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British India's Northern Frontier

1865-1895

A Study in Imperial Policy

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G. J. ALDER



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**FOR
MOTHER AND FATHER**

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	ix
PREFACE	xi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xiii
1 <i>Introduction</i>	1
2 <i>Eastern Turkistan 1865-1895</i>	
(1) The origins of British policy up to 1869	15
(2) The opening of British relations with Yaqub Beg 1869-1876	38
(3) The decline of British influence and the fall of Yaqub Beg 1876-1878	58
(4) The return of China 1878-1881	72
(5) The Russian supremacy 1881-1895	79
3 <i>Kashmir and the Tribal Territories 1865-1888</i>	
(1) The formation of British policy 1865-1876	100
(2) The Gilgit Agency policy of Madhopore and its failure 1876-1880	114
(3) The Gilgit Agency in abeyance 1880-1888	138
4 <i>The Upper Oxus Frontier of Afghanistan 1865-1888</i>	
(1) The Anglo-Russian 'Agreement' 1869-1873	165
(2) The Anglo-Russian 'Agreement' in decay 1873-1888	189
5 <i>The Settlement of the Northern Frontier 1888-1895</i>	
(1) Prelude to crisis 1888-1891	206
(2) The first Pamir crisis 1891-1892	226
(3) The second Pamir crisis 1892-1893	248
(4) The third Pamir crisis and its settlement 1893-1895	263
(5) The settlement in the tribal territories 1894-1895	287

CONTENTS

vii

6 *Conclusion*

300

APPENDIX I	Statistics of the Indian trade with Eastern Turkistan 1863-1932	318
APPENDIX II	Treaty between the British Government and His Highness Maharaja Runbeer Singh, G.C.S.I., Maharaja of Jummoo and Cashmere, his heirs and successors . . . , 1870	320
APPENDIX III	Conditions of Free Trade proposed by General Aide-de-camp von Kaufmann to Yaqub Beg, Chief of Djety-Shahr, 1872	323
APPENDIX IV	Treaty between the British Government and His Highness the Ameer Mahomed Yakoob Khan, Ruler of the Territory of Kashgar and Yarkund, his heirs and successors . . . , 1874	324
APPENDIX V	Translation of a Treaty between His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir on one side and Aman-ool-Mulk, the Ruler of Chitral on the other, 1878	329
APPENDIX VI	Relevant sections of the 'Durand Agreement', 1893	330
APPENDIX VII	Agreement between the Governments of Great Britain and Russia with regard to the Spheres of Influence of the Two Countries in the region of the Pamirs, 1895	334
BIBLIOGRAPHY		336
INDEX		377

MAPS

The Northern Frontier	xiv
The Tribal Frontier	103
The Pamirs	167

FOREWORD

UNLIKE the 'north-west', India's northern frontier has been such as to cut her off almost entirely from land communication with her neighbours; indeed India's commercial connections with the rest of the world in the modern era have been largely sea-borne. None the less, throughout the nineteenth century, the mountainous 'roof of the world' was the scene of constant observation and frequent intervention by British agents, patrols and garrisons. Although any large-scale invasion of India over such forbidding terrain struck many sensible soldiers as inconceivable, 'strategic' frontier posts grew up like mushrooms, each more advanced than the last.

The reasoning that justified such interference was simple. If the British left any penetrable pass unguarded, or any potentially hostile tribe untended, the Russians might move in. And so the expensive multiplication of roads and forts went on, each new advance further complicating and swelling the legacy of frontier defence. Suspicion begat suspicion, every tactical move, a counter-move – producing the kind of nervous hostility that we would describe today as 'cold war'. There was never any question of conquering the frontier, although occupation often followed the progress of influence; the main object was to secure the defiles, valleys or passes that led downward to the plains, by controlling the peoples that lay astride them. Dr Alder's detailed study concerns essentially one salient of the total frontier – the area best known as the eastern Hindu Kush whose remote inaccessible valleys encouraged a stubborn independence among the tough peoples inhabiting them. During the second half of the nineteenth century, hardly a year went by without at least a minor operation involving this intractable land or its outskirts.

Although the Imperial Studies Series has been in existence since 1927 this is the first monograph that concerns itself with the sub-continent of India. Such apparent neglect was simply an accident of annual competition. The original object of the series was to salve some of the important research work of young post-graduate students which might otherwise gather dust on archival shelves, before being ransacked by another academic generation

in pursuit of similar themes. Obviously the studies selected for publication have varied in subject matter, geographical setting and merit; but on the whole they represent diligent and scholarly attempts to deal with some problem of imperial development. The series was not designed for writers of established reputation; it is intended, in the words of one of my predecessors, for those 'who are mature in mind, but young in years'.

GERALD S. GRAHAM
Chairman of the
Academic Committee

The Royal Commonwealth Society,
London, W.C.2.

PREFACE

THIS study describes the formation and execution of British policy in that area on the north of India lying roughly between latitudes 33° and 40° N and longitudes 70° and 80° E. Within those limits at the end of the nineteenth century ran what I have called 'British India's northern frontier'. This borderland, protected and defined by the mighty ranges of the Eastern Hindu Kush, the Mustagh and the Karakoram, swept northwards in a great arc from the Dora Pass on the west to the Karakoram Pass on the east – three hundred tangled miles of mountain and precipitous valley. Thrusting up into the very heart of Central Asia, this massive salient came to be directly threatened by the apparently inexorable advance of Imperial Russia. Had this threat not existed, it is extremely doubtful whether there would have been any British *policy* in the area at all.

But there *was* a threat and hence the steps, described in this book, which were taken to make the remote limits of one Empire secure against the potentially hostile proximity of another. The work is based mainly upon the writings of the men who guarded and governed that Empire and who, without exception, took for granted their right to do so as implicitly as we accept the law of gravity. Imperialism is of its own time, and the fact that it has become a slogan in a new and more terrible 'great game' in Central Asia does not give the historian the right to ignore it as a phase of history, any more than it obliges him to pass judgment upon it in the light of today's values.

On the contrary, recent events have done much to give back to the area treated in this survey much of the importance which it possessed at the end of the nineteenth century but which it subsequently lost. Today the troop-carrying aeroplane can cover the old four or five day journey from Peshawar to Chitral in an hour, and the intercontinental nuclear rocket far to the north in Central Asia can vault the mightiest mountains in the world and obliterate Peshawar in only a few minutes. These things have made nonsense of traditional nineteenth-century concepts of warfare. High passes and barren plateaux are no longer beyond the range of modern armies, as the presence of Chinese tanks in the erstwhile Forbidden

City of Lhasa has amply demonstrated. But today, as in the nineteenth century, emissaries are perhaps as dangerous as soldiers in this part of the world, equipped as they now are with all the deadly armoury of ideological warfare. Today the northern frontier is vulnerable to this threat as never before – from the Asiatic territories of Soviet Russia, from those of its Chinese ally in Communist-controlled Sinkiang and from Chinese-dominated Tibet by way of Ladakh. Moreover, at a time when the political and military threat has never been greater, the responsibility for the security of this area has devolved upon two mutually hostile sovereign states. In 1957, I wrote in the final sentence of the doctoral dissertation on which this book is based, ‘here . . . where India and Pakistan together look north at the formidable junction of the Iron and Bamboo Curtains, is a corner of the board in the new “great game” between Free and Communist Asia which will probably one day require a great deal of attention’. Nothing has happened in the five years since those words were written to challenge their validity. If they err, it is on the side of caution. For, since then, we have had confirmation that China has laid claim to over 50,000 square miles of Indian territory and has actually occupied a considerable part of it. Now, even as I write, comes the news that Pakistan and China have agreed to demarcate their common frontier. If Pakistan is to seek to retain what she holds, her case will probably rest largely on the same historical material that gives substance to this book. For it was in the thirty years between 1865 and 1895 that today’s international frontiers in this part of Asia were first formed and stabilized. The purpose of the present work is to describe, from the British point of view, how this was achieved.

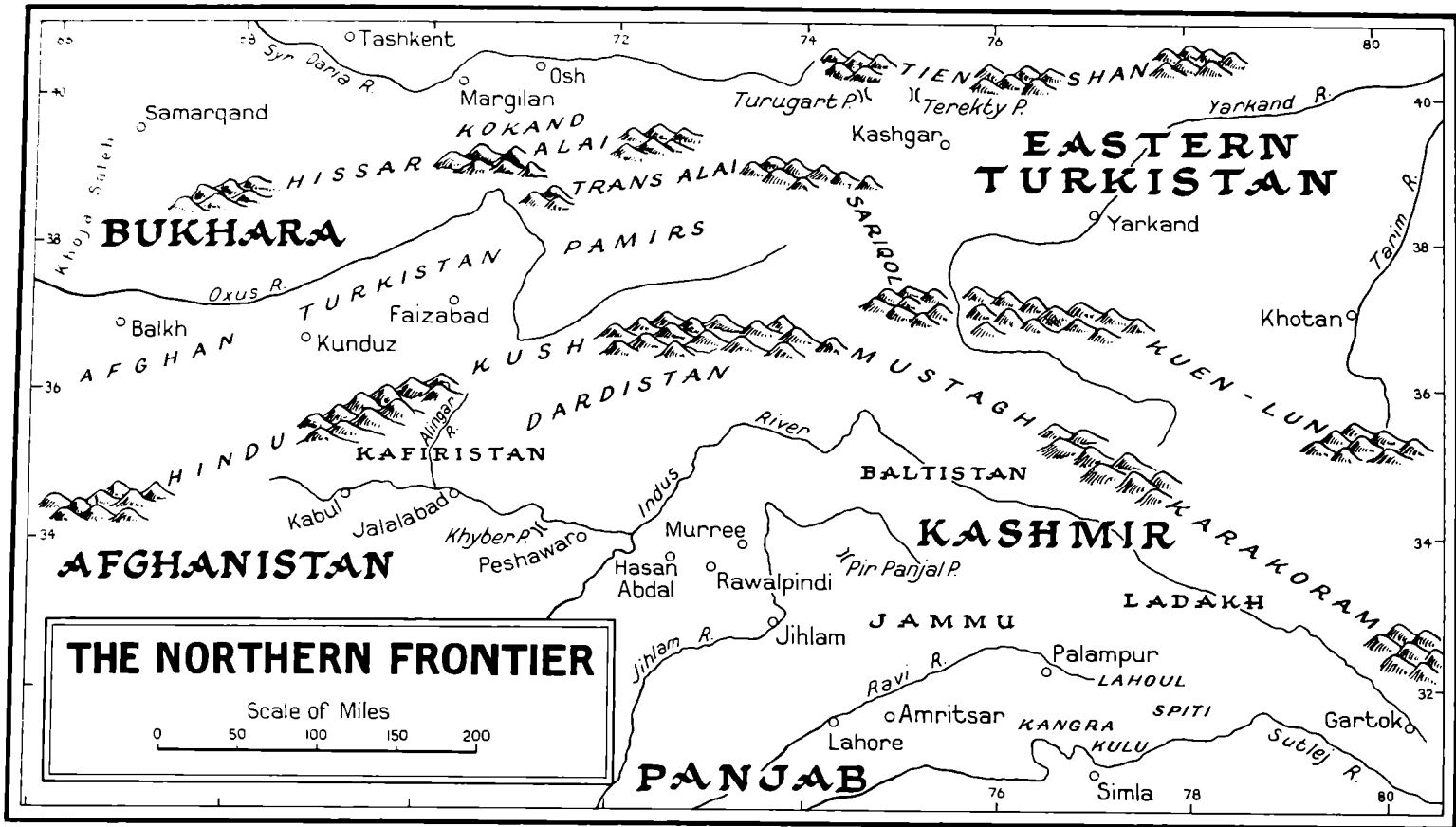
G. J. ALDER

University of London.
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MANY people have helped to make this book a reality. My thanks first of all are due to Mrs R. W. Greaves, who originally suggested the subject to me, and to my own University of Bristol, not only for making possible three years of full-time research upon it, but also for contributing towards its publication costs. During those years, and subsequently, Dr F. C. Jones, Reader in History at the University, has exercised a patient and helpful supervision of my work which I have much appreciated. Historical research of this kind would be impossible without the great libraries and the people who staff them and my own debt to Mr S. C. Sutton and his team at the India Office, and to the library staffs of the British Museum, the War Office and the Public Record Office is immense. I have especially valued the friendship and help which Kenneth Timings of the Record Office has extended to me. My thanks are also due to Sir Charles Buchanan for permission to consult the private correspondence of his grandfather, and to the trustees of the Ogilby Trust for access to the Indian papers of Lord Roberts. I have, too, been very fortunate in my friends and helpers: Richard Plincke has prepared the maps: my mother, Miss Lyn Williamson, Mrs Nadina Macleod and especially Miss Lita Shellard have between them undertaken the daunting task of rendering my many manuscripts into typescript: John Waldron, my sister, Mrs Gillian Clarkson, and my fiancée, Miss Sally Horner, have helped with the proof-reading: and Miss Jocelyn Ferguson has laboured for many hours beside me in the India Office Library. To all of them I offer my sincere thanks. Finally, I wish to record my gratitude to Professor G. S. Graham for his constant encouragement and support during the perilous transition of this work from thesis to book, and to the Royal Commonwealth Society for its generosity in making that transition possible at all.

G. J. ALDER



CHAPTER I

Introduction

ON the last day of the sixteenth century, Queen Elizabeth I incorporated by royal charter 'The Governor and Company of Merchants of London, trading into the East Indies'. By 1765 the Company had won territory in Bengal as far north as the twenty-seventh degree of latitude. Forty years later, by pushing north-westwards along the edge of the Himalayas, its frontiers crossed latitude 31° and came into contact with the Sikh kingdom which the formidable Ranjit Singh had created north of the Sutlej. The final collapse of what was left of that kingdom, and the subsequent annexation of the Panjab in 1849, brought the direct rule of the British to the north of Peshawar. Indirectly, British influence reached across the dependent territories of the Maharaja Gulab Singh as far as the Karakoram Pass.¹

North and east of the Karakoram Pass, beyond the Kuen-lun range and as far west as the skirts of the Pamirs, were the lands which had been added to the Manchu Empire by the Chinese in 1759. At about this time Afghanistan was being consolidated into a political entity for the first time by Ahmad Shah, and his northern boundary ran along the River Oxus. The lands between the Hindu Kush and the Oxus – Afghan Turkistan – were won and lost by Kabul several times, but eventually, in 1869, Sher Ali emerged from a six-year struggle for supremacy as Amir of Kabul. In the following years his power was successfully extended to the Oxus, and along it on the north-east into Badakhshan and Wakhan as far as the western edge of the Pamirs.²

The fourth power to impinge upon the area in modern times was Russia. Her first real expansion southwards into the Khirghiz steppes towards the distant Oxus had begun about 1730. In the beginning, the absorption of the nomad tribes was usually more nominal than real, but by 1853 the Russian frontier had reached

1. For Gulab Singh, see below pp.20-2 and 100-2.

2. It was a disagreement about the extent of this advance which so bedevilled the Anglo-Russian negotiations described below pp.165-76.

the line of the Syr Daria. Farther to the east, an earlier advance southwards from the Siberian base towards Tashkent had taken place independently and in the early 'sixties a five-hundred-mile gap of barren steppe still interposed itself between the last fort on the Syr and the nearest in the Trans-Ili district.

It was this gap which the 1864 operations in the north of Kokand were designed to close. As a result, a line of forts was established from the Aral Sea to Semipalatinsk fixing the limit, in Gortchakov's words, 'up to which we are bound to advance and at which we must halt'.³ The halt was only temporary. In June 1865 the great commercial city of Tashkent, a considerable distance in advance of the new line, was captured; in 1866 the Russians annexed the city and pushed their frontier still further across the Syr; in 1867 the new territories were formally absorbed; and in 1868 Samarqand fell.

This advance, which came increasingly to dominate Anglo-Indian strategic thinking as the nineteenth century wore on, was probably too rapid and too elemental to be really understood at the time. Public opinion assumed that, since it brought Russia nearer to India, it must have India as its object. In all the talk of invasion, flanking movements, parallels and salients, the fact that the Russian advance was essentially only the acquisition of an Empire tended to be overlooked. But that in itself was serious enough, for Russia had emerged from the Napoleonic Wars as the most powerful nation in Europe, and Britain's natural rival. Her rapid approach towards the vulnerable land frontier of the British Indian Empire, an Empire won from and maintained by the sea, represented a decisive change in Britain's international position. It was almost an article of belief among the Russian General Staff in the nineteenth century, as it had been with Napoleon, that without command of the sea a military offensive against Britain could only be effectively developed in Asia.⁴ No wonder people in Britain were worried. Frightened as they were by Russian invasion schemes, fed with false information, deceived by geographical ignorance, and forgetful of the vast distances of mountain, desert

3. Circular Despatch to Russian representatives abroad, 21 Nov. 1864 (o.s.), AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.70.

4. A. Lobanov-Rostovsky, 'The Shadow of India in Russian History', *History*, XIV (1929-30), p.224; H. T. Cheshire, 'The Expansion of Imperial Russia to the Indian Border', *Slavonic Review*, XIII (1934-5), p.96.

and plain in Central Asia, they greeted each Russian advance with almost inevitable bursts of alarm and Russophobia.⁵

The problem of defending India from this threat was not an easy one to solve. For one thing, the danger was half a world away. There was

. . . 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.⁶

Britain had effectively become a continental power. But the tiny British army of sixty thousand, lost in the midst of two hundred million Indians, and unable to rely on reinforcements from home in an emergency, represented only thirty men for each mile of frontier.⁷ It was faced by a much larger Russian army, ruling over a native population which in the whole of Central Asia was smaller than that in Hyderabad. Moreover, because of its fewer camp followers, the Russian force could support one and a half times as many fighting soldiers in any one district as could the contemporary British army.⁸

The administrative structure of Russian Central Asia was predominantly military. The Governor-General was always a senior soldier. He exercised wide powers, initiated policy, negotiated treaties, held court in Viceregal manner and was responsible to the War Minister and the Emperor, not to the Foreign Ministry.⁹ Close control from St Petersburg was impossible and even as late as 1885 the southern limits of the Russian Central Asian Empire, where the trouble was most likely to occur, were still ten days away from the capital in terms of news. General Chernaiev, who made the first annexations in Turkistan, came into head-on collision with the Imperial Foreign Ministry, and was said to have stated quite bluntly that advances in Asia had been, and would be,

5. For these sentiments, see J. H. Gleason, *The genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain* and V. K. Chavda, *India, Britain and Russia (1838-78): a study of British opinion*.

6. Roberts Memo., 31 Aug. 1892, RoP/1, p.303.

7. Contemporary figures for Spain and Italy were 937 and 860 respectively. BM Add. Mss. 43585, p.807.

8. O. St. John, Confidential Notes on Afghanistan as a Theatre of War, 1885, p.6.

9. H. C. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*, pp.267-8; B. H. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans, 1870-1880*, pp.47-51 and n.

made 'partly in disregard of the wishes of the Central Government and even notwithstanding its positive orders to the contrary'.¹⁰ This proved to be an unhappily accurate forecast of the way many of the Russian advances were accomplished in the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the Russian Foreign Ministry seemed to be in a state of almost constant embarrassment about them.

But, as senior Russian diplomats were forced to admit, the soldiers were really the only competent judges of many aspects of the Central Asian question.¹¹ At bottom, there was a Central Asian question, because of the rapid approach of two rival imperial frontiers. The word 'frontier', wrote Lytton in 1879, is a synonym for the word 'quarrel'.¹² Events in Central Asia certainly support the view and quarrels, potential or actual, imply soldiers and defence. That is why the chapters which follow feature military men as well as professional politicians and diplomats. In India, where from the start the British had won and maintained their empire by the sword, the interdependence of soldier and civilian in the formation of policy is plainly visible.¹³

Besides soldiers and politicians, the explorers and the secret agents had an important part to play. Events in Asia have consistently shown the truth of the remark that 'a preliminary to diplomatic action is the acquisition of geographical knowledge'.¹⁴ It was a preliminary to political action and to the formulation of a defensive strategy too. Explorers had been key figures in the Central Asian question for many years and the connection between geography, politics, diplomacy and defence had always been close.¹⁵ It was inevitably and especially so on the remote northern frontier of India.

Nevertheless there were obvious dangers in travel beyond the limits of effective Indian influence, and the list of those who had

10. Michell Memo., 20 Jan. 1873, FO 65/875.

11. 311, Buchanan to Clarendon, 2 July 1866, FO 65/869; Staal to Giers, 2 May 1894, A. Meyendorff, *Correspondence Diplomatique de M. de Staal*, II, p.241.

12. To Cranbrook, 9 Nov. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.1013.

13. Both the C.-in-C. and the Military Member of the Viceroy's Council played an important part in policy-making and many of the Government's most important political officers were soldiers.

14. Chapman to Sanderson, 11 Sept. 1891, HC/124, p.803.

15. See the two Raleigh Lectures of H. W. C. Davis, *The Great Game in Asia* (1926) and J. L. Morison, *From Alexander Burnes to Frederick Roberts* (1936).

never come back was already long by 1865. The Viceroy at that time, Lord Lawrence, took a more determined stand against British trans-frontier exploration than did any of his successors in the nineteenth century with the possible exception of Lord Ripon.¹⁶ Later, under Lord Lytton, the 'natural right of a Briton to get his throat cut when and where he likes' was less rigorously curtailed, but even Lord Salisbury added to his remark the important rider, 'except of course upon your immediate frontier'.¹⁷ Later still, Lord Kimberley at the India Office deplored the Indian restrictive attitude towards explorers compared with that of the Russians,¹⁸ and the Viceroy in 1889, Lord Lansdowne, declared himself ready to encourage explorers of 'acknowledged utility'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the danger of political complications meant that the prohibition upon trans-frontier exploration had, with modifications, to remain. The Indian Government had good reasons for its caution. One member of Martin Conway's²⁰ expedition to the Karakoram in 1891 not only broke his word and went west of the Indus during the Hunza campaign, but even crossed on to the Tagdumbash Pamir not far from where the incident which began the Pamir crisis had taken place a few months earlier.²¹

In the correspondence which preceded Conway's expedition, the mountaineer had been especially asked not to 'supply any foreign power with information which might be valuable to it from a military point of view'.²² The official attitude was clear enough:

The topography of the Hindu Kush is to India what the fortifications of a frontier town are to Germany, and the public might as reasonably ask for a plan of Strasbourg Fortress as for detailed information of the mountain passes leading into India.²³

The Royal Geographical Society, with a vested interest in the spread of knowledge, did not see the problem in quite the same

16. For Lawrence's views, see below p.32; for Ripon's, see his letter to Hartington, 5 May 1882, RP/4, p.111.

17. To Lytton, 19 May 1876, LyP/516/1, no.20.

18. Minute, 3 Mar. 1883, HC/61, p.171.

19. To Hamilton, 5 July 1889, LaP/11, p.82.

20. William Martin Conway (1856-1937), later Baron Conway of Allington.

21. Lansdowne to Grant Duff, 20 Sept. 1892, KP/6. Much of the correspondence is PFI/66, p.367 *et seq.*

22. Cunningham to Grant Duff, 23 Mar. 1892, *ibid.*

23. Undated India Foreign Dept. Memo., KP/6.

light, and on this issue a regular and acrimonious cold war was waged between it and the Indian Government for over a decade.²⁴ In fact, the attempt to preserve secrecy was an impossible one from the start, for private individuals could not be curbed. During the Pamir crisis, for instance, one Dr Leitner aroused the ire of the Indian Government by publishing information 'with the scarcely veiled intention of helping a possible enemy'.²⁵ India of course had a tighter grip on explorers in its own employ and their written statements were usually censored before publication.²⁶ One of them, Francis Younghusband, was so remarkably discreet that he once managed to describe his Pamir experiences without mentioning either his expulsion by the Russians or the passes north of Hunza at all!²⁷ But other officials were not so careful, nor perhaps so well gagged. The indiscretions of Sir Henry Rawlinson's²⁸ book had angered Lord Northbrook in 1875,²⁹ and nine years later the disclosures of Sir Charles MacGregor, the Quartermaster-General of India, were even more dangerous. He was severely censured for circulating his work, and the resulting investigation led to a new order of things in the Indian Record Department and to the establishment of a Confidential Library.³⁰ But, quite apart from these careless official lapses, there were always more sinister influences at work. In 1891 it was discovered that the secret telegrams and Cabinet papers sent to Messrs Eyre and Spottiswoode for printing had been seen by a very dubious hired writer.³¹ In

24. Some of this can be seen in BM Add. Mss. 43523, p.166 and 43524, p.160; PFI/41, p.1617; HC/123, p.975; LaP/14, pp.67-84; PFI/67, p.327 and PFI/69, p.1357.

25. Undated India Foreign Dept. Memo., KP/6. See also HC/128, p.11 and PFI/65, p.675. For Leitner, see index

26. See, for example, IFP/2341, Dec. 1884, p.27.

27. Later Sir Francis Edward Younghusband (1863-1942), leader of mission to Lhasa (1903-4) and Kashmir Resident (1906-9). Also see index.

28. Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810-95), President of the Royal Asiatic and Royal Geographical Societies, member India Council (1868-95). Also see index.

29. To Salisbury, 1 Apr. 1875, NoP/2, p.xliv. The book is that referred to above p.3, n.9.

30. On the reorganization, see PTI/13, p. 281. For the suppression of the book, see Lady C. MacGregor, *Life and Opinions of Sir C. M. MacGregor*, II, pp.342-60 and the correspondence in BM Add. Mss. 43525, p.200 and RP/16, pp.165, 256 and 266.

31. HC/3, pp.1741-52. Cf. Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans 1870-80*, pp.516 n. and 686 for the Marvin affair.

India an N.C.O. of equally doubtful origins managed to gain access to 'almost every paper' in the Intelligence Department, and later disappeared.³² Certainly the Russians *did* possess Indian confidential papers, and during the Pamir crisis there was undoubtedly a leak of information to the Russian Embassy in London.³³

Complete secrecy was impossible, but the efforts made to attain it illustrate the importance which was attached to the geographical and political information being gained by the explorers and agents. Their work had a close bearing on the policies of the diplomats and politicians as the story of the 1873 Oxus boundary negotiations, the opening of British relations with Eastern Turkistan and the establishment of the Gilgit Agency will confirm.³⁴ It was bound to be so, for in 1865, when this story begins, the area in which it is set was still to a large extent unexplored.

At the centre of it, indeed some have said at the centre of the whole world,³⁵ are the Pamirs. A pamir has been described as

neither a plain nor a down, nor a steppe, nor a plateau, but a mountain valley of glacial formation, differing only from the adjacent or other mountain valleys in its superior altitude, and in the greater degree to which its trough has been filled up by glacial detritus and alluvium, and has thereby approximated in appearance to a plain. . . .³⁶

Standing at heights of over twelve thousand feet, the Pamirs in summer are patched with thick grass and wild flowers, although otherwise they are without vegetation. In winter they are deep in snow for at least seven months of the year and harried by lethal winds which make life there all but impossible.³⁷ In 1895, the permanent native population of the Pamirs was probably less than a thousand.³⁸ Only about one-tenth of the area loosely called

32. Roberts Memo., 2 June 1890, RoP/6, p.637.

33. See A. Meyendorff, *Correspondence Diplomatique de M. de Staal*, II, pp.198, 222-3 and 225-6.

34. For the Oxus boundary, below p.189; Eastern Turkistan, below pp.30-3; the Gilgit Agency, below pp.110-14.

35. Carl Ritter, cited with approval by J. Paquier, *Le Pamir*, p.1.

36. G. N. Curzon, *The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus*, p.17; see also the *Report on the Proceedings of the Pamir Boundary Commission*, Chapter IV.

37. The contrast between the Pamirs in summer and in winter goes far to explain the conflict of opinion about their feasibility as an invasion route. See below pp.270-1.

38. Curzon, *op. cit.*, p.18n.

'the Pamirs' consists of these shallow valleys; the rest is occupied by lofty, parallel mountain ridges running roughly east-west, dividing one pamir from another, and rising sometimes to a snow-covered 20,000 feet. The eastern edge of the Pamirs is terminated by a double chain of mountains linking the Trans-Alai to the Karakoram, and between them runs the Sariqol Valley. This in places is much more fertile than the Pamirs and, in its central portion near Tash Qurghan, supported in the nineteenth century a small mixed population of settled agriculturists and nomadic cattle-breeders.³⁹

The Sariqol mountain chain is the watershed between the head-streams of the Oxus, draining away across the Pamirs to the west, and the streams running down eastward into the Tarim basin. This resembles a gigantic bowl with its rims formed by the Pamirs on the west, by the Tien Shan mountains running out from the Pamirs on the north, and on the south by the Kuen-lun stretching away far into China and dividing the Tarim basin from the Kashmir provinces of Baltistan and Ladakh and the high plateau of Tibet. Within these limits lies one of the most formidable true desert areas in the world. Its mixed but mainly Turkish population is therefore clustered almost entirely in the string of oasis towns like Aksu, Maralbashi, Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan lying round the fertile edge of the basin where the rivers come down from the mountains.⁴⁰ The western end of the Kuen-lun is little more than a buttress to the Karakoram range and its western extension, the Mustagh. Hemmed between the sea of mountains which make up these two great systems is the startlingly fertile Raskam Valley, running for about a hundred miles and capable of supporting a small population.⁴¹ South of it, the Karakoram-Mustagh range forms the true water-parting between the rivers of the Tarim basin on the north and the Indus system on the south.

39. Gordon Report, 17 Aug. 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.

40. The best contemporary account is India's *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*, Chap. II. For a useful summary, see Sir Aurel Stein's article in *Geographical Journal*, LXV (1925), pp.377 and 473.

41. Younghusband first drew attention to it, below p.211. See F. E. Younghusband, *Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, pp.95-6.

The stupendous mass of mountains formed by its junction with the Himalayas contains the highest peaks and the greatest glacier system in the world.⁴²

South of this mountain mass were Gulab Singh's dependencies of Baltistan and Ladakh. Baltistan, which is similar in its mountain valleys and glaciers to the Mustagh flanking it on the north, supported a sparse Muslim population, but was of little importance, since no feasible lines of communication ran across it. Ladakh on the other hand shared not only the religion and culture but also the lofty, barren and less rugged physical features of the Tibetan plateau. Its river valleys, especially those of the Shyok and the Indus, were the lines along which trade had percolated for centuries between India and Eastern Turkistan. In the extreme north-east of Ladakh, where the Karakoram dies away into the high Tibetan uplands, are the elevated and barren plains of the Lingzi-thang. In the late 'sixties these seemed to offer an even easier way to the north, both from the British hill territories of Kulu, Lahoul and Spiti and from Kashmir itself.⁴³

North-west of Baltistan towards the Pamirs, but almost completely isolated from them, begins a belt of non-Pathan tribal territory stretching to the south-west as far as Dir, Swat and Bajaur. This area, which may conveniently be called Dardistan,⁴⁴ is limited on the north by the Hindu Kush – the great mountain barrier which, from its junction with the Mustagh and Sariqol ranges somewhere near the head of the Tagdumbash Pamir, runs away west and then south-west across the middle of Afghanistan towards the Persian Gulf. It was in the Alpine valleys carved by the upper tributaries of the Indus as they poured down from the Hindu Kush, usually the only habitable areas and feasible lines of communication in this sea of mountains, that the separate tribal communities grew up. The most northerly of them inhabit the

42. For a summary of the disputes about the nature and relationship of these ranges, see S. A. Hedin, *Southern Tibet*, VII, Chapters 27–36.

43. The fullest contemporary accounts are A. Cunningham, *Ladak, Physical, Statistical and Historical*; F. Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*; F. Maisey, *Kashmir and Jammu*; A. F. P. Harcourt, *The Himalayan districts of Kooloo, Lahoul, and Spiti*.

44. Dard peoples have a pedigree going back to Pliny and Ptolemy but the term was popularized by Dr G. W. Leitner (see works in bibliography). For its linguistic significance, see *Linguistic Survey of India*, VIII, Pt.2, pp.1–3.

twin states of Hunza and Nagar.⁴⁵ Hunza, a narrow fertile mountain valley, supported in 1880 about six thousand people who, though notorious as robbers, lived primarily as a settled agricultural community. They owed their relative immunity from retribution to the rugged and inaccessible nature of their country. It was practically closed to the outside world in the summer when the rivers were in flood, and even today is extremely remote. Nagar, smaller than its ancient enemy, Hunza, but with a large cultivable area and therefore a bigger population,⁴⁶ was of less importance because it was more easily coerced from the south and had no outlet by which to raid to the north.

The next major political division to the west is Chitral,⁴⁷ divided in the middle of the last century into Upper and Lower Chitral and ruled by two different branches of the same family. Upper Chitral, consisting of Ponial, Mastuj and Yasin, was ruled by one branch despite the important fact that the Mastuj and Yasin valleys are geographically quite distinct and divided one from the other by the difficult Shandur range running down as a spur from the main chain. The people of Lower Chitral lived mainly in the valley of the Chitral River, from Mastuj down to below Chitral itself. To the east, Chitral was cut off from Afghanistan by independent Kafiristan, and to the south, from British territory by the Pathan tribes of Dir, Swat and Bajaur which inhabited the bloc of territory drained by the Swat River.⁴⁸ Their country is generally rather more open than the narrow gorges of Chitral and the Hindu Kush and belongs more properly, both geographically and ethnographically, to the north-west rather than the north frontier of India. From time to time, however, powerful chiefs like Rahma-

45. One of the earliest official accounts is enclosed with 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537. Useful contemporary descriptions are India's *Confidential Gazeteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*, pp.367 and 615 and E. G. Barrow's, *Confidential Gazeteer of Dardistan and Kafiristan*, I, pp.115 and 145.

46. Estimated at 10,000 in 1880 by J. Biddulph, *The Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, pp.24-5.

47. One of the earliest contemporary accounts based on native information is by H. G. Raverty in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XXXIII (1864), p.125. A useful summary is enclosed with 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537.

48. Good contemporary accounts are T. C. Plowden, *Papers relating to the state of affairs in Swat*; W. W. MacNair, *Confidential Report on the explorations in part of Eastern Afghanistan and in Kafiristan during 1883*; and India's, *Confidential Military Report on Dir, Swat and Bajaur*.

tulla Khan of Dir, and Umra Khan of Jandul, became involved in the northern frontier policy of the Indian Government, either because they dominated the shortest route from the Panjab to Chitral or because they had designs there.

Across the divide marking the south-eastern limit of these territories, the Indus flows down from the north-east. Along it, occupying one or more of the lateral valleys, are a series of small Shinaki 'republican' communities, the most important of which are Darel, Tangir and Chilas.⁴⁹ Chilas on the left bank, bounded by the Nanga Parbat range on the east and by the Black Mountain and the British valley of Kaghan on the south, was probably the biggest of the Indus republics in the last century and its people the most fanatical of all the Dard tribes. Strategically it was of considerable importance, for it stood on the flank of the Kashmir route to Gilgit and was on the line of a potentially shorter route to that place direct from British territory.⁵⁰

Gilgit was the nucleus, first of the Sikh power west of the Indus, and later of the British attempt to extend an influence over the whole of Dardistan up to the southern skirts of the Hindu Kush. It was a natural choice. Situated at the hub of routes leading off to all parts of Dardistan, with a good climate and fertile soil along the Gilgit river valley, it had been from ancient times the seat of a succession of rulers who were able to dominate in varying degrees the surrounding country. The chief fort and village, and later the British Agency bungalow, stood on the right bank of the river about twenty-five miles above its junction with the Indus.

The great divide between the Indus system flowing into the Indian Ocean and the Oxus flowing into the Aral Sea is the Hindu Kush. The hydrography of the Pamirs was for a long time the subject of dispute, but the 1895 Pamir Boundary Commission established that the real source of the Ak-su (or Murghab) and the Pamir rivers, and part source of the Panja, was the system of snowfields and glaciers lying in the range between the Great and Little Pamirs. These various feeders of the Oxus, each flowing along a pamir, contract on the western edge of the Pamirs into the rockbound and narrow valleys which are a feature of most of the mountain area through which the main stream of the Oxus

49. See J. Biddulph, *op. cit.*, p.13 *et seq.*; A. H. Mason, *Report on Kaghan and adjoining independent territory*, pp.23-73.

50. See below pp.257 and 259-60.

makes its great sweep to the north. The river passes in turn through the hill-principalities of Shignan, Roshan and Darwaz – the last, with a sparse Sunni population, quite the poorest and most inaccessible of them all. In the mid-nineteenth century Darwaz was on bad terms with its Shiite neighbours in Roshan and Shignan. Whereas the latter, although formerly the leading states on the Upper Oxus, tended to gravitate into the Afghan orbit to the south, Darwaz looked north to Bukhara.

On the western side of the great spur which drives the river on its northern bend is Badakhshan. This province is much more open in character and more fertile than the narrow valleys of the states along the Upper Oxus and by the mid-nineteenth century was quite an important local commercial centre. Its sub-district of Wakhan, limited geographically if not politically by the mountains north of the Pamir River and stretching away eastward on to the southern edge of the Pamirs, was generally much more barren and scantily populated, except on the west towards Badakhshan.⁵¹

North of Darwaz, and divided from it by an almost impenetrable mountain range, was the hill-state of Karategin, occupying the central part of the valley of the Surkhab River. It was bounded on the west by the Bukharan province of Hissar and on the north by what became Russian Fergana. North-east of Karategin, on the higher courses of the river, is the Alai Valley, itself bounded north and south by the Alai and Trans-Alai mountains. These form the northern buttress of the Pamirs. They link up with the Tien Shan range going east and with the Sariqol ranges running away, as already noticed, down the eastern edge of the Pamirs towards the Hindu Kush.⁵²

The area briefly described in these paragraphs had been for centuries the meeting-place of some of the world's greatest mountain ranges, rivers and religious faiths, but in the middle of the nineteenth century it was beginning to assume a new importance as the probable meeting-place of three huge territorial empires as well. Lord Lytton was the first to define for

51. Contemporary accounts are Yule's introduction to J. Wood, *Journey to the Source of the River Oxus*; L. F. Kostenko, *The Turkistan Region*, I, p.178 *et seq.*; memos. by R. Michell and A. W. M[oore] in HC/65, p.3 and HC/66, p.185; India, *The Military Geography of Afghanistan*, I, Chapters 1 and 2.

52. On the areas north of Darwaz at this time, the best translated accounts are Kostenko, *op. cit.* and A. Y. Snyesaref, *Eastern Bokhara*.

British India a coherent policy to meet this situation, and its outlines were followed without exception by all of his successors.

. . . the natural boundary of India is formed by the convergence of the great mountain ranges of the Himalayas and of the Hindu Kush which here extend northwards up to their junction. . . . Within the angle thus formed lie the territories of Chitral, Darel, Yasin, Hunza, and other petty dependencies. From Hunza on the slopes of the Mustagh, westward to Chitral under the Hindu Kush, these States occupy the valleys which run up to the skirts of the ranges, and are drained by the uppermost tributaries of the Indus river system. And the only passes through these ranges from the Pamir are, as we have said, in the hands of these semi-independent Chiefs. If a strong, independent, and hostile power were established on the north of these mountains, the passes might become lines of a demonstration . . . , which might at least be useful as a diversion to facilitate and support the flank of more serious operations in Afghanistan. If, on the other hand, we extend, and by degrees consolidate, our influence over this country, and if we resolve that no foreign interference can be permitted on this side of the mountains, or within the drainage system of the Indus, we shall have laid down a natural line of frontier which is distinct, intelligible, and likely to be respected.⁵³

That was a minimum programme for, as a later Viceroy put it, 'our nervous tissues extend a good deal beyond the limits of our material and military jurisdiction'.⁵⁴ In effect, as far as the British were concerned, the Hindu Kush and Karakoram ranges divided the political area into two zones. North of the mountains were India's 'nervous tissues' – those lands which were of political and strategic interest but which were deemed to be beyond the range of either effective military operation or occupation. South of the mountains were the areas which could if necessary be actively coerced or defended. Slowly and haltingly two policies were evolved to match this dichotomy. The end of each – the security of the British Indian Empire from external threat – was the same.

It is perhaps misleading in the context of this study to use phrases like 'north of the mountains', since most of the area with which it deals is mountainous. The great exception, as has been seen, is the Tarim River basin of Eastern Turkistan. And it was

53. 49, India, 28 Feb. 1879, PFI/21, p.859. Extract in AP 1895 LXXII C.7864.

54. Dufferin to Cross, 3 June 1877, DP/20, p.121.

here, in the 'sixties of the nineteenth century, that there occurred a great political upheaval which invited the attentions of both trader and strategist. Eastern Turkistan was the first sector of the northern frontier to attract the serious notice of the Government of India.

CHAPTER II

Eastern Turkistan 1865-1895

(1) *The origins of British policy up to 1869*

STANDING astride the ancient silk-route between Europe and Asia and at the meeting-place of caravan trails from India, Tibet, China, Kokand and Russia, Eastern Turkistan had enjoyed a reputation as a great commercial emporium 'ever since the days of the Ptolemies'.¹ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, its chief exports to India were marijuana², China tea, silk, gold and silver, carpets, sulphur, precious stones, dried fruits and ponies. In return the caravans carried opium, coarse shawls, brocades, leather, sugar, spices, tobacco, hardware, cotton and chintz piece-goods, tin, iron and indigo back to Yarkand and Kashgar. The great bulk of the trade from Kashgar went across the Karakoram Pass to Leh and from there reached the Indian plains either through Kashmir to Jihlam or through the Sutlej hill-states to Amritsar. By far the most important commodity passing through Ladakh was the fine under-wool of the sheep or goat used in the manufacture of Kashmir shawls, coming not from Eastern Turkistan but from the lofty uplands of Western Tibet and monopolised almost exclusively by the Kashmir weavers. More than any other, it was this valuable commodity which first attracted the attention of the British to the commercial possibilities of the far north.

In 1812, William Moorcroft, the Superintendent of the East India Company's Stud, visited Gartok in Western Tibet without permission and succeeded in obtaining some of the shawl wool, although he was able to discover very little about the lands

1. J. & R. Michell (*eds.*), *The Russians in Central Asia*, pp.51-2. On the silk route, see A. Hermann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen zwischen China und Syrien*.
2. J. E. T. Aitchison, a later British Joint-Commissioner at Leh and himself a doctor, attributed half the insanity in the Panjab to the drug. See his *Handbook of the Trade Products of Leh*, p.51.

farther north.³ In 1819, however, ostensibly in search of horses but undoubtedly far more interested in commerce, he set out on the great journey which took him first to Ladakh and then later through Afghanistan into Bukhara. Leh, the hub of the north Himalaya trade, was his first objective and he arrived there in 1821. Within a few months he secured the agreement of the Ladakh authorities to what he was pleased to call 'an Engagement . . . for establishing a commercial intercourse with British merchants and for their passage through the country of Ladakh to Chinese and Oosbuk Turkistan'.⁴ Moorcroft believed that the preferential treatment promised in the agreement would open the markets of Chinese Turkistan and eventually the whole of Central Asia to British commerce.⁵ Unfortunately for his plan, however, Moorcroft failed to get the permission he sought from the Chinese authorities to enter Kashgar with his caravan and he was never able to sign a commercial engagement with them to buttress his agreement with Ladakh. Even that document remained completely a dead letter and the East India Company deliberately ignored its existence.

It was not quite so easy to ignore some of Moorcroft's other discoveries and activities. While at Leh, he learned that an agent of the Russian Government, a shadowy but fascinating figure called Agha Mehdi, was on his way for the second time within a few years to visit both the ruler of Ladakh and Ranjit Singh, bearing letters of goodwill, a considerable sum of money and some commercial goods. So much seems well authenticated, but most of the rest of the dossier Moorcroft compiled on Agha Mehdi's activities was based on little more than hearsay from Yarkand. If true, and Moorcroft believed it was, the implications were serious. Agha Mehdi was said to have instructions to invite not only the ruler of Ladakh and Ranjit Singh, but also the exiled descendant of the former Muslim rulers of Kashgar to send representatives to St Petersburg. The latter would then be helped by a

3. This journey is described in *Asiatic Researches*, XII (1816), pp.375-534. The author is at present working on a biography of Moorcroft based on his papers at the India Office. The principal printed account of his travels is W. Moorcroft and G. Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces*.
4. The original document is in IO Eur. Mss. G.28.
5. To Metcalfe, 4 May and 15 Aug. 1821, *Bengal Political Consultations*, 20 Sept. 1822, nos.60 and 63.

Russian army to recover his hereditary possessions from the Chinese with the aid of a simultaneous Muslim insurrection against the Chinese garrisons. As a result, Russian influence and trade in Eastern Turkistan would be supreme.⁶

At this point in his argument, Moorcroft was led to a speculation which, he claimed, was 'so degrading, so monstrous' and so embarrassing that he was only able to describe it with difficulty. Had not trade moved between Leh and Kashgar at all seasons of the year for centuries? What then was to prevent a Russian army following the same route? There were in any case sound historical precedents for the movement of considerable forces from Kashgar across the Karakoram and thence to Kashmir. Once established in Kashmir, a natural fortress easily defended against attack from the plains, a Russian force in co-operation with Ranjit Singh could then re-equip itself at leisure for a further move.⁷ All this, and very much more about Russia's alleged designs, came spilling from Moorcroft's pen, although most of it made little impression on the Company authorities.⁸

They could not remain quite so indifferent when their Superintendent of Stud began to embrace political solutions to the dangers which he saw threatening on the extreme north. After the successful conclusion of his commercial agreement, the confidence of the Ladakh authorities in Moorcroft and the power he was believed to represent had grown rapidly. When Ranjit Singh shortly afterwards demanded tribute from Ladakh, his emissary was sent back to the Panjab with a flea in his ear and Moorcroft was asked to forward an appeal to the British authorities to take Ladakh under their 'protection' and accept its 'allegiance and submission'. He jumped at the idea. Both the clumsy letter from the Ladakh authorities to the Governor-General, containing an elaborate historical proof that Ladakh was independent, and the draft treaty

6. See especially Moorcroft's undated 'Sketch of an attempt by Russia to form a connection with Ladakh', IO Eur. Mss. D.260 and *Bengal Political Consultations*, 10 Oct. 1823, nos.23 and 25.

