THE HISTORICAL GENESIS OF INDIA'S NORTHERN FRONTIER PROBLEM

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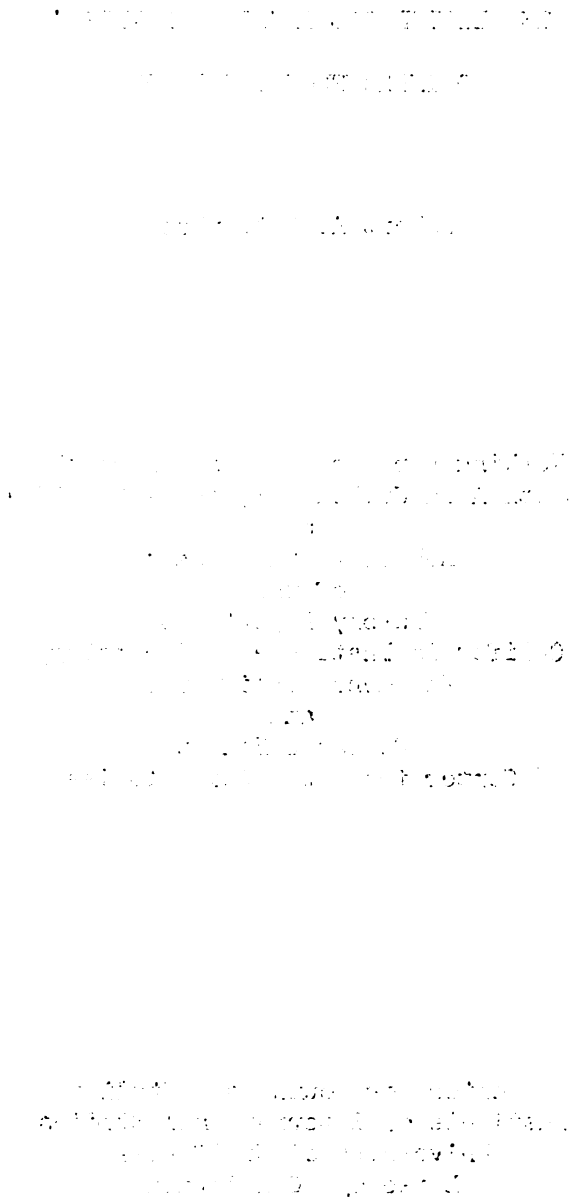


One of the major areas in which the Indian and Pakistani Governments have continued to follow in part the precedent set by the British Raj is that of frontier policy. The northern and northwestern borders, the classic invasion routes, were the Company's and later the Crown's chief concern and the same is to a large extent true for the post-partition Governments. Pakistan is heavily engaged in the Pakhtunistan controversy with Afghanistan and even sustained an armed invasion some weeks ago. In addition both India and Pakistan are deeply involved in border disputes with China in the far northern frontier area. For Pakistan, Peking's refusal to recognize Afghan sovereignty over the Wakhan Valley (the buffer between Pakistan-held Kashmir and Russia) and the Chinese threat to a section of Hunza east of Shimshal Pass are disturbing developments of equal importance to the more highly publicized Sino-Indian border disagreement over the Aksai Chin plateau area of north-eastern Ladakh. The situation is further complicated, of course, by the continuance of the controversy between India and Pakistan over Kashmir State which enhances the difficulties of formulating a joint Indo-Pakistan policy to meet the Chinese threat.

Although the Northern and North-Western border zones are contiguous, the British usually kept their policy towards the northern frontier independent from that pursued towards the North-West and of course this is all the more necessary today due to the realities of partition. It is with the northern frontier territories of Ladakh (which is under Indian jurisdiction but claimed by Pakistan) and Dardistan (where the converse is true) that this paper will deal.

The history of Ladakh, where controversy currently rages over conflicting Chinese and Indian claims to Aksaichin, the Chang Chenmo

Valley, Kurnak Fort, Spangur and Demchok, has been characterized by instability and turmoil. Squeezed between Tibet, India, Kashmir and the autonomous Muslim Rajahs of Baltistan; Ladakh as an independent entity suffered a precarious existence. This was not always so. During the early 17th century Baltistan and Western Tibet as far as Maryum Pass (the watershed between the Sutlej and Tsangpo river basins) came under Ladakhi rule. But an attempt to interpret this apparent Ladakhi hegemony in the lands north of the Himalayas could be misleading and it would be a mistake to think of Ladakh as a nation in the modern sense. The entire Baltistan-Ladakh area was largely one of independent and semi-independent rulers over whom Leh, when conditions were propitious, could exert its influence. Ladakh with its small population and strong neighbors was more often the victim of aggression than aggressor itself.

By the 1820's the Gyalpo (or King of Leh), found himself in a dangerous position. His predecessors had lost virtually all of Leh's seventeenth century conquests and with the Sikh acquisition of Kashmir in 1819, he feared a possible extension of Ranjit Singh's ambitions to Ladakh. To strengthen himself, the Gyalpo sought an alliance with the British. An East India Company agent, William Moorcroft, who was in Leh in 1822, concluded a trade agreement between the Gyalpo and the merchants of Calcutta, but the Company rejected his proposals for the conclusion of a formal treaty which would have brought Ladakh into the British sphere. As it turned out the Gyalpo apprehensions were quite justified but it was Gulab Singh, the Dogra feudatary of Ranjit Singh, who was to be feared rather than the Sikhs themselves.

