the part of his superiors, and I appeal to all commissioned ranks, from the Commanding Officer to the junior subaltern, to do what they possibly can for their men, and thus foster that spirit of mutual regard and confidence which is a distinctive feature of the British army.

The conduct and discipline of the Native portion of the army have also been in the highest degree satisfactory during my tenure of this command. The Indian Staff Corps is composed of an exceptionally earnest, hard-working body of officers, and to their efforts I mainly attribute the efficient condition of the Indian army. Native soldiers are quite as sensitive to kindness as their British comrades, but they require to be thoroughly understood by the European who has to deal with them, and, I may add, that no European can understand how to deal with Natives unless he is conversant with their language. In peace time every care should be taken to respect their habits and customs, which are really part of their religion, and upon which Native races lay such stress that any needless disregard of them is apt to produce discontent, and to alienate the classes from which our best soldiers are drawn. In time of war the same course should be followed so far as the exigencies of the services will permit, but I know from experience that, when employed in the field, the sepoy's soldiery instincts are sufficiently strong to prevent him from allowing his caste or religious observances to become in any way a military inconvenience. Native soldiers will do anything for those who care and feel for them, and it is a satisfaction to me to know that the officers of the Staff Corps fully recognize this fact, and by kind and considerate treatment do their utmost to gain the confidence and respect of those whom they command.

There is one subject connected with the training of the army in India to which I have given much consideration, and that is how to develop the martial qualities inherent in our Native officers. It is a question in which I take the deepest interest, and its satisfactory solution appears to me to rest almost entirely with the British officers of the Indian service. The more these associate with the Native officers, the more they let the latter see that they believe in them, the more they try to raise their social status, and the more care they take to impart instruction, the more favourable are the results. Of this there can be no doubt. Those regiments are in all respects the most efficient, in which the Native officers share to the fullest possible extent with their British comrades the responsibilities and labours that attend the proper training and handling of their men.

As Commander-in-Chief in India, I have been much gratified at the manner in

which the volunteer movement in this country has developed of late years. Out of a total number of 83 volunteer corps in India at the present time. 27 corps have been formed since I assumed command of the Army in 1885, and nearly 24,000 efficient volunteers are now available for military duty, should their services be required. These figures speak for themselves, and are a proof of the patriotic spirit which prompts our fellow subjects in this country to devote no small portion of their leisure to learning in peace time how to afford effectual aid in time of war. I congratulate the volunteers in India on their present state of efficiency, and I earnestly hope that each year will see an addition to their numbers, and to their deservedly high reputation.

In thus briefly adverting to the present state of the army in India, its conduct during the past 7½ years, and the measures which have been taken to increase its efficiency and add to its strength, I need hardly say that I fully recognize the impossibility of any Commander-in-Chief carrying out the duties of his appointment without the help of able and willing assistants. No Commander-in-Chief could have been more fortunate in this respect than myself, and it affords me the greatest pleasure to record publicly how much I owe to those good soldiers who have served with me on the Head-quarters' Staff of the Army in India, as well as on the staff and in command of districts. They have never spared themselves, they have been most loyal, and their work has been of a very high character.

I am particularly indebted to the late and present Adjutant-Generals in India, the late Major-General Sir T. D. Baker, K.C.B., whose recent death I deeply deplore, and Major-Generals Sir W. K. Elles, K.C.B., and W. Galbraith, C.B., also Brigadier-General G. deC. Morton, who has twice officiated in that capacity; to the late and present Quarter-Master-Generals in India, Lieut.-General E. F. Chapman, C.B., and Major-Generals Sir J. Browne, K.C.S.I., C.B., and E. Stedman, C.B., and to my late and present Military Secretaries, Colonels R. Pole-Carew, C.B., and W. G. Nicholson, C.B.

I have also to express my special obligations to the Inspector-General of Cavalry, Major-General G. Luck, C.B.; the late and present Inspectors-General of Artillery, Major-Generals C. E. Nairne, C.B., and H. C. Lewes, and the Assistant Adjutant-General for Musketry, Colonel I. S. M. Hamilton, D.S.O.

I desire to thank the General Officers who have commanded Districts in this Presidency during the past 7½ years for their unceasing efforts to carry out my wishes, and to raise the troops under their orders to the highest standard of efficiency.

The Director of Military Education in India, Colonel R. C. Hart, V.C.; the late and present Principal Medical Officers, Her Majesty's Forces in India, Surgeon-Major-Generals C. Madden, W. A. Thomson, and A. F. Bradshaw, C.B.; the Judge-Advocate-General, Colonel H. B. Sanderson, and the Principal Veterinary Officer in India, Veterinary Lieut.-Colonel W. A. Russell, have carried out their duties to my entire satisfaction.

It is a pleasure to me to have this opportunity of bearing testimony to the important share in the administration of the army, which has been taken during my tenure of command by the various distinguished officers who have served in the Military Department of the Government of India. Many substantial benefits have been secured to the army through their exertions, and the disposal of public business has been greatly facilitated by the cordial relations which they have maintained with the Head-quarters Staff. My special acknowledgments for sound advice and able assistance are due to Major-General Sir E. H. H. Collen, K.C.I.E. Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department; Major-General A. Walker, Director-General of Ordnance; Major-General G. E. L. S. Sanford, C.B., C.S.I., Director-General of Military Works, Major-General A. R. Badcock, C.B., Commissary-General-in-Chief, and Colonel H. G. Pritchard, Accountant-General.



Finally, I am much indebted to my late and present Interpreters, Lieut.-Colonel N. Chamberlain and Major E. A. Travers, and to the rest of my Personal Staff for their constant attention and valuable assistance.

I now bid farewell to the army in this country, both British and Native, with deep personal regret, but with the greatest confidence in its future. I know well what it has done under my orders; I know how much I am indebted to it, and I have no hesitation in predicting that whenever and wherever it may be called upon to serve in the field, it will worthily maintain its reputation for gallantry, discipline, and fighting efficiency.

ROBERTS, *General,*  
*Commander-in-Chief in India.*

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