7. See especially Moorcroft's letters to Metcalfe, 15 Aug. 1821 (*Bengal Political Consultations*, 20 Sept. 1822, no.63); to Swinton, 18 Apr. 1822 (*ibid.*, no.76); 17 Dec. 1821 (IO Eur. Mss. D.245); and 17 Dec. 1822 (IO Eur. Mss. G.28).

8. Governor-General in Council to Court of Directors, 9 Jan. 1824, *Bengal Political Letters Received*, vol.18.

which accompanied it were almost certainly composed by Moorcroft.⁹

If he had confined himself to the role of postman in this affair and simply forwarded the appeal to his superiors in secret, probably nothing more would have happened. The British authorities agreed with Moorcroft that they had an 'undoubted right' to take Ladakh under their protection but, in flat opposition to his views, deemed it undesirable 'to extend our influence and political relations into regions beyond the Himalaya'.¹⁰ British policy in the north was still firmly based on friendship with the Sikh kingdom of Ranjit Singh. Consequently, the very evidence that Ranjit had designs on Ladakh, which made Moorcroft so anxious to forestall him there, was for his superiors the best reason for keeping clear. Their anger can be well imagined when they learned that Moorcroft had written personally to Ranjit Singh pointing out that Ladakh was independent, that he, Ranjit, was known to be planning an attack on it, that the British had been advised of the fact and that Ranjit 'will hear from the British Government regarding the state of its intentions and affairs'.¹¹ This thinly veiled threat of possible British intervention in Ladakh struck at the whole basis of the British policy of friendship with its powerful Sikh neighbour and Moorcroft was promptly disowned by the Indian Government.¹²

There is no doubt at all that his letter to Ranjit was politically unwise, but it is not hard to explain. He was greatly afraid that the Sikh army would be in Ladakh before Britain could intervene, and the letter was of course an attempt to delay it. Moorcroft hated Ranjit's cruelty and misgovernment and hoped to save the unoffending Ladakhis from both. But above all, he knew that if the Sikhs ever dominated Ladakh all the positive advantages which he believed would follow a British protectorate over that country would be lost. These advantages he urged on the Government at great length. In the first place there was the obvious commercial advantage. A British protectorate would consolidate his com-

9. *Bengal Political Consultations*, 20 Sept. 1822, no.64.

10. Governor-General in Council to Court of Directors, 9 Jan. 1824, *Bengal Political Letters Received*, vol.18.

11. Letter dated 29 July 1821, *Bengal Political Consultations*, 27 Oct. 1821, no.90.

12. Prinsep to Moorcroft, 20 Oct. 1821, *ibid.*, no.92.

mercial agreement and give Britain a footing at one of the great meeting-places of Central Asian trade, with the opportunity of dominating the whole of the Central Asian and Chinese markets as far as Peking itself. With trade could come political influence and useful military advantages. Ladakh would be an excellent base for operations against China if the need ever arose, and any Russian attempt to invade India from the north could be forestalled from it. If Britain did not take Ladakh then either the Sikhs or Russia or China would, and the advantages would go to them. If Britain *did* take it then, Moorcroft argued, it would neither be too remote to defend, nor would it involve a breach of treaty; it would not antagonize China, nor involve the Company's army in dangerous complications on Ladakh's borders.¹³

These brave attempts to anticipate all the official objections which were in fact levelled at his scheme were of no avail. Moorcroft's salary as Superintendent was stopped and, soon afterwards, he was recalled.¹⁴ But by then he was far to the north beyond the reach of the Company's edict. He died of fever, or poison, on 27 August 1825 in the north of Afghanistan.

There is no doubt at all that Moorcroft's superiors would have much preferred him to confine his attentions to the search for horses. And yet, had he done so, he would have no place in the story of the development of a British policy towards Eastern Turkistan. It was because he made all knowledge his province in the territories he visited – and that, of course, included trade and politics – that he is important. In both spheres Moorcroft's ideas were far ahead of those who ruled the destinies of half the sub-continent. That is why they eventually disowned him. He is important not because he inspired official action in Ladakh and in the Chinese lands beyond the Karakoram, but because he brought their problems within the scope of British official decision-making for the first time. Moreover, in a remarkable number of ways he anticipated future developments. He forecast both the later Muslim insurrection against China in Eastern Turkistan and the Kashmir domination of Ladakh. He warned of the Russian intrigues along the whole northern frontier which later caused so

13. These and many other arguments are urged at great length in Moorcroft's letters in *ibid.*, 20 Sept. 1822, nos.63, 68, 71 and 76.

14. Governor-General in Council to Court of Directors, 9 Jan. 1824, *Bengal Political Letters Received*, vol.18.

much concern to the British authorities, and he suggested their strategic implications along lines which were followed closely by some later observers. He advocated the extension of British influence to Ladakh, the stationing of a British officer there and the extension of commerce with Kashgar for political ends. All this later became official policy. He sent home samples and criticized the unsuitability of British wares for the Central Asian markets, he urged the improvement of roads and transport methods, he criticized the high duties levied by Kashmir on the trade and proposed a fixed tariff. So in every case did his successors – but not until half a century later.

In the years after Moorcroft's death a number of other European explorers like the Gerard brothers, Henderson, Falconer and Vigne were busy in Ladakh, Kashmir, Baltistan and in the hill-states which border Kashmir and Ladakh to the south.¹⁵ But British policy remained one of friendship with the Sikhs and on at least two occasions overtures from Ladakh for British help against them were rejected.¹⁶ Indeed it was with British assent as well as that of Ranjit Singh that Gulab Singh, Ranjit's feudatory Raja of Jammu, conquered Ladakh in 1834.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the British were not prepared to watch unmoved when Gulab in 1841 tried to extend his conquests still farther into the shawl-wool areas of the Chinese in Western Tibet. Had a Chinese victory not restored the *status quo*, the British might well have made some real effort to do so, for Gulab's acquisitions for a time constituted a real political and commercial threat to the British lands on the Upper Sulej.¹⁸

The outbreak of war with the Sikhs in 1845 and their subsequent defeat at Sobraon by the Company's armies, upset the

15. The best general accounts of exploration in this region are S. A. Hedin, *Southern Tibet: VII – History of Exploration in the Kara-koram Mountains* and G. Dainelli, 'La Esplorazione della Regione fra l'Himalaja Occidentale e il Caracorum' in *Relazioni scientifiche della Spedizione italiana De Filippi nell' Himalaia, Caracorum e Turkestan Cinese 1913-14*, ser.2, vol.I.

16. H. A. Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, pp.60-1.

17. K. M. Panikkar, *The Founding of the Kashmir State*, pp.76-7; N. K. Sinha, 'Ranjit Singh's relations with some Indian Powers and with Burma', *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, XVIII, Pt.2, p.82.

18. Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp.65-72; M. L. Ahluwalia, 'Relations of the Lahore Durbar with China', *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, XXX, Pt.2, p.1.

political balance of power in the north. For Ranjit Singh, the British substituted his erstwhile feudatory, Gulab Singh. By the Treaty of Amritsar, signed on 16 March 1846, Gulab as 'Maharaja' was ceded 'all the hilly or mountainous country, with its dependencies, situated to the eastward of the river Indus and westward of the river Ravi . . .', including Kashmir, Ladakh and Jammu. He was promised British assistance against external aggression, but was required in return to refer disputes with his neighbours to British arbitration and to alter his frontiers only with British permission.¹⁹ In order to determine what these frontiers were, especially where they divided Gulab's territory from that of China, two British officers were sent in July 1846 to demarcate them. They were instructed to make sure that Gulab would never again be in a position to intercept the shawl trade between the Chinese lands and British territories, as he had for a time in 1841.²⁰ The 1846 Boundary Commission, and a much more ambitious one in 1847, acquired a great deal of valuable information about Ladakh and Western Tibet but failed to secure the hoped-for co-operation, from either Gulab Singh or the Chinese, in the demarcation of the boundaries.²¹ No formal frontier agreement was ever signed, and today's Sino-Indian dispute is one result.²² There is no doubt that the shawl trade with Western Tibet was the main commercial concern of the British in the far north in the eighteen-forties as it had been ever since the beginning of the century, but the 1847 commissioners were also instructed to try to re-open the earlier trade which had existed between the British hill-states and Chinese Turkistan, and if possible to visit Khotan and Yarkand.²³ They failed to do so and, apart from some imperfect second-hand information, ignorance of the lands north of

19. C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, XI, p.264.

20. H. Lawrence to A. Cunningham, 23 July 1846, *Enclosures to Secret Letters from India*, vol.106, no.33.

21. A good brief account of the work of the Boundary Commissions is Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp.76-80.

22. See, for example, the Government of India's *Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question*, pp.43, 53-4, 62.

23. 48, Governor-General to Secret Committee, 28 July 1847, *Secret and Political Letters from Bengal & India*, vol.13; Elliott to Cunningham, 27 July 1847, *Enclosures to Secret Letters from India*, vol.111, no.48.

the Karakoram remained as deep as ever. Two years later, in 1849, the remnant of the Sikh state was swept away and the Panjab annexed. British territory thereby became fully coterminous with that of Gulab Singh on the north – and through him with Chinese Turkistan itself.

Understandably enough, the gigantic task of administration in the new territories left little time for the British authorities in the Panjab to develop a trade with the Chinese lands to the north. Apart from the abolition of the former Sikh transit dues and the improvement of internal communications, nothing of a special character was done. But in June 1861 a printed *questionnaire* seeking information on the past and present state of the trade with the lands north of the Himalayas was sent to the Panjab officials in the field by the Lieutenant-Governor.²⁴ Using the replies, and most of the known information available from other sources, the Secretary to the Panjab Government, R. H. Davies, produced a comprehensive report which for the first time offered a reliable basis for a coherent attempt to develop the Asian trade.²⁵ Davies's conclusion, soon endorsed by other British observers, was that 'whether in point of distance or of price, our trade has the advantage over that of Russia' in the markets of Central Asia.²⁶

This optimistic opinion was deemed to apply as much to Eastern as to Western Turkistan, if the obstacles in the way of the trans-Himalayan trade could be removed.²⁷ The enormous physical obstacles – the mountains – were of course largely immovable. Most of the trade between Leh and Yarkand, as has been seen, was carried at this time along the four hundred and fifty miles of the Karakoram route. Even measured against the enormous distances covered elsewhere by Central Asian caravans and the hazards of desert, mountain, weather and brigandage which they overcame, the route across the Karakoram was quite exceptional. With its eleven major passes, only two of them lower than Mont

24. Government of Panjab Circular Letter no. 468 of 19 June 1861.

25. R. H. Davies, *Report on the Trade and Resources of the Countries on the North-Western Boundary of British India*.

26. *Ibid.*, p.82. See also Note by T. D. Forsyth, 1 Aug. 1866, extract in AP 1868–9 XLVI 384, pp.7–9 and Lumley, *Report on Trade and Manufacture of Cotton in Russia*, AP 1865 LIV 3477.

27. T. G. Montgomerie, Memorandum on Central Asia, AP 1874 XLIX C.1002, p.34.

Blanc, it was probably the highest and most difficult trade route of any size in the world. Between 20 per cent and 40 per cent of the pack animals were lost on each journey, and in exceptional years like 1868 a caravan from Leh could lose as many as eighty out of a hundred and twenty horses.²⁸

The physical difficulties of the caravan routes between India and Eastern Turkistan were eventually decisive in limiting the trade between the two countries. But to the Panjab officials reporting a *decline* in the years before 1861, the physical obstacles seemed the least of the factors stunting the trade because they were constant. Much more important apparently were the casual factors: the raids on the caravans by Hunza tribesmen coming across the Shimshal Pass,²⁹ the ineffectiveness of the Kashmir trade representative at Yarkand, and the lack of interest among the Chinese authorities. Political crises in Chinese Turkistan and in the territories farther east were also blamed for the trade's decline.

But the primary cause of decline, as almost all the authorities agreed, was the restrictive commercial policy being pursued by the Kashmir officials. There were two kinds of abuses. On the borders of Kashmir the customs were farmed and were levied at a rate so heavy as to amount 'almost to prohibition' on imported goods.³⁰ At Leh, the Kashmir agent not only levied transit duties on goods passing in either direction, but had for years been oppressing the traders to such an extent that he alone seems to have been largely responsible for the contraction of the transit trade.³¹ As a result the commerce had been forced out of its natural channels into even more hazardous routes so as to avoid Kashmir territory altogether. Douglas Forsyth,³² the Panjab official who more than anyone else was instrumental in the slow formation of a Government policy towards Eastern Turkistan at this time, recalled the situation like this:

a feeling of despair seemed to pervade the minds of the traders whenever the subject [of trade with Yarkand] was broached; and the severe and repeated losses to which they had been obliged to

28. Cayley Report, 10 Aug. 1869, CPD/109, no.244.

29. See below pp.26 and 160-61.

30. R. H. Davies, *op. cit.*, Appendix D, p.44 and Appendix 26.

31. *Ibid.*, pp.79-80, Appendix B, p.21 and Appendix C, pp.33-5.

32. Sir Thomas Douglas Forsyth (1827-86), later envoy to Burma 1875. Also see index.

submit rendered the very mention of Yarkand and its trade unpalatable to them.³³

The Davies report and the personal interest of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, Sir Robert Montgomery, did lead to a modest amount of official activity to promote the trans-Himalaya trade in the years between 1861 and 1866. Navigation on the Indus was improved and extended, internal land communications were developed, and in 1862-3 expenditure was sanctioned for improvements to the so-called Hindustan-Tibet road. Ten years earlier, the road had been completed for wheeled vehicles from the plains as far as Simla, and continued on a more modest scale in a north-easterly direction to the Sutlej. The original hope was of 'opening a direct commercial intercourse with Central Asia and Western China, and thereby directing into our own Provinces the trade at present monopolised by Russia', but work on the road had been stopped over one hundred and thirty miles short of the Tibet frontier.³⁴ The fresh burst of activity on the road in the mid-'sixties was also discontinued before the frontier was reached.³⁵ In any case, it was the opinion of the Panjab Public Works Department that, as far as the Eastern Turkistan trade was concerned, the route through Kulu and Lahoul was far more valuable.³⁶ Indeed, a considerable effort was expended at this time to make it passable for beasts of burden. Less successful were Montgomery's attempts to persuade the Government to open negotiations with China about curbing the Hunza attacks on the caravans between Leh and Yarkand.³⁷ Equally useless, as it turned out, was the much publicized reduction of the import and transit duties which the Lieutenant-Governor managed to persuade the Maharaja of Kashmir to accept in 1863.³⁸

33. Report on the Palampur Fair, 12 Nov. 1867, AP 1874 XLIX C.1002, p.6.
 34. D. Briggs, 'Report on the operations connected with the Hindostan and Thibet Road 1850-55' in *Selections from the Records of the Government of India*, no.16 (1856). It was an old idea. See e.g. Moorcroft & Trebeck, *op. cit.*, I, pp.373-4 and Davies *op. cit.*, p.28.
 35. Public Works 53, Sec. of State, 7 Nov. 1864, CPD/111, no.2. Seventy miles remained to be completed. 36. Davies, *op. cit.*, Appendix E.
 37. Memo. on the Davies Report, Jan. 1863, CPD/94, no.206.
 38. On this whole negotiation, and the misunderstanding which bedevilled it, see Montgomery to Elgin, 1 June 1863, EP/from Lt.-Gov. of Panjab 1862-3; AP 1868-9 XLVI 384, pp.11-13; Lytton to Salisbury, 8 Nov. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.593.

These piecemeal and largely local attempts to stimulate the Kashgar trade in the 'sixties were given a great fillip by a dramatic transformation of the political situation there. For centuries, the mainly Turkish and Muslim populations of the cities lying around the western edge of the Tarim basin had maintained close religious and economic ties with Kokand across the mountains to the west. The Chinese conquest of these cities in 1759 had made little real difference in this respect, and political intrigue across the western frontier was continuous. From about 1820 onwards, the exiled hereditary rulers of Eastern Turkistan had initiated from Kokand a succession of plots and invasions to regain their ancient throne. Whether or not the Russians were supporting them, as Moorcroft believed, is uncertain but all were unsuccessful. A fresh attempt was made after a Muslim revolt in Kansu in 1862, led by the current claimant and his immensely able lieutenant, Yaqub Beg. After a number of successes against the Chinese, Yaqub consigned his incapable master to honourable captivity and then set about extending his own sway as far as Manas and Urumchi on the north-east and to Khotan on the south. By 1869 this obscure minor Kokandi official had made himself the absolute ruler of an area several times the size of Britain, containing some of the most unruly people in Asia.³⁹ It was a remarkable achievement. Yaqub Beg was virtually the last truly independent sovereign of Central Asia and perhaps the most outstanding ruler that Asia produced after Nadir Shah. He was competent both as administrator and as soldier and managed to bring peace and security to a country which had known neither for half a century.

The commercial implications of this dramatic change seemed almost staggering to many British observers in India and at home. The cities of Eastern Turkistan, fertile and allegedly thickly populated but without manufactures of their own, were believed to be 'entirely dependent on foreign imports for everything except food'.⁴⁰ As a result, it was argued, 'the demand in all these countries for Indian products and English manufactures is

39. *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*, pp.106-213; W. W. Hunter (ed.), *Essays on the External Policy of India by J. W. S. Wylie*, pp.174-244; E. Molloy, *A Narrative of the Tungani Insurrection in Eastern Turkistan in 1863*; A. N. Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria*, Chapters 4-6.

40. Forsyth to Panjab, 2 Dec. 1870, enclosed with 6, India, 11 Jan. 1871, CPD/136, no.127.

enormous'⁴¹ and the market 'almost boundless'.⁴² In particular, since all overland trade with China had been interrupted, there appeared to be a golden opportunity for Indian tea to break into the Central Asian market, not only in Kashgar but west of the Pamirs too. By 1866 there was clear evidence of an acute shortage of tea in Kashgar and within two years prices were abnormally high throughout Asia. The new tea plantations at Kangra on the Kulu route to Leh seemed to be especially well placed for the northern trade.⁴³

The enthusiasm of the Panjab officials for closer commercial links with Yaqub Beg's kingdom seems to have been fully reciprocated in Kashgar. In marked contrast to the indifference if not hostility of the former Chinese authorities, Yaqub sent a mission to Kashmir in 1866 to discuss the security of the Leh trade routes. During the previous year Khirghiz and Hunza robbers had plundered no fewer than ten caravans and this the new Kashgar ruler undertook to prevent.⁴⁴ He was as good as his word, and in the years that followed these robbers in the mountain fastnesses on the very edge of his kingdom were 'most effectively restrained'.⁴⁵ Eventually, at the beginning of 1868, friendly relations with Yaqub Beg's new kingdom were officially opened by the British for the first time when the Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab received a Kashgar envoy at Lahore. Trade, of course, was one of the subjects discussed.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, the bulk of the trade between the Panjab and Yarkand had to pass through the territory of the Maharaja of

41. Cayley to Panjab, 13 Jan. 1868, AP 1868-9 XLVI 384, p.20.

42. Rawlinson, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XIV (1869-70), p.136. A great deal of the commercial excitement engendered by Yaqub Beg's activities found expression in the Society. See, e.g., *ibid.*, XI (1866-7), p.13.

43. 'Papers connected with the cultivation of tea in the district of Kangra', *Selections from the Public Correspondence of the Administration for the affairs of the Panjab*, I, no.14; E. H. Paske, 'Memorandum on tea cultivation in the Kangra District', *Selections from the Records of the Government of the Panjab—New Series*, no.5; S.M. Akhtar, *The Growth and Development of the Indian tea industry and trade*.

44. Enclosures of 195, India, 8 Dec. 1866, LIM/1, p.845; Report by Pundit Munphool, p.10, LIM/2, p.509.

45. T. E. Gordon Report, 17 Aug. 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.

46. Enclosures 4 and 5 of 15, India, 28 Jan. 1868, CPD/96, no.63.

Kashmir. The question of placing a British commercial agent at Leh to check the extortions of the Kashmiri officials there had been mooted at intervals for several years.⁴⁷ Eventually, at the end of 1866, the Panjab authorities, inspired largely by 'Mr. Forsyth's persistent recommendations', officially gave their support to the proposal.⁴⁸ Forsyth himself had discovered that the tariff negotiated by Sir Robert Montgomery with the Maharaja in 1863 was 'little more than a sham', since the crippling transit duties were as high as ever in most cases.⁴⁹ This seemed all the more unjust because, as a result of the steady improvements to the Kulu-Lahoul road in British territory, many traders had adopted that route and only passed through a corner of the Kashmir territory in Ladakh.

It was to investigate this state of affairs, and the more serious charge that the Kashmir authorities had been levying 'tribute' on British subjects in Lahoul, that the Indian Government reluctantly agree to the appointment of a British agent at Leh 'as an experimental measure for one season' only.⁵⁰ The attitude of the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence,⁵¹ was clear enough:

it is an extreme measure having an Agent at Leh, only justifiable as a temporary arrangement and until we are satisfied that the Chief of Kashmir will put and maintain matters on a sound footing.⁵²

Lawrence was always unwaveringly opposed to commercial or political missions to semi-civilized countries over which the Indian Government had no control, but the Leh appointment involved no real departure from this principle, for, as he pointed out, Ladakh is inhabited by 'a mild and docile people, and belongs to a Chief who is our ally and feudatory'.⁵³ The overwhelming need to keep

47. Davies, *op. cit.*, Appendix C, p.34; Montgomery Minute, 13 Dec. 1864, enclosed with 3, India, 22 Feb. 1865, *India Revenue Collections*, vol. 13, no.36.

48. Panjab to India, 13 Dec. 1866, AP 1867-8 L 147, p.3; Panjab to India, 4 Jan. 1868, enclosed with 9, India, 3 Mar. 1868, PDI/11, no.86.

49. Note, 1 Aug. 1866, AP 1868-9 XLVI 384, pp.7-10.

50. India to Panjab, 22 Jan. 1867, AP 1867-8 L 147, p.5.

51. John Laird Mair Lawrence (1811-79), later 1st Baron Lawrence, Viceroy of India 1863-9.

52. Marginal Note on a Memo. by W. R. Mansfield, enclosed with 1, India, 4 Jan. 1869, LIM/4, p.1.

53. To Sir J. Fergusson, 9 Apr. 1867, LP/8, no.24.

the Kashmir alliance dominated Lawrence's policy towards the Maharaja and was clearly laid down for the benefit of the Panjab authorities in 1868:

. . . the case of Kashmir is peculiar, and our policy in regard to kingdoms on the frontier is now, and ought to be, especially one of avowed conciliation and scrupulous forbearance. The position of the territory, the zeal and fidelity displayed by its Rulers to the British cause at various important epochs . . . and the earnest desire of the Government of India to have, in the space between British India and Central Asia, at least one friendly State, and one Ruler, thoroughly well-disposed to British ascendancy and influence.⁵⁴

Lawrence's own view was that the young Maharaja was personally enlightened but surrounded by bigoted advisers of his father's generation, and therefore in need of sympathetic handling.

It was, indeed, Lawrence's suggestion that a British medical man at Leh would be an easier pill to swallow than a purely political officer.⁵⁵ The man chosen, Dr. Henry Cayley,⁵⁶ reached the Ladakh capital in June 1867 and soon discovered that the abuses had not been exaggerated. In addition to the excessive transit duties, extra charges were being levied up to ten times the value of the regular duty, and bribes were necessary to get goods weighed and to obtain supplies. At the same time, the Kashmir trading agents received every favour. Despite great local opposition, Cayley achieved a good deal during his first season at Leh. The extra duties were abolished, some of the more venal officials were removed and a uniform 5 per cent *ad valorem* duty was fixed on all goods passing through Ladakh to British territory. Nevertheless, Cayley was not always as tactful as he might have been, particularly in his attempts to break the cherished Kashmir monopoly of shawl-wool.⁵⁷ Almost ten years later the Maharaja still had clear and unpleasant memories of the tension during the first year of the Leh Agency.⁵⁸

The new Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, Sir Donald

54. India to Panjab, 9 Nov. 1868, enclosed with 39, India, 26 Jan. 1869, CPD/110, no.255. Lawrence never forgot that Kashmir loyalty had probably saved the Panjab during the Mutiny only ten years before.

55. India to Panjab, 22 Jan. 1867, AP 1867-8 L 147, p.5.

56. Henry Cayley, later Deputy Surgeon-General of India.

57. Cayley Report, 13 Jan. 1868, AP 1868-9 XLVI 384, p.16.

58. Below p.118.

McLeod, and a section of the Council at home led by the previous Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Robert Montgomery, supported Cayley to the hilt.⁵⁹ McLeod himself was firmly opposed to what he called the 'coddling' system and believed that such a policy towards native rulers could only come to grief.⁶⁰ Lawrence, on the other hand, and some of his contemporaries on the Council at home, disliked the Panjab's attitude intensely. Sir John Kaye, for example, regarded it as

. . . highly offensive. . . I do not myself see what right we have to dictate scales of duty to an independent sovereign. . . I very much doubt the policy, to say nothing of the justice, of thus interfering with Kashmir except in respect of friendly advice. The inconsistency – the difference between precept and practice in our case – is obvious. For we profess to be horror-struck at the idea of a monopoly of any kind; yet our Empire was originally founded on a monopoly and we still maintain certain monopolies of our own because our revenue cannot do without them.⁶¹

Nevertheless, there were good reasons for the retention of a European Agent at Leh. In the first place, Cayley had been successful. Quite apart from the commercial restrictions which he had been able to remove, he had obtained information about the trade itself which seemed to justify the faith that Forsyth and the other Panjab officials had in its potentialities. Moreover, it seemed quite clear that 'unless it is known that the appointment will be continued or renewed, little or no permanent good will result'.⁶² In the following season, for instance, the mere rumour of the Leh Agent's recall caused duties to rise in some cases from 5 per cent to 12 per cent.⁶³ Finally, the Government had in some measure been compromised, for Forsyth in November 1867 had made the Delphic announcement to the traders assembled at the Fair which he organized at Palampur in the Kangra Valley, that the Leh Agency was to be 'permanent, at all events for some time to

59. Montgomery was McLeod's father-in-law. See the brief memoir by E. J. Lake, *Sir Donald McLeod*, especially Chapters 6–8.

60. To Lawrence, 16 May 1868, LP/28, no.35 and 20 July 1867, *ibid.*, no.17A.

61. Minute, 14 Jan. 1868, PDI/11, no.21. Another opponent of all commercial dealings with Eastern Turkistan on the Council at home was Sir George Clerk.

62. Cayley to Panjab, 15 July 1867, AP 1867–8 L 147, p.12.

63. Forsyth Note, 27 Nov. 1868, enclosed with 39, India, 26 Jan. 1869, CPD/110, no.255.

come'.⁶⁴ With considerable misgivings the Secretary of State in February 1868 sanctioned Cayley's reappointment, but only on condition that he refrained from peremptory language in his dealings with Kashmir.⁶⁵

It was plain enough that the Maharaja was not reconciled to the Leh Agency and some months later he offered a high price for its removal.⁶⁶ Lawrence, anxious to settle the matter once for all before he left India, was inclined to meet the Maharaja's wishes so as to obtain, as he put it, 'a cordial supporter instead of a lukewarm friend'.⁶⁷ But the united opposition of the Panjab authorities, the Kangra traders, and an influential section of the Council at home was too much for him. Early in 1869, Cayley's appointment was reluctantly sanctioned for the third time.⁶⁸ The crowded state of the bazaar at Leh and the doubling of the trade in 1868 certainly seemed to confirm all the forecasts of enthusiasts like Forsyth.⁶⁹ 'Now joy and gladness reign throughout Ladakh . . .', he wrote in a 'highly coloured' report after a visit to Leh.⁷⁰ For the time being, at least, it looked as though he was right about the commercial prospects, and the doubters, including Lawrence, wrong.

The wave of enthusiasm for trade with the new kingdom of Yaqub Beg which developed at home and in India in the late 'sixties was undoubtedly strengthened by a series of pioneer explorations at the same time. In the six years after 1855, the surveyors of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India had extended the triangulation into Ladakh and Kashmir⁷¹ and the new maps were completed in 1868. But in the early 'sixties, first-hand knowledge of the lands north of the Karakoram was still

64. Report on the Palampur Fair, 12 Nov. 1867, AP 1874 XLIX C.1002, p.10.

65. 22, Sec. of State, 15 Feb. 1868, AP 1867-8 L 147, p.13.

66. Panjab to India, 16 July 1868, enclosed with 131, India, 8 Aug. 1868, CPD/100, no.181.

67. India to Panjab, 9 Nov. 1868, enclosed with 39, India, 26 Jan. 1869, CPD/110, no.255.

68. India to Panjab, 4 Jan. 1869, enclosed with *ibid.*

69. For the trade statistics, see Appendix I.

70. AP 1868-9 XLVI 384, p.50. The adjective was the Secretary of State's.

71. T. G. Montgomerie, 'Memo. on the Progress of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of Kashmir', *Selections from the Public Correspondence of the Administration for the affairs of the Panjab*, V (1861), no.7.

scanty in the extreme. The only European known to have crossed the mountains in the early part of the century was the mysterious adventurer, Alexander Gardner, who entered Ladakh from across the Karakoram after a monumental journey through Herat, Bukhara, Badakhshan and Yarkand.⁷² The pioneers of the journey in the other direction were the three Schlagintweit brothers, who were exploring on behalf of the Company between 1854 and 1858.⁷³

The murder of Adolphe Schlagintweit at Yarkand considerably reduced the prospects of any European penetration of Eastern Turkistan from the Indian side, but fortunately native travellers were by that time supplying information about the whole area. Moorcroft had sent his servant Mir Izzet Ollah to Kashgar and beyond in 1812.⁷⁴ Almost the same route was followed in 1852 by Ahmed Shah Nakshabandi when searching for the missing Lieutenant Wyburd,⁷⁵ and in 1858 by Mahomed Amin while seeking news of Adolphe Schlagintweit.⁷⁶ There was nothing new, therefore, in the sending of natives on geo-political missions. But it occurred to Captain Montgomerie, while engaged on the Kashmir survey almost at the limits of activity permitted to Europeans in this direction, that trained native explorers might be used to extend both political and geographical knowledge far beyond the British limits into the Upper Oxus valley, Kashgar and Tibet. From 1863, a series of remarkable men, using false or abbreviated names, in disguise, and employing such ingenious devices as hollow prayer wheels and decimalized rosaries to help with the counting of paces, penetrated all over the northern frontier. The mass of information which they brought back was edited and then laid before the Government.⁷⁷

It was almost an axiom of Lawrence's policy that India should

72. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XXII (1853), p.283. See H. Pearse (ed.), *Soldier and Traveller, Memoirs of Alex. Gardner*, especially Chap. I.
73. H., A. and R. de Schlagintweit, *Results of a Scientific Mission to India and High Asia 1854-8*.
74. The original account was published in the *Calcutta Quarterly Oriental Magazine and Register*, III and IV (1825). An official translation of 1872 is in LIM/12, p.6.
75. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XXV (1856), p.344.
76. Davies, *op. cit.*, Appendices IVA and XXIXA.
77. The best brief account of the native explorers is K. Mason, *Abode of Snow*, Chap. 4. The accounts of many of them were collected and republished in *Records of the Survey of India*, VIII (1915).

incur no responsibilities where her arm could not reach. By the same token, he was firmly opposed to those British officials who sought to explore in the dangerous areas beyond the red line.

In the first place, we send them to certain destruction. On the other hand they are likely to do more harm than good. If they lose their lives we cannot avenge their deaths, and so lose credit.⁷⁸

The fluttering in the official dovecotes which occurred when W. H. Johnson, one of the officers engaged in the Kashmir survey, accepted an invitation from the then still-independent ruler of Khotan and reconnoitred an area of 21,000 square miles beyond the frontier, is not hard to imagine. Although he returned with some valuable political and commercial information, he was censured and compelled to resign.⁷⁹ It was thereupon clearly laid down that no person was in future to cross the frontier without specific permission from the Foreign Department.⁸⁰ In these circumstances, it was obvious that Forsyth's own application to visit Khotan was doomed from the start and the subsequent outbreak of hostilities between the ruler of Khotan and Yaqub Beg seemed to confirm the wisdom of Lawrence's caution.⁸¹ Nevertheless, it was very much easier to control the movements of officials than of private individuals. With governmental displeasure known to them but choosing to ignore it, Robert Shaw,⁸² a tea-planter, and William Hayward, a subaltern travelling privately, penetrated in 1868 to Kashgar and for the first time threw some real light on the whole area.⁸³

Their information, and especially that of Shaw, 'the hero of the hour',⁸⁴ was the factor which above all decided the next Viceroy,

78. To Wood, 4 Apr. 1865, WP/Box 7.

79. *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XXXVII (1867), p.1. The correspondence with the Indian Government is CPD/91, nos.93 and 178; PDI/10, no.178; and LIM/1, p.103. Johnson was later the Kashmir Joint-Commissioner at Leh for many years.

80. India Foreign Dept., 21 Oct. 1865, PFP/1147, p.948.

81. Forsyth denied this, enclosure 3 of 9, India, 3 Mar. 1868, PDI/11, no.86.

82. Robert Barkley Shaw (1839-79), later Resident in Mandalay. Also see index.

83. Reports in *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XL (1870), pp.33-166 and *Proceedings of the Society*, XIV (1869-70), pp.41 and 124. See also Shaw's, *High Tartary*.

84. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XVI (1871-2), p.281.

Lord Mayo,⁸⁵ to open diplomatic relations with Kashgar in 1870. But even before that, Lawrence was being forced to give way step by step to the clamour. In the autumn of 1868, the Panjab authorities once again urged the proposal which had been flatly refused earlier in the year – that a native agent should be chosen to represent the Indian traders at Kashgar – and this time permission was granted.⁸⁶

Even this involved no real breach in Lawrence's position, for he always thought that native agents were likely to involve the Government in fewer complications than Europeans.⁸⁷ But what he suspected most of all were the political implications of all this commercial activity. He was, of course, well aware of the tendency for annexation to follow trade, but more than that he feared that Yaqub Beg

may not remain content with our fostering trade between his subjects and British subjects in India; but that he may be led to look for our aid and co-operation, or at least for our influence in counter-acting Russia.⁸⁸

And by this time the shadow of Russia was already long over Eastern Turkistan.

Very early in the century, attempts seem to have been made by the Russians to secure a safe commercial route across Kokand to Kashgar.⁸⁹ Later, General Perovsky was advocating the conquest of Kokand because it

lies on the direct route from Russia into Chinese Turkistan, which together with Chinese Mongolia, promises a more profitable market for our goods than the countries lying to the south of Bukhara.⁹⁰

85. Richard Southwell Bourke, 6th Earl of Mayo (1822–72), Viceroy of India 1869–72.

86. AP 1868–9 XLVI 384, pp.49 and 55; McLeod to Lawrence, 23 Sept. 1868, LP/28, no.51A.

87. To Wood, 3 Oct. 1864, WP/Box 7.

88. India to Panjab, 28 Oct. 1868, omitted from the extract in AP 1868–9 XLVI 384, pp.55–7.

89. Moorcroft to Adam, 7 Sept. 1812, *Bengal Political Consultations*, 18 Dec. 1812, no.29 and Moorcroft to Swinton, 18 Apr. 1822, *ibid.*, 20 Sept. 1822, no.76.

90. Cited A. J. Lunger, *The Economic Background of the Russian Conquest of Central Asia*, p.98.

In fact the lure of the markets of Western China, supposedly containing '58 millions of inhabitants and from its geographical position admitting of no competition with us from England',⁹¹ was as strong in Russian trading circles as it was in British. The Moscow Society for the Encouragement of Russian Trade and Industry, backed by a noisy section of the Russian Press, was especially active and was largely responsible for the various attempts in the 'fifties and 'sixties to gain control of the old east-west caravan route from the Caspian to Eastern Turkistan. The establishment in 1869 of the 'fort' at Krasnovodsk on the Eastern Caspian, the various missions to examine the feasibility of navigating the Oxus up to the Afghan border and of diverting it into the Aral Sea – all were commercial as well as strategic in origin.

Much more successful than these, however, were the Russian efforts to reach Kashgar from the north, probably because the first great Russian expansion into Asia had been eastwards into Siberia rather than south towards India. In 1851, the Russians obtained important trade privileges on the Sino-Russian border and the right to establish factories and a Consulate at Kuldja north of the Tien Shan.⁹² The construction of Fort Vernoe a few years later paved the way for the rapid penetration of the Trans-Ili district, and in the late 'fifties and 'sixties a series of explorations by men like Semenov, Valikhanov, Golubev, Osten-Sacken and Severtsov, brought the sphere of Russian knowledge well into the Kashgar plain. By the beginning of the 'seventies, political agents like Kaulbars, Reinthal and Kuropatkin were being sent to Kashgar and the quest for topographical knowledge was being pursued much farther south towards Tibet.⁹³

One of the first Russian political agents to visit Kashgar was one Captain Valikhanov disguised as a merchant in 1858. He returned convinced that Russian commerce would have free play south of the Tien Shan because of the 'insuperable physical obstacles which

91. Letter from Russian Consul at Tashkent, enclosed with Commercial 50, Buchanan to Clarendon, 18 July 1869, FO 65/869.

92. E. Hertslet, *Treaties etc. between Great Britain and China and between China and Foreign Powers*, I, pp.449–54.

93. The best brief accounts of these Russian explorations are L. F. Kostenko, *The Turkistan Region*, I, p.39 *et seq.*; J. Deniker, 'Les Explorations Russes en Asie Centrale 1871–95' in *Annales de Géographie*, VI (1897), p.408; F. von Hellwald, *The Russians in Central Asia*, Chap.1. For Kaulbars, see below p.45; Reinthal, below p.54.

cut India off to the south'.⁹⁴ The Governor-General of Western Siberia, whose Adjutant Valikhanov was at this time, even went so far as to urge 'the transformation of Kashgar into a state independent of China under a Russian protectorate'.⁹⁵ Extreme views of this kind were, of course, far in advance of those of the Imperial Foreign Ministry. But in 1860 Russian diplomacy did win from China permission for Russian (as distinct from native) merchants to visit Eastern Turkistan and to lease land near Kashgar city for a factory.⁹⁶ Unfortunately for Russia, the rule of China in these lands was swept away by the great wave of Muslim risings which eventually brought Yaqub Beg to power before the treaty-provisions could be put into effect. From that moment it became the primary object of the Russians to secure recognition of their treaty rights from the new ruler and, because he proved unco-operative, relations between them deteriorated steadily. In the last few years of Lawrence's Viceroyalty, British observers were almost unanimous in believing that a Russian attack on Kashgar was imminent, and alarmist intelligence flowed in steadily, both from St. Petersburg and from Ladakh. In 1866 it was reported that Yaqub had strengthened his eastern frontier against the Russians and, in the following year, that he had returned hurriedly to his exposed capital after patching up a hasty peace in the north-east.⁹⁷ Relations deteriorated even further after an abortive Russian mission to Kashgar in 1868.⁹⁸ Russian caravans were harshly treated, the Russians built a fort a mere four marches from Kashgar on the Naryn River, and the river itself was bridged. Yaqub retaliated by sealing the frontier and massing troops along it.⁹⁹

94. J. & R. Michell (eds.), *The Russians in Central Asia*, p.467. See also the unpublished introduction by R. Michell to his translation of Valikhanov's account in LIM/4, pp.1539-60.

95. Cited N. Vakar, 'The Annexation of Chinese Turkistan' in *Slavonic Review*, XIV (1935-6), p.119. 96. E. Hertslet, *op. cit.*, I, pp.461-72.

97. Ladakh news-writer Report, 19 Sept. 1866, enclosed with 113, India, 22 June 1867, CPD/93, no.182; Shaw Memo., enclosed with 11, India, 4 Oct. 1869, LIM/5, p.951.

98. Shaw and Hayward learned of this visit in 1869, Hayward to Viceroy, 27 Aug. 1869, CPD/110, no.282. It is important to notice, in view of what Forsyth was later told in St Petersburg, that Russia was really the first to open diplomatic relations with Yaqub Beg.

99. 279, Buchanan to Stanley, 2 Dec. 1868, FO 65/869; Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria*, pp.6 and 60-1; Cayley Report, 2 Aug. 1869, enclosed with 276, India, 26 Aug. 1869, CPD/109, no.244.

At this time, the only possible route available to the Russians for an attack on Kashgar was the fairly difficult line from Vernoe by the Naryn fort and the Terekty or Turugart passes. An attack by this route could not have received any support in strength from the Orenburg-Turkistan line and would have been dependent for the bulk of its supplies on Siberia. Even so, both Shaw and Hayward believed that the Russians, after an initial repulse trying to force the narrow passes, would have no difficulty in occupying Kashgar.¹⁰⁰

It is scarcely surprising that the strategic implications of such a step became the subject of much discussion in India and at home. The simple fact, noted by Moorcroft two generations earlier, that not only caravans but also hostile armies had in the past penetrated from Kashgar across the mountains into Ladakh, led different people to very different conclusions.¹⁰¹ Forsyth, misled by over-optimistic information about a new route to Kashgar through the Chang-Chenmo valley, at first thought along the lines of the simple equation, 'where camels can go, armies may follow'. Moreover, stimulated by his excessive suspicion of Kashmir, he painted a black picture of Kashmir troops holding the southern passes against India, while co-operating Russian forces poured into Srinagar from the north.¹⁰² Later, harsh personal experience of the routes these imagined forces would have used, forced him to the very opposite conclusion that 'the passage of even a hundred horsemen over the high desert plains, unless proper arrangements are made, is difficult and might be rendered impossible'.¹⁰³

Not so Shaw. In 1869 he analysed in detail the route an invading army could use. By it,

Artillery could be brought, I believe, the whole way without being dismounted . . . here, a Russian army would have to fulfil the same conditions of success as they have already been accustomed to in the passage of the enormous deserts of the Khirghiz. . . . The

100. Shaw in AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.16; Hayward in enclosure 3 of 335, India, 11 Oct. 1869, CPD/110, no.282.

101. The earlier invasions are conveniently listed in *The Times*, 10 Nov. 1892, p.15. See also A. Stein, 'A Chinese expedition across the Pamirs and the Hindu Kush, A.D. 747,' *Geographical Journal*, LIX (1922), pp.112-31.

102. Undated Memo., enclosed with 197, India, 2 Nov. 1868, CPD/102, no.44. His second and even more extreme memo. of 7 Oct. 1868 is *ibid*.

103. Undated Confidential Report, SHC/68, p.363.

difference caused by the Tibetan desert being at an enormous elevation, and exposed to the extremes of cold instead of heat, may be dismissed as immaterial. . . . It has lately been argued that although barbarous hordes can traverse these regions, armies with civilised appliances of war cannot do so. . . . But where the road itself (as in Tibet) opposes no obstacle, scarcity of supplies forms no greater obstacle to civilised armies than to barbarous hordes. . . .¹⁰⁴

Shaw's soldier-companion, Hayward, agreed with him. Writing of the failure of an earlier invasion, Hayward said, 'the analogy cannot be maintained between a host of wild Tartars and what would be a disciplined European force equipped with every material and appliance of the art of war'.¹⁰⁵

Those who opposed Shaw and Hayward's idea of invasion by the Chang-Chenmo used precisely the same contention to defend the opposite point of view.¹⁰⁶ The War Office, for instance, believed that Shaw's argument was based on a 'complete fallacy'.

It is conceivable that 10,000 Khirghiz horsemen might be able to traverse a difficult road . . . with nothing but what can be carried at the saddle-bow . . . but turn these into European soldiers with their trains of artillery, ammunition, hospital supplies, and the innumerable requirements of a modern army and the case is totally different. The resources of the country that might suffice for the one would be utterly insufficient for the other.¹⁰⁷

The debate became public at home and even coloured the allegedly non-political discussions of the Royal Geographical Society, as well as the less inhibited exchanges in the House of Commons.¹⁰⁸ Naturally Lawrence and some of his Council gave the whole problem their 'anxious and constant consideration'.¹⁰⁹ But the views of Shaw and Hayward were never seriously entertained in high places and the active defensive measures they and Forsyth earlier had urged, such as the posting of a British garrison to

104. Enclosure 4 of 13, India, 11 Oct. 1869, LIM/5, p.1015.

105. *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XL (1870), p.118.

106. Rawlinson, the great debunker of all ideas of invasion by this route, used almost the same words, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XIII (1868-9), p.202.

107. Col. Cooke, Memo., 15 Dec. 1869, enclosed with WO to IO, 4 Feb. 1870, SHC/65, p.323.

108. *Hansard*, CXC VII, pp.1546 and 1572.