Gulab Singh was a direct descendant of the Hindu Rajah Dhrou Dei who first established the Dogra family as rulers of Jammu in the

declining days of the Moghul Empire. With the growth of Sikh power in the early years of the nineteenth century, the aspirations of Ranjit Singh, the architect of the Sikh state, soon included Jammu; and in 1808 General Hukam Singh conquered this hilly tract for his chief in Lahore. Although he had been one of the staunchest opponents of the invaders, Gulab Singh was realistic enough to discern that the Sikhs were, at least for the time being, irresistible. Therefore, along with his two brothers, he decided that the way to rebuild the family fortunes was not by further opposition to the overwhelming Sikh preponderance but rather by becoming the Lahore Government's loyal servant. By 1822 Gulab Singh had so usefully served Ranjit Singh that he was made hereditary Rajah of Jammu, while his brothers did not lag far behind in eminence. Thus within twenty years of the Sikh conquest of Jammu the Dogra Brothers, as they were known, had reached a position of influence far greater than that which they had enjoyed prior to 1808 - albeit they owed their success to Ranjit Singh's patronage.

Both the Company and Gulab Singh were well aware that the death of Ranjit Singh would presage the collapse of the Sikh power. While he still lived the British were content to maintain the status quo. They were unwilling to risk defeat at the hands of the powerful foreign-led Sikh army and Ranjit Singh was a loyal if wily ally. His strong state acted as a useful buffer against possible Afghan or Russian incursions. Ranjit Singh's departure from the scene would change all this but the Company was willing to wait.

Gulab Singh's ambitions necessitated a more active policy on his part. While ostensibly conquering territories to the north of Punjab in the name of Ranjit Singh, Gulab Singh was, in fact, creating a

dominion for himself that would survive the expected collapse of the Sikh empire on the plains. One British official[1] at the Court of Ranjit Singh even apprehended that Gulab Singh might attempt to seize the whole of the Punjab upon his master's death and that, certainly, there was little doubt the Dogras "would attempt to seize Kashmir which they have now almost surrounded."[2]

As the British had cut off possible avenues of advance to the east in 1809 by the Treaty of Amritsar, to the south, in 1838, by their support of the Amirs of Sind, and as there was a limit to how far the Afghans could be pushed in the west, the only fertile area for the acquisition of further territory lay in Ladakh, north of Jammu and east of Kashmir, where the British had already evinced little interest. In fact a possible Dogra invasion of this area was viewed with some enthusiasm by the Company for it was hoped that as a consequence a larger portion of the Tibetan wool trade would be diverted to its holdings. The Company had been trying to achieve this end at least since 1815 when a factory was established at Kotgarh on the Sutlej to coax the lucrative shawl wool traffic, normally a monopoly of Kashmir and Ladakh, directly into British territory. The Sikh conquest of Kashmir and the ensuing famine drove many of the Kashmiri weavers into British India and the Company redoubled its efforts to gain direct access to Tibetan products and to establish contacts with the Tibetan Government. It tried to use Sikkim as a route and worked through protected native states along the Tibetan border to influence the Tibetan and Chinese authorities. These officials were, however, reluctant to export to new markets and staunchly resisted the British overtures. Gulab Singh's future actions in Ladakh were to have the desired effect and between 1837 and 1840 shawl wool imports into

British territory and that of protected states such as Bashahr increased 200%, while other products including salt and borax were also diverted from their usual route.

In 1834, Gulab Singh sent his ablest general, Zorawar Singh Kahluria, with 4,000 infantry to conquer the territories between Jammu and the Tibetan border. The Dogras met with little opposition and the Gyalpo in desperation again sought British intervention on his behalf. This time he wrote to the Commander in Chief, Sir Henry Fane, only to be rebuffed as Ladakh, "is beyond the limits of the Company's dominions."[3] As a result Zorawar Singh in due course reached Leh and although the Gyalpo was kept on the throne, the life of an independent Ladakh, and for that matter the independence of the states of Baltistan had come to an end.

Despite his conquest of Ladakh Gulab Singh still was not satisfied. Knowing the advantages of controlling the profitable wool trade, he was not about to see the major benefits devolving to the British. He already ruled Ladakh and was confident of eventually inheriting Kashmir. All that was needed to achieve the possession of the entire wool trade was the acquisition of the territories where the goats and sheep themselves were raised - the Chang Thung Plains of Western Tibet. Consequently in May, 1841, Zorawar Singh advanced up the Indus Valley into Tibet with a force of about 6,000 men consisting largely of Ladakhis, Baltis and Kishtwaris.

He met with immediate success and advanced steadily eastward. The benevolent British attitude towards Gulab Singh changed with the invasion of Tibet for the commercial benefits that had resulted from the unrest in Ladakh promptly evaporated. The flow of wool into Bashahr and

other border areas dwindled and the British Resident there inquired whether the Dogras should be allowed to interfere with the wool trade to British protected states.[4] The Governor-General replied that the British Government would not tolerate interference with the trade of its provinces. "The infallibly injurious effect" of the stoppage of trade between British India and Tibet in violation of the "established rights of Traffic" of British subjects "by this audacious movement of the Sikhs cannot be submitted to without loss of influence and loss of consideration." George Clerk, the British agent at Ludhiana was ordered to convey the Governor-General's displeasure to the Lahore Durbar and to request that Gulab Singh be forced to recall Zorawar from Tibet.[5]