109. India to Panjab, 28 Oct. 1868, enclosed with 197, India, 2 Nov. 1868, CPD/102, no.44.

Ladakh, were never taken. Indeed, so little did Lawrence fear invasion from this direction, that he actually welcomed Russian activities in Yarkand on the ground that they would 'absorb her energies and waste her resources'.¹¹⁰

It is hardly surprising therefore that, until Lawrence left India early in 1869, almost nothing was done to develop an official policy towards the new state beyond the Karakoram. Lawrence really had no Kashgar policy at all. The great efforts to expand the trade were the work of a handful of enthusiastic Panjab officials and private individuals – men like McLeod, Hayward, Shaw, Forsyth, Cayley and Johnson – and achieved in face of the scepticism, and often opposition, of the Viceroy in Calcutta. Lawrence doubted whether any extensive trade could be fostered with Eastern Turkistan and he disliked its political implications even if it could.

(2) *The opening of British relations with Yaqub Beg 1869–1876*

Lord Mayo succeeded Lawrence as Viceroy early in 1869 and brought with him a much more positive conception of Central Asian policy than his predecessor had possessed. Mayo hoped to create between the Russian and British territories a double layer of influenced but independent states acting as a cushion to lessen the mutual discomfort of direct contact between the two Empires. Lawrence really had no policy which can be called 'Central Asian' in this sense, beyond the unvarying application of the rule that India had no interests there. This essential difference has been rather obscured because in the most important trans-frontier area, Afghanistan, both Mayo and Lawrence agreed that Russian influence would be intolerable and that no special steps were yet necessary to oppose it. But whereas, with this important exception, Lawrence was prepared to watch unmoved while Russia expanded into the rest of Central Asia, Mayo sought to build an independent belt of territories to the north of Afghanistan.

In Kashgar the difference between the policies of the two men is quite plain. By 1869 Kashgar was directly coterminous with the limits of British and Russian influence. Lawrence saw no objection to an extension of Russian power there. Mayo, on the contrary,

110. To Wood, 27 May 1865, WP/Box 7.

regarded it as part of the legitimate British sphere of influence. In June 1869 the Indian Government stated that,

Russia has not been inactive in those states [of Eastern Turkistan] and that there is as great a possibility of her touching the frontiers of India in the direction of the northern boundary of Kashmir as in any quarter. . . . We therefore believe that as it is for the interests of both countries that a wide border of Independent States should exist between the British frontier and the Russian boundary it would be desirable that Russia should be invited to adopt the policy with regard to Khiva and other kindred States, that we are willing to pledge ourselves to adopt towards Kelat, Afghanistan and the districts around Yarkand.¹

The Russian threat to Yaqub Beg, which for Lawrence was the most weighty argument against any connection with him, was for Mayo the chief spur to action. In the same month as the Indian policy statement quoted above, a frontier clash on the Naryn River between the Russians and some of Yaqub's men underlined the danger of open hostilities.² To prevent the inevitable extension of Russian influence which would follow, Mayo's aim was to establish the same friendly influence over Yaqub Beg as he was busily creating over Amir Sher Ali in Kabul. The vehicle was to be commerce.

In other words, the means as well as the end of Mayo's Eastern Turkistan policy was new. For, while Lawrence curbed commercial enterprise because of its political implications, Mayo encouraged it for that very reason. Robert Shaw, who more than anyone else stimulated the new Viceroy's interest in Eastern Turkistan, later wrote:

In view of the critical state of affairs in Central Asia, the possession of a legitimate interest leading to friendly intercourse with the nations beyond the mountains and yet committing us in no way to interfere in their affairs must be considered valuable. Without the bond of commerce . . . we must either have abstained altogether from direct intercourse with them, or else have entered upon it on avowedly political grounds.³

1. Memo. enclosed with 177, India, 3 June 1869, LIM/4, p.1469; see Argyll, Cabinet Memo., 7 Dec. 1869, BM Add. Mss. 44637.

2. Cayley Report, 7 Sept. 1869, enclosed with 14, India, 10 Oct. 1869, LIM/5, p.1035.

3. Enclosed with 131, India, 3 July 1876, PFI/9, p.159A.

Mayo would have agreed wholeheartedly. His letters to the Secretary of State for India, the Duke of Argyll, show how much Shaw's 'altogether new' information had influenced him. He was hopeful that 'at last we can see our way to a development of trade in that direction without risk' which would 'enable us to extend over its inhabitants a friendly and peaceful influence'.⁴ Moreover, Mayo had much more faith than Lawrence in the potentialities of the trade itself. To Lawrence in October 1868 they were 'too remote, not to say improbable'.⁵ Six months later, Mayo's Government was declaring its belief that tea from China could not compete with the Kangra product in the markets of Turkistan.⁶ With Mayo's arrival in India, then, a new tempo is apparent. The local efforts to push the Indian trade continued unabated, but henceforth the initiative came increasingly from Calcutta and the sphere of activity was extended into Kashgar itself.

Commerce as a move to check Russia was of course valid wherever it was played on the Central Asian chessboard and, in the first few months of Mayo's Viceroyalty, attention was mainly focused on Western Turkistan. It was easy for Mayo to argue that Britain could only check Russia 'by pushing our commerce northwards',⁷ but such a policy presupposed ease of access into Russia's Central Asian territories. And this possibility no longer existed for, unknown to the British, the Governor-General of Orenburg had been ordered to prohibit the entry of European goods. It was not until February 1869, when Sir Andrew Buchanan, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, reported discriminatory tariffs against Indian tea, that the whole subject came up for consideration in Whitehall.⁸ Mayo had a worthy ally there in Lord Clarendon, the new Foreign Secretary. He, as his private correspondence reveals, was very much concerned with the possibly explosive effects of a Russian prohibitive policy on British opinion, already uneasy at the Russian advances in Central Asia.⁹ Clarendon therefore took the lead in the efforts being made to obtain permission for Douglas Forsyth, who had already made the whole subject of

4. Letters of 29 July 1869, AP/Reel 311, p.691 and 19 Aug. 1869, *ibid.*, p.791.

5. AP 1868-9 XLVI 384, p.56.

6. 167, India, 27 May 1869, LIM/4, p.1365.

7. To Argyll, 25 Mar. 1869, AP/Reel 311, p.296.

8. Commercial 12, to Clarendon, 2 Feb. 1869, FO 65/774.

9. To Buchanan, 4 May and 24 Nov. 1869, BP/7.

British trade with Central Asia his own, to visit the Russian territories. When this proved impossible, Forsyth was invited to the Russian capital to discuss the general question of Central Asian trade and, as Clarendon wrote hopefully to Buchanan, 'make any commercial arrangement of which you can take official cognizance so as to give us something of a binding character'.¹⁰ It was a vain hope. Commercially, Forsyth's visit was completely abortive and the protective tariff he had gone to break remained a permanent feature of the Russian Central Asian Empire. Nevertheless Forsyth, as will be seen, was able to play an important role in the current Afghan boundary negotiations, which were themselves very closely connected with the commercial question, and he returned with some useful assurances of Russian intentions.¹¹

Not the least of these, since it appeared to give Mayo a free hand in his new policy towards Kashgar, was the assurance that Russia would not enter diplomatic relations with Yaqub Beg. To the Russians, he was a rebel against China with whom they already had treaty relations, and they declared that they had no aggressive designs against his territory.¹² Mayo continued to urge Buchanan to do all he could by diplomacy to hold the ring for him in Kashgar,¹³ while he in his turn set about 'diplomacy and a little gentle persuasion' on the Maharaja of Kashmir to remove the remaining internal obstacles to the Eastern Turkistan trade. If this was successful, then immediate approaches would be made direct to the Kashgar authorities.¹⁴ Mayo had none of Lawrence's inhibitions in his dealings with Kashmir and he believed that it had been 'a mistaken policy' to allow the Kashmir officials to hinder British trade for so long.¹⁵ His terms were therefore stiff. A Special Envoy, Captain Grey, went to Jammu in November 1869 and, after some 'rather hurried' and occasionally obstinate negotiations, obtained

10. Letter of 13 Oct. 1869, *ibid.*

11. See below pp.168-9. The best accounts of the visit are the private correspondence of Buchanan, Clarendon and Argyll; AP 1873 LXXV C.704; G. R. Elsmie, *Thirty-Five Years in the Punjab*, pp.145-55 and E. Forsyth (ed.), *Autobiography and Reminiscences of Sir Douglas Forsyth*, pp.43-53.

12. 220, Buchanan to Clarendon, 9 Nov. 1869, extract in AP 1873 LXXV C.704, pp.11-12. See above p.35, n.98.

13. Letters of 26 Sept. and 7 Nov. 1869, BP/7.

14. Mayo to Argyll, 2 Sept. 1869, AP/Reel 312, p.881.

15. To Argyll, 7 July 1870, AP/Reel 313, p.563.

from the Maharaja almost all that Mayo had demanded. Soon after his return from St Petersburg, Forsyth concluded a treaty with the Maharaja along the lines agreed with Captain Grey, and Mayo ratified it later when he met the Maharaja in May 1870.¹⁶

By Article 1 of the treaty, provision was made for the survey of all routes, after which a route would be nominated which could be 'a free highway in perpetuity and at all times for all travellers and traders'. Two Joint-Commissioners, one each from Kashmir and India, were to be appointed (Article 2) to supervise the route, settle disputes (Article 3) and exercise jurisdiction within a defined limit on each side of the chosen road (Article 4). Arrangements were made for the provision of carriage by independent Agents (Article 6), and supply-depôts and rest-houses by the Joint-Commissioners (Article 7). In return for the refund of all import duties on goods transmitted in bond through India to Kashmir and Eastern Turkistan (Article 9), the Maharaja agreed to levy no transit duties on the free highway or on goods passing through Kashmir unopened. Rules were framed for the guidance of the Commissioners and fixed sums were allocated for road maintenance. Rather surprisingly, in view of the earlier unpleasantness, the Maharaja requested that Cayley be the first British Joint-Commissioner.¹⁷ At the end of the first season, Cayley reported that the dual system worked well and it continued to do so, with one notable exception, until the collapse of Yaqub Beg's kingdom eight years later.

It was otherwise with those treaty provisions relating to the free highway and, ironically enough, this was in part due to the experiences of the mission which Mayo now proposed to send to Yarkand to set the seal on his Kashmir treaty.¹⁸ Yaqub Beg, now styled the Ataliq Ghazee,¹⁹ had sent an envoy to Mayo in 1870 and he had very opportunely requested that a British officer should return with him to Kashgar. Mayo jumped at the chance. Both

16. See Appendix II. The very full papers on these discussions are LIM/5, p.1539 and LIM/6, p.381.

17. Enclosure 10 of 25, India, 17 May 1870, LIM/6, p.381.

18. To Argyll, 7 July 1870, AP/Reel 313, p.563.

19. 'Ataliq is an old Turki word, like "father-chief" . . . and ghazee is a title (literally "ravager") assumed only by those engaged in war with infidels', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XL (1870), p.73n.

the envoy, Mirza Schadi, and Forsyth, who was the obvious choice for leadership of the British party, were strongly urged to advise the Ataliq to refrain from aggressions on his northern border which could only bring the full might of Russia down on his head.²⁰ Mayo nevertheless had to tread very carefully. Despite 'urgent requests', he refused to associate any soldiers with the party²¹ and argued, although rather unconvincingly, that Forsyth's visit was 'not in any sense a mission and has no political object'.²² Forsyth was merely described as 'the Commissioner of Jullundur on special duty'. On the merest breath of disturbances in Kashgar, stringent instructions were issued forbidding him to proceed unless all was quiet and directing him to return at all costs before winter closed the passes.²³

It is hard to say how far all this prejudiced Forsyth's chances of success.²⁴ Certainly the mission was a failure. Impeded by intrigue from Mirza Schadi and the Kashmir authorities and dogged by ill-luck, Forsyth returned without seeing the Ataliq at all. Not only had friendly relations with him *not* been established but, on the contrary, considerable suspicion was created. Much of the information obtained was scrappy and second-hand.²⁵ Moreover Forsyth, in the midst of a natural disappointment at the frustration of the great object of his life, was inclined to be pessimistic – not only about the prospects of trade with Yaqub, but about his chances of survival at all.²⁶ All this had an important influence on Mayo and he fully endorsed Forsyth's new conclusion that there should be no mission to Kashgar for a very long time, because Russia was apparently about to interfere there.²⁷ An Indian policy

20. Enclosures 9 and 13 of 78, India, 10 May 1870, LIM/6, p.327.

21. Mayo to Argyll, 10 May 1870, AP/Reel 312, p.311.

22. Enclosure 13 of 78, India, 10 May 1870, LIM/6, p.327.

23. Enclosures of India despatches 106, 164 and 171 of 10 June, 12 Aug. and 19 Aug. 1870, LIM/6 and 7, *passim*.

24. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*, pp.331–2, thought so. W. W. Hunter, *A Life of the Earl of Mayo*, I, pp.303–4, did not.

25. Forsyth's published report is AP 1871 LI 60 and the more interesting confidential report is SHC/68, p.363. A narrative account is G. Henderson and A. O. Hume, *Lahore to Yarkand*, pp.1–150. The geographical results are in *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XLI (1871), p.373 and *Proceedings*, XV (1870–71), p.175.

26. Confidential Report, SHC/68, p.363.

27. To Argyll, 3 Aug. 1871, AP/Reel 314.

statement just before the Viceroy's death revealed his changed order of priorities:

We should establish with our Frontier States of Kelat, Afghanistan, Nepal and Burma, and possibly at some future date with Yarkand, intimate relations of friendship.²⁸

It is scarcely surprising that Russia viewed Forsyth's visit, and the efforts to open out a trade with an area regarded as a Russian preserve, with considerable suspicion. The semi-official *Turkistan Messenger*, for instance, commented, 'since Yaqub Beg is our nearest neighbour . . . it seems it would be for Russia and not for England to monopolise the markets of Alty Shar.'²⁹ In 1869 the Governor-General of Turkistan, General Kaufmann, had been instructed to establish the same relations with Kashgar as existed with Kokand, that is to say no interference in internal administration, but safety of passage for Russian caravans.³⁰ This latter condition was not obtained, however. The continuing anarchy on Russia's border and the intractable attitude of Yaqub himself led to a rising agitation among Russian commercial interests which culminated in a stiff petition to Kaufmann. This demanded, among other things, the establishment of a Russian Consulate at Kashgar.³¹ Events came to a head in 1871, when Yaqub's campaigns in the north roused Russian fears that he would extend his sway north of the Tien Shan into Kuldja and establish 'a pro-British régime there'.³² Kuldja, the so-called 'Russian Khyber', was important both strategically and commercially to Russia, for it dominated the important routes north of the mountains along which she was trying to get in touch with China.³³ British commentators had forecast the possibility of a Russian advance in this quarter for some while. Its timing, in July 1871, leaves little doubt that it was to forestall the army of the Ataliq Ghazee.

28. My italics, 4, India, 19 Jan. 1872, LIM/11, p.77.

29. Issue of 21 Oct. 1870. Russian feelings were variously described as 'annoyance and regret' (Michell Abstract, 24 Mar. 1876, FO 65/957) and 'alarm' (Schuyler Memo., FO 65/902).

30. 99, Buchanan to Clarendon, 24 Mar. 1869, FO 65/870.

31. Commercial 4, Rumbold to Granville, 21 Mar. 1871, SHC/67, p.359; 78, Buchanan to Granville, 5 May 1871, *ibid.*, p. 541; R. Michell, *Eastern Turkistan Pt.2.*, pp.5-8, SHC/80, p.387.

32. Lungcr, *The Economic Background of the Russian Conquest of Central Asia*, p.104.

33. A. Lobanov-Rostovsky, 'The Shadow of India in Russian History' in *History*, XIV (1929-30), p.226.

The result of this advance was to give the Russians strategic domination of the north-eastern approaches into Kashgar and considerably to increase the area of possible conflict. During the winter of 1871-2, intelligence from Peking suggested that a Russian invasion of the Kashgar plain was imminent, but the Indian Government could only reaffirm its confidence in the Russian assurances given in St Petersburg in 1869.³⁴ Later evidence suggests that this, if genuine, was misplaced confidence, for an attack had actually been planned, stores were collected at Vernoe, and a military road was built for the purpose.³⁵ Open hostilities were only avoided by Yaqub's last minute agreement to receive a Russian mission. This, led by Baron Kaulbars, came to Kashgar in 1872 and returned with a commercial treaty which promised Russian merchants free passage, a 2½ per cent maximum import duty, and commercial agents in all towns if desired.³⁶ Russia's commercial supremacy seemed well-established and Mayo's aim of including Kashgar within the orbit of British influence had most certainly not been achieved.

Not only was the end of his policy unrealized, but its means – the trade – was proving intractable. The search for an easier route than the Karakoram to Eastern Turkistan had been going on for years.³⁷ Adolphe Schlagintweit in 1857 and Johnson nine years later had both used routes which, keeping to the east, had crossed the high open land nearer the sources of the Shyok river and its feeders, instead of negotiating the gorges lower down as did the Karakoram route. It was obvious that the old route could never be equalled in horizontal distance by keeping to the high circumference of the circle and avoiding its broken interior. The British efforts of the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, led by Cayley from his vantage point at Leh, were therefore directed at finding the ideal compromise between difficulty and distance. During his second season in Ladakh, Cayley had explored along the Chang-

34. 12, Wade to Granville, 7 Feb. 1872, SHC/70, p.867; 54, India, 29 July 1872, LIM/13, p.211.

35. 8, Loftus to Granville, 18 Feb. 1874, FO 65/901; Forsyth Confidential Report, 21 Sept. 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.

36. 143 and 200, Loftus to Granville, 13 June and 23 July 1872, FO 65/874. The Treaty is Appendix III.

37. Davies, *Report on the Trade and Resources of the Countries on the North-Western Boundary of British India*, Appendix B, p.21 and n.

Chenmo valley as far as the Qara Qash river and had satisfied himself that there were no obstacles to the passage of camels and laden animals.³⁸ Hayward, homeward bound from Kashgar a year later, confirmed this opinion. The route, he said, was 'easy in every respect'.³⁹

Cayley, Shaw, Hayward and Forsyth all believed that the Chang-Chenmo route would be the new commercial high road to Central Asia. It connected naturally with the Kulu and Spiti routes to the plains, it had only four passes – all ice-free in the summer and none of them worse than the easiest on the Karakoram route, it had no dangerous fords to cross, and grass and fuel were generally plentiful. Money for the improvement of this route had already been sanctioned and spent by the time Forsyth was ordered to use it in 1870 on his way to Kashgar. But the Kashmir authorities, by accident or design, failed to lay out ample supplies or provide suitable baggage animals and two-thirds of Forsyth's beasts died. The effect of this on the *karayakash*, the hirers of horses, was serious. According to Cayley at Leh, they were 'really terrified at the sight of some three hundred carcasses of horses and yaks lying along the road'.⁴⁰ This temporary setback, for that is what it appeared to be at the time, did nothing to diminish Cayley's enthusiasm for the Chang-Chenmo route and, at the end of 1870, he recommended it for adoption as the 'free highway' of the first Article of the 1870 treaty with Kashmir.⁴¹ Continuous improvements were made to it by him and by his successor at Leh in 1871, Robert Shaw.

Unfortunately, the traders did not use it. Earlier, Kashmiri intrigue had been blamed for the failure of the commerce to follow a route which avoided Leh.⁴² Later, the carnage among Forsyth's animals afforded a convenient explanation for its neglect. But by the time Lord Northbrook succeeded to the Viceroyalty in mid-1872, it was necessary to look deeper for reasons. In fact, Cayley

38. 'Report on the Routes to the Karakash River via the Chang-chenmo Valley and Pass', *Selections from the Records of the Government of the Panjab—New Series*, no.2, pp.25–54. Reprinted AP 1868–9 XLVI 384, pp.39–48.

39. Enclosure 5 of 268, India, 19 Aug. 1869, CPD/109, no.244.

40. Enclosure 4 of 235, India, 30 Nov. 1870, LIM/7, p.789. The hardships were such that Forsyth lost the sight of one eye.

41. Report on the Trade Routes through Ladakh and Chang-chenmo, AP 1874 XLIX C.1002, pp.21–5.

42. Enclosure 4 of 39, India, 26 Jan. 1869, CPD/110, no.255.

had overlooked what Shaw later described, in the current Darwinian terms, as a 'kind of natural selection' based on the experience of centuries which dictated the choice of routes.⁴³ There is no doubt that prejudice and custom had a lot to do with it, as Cayley claimed, but ignorance was a more potent reason. For the route was occasionally so sparsely supplied that in some places life or death for his beasts depended on the 'traveller finding one particular ravine (where there is grass) among numerous others, through all of which the road might equally lead'.⁴⁴ The guides provided did not always inspire confidence, and there were no established carriage arrangements as on the Karakoram. Moreover, the Chang-Chenmo involved five extra marches (about a hundred miles) at higher altitudes. As an obviously well-informed commentator in the *Edinburgh Review* put it:

. . . it is now becoming pretty generally acknowledged that the physical difficulties of an occasional bad pass, encountered here or there, are less formidable than the exhaustion of the vital force, caused by long continued marches over cold unsheltered deserts, in a highly rarefied atmosphere.⁴⁵

The Chang-Chenmo was a failure. Despite the rest-houses, depôts, guides and *dak* runners, only 388 men used the route in either direction, exclusive of the two Forsyth missions, between 1870 and 1877.⁴⁶ It was an embarrassing miscalculation because it made the 1870 Treaty provisions about the 'free highway' and the Joint Commissioners jurisdiction along it completely a dead letter.⁴⁷

No more success was achieved with proposals for opening up an easterly route farther south. When Johnson returned from Khotan bringing news of an easier route from that place to India 'practicable for wheeled vehicles all the year round',⁴⁸ interest was aroused again in the neglected Hindustan-Tibet road. And when Forsyth was refused permission to explore in this direction,

43. Report, 6 Mar. 1872, enclosed with 93, India, 3 May 1872, LIM/12, p.185.

44. Shaw Report, 30 Aug. 1871, enclosed with 14, India, 19 Jan. 1872, LIM/11, p.83.

45. *Edinburgh Review*, Apr. 1874, p.322.

46. Elias Report, 28 Mar. 1878, PFP/1147.

47. The *de facto* arrangement was that the jurisdiction of the Leh Joint-Commissioners covered all the routes.

48. *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XXXVII (1867), pp.2. and 10.

Rawlinson, on the Council at home and the keenest advocate of the route, suggested that one of Montgomerie's native explorers should go instead.⁴⁹ Nothing was done. It was Rawlinson who brought fresh pressure to bear on the Indian Government in 1869-70 but again his proposals were rejected.⁵⁰ Even when, much later, one of the native explorers attached to Forsyth's second mission to Kashgar brought back some hopeful information about Johnson's route to Khotan, his discoveries attracted little attention,⁵¹ By that time it was clear that no substantial trade could be developed with Eastern Turkistan at all.

Forsyth's Palampur Fair in the Kangra Valley was first held in 1867 in order to try and attract the Yarkand merchants to the Kulu route into the plains but, after a hopeful start, this also failed in its main aim.⁵² In 1873 only two Yarkandi merchants attended.⁵³ The prime cause seems to have been the late arrival of the Yarkand caravan at Leh each year, with the inevitable result that the trade was diverted on to the shorter Kashmir routes to the Panjab. Nevertheless, these failures to control the flow of the trade should not be exaggerated. In 1870, the value of the trade increased to fifteen lakhs of rupees and reached the new high level of eighteen lakhs in 1873.⁵⁴

All this lent substance, and the successful conclusion of Kaulbars' treaty lent urgency, to the arguments of Robert Shaw, undoubtedly the greatest public advocate of the Kashgar trade. Early in 1873 he was in England showing samples and spreading his gospel about the hopeful possibilities of trade with the sixty million tea-drinking, cotton-wearing inhabitants of China's western provinces right up to the Great Wall itself.⁵⁵ His activities certainly reaped a quick harvest. In February, March and April 1873, the India Office was bombarded with appeals and deputa-

49. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XIII (1868-9), p.197.

50. Correspondence in CPD/111, no.20.

51. *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XLVIII (1878), especially pp. 184-7.

52. Forsyth to India, 2 Feb. 1874, enclosed with 25, India, 17 Apr. 1874, LIM/17, p.370, extract in AP 1874 XLIX C.1002, pp.36-9. See above p.29.

53. Paske, Report on the Fair of 1873, *ibid.*, pp.18-19.

54. Appendix I.

55. His activities can be followed in *The Times* of 25 Jan. 1873, p.6; 15 Mar. 1873, p.9; 19 Mar. 1873, p.9.

tions from municipal Chambers of Commerce and other bodies, all using Shaw's arguments in favour of the opening of new routes to Kashgar and the conclusion of a British commercial treaty with the Ataliq Ghazee.⁵⁶

The new Viceroy, Lord Northbrook,⁵⁷ held his hand until the Ataliq's own attitude became clear. Then, in June 1873, he let it be known in an important policy statement that he did not regard Kashgar as being within the sphere of Russian influence, nor did he consider that the recent Russian commercial treaty made the slightest difference in this respect.⁵⁸ These, indeed, were little more than hopes – and Mayo's hopes at that. But to help turn them into realities, and at the same time overcome the great weakness of Mayo's policy – its inability to impose any restraints beyond moral pressure should Russia choose to ignore implicit British claims to supremacy of influence in Kashgar – Northbrook now proposed diplomacy and international agreement to preserve Yaqub's kingdom. The original idea of an Anglo-Russian agreement about the Kashgar frontier came from the Ataliq's envoy, the Syud Yaqub Khan, while passing through India early in 1873 on his way to Constantinople. Northbrook adopted it and suggested that 'soundings' should be made in St Petersburg about the possibility of defining the northern and western limits of Kashgar, and then of extending the recently agreed Afghan line eastward to meet it.⁵⁹ It is scarcely surprising, in view of the recent protracted and arduous negotiations about that line, and the ill-feeling its publication subsequently generated, that Northbrook's suggestion was unpopular in Whitehall. He dropped it without demur.⁶⁰

For he had already taken the decisive step which marks the real reversal of thirty years of British exclusion from events in Central Asia. The 1873 mission to Kashgar was a very different affair from Mayo's 'almost furtive' attempt of 1870.⁶¹ There were no crippling instructions about the time and route of the mission's

56. The petitions are in FO 65/876, SHC/72 and AP/Reels 321 and 325.

57. Thomas George Baring, 1st Earl of Northbrook (1826–1904), Viceroy of India 1872–6.

58. 60, India, 30 June 1873, AP 1878–9 LVI C.2190, p.103.

59. 62, India, 30 June 1873, AP 1878 LXXX C.2164, p.205. Cf. enclosure 5 of 30, India, 14 Mar. 1873, LIM/14, p.549.

60. Argyll to Kaye, SHC/75, pp.211–14 and minutes by Gladstone, Granville and Hammond, 17 Aug. 1873, FO/391/24.

61. Napier to Northbrook, 10 Oct. 1872, NoP/8, p.179.

return, and none of Mayo's scruples about sending military men either. Four of them were in the party. Besides its leader, Forsyth, there were medical men, British and native surveyors, a commercial expert, an ethnologist, a geologist and a historian. Altogether, the impressive party was three hundred and fifty strong with five hundred and fifty animals. Forsyth himself was at first styled 'Envoy and Plenipotentiary' until the error was spotted by Lord Salisbury⁶² and the more modest 'Envoy to Yarkand' took its place.⁶³ But there was nothing modest about the aims of the mission. Ostensibly it was to secure a commercial treaty on terms similar to those obtained by Kaulbars in the previous year, but in addition Forsyth was instructed to obtain as much scientific, geographical and strategic information as possible. And, most radical and striking of all, if circumstances were favourable he was to summon Robert Shaw from Leh and install him as Britain's first permanent Resident in Kashgar.⁶⁴

This programme more than satisfied commercial interests at home, but it must be emphasized that for Northbrook, as for Mayo before him, the political ends were much more important than the commercial means. In his opinion, the chief value of the proposed commercial treaty was that it would give India, a '*locus standi* to interfere diplomatically in case of need'. It would also give Forsyth an opportunity to impress upon the Ataliq the need for caution in his dealings with Russia. This, too, was right in line with Mayo's policy. But unlike Mayo, Northbrook was not very hopeful about the potentialities of the trade,⁶⁵ and Argyll in the India Office agreed with him.⁶⁶

Measured by his instructions, Forsyth's mission was a great, if not an unqualified, success. An elaborate commercial treaty was agreed⁶⁷ which provided for unrestricted trade (Article 2), a maximum import duty of 2½ per cent (Article 4) and the establishment of 'Commercial Agents' with judicial powers (Articles 6 and

62. Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne Cecil, 3rd Marquis of Salisbury (1830–1903), Secretary of State for India 1874–8.

63. 14, Sec. of State, STI/6, p.315 which stated that 'plenipotentiaries' must be mandated with the Great Seal.

64. Enclosure 5 of 70, India, 1 Sept. 1873, LIM/15, p.1003.

65. Northbrook to Argyll, 30 Apr. 1873, AP/Reel 317.

66. George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll (1823–1900), Secretary of State for India 1868–74.

67. Appendix IV.

8). So much had been obtained by Kaulbars. But he had not been equipped to bring back the vast mass of information of Eastern Turkistan and the little known areas to the west of it which Forsyth and his party obtained.⁶⁸ Above all, there was no provision in the Russian treaty for a permanent representative with ambassadorial status, as in Article 6 of the British treaty.

The steps taken by the Indian Government to implement this Article have never been described, although they afford one of the most instructive episodes in the whole story of Anglo-Kashgar relations.⁶⁹ Northbrook, unlike Lawrence, was all in favour of posting beyond the red line British officers 'who will give us correct information, and use their influence in the interests of peace'.⁷⁰ Therefore, as soon as Forsyth's opinion that such an officer could stay in Kashgar without risk was received, Shaw was ordered to proceed there, accompanied by a doctor. It was not known whether the Viceroy's ratification of the treaty had reached Forsyth before he left Kashgar for home, so Shaw was instructed to meet Forsyth and, if ratifications had not been exchanged with the Ataliq, he was to go on to Kashgar and exchange them. If, however, Forsyth had already completed the formalities, Shaw was to proceed as British Representative under Article 6. He had two sets of credentials to cover both contingencies. In either case his instructions were clear:

Your duties at Kashgar will be to maintain friendly relations with the Amir's Government, to attend to British commercial interests in His Highness' territory, and generally to supervise the execution of the Treaty and promote its effects. You will refrain from offering suggestions to the Amir in matters of Government or foreign policy; but if he desires to consult you, you need not refuse to assist him with information and appropriate advice.⁷¹

68. See the very stout *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*. More intimate details are given in Elsmie, *Thirty-Five Years in the Punjab*, pp.177-86 and 194-9; E. Forsyth (ed.), *Autobiography and Reminiscences of Sir Douglas Forsyth*, pp.77-89; Forsyth's Confidential Report is enclosed with 40, India, 30 June 1874, LIM/17, p.1127. For the geographical discoveries of the Mission, see below pp.111-12 and 189-90.

69. Almost all the published accounts give the impression that 'the Forsyth treaty seemed to bring the relation of England and Kashgar to a sudden termination', D. C. Boulger, *The Life of Yakoob Beg*, pp.233-4.

70. To Salisbury, 14 July 1874, NoP/2, p.lxxvii.

71. India to Shaw, 29 May 1874, enclosed with 36, India, 2 June 1874, LIM/17, p.957.

As it turned out, Forsyth had already set out for home when the ratified copy of the treaty reached him, so Shaw duly proceeded as 'Officer on Special Duty, Kashgar' to complete the business. In this extraordinary fashion, the first tentative steps were taken to reverse the thirty-year-old policy of withdrawal from events in Central Asia. But Northbrook's hesitation is not hard to understand. There was some evidence that a permanent British Resident was not entirely welcome to the Ataliq.⁷² Moreover, Northbrook had no support at home, either from the new Secretary of State, Lord Salisbury, or his Council. In June 1874, Rawlinson warned:

We are getting rather nervous here about our Kashgar relations, as it seems pretty certain that China will make an effort to recover her position in Eastern Turkistan, and if assisted by Russia, which is quite on the cards, we may get into a scrape. The Council seem to think that Shaw's appointment as *permanent* representative was a little premature. . . .⁷³

Salisbury privately added other grounds for caution: 'It is thought that your Envoy will probably get his throat cut, and that we shall have to go to war across the Himalayas in order to avenge him.'⁷⁴ Northbrook was therefore ordered not to take any further steps towards permanent representation without express permission from Whitehall, and the warning was passed to Shaw.⁷⁵

He, meanwhile, although receiving excellent treatment, was not able to make much headway with either the question of permanent representation or with the treaty ratifications. Almost as soon as he arrived he was astonished to learn that, according to the Ataliq, it had been agreed with Forsyth that no action to implement Article 6 of the treaty would be taken until the sanction of the Sultan of Turkey had been obtained.⁷⁶ Forsyth strongly denied this when he heard about it, although whether it was a genuine or intentional 'misunderstanding' is not clear.⁷⁷ What *was* plain, however, was that the Ataliq was very unwilling to antagon-

72. Enclosure 14 of 1, India, 2 Jan. 1874, *ibid.*, p.1. The negotiations about Article 6 had been difficult.

73. To Northbrook, 12 June 1874, NoP/6, p.126.

74. To Northbrook, 24 July 1874, NoP/2, p.41.

75. 19, Sec. of State, 24 July 1874, STI/6, p.379.

76. Enclosure 6 of 74, India, 25 Dec. 1874, LIM/19, p.562.

77. Note, HC/3, p.1617.

ize Russia or give her a chance to make a similar demand for permanent representation. In June 1875 Shaw was instructed to return to India as soon as he had obtained ratifications from Yaqub.⁷⁸ After a great deal of pressure, he eventually left in July armed with a communication bearing the Ataliq's seal.⁷⁹ The fitting end to this whole slightly ludicrous episode came when Shaw's hard-won 'ratification' turned out to be nothing more than a complimentary letter to the Viceroy'.⁸⁰

There is little doubt that Northbrook's awareness of lack of support, both in London and in Kashgar itself, goes far towards explaining the hesitant policy he pursued in this question. And, as usual, uncertainty about the Russian attitude played its part too. The cold war on the Naryn River between the Russian and Kashgar forces had been threatening to grow hot for some time. Now, after an expert study by the soldier-members of Forsyth's mission of Yaqub's ramshackle military machine and his northern passes, it was all too clear that a Russian conquest of the Kashgar plain right up to the Karakoram presented no obvious military difficulties at all.⁸¹

1874 was a year of fresh tension, and all reports agreed that trouble was imminent. Forsyth's mission, and in particular the British surveying expeditions up to the southern confines of Russian territory, only made things worse and some very wild rumours were circulating in Russia at this time.⁸² But the only issue to ruffle the waters of Anglo-Russian diplomacy was in connection with the supply of arms that Forsyth was rumoured to have taken with him to Kashgar.⁸³ Despite the belligerence of some

78. Enclosure 14 of 28, India, 19 July 1875, PFI/4, p.1001.

79. Enclosures 8 and 9 of 47, India, 14 Oct. 1875, PFI/6, p.239.

80. Shaw's Report is enclosed with 131, India, 3 July 1876, PFI/9, p.159A.

81. Forsyth Report, 21 Sept. 1874 and a Report by Biddulph are enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303; Gordon's Report on the northern passes is enclosed with 27, India, 24 Apr. 1874, LIM/17, p.827.

82. The Russian Ambassador at Constantinople was reporting that Forsyth's aim was to send 'pensioned Officers of the Indian army to be employed as Engineers, Telegraphists, Chiefs of Police and even as advisers of the Governors of Provinces', 387, Loftus to Derby, 28 Oct. 1874, FO 65/903. There was hostile comment in the Russian Press and some unpleasant enquiries were made at Kashgar, Michell Abstract, 25 June 1874, SHC/79, p.639; enclosures of 40, India, 30 July 1874, LIM/17, p.1127.

83. Doria to Derby, 10 June 1874, AP 1878 LXXX C.2164, p.15.

members of his Council in London, Salisbury himself was not inclined to be self-righteous with the Russians over this question. He knew very well that arms were reaching Kashgar from India with official knowledge,⁸⁴ although they were never supplied direct by the Indian Government to Yaqub Beg as they were to Sher Ali of Kabul. Licences to private firms to supply arms to Kashgar were, however, freely granted and at the time of the Russian inquiries of June 1874 a particularly shady transaction was afoot involving the mysterious Colonel Gardner and twenty thousand muskets.⁸⁵ In the following year, the Indian Government 'as an act of courtesy', paid for the carriage from Bombay to Lahore, of two hundred cases of guns destined for Yarkand.⁸⁶ Russia was never given any information about these activities and the rumours of vast arms deals flourished unchecked. They were 'seriously believed'⁸⁷ too, especially by General Kaufmann who was particularly bitter on this score.⁸⁸ Their significance, and his irritation, became more comprehensible when, under Northbrook's successor, a new Near Eastern crisis injected a fresh element of hostility into Anglo-Russian relations and the Ataliq Ghazee began to be looked upon as a potential leader of Muslim resistance to Russia in Central Asia.

But in 1875 all that was in the future. For a short while at least, it looked as though Northbrook had achieved what Mayo had failed to do: Yaqub Beg's kingdom appeared to have been brought within the orbit of British influence. In the middle of 1875, while Shaw was still at Kashgar, a Russian Colonel named Reinthal arrived in Kashgar on official business. If he had been sent, as seems likely, to counter the influence of any permanent British representative, then the ill-treatment he received must have led to a change of plan. For he only stayed a few days and returned

84. To Lytton, 10 Mar. 1876, LyP/516/1, no.8.

85. Correspondence is in SHC/79 and HC/3; Northbrook to Salisbury, 15 Oct. 1874, NoP/2, p. cxv. For Gardner, see above p.31.

86. Correspondence is *Bombay Political Proceedings*, vol.1127, nos.378 and 1534; PTI/2, pp.143 and 307; PFI/10, p.215.

87. The Russian Ambassador, Schouvalov, told Lytton this shortly before he left for India, Lytton to Salisbury, 26 Feb. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.4; E. E. Balfour, *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, pp.33-8. It is likely that the Kashgar envoys themselves helped to propagate this myth. See F. G. Burnaby, *A Ride to Khiva*, pp.143-4.

88. 14, Loftus to Derby, 6 Jan. 1875, FO 65/926.

reporting the 'entirely English' sympathies of Yaqub and describing the British arms with which his forces were equipped.⁸⁹

And yet, although the 1873-4 Forsyth mission marks the peak of British influence in Kashgar, it was at the same time an important landmark in the progressive British disillusionment with the commercial capacity of the country. The full information obtained by the members of the party made it quite plain that the wild hopes of the late 'sixties had been much exaggerated. Even Forsyth, who was more responsible for the exaggerated optimism than anyone, except perhaps Shaw, had to admit that 'the population is much scantier than we had been led to expect'.⁹⁰ But there was still room for cautious optimism. The astonishing fertility of the irrigated tracts of Eastern Turkistan, the 'very comfortable condition of the people and the degree of civilization they have attained',⁹¹ the lack of manufactures and the obvious openings for machinery and skilled labour, the natural mineral wealth of the country and the apparent stability of the Ataliq's rule - all these gave promise of at least a modestly prosperous commerce on a limited scale.

The proceedings of the newly-formed Central Asian Trading Company at first confirmed this. Although the wild hopes of the promoters were not realised, a large caravan sent to Yarkand in 1874 met with 'fair success' and raised the value of the trade to a new peak of over twenty-five lakhs of rupees. But it was soon all too obvious that even the modest amount of goods taken in 1874 (Rupees 3,10,000) was sufficient to glut the market.⁹² Another rise in 1876 was followed in 1877 by the sharpest decline since the trade had been recorded. And before the 1878 season had opened, the Chinese were back in Kashgar and the Ladakh routes were firmly closed once more.⁹³

89. Wellesley to Tenterden, 21 July 1875, HC/5, p.37; M. A. Terentyef, *Russia and England in Central Asia*, I, p.291; E. Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bokhara and Kuldja*, II, p.324.

90. Forsyth to India, 2 Feb. 1874, enclosed with 25, India, 17 Apr. 1874, LIM/17, p.775, extracts in AP 1874 XLIX C.1002, pp.36-9. See also the similar verdicts of H. W. Bellew, *Kashmir and Kashgar*, pp.282 and xv-xvi and T. E. Gordon, *The Roof of the World*, p.51.

91. Forsyth to India, 2 Feb. 1874, enclosed with 25, India, 17 Apr. 1874, LIM/17, p.775.

92. Molloy, Ladakh Trade Report 1875, PFP/859, p.525.

93. Ladakh Report, 17-31 Jan. 1878, enclosed with 74, India, 15 Mar. 1878, PFI/18, p.207.

As far as the Panjab authorities were concerned, one of the chief lessons to be learned from the 1873-4 mission was of the difficulty of the routes. It was argued that, in view of the hardships experienced by its members 'proceeding with all the prestige and advantages of an imperial embassy, the successful performance of the journey by large caravans under less favourable circumstances must be considered problematical'.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the efforts to improve the existing routes and open new ones never slackened. If anything, they were stimulated by the failure of the Chang-Chenmo line. Hayward had drawn attention to the old route much farther west which crossed the Kuen-lun by a single easy pass, instead of the two high and difficult ones on the usual Karakoram line, and came out into the plains at Kogyar.⁹⁵ This had fallen into disuse because of the Hunza raids, but Forsyth persuaded the Ataliq to reopen it and eventually used it as his way back to India.⁹⁶ Molloy, Shaw's successor as Joint-Commissioner at Leh, became almost as ardent an apostle of this Kogyar route as Cayley had been of the Chang-Chenmo and in the same way believed that it could be made practicable for camels.⁹⁷ Closer inspection, however, revealed that the improvements he advocated would be far too expensive and the matter was dropped.⁹⁸ Farther south, a number of improvements to the British and Kashmir roads to Leh were put in hand and many more were mooted. But nothing at all came of the attempts to open out a route through Chitral and the Pamirs to Kashgar.⁹⁹

The information brought back by Forsyth's party not only cast doubts on the commercial significance of Eastern Turkistan, but led to a very important change in British thinking about its strategic significance as well. Northbrook himself, like his predecessors, was never kept awake at night by fears of Russian invasion across the Karakoram. He regarded the idea as 'all moonshine' and was simply 'amused' when he heard that de Lesseps and a Russian, Baranovsky, were considering the construction of a rail-

94. Panjab Proceedings no.910, 26 May 1874, enclosed with 132, India, 21 July 1874, LIM/18, p.123.

95. Hayward Memo., 11 Oct. 1869, enclosed with 18, India, 25 Jan. 1870, CPD/111, no.335.

96. *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*, p.22.

97. Reports of 20 Feb. and 29 Apr. 1874, PFP/144, pp.436 and 557.

98. Ladakh Trade Report 1875, PFP/859, p.525.

99. See below pp.124-6.

way from Kashgar to India by this route.¹⁰⁰ The reports of the second Forsyth mission certainly confirmed the impregnability of the Karakoram, but for the first time they revealed the dangers of a Russian advance across the Pamirs and through the easier passes into Hunza, Yasin and Chitral farther west.¹⁰¹ From that moment Kashgar was seen in a new strategic light, not as the springboard for a direct attempt on India, but as a potentially rich supply base on the flank of a more westerly advance.¹⁰² Colonel Gordon,¹⁰³ one of Forsyth's colleagues, pointed out the significance of all this:

Kashgar in the possession of Russia, could be made to produce a vast supply of food and carriage, and all that is required for the manufacture of war material – coal, iron, copper, lead, sulphur, saltpetre and charcoal. . . . The importance of Kashgar on the flank of . . . an advance [across the Pamirs farther west] is apparent. As long as it remains in hands friendly to us, no such advance could be made without certain risk of the communications being cut by irregular troops . . . while aid in arms and money could be sent with perfect safety across the Karakoram. Should Kashgar be occupied by a Power friendly to the force advancing along the line indicated, it would be able to furnish supplies in food and carriage, which, with ordinary preparation would be practically unlimited.¹⁰⁴

This second possibility, that Russia might make a main advance across the Pamirs after a successful conquest of Kashgar, became more feasible early in 1876 when Russia absorbed Kokand, and thereby put Kashgar 'geographically and militarily . . . at [her] mercy'.¹⁰⁵ Alexander Burnes had pointed out as early as 1838 the

100. To Mallet, 28 Feb. 1873, NoP/9, p.27; to R. H. Davies, 1 June 1874, NoP/10, p.137. On the railway schemes, see the *Geographical Magazine*, I (1874), p.217 and *The Times* of 8 Dec. 1874.
101. Gordon, Special Report, 14 July 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303. See also below, pp.110–12.
102. H. Bower, *Confidential Report of a Journey in Chinese Turkistan 1889–90*, p.42; Younghusband, *Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, pp.105 and 107.
103. Later General Sir Thomas Edward Gordon (1832–1914).
104. Gordon, Special Report, 14 July 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.
105. G. Macartney, *Eastern Turkistan: The Chinese as Rulers over an Alien Race*. The Russian Press echoed these sentiments at the time, Michell Abstract, 30 Dec. 1875, HC/9, p.45.

significance which this move would have for Kashgar.¹⁰⁶ It gave Russia access to the Eastern Turkistan plain by easier passes and a firm supply base on the Syr Daria, with all the resources of Tashkent and Turkistan to draw upon.¹⁰⁷ Not only that, but with Kokand went a vague title to the Pamirs which, if asserted as it was later, would have made Russia's strategical grip on Yaqub Beg's kingdom even tighter.

Just as in Mayo's day, the perennial doubts about Russia's intentions continued under Northbrook to fetter the dealings of the Indian and Kashgar authorities with one another. Northbrook's earlier suggestion of a joint Anglo-Russian demarcation of the Kashgar frontier would have removed some of these fears, but nothing had been done about it. Nevertheless, with the limited means at his disposal – and by that is meant the modest commercial intercourse with Kashgar and a reluctant Secretary of State at home – Northbrook had gone almost as far as it was possible to go in the extension of Mayo's policy. The 1874 Treaty was the high-water mark of British influence in Kashgar – and it was followed by a recession even before Northbrook left India in 1876. His successor, Lord Lytton,¹⁰⁸ arrived when Anglo-Russian relations were about to take a sharp turn for the worse. For the first time it began to look as though the conflict of interest between Britain and Russia in Kashgar, a subject hitherto scrupulously avoided in diplomatic exchanges between them, would break out into the open at last.¹⁰⁹

(3) *The decline of British influence and the fall of Yaqub Beg
1876–1878*

Lord Lytton, the great apostle of the 'forward' policy elsewhere on the Indian frontier, was less inclined at first to pursue an active policy towards Eastern Turkistan than either of his predecessors. His attitude in one sense went right back to Lawrence, for like

106. To W. H. Macnaughten, 1 Feb. 1838, LIM/2, p.703. Cf. Perovski, cited above p.33.

107. See Shaw Memo., 8 Oct. 1869, enclosed with 16, India, 18 Oct. 1869, LIM/5, p.1111.

108. Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton, 1st Earl of Lytton (1831–91), Viceroy of India 1876–80.

109. One of the first letters Lytton received from Northbrook (that of 21 Apr. 1876, LyP/519/1, no.15) stressed the importance of Kashgar.

Lawrence he looked on the territories to the east as a bait to draw Russia aside from her more dangerous advance southward into Asia. Certainly he understood the basic weakness of any ambitious British policy in Kashgar. Believing that Britain could not oppose a Russian advance into the Tarim basin, he thought it would be

prudent and politic, on our part, to make a virtue of necessity, and hold such language to Russia as may serve to strengthen our remonstrance against her advance in other directions, by the disavowal of an opposition which cannot be enforced. . . .

His only reservation would be 'that Russian Kashgar shall not extend further south than some line, which would leave a margin between it and the watershed from Darkot to Karakoram'.¹ Lord Salisbury, who had already told Northbrook that he thought *his* policy was 'that of a man who, when there is a danger of a flood, proceeds to shut down the sluice of the main outlet',² completely agreed with Lytton's interpretation. It had, in his opinion, the added advantage that it was likely to embroil Russia with China.³

But Lytton very quickly shifted his ground when he reached India and saw the striking information about the ease of the passes west of the Karakoram which Forsyth's mission had brought back. Instead of the geographical obstacles which he regarded as the chief objection to Northbrook's policy in Kashgar, it now looked as though India had 'comparatively easy access into that country for the purposes both of trade and of war'. This put a very different complexion on things:

We may find it in our power to establish commercial intercourse with Yarkand susceptible of rapid development, and to throw a military force into the country, in case of need, almost sooner than Russia could do so. In that case, I cannot but think that the present opportunity of closer intercourse with the Ruler of Yarkand and his people may be advantageously re-considered from a much more hopeful point of view; and our relations with this State suffered to assume a more important place in the general programme of our frontier policy.⁴

1. To Salisbury, 14 Mar. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.25.

2. Letter of 22 Jan. 1875, NoP/3, p.8.

3. To Lytton, 10 Mar. 1876, LyP/516/1, no.8.

4. Lytton to Salisbury, 18 Sept. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.462. For the information which led to this change of attitude, see below pp.110-12.

The first step was to extend British influence right up to the passes. Lytton was busy negotiating with Kashmir about this when Syud Yaqub Khan arrived in India as the Ataliq's permanent representative under the 1874 Treaty and urged the speedy deputation of his British counterpart to Kashgar. Lytton hedged at first until his arrangements with the Maharaja of Kashmir were complete.⁵ Salisbury in London had no strong feelings either way but tended to believe that 'the advantage is not worth the risk'.⁶ His Council was divided, with a majority in favour of a British representative in Kashgar.⁷

There was a lot to be said for the appointment of a British representative there. The Ataliq's decision could be regarded as one in favour of a British rather than a Russian alignment. To have refused to send a representative would not only have been a breach of faith, but would possibly have thrown Yaqub Beg 'unconditionally and immediately into the arms of Russia'.⁸ Moreover, with Russian agents busy in Kabul, any jealousy in St Petersburg of a British agent in Kashgar could be discounted. In any case, it was very likely that Yaqub had sounded Russian official opinion before proposing to receive a British representative. An embassy in Kashgar would be as safe from internal disturbance as the consulates in places like Baghdad, Teheran and Damascus, and would be in a good position to act as 'a sentry on the lookout' for early intelligence of Russian moves. In fact, the general feeling in Whitehall seems to have been that, although the advantages of the measure scarcely justified Northbrook's action in writing it into a treaty, yet the disadvantages of going back on his policy would have been serious. The decision in favour was reached in December 1876, but it was not until the following April that a British representative was formally sanctioned, and then 'more as a Commercial than a Political Agent'. Whether he was to be permanent or not was left an open question.⁹ Robert Shaw, the almost inevitable choice for the appointment, prepared to leave London for India in July 1877.

5. For these, see below pp.117-18.

6. Tel., Sec. of State, 17 Aug. 1876, enclosed with 50, India, 19 Oct. 1876, PFI/10, p.645.

7. The Minutes are PTI/3.

8. Lytton to Salisbury, 18 Sept. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.462.

9. 31, Sec. of State, 5 Apr. 1877, PTI/3, p.261; cf. Rawlinson to Lytton, 15 Dec. 1876, LyP/517/2, no.100.

A few days after Lytton had sketched, in September 1876, the outlines of his new active policy in Kashgar, he received information which revealed that one of the most important of the allegedly easy passes was closed by a glacier.¹⁰ He confessed to 'much disappointment' at first.¹¹ This would have been a strange reaction if the extension of Kashmiri, and therefore of British, influence up to the passes which he was proposing had been defensive in implication only. Then, presumably, he would have 'greatly rejoiced' at the news because 'it leaves us one hole the less to stop'.¹² But Lytton's private correspondence leaves little doubt that his Kashmir policy was to some extent offensive, and designed to prepare the way for closer links with Kashgar. Hence the 'disappointment' he felt. Nevertheless, he did not abandon his Kashgar aims immediately and, early in 1877, was proposing privately that Russia should be asked to promise 'not to interfere, or compete with us in Baluchistan and Kashgar as well as Afghanistan'.¹³

By that time Russo-Turkish relations were deteriorating towards open conflict and a new Near Eastern crisis was imminent. The problems of Central Asia and Asia Minor were always closely connected with one another. In the nineteenth century both existed in some measure as a result of Russia's so-called 'urge to the sea'.¹⁴ Britain in return feared Russian supremacy on the Bosphorus chiefly because it threatened the routes to India. That apart, it was obvious that if both Powers were at war over Constantinople they were unlikely to be embracing each other in Central Asia,¹⁵ especially since the Russian General Staff believed that Britain was only vulnerable in India.¹⁶

There was another connection too. Both Britain and Russia had Muslim subjects in Asia whose reactions to any pro- or anti-

10. Below p.118.

11. To Salisbury, 28 Sept. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.498.

12. Lytton to Salisbury, 3 Oct. 1876, *ibid.*, p.518. It was Aitchison who 'greatly rejoiced' in a letter to Northbrook of 1 Nov. 1876, NoP/17, p.44.

13. To Salisbury, 11 Jan. 1877, LyP/518/2, p.25.

14. R. J. Kerner, *The Urge to the Sea* (Berkeley 1942).

15. The statement is put the other way round in Buchanan to Granville, 19 Dec. 1872, BP/3, p.146.

16. Above p.2. Cf. Skobolev's remark 'Without a serious demonstration towards India . . . it is impossible to think of a war for the Balkan Peninsula', quoted H. T. Cheshire in *Slavonic Review*, XIII (1934-5), p.96.

Turkish policy had to be considered by both Powers. In the period before the Russo-Turkish War there was plenty of evidence that the Sultan was trying to raise a Muslim league against Russia in Central Asia – and it was designed to include Kashgar.¹⁷ British and Russian theorists frequently regarded intrigue among the Muslims as a legitimate weapon in any struggle between them for hegemony in Asia. It seemed certain that Yaqub Beg would have played an important part if this situation had ever arisen. He had always ostentatiously based his administration on the Koran and his foreign policy on close ties with Constantinople. Turkish instructors drilled his forces in the use of Turkish arms, his coins bore the Sultan's effigy, and the Turkish flag always flew beside his own.¹⁸ The proximity of such a vigorous and militant ruler as Yaqub to the discontented and newly conquered Muslim subjects under Russian control obviously alarmed the Russians, and particularly as Britain seemed to be wooing him so assiduously.¹⁹ Lytton certainly had no scruples about using intrigue as a weapon of Central Asian policy,²⁰ although he was seriously alarmed at the possibilities of a rising among his own forty million Muslim subjects.²¹ There is little doubt that he was inclined to set a higher value on the influence of the Sultan-Caliph than the events justified. The other view – that 'in practice, religion only finds supporters when it meets the personal interests of the parties whose aid is sought; and there is a fair prospect of the movement proving successful' – seems much more realistic.²² Yaqub Beg's political gravitation towards Calcutta *via* Constantinople undoubtedly

17. See the correspondence from Layard in Constantinople in HC/17, p.675 and HC/19, p.385; Confidential Print in BM Add. Mss. 39164, p.7; D. E. Lee, 'A Turkish Mission to Afghanistan in 1877', *Journal of Modern History*, XIII (1941), pp.335–56.
18. In 1873 he was created by the Sultan 'Amir-ul-Muminin' or 'Commander of the Faithful', the title of the former Caliphs of Baghdad. *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*, p.11.
19. Michell Abstract, 2 Mar. 1876, HC/9, p.453 and enclosures of 169, Loftus to Derby, 21 May 1875, FO 65/927; Terentyef, *Russia and England in Central Asia*, I, pp.288–90.
20. To Salisbury, 25 Oct. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.562. See the *Manchester Guardian*, 16 July 1954.
21. Lytton to Beaconsfield, 18 Sept. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.470 and to Layard, 2 June 1877, BM Add. Mss. 38969, p.109.
22. Cavagnari to Lytton, 19 June 1877, BM Add. Mss. 39164, p.10. This whole issue was much debated in the press and Commons at this time.

aggravated both his own and India's relations with Russia. But his fear of Russia was probably quite enough to deafen his ears to appeals from Constantinople, just as it had been when his fellow-countrymen and co-religionists in Kokand made similar appeals to him a few years before. Forsyth even believed that in a war between an Anglo-Turkish coalition and Russia, he would actually have joined the Russians. The matter was never put to the test. When the real crisis between Britain and Russia came in March 1878, after the Treaty of San Stefano, the Ataliq was already dead and his capital once again in Chinese hands.

In 1874, after the subjugation of Kansu, the Chinese forces under Tso Tsungt'ang had left Suchow and moved slowly off in the direction of Urumchi.²³ The information available to the British officials was scanty in the extreme. But, almost to a man, they believed that the Chinese had no hope of crossing the vast distances, including eighteen marches of desert, which separated them from Kashgar and then of conquering it at the end of such a journey.²⁴ It was not until March 1876 that Sir Thomas Wade, the British Minister in Peking, was able to convince himself that the Chinese were really in earnest.²⁵ Long before that, however, Northbrook had been ready to use his good offices at Peking on behalf of Kashgar, preferably with Russian co-operation.²⁶ Nothing was ever done to sound out the Russians along these lines, but there is at least a possibility that in 1874 such an approach might have been favourably received. The return of Eastern Turkistan to China was by no means an unmixed blessing for Russia.²⁷ Moreover, the Russians could no longer take the virtuous line about unimpeachable Chinese sovereignty as they had in 1869, for they had already negotiated a treaty with Yaqub and the Tsar had formally received his representative in St Petersburg.²⁸ It was

23. W. L. Bales, *Tso Tsungt'ang*, Chapters 12 and 13; A. W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, II, pp.762-7.
24. There are some amusing examples of retrospective lying on the part of some British observers who were proved wrong. Cf., for example, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XXII (1877-8), p.288 with SHC/65, p.603.
25. 83, to Derby, 24 Mar. 1876, HC/12, p.151.
26. 61, India, 2 Oct. 1874, LIM/19, p.1; Northbrook to Salisbury, 9 June 1874, NoP/2, p. lxiii.
27. Below p.72. At least one section of the Russian Press favoured joint Anglo-Russian action.
28. 290, Loftus to Granville, 23 July 1873, FO 65/878.

not until March 1876 that the Russian decision to assist the Chinese cause was finally made, and even after that a very ambiguous policy was followed.²⁹

No wonder that the British could not agree about Russia's attitude! Lord Augustus Loftus, the Ambassador in St Petersburg, still favoured joint Anglo-Russian mediation, but Wade, who in Peking had been taking the initiative in attempts to intercede between the Chinese and Yaqub Beg, flatly opposed the idea. Whitehall agreed with him.³⁰ In the summer of 1877, with official permission and assisted by the ubiquitous Forsyth, Wade undertook a series of private and semi-official negotiations with the new Chinese Minister in London, Kuo Sung Tao, and with Syud Yaqub Khan, who was also in the capital at the time.³¹ Wade's own view of the situation was Chinese rather than Indian. He had always fought to preserve China's integrity against Russia, and in this case he believed that a separate existence for Kashgar as a Muslim buffer-state would be better for China than a crippling long and possibly unsuccessful campaign to recover it.³² The Indian authorities may not have agreed with Wade's reasoning, but at least his support of Kashgar's independence had their blessing. And yet, the basic difference between the Indian viewpoint and Wade's pro-Chinese one, which had already caused trouble in the past,³³ could not be entirely hidden now. There is no doubt, for instance, that Wade's negotiations with Kuo in London were seriously hampered by the Indian determination to send Shaw back to Kashgar.³⁴

In any case, despite periodic optimism and rumours of Chinese set-backs, the prospects of a successful mediation were very remote. In the first place, China was very suspicious of British motives,

29. Enclosures of 444, Loftus to Derby, 26 Sept. 1876, FO 65/957; F. Kazak, *Ostturkistan zwischen den Grossmaechten*, p.64, n.20.

30. Wade Memo., 26 Mar. 1877, FO 17/825; minutes in FO 17/825 and HC/16, p.437B.

31. The documents have been collected in the case volumes FO 17/825-6. An analysis of them, in conjunction with the Tenterden Papers, has been made by V. G. Kiernan in the *Cambridge Historical Journal*, XI (1955), pp.317-42.

32. The campaign was costing over £3 million a year. Wade to Derby, 31 Jan. 1877, HC/15, p.943.

33. Below p.74.

34. Wade to Tenterden, 8 July 1877, FO 363/4.

especially after the recent Margary affair which had brought the two nations to the verge of war.³⁵ Forsyth in 1876 had found himself unable to make any headway with Li Hung Chang on the question of Kashgar's independence and the Grand Secretary had very justly perceived that British concern owed more to 'Russo-phobia . . . than friendliness to China'.³⁶ Kuo in London frankly admitted that he was afraid to compromise himself at home by any apparent advocacy of Kashgar's cause.³⁷ Besides, he 'had no authority to treat in the matter nor any fresh or accurate knowledge of the situation to guide him in doing so'.³⁸ The Syud too had no powers to treat on behalf of Yaqub Beg.³⁹ And the third character in the drama, Tso Tsung'ang, through whom all the peace proposals had to go, was obviously unlikely to stop his armies when they had almost achieved the goal which they had taken nearly four years to reach. In any case, the London discussions were much too remote from the events in Kashgar to have any real influence upon them.⁴⁰

Awareness of this, and of the deteriorating situation in Kashgar itself, certainly strengthened the opposition which existed in the India Office to the deputation of any permanent British representative to Yaqub Beg.⁴¹ Prompted by some urgent minutes, Salisbury warned in July 1877 of the 'danger that too urgent an advocacy [of a settlement] by England may be thought to warrant the belief that England will hold herself bound in some way or other to secure its execution'.⁴² The situation was certainly not reassuring. Quite apart from the ever-present danger of Sino-Russian co-operation, there was also talk in 1877 of other foreign intervention, probably German,⁴³ at China's request.

35. S. T. Wang, *The Margary Affair and the Chefoo Agreement*, especially Chap. 7.

36. Wade to Forsyth, 6 Apr. 1876 and Forsyth to Wade, 9 Apr. 1876, FO 17/825.

37. Memo. by Hillier, 14 July 1877, *ibid.*

38. Prince Kung's opinion, cited 172, Fraser to Derby, 24 Sept. 1876, *ibid.*

39. Wade to Tenterden, 4 June 1877, *ibid.*

40. There is an interesting case in DOC/10, pp.8-10 of a letter from India to the Panjab, forwarding a letter to the Maharaja of Kashmir, to be sent first to the Kashmir Resident, requesting the Maharaja to forward a letter from the Syud in London to Kashgar!

41. Minutes, PTI/3.

42. IO to FO, 2 July 1877, HC/19, p.577. In fact both sides *did* want a British 'guarantee'.

43. 46, Forsyth to Derby, 5 Mar. 1877, HC/18, p.321.

Eventually, the confusion in Kashgar after the death of the Ataliq persuaded the Indian Government to postpone Shaw's trip, but it was suggested that he should go as soon as the passes were open in 1878 if, in the meantime, the new ruler, Beg Kuli Beg, expressed a wish for a British representative.⁴⁴ Word was received from him in December 1877. Ney Elias, the British Joint-Commissioner at Leh who had been waiting there with 'the express purpose of watching Kashgar affairs',⁴⁵ thereupon suggested that Britain only had to give the new ruler moral support, before the Chinese advance began again in the spring, to win him an honourable peace. Elias proposed, therefore, that he should set out at once and inform Beg Kuli Beg that Shaw was following to help him come to terms with the Chinese.⁴⁶

This was the matter for decision in February 1878. Lytton's attitude was still governed by his information about the difficulty of the passes:

I think there is a very great deal to be said in favour of not extending our trans-frontier relations to a State which is far removed from our base, directly under the menace of two great empires over whose policy we have no control [and] . . . so situated . . . as to render it practically impossible for us to furnish any material assistance to its Government.

On the other hand, Lytton had inherited from Northbrook treaty obligations which he felt it impolitic to abandon. Moreover, he was always convinced that what he described as a 'heads we win, tails you lose policy' had led to the decline of British influence in Afghanistan. In the same way with Kashgar, he felt that it was folly to withhold British friendship until the object of it was strong enough to do without it. Lytton therefore urged the unwilling members of his Council to accept Elias' proposal.⁴⁷

His viewpoint was strengthened by the intelligence from Ladakh, which continued to suggest that the Chinese forces were weak and the country peaceful.⁴⁸ The reality was very different.

44. Tel., Viceroy, 11 Oct. 1877, HC/22, p.89.

45. Lytton, Confidential Memo. on Kashgar, 5 Feb. 1878, LyP/520/2, p.115. Ney Elias (1844-97) had travelled earlier in China and Asiatic Russia. Later Consul-General for Khorassan and Seistan. Also see index.

46. Enclosure 5 of 49, India, 15 Feb. 1878, PFI/17, p.895.

47. Lytton, Confidential Memo. on Kashgar, 5 Feb. 1878, LyP/520/2, p.115.

48. Ladakh Diary, 1-16 Sept. 1878, enclosed with 230, India, 7 Nov. 1878, PFI/20, p.97.

For, on 18 December 1877, the victorious Chinese army had entered Kashgar city and ended its fifteen years of independent existence as the capital of a new Muslim state in the centre of Asia. It is interesting and significant that Yaqub Beg's kingdom, which had earlier so captured the imagination of the British public and of Queen Victoria herself,⁴⁹ passed away almost completely unnoticed by the British Press.

Despite the superficial fluctuations of Lytton's policy towards Kashgar, his attitude was essentially consistent. Its basic assumption was always that

the line which we may adopt as defining the sphere of our political influence, should coincide generally with the geographical outline of the position which, if need be, we may be ready to maintain actively.⁵⁰

When, at the beginning of his Viceroyalty and again later, he criticized the policy he had inherited in Kashgar, it was because that policy appeared to disregard this maxim. Only when misleading information suggested the ease of some of the passes across the mountains, did Lytton willingly adopt the Northbrook-Mayo policy of extending British interests into Kashgar, and then only because it appeared that they could be 'actively' defended if necessary. But, for the most part, he distrusted political activity beyond 'the natural boundary of India' which 'in this direction . . . is formed by the convergence of the great mountain ranges of the Himalayas and of the Hindu Kush'.⁵¹ In any case, he did not believe that invasion across the Karakoram was possible, and only concerned himself with a Russian advance into Kashgar because it would give access to the Gilgit and Yasin passes farther west.

It was a realistic approach and it also governed Lytton's view of the Kashgar trade. He, like Northbrook and Mayo, was well aware of the political value of commerce. But to those who favoured active steps to oppose the Russian trade with Kashgar, he argued that 'to oppose an obstacle to a trade which we cannot ourselves develop or control would neither be politic or [*sic*] wise'.⁵² Confronted, in addition, with the clearest evidence that the trans-Himalayan trade could *not* be developed, he did nothing.

49. O. T. Burne, *Memories*, p.198.

50. 49, *India*, 28 Feb. 1879, PFI/21, p.859.

51. Above p.13.

52. *Minute*, 4 Sept. 1878, PFI/19, p.589.

But, quite apart from his personal inclinations, Lytton was faced with a situation in Afghanistan which demanded his unremitting attention, and this was just when events were combining to render even the existence of Kashgar problematical.

For these reasons then, Lytton's Viceroyalty marks a general recession from the Kashgar policy developed by Mayo and pushed to its limit by Northbrook. Even before Northbrook left India, Salisbury had pointed out to him the dangers of trying to gain an influence over a state which lay geographically and politically almost in another system:

If any frontier ever gave safety we may surely contemplate with equanimity what goes on north of the Himalayas. What then is the advantage of encouraging and strengthening Yaqub Beg? The trade obtainable seems hardly worth an effort. We have no means of sustaining him against an invasion. If we had, we should only, by doing so, concentrate the forces of the invader upon the lines of the Attrek and the Oxus. But, except so far as we have given Yaqub moral support and increased his prestige, we are not, and have not been able to strengthen him. But our advances . . . have produced great irritation among the Russians.⁵³

Lytton took the same view. Thinking chiefly of the possibilities of failure, he looked on the British pretensions to supremacy of influence in Kashgar as a dangerous bluff which, if called, could only result in loss of face and the reputation for fair dealing.

Northbrook and Mayo would doubtless have replied that this was just the contingency their policy was designed to prevent. In Central Asian politics, as elsewhere, it seemed to be true that nature abhorred a vacuum. One could argue with some conviction that Russian influence there 'immediately fills any space that is left vacant by the English powers',⁵⁴ not necessarily as a result of premediated aggression, but simply by cause and effect. Certainly, as the common frontier between Russia and Kashgar lengthened, the danger of Russian military adventures there after a frontier incident, as had happened so often elsewhere in Asia, was a very real one. And, doubtless, the usual sequence would have been followed whereby the actions of the officers on the spot

53. Salisbury to Northbrook, 22 Jan. 1875, NoP/3, p.8. Although Salisbury ended 'no doubt you will be able to give me a cogent answer', Northbrook never made any attempt to do so.

54. R. Temple, *India in 1880*, p.434.

would have won unwilling, but nevertheless complete, acceptance in St Petersburg as a *fait accompli*. If this view of the 'accidental' nature of much of Russia's advance is admitted, then it would seem reasonable enough for Mayo and Northbrook to supply the Ataliq with arms, and with the moral support which lavish missions and permanent Residents implied, in the hope that the resultant

European publicity secured for the frontier affairs of Kashgaria by our access to it as neutral observers, present there on our own lawful occasions, is likely in similar cases to turn the scale in favour of greater moderation and less precipitancy on the part of the subordinate agents of Russia.⁵⁵

Moreover, the constant counsels of prudence and moderation which every Indian representative was instructed to give to Yaqub seem to have helped to reduce tension in his relations with the Russians.⁵⁶

Judged by its results, the policy of Mayo and Northbrook was a success, for Russia never invaded Kashgar and never established the same friendly and intimate relations with Yaqub Beg as did the Indian Government. Unfortunately for this argument, it is not enough to judge by results alone. There is not a shred of evidence to suggest that Russia ever delayed an attack on Kashgar for one moment through fear of British action. On the contrary, although the Indian dealings with Yaqub were so harmless that they could have been 'posted at Charing Cross without any harm',⁵⁷ this sort of frankness was never in fact shown and the Russians were inevitably caused a great deal of irritation by the British activities. On two known occasions, only hasty submission saved the Ataliq from Russian attacks which had been prepared for in advance. But it was so obviously not in Russia's interest to add to her Empire a territory in which, it was said, never a year passed without an insurrection. Russia had troublesome Muslim subjects enough and much more important interests farther west. She could have had no real wish to expand beyond an excellent natural frontier into a quarter where she would run a serious risk of collision with China.

It is even less likely that Russia's failure to come to blows with

55. Shaw Report, enclosed with 131, India, 3 July 1876, PFI/9, p.159a.

56. Northbrook to Salisbury, 22 Jan. 1875, NoP/3, p. xix.

57. Northbrook to Salisbury, 2 June 1874, NoP/6, p. xxxiii.

Kashgar was in any way due to British claims or interests there, since the British position was never publicly formulated. Mayo, Northbrook and Lytton all at some time urged definition, and Loftus in St Petersburg wanted a clear warning to Russia that 'the independence of Kashgar is a question of interest to England and that any aggression against Kashgar would be of serious moment'.⁵⁸ But this was just the challenge to Russia that Britain could not make. Russia would either contest the British claim to supremacy of influence in an area 'at a vast distance from the territory of the British Government and . . . close to the confines of the Russian possessions',⁵⁹ with painful results, or she would merely 'disclaim any aggressive designs but assert a right of punishing unfriendly conduct', and the position would be exactly as before.⁶⁰ The political rivalry behind the commercial therefore remained latent and undefined. Both powers reserved to themselves rights in Yaqub's kingdom which were never asserted before the other, nor established in practice. Each quietly regarded Kashgar as within its own legitimate sphere – and did nothing. Despite the alarms, an Anglo-Russian conflict over Kashgar, outside the paragraphs of a despatch, was practically impossible. Many observers remarked that neither power had sufficient interests there to go to war over it, and they were right. The only active rivalry was a commercial one, perhaps merely one aspect of the greater struggle for the capture of the China tea-trade,⁶¹ and it hardly ruffled the waters of Anglo-Russian diplomacy at all.

For Russia was presumably aware, as Mayo stated to the Yarkand envoy, that 'nothing would induce him to send a single soldier across the frontier to give help in any wars'.⁶² The Kashgar authorities certainly were. The Syud once put the position plainly to Shaw:

If Russia were to send a force to attack Kashgar, could you send one to repel it? You know you could not. Allow us therefore to guard against any danger from that quarter in such a manner as we may, seeing that you cannot undertake to save us from it.⁶³

58. Memo. on Central Asia, sent privately to Derby, 19 May 1874, FO 65/901.

59. The words of the Amir of Kabul, quoted by the Kabul Agent, 19 Feb. 1874, enclosed with 17, India, 6 Mar. 1874, LIM/17, p.469.

60. Rawlinson's views on Loftus' suggestion as above, FO 65/901.

61. The theory of Michell, Memo. on Eastern Turkistan, SHC/66, p.203.

62. Enclosure 9 of 78, India, 10 May 1870, LIM/6, p.327.

63. Enclosure 6 of 74, India, 25 Dec. 1874, LIM/19, p.562.

Moral support alone could have had but little weight with Yaqub Beg. He had experienced in his youth the might of the armies of the White Tsar, and was said by his closest counsellor to have such a blinding dread of the Russian power that, 'if it were not against the law of the Mussulman faith, he would tomorrow declare himself a tributary of Russia in order to secure himself against her hostility'.⁶⁴ However much Northbrook might effect to welcome Yaqub's fear of Russia as preventing 'any decent excuse for a Russian advance in that direction',⁶⁵ it had a very adverse effect on his attitude to India. It was Russian opposition which led Yaqub to curtail suddenly the activities of the Forsyth mission, and it was fear of Russian hostility which led him to delay the ratification of the treaty and postpone the operation of its sixth article.

British policy too was inhibited by fear of real or imagined Russian moves on Kashgar. Rumours of impending Russian action were almost constant. They helped to strengthen Lawrence in his unflinching opposition to political relations with the new state, they explain the rigid curtailment of the scope of Forsyth's first mission, and account for the ambiguous and hesitant nature of the steps taken to augment the treaty negotiated during his second. It can scarcely be claimed for Northbrook that it was Indian policy which kept the Russians out of Kashgar.

In fact, time showed that he had made a double miscalculation. In the first place, and his sources of information were admittedly defective, he persistently neglected the Chinese factor in the situation. Both Russian and British observers exaggerated the commercial importance of Kashgar, but the Russians never shared the optimistic faith in the permanence of the Muslim kingdom, and the near impossibility of a successful Chinese intervention, which characterised the British accounts almost to the last.⁶⁶ The fault was not in sacrificing political to commercial ends,⁶⁷ but in sacrificing long-term to short-term political ends. Commerce

64. *Ibid.*

65. To Rawlinson, 22 Jan. 1875, NoP/7, p. vii.

66. The Russians of course were in a much better position to get reliable information about Chinese activity. The great difference between a Russian description of Kashgar and one of Shaw's effusions has been remarked upon by C. F. K. von Sarauw, *Russlands Kommerzielle Mission in Mittelasien*, pp.40-1.

67. As suggested by D. C. Boulger, *The Life of Yakoob Beg*, pp.288-9.

was always only the means – and here lies the second miscalculation. For, even during Northbrook's Viceroyalty, it had become plain that the limited capacity of the trade made it unsuitable as an effective political weapon. It is difficult, therefore, to shake off a sense of futility about the whole episode of British dealings with Yaqub Beg. Perhaps the Maharaja of Kashmir put it best when he remarked, 'Forsyth Sahib with his K[night] C[ommander of the] S[tar of] I[ndia] and the Syud [Yaqub Khan] with his allowance were the only people who had got any good out of Yarkand'.⁶⁸

(4) *The return of China 1878–1881*

The return of China to the border lands of the north-west was plainly an event of major political importance and one likely to have a considerable effect on the balance of power in Central Asia. Kashgar, from being the capital of an independent Muslim kingdom, shrank in status to the mere local centre of an outlying Manchu province. Just what difference this would make to India and Russia was by no means clear at first.

For the Russians, there had always been some doubt as to whether their interests would best be served by the continuance of the Muslim régime at Kashgar, or by the return of China. There were obvious advantages for Russia, with her bitter experience of confiscated caravans, dead-letter treaties, militant Islamism and British guns, if 'neighbours of proved peaceful habits'¹ returned. Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister, confirmed that Russia would welcome a Chinese victory *if* it would lead to the restoration of Russia's commercial privileges in Kashgar. The qualification was important, because Russia and China were not on the best of terms. If the Kashgar authorities proved obstructive, Russia could always bring far more effective pressure to bear on a small independent Muslim kingdom with its capital close at hand, than she could at remote Peking. China, with all her vast manpower resources would seem to be a far more formidable neighbour than the Ataliq Ghazee.

The first results of the change seemed to justify Russia's caution.

68. Hartington to Foreign Dept., 14 Feb. 1882, BM Add. Mss. 43576, p.790.

1. M. J. Veniukoff, *The Progress of Russia in Central Asia* (Secret and Political Memo., C.17).

Just as the expulsion of the Chinese in the previous decade had brought anarchy on the Russian borders, so now their return had the same effect. In both cases, Russian relations with the authorities at Kashgar became dangerously exacerbated. The refusal of the Russians to surrender refugees, and their *laissez faire* attitude towards the subsequent attempts of some of those refugees to raise an insurrection against the Chinese, helped to create a dangerous situation on the frontier. The air was heavy in 1878-9 with rumours of war preparations and minor frontier clashes.²

The Sino-Russian hostility crystallised over the question of the retrocession to China of Kuldja, which the Russians had occupied in 1871 on the understanding that it would be handed back as soon as China was in a position to receive it. After eight months of hard bargaining, the Treaty signed at Livadia was promptly repudiated by the Yamen, and the envoy who negotiated it, at first metaphorically and later nearly literally, lost his head.³ Thereupon, Sino-Russian relations, already strained, became critical and war seemed imminent. The Russian press grew bitterly anti-Chinese in tone, the Pacific fleet was strengthened, and Kaufmann came to Vernoe to supervise the concentration of 15,000 troops. When all was ready, he urged an immediate attack.⁴ His opposite number, Tso, was equally busy moving troops and advocating offensive moves to the Yamen.⁵ Fortunately, however, the diplomats averted the war which the generals appeared only too willing to wage, and the crisis was ended by the Treaty of St Petersburg on 24 February 1881.⁶

In the new situation created by the Chinese return to Eastern Turkistan, India, like Russia, also stood both to gain and lose.

2. See *inter alia* the diaries from Leh, Gilgit and Peshawar in PFI/20-22.
3. This Treaty has apparently never been published but is summarized in H. Cordier, *Histoire des relations de la Chine avec les Puissances occidentales 1860-92*, II, pp.185-7.
4. *Bulletin du Comité de l'Asie Française*, VII (1907), pp.438-40; HC/40, p.875; HC/42, p.767; *Advances in Asia*, IV (Secret and Political Memo., C.69); Col. Belyavsky, *Affairs in Turkistan*, pp.23 and 137-9.
5. *Advances in Asia*, IV, p.40; HC/37, p.393; HC/39, p.134.
6. There is a considerable literature on this crisis but see especially Chu Djang, 'War and Diplomacy over Ili', *Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, XX (1936), no.3; H. Cordier, *op. cit.*, II, pp.172-240; W. M. Engstrand, *The Kuldja Affair and its significance in Sino-Russian relations*; C. and B. Jelavich (ed.), *Russia in the East 1876-80*, pp.91-139.

Following the almost unanimous opinion of its advisers, the Indian Government had certainly underestimated the possibilities of a Chinese victory and, far more than Russia, had committed itself to the régime of Yaquub Beg. Wade at Peking warned in 1870, and again two years later, that China would never admit the Government of India's right to make a treaty with an independent Kashgar. Having been given to understand that Mayo agreed with him (hence the emphatically non-political nature of Forsyth's first mission), he was naturally 'somewhat astonished', to put it mildly, when he learned of the full-blooded treaty negotiated by Forsyth in 1874.⁷ Although there was no official protest, the Chinese were probably more than astonished, and 'certainly did not forget . . . that one of the greatest European powers had considered one of their provinces as definitely lost to China'.⁸ While Yaquub Beg was at Kashgar, India had both a friendly neighbour and commercial parity with Russia in the Turkistan market. The return of China was likely to involve a change for the worse on both counts. For not only was she likely to revive her old policy of commercial exclusiveness, coupled with preferential treatment for Russian merchants based on former treaties, but she was likely to be hostile in the political sphere as well. An even greater danger was that Russia would take advantage of the chaos consequent on the collapse of the Kashgar kingdom in order to make advances on her own account towards the Indian frontier, especially on the Pamirs. Lytton's great policy despatch of February 1879 was written in the belief 'that Russian forces are being pushed forward into Kashgaria both from the north and from the west, and that they are moving southwards across the Pamirs towards Shignan and the Oxus sources'. But Lytton did not overlook the equal danger of an advance as a result of forceful diplomacy rather than force. It was this possibility, that Russia would gain in exchange for the retrocession of Kuldja 'some portions of Kashgar territory commanding the passes leading to India', which as much as anything was used by Lytton in the same despatch to justify his policy of extension up to the southern limits of the Hindu Kush in this direction.⁹

7. Wade to Forsyth, 6 Apr. 1876, FO 17/825. His warnings are LIM/6, p.745 and CPD/136, no.134.

8. *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, X (1923), p.439.

9. 49, India, 28 Feb. 1879, extract AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.2.

The situation was not, however, entirely to India's disadvantage. China on her Asian frontier had not shown herself an aggressive power, and even if there *was* a danger of Chinese interference with the Muslim Hunza chief, as some argued, the risk of hostile intrigues by the Ataliq among his co-religionists there had been theoretically even greater.¹⁰ He had, in fact, never used his influence except in India's favour *against* the marauding propensities of the Hunza ruler, but there had always been the possibility of a rupture between India and the Kashgar kingdom, especially since the Ataliq's fear of Russia was said to be so great that he considered declaring himself to be her 'tributary'.¹¹ Certainly, in terms of material strength, China constituted a much more effective barrier against Russian expansion than the Muslim kingdom, and the events of the later 'seventies emphasized the fact.

In the first place, the unexpected victory of the Chinese arms in Eastern Turkistan, followed by the successful persuasion of Russia to disgorge territory, seemed to point to latent and unsuspected reserves of strength.¹² Moreover, as the Near Eastern crisis in Anglo-Russian relations in 1878 was immediately followed by an equally serious crisis between Russia and China, there seemed to be nothing more natural than that Russia's two rivals should move together. When Chung How first left Peking to negotiate the abortive Livadia treaty, the British Chargé there warned that he might, if the Russians proved intractable, turn to Britain for support. It was a sound instinct and, sure enough, in the height of the crisis, feelers were made for a defensive alliance with Britain.¹³ To this extent, the balance of power had changed in Britain's favour. For a time, Kashgar acted as the bait which drew Russia into difficulties with China, rather than as the buffer against her farther eastward advance. It was a temporary triumph for the Salisbury-Lytton-Lawrence concept as opposed to that of Northbrook. In 1876, Sir Halliday Macartney, the English Secretary to

10. Occasional voices were raised warning of this danger. See *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XVI (1871-2), p.406 and F. Drew, Memo. on the politics of the Gilgit Frontier, SHC/71, p.1501.

11. Above p.71.

12. This belief coloured the writings of some British publicists right up to the Sino-Japanese War.

13. Frascr to Salisbury, 23 Oct. 1878, HC/30, p.55; tel., Wade to Salisbury, 14 Jan. 1880, HC/37, p.106.

the Chinese Legation in London, had been reflecting on the unpleasant possibility of a war with Russia and China at the same time, in which Yaqub Beg would be a useless ally.¹⁴ Two years later, the uncomfortable prospect of a simultaneous conflict with Britain and China was alarming the Russians.¹⁵

Unfortunately, in this situation India was hamstrung by the same features of the situation as had crippled Northbrook's policy – the simple logic of geographical, political and military factors which made Kashgar an easy prey for Russia, and for India only an indefensible outpost. In 1880, the Sino-Russian friction reacted favourably on general Indian interests, because it aligned the great 'third force' in Asia with her against Russia, and more specifically struck at the Russian commercial and political position in the Chinese territories on India's northern frontier. It had useful military advantages too.¹⁶ But as soon as the situation became menacing enough to bring a Russian demonstration by force within the bounds of possibility, then British influence had to be thrown heavily and quickly on the side of peace. Thus, both Wade and 'Chinese' Gordon, who had been called in to assist at Peking, were compelled to urge China to accept the Livadia Treaty as it stood. Plunkett, in the Russian capital, later played a similar role in the discussions which preceded the Treaty of St Petersburg.¹⁷ All three were thereby paving the way for a Russian acquisition of those very commercial and political privileges in Eastern Turkistan which it was clearly in India's interest to deny her.

The events of 1878–81 illustrate the workings of this unhappy dilemma very plainly. The Kashgar trade with India was inevitably dislocated at the end of 1878, but when Elias travelled up to the Chinese border at Kilian, he discovered that, although tea and opium had been declared contraband, the standstill was due not to any deliberate action by the Chinese authorities but to other temporary factors such as high transport prices and the uncertain

14. D. C. Boulger, *The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney*, p.257.

15. *Ruski Mir*, 1 Jan. 1879, Michell Abstract, 9 Jan. 1879, HC/30, p.261.

16. It was believed so have to denuded Turkistan of troops that an advance towards India under General Kuropatkin became impossible. Report of the Intelligence Branch, November 1880, HC/42, p.687.

17. Wade to Gordon, 23 July 1880, HC/45, p.114; L. E. Frechtling, 'Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Eastern Turkistan 1863–81', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, XXVI (1939), p.487.

political situation.¹⁸ In 1879 and 1880 the trade steadily revived and, despite the non-effective Chinese prohibition on tea, and the generally capricious duties, by 1881 it had almost reached the previous best of 1876.¹⁹ In 1881, Andrew Dalgleish took the first British-led caravan to Kashgar since the Chinese victory and, exempted from the usual duties, made a handsome 33 per cent profit.²⁰ Conversely, the Russian trade was badly affected by the Sino-Russian tension. In 1878, no Russian merchants were allowed at all for almost a year, and in the next year only one road was open. Reports told of obstructed caravans, harsh treatment, and diminished supplies of Russian cotton goods in the Kashgar market.²¹

The most striking symptom of the new favourable state of affairs, and one which caused 'profound astonishment' in Kashmir, was the invitation from the Governor of Yarkand, which arrived for Elias while he was at Kilian in 1879, to come and discuss questions of mutual relations.²² Their discussions were the usual blend of politics and commerce. Elias emphasized the Indian need for some definite standing for the trade, and for a system whereby intelligence of Russian activity could be exchanged between Ladakh and Yarkand.²³ At about the same time Wade in Peking was receiving a much less favourable reaction to his official requests for a British Consul in Kashgar and a trade under regulation. Both were refused by the Yamen although it was made clear that passports would not be refused to travelling British agents.²⁴

Taking advantage of this, the Indian Government, which was rather concerned over the effects of the Livadia Treaty, sent Elias back to Yarkand in 1880. His task, of course, was to discuss the trade once more and also to

collect valuable information with regard to the commercial position and proceedings of the Russians in Kashgar; and also in all

18. Elias to Henvey, 12 Sept. 1879, enclosed with 228, India, 6 Nov. 1879, PFI/23, p.1217.
19. Appendix I.
20. Ladakh Diaries, IFP/1916, p.237 and 1917, Feb. A, p.5.
21. Enclosure 1 of 49, India, 28 Feb., 1879, PFI/21, p.859; Elias to Henvey, 12 Sept. 1879, enclosed with 228, India, 6 Nov. 1879, PFI/23, p.1217; Michell Abstract, 10 Dec. 1880, HC/43, p.487.
22. Henvey to India, 21 Sept. 1879, enclosed with 228, India, 6 Nov. 1879, PFI/23, p.1217.
23. Elias to Henvey, 12 Sept. 1879, enclosed with *ibid*.
24. Wade to Lytton, 9 Oct. 1879, LyP/519/12, no.67.

probability with regard to the course of affairs in the direction of Badakhshan and the Upper Oxus.²⁵

This news brought into action again that doughty opponent of dealings with Kashgar in the Secretary of State's Council, Sir Erskine Perry. He minuted, ' . . . all this *bosh* about the promotion of trade, of which we have heard so much before, is too flimsy to be repeated!' ²⁶ His view had a great deal to recommend it, for commercially Elias's mission was an abortive one. Despite permission from Peking to travel extensively, he was met everywhere with humiliation and obstruction, and returned convinced that nothing could be achieved except by a properly accredited mission. His report was therefore gloomy:

. . . the whole of the trade with India is regarded as illegal by the Chinese authorities, and, being only allowed on sufferance, is liable to be stopped at any moment.²⁷

There were certainly many danger signs that the Indian trade, which had been artificially stimulated by the Sino-Russian tension, rested on very dubious foundations. The import duties on Indian goods, for example, were capricious and usually averaged about 6 per cent *ad valorem*, in addition to very heavy transit duties. Moreover, even in face of great difficulties, Russian goods still managed to fill the Kashgar bazaars. But most ominous of all, as soon as news of the Treaty of Livadia reached Kashgar, the duties on all Indian and British goods were raised between five and ten times.²⁸ When it is remembered that Wade in Peking was urging China to accept the Livadia terms, the irony of the situation becomes clear.

Fortunately, the danger was temporarily averted by the Chinese repudiation of the Treaty. Duties returned to their former levels, and orders were received at Kashgar to admit no more Russian traders.²⁹ But a new Sino-Russian settlement was inevitable and, since it was the territorial not the commercial clauses of Livadia that China objected to, the commercial basis of that treaty would

25. 74, India, 24 Mar. 1880, PFI/24, p.1587.

26. HC/39, p.412.

27. Elias to Henvey, 31 Aug. 1880, enclosed with 229, India, 2 Nov. 1880, PFI/26, p.1735.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Elias Diary, May-Aug. 1880, enclosed with *ibid.*

probably remain unchanged. The results for India were likely to be serious:

. . . The Russians would be paying no duty on either imports or exports, while the Indian trader would have to pay (as he does now) any duty which the Chinese authorities might choose to impose.³⁰

Elias's fears were justified. By the Treaty of St Petersburg, Russia virtually retained all the commercial privileges she had gained at Livadia: a free zone along the western Chinese boundary, the remission of two-thirds of duty on land-borne goods, the opening of thirty-six new points of entry, and new Consulates, including the one at Kashgar already recognized by the Treaty of 1860.³¹

In this way, Russia emerged from three years of confusion with her advantageous geo-political position in Sinkiang (as the Chinese called their re-conquered province) sanctioned by formal Treaty. The St Petersburg Treaty marks the beginning of a new phase in which Russian influence was dominant in the councils and markets of Kashgar. The symbol and part-cause of this new state of affairs was the first Russian Consul in Kashgar, Petrovsky, who arrived at the city to take up his post in November 1882. Domineering and unpopular, at least with the Chinese, but as quick to protect his nationals as he was to intrigue against British interests, he very soon established himself as 'the virtual ruler of Kashgar'.³² Backed by the prestige of an impressive Consular staff and an escort of thirty Cossacks, his role in the commercial and political stranglehold which Russia obtained over Eastern Turkistan was decisive.