Meanwhile the Dogras continued their successful depredations. They cut the track between Sinkiang and Bashahr and captured most of Western Tibet up to Maryum Pass. Brian Hodgson, the British Resident in Kathmandu, for one, felt that they could not be stopped short of Lhasa.[6] As Zorawar Singh advanced the British became more vociferous in their complaints. Clerk was instructed to inform the Lahore Durbar that the Dogra interference with the Bashahr trade was unwarranted and hardly the action expected of an ally.[7] The situation was felt to be particularly unfortunate as the Dogra invasion had occurred just when the Bhotias were about to cross the Himalayas with wheat, rice and "English goods" (broadcloth) to exchange for salt, borax and shawl wool. Now they would have to suffer the privation resulting from the cancellation of their trip or run the grave risks involved in pursuing the expedition. Furthermore in September, 1841, the political Agent in Bashahr, reported that Zorawar was trying to exact money from Bhotias under British protection in Byans (in Kumaun) and had threatened to invade the area if the exactions

were not promptly discharged.[8] The British Government in India was incensed at this report and informed Clerk that the Sikhs must order the evacuation of Byans immediately, no more taxes were to be levied, those villagers already assessed would have to be compensated and a Company officer should be deputed to the area to supervise.[9]

News that the Dogras were moving towards the frontier of Nepal increased the Company's apprehension for it had always feared a possible alliance between Lahore, Gulab Singh and Nepal, the only powerful independent native states on the sub-continent. Clerk was expressing the typical British attitude when he wrote: "It can never be safe for the Government of India to allow the approximation to Nepal of any other powerful and aspiring hill state."[10] Next the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Province reported that Zorawar Singh intended to build a chain of forts from Ladakh to the border of Nepal and that he was attempting to gain the cooperation of the Nepalis. The Governor felt that the Sikhs might be inclined to enter into an alliance with Nepal as they wished to regain Kumaon from the Brtish. In conclusion he conjectured that recent Dogra demonstrations near Bashahr and Kulu were all part of a plan to reach the Nepal frontier.[11] Certainly there was evidence that Nepal and the Khalsa were both willing to fish in the troubled waters of Himalayan controversy. In 1837 a Nepali delegation had been well received in Lahore. The British Agent[12] there wrote:

> The information gained by me in my late visit to Lahore was that among other objects of ambition Raja Gulab Singh had in taking Ladakh, one was to extend his conquests down the course of the Spiti until they approached the northeastern confines of the Nepalese possessions in order that he might connect himself with that Government ostensibly with the view to promote the trade between Lhassa and Ladak, which the late commotions in Tibet have tended to interrupt,

> but in reality to establish a direct intercourse with a power which he thinks will not only tend to augment his present influence but lead to an alliance which may at some future time be of reciprocal importance.[13]

The Agent was equally doubtful about the intentions of Ranjit Singh whom he suspected of being attached to the British purely by considerations of self-interest.[14] In 1839, another Nepali delegation was again very warmly welcomed by Ranjit Singh, apparently confirming British fears that the antipathies of 1809 over Kangra had finally been forgotten. But nothing came of these overtures. Ranjit Singh was much too shrewd to trade the advantages of a British alliance for the dubious guarantees of a connection with Nepal.

Actually the British were in a weak position. They were deeply involved in the Afghan War where most of their troops were committed and the flow of shawl wool had traditionally been kept to the north of the Himalayas. One could argue that the Dogras were quite justified in trying to correct the existing situation. As Zorawar Singh himself wrote to the Lahore Durbar, the importation of shawl wool by Bashahr merchants had "greatly injured the shawl wool manufacture of Cashmere" and the Bashahr merchants did not have a right to do this.[15] But Zorawar Singh's threat to march on Lhasa if Ladakh did not continue to receive a monopoly of the shawl wool trade, the fear of a Dogra-Nepal raproachment and a report from Joseph Cunningham, the British observer in Tibet, that "all trade especially in shawl wool to the Company's provinces is at a standstill or has been prohibited,"[16] spurred the Governor-General to the verge of action. He set a deadline of December 10 for the withdrawal of Zorawar Singh's forces to Ladakh.[17] Whether Auckland actually intended to implement this threat is doubtful but Sher Singh, who succeeded to the throne in

1840 was sufficiently impressed to order Zorawar's retreat from Tibet and the British frontier.[18] Clerk doubted whether the Dogra Brothers would ever allow these orders to reach Zorawar Singh. But the whole question became academic on the very date of the British deadline (December 10) when a Tibetan army defeated the motley out-numbered Dogra forces near Missar. The extent to which Gulab Singh had over-extended himself was now startlingly clear. Besides many of his troops the battle cost him his redoubtable commander, Zorawar Singh.

The Tibetans encouraged by their victory over the Dogras prepared to invade Ladakh; while Gulab Singh immediately sent a relief expedition. Vizier Lukput, the ranking Dogra officer in Ladakh found himself in the unenviable position of trying to hold out against the advancing Tibetans on the one hand and of maintaining the Dogra supremacy over the Ladakhis on the other. A small party of influential Ladakhis defected and attempted to reestablish an independent Ladakh by playing off the two sides against each other. Ahmed Shah the deposed ruler of Baltistan also rose in revolt.

The British, for their part, had to determine what policy to adopt in consequence of the new course of events. At one point the Company was willing to approve Gulab Singh as the ruler of Ladakh in return for support in Afghanistan,[19] but Cunningham conjectured that Tibetan control of Ladakh might be more advantageous to the Company than that of the Dogras.[20] Then slowly the British did move to a position that allowed them to recognize Galub Singh's position. Firstly the Dogras, Clerk reported, had given up any plans of conquering the territory west of the Indus and secondly the Tibetan commander was no more interested in encouraging the export of shawl wool direct to Bashahr than Zorawar Singh had been. He

stated that Bashahr could continue to trade in shawl wool if it could be proved that this had been done previously.[21] Although Clerk wondered whether the British should allow the sacrifice of rising trade and industry in Bashahr which the difficulties in Ladakh had caused,[22] rumors of a possible Nepal-Tibet alliance induced Cunningham to remind his superiors that the British were at war with China (The Opium War). He recalled the Company's long connection with the Sikhs and the Punjab which "has of late become, except in name, little more than a British dependency and our honor may be involved in the proceedings of the Sikhs."[23] More significantly as Ranjit Singh was now gone and the predicted disintegration of the Khalsa was under way, British statesmen, notably Hardinge and Hobhouse, envisioned a client Sikh state or the outright annexation of the Punjab in the near future.