(5) *The Russian supremacy 1881-1895*

It was not very long before the Indian merchants began to feel the effects of the removal of many of the restrictions which hitherto had cramped Russia's land-borne trade with Kashgar. By 1887,

30. Elias to Henvey, 3 May 1881, enclosed with 83, India, 8 July 1881, PFI/29, p.55.

31. E. Hertslet, *Treaties etc. between Great Britain and China and between China and Foreign Powers*, I, pp.483-99.

32. P. T. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, p.111. Almost every traveller to Kashgar echoed this description.

the Kashmir Resident was commenting, 'the volume of [Indian] trade is very small and . . . tends to decrease rather than increase'.¹ Small it certainly was, with only about one thousand merchants engaged altogether. Compared with the total trade of India, it was quite insignificant.² But although small, the Indian Kashgar trade did not decrease to any extent and maintained itself fairly consistently at between 20 and 30 lakhs of rupees right up to the Second World War, with the exception of a boom period free from Russian competition after the 1917 Revolution.³ Nevertheless, its relative share of the Kashgar market declined rapidly as the Russian trade increased.⁴ From 1883, Russian goods even began to filter back along the Indian routes to compete at Leh, and in the Upper Oxus provinces and Chitral.⁵ In 1893, the Leh Joint-Commissioner described this tendency as

. . . a new and undesirable trade current, which may tend to widen the sphere of antagonistic influence more effectively than armed exploration or scientific expeditions.⁶

That, of course, was the point. Russia was winning not only a market but a sphere of influence in Kashgar and she was fortunate that while Lord Ripon⁷ was Viceroy of India – that is, until 1884 – she was allowed to do so unchallenged. Ripon, like Lawrence, thought that the ideal trans-frontier policy was one of complete disengagement, backed by military safeguards at home and diplomatic insurance at St Petersburg. A policy of what he regarded as entanglement in Sinkiang had no appeal for him at all.⁸ So when, in 1882, Wade in Peking raised the question of a permanent British Officer at Kashgar and the Yamen rather surprisingly 'heartily concurred',⁹ Ripon and his Council decided

1. Enclosure 1 of 121, India, 5 Aug. 1887, PFI/50, p.1603. Cf. IFP/3274, p.77.

2. See below pp.92–3.

3. Appendix I.

4. See the tables in Kazak, *Ostturkistan zwischen den Grossmaechten*, pp.104, 113–15, 120, 151–3 and the graph p.103.

5. Ladakh Trade Report 1884, PFI/46, p.1007.

6. Enclosure 3 of 50, India, 21 Mar. 1894, PFI/73, p.1189.

7. George Frederick Samuel Robinson, 1st Marquis of Ripon (1827–1909), Viceroy of India 1880–84.

8. He even favoured 'leaving the Afghans to take care of themselves'. Letter to Kimberley, 29 Mar. 1884, RP/6, p.55.

9. 25, Parkes to Granville, 28 Jan. 1884, HC/62, p.1389.

that the establishment of a British Consulate in Kashgar, where there is little British trade, would be more likely to result in political complications than in any material advantage.¹⁰

This decision is hard to justify now and certainly was not popular at the time. Kimberley,¹¹ the Secretary of State, thought it 'open to doubt' and Rawlinson, 'wrong'.¹² The danger of 'political complications' was really very remote. There was no question of incurring a dangerous moral responsibility for the régime at Kashgar, as there may have been in 1874 when India alone was seeking to maintain a permanent representative at the capital of a small kingdom which was in revolt against one huge empire and threatened by another. In any case, however high the mountain barrier in this direction, the Indian Government just could not afford to neglect what was going on beyond it, for Kashgar was now ruled by a Power which was always a factor to be reckoned with in the Central Asian question. Still less could India ignore events on the Pamirs and in the Upper Oxus provinces. As the Russian threat along that line of advance increased, so, in direct proportion, did the need for a British representative at Kashgar. Standing at the hub of a network of caravan routes running to all parts of Asia, only a few marches from Russian territory, and with close links with the subject peoples to the west, it was in an ideal flank position for watching the eastern wing of the Russian advance. Moreover, as long as the Afghan opposition to British Agents on its frontiers continued, there was nowhere else east of Persia where such a listening post could be established.

The Leh Agency was no real substitute. Three days *after* the Chinese forces occupied Kashgar, Elias was writing from Leh that the unification of the kingdom under Yaqub Beg's successor was complete and that there was no further prospect of a Chinese advance.¹³ Ten years earlier, Dr Cayley's information of the fall of Khotan, a mere two hundred miles away, had been more than a year old!¹⁴ Shut in behind one of the most tremendous mountain

10. 36, India, 20 June 1884, PFI/40, p.1661; Ripon to Hartington, 5 May 1882, RP/4, p.111.

11. John Wodehouse, 1st Earl of Kimberley (1826-1902), Sec. of State for India 1882-5, Feb.-Aug. 1886 and 1894-5.

12. Minutes, 20 July 1884, HC/65, p.1182.

13. Elias to Henderson, 20 Dec. 1877, enclosed with 49, India, 15 Feb. 1878, PFI/17, p.895.

14. IO Minute, PDI/10, no.206.

barriers in the world, Leh did not receive trustworthy information until the Yarkand caravan arrived, and this was usually not until the October of each year. The same sort of difficulties were experienced with the Gilgit Agency and, after its abolition in 1881, the Indian Government was dependent for information in that direction on whatever the Kashmir authorities chose to tell it.¹⁵ A native newswriter at Kashgar proved to be no substitute either. In 1879, Elias had recommended that the Kashmir trade representative there be paid a small annual grant to act as Agent for the Indian traders and as newswriter. The news he supplied, however, was so unreliable, and his intrigues against the Indian traders he was being paid to protect so notorious, that his grant was terminated in 1883.¹⁶

Somebody was clearly necessary to counteract the argus-eyed activity of Petrovsky. Quite apart from political considerations, it was absurd to protect the trade at Leh and ignore it at Kashgar. With Ripon's successor, Lord Dufferin,¹⁷ a new policy towards Sinkiang can be discerned. It was still part-political and part-commercial, but the balance of the mixture was changed. No longer was commerce a tool to acquire a predominant political influence. *That* battle was lost by the time the Treaty of St Petersburg was signed. So the Indian Government lowered its sights and commerce became the means by which *some* political influence and *some* contact with the Chinese authorities was maintained. More specifically, the Indian Government set itself to achieve theoretical parity with the Russians – that is, to win a recognized trading position and to obtain an accredited representative in Kashgar.

Soon after Dufferin reached India, Lord Kimberley told him of his own doubts about the Ripon policy which, he thought, left the Russians 'uncontrolled masters of the situation'.¹⁸ The immediate cause of Dufferin's decision to send a mission to Kashgar was the deteriorating situation on the Upper Oxus and the need for reliable information about it.¹⁹ Trade was very much a secondary consideration, but Elias was instructed to negotiate with the Chinese

15. And that was very little. See below p.144.

16. IFP/2113, Oct., p.48. On his unreliable information, see IFP/1916, p.245.

17. Frederick Temple Hamilton-Temple Blackwood, 1st Marquess of Dufferin and Ava (1826–1902), Viceroy of India 1884–8.

18. Letter of 5 Dec. 1884, KP/10.

19. Tel., India, 10 Mar. 1885, HC/71, p.155. See below pp.199–201.

authorities in Sinkiang for a 'permanent Political Agency' and the removal of trade restrictions.²⁰

The need to establish the Indian trade on a legal footing was very quickly made plain by Elias's experiences. He found that the British trader, Dalgleish, had just been expelled from Chinese Turkistan and Elias himself met with a very unfriendly reception.²¹ Nicholas O'Connor, the secretary of legation in Peking, whom Elias very unjustly blamed for his failure, was also having difficulties. The Yamen flatly refused to send anyone to negotiate with Elias and argued that the trade was too small to justify any special regulation.²² O'Connor, however, remained optimistic, and persuaded India to send him a comprehensive draft trade convention for submission to the Yamen.²³

But nothing was done. The general political situation could hardly have been less favourable for the extraction of any more commercial concessions from China. The opium question, which had embittered Anglo-Chinese relations since 1883, had only just been settled when, in the summer of 1885, an Indian agent arrived in Peking to discuss the resumption of trade between India and Tibet.²⁴ It was, in the words of Li Hung Chang, 'an unfortunate coincidence' and he made it plain that the Kashgar negotiations would be abandoned if associated with the Tibet scheme.²⁵ Eventually, Tibet was sacrificed to a settlement in the bitter Burma dispute, which had also been jeopardizing Indian attempts to extend their commerce elsewhere at this time.²⁶ No sooner was Burma settled, than the Kashgar issue was further complicated in 1887-8 by a Franco-Chinese Convention which raised the very relevant question of whether the 'most-favoured nation' treaty clauses were applicable to China's inland frontier trade.²⁷ Finally,

20. Durand to Elias, 26 May 1885, enclosed with 152, India, 28 Aug. 1885, PFI/45, p.409.
21. N. Elias, *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*.
22. O'Connor to Viceroy, 25 July 1885, enclosed with 6, India, 5 Jan. 1886, PFI/46, p.107.
23. Draft is enclosed with *ibid*.
24. 150, India, 28 Aug. 1885, PFI/45, p.383.
25. 432, O'Connor to Salisbury, 16 Oct. 1885, HC/82, p.119.
26. As Li Hung Chang had warned it would. O'Connor to Dufferin, 30 Nov. 1885, HC/83, p.1383.
27. The correspondence of 1887-8 between Whitehall and Peking is HC/98, pp.1307, 1491, 2107 and HC/99, pp.185 and 335.

in 1888, the ill-feeling generated in the Sikkim negotiations made all discussions about China's overland trade very delicate indeed.²⁸

In these circumstances, the prospects of any successful arrangement about Kashgar were slim, but they were reduced almost to vanishing point by the failure of the British either to agree about what they wanted or to press it with determination. At the end of 1885, O'Connor proposed to axe half of India's draft convention and base all trade rights on the 'most-favoured nation' clause of the Treaty of Tientsin.²⁹ A few months later the Chinese adviser in London, Sir Halliday Macartney, urged an even simpler convention based on the commercial clause of the Treaty of St Petersburg. When this was eventually accepted with great reluctance by the Indian Government and passed to Sir John Walsham, the British envoy at Peking, for settlement, he immediately retaliated in mid-1886 with a scheme of his own.³⁰ Throughout 1887 the ball was tossed backwards and forwards like this and then, for eighteen months, Walsham seems to have done nothing at all.³¹

It should have been realized more plainly than it was that, with every year that passed, the British bargaining position was becoming weaker. For one thing, as Petrovsky dug himself in, so the Chinese became more and more determined not to have another like him. '... What guarantee was there that an English official if once admitted . . . might not follow the same course and make himself as obnoxious as the Russian?'³² It is probably not entirely a coincidence that the last time the Yamen was prepared to consider a British official in Kashgar was just before Petrovsky arrived there. And, of course, Petrovsky's growing power was a reflection of the increasing Russian share of the trade. British negotiators might talk, as O'Connor did in 1885, of an Indian trade 'which has already assumed such large proportions and promises a rapid development', but the truth was very different.³³ Indeed, as has

28. 23, Walsham to Salisbury, 29 Mar. 1888, HC/101, p.819.

29. Enclosure 13 of 6, India, 5 Jan. 1886, PFI/46, p.107.

30. 11, Sec. of State, 2 Apr. 1886, PTI/12, p.35; 97, India, 18 June 1886, PFI/47, p.357; Walsham to FO, 16 Aug. 1886, HC/88, p.609.

31. The 1887 correspondence is HC/106, p.1148 *et seq.*

32. Elias, *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*, p.4.

33. In the same year as O'Connor wrote these words, the official *Review of the Trade of British India with Foreign Countries 1884-5*, p.lxviii said that the Kashgar trade 'seems to possess no present capacity for growth'.

been seen, the Chinese were not slow to contest the British demand for a commercial agent, on the ground that the trade was too small to justify it. A further blow to the Indian commercial position was the murder on the Karakoram in 1888 of the much-admired and influential Andrew Dalglish, the only Briton personally engaged in the Kashgar trade.³⁴

So it was that commerce, which in the 'seventies was intended to pave the way for the supremacy of British influence in Kashgar, by the end of the 'eighties was losing even its value as an excuse for securing the appointment of a quasi-consular representative. The pretence was abandoned in August 1889. For by then the deteriorating situation on the northern frontier made a political agent so urgently necessary that the Indian Government pressed merely for

the more important and more simple measure of the Political Agency alone with Consular rights based on most-favoured nation clauses [since] Her Majesty's Legation at Peking are unable to assist in completing the more comprehensive convention [containing also the commercial clauses] without incurring delays which practically render our whole plan abortive.³⁵

Walsham at Peking ran true to form. Nearly a year later the Indian Government raised the matter again, pointing out that the closure of the Leh-Yarkand road made the matter urgent.

Russian exploring parties now parade over the whole of the Pamirs, Chinese Turkistan and Northern Tibet, and we have no means of watching their movements; while, with a Russian Consul-General for several years established at Kashgar, English influence is gradually dying out.³⁶

It took two more reminders – the second a very sharp one in August 1890 – before a reply could be drawn from the 'somewhat dilatory' Minister. Then Walsham, completely ignoring the Indian pleas for urgency, blandly telegraphed that he disliked the pro-

34. The correspondence is HC/101, pp.835 and 949; IFP/3274, July, pp.45–96 and Oct., pp.121–35; HC/114, pp.1217 and 1411; HC/115, p.421. See also Bower, *Confidential Report of a Journey in Chinese Turkistan 1889–90*, pp.19–32 and H. Lansdell, *Chinese Central Asia*, II, pp.110–16 and 318–22.

35. 120, India, 16 Aug. 1889, PFI/57, p.1257.

36. 87, India, 14 July 1890, PFI/60, p.961.

posal and that he preferred a different course of action as being more acceptable to the Yamen.³⁷

By then, however, the prospects for a Kashgar Consulate looked distinctly more hopeful, because China had begun to press for reciprocal privileges in British territories. Lord Salisbury, now at the Foreign Office, urged immediate acceptance for the sake of the friendship of China 'which is of such great and growing importance to this country, to India and the Colonies'.³⁸ The India Office even began to indulge in the pleasant dream that 'before long we shall have Consuls or Consular Agents at Yarkand, Khotan, Lhasa and in Yunnan'.³⁹ But it was – just a dream. The negotiations really foundered because the Chinese preferred to give up the Hong Kong Consulate they wanted so much, rather than accept its *quid pro quo*, the appointment of a British Consul to Kashgar.⁴⁰

The determined opposition of the Chinese to the Kashgar appointment seems to have been mainly due to a fear that the Russians would use it to extort further concessions in the negotiations then in progress for a renewal of the Sino-Russian commercial treaties.⁴¹ In fact, fear of Russian retaliation bedevilled the Chinese in Kashgar nearly as much as it had Yaqub Beg, all the more because the character of Petrovsky and his staff made the Russian Consulate a very useful engine of menace. Later, for instance, the acting Russian Consul-General warned,

You will never have a Consulate in Kashgar . . . if the Chinese make you such a concession, your Salisbury will hear such a noise at the other end of China that he will not soon forget it.⁴²

This remark was addressed to George Macartney. In September 1891 the Indian Government had decided to retain Macartney indefinitely 'residing in Kashgar for the transaction of Indian official affairs.'⁴³

37. 15, Walsham to Salisbury, 3 Sept. 1890, HC/129, p.741.

38. FO to IO, 14 Oct. 1890, HC/129, p.746.

39. IO Note, HC/117, p.751.

40. FO to IO, 31 July 1891, FO 65/1414.

41. Bayley to Durand, 22 May 1891, DOC/11, p. 86. This was later confirmed, HC/128, p.437.

42. Macartney Diary, w/e 31 Aug. 1897, FO 65/1549.

43. India Foreign Dept. to Dept. of Finance, 10 Sept. 1891, IFP/3962, Sept., p.277.

But despite his lack of official status, Macartney did some valuable work, both as the Indian representative co-ordinating policy with the Chinese authorities, and as an intelligence agent obtaining early warning of Russian movements. The year 1891, as will be seen, was an eventful one in the lands on the western edge of Sinkiang. In the August the Russians precipitated a serious crisis with both the Chinese and the British by their activities on the Pamirs. Four months later Indian forces occupied Hunza. It was hoped that Macartney's usefulness in both disputes would convince the Chinese⁴⁴ of the need to formalize his position but, unfortunately, behind both disputes were factors which rather tended to delay Macartney's recognition: the Hunza occupation, because it led to a sharp deterioration of relations between the Chinese authorities in Kashgar and the Indian Government; and the Pamirs crisis, because not only did it heighten the Chinese fear of Russian retaliation, but at the same time intensified the already marked reluctance of the London Foreign Office to take any step which might jeopardize Anglo-Chinese friendship. New efforts to raise the Kashgar Consul issue, and that of the Trade Regulation which was to go with it, were therefore discouraged by Whitehall in 1893, 1894 and 1895.

Macartney had by then won some sort of local recognition, but his position remained thoroughly unsatisfactory in relation to Petrovsky, despite spasmodic Indian attempts to regularize it. In 1893 Macartney was invested with the high-sounding but meaningless title of 'Special Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir for Chinese Affairs' and eleven years later, 'Consul' – on both occasions without Chinese consent. It was not until the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 that the unremitting hostility of the Russian Consulate towards Macartney really died away, and it is probably significant that only then did the Chinese recognize him as Consul.⁴⁵ The long-sought-for Trade Convention was never obtained.

Without it, as has been seen, the Indian share of the market steadily dwindled. It seems fairly clear that, whatever the reasons for this, it was not because Russian traders paid less duty than the Indians, for the advantages gained by the Treaty of St Petersburg

44. Sanderson Note, FO 65/1434.

45. Lady C. T. Macartney, *An English Lady in Chinese Turkistan*, pp.61–2. He was made Consul-General in 1910.

were generally extended to the Indian traders too.⁴⁶ It was rather that without treaty protection the Indian trade had no *locus standi*. Exactions were capricious and arbitrary, debts were hard to recover, and the Indian traders were 'only admitted on sufferance'.⁴⁷ How dangerous this state of affairs could be was revealed in 1887, when the long-standing but hitherto non-effective prohibition on Indian tea, almost the only Indian export to Sinkiang to rise in the 'eighties, was suddenly enforced with 'fatal effect'.⁴⁸ Two years later, the Leh road was suddenly closed and the use of the Kilian and Kogyar routes remained restricted until 1897-8. In 1893 all duties, except those on tea, were remitted, only to be reimposed again in 1896.

It was this uncertainty more than any discriminating tariff or hostile Consul which really handicapped Indian trade after 1881. But the reasons for the Russian commercial supremacy go far deeper than all of these factors. They are more symptoms than causes. For, long before the Ataliq was dead, and despite the almost constant ill-usage of the Russian caravans, Russian goods had dominated the Kashgar market. The opinion of the Ladakh agent, even as early as 1871, was that, despite a rise in the value of Indian cotton exports, 'the very existence of English cotton goods is almost unnoticed in the bazaars . . . which are crowded with Russian fabrics'.⁴⁹ This sort of comment reappears in the account of almost everyone who visited Sinkiang in the 'eighties and 'nineties. It is probable, therefore, that the Trade Convention and the accredited consular representative which India set herself to achieve, would not really have made very much difference commercially, for they would have left the fundamental cause of the Russian supremacy untouched.

In essence, it was a matter of political geography. The Russian absorption of Kokand and Kuldja had given her routes into Kashgar which, if not easy, were certainly very much easier and shorter

46. Elias, *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*, p.13.

47. Durand to O'Conor, 18 May 1885, enclosed with 152, India, 28 Aug. 1885, PFI/45, p.409. Cf. C. A. M. Dunmore, *The Pamirs*, II, pp.224-7.

48. Ladakh Trade Report 1888-9, PFI/57, p.1247; PFI/55, pp.551 and 1103.

49. PFP/142, p.245. The statement of D. C. Boulger (*The Life of Yakoob Beg*, p.202) that by 1876 all Russian goods had been driven from the market is, like much else in the book, quite untrue.

than those on the Indian side.⁵⁰ Moreover, their natural advantages were rapidly augmented by improvements which soon made the Turkistan cities readily accessible to caravans all the year by road, and later brought the railhead in Russian territory very much nearer to Kashgar. These measures, and the granting of an excise drawback which, on cotton at least, more than covered the carriage costs from Osh, all gave the Russians an immense advantage.⁵¹ It has been estimated that, by 1900, Russian transport costs were only half those of goods coming from India across the hazardous Karakoram route.⁵² Moreover, as has been seen, British attempts to divert the trade on to apparently easier routes like the Chang-Chenmo and the Kogyar met with very little real success.

The same is true of the new route through Hunza which the subjugation of that kingdom in 1891 appeared to open. The campaign was mainly political and strategic in aim, as will be seen,⁵³ but it was partly commercial in origin. At the beginning of 1888, news had reached Leh that the Hunza tribesmen had once again attacked one of the Kashgar caravans. It was feared that if these depredations were allowed to continue unchecked as in the past, the effects on the trade would be serious. When, therefore, a Khirghiz representative sought protection at Leh in the spring of 1889, the Indian Government took the opportunity to send Captain Francis Younghusband with a small party to that part of the frontier. The prime aim was to acquire politico-military intelligence, but Younghusband was also instructed to 'enquire into the means of defending the Leh-Yarkand road from further depredations'.⁵⁴ He distributed money to the Khirghiz to enable them to repair the fort at Shahidulla and then returned to India through Hunza to consolidate an arrangement entered into a few months earlier with the Hunza chief, by which he promised to stop the raids on the caravans in return for an increased subsidy. Both Younghusband and Lieutenant Algernon Durand, who had

50. Kostenko, *The Turkistan Region*, I, pp.59-62.

51. Macartney Diary, 23 July 1894, enclosed with India Foreign Dept., 10 Sept. 1894, PFI/76, p.187.

52. Kazak, *Ostturkistan zwischen den Grossmaechten*, pp.93, 94, 97 and 102.

53. Below pp.209-12 and 228-9.

54. Younghusband, *Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, Introduction. For other purposes of his Mission, see below pp.210-11 and 279.

negotiated the arrangement, were convinced that only force would bring the raids to an end.⁵⁵ They were right. Almost before Younghusband left, a Hunza force was on its way to relieve the Khirghiz of the money he had given them, and in the next year the raids began again in earnest. But the campaign which ended them for ever brought no other commercial benefits as far as the Kashgar trade was concerned. When, in 1894, the Leh Joint-Commissioner advocated the opening of the Hunza route as the great trade channel of the future,⁵⁶ his proposal was quashed on grounds mightier than commerce:

The natural difficulty of the passes in that region at present provides a valuable line of defence, and we have hitherto, on military grounds, declined to permit any improvement of the road to the north of Nagar.⁵⁷

The Hunza route never carried much of the trade and nor, for similar reasons, did that farther west through Chitral.⁵⁸

Not only did alternative routes fail to bring any significant benefit to the Kashgar trade, but the unremitting efforts to improve existing routes which were made by a series of devoted British officials on small budgets, were of very limited effect too. It is probably fair to say that some of these efforts were not always well directed,⁵⁹ but the simple truth of the matter was that the natural difficulties of the routes were so great that all but the most minor improvements were right out of the question.

Another factor which reflected these difficulties was the uncertain arrival of the caravan from Yarkand at Leh. For example, between 1867 and 1878 every one was late with but three exceptions.⁶⁰ The results for the trade were serious. In the first place,

55. Younghusband, *op. cit.*, p.86; A. Durand, Gilgit Agency Report 1889, p.4, enclosed with 43, India, 28 Apr. 1890, PFI/59, p.1193.

56. Godfrey to Kashmir Resident, 2 June 1894, enclosed with India Foreign Dept., 16 July 1894, PFI/75, p.405.

57. 186, India, 25 Sept. 1895, PFI/82.

58. In 1931, the Hunza route carried 8 per cent and the Chitral route 29 per cent of the Kashgar trade. *Report on the Trade of Chinese Turkistan with India and Adjacent Countries 1931-2*.

59. This was the view of Paske, 21 July 1875, PFP/145, p.935.

60. The exceptions are 1868, 1869 and 1875. The caravans were sometimes kept back to keep the route clear for envoys, sometimes because of political disturbance, sometimes because of the weather, sometimes because their horses and supplies were requisitioned for war and sometimes simply to prevent intelligence reaching India.

those Panjabi traders who wanted to get back to India before the passes closed had to leave before the caravan arrived. Much of its goods had therefore to be stored at Leh, with consequent deterioration and sometimes almost total loss. Frequently the Turki merchants abandoned operations for the year altogether rather than face a Karakoram crossing in winter. When they did venture across, such a heavy toll was usually taken of the baggage animals that many of the professional carriers were forced out of business.⁶¹ The consequent shortage of carriage crippled the trade even more. Enormous accumulations of merchandise, and a great deal of extortion and systematic robbery from the local carriers, took place as a result. South of Leh, considerable improvements in the carriage situation seemed to have been achieved in the 'seventies by the officially encouraged Kulu Mule Train,⁶² but from Leh onwards the position always remained unsatisfactory. Shortage of carriage continued to handicap the trade well into the twentieth century.⁶³

Although the merchants, as merchants are wont to do, complained almost continually that not enough was done for them by the government, they themselves were not entirely blameless. Almost without exception the trade was left in the hands of Indian natives and these, unlike the much more systematic Russians, made no special efforts to cater for the Kashgar market at all. Their goods were often 'the sweepings of the market' – in the case of fabrics, often lighter and plainer than the Turakis wanted and sometimes even designed with the figures of men and animals proscribed by Islam.⁶⁴ The same neglect of consumer tastes was noticed in the preparation of Kangra tea.⁶⁵ Quality, too, was suspect and the dyes of British textiles had a bad reputation for instability.⁶⁶ Shaw, and later Macartney, sent home samples to

61. Ladakh Trade Report 1873, LIM/18, p.125.

62. Shaw in *ibid.* claims it as a success but Paske called it 'a complete failure', PFP/143, p.960. Other evidence supports Shaw.

63. See, for example, *Report on the Trade of Kashgar for the years 1923-4* (printed as an Annexe to the *Report on the Condition and Prospects of British Trade in India 1924-5*).

64. Elias to Henvey, 12 Sept. 1879, enclosed with 228, India, 6 Nov. 1879, PFI/23, p.1217.

65. Ladakh Trade Report 1875, para. 18, PFP/859, p.525.

66. M. S. Bell, *China: Reconnaissance Journey through the Central and Western Provinces . . . to Ladakh and India*, II, p.538.

acquaint the home industry with what was required, but without significant effect. Moreover, there was a distinct tendency for Indian goods to be over-priced, and for the merchants to compensate themselves for the arduous and costly journey by the anticipation of abnormal profits.⁶⁷

Another factor which played its part in handicapping the Indian traders, was the running fire of intrigue and oppression maintained against them by some of the Kashmiri officials and merchants, even when British representatives were at Leh and Kashgar itself. In 1882 the Kashmir Durbar hinted that, since the Leh Agency was established to foster trade with the deceased Yaqub Beg, it should be abolished – and this at a time when the new Kashmiri Joint-Commissioner was reviving the methods which had made a British official at Leh necessary in the first place.⁶⁸ Right at the end of the period, in 1894, Kashmiri mal-practices were still the subject of official complaint.⁶⁹

At the root of the failure of the Indian trade to expand in face of Russian competition lay the elemental fact that both the supply and demand of the Kashgar market were limited and inelastic. The Central Asian Trading Company, for example, still had a large proportion of its goods unsold two years after their arrival in Kashgar. On the other hand, merchants frequently found it difficult to assemble a caravan of suitable goods for the return journey to India. The lack of coinage and the necessity for barter made both problems worse. Indeed, it is quite clear that the earlier optimistic hopes of both Russian and British commercial interests were wide of the mark.⁷⁰ As far as India was concerned, the Kashgar trade was insignificant. Its highest recorded value during the rule of the Ataliq Ghazee was under £300,000, when in the same

67. Ladakh Trade Report 1869, LIM/6, p.525. Shaw thought the goods of the Central Asian Trading Co. far too expensive.

68. Henvey to Grant, 22 Sept. 1882, IFP/1920, Oct., p.119; Ladakh Diaries in IFP/2111, Jan., p.233; *ibid.*, Mar., p.131; and IFP/2112, June, p.59.

69. Godfrey to Kashmir Resident, 2 June 1894, enclosed with India Foreign Dept., 16 July 1894, PFI/75, p.405.

70. British optimism has been noticed above pp.25–6. The Russians were equally misled. For a discussion of Russian population estimates for Eastern Turkistan, as high as 60 million, see R. Michell, *Eastern Turkistan*, pp.6–7. SHC/66, p.203. For the Russian commercial disappointment, see Lungcr, *The Economic Background of the Russian Conquest of Central Asia*, p.106 and Kuropatkin, *Kashgaria*, pp.68–88.

year, 1876, the frontier trade of the Panjab alone totalled almost £4 million, and the foreign trade of India was in the region of £100 million.⁷¹

All these factors undoubtedly help to explain India's inability to combat the Russian commercial, and therefore political, supremacy in Kashgar, but there is no doubt that the cumbersome nature of the British policy-making machinery has something to do with it. All questions of Eastern Turkistan policy, whether Anglo-Chinese or Anglo-Russian in context, had naturally to go through the Foreign Office. But neither it, nor the India Office, was prepared to accept responsibility for these questions, and in moments of crisis each expected the other to make the decisions.⁷² Fortunately the two great State Departments were in the same building. More serious, was the fact that the executive agents of Britain's Kashgar policy were far away in Peking and St Petersburg. The officials in both places took their orders from the Foreign Office, and neither of them had recognized official channels of communication with the Indian Government at all. It is not surprising that occasionally there were clashes of interest.⁷³ Once China was back in Kashgar, and India began to seek a consulate there, the conflict between Indian and Foreign Office interests became more overt. The Indian Government, with a great deal of justice, blamed the Peking Legation for the delays in settling 'this interminable matter'. On one occasion, India actually asked that negotiations with China on a frontier issue be dropped, because it feared that its interests would be sacrificed in Peking.⁷⁴ At bottom, throughout the whole period, it was a conflict between the general Foreign Office policy of support and friendship for the Manchu Empire and those specific Indian interests which were apparently threatened by Chinese pretensions. It led in the 'eighties and 'nineties to a series of head-on collisions between the two State Departments, not only about Chinese Turkistan, but about Burma, Tibet, Sikkim, Yunnan and Hunza as well. One solution might have been to have an Indian attaché at the

71. These figures are based on the contemporary exchange rate of 1 Rupee = 1 Florin.

72. Cf. the various comments of Salisbury, Mallet and Montgomery recorded in HC/15, p.876; HC/16, p.437A and HC/5, p.1183B respectively.

73. Above p.74.

74. Tel., India, 28 June 1889, HC/109, p.375.

Peking legation as Dufferin had suggested in 1886.⁷⁵ Certainly the Indian Government were determined that any British representative in Kashgar should be an India, and not a Foreign, Office official.⁷⁶

When one considers the hydra-like nature of British Kashgar policy; the vast distances between Kashgar, Peking, Leh, Srinagar, Calcutta and London, all of which had a hand in its formulation or execution; the faulty information at the British disposal: and the fact that Whitehall was often divided, not only on the question of the right policy to be pursued in Eastern Turkistan, but whether one should be pursued at all; when one considers all these things, then the delays, the hesitations and the ultimate failure are not really hard to understand. Russia was in a far better position, for in her case decentralization was carried to its logical limits. The Governor-General of Turkistan conducted his own Kashgar policy with little interference from St Petersburg and it was several years before anyone in the capital would receive the envoys of the Ataliq Ghazee at all. Moreover, much more reliable information was available from the Russian fort on the Naryn and from the Russian territory north of the Tien Shan than ever reached Leh, far to the south. Once Petrovsky was established at Kashgar, Russia had both a source of up-to-date information and an effective executive agent. India had neither.

The Russian supremacy in Kashgar certainly reflects both a superior trading position and policy and a superior policy-making machinery, but the Russian strategic domination of the Turkistan plain was also an important factor. Kashgar was, militarily speaking, already at Russia's mercy in the 'seventies. But, notwithstanding the loss of the Kuldja passes by the Treaty of St Petersburg, Russia's advances on to the Pamirs, her railway extensions, her military reorganization and her road improvements put her in an even stronger position to attack it in the 'nineties.⁷⁷ British observers had consistently doubted China's ability to reconquer Kashgar and, despite the proven error of this belief, remained almost unanimously agreed about the utter contemptibility of the

75. Tel., India, 2 Jan. 1886, HC/82, p.147.

76. 120, India, 16 Aug. 1889, PFI/57, p.1381.

77. For brief accounts of the improvements, see Kazak, *Ostturkistan zwischen den Grossmaechten*, pp.80-2 and *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, XII (1925), pp.235-8.

Chinese army in Kashgar. According to the sarcastic verdict of one British official, the Chinese army 'shines in gardening and produces most excellent vegetables'⁷⁸ but, in the words of another, would be about as useful in war against Russia as a 'cardboard rampart against siege artillery'.⁷⁹ Some concluded that China would therefore be useless in a British conflict with Russia.⁸⁰ Others pointed out that China, uncommitted as she was to either of the great Central Asian rivals and coterminous with both, would be a valuable ally in the struggle.⁸¹ Both views had been held of the Ataliq Ghazee. China had vast manpower reserves but could not Yaqub call up the numberless Muslim hosts of Central Asia to his aid? Just as in Yaqub's time, however, the majority of British officials seem to have felt that a successful Russian invasion of Eastern Turkistan was only a matter of time and they continued to believe it well into the twentieth century.⁸²

Both Yaqub Beg and the Chinese were seriously inhibited in their dealings with the British because of the constant menace of Russian intervention. The British authorities were less concerned. At the highest level they never really feared an invasion of India direct from Eastern Turkistan at all, although isolated individuals certainly did so. The fears of Moorcroft in the 'twenties and of Shaw in the late 'sixties were revived again twenty years later by Andrew Dalgleish. By then, attention was not on the routes to the east of the Karakoram, like the Chang-Chenmo, but those on the west towards the Mustagh Pass and the Raskam Valley. Dalgleish was convinced that

Any power established in Yarkand could bring an army of any size and of all arms without difficulty to the north base of the Mustagh either from the direction of Yarkand or Sariatol.

78. Bower, *Confidential Report of a Journey in Chinese Turkistan 1889-90*, p.29. See also *ibid.*, pp.39-42.
79. Elias to Henvey, 12 Sept. 1879, enclosed with 228, India, 6 Nov. 1879, PFI/23, p.1217.
80. Bower, *op. cit.*, p.38.
81. C. W. Dilke, *The Present Position of European Politics*, pp.174-6; H. Brackenbury, *Sketch of the Situation Abroad and at Home from a Military Standpoint*, 3 Aug. 1886, WoP/18; Dufferin Memo., 18 Sept. 1886, DP/27, no.35.
82. P. T. Etherton in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, X (1923) called it a 'more or less accepted probability of political and economic development' before the Great War.

If then the Mustagh Pass were seized, he believed that an artillery route could quickly be made which would bring the Russians direct into the heart of Kashmir.⁸³ As usual, the professional military view was much more moderate. Younghusband, after a full strategical study of this frontier, denied that the Mustagh was practicable as a military route at all and emphasized that the danger from this direction was towards Hunza not Kashmir. He *did* believe, however, that a demonstration by a small force against Ladakh was possible. To meet it, he suggested that the pitiful Leh garrison of eighty Kashmiri troops should be augmented and re-organized to take up defensive positions between Leh and the Karakoram Pass.⁸⁴ Nothing was done. In 1890 the Indian Government even opposed a proposal to extend the telegraph to Leh, although at the same time the completion of the line to Gilgit was sanctioned.

It was a clear symptom that the danger was now expected farther west. Even before Yaqub Beg was dead, the British military observers were tending to regard the Turkistan plain not so much as a possible invasion route to India, but as a fertile supply base on the flank of a more westerly advance. A similar change is visible in Russian military opinion too. In 1869 Kashgar was considered to be an important springboard for a direct attack on India⁸⁵ but, once China was back in Kashgar and Russian explorations had begun to reveal greater prospects for an advance against India farther west, Eastern Turkistan increasingly came to be considered primarily as a campaigning ground against China. When Sino-Russian relations were so strained over Kuldja, Kaufmann's assembled troops were all ready for a descent into the plain towards Kashgar, where it was believed a Muslim insurrection could most easily be fomented.⁸⁶

But it is significant that Kaufmann's plan was eventually vetoed

83. Quoted Bell, *China: Reconnaissance Journey through the Central and Western Provinces . . . to Ladakh and India*, II, p.553.

84. Younghusband, *Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, pp.5, 104 and 109. See below pp.210-11.

85. The emphasis which Terentyef (*Russia and England in Central Asia*, II, pp.106-7 and 114-15) laid on Kashgar was remarked upon by Lord Northbrook. And Terentyef had access to the Russian archives at Tashkent.

86. Villiers to Dufferin, 12 Aug. 1886, HC/41, p.223; Belyavsky, *Affairs in Turkistan*, p.163.

in 1880 on the ground that its returns would not justify the time and expense it would involve. The very distance of Kashgar from Peking, which made it such an easy military target, at the same time tended to make its conquest of very limited political value. The Manchu Empire had existed for several years with the Turkistan limb lopped off, and presumably could do so again. Both Russian and British observers alike were agreed that Kashgar would play a very limited role in any Sino-Russian struggle, which would be fought mainly on the Amur and in Manchuria nearer to China's nerve-centres.⁸⁷ In any case, there were sound political as well as military reasons why Russia would not wish to forsake an excellent natural frontier and become responsible for even more troublesome Asiatic Muslim subjects. Moreover, external events at the end of the century, like the Manchurian crisis and the Russo-Japanese war, helped to reduce the chances of a Russian military attack on Kashgar still further. It has already been noted how the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 took much of the sting out of the rivalry of the two Powers in Kashgar. The changed military thinking on both sides which resulted was soon apparent. Only two years later a British military report authoritatively discounted the possibility of a Russian attack on Kashgar,⁸⁸ and events suggested it was right. For in 1914 the Russians proposed a division of China's western territories which left all of the lands south of the Tien Shan beyond their limits.⁸⁹

Their ostensible reason for doing so is interesting. Kashgar, they said, had a special importance for Indian security. It is undeniable. Right through the second half of the nineteenth century, most British observers were convinced that the Karakoram would one day 'form the first common boundary the world may ever see, between the dominions of Old England and Holy Russia'.⁹⁰ Some welcomed this development, but most deplored it. Forsyth, one of the latter, summarized the results of such a step:

87. Belyavsky, *op. cit.*, p.140; Venuikoff, *The Progress of Russia in Central Asia*; Bell, *op. cit.*, II, p.681; C. W. Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain*, II, p.75; Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*, pp.347-8.

88. India Intelligence Branch, *Confidential Military Report on Kashgaria*.

89. G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley, *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*, IX, no.804, p.760; *Mezhdunarodnyia otnosheniya v epokhu imperializma*, 3, I, 566.

90. Hunter (ed.), *Essays on the External Policy of India by J. W. S. Wyllie*, pp. 228-9.

In real sober truth, India is more vulnerable by [*sic*] Russia on the north than on any other side. For, whereas if she approached India through Afghanistan, she would have to traverse a poor and probably hostile country, far from her supports, on the north she would step from the rich country of Turkistan at once within the red line which bounds British territory. It is not necessary to suppose that Russia would march all through Kashmir and pour her troops through the Pir Panjal Passes into the plains of the Panjab.⁹¹

It was not necessary to suppose that Russia would move troops at all. Invasion, or even a diversion, towards Ladakh might perhaps be impossible, but the dangers of the coterminity of a powerful European state like Russia with a semi-inaccessible native kingdom of dubious loyalty like Kashmir were undeniable nevertheless. Even those who scoffed at the wilder fears of people like Shaw and Hayward usually recognized this fact. There was no need to believe, as the Syud Yaqub Khan pretended, that Russia in Kashgar could 'make India untenable'.⁹² But the redoubtable Fred. Burnaby was not exaggerating when he said that it would be 'a disagreeable thorn in our side'.⁹³ That most certainly it would and could have been, if the exigencies of European politics had demanded it.

For that reason India's only weapon, the trade, was not left entirely to its fate.⁹⁴ All the Viceroys of the period were well aware, and the history of the peninsula they ruled was witness to the fact, that trade in Asia is 'the great lever of political influence'.⁹⁵ Lawrence and Ripon, anxious to confine India's political responsibilities within the Indian border, therefore did nothing to encourage the Kashgar trade. All the others, because they wished to extend British influence, *did* encourage it. British policy in Eastern Turkistan was always, from the 'sixties of the nineteenth century onwards, a blend of commercial means and political ends, and the duties of the individuals who executed that policy – Cayley, Shaw, Forsyth, Elias, Younghusband, Macartney and the later Consul-Generals

91. Memo., 7 Oct. 1868, enclosed with 197, India, 2 Nov. 1868, CPD/102, no.44.

92. Enclosure 6 of 74, India, 25 Dec. 1874, LIM/19, p.562.

93. *A Ride to Khiva*, p. vii.

94. Only four years before the outbreak of the Hitler war, negotiations were going on about the trade. E. Teichman, *Journey to Turkistan*, pp.21-2 and 100-9.

95. *St Petersburg Gazette*, 5 June 1879, HC/33, p.565.

– were always both political and commercial. The important changes which are visible in British policy during the second half of the nineteenth century are really changes in the balance of the political and commercial ingredients to suit a changing set of conditions. The Russian commercial, political and strategic grip on Eastern Turkistan was growing tighter all the time. By 1881, when her commercial supremacy had gained the sanction of Treaty and her political dominance expression in the person of Petrovsky, India was forced to aim merely for technical parity – for the treaty-based trade and the permanent representative which had been hers under Yaqub Beg. But whether the Indian Government aimed high or low in Kashgar, its policy was always necessarily in opposition to the topographical realities of the situation. It is these which *au fond* account for the Russian dominance. Hidden away behind the greatest mountain barrier in the world, and at the end of the routes so appalling as to be almost incapable of improvement, India could do virtually nothing to counteract that dominance.

Kashmir and the Tribal Territories 1865-1888

(1) *The formation of British policy 1865-1876*

WHEN Gulab Singh was awarded the Kashmir Valley and all the mountain territory 'eastward of the river Indus and westward of the river Ravi' in 1846,¹ it was hoped that he would help to protect British India against possible enemies in the north.² The annexation of the Panjab had destroyed for ever the Sikh menace but there remained the Afghan threat to the tribal areas north of Peshawar, and there was always the possibility of encroachments in the north-east from Chinese Turkistan. Above all, with the mid-century advance of Russia on the Tashkent line, a new and more dangerous threat to the Indian northern frontier began to reveal itself. In a nutshell, British imperial policy towards Kashmir in the later nineteenth century was simply the attempt to employ that kingdom as the guardian of the northern frontier, without the hostility, expense and added responsibilities which its annexation would involve.