With important new developments on the horizon, the British reconciled themselves to the loss of a significant share of the shawl wool trade and to letting larger considerations of Indian security and political expediency take precedence. They limited themselves to the role of spectators in the impending battle for Ladakh, although the General-Governor did offer to mediate.[24] When the advocates of an independent Ladakh, asked for British aid in avoiding the forthcoming hostilities which they felt would greatly ravage the countryside,[25] they were informed that the British felt Ladakh should belong to the Sikhs.[26] As a result the Gyalpo soon wrote to Cunningham that he had given the country to the Chinese Emperor: "We had no other remedy - what could we do?"[27] To Sher Singh the Gyalpo was forced to write, quite inaccurately, that Ladakh had always held allegience to China through Lhasa until the Jammu Rajahs had interferred. Now the Dogras must leave Ladakh in its former condition as the Tibetans demanded the payment of the usual tribute to Lhasa, the removal of all Dogras from

Ladakh and Baltistan and the admission of Chinese[28] supremacy by the rulers of these areas. If the Jammu Rajahs cooperated, the shawl wool and tea would again pass through Ladakh and Kashmir to Lahore.[29]

But neither side was willing to settle the issue without a trial of strength, and by late August, 1842, the two antagonists were in the field near Leh. By mid-September the Dogras had decisively defeated the Tibetans and captured their commander.[30] A treaty was promptly signed which recognized the existing situation - in other words that the Dogras were the rulers of Ladakh but that their control did not extend to Tibet. To understand the treaty provisions it is necessary to look at both the Tibetan and Persian versions, for the Dogra treaty lists only the restrictions placed on the Tibetans and the converse is true of the Tibetan version. The Tibetan treaty stated that perpetual friendship was to prevail between the two parties and that the frontier was henceforth to be permanently fixed. The Gyalpo and his family were to be allowed to remain peacefully in Ladakh but not to indulge in any intrigues. The Ladakhis could, if they wished, continue to send the annual tribute to the Dalai Lama with which practice the Dogras would not interfere. "No restriction shall be laid on the mutual export and import of commodities - e.g., tea, piece goods, etc. and trading shall be allowed according to the old-established custom." Finally the Ladakhis were to provide transportation and accommodations for Tibetan traders in Ladakh and the Tibetans would provide similar amenities for Ladakhi traders in Tibet.[31]

The Tibetans (in the Persian treaty) for their part guaranteed that Ladakh "Will absolutely and essentially not be the subject of our designs and intention." They bound themselves not to aid or abet the opponents of Gulab Singh and pledged to "carry on the trade in wool, shawl

and tea, in accordance with the old customs, via Ladakh year by year."[32] The treaty between Gulab Singh and the Lhasa Government did not bind the former's Suzerain and a supplementary treaty with similar provisions was concluded between the Lahore Durbar and Lhasa.[33]

As Gulab Singh and the British had anticipated the Sikhs were not able to maintain the efficiency of their government after Ranjit Singh's death and the inevitable conflict between the Khalsa and the Company came to pass in 1845. Gulab Singh ingratiated himself with the British by acting as an intermediary and in Article XII of the Treaty of Lahore signed on March 9, 1846, he was recognized as an independent ruler by both the Lahore and British Governments. The achievement of this end was facilitated by the Sikh inability to pay the full one and one half crores of rupees indemnity they were assessed by the Company. The Lahore authorities were consequently forced to cede to the British the territories between the Beas and Indus Rivers including Kashmir and Hazara. The Company, in turn, transferred these areas to Gulab Singh for a crore of rupees which amount was later reduced to seventy five lakhs when the British assumed Kulu and Mandi. This arrangement was mutually advantageous for the Company and the Dogras. Gulab Singh at last saw the fulfillment of his ambition for an independent Dogra State and the British were able to conclude quietly what could have been a most difficult war. It is doubtful that they could have conquered Kashmir at this time and they made a sizeable pecuniary profit in the bargain.

A week later the Treaty of Amritsar signed by Gulab Singh and the British Government formalized the Lahore agreement in greater detail. Gulab Singh and his heirs were guaranteed "all the hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the River Indus

and the westward of the River Ravi including Chamba and excluding Lahul."[34]

The eastern boundary of the Dogra dominions was to be determined later inasmuch as the traditional location of the frontier seemed well-known. Moorcroft during his visit to Ladakh had described the Karakorum Mountains and Yarkand as the border in the north and the Rudok district of Tibet as the frontier in the east. Over thirty years later the British survey Agent, Alexander Cunningham, reached conclusions in essential conformity with earlier findings. It is evident that treaty enactments at least from the 17th century rarely defined the actual border between Ladakh and Tibet explicitly. It is however equally apparent that these boundaries as precisely defined by the treaty between Lhasa and Ladakh signed in 1684 were deemed sufficiently clear through custom and tradition that their detailed exposition was never considered necessary and it is significant that at least from 1842 until the present day there was no controversy over the matter. This did not mean that the British were not concerned with the formal demarcation of the eastern border of the Dogra dominions. Quite to the contrary, they still feared the possible renewal of Gulab Singh's ambitions in western Tibet and his desire to assume control of the entire wool trade including that portion which found its way into British controlled territory. A venture of this type might have embroiled the Company in disputes with China that could have negated the advantages obtained in the treaty that ended the "Opium War" in 1842.