But such a policy implied a measure of control, and this was lacking at first. The Treaty of Amritsar with Gulab Singh made no provision for a British representative at his court, and the usual clause which prohibited independent diplomacy by the feudatory was omitted. Although this was probably because Gulab's territories only shared a frontier with the British in the hills in 1846, it did create a number of difficulties. For one thing, although the Indian Government had no control over Gulab's external policy, yet it had a treaty obligation to defend him from aggression. Moreover, by fastening the rule of a Hindu minority on a Muslim people, the British had incurred a heavy moral responsibility for

1. Above p.21.

2. 8, Governor-General to the Secret Committee, 19 Mar. 1846, *Secret and Political Letters from Bengal and India*, vol. 13; cf. Sir George Clerk to Sir Charles Napier, March 1849, DOC/1.

its welfare. As early as 1848, Lord Hardinge had warned the Maharaja that the British authorities could not be 'the blind instrument of a ruler's injustice towards his people',³ and even before that the question of placing a British representative at his court had been discussed.⁴

Over a number of years, a steady barrage of virulent criticism was directed at various aspects of Kashmir misgovernment in the British press. Whatever its motives, and much of it was inspired by little more than pique that Lord Hardinge had not annexed Kashmir and turned it into a paradise of 'English racing, English farming, English fox-hunting and English cricket',⁵ this press campaign was powerful enough in the 'sixties and 'seventies to cause considerable embarrassment to successive Viceroys and seriously alarm the Maharaja himself.⁶ One fairly constant complaint was that, since the treaty of Amritsar had only granted Gulab territories east of the Indus and at the same time precluded him from extending his boundaries without British assent, then all his acquisitions in Dardistan were in breach of treaty and should be given up.⁷ This specific argument was much easier to rebut than the more general charges of misgovernment, for had such a literal interpretation of 'eastward of the river Indus' been intended in 1846, Gulab would have been deprived not only of Gilgit but much of Baltistan and Ladakh as well. On the contrary, in 1848 the Resident and Agent to the Governor-General actually urged him to strengthen the Gilgit garrison. Much later, in 1870, the Indian Government stated categorically that Gilgit *was* 'included in the territories formally ceded to the Maharaja by Treaty'.⁸

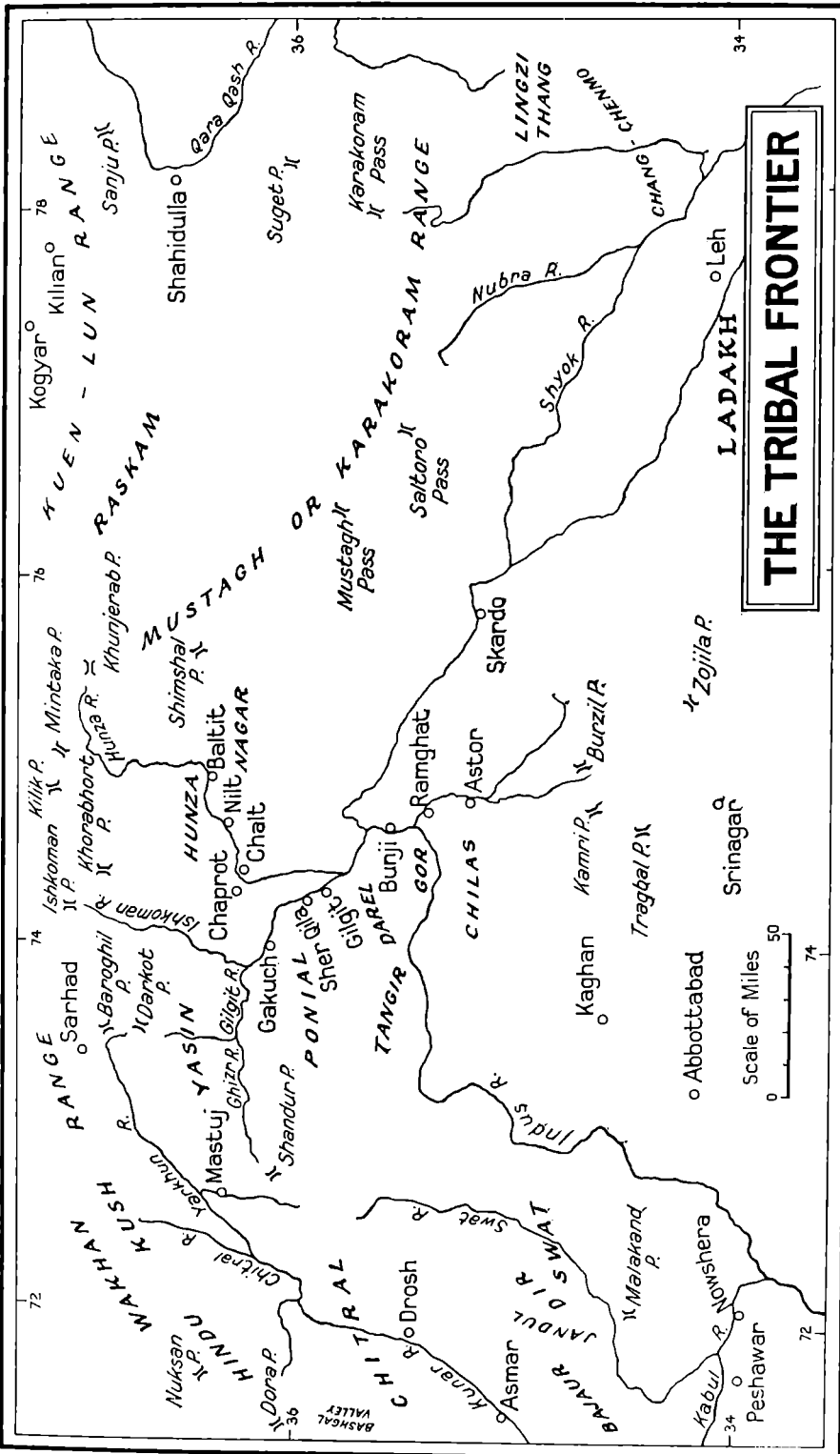
3. Hardinge to Gulab Singh, 7 Jan. 1848, *India Secret Consultations*, 28 Jan. 1848, no.43A. Sir Henry Hardinge, 1st Viscount Hardinge of Lahore (1785-1856), was Governor-General of India 1844-7.
4. Panikkar, *The Founding of the Kashmir State*, p.132; Northbrook to Argyll, 26 Dec. 1873, AP/Reel 318; Salisbury to Lytton, 26 Sept. 1876, LyP/516/1, no.51.
5. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, IV (1859-60), p.32.
6. Lawrence to Wood, 21 Oct. 1865, WP/Box 7; Mayo to Argyll, 16 May 1870, AP/Reel 312, p.331. The book *Kashmir Misgovernment* by R. Thorp was enjoying a considerable success at about this time.
7. *The Pioneer*, 9 May 1870; G. W. Leitner, *The Languages and Races of Dardistan*, p.82.
8. India to Panjab, 16 May 1870, enclosed with 24, India, 17 May 1870, LIM/6, p.365.

The story of the Kashmir extensions in this direction really begins in 1842. In that year Gauhar Aman of Yasin, the dominant chief in Dardistan at the time, attacked Gilgit and murdered its hereditary ruler. Although Astor on the Gilgit road had been made tributary to the Sikhs, their power had not been really felt north of the Indus before this time. Now, appeals for help brought a Sikh army to Gilgit, the Yasinis were expelled, and the first of a long series of Kashmir Governors was installed in the fort. The Sikh hold on Gilgit, driven like a wedge into an unknown country of fanatical Muslim tribes, far from the natural Sikh frontiers and at the end of a tenuous supply line closed for half the year, was inevitably very precarious. So Gulab Singh found when he shouldered the Sikh burden in 1846. Only two years later, Gauhar Aman was back in Gilgit, although speedily expelled again. But in 1852, a much bigger upheaval drove the Kashmiris out of Gilgit once more and this time the Indus remained the frontier of Kashmir, and the garrison at Bunji the limit of its advance in this direction, for eight years. In 1860 Gauhar Aman died, and the new Maharaja, Ranbir Singh, made a determined and successful effort to re-establish his authority across the Indus. Gilgit fell without the loss of a single man, and the Kashmir grip on the fort was never again seriously relaxed until recently.⁹

The Kashmir control of Gilgit opened a new phase in the history of the northern frontier. In many ways the Dogras there were face to face with the same sort of problem as the British in India and the Russians in Central Asia were encountering at about the same time – the problem of how to control refractory border peoples. The solutions were basically the same too. In each case the larger was forced to expand at the expense of the smaller. On the northern frontier, once the Hindu outpost had been established at Gilgit, it was almost inevitable that the Kashmir authorities would have to extend their influence over the stormy Muslim tribes which surrounded it. Thus, in 1850–1 Chilas on the route to Gilgit had been attacked and compelled thereafter to pay nominal tribute to Kashmir. After the recapture of Gilgit in 1860, a Kashmir nominee was installed in Ponial as ruler. In 1863 Yasin

9. The 1860 campaign is described by T. G. Montgomerie in his 'Memo. on the Progress of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of Kashmir', *Selections from the Public Correspondence of the Administration for the Affairs of the Panjab*, V (1861), no.7.

THE TRIBAL FRONTIER



Scale of Miles
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o Abbottabad
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Y Zojila P.

LADAKH

72 74 76 78 36 34

was occupied with great cruelty and Mulk Aman, the son of Gauhar Aman, temporarily lost his throne.¹⁰ Three years later the Kashmir forces attacked Hunza, but this was biting off more than they could chew, and for a time their defeat raised up a new combination of the tribes along the Indus which threatened even Gilgit itself. It was led by Aman-ul-Mulk of Lower Chitral. This remarkable chief had been on close terms with Gauhar Aman and, like him, was unwaveringly hostile to the Kashmir encroachments. But, despite his opposition, the setback to Kashmir was only temporary and the process of consolidation went on. Darel was invaded and paid nominal tribute from that time and, at the end of the 'sixties, Hunza and Nagar too began to receive an annual subsidy in return for tribute and allegiance to Kashmir.¹¹

It must not be assumed that these ties were indicative of great Kashmir strength. On the contrary, the attitude of nearly all the districts mentioned was rarely much better than one of veiled hostility, and the subsidies they received were really only blackmail to save Gilgit from attack. Nevertheless, this was a field of activity in which the British authorities gradually found it necessary to interfere. In 1849 the Maharaja was asked in future to give prior information of his troop movements to the Panjab authorities,¹² and in 1851 the correspondence about the Kashmir conquest of Chilas makes it quite clear that the British considered that their prior consent was necessary.¹³ In 1852 the first 'officer on special duty in Kashmir' was appointed although, interestingly enough, he was there at first neither to check internal misgovernment nor to control Kashmir's foreign relations. His job was simply to control the misconduct of British visitors to the Valley, and both his appointment and his duties were seasonal.¹⁴ Generally speaking, it seems that the officers selected for the post were

10. It is this campaign which Hayward described in *The Pioneer* of the 9 May 1870. See below p.107.

11. For the complex events described in these paragraphs, see Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, pp.435-50 and his Memo. on the Politics of the Gilgit Frontier, SHC/71, p.1501; Pundit Munphool undated Report, CPD/98, no.123; Faiz Baksh Report, IFP/766, p.749; Leitner, *op. cit.*, pp.81-6; Biddulph, *The Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, *passim*; various memos. in PFI/14, p.537.

12. Pundit Munphool Report, CPD/98, no.123, pp.8-10.

13. *India Secret Consultations*, 25 Jul. 1851, nos.22-4.

14. *India Political Consultations*, 14 Dec. 1852, nos.82-3.

mere birds of passage who generally confined themselves to these functions, although they were often acute observers of the political scene as well.¹⁵

As long as Lawrence was Viceroy, the Maharaja was left alone and his frontier activities were ignored. Lawrence's attitude, both to developments in Central Asia and towards Kashmir in particular, has already been noticed.¹⁶ All his instincts were against unnecessary interference in either sphere and he consistently opposed the efforts of the Panjab authorities to tighten the grip on Kashmir which they justified on the ground of political developments farther north. In 1868, for example, when the Lieutenant-Governor urged that India should assume direct control of Kashmir's external diplomacy because of events in Eastern Turkistan, Lawrence opposed the proposal – and for much the same reasons as he had obstructed the posting of a British commercial agent at Leh. Both, he feared, would arouse the Maharaja's opposition, and so be ineffective.¹⁷

Mayo's attitude was very different. It is during his Viceroyalty that one is first aware that 'the rapid march of political events in the countries beyond the Northern and Western frontiers of Kashmir' was beginning to influence British policy towards that state.¹⁸ Mayo was much more conscious than Lawrence of the dangers implicit in the Russian expansion into Central Asia and, had he lived, he would almost certainly have pressed for a permanent British representative in Kashmir to control the Maharaja's foreign relations. Lawrence's attitude he found incomprehensible. 'How this treaty [Amritsar] can be carried out without exercising direct control over the diplomatic transactions of the Kashmir State I cannot understand.'¹⁹ But, for the time being at least, Mayo hoped that a tighter grip on Kashmir without any overt reversal of Lawrence's 1868 decision would be enough.²⁰ It is significant that in 1871 he overruled the Panjab's nomination for the 'officer on special duty' in Kashmir, hitherto always a Panjab

15. See, e.g., the reports of Girdlestone in 1871, IFP/764, p.29 and Wynne in 1873, IFP/771, p.373.

16. Above pp.27-8 and 38-9.

17. Enclosures 4 and 5 of 15, India, 28 Jan. 1868, CPD/96, no.63.

18. Enclosure 5 of 24, India, 17 May 1870, LIM/6, p.365.

19. Minute on the correspondence enclosed with 24, India, as above; cf. Mayo to Argyll, 16 May 1870, AP/Reel 312, p.331.

20. Enclosure 5 of 24, India, as above.

official, and appointed in his place an Under-Secretary of the Imperial Foreign Department.²¹

So far as the tribal territories west of Kashmir were concerned, Mayo was undoubtedly handicapped by the general ignorance which prevailed about their topography and political structure. As Rawlinson remarked some years later, the combination of tribal lawlessness, Kashmir intrigue, and official opposition had made it 'about as difficult to examine and travel in as any part of Asia'.²² In 1847 Vans Agnew and Young had managed to penetrate some distance beyond Gilgit,²³ but after them no European was able to gain any reliable information until Frederick Drew, formerly of the Indian Geological Survey, travelled extensively in Dardistan between 1862 and 1871.²⁴ In 1866 one 'Doctor' Leitner got as far as Gilgit and, on the basis of a few days' stay, wrote busily about the whole of the area for the rest of his life.²⁵ Two years later, George Hayward wanted to explore the Chitral route to the Pamirs but Lawrence refused to let him travel on this 'most dangerous of all the routes'.²⁶ As has been seen, the irrepressible Hayward immediately set off with Shaw to Kashgar to try the eastern approach to the Pamirs instead.²⁷

The very dangers which beset European travel in Dardistan made it a likely field for native exploration. In the 'fifties H. G. Raverty had sent a man to get him information in Kafiristan, Chitral and Swat,²⁸ and in 1865 the Indian Government's political agent known as 'P.M.' (Pundit Munphool) travelled through Dardistan on his way to Central Asia.²⁹ Unfortunately Pundit Munphool was not a trained observer and brought back little geographical information of value. In 1870, however, Mayo took

21. This was Charles Girdlestone. The precedent was followed down to 1883.

22. In Feb. 1876, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XX (1875-6), p.251.

23. Their report was never made public. See *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XXIII (1853), p.10.

24. He recorded his experiences in *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*.

25. His many books certainly did a good deal to make the area known. See bibliography for the titles and above, p.6.

26. To Northcote, 7 July 1868, LP/9, no.47.

27. Above p.32.

28. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XXXI (1862), p.227 and XXXIII (1864), p.125.

29. The correspondence is LIM/2, p.499 *et seq.* His reports are *ibid.* and CPD/98, no.123.

the opportunity of Forsyth's mission to Kashgar to organize a combined assault by native explorers on the unknown lands to the west of it, including Dardistan. 'The Havildar' (Hyder Shah) successfully penetrated into Swat, Dir and Chitral, and then made a rapid survey across the Nuksan and Dora passes.³⁰ At the same time 'I.K.' (Ibrahim Khan) was sent through Gilgit and Yasin in order to supplement the information which Hayward had gained earlier in the year while exploring unofficially in the basins of the Gilgit and Yasin rivers.³¹

When Mayo met the Maharaja of Kashmir at Sialkot in May 1870 to ratify the recently concluded commercial treaty,³² he had in his pocket Hayward's vivid account of the atrocities committed by the Kashmir forces when they had occupied Yasin in 1863.³³ He warned the Maharaja to 'commit no aggressions on his neighbours and make no attempt to extend his authority beyond the limits which had been conferred on his father'.³⁴ Mayo believed that a warning in these general terms would be enough, although he was also well aware that Hayward may well have been put in considerable danger if his anti-Kashmir views had been revealed to the Maharaja. The Viceroy's anger when Hayward's views appeared in print³⁵ can well be imagined. It was bad enough that the young explorer had put himself in serious danger, but by so doing he had probably also jeopardized the whole Sialkot policy of preventing any further Kashmir extensions in Dardistan.

Events quickly confirmed these forebodings. It has already been mentioned that the upheavals in Dardistan in 1866 had brought to the front as the chief opponent of Kashmir, Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral. For the next quarter of a century this remarkable chief dominated his neighbours, as much by the enormity of his treacheries as by his sheer ability. To tighten his grip on Yasin, Aman-ul-Mulk had encouraged his nephew, one Mir Wali, to usurp power there. Despite strong official advice to postpone his journey, Hayward was back in Yasin in 1870, hoping to find

30. *General Report on the operations of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India during 1870-71*, Section XVI.

31. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XV (1870-71), p.387.

32. Above pp.41-2.

33. Above p.104 n.10.

34. Mayo to Durand, 21 Sept. 1870, enclosed with 76, India, 12 Oct. 1872, LIM/13, p.917.

35. Mayo to Argyll, 16 May 1870, AP/Reel 312, p.331.

a way northward into the Pamirs. On the morning of 18 July 1870, for reasons which have never been properly explained, he was overtaken at Mir Wali's orders and murdered. Thereupon, Mir Wali's chief minister, who had opposed the murder, immediately got in touch with Aman-ul-Mulk. When Pahlwan Bahadur, Aman's nephew and governor at Mastuj, arrived in Yasin, Mir Wali fled, at first across the mountains to the north, and later back to the arms of his erstwhile patron at Chitral.³⁶ As Mayo had feared, and in defiance of all that had been said at Sialkot, the Maharaja began to prepare to invade Yasin.³⁷ For the first time it became absolutely necessary to examine the imperial considerations which underlay the Sialkot policy of limiting the extensions of Kashmir in the tribal lands to the west.

At the root of Mayo's policy lay distrust of Kashmir, and the timing of Hayward's death did nothing to dispel it. He distrusted the ability of Kashmir to make the proposed conquests, to carry them out without such atrocities as no British Government could tolerate, and to maintain them without infinite trouble and expense. The retention of Gilgit already taxed Kashmir resources to the limit, and it was unlikely that the Muslim tribes, with Aman-ul-Mulk at their head, would accept without a struggle any large Hindu accession of territory and power. Above all, Mayo distrusted the use Kashmir might make of the conquests. They would bring the Maharaja's territory close to the disputed Afghan lands just across the Hindu Kush, in which Russia was showing such a marked interest at this time,³⁸ and facilitate Kashmiri intrigues – both with Kabul and with the Russians at Tashkent. Russian agents and traders had been interested in Kashmir for a long time, and there was plenty of evidence that the interest was mutual.³⁹ In this direction, Mayo much preferred a *cordon sanitaire* between Kashmir and the disputed Upper Oxus territories north of the mountains. If either Chitral or Kashmir had to have Yasin, then he preferred it to be Chitral. Aman-ul-Mulk was not really

36. There is a full correspondence on these events in IFP/766, pp.697–813.

37. Enclosure 4 of 50, India, 9 Sept. 1870, LIM/7, p.409.

38. Below p.166 *et seq.*

39. Above p.16 and G. T. Vigne, *Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo etc.*, I, p.284; H. G. Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Part of Baluchistan*, p.190n.; Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*, p.215. Some further evidence of Kashmiri intrigues with the Russians is FO 65/989 and PFI/2, p.769.

big enough to menace Kashmir, and in any case the ties between Chitral and Yasin were already close.⁴⁰

The Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, Sir Henry Durand, took the opposite view:

As a mere matter of policy, it is more to our interests that the head of the Gilgit Valley be in the hands of Kashmir than in the hands of Chitral, for a glance at the map shows the value of a friendly and substantive hold by an adequate force up to the watershed between the Gilgit and Chitral Valleys; it would be an immense curb on . . . the quadrangle between the Kunar or Chitral rivers, and the Indus.⁴¹

Durand was doubtless correct to emphasize, as he did, the important physical barrier between Chitral and Yasin, but Mayo's assessment of the true Kashmir strength, or lack of it, in Dardistan was the more realistic. Mayo's view, in fact, stood in the middle between those opponents of Kashmir like Hayward, who urged that her limit in this direction should be the Indus, and those like Montgomerie, Rawlinson and Drew, who wanted an extension of Kashmir right up to the Hindu Kush watershed.

Mayo's successor, Lord Northbrook, followed his line exactly when, in 1872, he opposed a proposal of Rawlinson that Kashmir should levy a fine on Yasin for Hayward's murder and secure it by force.⁴² Like Mayo, Northbrook believed that a tighter grip on Kashmir was necessary. For one thing, a prerequisite of his active Kashgar policy was effective control over the routes to it, and these, of course, ran almost exclusively through Kashmir territory. There is no doubt, too, that Northbrook was concerned about the hostile attitude of Russia on the Upper Oxus after the conclusion of the 1873 'agreement', and the fresh evidence which came to light in that year of Kashmir intrigues with the Russians.⁴³

Whatever the reasons, he seems to have thought that the need for a permanent Resident in Kashmir was so self-evident as scarcely to require the sanction of Whitehall at all. The Panjab

40. Mayo to Durand, 21 Sept. 1870, enclosed with 76, India, 12 Oct. 1872, LIM/13, p.917.

41. Cited in a minute of 1880 by A. W. Moore, HC/42, p.803.

42. 76, India, 12 Oct. 1872, LIM/13, p.917. Rawlinson's memo. and the letter on behalf of Hayward's sister which inspired it are SHC/71, p.23.

43. Below pp.130, 177 and 219.

Government was simply informed that the 'officer on special duty' was in future to be a permanent Political Resident, although still answerable to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab.⁴⁴ The opposition of the Maharaja was only to be expected, but Northbrook did not reckon with the outcry from the Lawrentians in the India Office, where 'serious differences of opinion' split the Council.⁴⁵ Eventually the Maharaja himself offered a compromise. The tour of the 'officer on special duty' should be extended from six to eight months, and that of the Leh Commissioner to a full year. This arrangement was accepted and there, for the time being, the matter rested.⁴⁶

An entirely new perspective was given to the whole problem of policy in the tribal lands south of the Hindu Kush by the discoveries about the lands north of the mountains which were made by the explorers attached to Forsyth's second Kashgar mission of 1873-4. Their revelations were the more startling because so little had been known before. The basis of modern knowledge about the Pamirs had been laid by the remarkable journey of John Wood to Lake Victoria in 1837,⁴⁷ but no substantially new information had become available until the journeys of the Indian Government's native agents, Abdul Mejid⁴⁸ and Mirza Shuja⁴⁹ ('the Mirza') in 1860 and 1868 respectively. Even then there was a wide 'tract of obscurity' between longitudes 67° and 76°E which covered the Upper Oxus, Kolab, Karategin, Hissar and all but the southern fringes of the Pamirs.⁵⁰ The native explorers attached to Forsyth's first mission did something to narrow this tract. One of the 'most intelligent' of them, Faiz Baksh ('F.B.') travelled to Yarkand *via* Kabul, Wakhan and Sariqol, with orders to prepare the way if Forsyth should find it possible to return to India by the

44. Northbrook to Davies, 14 Mar. 1873, NoP/9, p.36 and enclosures of 73, India, 15 Sept. 1873, LIM/15, p.1039A.

45. All the correspondence is LIM/15, p.1039A *et seq.*

46. Northbrook to Argyll, 14 Nov. 1873 and 5 Feb. 1874, AP/Reel 318; Maharaja to Lt.-Gov., 16 Apr. 1874, M/5, p.1077.

47. Wood, *Journey to the Source of the River Oxus and Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, X (1840), p.530.

48. His itineraries were published in *Selections from the Records of the Government of India Foreign Department*, no.39 (Calcutta 1863).

49. *Selections from the Records of the Government of India Home Department*, no.83 (Calcutta 1871), p.19. He was murdered on another assignment in 1871.

50. *Geographical Magazine*, I (1874), p.54.

Pamir route.⁵¹ Ibrahim Khan ('I.K.') also traversed the Pamirs *via* Sariqol to Yarkand, after crossing over from Gilgit and Yasin. Forsyth himself failed even to see the Ataliq Ghazee and returned to India through Ladakh as he had come.

His second mission to Kashgar was very different. He was ordered by Northbrook to pay especial attention to the lands west and south-west of Kashgar, and he was given every facility to do so.⁵² Besides the journey of Ibrahim Khan across the Pamirs to Kabul and back,⁵³ and those of 'the Havildar' and Abdul Subhan to the Upper Oxus,⁵⁴ the European surveyors of the mission under Gordon examined the Great and Little Pamirs. The results were startling. It was discovered that the Russians could not only advance on to the Pamirs by way of unclaimed territory,⁵⁵ but that an 'excellent road' ran from the Russian military post at Osh across the Alai to Sariqol which was 'so good that only about twenty-five miles . . . require any preparation for the passage of guns'.⁵⁶ Sariqol, so far from being 'strategically unimportant' as had been believed earlier,⁵⁷ was found to have considerable significance as a junction of routes. Two of these routes seemed to be especially important – the one going south to Hunza, and the other across the Little Pamir to Sarhad in Wakhan. From Wakhan, according to its ruler, there were two easy roads to India. One, the most direct, went by the Ishkoman Pass into Yasin and on to India *via* Gilgit, Chilas and Torbela. The other crossed the Baroghil Pass to Chitral and led to Peshawar.⁵⁸

Confirmation seemed to come from the experiences of Captain John Biddulph, who had been sent to examine these passes across the Hindu Kush from the north. Although he failed even to set eyes on the crest of the Darkot or Ishkoman passes, he did get to

51. His reports are LIM/12, pp.6A and 1743, and IFP/766, p.749. Curzon believed he falsified his route on this trip, *The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus*, p.76.
52. Enclosure 5 of 70, India, 1 Sept. 1873, LIM/15, p.1003.
53. His diary is enclosed with 22, India, 10 Apr. 1874, LIM/17, p.735.
54. Below pp.189–90
55. Below pp.218–19.
56. Gordon, Special Report on Kashgar, the Pamirs and Wakhan, 14 July 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.
57. By Sir R. Montgomery. See his memo., 18 Feb. 1873, enclosed with 34, India, 28 Mar. 1873, LIM/14, p.603.
58. Gordon, Report on Sariqol, the Pamirs and Wakhan, 17 Aug. 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.

the summit of the Baroghil leading into Chitral and, like all the travellers who followed him, was greatly impressed by its apparent ease. One of these later described it as

the most curious and startling feature in this part of the world; for here the mighty main range suddenly sinks down abruptly into absolute insignificance, and for a short distance low undulating hills take the place of lofty peaks.⁵⁹

Biddulph, never the most cautious of men, jumped to some unnerving conclusions. Gordon's party, he said, had proved that from Osh

there is nothing to prevent the rapid advance of an army fully equipped to within a few miles of Sarhad. Not only is no road-making for the passage of field artillery necessary, but along the whole distance there is an unlimited quantity of the finest pasture in the world.

From Sarhad to the passes there was only a mile or two of road to prepare, and the passes themselves were open 'ten months in the year'. Biddulph did, almost reluctantly one feels, concede that the roads south of the passes in Gilgit and Chitral would probably need 'some preparation before bodies of troops can be brought by any of them' but, he added, 'this will tell as much against the defending forces as against the invader. None of them [the roads] present any great natural obstacle'.⁶⁰

It is not surprising that these views caused a considerable stir in Government circles, particularly as there was no reliable information of the tribal areas south of the allegedly easy Ishkoman and Baroghil passes with which to refute Biddulph's guesses. The reports of the many native explorers who had crossed Dardistan tended, if anything, to confirm his views. Raverty's native informant, for example, had described northern Chitral as 'a vast plain, gradually sloping upwards towards the high table-land of Pamir to the north and east . . . consequently there would be no difficulty for the passage of light artillery'.⁶¹ Opinions like these had never

59. W. S. A. Lockhart and R. G. Woodthorpe, *Confidential Report of the Gilgit Mission 1885-6*, pp.11-12.

60. Undated Report on the Chitral Passes, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303. There is, for obvious reasons, little reference to Biddulph's journey in the official report of the Forsyth Mission beyond the bare statement that he had gone (p.229).

61. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XXXIII (1864), p.130.

really attracted serious official attention and, indeed, many – like Forsyth, Montgomery and the Panjab authorities – frankly disbelieved them.⁶² Now it was clearly necessary to think again. In the spring of 1876 Biddulph was sent back to examine the southern exits of the passes and find out whether the Ishkoman really was the ‘shortest and easiest route to India yet known’.⁶³ At the same time Ata Mohamed (‘the Mullah’) was sent, disguised as a timber merchant, to explore the routes farther south along the Upper Indus.⁶⁴

To the Indian Government these discoveries were all the more disturbing because Russia was already showing unhealthy signs of activity on the Pamir line. In 1871, Fedchenko had opened up the Alai and Trans-Alai approaches and then, in 1876, Kokand was absorbed in the province of Fergana.⁶⁵ Most regarded Fergana as little more than a *cul-de-sac*, and British attention in the years that followed was mainly on the right wing of Russia’s advance farther west.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, a few had for years been warning that Kokand’s absorption would presage further Russian encroachments on the Pamirs and towards the Upper Oxus. Gordon in 1875 had already pointed out that the Russians in Kokand would be the same distance (three hundred miles) from the Baroghil Pass as the nearest British post at Abbottabad, and could easily get there first.⁶⁷ But, apart from anything else, it was almost inevitable that Russia would eventually have to go on and control the origin of the Kokand disturbances, the Khirghiz of the Alai plateau. In any case, the Russian Governor-General had issued instructions for the systematic exploration of the Pamirs, and the results were soon apparent.⁶⁸ In 1876 Skobolev led an expedition across the Alai to complete Fedchenko’s work. If Kostenko’s claim

62. Forsyth Memo., 10 June 1873, NoP/9, p.230; Montgomery Memo., 18 Feb. 1873, enclosed with 34, India, 28 Mar. 1873, LIM/4, p.603; Commissioner Peshawar, 4 Nov. 1873, PFP/143, p.1353.

63. Lytton to Salisbury, 14 Apr. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.80.

64. His confidential report is enclosed with 26, India, 30 July 1877, PFI/14, p.1473.

65. A. von Kuhn, *The Province of Ferganeh*, PFI/9, p.723.

66. 158, Loftus to Derby, 22 Apr. 1876, FO 65/957; *Geographical Magazine*, III (1876), p.149 *et seq.*

67. On the strategical effect of holding the Ishkoman Pass in Yasin, 3 Nov. 1875, HC/6, p.631.

68. War Office, *Russian Advances in Asia 1876–8*, p.24.

that he reconnoitred as far south as the Uzbek Pass is true, then in that year only sixty-six miles separated the British and Russian explorations on the Pamirs.⁶⁹ Soon after the 1876 expedition, the Russian frontier was pushed forward on to the northern Pamirs around the Qara Qul, and the road from Osh was improved. In 1878, Severtsov's party got as far south as Yeshil Qul and, by doing so, connected up with the observations of Forsyth's party.⁷⁰

The beginnings of the Russian activity in this direction,⁷¹ taken in conjunction with Biddulph's discoveries, eventually convinced Northbrook that Mayo's policy of opposition to Kashmir's extensions in Dardistan would have to be abandoned. He left India before the result of Biddulph's 1876 journey was known, but his parting advice to his successor, Lord Lytton, was a strong recommendation that Kashmir control should be extended over Chitral and Yasin right up to the southern side of the passes.⁷²

(2) *The Gilgit Agency policy of Madhopore and its failure*
1876-1880

The whole structure of Lytton's thought on Indian defensive strategy made him predisposed to follow the advice Northbrook had given him. He assumed that

Should the Russian power, resting along the northern frontier of Kashmir, overflow the mountain range . . . the moral effect of such a position would be as injurious to the tranquility of our power as if Russia were at Merv.¹

Lytton believed that, at any moment, the Muslim government at Kashgar would succumb to a Russian, or possibly Chinese, invasion and his correspondence makes it clear that it was from this direction that he believed the northern frontier was chiefly menaced.² The 1873 'agreement', so far as a pen and ink line

69. Kostenko, *Turkistan Region*, I, p.43; Michell Abstracts, 30 Oct. 1876, HC/14, p.181A and Apr. 1877, HC/18, p.21.

70. HC/27, p.1385; HC/28, p.591; HC/33, p.117 *et seq.*

71. See also below pp.151-2.

72. Stated in Lytton to Egerton, 2 Dec. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.1065.

1. And that, for Lytton, was saying a lot. Lytton to Salisbury, 14 Mar. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.25. Cf. above p.13.

2. See, e.g., letter to Salisbury, 28 Sept. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.498.

could, had sealed a Russian approach across the Upper Oxus west of Lake Victoria, and the Pamirs east of it were not yet attracting a great deal of attention. Even when, as for a time in 1876, Lytton was willing to accept a Russian invasion of Kashgar, it was only on condition that there should be a margin of British influence, or territory, left to the north of the mountains.³

And here lies the connection between his Kashgar policy and his wider views of defensive strategy. Classical military thought condemns the defence of a mountain frontier on its inner side, and Lytton too believed that, unless the external debouches of the passes were controlled, 'our "mountain-frontier", on which the "Lawrentians" profess to place such reliance, is simply a fortress with no glacis – in other words, a military mouse-trap'.⁴ Lytton was at first disposed to apply this doctrine to the northern frontier as much as elsewhere, and only later came to believe that it would be sufficient, in this direction, to stop up the southern outlets of the passes.⁵ But, whether the northern or southern outlets were to be defended, it followed that what Lytton called the 'broad belt of independent barbarism' between the British frontier and the passes would have to be controlled. If it was not, the Indian Army when attacked

would have had no alternative between forcing the passes, under conditions of much difficulty and danger, in order to meet its adversary in a hostile country, far from its base, and without any friendly support within reach, or else, with a great . . . river [the Indus] at its back, awaiting his arrival behind a frontier line of one thousand miles in length, pierced by passes open to the enemy at points too numerous to be effectively guarded.⁶

Thus, policies in the tribal areas for the first time became imperial issues, to be dealt with simultaneously as 'indivisible parts of a single Imperial question'.⁷

Most of Lytton's frontier measures and proposals were chiefly designed with Russia in mind, but Afghanistan was also intimately

3. Above p.59.

4. To Cranbrook, 9 Apr. 1878, LyP/518/3, p.233, extract in Balfour, *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, pp.185–8.

5. To Salisbury, 18 Sept. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.460; to Cranbrook, 3 Aug. 1878, LyP/518/3, p.531, cited Balfour, *op. cit.*, pp.249–61.

6. 160, India, 7 July 1879, AP 1878–9 LVI C.2401, p.24.

7. 50, India, 23 Mar. 1877, PFI/13, p.235.

connected with the frontier problem. This is as true of the northern frontier as it is of that on the north-west. Until Ranjit Singh conquered Kashmir it was an Afghan dependency, and even as late as 1857 the retrocession of Peshawar to Afghanistan was still being considered.⁸ The tribes of the intermediate country, who had always been fairly independent, became completely free with the Sikh victory. But Afghan intrigues amongst them never ceased. In 1858 and 1859, Dost Muhammad had to be warned off, and his pretensions to the tribal lands were expressly repudiated by Canning in 1861. It was about the same time, with arguments that were long remembered, that Herbert Edwardes,⁹ the Commissioner at Peshawar, pointed out the danger of letting Afghan influence into the tribal area east of the Kunar river. It would, he argued, turn the right flank of the British defensive position in the Peshawar valley, already surrounded by semi-hostile tribes and passes of no great difficulty, and unsettle the whole frontier.¹⁰

As long as Afghan-Indian relations were friendly this was not a very serious danger, and in 1872 it was even possible for Rawlinson to urge in Council a tripartite British-Afghan-Kashmiri agreement to subjugate these tribes jointly.¹¹ But by the time Lytton arrived in India four years later, relations with Kabul were distinctly strained. Northbrook had resisted to the end any policy which could lead to a showdown with the Amir, but a showdown, on the contrary, was just what Lytton's secret instructions provided for. A bid for Afghan friendship was to be made which, if rejected, was to lead to a reconsideration of the whole policy of retaining Afghanistan as a buffer state. Meanwhile, Lytton delayed the formulation of a policy for the northern frontier, and the Panjab authorities were, for the time being, expressly forbidden to encourage that extension of Kashmir influence which Northbrook had recommended. There is some evidence that, if the Peshawar Conference with the Afghans had succeeded, Lytton was even

8. Morison, *From Alexander Burnes to Frederick Roberts—A Survey of Imperial Frontier Policy*, pp.13-14.

9. Later Sir Herbert Benjamin Edwardes (1819-68), Commissioner of Peshawar 1853-9.

10. His words were officially cited with approval in 1876 (enclosure 3 of 88, India, 25 Aug. 1882, PFI/33, p.949), in 1878 (162, India, 27 Dec. 1878, PFI/20, p.869) and in 1884 (RP/16, p.258).

11. Memo., SHC/71, p.31.

prepared to defy Herbert Edwardes' reasoning and allow an Afghan absorption of Chitral.¹²

The death of the Afghan envoy at Peshawar on 26 March 1877, and the consequent breakdown of the Conference, cleared the way for a new and vigorous anti-Afghan policy. Less than a month later, Lytton was admitting to Egerton,¹³ the Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, 'My present object is to weaken and embarrass the position of the Amir by all the indirect means in my power'.¹⁴ One of these 'indirect means' was the extension of British influence beyond the frontier

by establishing along the line of it the chiefs and tribes dependent on us and more or less friendly. We must invest money for this purpose at a risk, and we may lose our money . . . but . . . much political good may be secured if the experiment succeeds.¹⁵

In other words, the active frontier policy which suggested itself as a necessary defensive move against Russia was at the same time to be used offensively against Afghanistan as well. From that moment, until a friend sat once more on the throne of Kabul, it is almost impossible to separate these twin motives of Lytton's policy as it developed on the northern frontier.

In May 1876 Lytton had believed that the extension of Kashmiri power over Yasin, which Northbrook had recommended, should only be attempted if negotiation with the Afghans failed.¹⁶ By the July, he was convinced that it would be necessary anyway. Russia was absorbing Kokand, and

. . . it would be suicidal, in our present uncertain and menaced position, to leave to the mercy of chance, in the hands of any weak chief surrounded by powerful and aggressive neighbours, that strip of territory containing the Baroghil and Ishkoman passes.¹⁷

Lytton's solution was simple. British support would be given to Kashmir, if it was needed, to occupy Yasin and secure the two

12. To Salisbury, 2 May 1876, LyP/518/1, p.129.

13. Sir Robert Eyles Egerton, Lt.-Gov. of the Panjab 1878-82.

14. Letter of 23 Apr. 1877, LyP/518/2, p.293.

15. Lytton to Cavagnari, 31 May 1877, *ibid.*, p.440; see also Balfour, *op. cit.*, p.164.

16. To Salisbury, 29 May 1876, LyP/518/1, p.192.

17. To Salisbury, 15 July 1876, *ibid.*, p.283.

passes. In return, Britain would obtain a permanent Resident in Kashmir and the right to post an Agent at Gilgit.¹⁸

Meanwhile Biddulph was having a closer look at the Yasin passes from the south side. He soon discovered that the Ishkoman Pass, which had caused so much excitement when he first made his alarmist guesses about it in the previous year, was really 'only open in winter, practically of no importance'. The Darkot Pass leading direct to Yasin he found to be impassable for artillery although open for ten months of the year. Of the three, only the Baroghil Pass leading to Mastuj and Chitral turned out to be as easy as he had thought. This he described as 'practicable for artillery for ten months in the year, but closed on the south side by an easily defensible gorge, of first-rate importance'.¹⁹

Despite the rather different strategical situation which these discoveries revealed, and the considerable opposition in his own Council, Lytton went ahead along the lines he had already sketched in July. On 17 and 18 November 1876, he put his proposals to the Maharaja at Madhopore. Ranbir Singh was ready enough to extend his territory into Yasin with the promise of British assistance and five thousand rifles for the purpose, but he 'kicked long and strenuously' against the appointment of a British Agent at Gilgit. He seems to have been most afraid of the sort of high-handed interference in domestic matters 'like what was done by Dr Cayley at Ladakh',²⁰ and at one stage it looked as though the negotiations would break down altogether over this issue. Lytton only got his way by keeping quiet about his plan to keep the British Resident in Kashmir all the year, and by giving written assurances that there would be no interference by the Gilgit Agent in the domestic affairs of Kashmir.²¹

Biddulph duly proceeded at the end of 1877 to his isolated post as the first British 'officer on special duty at Gilgit'. The instructions he took with him leave no doubt that the appointment was primarily a political one. His principal task was

18. To Salisbury, 22 July 1876, *ibid.*, p.304.

19. Appendix IV of 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537.

20. Maharaja to Lytton, 26 Nov. 1876, Appendix V of *ibid.*

21. All this was deliberately hushed up, Balfour, *op. cit.*, pp.184-8. Cf. Lytton to the Queen, 23 Dec. 1876, Balfour, *Personal and Literary Letters of Robert, First Earl of Lytton*, II, p.46.

to furnish reliable intelligence of the progress of events beyond the Kashmir frontier . . . and . . . in consultation with the Kashmir authorities, to cultivate friendly relations with the tribes beyond the border in view to bringing them gradually under the control and influence of Kashmir.²²

At the same time, with a Kashmir force strengthened by grants of arms and ammunition, he was to watch from Gilgit the southern outlets of the passes leading into Hunza, Yasin and Chitral. As Lytton put it later:

we shall . . . consider it from the first incumbent upon the Government of India to prevent, at any cost, the establishment within this outlying country of the political preponderance of any other Power.²³

The most important Chief to win over was Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral. In 1876 he seemed to be making things easy for the Madhopore policy by offering his allegiance to Kashmir and adding that Dir and Yasin were willing to do the same.²⁴ His earlier opposition to the Kashmiris has already been noticed, and on at least two occasions in the past he had made vain overtures for British help against them. Whatever his motives for this apparent change of heart, there is little doubt that the growing power of Afghanistan in Badakhshan just across the mountains to the north of him had a lot to do with it. The close connection between events in the Upper Oxus provinces and those south of the Hindu Kush in Chitral and Yasin, is a cardinal feature of the politics of this area.²⁵

Chitral had once been a dependency of Badakhshan and, both in 1831 and in 1857, a Badakhshani force had been south of the mountains laying siege to Yasin.²⁶ When the Amir Sher Ali extended Afghan power into Badakhshan, the danger must have

22. A. N. Wollaston, Memo. on Chitral, Pt.1, 8 Oct. 1878, p.17, Secret and Political Memo., A.18).

23. 49, India, 28 Feb. 1879, PFI/21, p.859. For some more of this despatch, see above p.13.

24. Correspondence is IFP/766, especially pp.790 and 797.

25. See Saunders' remarks below p.150. Lytton's statement to the contrary, LyP/518/4, p.1013, is absurd.

26. Faiz Baksh, 'Report on Chatral', *Selections from the Records of the Government of the Panjab—Confidential Series*, A.XI (1883); *idem.*, 'Translation of a report on Badakhshan, Balkh and Bokhara', *ibid.*, A.II (1871), pp.54-5 and 58.

been brought home very forcibly to Aman-ul-Mulk by the flight of the dispossessed Jehandar Shah to Chitral.²⁷ Aman understandably entered into friendly relations with the new power north of the mountains as soon as he could,²⁸ but also took care to reinsure himself with Kashmir at the same time.²⁹ His caution was justified. For in 1872, soon after Jehandar Shah reappeared in Chitral, a force from Badakhshan with approval from Kabul tried to invade it by the Baroghil Pass. Although successful in repelling the Badakhshanis with heavy losses,³⁰ Aman-ul-Mulk must have drawn his own conclusions from this affair, and they were probably underlined when Northbrook rejected fresh advances from him two years later.³¹ Not surprisingly, he had therefore tendered his allegiance unconditionally to Kabul, and paid tribute.³²

Lytton was thus faced with a new situation. When, as will be seen, the 1873 'Agreement' between Britain and Russia confirmed the Afghan title to Badakhshan, scarcely anyone appears to have considered the possible repercussions of this step south of the Hindu Kush.³³ Then, Afghanistan had been seen only as an ally who must be strengthened against Russia, not really as a possible enemy whose power could be dangerous. Lytton was faced with the painful fact that Sher Ali was *not* friendly. Moreover, the inability of Lawrence, Mayo and Northbrook to entertain Aman-ul-Mulk's cries for help, had driven him into a relationship with Kabul which bid fair to create that very extension of Afghan influence east of the Kunar which Edwardes had warned against earlier.

The Chitral ruler was undoubtedly in a difficult position. All the evidence from Kabul in 1877 suggested that, even while the Amir's representative was negotiating at Peshawar, Sher Ali was

27. Especially as the new Mir of Badakhshan immediately demanded the surrender of Jehandar Shah and allegiance from Chitral, LIM/2, p.603.

28. IFP/763, p.80; *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XLII (1872), p.188.

29. By fresh approaches in 1871, IFP/766, p.790.

30. See the enclosures of India 62 of 9 Sept., 74 of 11 Oct. and 82 of 20 Dec. 1872, LIM/13, pp.251, 853A and 1123. A narrative account is Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *Confidential Report of the Gilgit Mission 1885-6*, Appendix I.

31. Appendix III, Section 14, p.23 of 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537.

32. Kabul Diary, 13-15 Oct. 1874; Biddulph, Report of a Journey to Yasin and Chitral, 22 Dec. 1878, enclosed with 74, India, 27 Mar. 1879, PFI/21, p.1353.

33. An exception was the very acute Geographer of the IO, Trelawney Saunders. See his memo., 14 Feb. 1873, FO 65/875, cited below, p.150.

at the same time massing troops along the British frontier, making public exhortations in favour of holy war, and intriguing for a great tribal uprising against the British in Swat, Bajaur and Dir.³⁴ If these efforts had been successful, Aman-ul-Mulk would have had hostile Afghan influence to the south of him as well as to the west and north. The great sheet-anchor of his hopes was Rahmatulla Khan of Dir, attached to Chitral by many ties and also for years on friendly terms with Kashmir. Unfortunately, a *contretemps* over money matters had led to an interruption of amicable Kashmir-Dir relations. Rahmatulla had immediately accepted the overtures being made to him from Kabul and sent his eldest son, in company with many of the Khans of Bajaur, to reach a settlement.³⁵ Aman-ul-Mulk's alarm at this shift in the balance of power is reflected in his letters to Kashmir in the spring of 1877.

It was in response to one of these letters that Lytton took the first steps to meet the Afghan threat to the tribal areas. The Amir was warned to keep clear of Bajaur, Dir and Swat, Aman-ul-Mulk was reminded that he was no longer free to make submission to Kabul, and Kashmir was promised support in any measures necessary to oppose the Afghans.³⁶ At the same time an intelligence system was hastily organized from Peshawar, and British secret agents were filtered into the disputed ground between the Kunar and the Indus, equipped with cypher and messengers to report on the situation.³⁷

Not surprisingly, Aman was still unwilling to commit himself, despite the fact that the Chitral and Yasin representatives were taken to the Delhi Durbar to be dazzled by the resources of British India, and to have the Madhopore arrangements explained to them.³⁸ A halting triangular correspondence between Chitral, Kashmir and India dragged on into the summer of 1877 without much result,³⁹ until eventually, in the August, the Indian Govern-

34. See Moore Memo., 30 Nov. 1878, Secret and Political Memo., A.21; 13, India, 10 May 1877, AP 1878-9 LVI C.2190, p.160; more details in PFI/20, p.547 *et seq.*

35. On this visit, see PFI/13, pp.725-6, 728, 729, 730-1.

36. Tels. of 28, 29 and 30 Mar. 1877, Appendix V, pp.12-13 of 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537.

37. Lytton to Egerton, 10 Apr. 1877, LyP/518/2, p.263.

38. Lytton to Beaconsfield, 3 Oct. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.515; Appendix V, p.6 of 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537.

39. Much of this is in *ibid.*

ment laid down for the Maharaja the basis of a possible Kashmir-Chitral treaty. This, it was suggested, should contain

first, an express recognition by the Chitral Chief of Your Highness's suzerainty; *secondly*, an agreement for the exchange of representatives; and, *thirdly*, an agreement by Your Highness to grant the Chitral Chief such annual subsidy as may be determined. . . .

The Maharaja's draft followed these suggestions closely. At the end of 1878 it was sent to Aman with the first instalment of the subsidy and, early in 1879, a Chitrali envoy returned with an almost identical document. Aman had not even bothered to sign it, but had simply stated that it had his approval.⁴⁰

Despite this paper commitment, Aman-ul-Mulk did his best to minimize the significance of his relations with Kashmir and to maintain as close ties as possible with Kabul. Lytton was prepared to turn a blind eye to this, if it would prevent any overt Afghan action against Chitral,⁴¹ but it made things very difficult for Biddulph at Gilgit, especially as Afghan-Indian relations in 1878 were deteriorating towards war. Matters eventually reached such a pitch that Biddulph even doubted whether his projected visit to Chitral in 1878 would serve any purpose at all.⁴² On 16 October he reached Yasin. On the 29th, the final ultimatum was despatched to Kabul. On the 31st, several weeks too late, the Indian Government telegraphed to order the postponement of Biddulph's visit.⁴³ With war about to break out between India and Afghanistan it was impossible to guess which way Aman-ul-Mulk would jump.

Luckily Biddulph received a tolerably friendly welcome in Yasin and Chitral. Both rulers, however, were loud in their contempt of the Kashmir connection. Pahlwan Bahadur of Yasin claimed that he had met with 'nothing but bad treatment and bad faith from Kashmir; that in consequence he had determined on sending no more *Vakils* to Jammu'. Aman-ul-Mulk was even more contemptuous of the Kashmir subsidy – 'I can take a few Kaffir women and sell them for as much', he said – and was clearly disappointed that Biddulph had brought with him nothing

40. See Appendix III. Aman's draft reduced the tribute in Article I to two of each article.

41. To Cavagnari, 20 July 1877, LyP/3/2, p.629.

42. Biddulph to Northbrook, 20 Sept. 1878, NoP/14, p.79.

43. J. Crawford, Further Précis on Gilgit Affairs, 27 Nov. 1878, LyP/522/1.

more than platitudes about the need for friendship with Kashmir. A few days after Biddulph left, despite a very clear warning against it, Aman made fresh overtures to Kabul for a marriage alliance.⁴⁴

Frederick Henvey, the Kashmir Resident, was inclined to take the Chitral-Kabul liaison very seriously indeed and, since India and Afghanistan were now at war, recommended that Aman should lose his subsidy.⁴⁵ Lytton was understandably reluctant to admit the failure of the Madhopore policy, although his discouragement of Henvey's proposal on the ground that India could not prevent Chitral's relations with Kabul was tantamount to the same thing. In any case, he was much more aware of the difficult nature of Aman-ul-Mulk's position than Henvey, and looked to the defeat of Afghanistan in the field to give Aman a more accurate assessment of the relative strengths of the two winds between which he was so uneasily trimming. And so it proved to be. The conduct of the Chitral Chief 'varied weekly, according to the progress of the war',⁴⁶ but by April 1879, when the issue was no longer in doubt, he was being described as the 'devoted ally' of Kashmir.⁴⁷

By then, the patent inability of Kashmir to obtain an effective control over Chitral and Yasin, and to guard their northern passes against either Russia or Afghanistan, had already led Lytton to consider other means of achieving the same ends. Before 1877, no direct relations had been entered into with the Pathan tribes on this part of the frontier at all. In April 1877, however, Lytton sent to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab drafts of letters which were to be forwarded to the chiefs of Swat, Dir and Bajaur.⁴⁸ Egerton refused to despatch them and sent only verbal messages instead, for, as he explained, there was a danger of either a humiliating rebuff or of extensive commitments.⁴⁹ To Lytton, this was nothing but a new expression of the old Panjab belief that 'what

44. Biddulph, Report of a Journey to Yasin and Chitral, 22 Dec. 1878, enclosed with 74, India, 27 Mar. 1879, PFI/21, p.1353. More informal is Biddulph to Northbrook, 25 Nov. 1878, NoP/14, p.101.

45. To Lyall, 11 Jan. 1879, enclosed with 74, India, 27 Mar. 1879, PFI/21, p.1353.

46. Biddulph, Memo. on the present condition of affairs in Gilgit, Secret and Political Memo., A.18.

47. Gilgit Diary, 3 Apr. 1879, PFI/22, p.585.

48. Letter of 22 Apr. 1877, LyP/518/2, p.291.

49. To Lytton, 22 and 24 Apr. 1877, LyP/519/4, nos.115 and 120.

has never been done before, must never be done at all'.⁵⁰ He did not, however, press his views, for it was obvious by the spring of 1877 that the Afghan attempts to set the border ablaze had failed.⁵¹

Later in the same year, Rahmatulla Khan of Dir made fresh approaches to Cavagnari, the British Commissioner at Peshawar, for guarantees of independence and assistance with troops and a subsidy.⁵² He was probably suspicious of his failure to obtain a promise of non-aggression from Kabul, and especially alarmed by the Amir's intrigues with his eastern neighbour, Swat. The aged but influential *Akhund* of Swat was certainly strong enough to resist Afghan influence, but a struggle at his death was inevitable between his son, Mian Gul, and Sherdil Khan, Chief of the Rani-zais and an ally of Rahmatulla. Since Mian Gul looked to Kabul for support, it was not really surprising that Sherdil and Rahmatulla should seek help from the British.⁵³ There were obviously sound political reasons for backing the Dir faction as an insurance against Afghan supremacy in Swat. Cavagnari hoped and believed that Dir, with British support, would be able to unite the Pathan tribes in a great anti-Afghan confederacy. He suggested a subsidy for both Rahmatulla and Sherdil, provided that they re-established relations with Kashmir and that Rahmatulla proved his ability to close the gap between his own and Indian territory.⁵⁴

It was not only the anti-Afghan quality of such a combination which made it attractive. For many years the existence of a more direct trade route to Chinese Turkistan than either those across Ladakh to the east, or by Jalalabad and Kunduz to the west, had been suspected, running north from Peshawar *via* Swat and Dir to Chitral, and then into the Upper Oxus valley. Scepticism about the alleged ease of the route, its inaccessibility, and the fact that

50. To Egerton, 26 Apr. 1877, LyP/518/2, p.323.

51. Lytton to Salisbury, 25 Apr. 1877, LyP/3/2, p.306; Thornton to Henderon, 24 Apr. 1877, Appendix V, p.15 of 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537.

52. Memo. of an interview, 10 Oct. 1877, PFI/17, p.446.

53. The situation in Swat is described by T. C. Plowden, 'Papers relating to the state of affairs in Swat', *Selections from the Records of the Government of the Panjab—New Series*, no.14 (1877) and in reports in PFP/859, especially p.681.

54. Memo. of an interview, 10 Oct. 1877, PFI/17, p.446; cf., Cavagnari to Lytton, 26 Mar. 1878, LyP/519/8, no.1.

it crossed areas 'infested with fanatical tribes hostile to Britain',⁵⁵ all made direct governmental action such as was practicable on the Ladakh routes impossible, despite the urgent representations of commercial interests.⁵⁶ As late as 1876, the Commissioner of Peshawar was repeating the view that it was not a practicable proposition to open the route, because there was no reliable information about it and the Indian Government had no official relations with the tribes in question.⁵⁷ Now, a year later, Biddulph was supplying the information, Chitral was in theory under the influence of a British feudatory, and Dir was seeking to enter into relations with the British authorities. Whatever the possibilities for trade implicit in this changed situation, Lytton was much more interested in the political and strategic advantages of 'a permanently safe and permanently open alternative route from Peshawar to Chitral and Yasin' and the passes they guarded.⁵⁸ From that time the advantages of this short route from India to the passes, in preference to the long haul by Kashmir and Gilgit, became a constant theme in British statements about the northern frontier. In 1890, Roberts⁵⁹ estimated that it would take only twenty days to get an infantry brigade from Nowshera to Gilgit by the Dir route, as opposed to the eighty days necessary from Rawalpindi by the Srinagar road.⁶⁰ For Lytton, in 1878, control of this route had an obvious appeal as an alternative means of bringing pressure to bear on Aman-ul-Mulk, especially as Biddulph was writing to him at this time, stressing the weakness of the Kashmir grip on Chitral from the Gilgit side.⁶¹

Most of these considerations, avowed or unconscious, played their part in the search for a policy towards Dir which occupied much of the early months of 1878. The need for action was increased by the death of the *Akhund* of Swat in the January.⁶²

55. Forsyth Memo., 21 Sept. 1868, AP 1868-9 XLVI 384, p.33.

56. See the petition of the Society of Arts in 1873, AP/Reel 321 and its enclosures, Reel 325.

57. To Panjab, 31 May 1876, PFP/859, p.484.

58. To Cavagnari, 6 Feb. 1878, LyP/518/3, p.93.

59. Frederick Sleigh Roberts (1832-1914), Indian Commander-in-Chief 1885-93, later Earl Roberts of Kandahar. Also see index.

60. Memo. on the proposed construction of a Railway from Kashmir to the Panjab, 4 Aug. 1890, RoP/6, p.687.

61. Letter of 24 Feb. 1878, LyP/519/7, no.77.

62. Tel., India, 16 Jan. 1878, HC/33, p.459.

Rahmatulla and Sherdil immediately took possession of some villages in Upper Swat, and Mian Gul despatched a mission to Kabul for assistance.⁶³ In the February, Cavagnari was instructed to find out what Rahmatulla was prepared to offer in return for a cash subsidy.⁶⁴ This first tentative step in a new policy was destined, for many reasons, to be the last. For one thing, as even Cavagnari had to admit, Rahmatulla's demand for British protection was impossible to concede.⁶⁵ And the alternative – the rather lame advice that he should re-establish friendly relations with Kashmir – was unlikely to appeal to him, any more than it did to Aman-ul-Mulk, as an adequate safeguard against Afghan hostility. For as even the Maharaja admitted, and all Biddulph's evidence confirmed the view, Kashmir could give no real assistance to Dir if it was attacked.⁶⁶ Worse still, the so-called 'poor creature', Mian Gul, quickly inflicted several sharp defeats on the 'strong man', Rahmatulla, even though the latter had the assistance of Sherdil and a force from Chitral.

By June 1878 Lytton had come to the conclusion that Rahmatulla Khan of Dir was not worth buying.⁶⁷ As he later put it,

The Chiefs of these States will come to us whenever we want them. We have only to beckon them off the rank like cabmen; and it is inadvisable to have too many greedy ruffians on our hands at once.⁶⁸

With the flight of Amir Sher Ali a few months later, and the entry of British forces into Afghanistan, the threat from Kabul for the time being ceased to exist. As a result, although the struggle between Dir and Swat dragged on with fluctuating fortunes well into the next decade, it ceased to be of any practical significance for British policy on the northern frontier.

The flirtation with Dir had of course been designed to supple-

63. Enclosure 6 of 17, India, 8 Feb. 1878, PFI/17, p.719; enclosures 3-5 of 21, India, 22 Feb. 1878, PFI/17, p.963; enclosure 3 of 27, India, 15 Mar. 1878, PFI/18, p.165.

64. Lytton to Cavagnari, 6 Feb. 1878, LyP/518/3, p.93.

65. To Lytton, 12 Feb. 1878, LyP/519/7, no.61.

66. T. C. Plowden, *Confidential Précis of Correspondence relating to Affairs in Central Asia, etc. 1875-7*, p.174; Lytton to Cavagnari, 14 Oct. 1877, LyP/518/2, p.918.

67. To Cavagnari, 11 June 1878, LyP/518/3, p.396.

68. Lytton to Cranbrook, 23 Sept. 1878, *ibid.*, p.674. I am indebted to Mrs Denise Angus for drawing my attention to this letter.

ment the inadequacies of the Madhopore policy in the Chitral direction. Biddulph had his own suggestions. He had returned from Chitral and Yasin at the end of 1878 convinced of Aman's treachery, although still hopeful that something could be done with him by playing off against him his nephew in Yasin.⁶⁹ But in March 1879 Biddulph proposed that the attempts to win Aman-ul-Mulk which had been going on since Madhopore should be abandoned. Pahlwan Bahadur of Yasin, on the other hand, should be completely detached from Chitral and his kingdom brought firmly within the Kashmir orbit.⁷⁰ The attitude of the Foreign Department to Biddulph's proposal was admirably lucid: 'Yasin may be as useful to us, strategically, as Chitral; it does not follow that we should abandon Chitral politically'.⁷¹ For political abandonment of Chitral would have driven it straight into the arms of the Amir. Whether Chitral was more important than Yasin as far as a threat from Russia was concerned was debatable, but Yasin could never be used, as could Chitral, to checkmate Afghan intrigues east of the Kunar.

The defeat of Afghanistan opened up quite a different possibility for solving the problem of Chitral. As Henvey put it in April 1879,

. . . in the event of the Afghan power being re-established under British control in Badakhshan, it might be practicable to control Aman-ul-Mulk from thence, far more effectually than he can be controlled from Kashmir.⁷²

This was a solution which Lytton had toyed with before the failure of the Peshawar Conference. But if the events since then had shown anything at all, it was that Afghan friendship could not be relied upon and that Kabul would not hesitate if necessary to enlist the tribes as an offensive weapon against British India. Lyall was thinking along lines similar to those of Edwardes in 1859 when he minuted against Henvey's scheme, 'We have no interest in placing the Kabul Amir at the head of a number of feudatories, also Mahomedan; we should prefer to keep Kabul altogether out. . . .'⁷³

69. Report of a Journey to Yasin and Chitral, 22 Dec. 1878, enclosed with 74, India, 27 Mar. 1879, PFI/21, p.1353.

70. To Henvey, 3 Mar. 1879, Secret Proceedings, Oct. 1879, LyP/522/1.

71. Lyall to Henvey, 14 Apr. 1879, *ibid.*

72. To Lyall, 10 May 1879, PFI/22, p.1061.

73. Minute, 2 May 1879, Secret Proceedings, Oct. 1879, LyP/522/1.

Although perhaps over-optimistic in his belief that Afghan influence could be exercised in Chitral in India's favour, Henvey had at least grasped the essential truth that Chitral could be coerced, and therefore influenced, more easily by Afghanistan on the west than by Kashmir on the east. Some, like Egerton and Cavagnari, wanted to take advantage of this fact in a different way. They urged, now that Afghanistan had been defeated, that Britain should make annexations along the Kabul line and in the area round Jalalabad, in order to command Chitral and the other tribes from the west.⁷⁴ The India Government denied that such a policy was necessary:

The only political advantage . . . acquired would be the means of utilising those tribes and Chiefships as a barrier . . . against the action of any hostile power at Kabul: and for the control or punishment of such action, material guarantees, far more effectual, are provided by the Treaty [Gandamak] which secures to us the permanent military command of Kabul. . . .⁷⁵

The events of the previous three years are sufficient to give the lie to the first part of this statement. It was not primarily against Kabul but against Russia that the British had tried to erect a barrier by extending their own and Kashmir's influence into the area between the Indus and Kunar rivers. And within two months, the lie was tragically given to the second part of the Government's statement. For on 3 September 1879 the British Residency in Kabul, and with it the whole Gandamak policy of a unified Afghanistan under British influence, went up in smoke. Lytton immediately prepared to proceed with his alternative policy – the disintegration of Afghanistan.

Once committed to this reversal of Afghan policy, the way was open for an equal *volte-face* in Dardistan. Just two months after Cavagnari's death at Kabul, Lytton sketched for Egerton the outlines of a drastic new policy which that death had indirectly made possible:

I am led . . . to the conclusion that the Maharaja [of Kashmir] should now be relieved of all responsibilities, and deprived of all

74. Lytton to Cranbrook, 9 Nov. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.1013; Balfour, *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, p.330.

75. 160 of 7 July 1869, AP 1878-9 LVI C.2401, p.24.

powers, in regard to Chitral and Yasin; that he should be simultaneously relieved of the small subsidy he pays to the Mir of Chitral, and of the unwelcome presence of a British Officer at Gilgit; that the agency for our relations with Chitral and Yasin should be transferred to Jalalabad; and that His Highness should be plainly told that, henceforth, he will neither be required, nor permitted, to meddle with the affairs of any State, great or small, beyond the Kashmir frontier.⁷⁶

Egerton, who of course had favoured such a policy before Gandamak, naturally greeted it with enthusiasm.⁷⁷

But within a few months, Lytton had to admit that he could not obtain the 'recognised and well-established political fulcrum at Jalalabad', by which his new policy would stand or fall.⁷⁸ For one thing, the Commander-in-Chief judged the military occupation of the town out of the question on military grounds.⁷⁹ It had obvious political objections as well.⁸⁰ And without military occupation it was unlikely that a Political Officer could be left there in safety. Lytton was still toying with alternative methods of political control in the early months of 1880,⁸¹ but the British electors foiled him. He resigned with the Conservative Government at home, and left India for ever in April 1880.

In the space of four busy years Lytton had sought to control the quadrangle between the Kunar and Indus rivers from three directions. The schemes of control from the west through Afghanistan, and from the south through Dir, never really got off the drawing-board. Both were considered, because control from the east through Kashmir – the policy of Madhopore – was 'a complete failure'. This was Lytton's own conclusion just one month before he left for home. He went on to say that he was 'not cognisant of any practical advantage yet obtained by Major Biddulph's residence at Gilgit'.⁸²

What had gone wrong? Forsyth had been one of the first to advocate a British Agent at Gilgit – not to encourage Kashmiri

76. Letter of 2 Dec. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.1065.

77. To Lytton, 11 Dec. 1879, LyP/519/12, no.1115. So did Biddulph.

78. To Cranbrook, 25 Feb. 1880, LyP/518/6, p.139.

79. The military objections are described in Lytton to Stewart, 27 Mar. 1880, *ibid.*, p.238.

80. Lytton Memo., 20 May 1880, PFI/26, p.1131.

81. E.g. to Roberts, 20–1 Mar. 1880, LyP/518/6, p.194.

82. *Ibid.*

activity, which he mistrusted, but to counter it.⁸³ Lytton adopted the suggestion, but he proceeded from the opposite premise that Kashmir was essentially loyal. In this he followed Northbrook, but there was a great deal of evidence to support the other view. In 1872 a Kashmiri envoy had been despatched to the Russians, and fresh evidence came to light in the following year.⁸⁴ But it was not until he saw the evidence of Kashmir double-dealing which Roberts unearthed at Kabul, that Lytton's faith was really shaken.⁸⁵ It made nonsense of Madhopore. The ally whose influence a British Agent at Gilgit was supposed to spread as a bulwark against Russia and Afghanistan, was found to have been in secret correspondence with both. Treachery was never proved against the Maharaja, but enough was found to show at least 'an unfitness for the functions entrusted to him'.⁸⁶ Lytton summed up the ruler unambiguously for his successor as 'a broken instrument which we can neither mend, nor employ again with any safety'.⁸⁷

Perhaps the hostility to Biddulph's appointment which the Maharaja evinced during the Madhopore negotiations should have been noted more carefully. Certainly it very quickly made absurd that part of Biddulph's instructions which told him to work 'in consultation with the Kashmir authorities'. When every allowance is made for the impulsiveness of his nature, the loneliness and danger of his position, and a natural bitterness at the failure of his mission – all of which inevitably coloured his views – there is no doubt that Biddulph's life at Gilgit was deliberately made unpleasant by the Kashmir authorities. Intrigues began even before he arrived. He wrote later,

My baggage was openly plundered by an official, . . . false reports of an alarming nature were made to me, a report was transmitted . . . that the Governor would not be responsible for my safety. . . .⁸⁸

83. Confidential Report, 21 Sept. 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.

84. Lyall to Burne, 25 Feb. 1880, PFI/24, p.1159A; Davies to Northbrook, 6 Feb. 1873, FO 65/876; Rawlinson to Granville, 9 Mar. 1873, PRO/30/29/75; enclosures of 73, India, 15 Sept. 1873, LIM/15, p.1039A. See also above p.108 and below p.219.

85. To Cranbrook, 7 Feb. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.86.

86. Lytton to Egerton, 2 Dec. 1879, *ibid.*, p.1065.

87. To Ripon, 8 June 1880, LyP/518/6, p.355.

88. Memo. on the present condition of affairs in Gilgit, Mar. 1881, Secret and Political Memo., A.18.

Biddulph unwisely retaliated by accusations against the Governor based on very slender evidence. But although both Henvey and Lyall in the Foreign Department regretted the way he had handled the matter, neither for a moment doubted that he had been the victim of a plot designed to secure his removal from Gilgit.⁸⁹ The Maharaja replaced the Governor in question, but his extreme bitterness at what he doubtless regarded as another unwarrantable trespass on his prerogative *à la Cayley*, probably accounts for much that followed. Strenuous objections were made to Biddulph's 1878 visit to Chitral and Yasin, his suggestions were ignored, attempts were made to enforce a boycott of the Agency, and there was even, Biddulph alleged, a plot to kill him.⁹⁰

Henvey, the British Resident in Kashmir, was face to face with similar problems. Right from the start Lytton considered it an anomaly that British relations with Kashmir, which were increasingly imperial rather than local, should be conducted through the Panjab authorities. In the spring of 1877, therefore, it was laid down that in future

... the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir shall be placed under the immediate orders of the Government of India in the Foreign Department, and shall correspond directly with that Department regarding trans-frontier affairs and other political matters of imperial concern.⁹¹

But it made little difference to Henvey's position *vis-à-vis* Kashmir. He was still ignored by the *darbar* as much as possible, and complained on more than one occasion that he was the last to hear of important events on the frontier. The Panjab authorities made things worse by a rather liberal interpretation of the matters of 'local or provincial interest', which alone were supposed to come within their purview.⁹²

Kashmir opposition was undoubtedly a factor in the difficulties which Biddulph and Henvey encountered, but it is hard to resist

89. Crawford, *Précis of Gilgit Affairs*, 21 June 1878, pp.14-17 and *Précis*, 9 July 1878, pp.27-37, both LyP/522/1.

90. Memo. on the present condition of affairs in Gilgit, Mar. 1881, Secret and Political Memo., A.18.

91. PFP/860, pp.380 and 559 *et seq.*

92. For the many humiliations Henvey endured, see his report of 15 May 1880, para. 41 in J. A. Crawford, *Confidential Précis of Correspondence relating to the Kashmir State*, Appendix 10.

the conclusion that both men lacked the qualities necessary for complete success. Neither trusted the other, and neither had the full confidence of the Foreign Department. Lytton, the Secretary of State, and their Liberal successors – all believed that Henvey was not as tactful with the Maharaja as he might have been. He was, in Lytton's words, 'one of those men who mistake hatchets for razors'.⁹³ Biddulph's defects were of a similar order. He flirted with the most impracticable schemes of intrigue among the tribes, he disobeyed orders on a number of occasions, he mishandled his dispute with the Gilgit Governor, and he not only failed to gain an influence over the tribal Chiefs, but made a patently inaccurate appraisal of the political situation in Dardistan which, as will be seen, put him for a time in grave danger of his life. Both Henvey and Lyall in the Foreign Department paid tribute to his abilities, and both qualified their remarks by deploring his rashness and hot temper.⁹⁴ Lyall, in fact, was forced to urge caution on him almost continually, and Biddulph in return nursed a sense of grievance that his views were being ignored.⁹⁵

The only valuable result of his three-year residence at Gilgit was that he greatly augmented existing knowledge about the tribes and the country they inhabited. Indeed, he made heroic efforts to perform this function effectively. He organized a spy system which extended across the Hindu Kush as far as Samarqand and down the Indus among the Pathan tribes. On the basis of this information he compiled a weekly diary of news. But even here he was handicapped by Kashmir obstruction and by the opposition of Chitral and Yasin, both controlling the outlets to the north.⁹⁶ Henvey once said that he could not remember a single instance when valuable news came from Gilgit, hidden as it was on the wrong side of the mountains and 'on the road to nowhere'.⁹⁷

93. To Egerton, 2 Dec. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.1065.

94. Henvey Memo., 22 Nov. 1880, Crawford, *Confidential Précis of Correspondence relating to the Kashmir State*, p.191; Lyall Minute, 1 Mar. 1881, BM Add. Mss. 43575, p.71.

95. See, e.g., his letter to Northbrook, 20 Feb. 1879, NoP/14, p.120. These interesting and uninhibited letters to the former Viceroy are very revealing of Biddulph's temperament.

96. Biddulph to Lytton, 24 Feb. 1878, LyP/519/7, no.77. The official survey was not extended to Gilgit until 1879–80, IFP/1391, p.189 *et seq.*

97. Memo., 22 Nov. 1880, Crawford, *Confidential Précis of Correspondence relating to the Kashmir State*, p.191.

What is quite clear is that the value of the information Biddulph managed to obtain was totally incommensurate with the risk involved.

For Biddulph's ineffectiveness was, to a large extent, simply a reflection of the weakness of the British power he represented. Amid a tangle of 'mountain tops higher than Mont Blanc'⁹⁸ and far from the reservoirs of British military strength, British influence at Gilgit was just not strong enough, either to impress Chiefs like Aman-ul-Mulk, or to control the dubious activities of the Kashmir officials. The fact that the Indian Government, when appealed to by the tribes, could only refer them to the Hindu power they despised, ultimately proved fatal to Biddulph's chances of success, and he constantly urged the need to by-pass the Kashmir *darbar* if any results were to be achieved. Certainly Lytton's policy here is in striking contrast to his frequently expressed aim of pushing British influence, whether it be on the Upper Oxus or in Kashgar, only where it could be maintained, if necessary, by force. In June 1880 the Indian Foreign Secretary admitted to Henvey that

Should difficulties arise, it would be embarrassing, if not impossible, for the Government of India to render any material assistance to the Maharaja or to Major Biddulph in regard to the protection and tranquility of this remote frontier.⁹⁹

The root trouble, of course, was the inaccessibility of Gilgit, both from British territory direct and along the route from Kashmir. From Srinagar to Gilgit was over two hundred and thirty miles (that is, at least eighteen marches for troops) of at best rough track, and closed by snow for half the year. The route crossed the Indus at Bunji (at this time all goods and men had to be ferried across) and the forty-yard torrent of the Astor River at Ramghat. Two of the passes – the Kamri at 13,000 feet and the Tragbal at nearly 10,000 feet – were both liable to sudden gales of deadly cold so intense that, even in 1892 when the route had been improved, a caravan of three hundred mules and their drivers could be wiped out in a single night. In places the route was so narrow that mules often fell into the torrent below, and in others so bad that supplies

98. Sir Erskine Perry Minute, PTI/4, p.361.

99. Letter of 29 June 1880, enclosed with 65, India, 27 July 1880, PFI/26, p.293.

could only be carried by impressed coolies. These were neither fed nor clothed properly and were consequently in a terrible condition physically. Even in summer, when the heat was so pitiless that the route along waterless stretches could be followed by the bleached bones that littered it, communication between Kashmir and Gilgit was often interrupted.

It is true that Lytton's information in 1876 tended to minimize the difficulties of the route but, once they had been realized, it should have been obvious that improvements were essential.¹⁰⁰ As it was, almost the only thing achieved was an Anglo-Kashmir agreement in 1878 to construct a telegraph line between Gilgit and Srinagar, and even that was on the Maharaja's initiative. But although the Jammu-Srinagar section was quickly finished, the line onwards to Gilgit was still incomplete in 1884, as each savage winter undid most of the work of the previous summer.¹⁰¹ As for the road itself, by 1881 only ten miles of improvements had been completed, and even then with no regard whatsoever to gradient.¹⁰²

The Kashmir grip on Gilgit was bound to be weak. In fact, despite the crippling effect of Kashmiri intrigues against Biddulph, it was the weakness not the strength of Kashmir in Dardistan which really stultified the Madhopore policy. And there were many more reasons for this than the mere difficulty of access from the Kashmir side, important as this was. In the first place, it was inevitable that the Muslim tribes would resist to the uttermost any extension of the influence of their traditional Hindu enemy. Their relations with Kashmir were based on no community of interest and would normally have been distant, if not actually hostile. Aman-ul-Mulk in particular was in an impossible position. If Madhopore was to succeed, he had to align himself with the 'cow worshippers' of Kashmir and the British 'Kafirs' – the one he scorned, and the other he scarcely knew – against the free Islam of the wild neighbours who surrounded him, and in face of the ever-present menace from Kabul. Nothing that British India

100. The Kashmir Resident stressed the need for them in his letter of 9 Mar. 1877, Appendix III, Section 5, p. 38 of 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537.

101. Appendix V of *ibid.* The correspondence is *India General Proceedings*, Mar. 1878, nos. 1–56; Dec. 1879, no.12 and May 1881, no.4; IFP/2111, Jan., p.257 and Feb., p.179.

102. Letter from Mr Ross, 24 Aug. 1881, RP/10, p.110A.

offered could affect these basic facts of Chitral's political environment. The subsidy which Aman received from Kashmir might as well have been thrown in the Indus for all the good it did. As a guardian of the passes he was useless and, if war had come with the Russians in 1878-9, as it so nearly did, he would probably have joined a Russia supreme on the Upper Oxus and in alliance with Kabul.¹⁰³

If he had, it is quite certain that Kashmir could have done little about it. The military weakness of Kashmir at Gilgit was pathetic. The proper complement of the Gilgit garrison was one Kashmir infantry regiment at Gilgit and Skardo and two at Astor, but they were almost always gravely under strength and efforts to remedy the situation proved unavailing.¹⁰⁴ When the outbreak of 1880 occurred, there were only seven hundred and fifty men at Gilgit to oppose a tribal combination numbered in thousands. Of these, the officers were 'incapable' and 'a large proportion of them' were, 'from old age and sickness, unfit for active service in a mountainous country.'¹⁰⁵ Two days after Henvey had written this, a British officer reported from Astor that those of its garrison who were fit for duty were armed only with flint muskets, which 'would take about five minutes to load . . . if the bullet with its inequalities did not happen to stick in the barrel'.¹⁰⁶

The military weakness of Kashmir in Dardistan had its roots in the gross maladministration at home. Kashmir was by nature almost the last place in India to be hit by a scarcity of food. And yet, in the three years before 1880, it had suffered so cruelly from protracted misgovernment that some three-fifths of the Muslim population had died.¹⁰⁷ This, of course, had a disastrous effect at Gilgit, for it not only limited supplies but decimated the coolies who alone could move them. Despite the running fire of anti-Kashmir feeling in the British press, Lytton was slow to move. He was afraid that the sort of active intervention in Kashmir's domestic

103. Henvey to Lyall, 21 Apr. 1879, Secret Proceedings, Oct. 1879, p.28, LyP/522/1.

104. Secret Proceedings, Jan. 1879, nos. 25-7, *ibid.*; Crawford, *Précis of Gilgit Affairs*, 21 June 1878, *ibid.*; Henderson to Lytton, 6 Apr. 1878, LyP/519/7.

105. Henvey to Lyall, 16 Dec. 1880, enclosed with 103, India, 15 July 1881, PFI/29, p.235.

106. Tanner to Henvey, 18 Dec. 1880, IFP/1743, Aug. A, p.675. See below p.140.

107. Crawford, *Confidential Précis of Correspondence relating to the Kashmir State*, Appendices 10 and 11.

affairs which Henvey and Lyall were urging in 1879, would amount to annexation. It would not only impose a heavy burden on British time, energy and money, but would probably have an adverse effect on British relations with the other feudatory rulers in India as well.¹⁰⁸ None of these were risks to be taken lightly, especially while India was at war. Gradually however, in face of the disastrous course of the famine in Kashmir and the mounting evidence of the Maharaja's intrigues, Lytton became convinced that something would have to be done. He was all ready to impose far-reaching reforms on the Maharaja when his Viceroyalty ended, and he had to content himself with the warning to his successor that Kashmir was the first problem that would have to be tackled.¹⁰⁹

Behind all these political and military factors stultifying the Madhopore policy, lies a less obvious strategical weakness. Colonel Gordon had been the first to sketch a scheme of defence for the northern frontier based on Gilgit¹¹⁰ and it was designed to meet the danger of a Russian advance across the Pamirs and over the easy Yasin passes, which he and Biddulph had revealed while exploring with Forsyth's mission in 1874. In 1876, however, as has been seen, Biddulph's second visit had shown that the Yasin passes were unimportant and that the Baroghil Pass into Chitral was the most vulnerable of all. Moreover, all the evidence suggested, although no Englishman at that time had travelled along it to confirm it, that the route south of the Baroghil through Chitral was also easy.¹¹¹ And yet Gilgit, which Madhopore constituted the basis of Chitral's defence, was separated from it by two hundred and twenty miles of bad road, by the 12,000 feet of the Shandur Pass, and by a dangerous defile in which, much later in 1895, a British officer and a party of Sikhs were wiped out to a man by tribesmen contesting the passage. It is true that Lytton hoped at Madhopore that Kashmir could gain an effective control over Chitral without the full absorption which was planned for

108. Lytton to Cranbrook, 15 Nov. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.979.

109. To Ripon, 8 June 1880, LyP/518/6, p.355.

110. On the strategical effect of holding the Ishkoman Pass in Yasin, 3 Nov. 1875, HC/6, p.631.

111. Biddulph later confirmed this, although still largely by hearsay. Report on a Journey to Yasin and Chitral, enclosed with 74, India, 27 Mar. 1879, PFI/21, p.1353.

Yasin.¹¹² Biddulph thought so too at first and, in any case, he believed that

by having Yasin under our influence and strengthening Gilgit . . . it would be impossible for any force to advance down the Chitral valley with the prospect of being taken in flank.¹¹³

But Kashmir did *not* gain an effective control over Yasin, and even the Maharaja's grip on Gilgit was suspect. And, even without the Kashmir failure, there was a fundamental weakness in a scheme which, based on Gilgit to the east, was meant to defend the Chitral passes to the west. Indeed it was the partial realization of this fact which inspired Lytton's abortive attempts to open the direct route to Chitral from the south.

All one can say about the Madhopore policy is that there *may* have been some advantage in the shadowy sway which the Maharaja exercised over Aman-ul-Mulk, especially if the object was, as Lyall claimed in 1879, not to gain him as an ally in war but merely 'to ticket him as our man, whom no one else must meddle with'.¹¹⁴ This may have been the object by 1879, but it was a big step back from the original aims of Madhopore. Henvey's generalizations of May 1880 about Chitral and Kashmir seem much more to the point:

. . . when the shock of war comes, diplomatic considerations are apt to be rudely swept aside: and an empty title to suzerainty, unenforced by real strength, is not likely to command respectful notice. . . . A State which is rotten to the core within can scarcely show a bold front without. A State whose soldiers are always in arrears, and therefore discontented, forms a sorry bulwark to the Indian Empire. A State which cannot keep its people alive would meet with difficulty in equipping and supplying a force for distant warfare in a barren country.¹¹⁵

The truth of all this was to be very quickly revealed to Lord Ripon.

112. To Salisbury, 20 Aug. 1876, LyP/518/1, p.406.

113. To Henvey, 3 Mar. 1879, Secret Proceedings, Oct. 1879, LyP/522/1.

114. To Henvey, 16 May 1879, *ibid.*

115. Memo., 15 May 1880, Crawford, *Confidential Précis of Correspondence relating to the Kashmir State*, Appendix 10, p.277.

(3) *The Gilgit Agency in abeyance 1880-1888*

Lord Ripon was a great admirer of John Lawrence and a natural opponent of Lytton's 'forward' policies in almost every sphere of governmental activity. As far as he was concerned, the Gilgit Agency was a 'mistake',¹ but before he could take any steps to abolish it, the simmering hostility of the tribes boiled over on 28 October 1880.

Hunza and Nagar had for years owed some sort of allegiance to the former rulers of Gilgit and from 1869 they paid tribute to Kashmir, receiving a small annual subsidy in return. Ghazan Khan of Hunza was generally more hostile to Kashmir than was Jaffar Khan, his neighbour across the river in Nagar. Not only was Hunza territory more inaccessible, but Ghazan Khan's allegiance was complicated by an obscure relationship with the Chinese authorities at Kashgar.² Although Biddulph visited Hunza in 1876 before his appointment to Gilgit, it is extremely doubtful whether, as Agent, he would have had much to do with the country, had it not been for the Kashmir intervention in the Hunza-Nagar dispute about Chaprot. This fort, situated at the point where the Hunza, Nagar and Kashmir territories met, and believed by the tribesmen to be impregnable, was obviously of some importance strategically. As far as Kashmir was concerned, it was especially valuable because it dominated the route between Gilgit and Hunza, and safeguarded the Gilgit garrison against a flank attack from the north. It was for this reason, above all, that Biddulph at Madhopore recommended the occupation of Chaprot by a Kashmiri force.³

The situation was favourable for such a step in 1876. Hunza forces had retained the fort until the winter of 1875-6 when the inhabitants, tired of the oppressive rule of Ghazan Khan, had invited Jaffar Khan of Nagar to occupy the place instead. He had done so, but fearful of Ghazan Khan's almost inevitable retaliation, begged for a Kashmir garrison to hold the fort as an arbiter between them. With Lytton's approval, such an arrangement was

1. To Hartington, 27 July 1880, RP/2, p.40.

2. Below pp.160-1.

3. Appendix IV, p.12 of 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537.

concluded in June 1877, and the new Kashmiri force at Chaprot was put under the command of Azor Khan, younger son of the Nagar ruler, as Governor.⁴

Early in 1878, Ghazan Khan sought Biddulph's help in recovering Chaprot for Hunza. The rejection of this feeler, coming just when the Chinese re-conquest of Kashgar had freed Hunza from the threat of the Ataliq Ghazee's wrath on the north, seems to have led directly to a spate of active Hunza intrigue for a joint Yasin-Chilas-Darel attack on Gilgit.⁵ Although Biddulph believed that the whole story was just another plot to frighten him away,⁶ the Kashmir forces nevertheless began to take steps to meet the danger. More than anything, the improvement of the route to Chaprot so as 'to allow of a man passing over the worst places without using his hands'⁷ seems to have upset Ghazan Khan's plans. So, in June 1878, he shifted his ground and began to urge Kashmir to take over the fort entirely. Both Biddulph and Henvey were in favour of this suggestion because the existing arrangement was quite unsatisfactory.⁸ The Maharaja however, and again later in May and October 1879, refused to take any steps which might lead to hostilities on the frontier. His caution is not hard to understand. Famine was raging in Kashmir, the garrison at Gilgit was depleted, and Jaffar Khan's insolence in Nagar was adding point to the stronger-than-usual rumours which were circulating during these months of an imminent large-scale tribal rising.⁹

When Biddulph returned to Gilgit in the spring of 1880, after spending the winter in India, the situation had deteriorated even further. Pahlwan Bahadur of Yasin, whom Biddulph always favoured above all, had for some reason become openly hostile, and appeared to be entering into ominously close relations with Hunza.¹⁰ A little later, Jaffar Khan of Nagar was deposed by his eldest son Mahmud Khan, a man bitterly hostile to his brother Azor Khan and the Kashmiri garrison at Chaprot. He, too, quickly got in touch with Hunza. Rumours thickened as the year

4. Appendix III, Section 15, p.42 of *ibid.*

5. Enclosure 7 of 148, India, 8 July 1878, PFI/18, p.1307.

6. To Lytton, 24 Feb. 1878, LyP/519/7, no.77.

7. Enclosure 9 of 148, India, 8 July 1878, PFI/18, p.1307.

8. Enclosures of 72, India, 2 Sept. 1878, PFI/19, p.449.

9. A good summary of the mass of documents on these events is enclosure 9 of 103, India, 15 July 1881, PFI/29, p.235.

10. Discussed in *ibid.*

1880 wore on, and so apparently did relations between the tribes.¹¹

Against this background, the position of the small Kashmiri garrison at Chaprot, thirty miles of bad road from reinforcements, was extremely precarious. In 1880, therefore, Biddulph and Henvy brought fresh pressure to bear on the Kashmir authorities to make Chaprot independent of Gilgit for assistance and of Nagar for supplies.¹² This time, the danger of a tribal upheaval was so patent that the Kashmir authorities at last took active steps to meet it. In February, arms and grain were supplied to Azor Khan at Chaprot and sappers began to work on the road again.¹³ In June, the Maharaja practically made the whole question over to Biddulph. An unusually competent Kashmiri officer, General Hoshiara, was sent to Gilgit and immediately began putting the defences in order. The garrison there was gradually increased to what Biddulph considered the minimum of two hundred and fifty men, Azor Khan's subsidy was increased, Hunza and Nagar were warned in the strongest possible terms of the consequences of defection, and some hundreds of troops at Srinagar under orders for Gilgit were despatched straight away.¹⁴

On 28 October 1880, before these preparations were really complete, Biddulph's 'good friend' Pahlwan, aided by a Hunza force, seized Gakuch forty miles upstream of Gilgit, overran Ponial, and besieged Sher Qila, a fort only twenty-four miles from Gilgit. The situation was undoubtedly serious.¹⁵ Reinforcements sent up to Sher Qila failed to arrive in time, and Biddulph was forced to abandon an attempt to relieve the fort and retired hastily to Gilgit. The garrison reliefs, which should have reached Gilgit two months earlier, did not arrive until mid-November and, of those troops in Gilgit when the crisis broke, one-tenth were sick and the rest were mostly either boys or old men. It was almost, as Biddulph put it, 'a big business'.¹⁶ Chilas was ready to attack Bunji and so

11. Gilgit Diary, 16-22 July 1879 and 1-8 June 1880, PFI/23, p.399 and PFI/26, p.327.

12. Correspondence is enclosed with 65, India, 27 July 1880, PFI/26, p.293.

13. Gilgit Diary, 23-9 Feb. 1880, PFI/25, p.265; enclosure 13 of 122, India, 1 June 1880, PFI/25, p.917.

14. Enclosures 17, 19 and 24 of 65, India, 27 July 1880, PFI/26, p.293; Gilgit Diary, 23-31 July 1880, PFI/26, p.939; Moore Minute, HC/4, p.803.

15. Tel., India, 18 Nov. 1880, enclosed with 241, India, 22 Dec. 1880, PFI/26, p.2055.

16. Enclosure 34 of *ibid.*

cut Gilgit off from the outside world, forces from Tangir and Darel joined Pahlwan before Sher Qila, and it was subsequently revealed that, with one exception, every village on the Gilgit side of the Indus was ready to join.¹⁷ Not the least ironic feature of the situation was the fact that the only men of any importance to stand by Biddulph were the two he suspected most of all – Jaffar Khan of Nagar and Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral. The former sent a small force to aid Gilgit, and Aman launched an attack on Yasin while Pahlwan was before Sher Qila which forced him to abandon the siege and fly almost alone into Wakhan. By mid-November the main danger was over.¹⁸

The search for a new policy for the northern frontier began at once. The first news of the rising had brought a spate of minutes at home in favour of Biddulph's removal.¹⁹ Henvey too, although in May 1880 he had stated his belief that it was only Biddulph's presence which kept the frontier tranquil, was by the December convinced that the Gilgit Agency should go.²⁰ He was, in any case, rapidly losing patience with Biddulph's insubordination and political maladroitness. Meanwhile, the Gilgit Agent himself was making his own characteristic proposals. His greatest wish, he said, was 'to send 300 British sepoy who would push Pahlwan and all the "tribes of the Hindoo Koosh" into the Oxus'.²¹ Pahlwan's subsequent flight across, if not into, the Oxus made no difference. Biddulph continued to believe that 'punitive expeditions' were called for, because 'we shall never be secure or peaceable in Gilgit if hostile acts like the recent ones be passed over'.²² Henvey's view, that 'if John Biddulph is allowed to go prancing about on "punitive expeditions" we shall soon be in hot water

17. Gilgit Diary, 18–25 Nov. 1880, PFI/26, p.2051.

18. The rising is fully described in the enclosures of 241, India, 22 Dec. 1880, PFI/26, p.2055. See also Biddulph's letters in BM Add. Mss. 43574, pp.511 and 515.