To forestall such a contingency Hardinge informed the Chinese Resident in Lhasa that Article 11 of the Lahore-Tibet treaty, under the provisions of which all trade was to pass through Ladakh had been cancelled. He stated that he wanted Tibetan traders to have free access to British territory and that no duty was to be charged on shawl wool and

other Tibetan products entering British Territory.[35] Calcutta also sent two commissioners to Ladakh in August, 1846, "to ascertain the ancient boundaries" between Ladakh and Tibet and "to lay down the boundary between the British territories" and those of Gulab Singh.[36] A letter was sent to the Tibetan Governor at Gartok who finally forwarded it to Lhasa, although with considerable reluctance. Early in 1847 a Sino-Tibetan delegation arrived at Gartok to investigate the situation. The British promptly dispatched a new set of Commissioners to Ladakh with a proposal for the joint demarcation of the Tibet-Ladakh boundary. The Chinese officials, well-aware of their country's intrinsic weakness, were unwilling to demarcate the border. Protecting China's position with a policy of evasion and procrastination - a policy which succeeding governments in China down to the present day have adhered to with considerable success the Chinese official in charge of the mission to western Tibet couched his refusal in bland terms: "Respecting the frontiers I beg to remark that the borders of those territories have been sufficiently and distinctly fixed, so that it will be best to adhere to this ancient arrangement and it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any additional measures for fixing them."[37] Again in 1852 an agreement between the Dogra Thanadar Basti Ram of Ladakh and the Kalon Rinzin of Rudok confirmed the existing border." The boundary between Ladakh and Tibet will remain the same as before."[38]

Having failed in their efforts to effect a joint demarcation of the Ladakh - Tibet frontier, the British Commissioners proceeded on their own initiative to ascertain that the existing borders in the area followed the boundary provisions of the 1684 treaty as reaffirmed in 1842. Five decades later, in 1899, the Calcutta authorities proposed the demarcation of the Ladakh-Sinkiang border which the Government of India described as

running "along the Kuen Lun range to a point east of 80° east longitude where it met the eastern boundary of Ladakh" (thus incorporating all of Aksaichin within Kashmir State). Once again the Chinese Government dismissed the demarcation proposal as unnecessary, since there was a "well-known boundary" in this area, but raised no objection to the definition given in the Government of India note.

Thus, except for the single exception of the period from 1863 to 1866, when the Kashmiri Maharajah, Ranbir Sing, temporarily seized the area between the Karakorum and Suget Passes, the century following Gulab Singh's rule over Kashmir was one of comparative stability and amicability in Ladakh's relations with its neighbors.

The British were never really too apprehensive about the Chinese and were on the whole willing to entrust the conduct of Sino-Ladakh relations to their Kashmiri clients; although they did maintain a joint commissioner in Leh during the summer months to watch over the trade between India and Turkistan which had grown from L 55,000 in 1857 to L 129,000 in 1869. Until the third quarter of the 19th century they were also willing to leave the affairs of the Dard States to the north of Kashmir in the charge of the Dogras, or more particularly in the weak hands of the Kashmiri Wazir-i-Wazarat stationed at Gilgit. This official had since the early 1840's held nominal but sporadic sway not only over Gilgit but over Astor, Hunza, Nagar, Punyal and the states of the Upper Indus Valley as well. But the motley Kashmiri forces were no match for the hardy mountaineers and disaster inevitably resulted from any Dogra attempt physically to enforce the state's dominance. All of this was of no consequence to the British who felt that the lofty Hindu Kush and Pamirs made the area safe from Russian invasion which after all was their chief concern. These

feelings of security were reinforced by the complacent reports of British agents such as Johnson, Biddulph, Hayward and Shaw who periodically wandered through the Hindu Kush and Pamirs.

Chinese Turkestan (Sinkiang) revolted against China in the 1860's and sought British aid against both the Chinese and Russians. Consequently, in 1873 a mission headed by T. Douglas Forsyth was deputed to the rebel chief, Yakub Beg. During the course of this visit to Yarkand, Thomas Gordon, Forsyth's second in command, led an expedition into the Pamirs. As he later wrote, "it was tolerably well known that the wide extent of lofty mountains between Eastern (or Chinese) Turkistan and Ladakh barred the passage of a modern army in that direction, but it was open to question regarding the Pamirs and the passes leading to India through Gilgit and Hunza."[39] Evidently the journey which, "helped us to gauge accurately the difficulties that would confront an invader,"[40] assuaged any possible British fears as to the strength of the mountain barrier for no efforts were made to create additional defences in the northern-most reaches of the sub-continent. In 1885, however, the massing of a thousand man Russian army along the northern borders of India awoke the British to the possibility of a Russian invasion of their dominions via Kashmir and fear of a Russian thrust was quite another matter to concern about the Chinese as British relations with Afghanistan so eloquently testified. Consequently, later in that same year a British officer visited Hunza on a reconaissance tour, while in 1888, Algernon Durand, was sent by Lord Dufferin, ostensibly to check on the progress of a war between Hunza-Nagar and Kashmir. During the course of his travels Durand visited the Mehtar of Chitral who deeply shocked him at a state banquet by calling over one of his servants and blowing his nose in the end of the latter's turban.[41] The real purpose

of Durand's journey was to check on the nature of the Russian threat and upon returning to Lahore, Durand reported to his brother, the foreign secretary: "As I passed Gilgit I heard that a Russian officer had just been in Hunza."[42] He was quite right, the officer was Captain Grombtchevsky who had found his way through a gap between the Pamirs and Chinese Turkestan (Sinkiang). Thus as Durand observed, "the game had begun."[43]

Now the problem was to strengthen the position of the Kashmir Government vis a vis the northern marches and Durand later contended that, "as the suzerain power the responsibilities became ours and it was recognized that the Hindu-Kush for these hundreds of miles must be our natural frontier."[44] As a preliminary step the military capacity of Kashmir was increased by the formation in 1888 of the Imperial Service troops. During the next year the British Political Agency in Gilgit, which had been temporarily in existence some 15 years earlier, was reopened and Durand appointed agent. The objects of the Agency were declared to be, "the watching and control of the country south of the Hindu-Kush and the organization of a force which would be able in time of trouble to prevent any coup de main by a small body of troops acting across the passes."[45] The new agent's position was not an easy one, for the area of the Gilgit Agency was officially under the jurisdiction of the Kashmir authorities; yet Durand "was really answerable for the proper government and progress of the Gilgit district and the discipline of the troops."[46] Eventually a modus vivendi was achieved. Durand organized an unofficial Committee of Public Safety consisting of the Kashmiri Governor and Commander in Chief and himself. The committee met periodically to determine policy and on the whole followed Durand's advice.

After establishing the Agency Durand proceeded on a tour of his

new domain which was to include Chitral, Yasin, Punyal, the Gilgit Valley, Hunza, Nagar, the Astor Valley, the Indus Valley from Bunji to Batera and Kohistan-Malazai. He drew up an agreement with the rulers of Hunza and Nagar under the provisions of which Safdar Ali of Hunza and Jafr Khan of Nagar would keep open the Kashgar road and allow free passage of mail. These rulers also agreed to expedite Francis Younghusband's passage through Hunza on the last leg of his momentous journey across China. In recompense both chiefs were granted a subsidy.

In 1890, another Russian delegation visited Hunza and according to the future Mir, Mohammed Nazim Khan, not only promised aid to Hunza against the British but confidently foresaw the eventual absorption of Hunza by the Czar. Safdar Ali was well pleased with the visit and sent a mission with presents to Russia as he wished to counteract the growing British influence in the Pamirs. To make matters worse Younghusband, who was undertaking a journey through the Pamirs, was stopped by the Russians at Bozai-Gumbaz and expelled from the region by Colonel Yonoff who claimed that Younghusband was on Russian territory. A similar experience was endured by Lieutenant Davison at Alichur Pamir. But the danger of Safdar Ali drawing up an agreement with the Russians was not to persist for long. In May, 1891, in conjunction with the son of the ruler of Nagar, Uzr Khan, he stopped the mails on the Kashgar road and prepared to expel the Kashmiri troops stationed in Hunza and Nagar. He even tried to obtain aid from the Chinese to whom Hunza paid a small annual sum for territories jointly administered east of Shimshall Pass. Durand immediately reinforced the Dogra garrisons and upon arriving on the scene himself in November, issued an ultimatum to Hunza and Nagar. A short but sanguinary war ensued, the intensity of the fighting being attested to by the awarding of three Victoria

Crosses to British officers involved in the campaign and by the severe wounding of Durand himself. Safdar Ali vainly waited for Russian aid but finally fled to the small Jagir granted to his father in Yarkand by the Chinese. He was deposed and replaced as Mir by his brother Nazim Khan, who realizing that he owed his position to the British remained loyal to their cause until his dealth in 1938. He did, however, on British advice, continue to make the payment to the Chinese at Kashgar. Jafr Kahn remained as the ruler of Nagar although Uzr Khan was exiled to Kashmir; and until 1895 the subsidies to both Hunza and Nagar were withdrawn. As part of the new arrangement Francis Younghusband was appointed Assistant Political Agent stationed in Hunza and this post supported by a garrison remained in existence until 1897.

The scene of trouble now shifted southward to the Indus Valley and Chitral which had come under Kashmiri (really British) protection in 1876 at the time of an Afghan threat to its borders. In 1892-3 Durand commanded a campaign against the Upper Indus Valley states which had risen in revolt against Kashmir and concurrently the death of the powerful Mehtar of Chitral resulted in the usual civil war. The British supported one of the candidates for the throne and upon his assumption of power declared a protectorate over Gilgit and Chitral and stationed a garrison there. A move possibly prompted by a report that the Russian newspaper Svet had urged the absorption of Chitral by the St. Petersburg Government. Within a few months the new Mehtar was murdered and the British troops withstood a difficult siege in the Fort of Chitral before a relief force arrived.

Up until this time Chitral had remained under the technical jurisdiction of Kashmir but the Chitral campaign resulted in its absorption into British India as part of the "forward policy" which had applied to

the northwest tribal territories since the Second Afghan War of 1880. The Dard areas remained under the loose control of the Gilgit Agency and the Kashmir Government. Had the British felt that the territories of the Gilgit Agency presented Russia as easy a path to the plains of India as Afghanistan, no doubt a more direct control would have been assumed, but the Gilgit Agency was isolated from its neighbors in all directions by lofty mountains. In contrast British policy on the North-West Frontier created a problem totally independent of Russia. The Pathan tribes acknowledged an at least pro forma allegience to the Pathan king of Afghanistan and the Durand Line by dividing the Pathan territories and by placing half of the tribes under the jurisdiction of the infidel British Raj created an enduring problem. The Dard tribes, although they were forced to admit the suzerainty of a Hindu Kashmir State, were all within the same political jurisdiction and felt no loyalty to Kabul, but they too would have resented overt British interference in their affairs. As it turned out the Gilgit Agency never suffered wars of the intensity of those experienced in 1897, 1919, 1925, 1930-31, 1933, 1936-37, etc. by the Pathan dominated tribal areas of what had in 1901 become the North-West Frontier Province.

Generally speaking then the northern frontier never caused the British any real problems after the last decade of the nineteenth century. In the Gilgit Agency, despite the British Government's endemic Russophobia, the establishment of a friendly ruler on the throne of Hunza, the defeat of Russia in the war against Japan and the extension of Afghan territory north-eastward in 1896 as a buffer between British and Russian territories, tended to calm British apprehensions. In Ladakh no genuine danger ever arose. It was not contiguous to Russia and the moribund

Ch'ing Empire was faced with internal problems of too pressing a nature to allow for much concern with this out-lying area.

Since the transfer of power Russia has recognized the Durand Line and is no longer considered an immediate threat but both India and Pakistan are faced with a resurgent China. Peking refuses to accept either the Durand Line or the boundary with Ladakh and the Chinese may possibly complicate the Kashmir problem by drawing up a treaty with Pakistan covering the disputed areas. They are attempting to take advantage of boundaries delimited but heretofore only unilaterally demarcated (although past Chinese Governments accepted this demarcation) and of historic tribute and rental arrangements to claim important segments of Ladakh and Hunza. Thus the rebirth of a strong China presents a dilemma and a danger never faced by the British Indian Government on the Northern frontiers of the sub-continent. The situation of the 19th century, when the British frequently tried to use the Chinese as a lever against an expanding Russia has been reversed and the post-partition governments are being forced to pursue the opposite tack - a tactic complicated by the fact that both Russia and China are Communist powers whose governments have much more in common than the Czarist and Ch'ing regimes of the 19th century while on the other hand India no longer has a single authority determining policy. The Indians and Pakistanis can only hope that the decisive force of rival national aspirations will help to frustrate (if properly encouraged) the development of any common Russo-Chinese policy in a part of the world where the past relations between these two powers have been characterized more by controversy than by any community of interests.

FOOTNOTES

Unless otherwise indicated all MS notations refer to records kept in the National Archives of India in Delhi.

[1]Claude Wade, British Agent at Ludhiana.

[2]Political Consultations. Feb. 14, 1838, Nos. 57-58, Wade to Macnaghten, Jan. 1, 1838. In regard to the Dogra conquest of Ladakh Wade wrote: "It was a wanton act of usurpation in order to strengthen his [Gulab Singh's] means of seizing Kashmir itself when the expected opportunity may offer." Ibid., Jan. 17, 1838, No. 26, Wade to Macnaghten, Nov. 17, 1838.

[3]Ibid., Dec. 20, 1837, No. 7, the Gyalpo of Leh to the Commander in Chief, no date.

[4]Secret Consultations, No. 35, Thomason to Lushington, July 31, 1841.

[5]Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol. 79, Thomason to Lushington, Sept. 1841 (India Office Library, London).

[6]Secret Consultations, Aug. 23, 1841, No. 65, Hodgson to J. Erskine, Aug. 4, 1841.

[7]Ibid., Sept. 6, 1841, Nos. 42-44, Government to Clerk, Sept. 6, 1841.

[8]Ibid., Oct. 11, 1841, No. 6, Lushington to Thomason, Sept. 20, and Sept. 23, 1841.

[9]Ibid., No. 97, Government to Clerk, Oct. 8, 1841.

[10]Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol. 79, 1841, Thomason to Lushington, Sept. 1, 1841, (India Office Library, London).

[11]Secret Consultations, Oct. 11, 1841, Nos. 46-51. Minute by Lt. Governor T. C. Robertson, Meerut, Sept. 28, 1841.

[12]Claude Wade.

[13]Political Proceedings, June 12, 1837, No. 41, Wade to Chief Sec., Fort William.

[14]Ibid., Oct. 20, 1837, No. 6.

[15]Secret Consultations, Sept. 6, 1841, Zorawar Singh to the Lahore Government, Aug. 18, 1841.

[16]Ibid., Nov. 22, 1841, No. 23, Cunningham to Clerk, Oct. 21, 1841.

[17]Ibid., Nov. 8, 1841, No. 45, Clerk to Cunningham, Oct. 20, 1841.

[18]Ibid., Nov. 22, 1841, No. 18, Clerk to Maddock, Oct. 31, 1841.

[19]Ibid., March 21, 1842, No. 85, Governor-General to Clerk, March 21, 1842.
Ibid., March 30, 1842.
Ibid., Minute by W. W. Bird, March 28, 1842.

[20]Ibid., No. 101, Cunningham to Clerk, Feb. 2, 1842.

[21]Ibid., Oct. 5, 1842, Nos. 73-76, Kalon Surkhang to Cunningham, July 20, 1842.

[22]Ibid., Clerk to Maddock, Aug. 14, 1842.

[23]Ibid., Oct. 19, 1842, Nos. 45-56, Cunningham to Clerk, Sept. 18, 1842.

[24]Ibid., Oct. 26, 1842, Nos. 94-99, Maddock to Clerk, Sept. 5, 1842.

[25]Ibid., July 6, 1842, Nos. 40-44, Gumbo to Cunningham, April 18, 1842.

[26]Ibid., Cunningham to Gumbo, May 3, 1842.

[27]Ibid., Aug. 3, 1842, No. 22, Gyalpo to Cunningham, May 27, 1842.

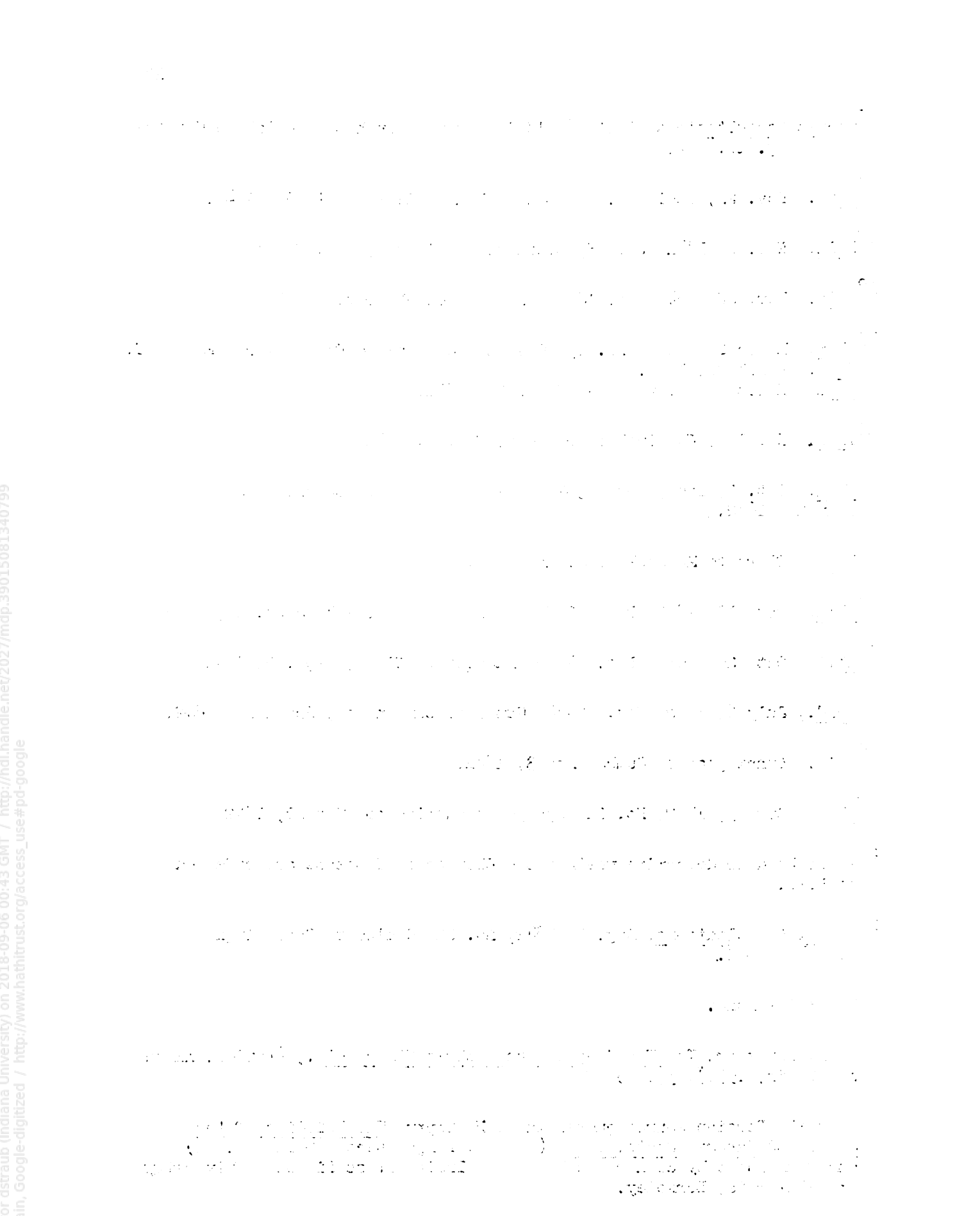
[28]It is hard to determine whether the Chinese or Tibetans are referred to here.

[29]Secret Consultations, Aug. 3, 1842, No. 22, Gyalpo to Sher Singh, June 13, 1842.

[30]Kalon Surkhang.

[31]H. M. Panikkar, The Founding of the Kashmir State, etc., (London, Allen and Unwin, 1930), pp. 85-87.

[32]From the Persian source quoted in A. N. Sapru, The Building of the Jammu and Kashmir State, etc., (Lahore, Punjab Record Office, 1931), and translated by Sepher Zabih for the Indian Press Digests, University of California, Berkeley.



[33] Panikkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-89. Meng Pao, the Chinese Resident in Lhasa also gave his assent and his report was accepted by Peking. Meng Pao, *Hsi-Tsang Tshou-shu* (West Tibet Memorial Reports), published by the author, no date, chuan 1, pp. 53a-54b.

[34] Article 1, Treaty of Amritsar, see C. U. Aitchison, *Treaties, etc.*, (Calcutta, Government of India, 1931), Vol. XII, pp. 21-22.

[35] *Secret Consultations*, Dec. 1846, Nos. 1331-1343, Hardinge to Lhasa, Aug. 4, 1846.

[36] Alexander Cunningham, *Ladak*, (London, Allen, 1854), p. 13.

[37] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Notes, Memoranda and Letters Exchanged between the Governments of India and China*, September-November, 1959 (White Paper No. 11), New Delhi, 13 Nov. 1959, p. 36.

[38] *Ibid.*, *Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question*, Feb., 1961. p. 54.

[39] T. E. Gordon, *A Varied Life, etc., 1847-1902*, (London, John Murray, 1906) p. 97.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[41] Algernon Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, (London, John Murray, 1900) p. 60-1.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Ibid.* p. 2.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 119

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 226.