19. HC/42, p.809 and Hartington to Ripon, 25 Nov. and 10 Dec. 1880, BM Add. Mss. 43565, p.208 and 43566, p.13.

20. To Lyall, 4 Dec. 1880, enclosed with 103, India, 15 July 1881, PFI/29, p.235.

21. To Henvey, 1 Nov. 1880, BM Add. Mss. 43574, p.512. This heavy humour at the expense of the title of his book which had just been published brought its own crop of solemn minutes to the effect that 'of course' troops could not be sent to push Pahlwan in the river.

22. To Henvey, 14 Nov. 1880, enclosed with 241, India, 22 Dec. 1880, PFI/26, p.2055.

again',²³ was naturally also that of the Indian Government. Ripon himself was so afraid that Biddulph's 'indiscreet and unwise' activities would lead to further trouble, that he wanted to push through the abolition of the Gilgit Agency as quickly as possible, regardless of the loss of prestige involved.²⁴ Biddulph and Henvey were both summoned to Simla for consultation, and there the withdrawal of the Agency was finally decided upon. In July 1881, in the same month as the last British officers left Gilgit, the new arrangements were officially laid down by the Indian Government for Henvey's benefit:

. . . the change of circumstances since 1877 has so far diminished the importance of this post of observation, that it is not thought worthwhile to maintain an Agency at present. . . . You will avoid any expression that might be taken as indicating any indifference . . . to the state of affairs on that frontier. . . . His Excellency in Council is aware that this arrangement will probably necessitate more frequent consultation with the Government of India. . . .

Arrangements with regard to Chitral were left entirely to the Maharaja.²⁵

Aman-ul-Mulk had certainly played his cards very skilfully in this affair. There is little doubt that he was party to Pahlwan's plans, for his troops marched against Yasin on the very day that that unfortunate Chief attacked Sher Qila. As a result, Aman had been able to pose as the loyal tributary of Kashmir and win a large financial reward for his pains. He had also gained a much augmented kingdom by extending his power across to the Gilgit side of the watershed. Whatever his private doubts about such a drastic shift in the balance of power in Dardistan, the Maharaja was in no position to challenge it and it duly received his approval.²⁶

No official conclusion was ever reached about the origins of the rising of 1880. What is clear however, is that it laid bare the weaknesses of the Madhopore policy so strikingly that they could no longer be tolerated. Kashmir intrigue may have been behind the

23. To Lyall, 22 Nov. 1880, BM Add. Mss. 43574, p.520.

24. To Lyall, 6 Feb. 1881, RP/9, p.14.

25. Enclosure 31 of 103, India, 15 July 1881, PFI/29, p.235, extract in AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.4.

26. Maharaja to Aman-ul-Mulk, enclosure 12 of 143, India, 23 Oct. 1881, PFI/30, p.311.

affair, and certainly Kashmir corruption and inefficiency made it more serious than it actually was. As for Biddulph, it was only too plain that in three years he had failed, not only to establish any influence over the tribes, but to form any reliable opinion about them either. His special protégé, Pahlwan, had led the attack and almost the only Chief remaining loyal to the Maharaja had been Jaffar Khan of Nagar, whose annual subsidy had earlier been stopped on Biddulph's recommendation. But, above all, it was only too obvious that neither Kashmir nor the Indian Government could provide adequately for the personal safety of an Agent in such a remote spot as Gilgit.

It was one thing to criticize the Madhopore policy, but quite another to devise an adequate substitute for it. Direct British intervention on the Kashmir frontier was out of the question, and there was no longer the possibility of control from the Afghan side. No feasible third course really existed. Either the Government of India had to contract out of an influence in the area altogether, or it had to exert its influence vicariously through Kashmir. The first was patently unwise, the second no more than Lytton's Madhopore policy, but it was, as Ripon's Government admitted, 'the only practicable policy left open to us',²⁷ In other words, the difference between Ripon and Lytton was simply one about the means to an agreed end. The real breach with the past was not 1881 but 1876, when Mayo's Sialkot policy of restricting the extension of Kashmir influence was reversed. Ripon, in fact, lost no time in pointing out to the Maharaja that the objects of 1876, 'which are still regarded by the Government of India as important, will be in no way contravened by the removal . . . of the Agency'.²⁸ Aman-ul-Mulk was warned that his treaty with Kashmir was still binding, and full discretion was reserved to send back a British Agent to Gilgit if it should ever be found necessary.

The authorities at home were not altogether happy about this compromise and Ripon himself did not disguise his doubts about Kashmir's ability to control the tribes.²⁹ Indeed, it was almost a corollary of the abolition of the Gilgit Agency that something

27. 88, India, 25 Aug. 1882, PFI/33, p.949.

28. Letter of 18 June 1881, Crawford, *Confidential Précis of Correspondence relating to the Kashmir State*, p.195.

29. 88, India, 25 Aug. 1882, PFI/33, p.949. See minutes PTI/7, p.331 and HC/48, p.130.

would have to be done to put Kashmir's internal house in order. Ripon had urged the Maharaja to embark on a thorough overhaul of his administration as soon as he arrived in India,³⁰ and reminded him again a year later. Nothing was done. A drastic reform programme was therefore drawn up, which was to be put into effect the moment the ailing Maharaja died.³¹ He did so in September 1885, and Ripon's successor, Lord Dufferin, followed the programme exactly.³²

But apart from general administrative reform, Ripon was forced to take other more specific measures especially designed with an eye to contingencies beyond the Kashmir frontier. The arrangement which Lytton had been forced to accept, whereby the British 'officer on special duty' in Kashmir was responsible only for imperial matters to the Indian Government, had not worked well even while Biddulph was at Gilgit.³³ When he was removed, Ripon particularly asked the Maharaja to keep the 'officer on special duty'

constantly informed as to the course of events beyond his northern frontier, and to consult [him] . . . in taking any measures affecting the relations of Kashmir with any of the neighbouring States.³⁴

It was not long, however, before Henvey was complaining that he was being systematically starved of information by the Kashmir authorities.³⁵ By April 1884, Ripon had come reluctantly to the conclusion that there was no alternative but to appoint a permanent 'Resident' in Kashmir. This step, it was argued, was

. . . called for, not merely by the need for assisting and supervising administrative reforms, but also by the increasing importance to the Government of India of watching events beyond the North-Western frontier of Kashmir.³⁶

30. Letter of 13 July 1880, IFP/1922, Sept., p.217.

31. The private correspondence between Ripon and Kimberley is RP/6, p.38 and BM Add. Mss. 43525, p.15. The official exchanges are in AP 1890 LIV C.6072, pp.3-5 and 6-8.

32. *Ibid.*, p.5.

33. Above p.131.

34. India to Henvey, 18 July 1881, enclosed with 103, India, 15 July 1881, PFI/29, p.235. The Secret Service money at the disposal of the 'officer on special duty' was increased fourfold when the Gilgit Agency was abolished, IFP/1742, July B, nos.154-5.

35. To India, 11 July 1882, enclosed with 108, India, 25 Sept. 1882, PFI/33, p.875.

36. India, 7 Apr. 1884, AP 1890 LIV C.6072, p.3.

Dufferin carried through the new arrangement, along with all the other reforms imposed on Kashmir, in 1885.³⁷ It is interesting, although hardly surprising in view of Kashmir's attitude in the past, that the appointment of a permanent British officer to the Maharaja's court aroused a more bitter opposition than all the rest of the administrative reforms put together. And not without some justification. At least one important British official – the new Secretary of State, Lord Randolph Churchill – hoped that the permanent Residency was only the first step towards annexation.³⁸ It is certainly rather ironic that Ripon, who had been so horrified at the discovery that Lytton had once seriously considered the annexation of Kashmir, was himself compelled to establish a tighter grip on Kashmir than any of his predecessors had ever done.

One symptom of this was the attempt which was made to construct a reasonable road from the Panjab into the Valley. When Ripon went to India, over thirty years after the annexation of the Panjab, the routes from British territory into Kashmir were still so bad that laden camels could not pass from one to the other. The least difficult line, and the only one which could be kept open all the winter, was that which ran from Murree to Kohala on the British frontier, and then up the Jihlam valley to Srinagar. In 1881 the Maharaja was urged to push on the construction of a cart road from Srinagar to Kohala, and offered the assistance of a British engineer. A year later, the Panjab authorities, with imperial revenues significantly bearing half the cost, took steps to complete the Murree-Kohala section.³⁹ Progress was inevitably very slow on the Kashmir part of the road. During the war scare of 1885 the Indian Strategical Committee recommended that it should not only be rapidly completed as far as Srinagar, but continued towards Gilgit and Chitral.⁴⁰ The joint War Office and India Office Committee which reviewed this and all the other proposals designed to put the frontier in a state of readiness, expressed doubts about the value of a road beyond Srinagar

37. India, 19 Oct. 1885, *ibid.*, p.5.

38. To Dufferin, 16 Sept, 1885, DP/18, p.183. Randolph Henry Spencer Churchill (1849–95), third son of the 7th Duke of Marlborough, Sec. of State for India 1885–6.

39. Correspondence is IFP/1922, Sept., p.217 *et seq.*

40. 112, India, 10 July 1885, WO 32/263/40233.

'from a purely military point of view'⁴¹ but, after renewed pressure from India in 1886, its construction as far as Gilgit was eventually sanctioned.⁴² In fact, because of delays in the Kashmir section, the road was not open for traffic even as far as Srinagar until 1890. In that year, the question of linking Kashmir to the Panjab by a strategic railway was seriously considered for the first time, but the project was abandoned in 1892 and was not completed until very much later by way of Sialkot and Jammu.⁴³

When the first efforts were made to open up a feasible military route into Kashmir, the Maharaja's army was regarded as a liability which in war would have to be watched by a considerable British force.⁴⁴ In fact, during the war scare of 1885, the Maharaja was warned that British troops might have to be stationed in the Valley.⁴⁵ Ripon had urged him to reorganize his army in 1884,⁴⁶ but very little was achieved until the Imperial Service Scheme cleared the way for a thorough reform by British officers. In 1888 an agreement was concluded with the Maharaja whereby a certain number of his troops were allocated for defence on the Gilgit frontier⁴⁷ and by 1891 a considerable improvement had taken place.⁴⁸ Both in the Hunza campaign of that year, and later during the Chitral fighting of 1895, the Kashmir troops acquitted themselves extremely well.

But all that was in the future. For Ripon, neither the abandonment of Lytton's hated Gilgit Agency, nor the tighter political control over Kashmir which it involved, nor the improved relations with Afghanistan which followed the conclusion of the Afghan war, did anything to solve the imperial problem of how to defend the northern frontier. The difficulties which had faced

41. The report is enclosed with *ibid.*

42. 24, Sec. of State, 27 Jan. 1887, PFP/2923, Frontier, Apr. A.

43. Much of the correspondence is LaP/3; IFP/3738, Feb., pp.515-92; IFP/3963, May, pp.105-11; IFP/3964, Aug., pp.65-70; IFP/4183, Feb., pp.165-8.

44. Confidential Memo. on the Armies of Native States, 18 June 1884, BM Add. Mss. 43585, p.785.

45. Dufferin to Churchill, 12 Oct. 1885, DP/18, p.235.

46. India Foreign Dept. to Kashmir Resident, 1 Aug. 1884, AP 1890 LIV C.6072, p.6.

47. A. Durand, Report on the present military position at Gilgit, 5 Dec. 1888, PFI/57, p.33.

48. Lansdowne to Cross, 7 Oct. 1891, LaP/18, p.118.

Lytton – Chitral vacillation between Afghanistan and Kashmir, Afghan intrigue in Dir, Swat and Chitral, Hunza and Nagar opposition to the weak Kashmir force at Gilgit – all these were as much in evidence after 1881 as before it.

Towards Chitral, Ripon pursued Lytton's double-barrelled policy of encouraging its dependence on Kashmir, and its independence of Kabul. He had no illusions about the value of the friendship of Abd-ar-Rahman, the new Amir at Kabul, and wanted no extension of Afghan influence into Dardistan. But he was not prepared to oppose it by an active tribal policy of his own, or by the conclusion of any fresh engagements with the tribes.⁴⁹ So when, in 1881, Aman-ul-Mulk sought to conclude a direct alliance with the Indian Government, he was fobbed off with the usual mention of his relationship with Kashmir. And, as usual, Aman considered this inadequate, for he was under pressure from the Afghan authorities, both in Kabul and Badakhshan.⁵⁰ There was a strong feeling in the India Office that the Viceroy was inclined to underestimate the danger of Afghan intrigues in this direction.⁵¹ However, a stiff letter from Kabul, dated 20 March 1882 and claiming Chitral in unqualified terms, could not be left unchallenged even by Ripon.⁵² After telegraphic reference to London for permission to threaten Abd-ar-Rahman with 'force of arms if needful', Ripon warned him, although rather more gently than this, that India was committed, both to Kashmir's suzerainty over Chitral and to the defence of the Maharaja's rights there.⁵³ Back from Kabul came a masterly reply, giving nothing away at all. Abd-ar-Rahman wished it to be known, he said, that he would not interfere in Chitral, no, not even if the Government of India severed it from Afghanistan!⁵⁴

It is scarcely surprising, in view of this equivocal reply, that there was no perceptible slackening of Afghan pressure on Chitral.

49. See his letters to Gladstone, 22 Oct. 1881, BM Add. Mss. 44286 and to Hartington, 21 Aug. 1880, RP/2, p.81.

50. Enclosures 20, 24 and 31 of 103, India, 15 July 1881, PFI/29, p.235; enclosure 3 of 143, India, 23 Oct. 1881, PFI/30, p.311.

51. 53, Sec. of State, 30 Dec. 1881, PTI/7, p.473.

52. Enclosure 25 of 88, India, 25 Aug. 1882, PFI/33, p.949; Ripon Minute, 15 Apr. 1882, BM Add. Mss. 43576, p.1026.

53. Tel., India, 11 Apr. 1882, HC/51, p.1143; enclosure 3 of 88, India, 25 Aug. 1882, PFI/33, p.949.

54. Kabul Agent to India, 25 July 1882, PFI/33, p.871.

On the contrary, at the end of 1883 the Indian Government began to fear 'a combined invasion of Chitral by Afghan forces from Badakhshan on the one side, and from Jalalabad on the other'.⁵⁵ The Amir was warned off once again⁵⁶ and, for a year or two, Afghan pressure on Chitral seems to have slackened. In 1887, however, relations between them deteriorated once again. The trade route into Chitral from Badakhshan was closed, with serious loss of revenue to Aman-ul-Mulk, and the Afghans began to charge crippling tolls on timber floating down the Kunar River from Chitral towards Peshawar.⁵⁷ To economic sanctions Abd-ar-Rahman added political pressures. In particular, the Chitral Agent in Kabul was imprisoned so as to force Aman-ul-Mulk to reconsider his refusal to enter into a marriage alliance with the Afghan ruler. This refusal is symptomatic of a distinct tendency in the middle 'eighties for Aman to align himself more definitely on the side of Kashmir. In return, the Indian Government began to treat him with growing confidence. At the end of 1882, when Aman proposed to eject his nominee from Yasin and replace him with one of his own sons, the Indian Government did not oppose this tightening of the Chitral grip on the Gilgit side of the watershed, despite the hostility of Kashmir. In 1883, after Aman had behaved well towards the traveller, William MacNair, growing governmental confidence in him was expressed by a grant of arms and ammunition. A further gift of arms followed in the next year.⁵⁸ In 1885 an official British mission to Chitral under Colonel Lockhart was extremely well received, and negotiated a defensive agreement with Aman-ul-Mulk.⁵⁹ Later his subsidy was doubled and he even asked for a British Officer to be permanently resident at his capital.⁶⁰ Not all the British visitors to Chitral at this time agreed about Aman-ul-Mulk's loyalty, but they all felt certain that his death would precipitate civil war between his successors

55. 3, India, 8 Jan. 1884, PFI/39, p.123.

56. Enclosure 18 of 6, India, 8 Jan, 1884, *ibid.*, p.145.

57. News Diaries, PFI/51, pp.665, 801 and 1395 and PFI/53, p.495.

58. 6, India, 8 Jan. 1884, PFI/39, p.345 and 51 of 29 Aug. 1884, PFI/41, p.1083. For MacNair, see below p.154.

59. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *Confidential Report of the Gilgit Mission*, pp.307-12, 317-41 and 346-53. For this mission, see below pp.154-7.

60. North-West Frontier Diary, June 1887, PFI/50, p.1229.

and that this would create a fertile field for both Afghan and Russian intrigues.⁶¹

It was certainly the intrigues of the Amir among the tribes to the west and south of Chitral which alarmed Aman-ul-Mulk the most. In August 1883 Abd-ar-Rahman was threatening to invade Bajaur and Swat unless their Chiefs came to Kabul to make submission.⁶² Ripon was not inclined to take these threats any more seriously than he was those towards Chitral, but under pressure from London he warned the Amir that Bajaur, Dir and Swat were all beyond Afghan influence.⁶³ The warning had no effect. Reports in 1884 showed, if anything, an intensification of Afghan intrigues in this quarter.⁶⁴ A year later the Amir exploited his visit to Rawalpindi to the full, both by intrigues *en route*, and by claiming that Lord Dufferin there had given him a *carte blanche* in Dir, Swat and Bajaur.⁶⁵ It is interesting to notice that, during the Rawalpindi Conference, the British did in fact consider the possible reversal of a forty-year-old policy by permitting, instead of opposing, the extension of Afghan influence among these tribes. Dufferin believed that such an offer would leave the *de facto* situation unchanged, since the Amir would not be strong enough to make his occupation effective. But this was a risky assumption, to say the least. Fortunately, since the Amir proved surprisingly accommodating about Russian gains on his northern frontier, the question of buying his complaisance with offers in the tribal lands to the south-east was never discussed at Rawalpindi at all.⁶⁶ The Afghan menace nevertheless continued to increase. In 1886, Abd-ar-Rahman began to turn his attention towards the subjugation of the tribes between the Kunar and Alingar Rivers and those in Southern Kafiristan. By 1888 there was a general feeling that

61. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *op. cit.*, pp.269, 271-2 and 364; A. Durand, Report on the present military position at Gilgit, 5 Dec. 1888, PFI/57, p.33; Elias, *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*, pp.101-2.

62. Kabul Agent to India, 10 Aug. 1883, PFI/37, p.943; Peshawar Diary, 1 Aug. 1883, *ibid.*, p.1005.

63. Enclosure 5 of 3, India, 8 Jan 1884, PFI/39, p.123.

64. Enclosures of 10, India, 19 Feb. 1884, *ibid.*, p.919 and 11 of 12 Sept. 1884, PFI/41, p.1287.

65. News Diaries, PFI/44, pp.207 and 1063 and PFI/46, p.1545.

66. Kimberley to Dufferin, 6 Mar. 1885, DP/18, p.31; Dufferin to Kimberley 30 Mar. 1885, KP/2.

some new Afghan forward movement in that direction was contemplated.⁶⁷

Before 1887 neither Ripon nor Dufferin had taken any positive steps to oppose Afghan intrigues by entering into direct relations with the tribes themselves, as Lytton had done. Dir was the most important independent tribal territory in the area east of the Kunar.⁶⁸ Lytton had been inclined to encourage the extension of Kashmir influence to Dir, but Ripon in 1881 had discreetly discouraged any such thing.⁶⁹ By 1883, however, for reasons which were not clear even to Whitehall but probably because of the Afghan activities, the Indian Government quietly reversed its attitude and stated that it would welcome friendly Kashmir-Dir relations.⁷⁰ Ripon was not, of course, prepared to deal direct with Rahmatulla Khan himself, and in 1884 that Chief's request for a British subsidy was refused.⁷¹ Quite apart from his horror of entanglements, Ripon was very well aware that the long indecisive struggle between Dir and Jandul lay behind their not infrequent appeals for British help and alliance in the middle 'eighties.

Dufferin continued at first to give the same courteous but evasive replies to these appeals as his predecessor had done, but gradually he was forced by events into a more active policy. The growing Russian threat in the lands along the Upper Oxus was probably the most decisive factor. The Upper Oxus states had already attracted considerable attention during the Anglo-Russian negotiations for the 1873 'agreement',⁷² and one of the most perceptive comments about them was made in that year by the Geographer of the India Office, Trelawney Saunders. They cover, he said,

the north-western salient angle of the British Kashmirian frontier, formed by the great bend of the Indus; and their relations with Chitral, Yasin, Swat, etc., may soon become potent for good or harm, in the settlement of that seat of Moslem disturbance, which must sooner or later force upon itself the decisive action of the Indian Government.⁷³

67. News Diaries, PFI/46, p.1545; PFI/50, p.249; PFI/52, pp.469 and 763; PFI/53, p.541; IFP/3273, Mar., pp.31-53.

68. For reasons noted above pp.124-5.

69. Enclosure 37 of 103, India, 15 July 1881, PFI/29, p.235.

70. 3, India, 8 Jan. 1884, PFI/39, p.123. See Burne Memo., PTI/10, p.3.

71. Enclosures 12 and 13 of 28, India, 12 May 1884, PFI/40, p.971.

72. See below Chap. IV, *passim*. 73. Memo., 14 Feb. 1873, FO 65/875.

The significance of these words was not fully apparent until 1874, when the Forsyth Mission revealed for the first time just how easy were the approaches to the tribal territories across the Hindu Kush from the Upper Oxus.⁷⁴ A year later, the Russian explorer, Maiev, brought back reliable information of the lands south of the Hissar Range and so pioneered a new route direct to the Upper Oxus from the Russian lands in the north. Despite strenuous efforts at secrecy, Biddulph's second journey to examine the Hindu Kush passes from the south in 1876 was fully reported in the British press.⁷⁵ The Indian Government therefore pointed out that

in the existing circumstances of our relations with the countries on our north-western borders, it is necessary that researches in those countries should be conducted by secret Agents, and secrecy is incompatible with the publication of the adventures of our Agents, whose very names, before long, became by-words in the mouths of persons interested in watching their movements. . . . It is scarcely necessary to remark that the premature publication of such information and comments [as that about the Baroghil Pass], before we are ready for action, may prove of the utmost political embarrassment to us.⁷⁶

In this case, the damage had already been done. Whereas the Russian semi-official work of Terentyef, published in the early 'seventies, could only speak of the whole matter of routes across the Indian northern frontier as 'misty and undefined', Kostenko's work of 1880 reported Biddulph's discoveries in full.⁷⁷

Their implications were not apparently overlooked in Russia. As Anglo-Russian relations deteriorated in 1878, the Russians launched a grand exploratory assault on the northern frontier, not only across the Pamirs,⁷⁸ but also along the new line farther west direct on the Upper Oxus. Maiev went back again to the south of Hissar to investigate the navigability of the Upper Oxus, and Bykov showed that it was navigable at least as far as the Surkhab

74. Above pp.111-12.

75. See especially *The Pall Mall Budget* of 7 Apr. 1876.

76. 46, India, 5 Oct. 1876, PFI/10, p.499.

77. Terentyef, *Russia and England in Central Asia*, II, p.115; Kostenko, *The Turkistan Region*, I, p.135 and II, p.240. The Russian newspaper *Golos* of 3 Apr. 1878 had a detailed account of Biddulph's discoveries.

78. For which, see above pp.113-14.

junction. Colonel Matvaiev, with Trotski and the Russian astronomer, Schwarz, penetrated into Badakhshan as far as Faizabad and tried to get through Wakhan to the Chitral passes. At about the same time, Oshanin became the first European to reach Karategin and, with Neverski and Radionov, linked up on the Upper Oxus with Severtsov's party from the Pamirs.⁷⁹ In the next year there was news of more Russian surveying activity in Karategin and Darwaz.⁸⁰

If it had been only Russian explorers, the Indian Government would not have been as alarmed as it was in 1878. But, in the May of that year, the order was given for the formation of three Russian military columns in Central Asia. One of them, the Fergana column under General Abramov containing about fourteen hundred men, was ordered to march from Margilan across the Alai, through Karategin down the Surkhab to Faizabad, and thence south-eastward towards Qala Panja in Wakhan and the Chitral passes. Snowstorms delayed this column badly, and when the peaceful outcome of the Congress of Berlin eventually halted its march, it was turned eastwards towards Kashgar.⁸¹

The peaceful ending of the international crisis in the Near East led to no slackening of the Russian activities on the Upper Oxus.⁸² In 1881 Regel passed from Samarqand and Karategin into Darwaz.⁸³ A year later he was back again in the Badakhshan district of Gharan, spent the winter in Shignan, and cost the ruler his throne as a result.⁸⁴ In 1883, Ivanov, Puttiata and Bendersky covered most of the Pamirs from Sariqol as far as the eastern approaches of Roshan and Shignan. Then, in the autumn of that year, they joined up with Regel and tried in vain to gain access

79. Account of the Surveys of the Russian Imperial Topographical Dept., enclosed with Swaine to Dufferin, 9 Apr. 1879, HC/31, p.953. For Severtsov, see above p.114.

80. Dufferin to Salisbury, 29 July 1879, AP 1880 LXXVIII C.2470, p.103.

81. AP 1878 LXXX C.2164, pp.133-5, 141, 145-9; Burne Memo., HC/26, p.448A; War Office, *Russian Advances in Asia 1879-81*, pp.25-8; Belyavsky, *Affairs in Turkistan*, p.135.

82. 1880 was a year of rumoured activity in this quarter. See Griffin, Secret Memo., 5 June 1880, PFI/25, p.1281; War Office Memo., HC/38, p.63; *The Times*, 24 Jan. 1880; *Standard*, 24 Apr. 1880.

83. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, IV (1882), p.412.

84. Below p.194: Michell, Memo. on the Regions of the Upper Oxus, p.44 *et seq.*, HC/65, p.3.

to Shignan once more.⁸⁵ Their work really marked the end of the Pamirs as a blank on the map, for it linked the British and Russian surveys at Tash Qurghan. In 1884 Regel was back in Karategin, and at the same time Grum-Grjimailo began his explorations on the Upper Oxus and the Pamirs.⁸⁶ Michell, the India Office's Russian expert, summarized the changed situation which this spate of Russian exploration had revealed:

Our hundreds of miles dwindle it seems to as many versts [two-thirds of a mile]. Dr Regel can run down to the Panja from Tashkent and be back in a month, halting and lingering to ascertain all he wants to know preliminarily to another and lengthened journey. By improving the roads Bukhara can pour troops even into Darwaz and Karategin; individuals can easily find their way down all the passes from the north even into Badakhshan, and doubtless with little labour roads can be laid for beasts of burthen.⁸⁷

In the past, the chief danger to the security of the Upper Oxus lands had been in a Russian advance up the Oxus from Khiva.⁸⁸ Now it began to look as though there was a more direct route to the Upper Oxus from the Russian territories in the north.

Although there is no need to believe a quarter of the garbled rumours about Russian troop concentrations and intrigues which this so-called 'grand scheme of tapping the Anglo-Indian frontier'⁸⁹ inspired, all the same the situation must have looked extremely disquieting to the Indian authorities. For one thing, the situation in the Afghan lands on the Upper Oxus north of the Hindu Kush was so confused that almost any Russian activity there could be dangerous.⁹⁰ South of the mountains too, the state of the tribal lands did not inspire confidence. Although, as far as

85. Michell, *op. cit.*, p.62 *et seq.*; *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, VI (1884), pp.135, 176 and 369.

86. Thornton to Granville, 30 Dec. 1884, HC/69, p.543; *News Diaries*, PFI/42, pp.59 and 123.

87. Michell, *op. cit.*, p.42. For an example of the changed views, cf. Rawlinson's remarks in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XVII (1872-3), p.113 with those in the *Royal Geographical Society Supplementary Papers*, I (1882-5), p.262.

88. C. K. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Lord Palmerston, 1830-41*, II, p.741; J. B. Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan, Beloochistan*, p.459.

89. Rawlinson, Memo. on Shignan and Roshan, 12 Apr. 1884, Secret and Political Memo., A.51.

90. Below pp.192-5.

one can tell, the Russians had not yet crossed the Hindu Kush, the first clear evidence that they had been intriguing with Chitral came to light in 1883, and Aman-ul-Mulk had to be told how to deal with them if they came.⁹¹

This important information was discovered by William MacNair, the first European to penetrate into the tribal lands of Dardistan since the end of the Gilgit Agency. With a native assistant, he mapped about nine thousand square miles of almost unknown territory in Chitral, Kafirstan and beyond the Hindu Kush into Badakhshan. Although he was an officer of the Indian Survey, MacNair travelled without permission and in defiance of the frontier regulations.⁹² Apart from him, the important work of discovery and survey in Dardistan had to be left to official native explorers. In 1882-3 a unique survey of the Shinaki area along the Indus valley was made by a native surveyor from the surrounding peaks.⁹³ Later, in 1885, selected members of the Guide Corps were given permission to explore in Swat and along the Indus.⁹⁴ Once the bungalow at Gilgit was empty of a British Officer after 1881, even political information had to come from native agents like Rab Nawaz Khan in Chitral. By the middle 'eighties it was becoming plain that the full knowledge necessary for a coherent and adequate defensive policy on the northern frontier could never be obtained by these piecemeal methods, especially as the reports of native agents and explorers were usually of little value from a military point of view.

In 1885, therefore, it was decided to make a major British exploratory assault on the northern frontier – the first since Forsyth's mission twelve years before. A party under Ney Elias from Kashgar in the east, and the British members of the Afghan Boundary Commission coming from the west, were to examine the lands along the Upper Oxus. At the same time a small party led by Colonel Lockhart, consisting of Colonel Woodthorpe as surveyor, Surgeon Giles, and Captain Barrow of the Indian Intelligence Department,

91. MacNair, *Confidential Report on the Explorations in part of Eastern Afghanistan and in Kafirstan during 1883*; enclosures 15 and 19 of 6, India, 8 Jan. 1884, PFI/39, p.145.

92. The correspondence about this is IFP/2337, Feb., p.90 *et seq.*

93. *Account of Dardistan with map of the country surveyed during 1882-3 in connection with the Great Trigonometrical Survey*, PFI/42, p.323.

94. PFP/2473, Nov. Frontier B, nos. 15-16. This was later shelved, PFP/2700, Feb. Frontier B, nos. 59-60 and IFP/2782, Mar. A, pp.55-7.

was sent into the tribal lands south of the Hindu Kush 'to determine to what extent India is vulnerable through the Hindu Kush range between the Kilik Pass and Kafiristan'.⁹⁵ Lockhart's party travelled north in the summer of 1885 through Kashmir and Gilgit to Chitral, visited the Dora Pass and eastern Kafiristan and, after an unsuccessful attempt to enter Dir and Jandul, wintered in Gilgit. In April 1886 they set out again through Hunza and the Kilik Pass on to the Tagdumbash and Little Pamirs, explored the northern approach to the Baroghil, and then travelled through Qala Panja, Ishkashem, Zebak and the Dora Pass back into Chitral and Gilgit. They surveyed twelve thousand square miles of territory and claimed to have examined 'all passes of any importance whatever' across the Hindu Kush.

The result was that for the first time the basis existed for a composite defensive scheme for the whole of the northern frontier. Lockhart's conclusion was that the strategic significance of the Baroghil Pass, the focus of British concern ever since Biddulph's visit ten years before, had been considerably exaggerated. He wrote:

The pass itself is easy; it is the lowest we ever crossed (12,700 feet above sea), and it does not lead to Gilgit or anywhere else by any practicable route for pack animals. It is cut off from Yasin and Gilgit by the Darkot . . . , which is an insuperable barrier to the passage of troops, and the road from it to Chitral is by the Yarkhun valley, which may also be dismissed from consideration as a military route. The relative positions of the Darkot and Baroghil had not been understood until we went up.⁹⁶

For the Baroghil, Lockhart substituted the Dora, which he described as 'the only pass on the section which need be taken into account at all'.⁹⁷ 'It is, as Aman-ul-Mulk before told me, the only practicable avenue into his country, and could rapidly be made fit for wheels.'⁹⁸

Lockhart's Mission for the first time gave due weight to the difficulties of the routes south of the passes and, as a result, came

95. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *Confidential Report of the Gilgit Mission*, p.275. For Elias and the Boundary Commission, see above p.82 and below pp.200-3.

96. Lockhart Note, 9 Mar. 1888, appended to Secret and Political Memo., A.79.

97. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *Confidential Report of the Gilgit Mission*, p.275.

98. *Ibid.*, p.314.

to the conclusion that the danger was not of invasion on any scale by an army, unless a military road above the high-water mark of the valleys had first been engineered for it. Lockhart argued that, apart from two short and uncertain periods in spring and autumn, either the heavy snow of winter blocked the passage across the passes or in summer 'every water-course is full, and the low-level paths are covered by raging torrents'. The high-level paths, he found, were 'as a rule, unfit for pack animals'.⁹⁹ In a retrospective conclusion, Lockhart wrote:

I went up believing that an enterprising commander might make short work of the difficulties. I returned convinced that without unlimited labour resources the feat of crossing an army over the section of the Hindu Kush visited by myself was an impossibility.¹⁰⁰

The only danger to be guarded against was from small lightly-armed forces coming across in spring and autumn, and it was to meet this that Lockhart's defensive scheme was designed.

It was implicitly based on two assumptions. One was that Aman-ul-Mulk was loyal and that the agreement Lockhart negotiated with him – by which the Chitral ruler promised to hold the northern passes into Chitral and to open whatever route from the south British supporting forces chose to take – could be relied on.¹⁰¹ The other was that a force holding Yasin could not only close the direct routes through it and Gilgit from the north, but could threaten on the flank an advance across the Dora and through Chitral.¹⁰² This had been Biddulph's original view and, like Biddulph, Lockhart based his defensive scheme upon a British Agent at Gilgit. In Chitral a native agent would suffice.¹⁰³

The acquisition of Gilgit would secure for us the continued loyalty of Chitral, carrying with it our right of way through the Mehtar's dominions, and his active co-operation in time of need. In my opinion it would ensure the safety of the Hindu Kush.¹⁰⁴

Lockhart hoped to augment the defence of Chitral, although he did not stress this, by a military road from Peshawar through Dir

99. *Ibid.*, p.275.

100. Lockhart Note, 9 Mar. 1888, appended to Secret and Political Memo., A.79.

101. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *op. cit.*, pp.308, 310, 331–2 and 350–1.

102. Barrow. *Gazeteer of Dardistan and Kafiristan*, Pt.I, pp.1 and 177.

103. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *op. cit.*, p.348.

104. *Ibid.*, p.276.

and Chitral as far as the Dora Pass. Defence would be mainly entrusted to levies formed into an active and mobile Scout force which, rather than defensive works, would be responsible for blocking the passes.¹⁰⁵ This force would be stiffened by a Panjabi artillery battery and nineteen British officers. Gilgit would be controlled direct from India, and no Kashmir troops would be used at all.¹⁰⁶

It is interesting, in view of what happened later, to compare this with the view which the civilian Ney Elias took of the defensive problem in Dardistan at the same time. He set out from entirely opposite premises: that Aman-ul-Mulk was unreliable, that the routes between Gilgit and the Dora Pass were difficult, and that even in the unlikely case of Aman honouring his agreement and opposing a Russian advance from Badakhshan, his help would 'not be worth consideration'. Elias concluded:

It is obvious, from a political point of view, that any measure for obtaining a grip on Chitral and the approach from Badakhshan, must be undertaken from the Panjab frontier and not from Gilgit.¹⁰⁷

But whether defence was to be based on Gilgit or Chitral, it was obvious that *something* had to be done, and that quickly, especially as the recently concluded demarcation of the north-west frontier of Afghanistan seemed to have diverted Russian attention to the eastern end of it. In 1887 rumours of Russian troop movements at Charjui and along the Upper Oxus were so rife that the Intelligence Branch specifically drew the attention of the Foreign Office to them.¹⁰⁸ War was not feared in Central Asia in 1887, but there did seem to be a danger that the Russians would, by the intensive Russification of Bukhara and the impending extension of the Trans-Caspian railway to Samarqand,

gradually transform the Upper Oxus into a military line of communications in connection with the railway at Charjui. Thus the Turkistan base will first move forward round the eastern flank of the recently demarcated frontier [of Afghanistan in 1885-6].¹⁰⁹

105. *Ibid.*, p.109.

106. *Ibid.*, pp.275-80.

107. Elias, *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*, pp.100 and 102.

108. Memo., 22 Aug. 1887, HC/96., p.1339. The demonstrations at Charjui were ostensibly to persuade a reluctant Bukhara to accept the extension of the Trans-Caspian Railway to Samarqand.

109. 23, Herbert to Morier, 4 Apr. 1888, FO 65/1348.

Six months later, the Intelligence Branch commented that the Russians appeared to be 'systematically' taking possession of the Upper Oxus above Khoja Saleh. All this coincided with a flood of rumours of Russian intrigues in Chitral, although many of these could be traced to the movements of the three French explorers who crossed over into Chitral from the north in 1887.¹¹⁰

Since 1885, Dufferin's Foreign Secretary and one of his closest friends had been Mortimer Durand. Durand later described his feelings at this time:

No one knows better than I do the difficulties of the Gilgit policy. I was in the Foreign Office when Biddulph's Agency was withdrawn, and I had no inclination whatever to push another Agency in without necessity. But it became very evident that, unless we did so, we should lose all control over this tract of country.¹¹¹

In May 1887, therefore, writing in a purely private capacity, he sketched a drastic new active frontier policy. The belt of tribal territory from Chitral to Dera Ghazi Khan, he argued, should be turned into an effective defensive barrier by the establishment of closer relations with the tribes. As far as Gilgit was concerned, the Agency should be re-established with a garrison of Kashmir forces and local levies, and the new Agent should open negotiations with all the neighbouring tribes. The old Lyttonian ideal of a tribal policy conditioned by imperial considerations had once again taken firm root in high places. Durand emphasized that the 'active' policy he advocated was only necessary because of the Russian advance, but, with this as his premise, he was forced inevitably to Lytton's conclusion that those tribes who held the principal routes and passes must be brought into subjection in order that a British force could, if necessary, act safely in the country beyond.¹¹²

Durand's memorandum made a deep impression at home. Two months later, the Secretary of State, following his argument closely, urged Dufferin to consider the policy to be pursued on the death of the Amir, and to decide whether it was desirable to

110. Bonvalot, Capus and Pepin. The correspondence about them is HC/94, p.1437 *et seq.* See G. Bonvalot, *Through the Heart of Asia over the Pamir to India*; G. Capus, *Le Toit du Monde*; and below p.270

111. P. M. Sykes, *The Rt. Honourable Sir Mortimer Durand*, p.185.

112. Memo. on the Present Position in Central Asia, 21 May 1887, HC/94, p.1295.

enter into closer relations with the frontier tribes in order to bring them under control and utilize them for defence.¹¹³ Dufferin decided that within limits it was, and the Panjab authorities were informed accordingly.¹¹⁴

But it was events on the northern frontier itself which finally made the re-establishment of the Gilgit Agency imperative. In 1882, doubtless with Kashmir connivance, Azor Khan of Chaprot had expelled his usurping brother from Nagar and restored his father, Jaffar Khan, as ruler.¹¹⁵ For a time, the change had reacted favourably on Kashmiri interests because it deepened the cleavage between Nagar and Ghazan Khan of Hunza. But by 1884 there were fresh rumours of joint Hunza and Nagar intrigues over Chaprot, and the Indian Government found it necessary to stiffen the back of the Maharaja, who seemed inclined to evacuate his three or four hundred troops from the fort altogether.¹¹⁶

When Lockhart entered Hunza in April 1886 on his way to Wakhan, Ghazan Khan refused to let him pass unless he handed over Chaprot and its neighbour Chalt. Although a considerable number of Hunza hostages were being held at Gilgit, things for a time looked very serious for Lockhart's party, and they were only allowed to proceed by promising to secure the evacuation of Chaprot by the Nagar forces.¹¹⁷ From that time the fort was held by Kashmir sepoy alone.

In 1886 Ghazan Khan was murdered by his son, Safdar Ali, and the Hunza-Nagar feud was patched up.¹¹⁸ The result was soon manifest. After a false alarm of a joint Hunza-Nagar attack on Chaprot in 1887,¹¹⁹ the real thing came on 20 January 1888. Two thousand men from both states ejected the Kashmir garrison from the fort and threatened Nomal, only fifteen miles by road from Gilgit. For a time this affair, like its predecessor in 1880, looked serious enough to threaten the entire Kashmir grip on Dardistan, although it was eventually settled peacefully after

113. 17, Sec. of State, 22 July 1887, PTI/13, p.55. See also HC/94, pp.1269-92.

114. Relevant portions of the despatch are cited C. C. Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908*, p.71. See Dufferin to Churchill, 18 Aug. 1887, DP/20, p.228.

115. Enclosures of 140, India, 5 Dec. 1882, PFI/34, p.577.

116. Enclosures 4-6 of 46, India, 1 Aug. 1884, PFI/41, p.591.

117. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *op. cit.*, p.391 *et seq.*

118. North-West Frontier Diary, Oct. 1886, PFI/48, p.507.

119. North-West Frontier Diary, Mar. 1887, PFI/49, p.1275.

negotiation. By August 1888 a peaceful Kashmiri re-occupation of Chalt and Chaprot had begun.¹²⁰

Nevertheless, this crisis did reveal in the situation in Dardistan several disquieting features which added weight to the arguments of those who were advocating a restoration of the Gilgit Agency. For one thing, despite the improvements which had already been made to the Gilgit road, the operations of 1888 showed once again just how impossible it was to push troops rapidly up to Gilgit. Five thousand men had been poured into Gilgit, Nomal, Astor and Bunji as soon as the passes were open, and then stranded there without carriage, medical arrangements or food. Coolie traffic on the Astor-Bunji route broke down completely and, with their troops mutinous, starving and immobilized, the Kashmir authorities had no alternative but to treat for peace. It was quite clear that Kashmir was in no position to exercise any effective influence over Hunza, and Safdar Ali remained hostile. It was while in this mood that he received Captain Gromchevsky and a party of Cossacks who crossed over into his territory from the Pamirs a few months later in 1888. Although the nature of the discussions between Safdar Ali and the Russian was not known at the time, it was apparently agreed that a Russian military post would be established at Baltit to train a Hunza force to repel the British.¹²¹

A dangerous liaison with Russia was bad enough, but the year 1888 also brought the whole question of Hunza's relationship with the Chinese authorities at Kashgar to a head for the first time. There do not appear to have been any significant contacts between Hunza and Chinese Turkistan in modern times until 1847, when Shah Ghazanfur of Hunza helped the Chinese authorities in Yarkand to overcome a Muslim rebellion, and received land and a subsidy as a reward, in return for nominal allegiance.¹²² The Hunza raids in the valley of the Yarkand River on the caravans between Leh and Yarkand were winked at or possibly even connived at by the Chinese, and for many years they effectively stunted the trans-Himalaya trade in this direction.¹²³ Yaqub

120. Correspondence is IFP/3273, May, pp.73-111 and enclosures of 173, India, 15 Oct. 1888, PFI/55, p.667.

121. B. H. Mons, *High Road to Hunza*, p.94; Gilgit Agency Report 1889, p.4, enclosed with 43, India, 28 Apr. 1890, PFI/59, p.1193.

122. Biddulph, *The Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, p.28.

123. Above p.23.

Beg's more effective power was felt even as far as Hunza and, as long as he ruled in Kashgar, Hunza raids on both the caravans and on the Pamir Khirghiz ceased altogether.¹²⁴ As soon as news of the Chinese re-occupation of Eastern Turkistan reached Ghazan Khan in 1878, he immediately welcomed back his old friends by despatching one of his men with the 'customary tribute' to the Chinese authorities. This time, however, the matter was not simply one between Hunza and Yarkand, for since 1869 Ghazan Khan had been subsidized by Kashmir too.¹²⁵ That is why Biddulph at Gilgit warned the Hunza Chief that he could only send presents to China and not tribute. In reply Ghazan Khan formally re-affirmed his allegiance to the Maharaja,¹²⁶ but his exchanges with the Chinese authorities in Sinkiang went on just the same. In the summer of 1878 the Chinese roundly demanded the full submission of Hunza.¹²⁷

Lytton was inclined to take these exchanges seriously, especially as by this time it looked as if Russia would soon inherit by the conquest of Sinkiang all Chinese claims to influence south of the mountains.¹²⁸ Ripon, on the contrary, was *not* very concerned, and Henvey was in effect told to solve the problem by ignoring it.¹²⁹ If anything, the Hunza-China relationship seems to have grown closer in the years that followed. Certainly in 1886 Elias found that the Chinese in Yarkand regarded Hunza as an outlying district of Sinkiang, and spoke of incorporating it eventually within their province.¹³⁰ In Hunza, Ghazan Khan himself told Lockhart quite frankly that he was a subject of the 'King of China' and acknowledged no other master.¹³¹ Even so, as long as Ghazan Khan, and Safdar Ali after him, were not foolish enough to press this attitude to extremes, the fact that they paid tribute to and received subsidies and presents from both China and Kashmir was winked at by the British authorities.

It was the 1888 crisis over Chaprot which brought matters to a

124. Above p.26.

125. Above p.104.

126. Enclosures 11, 15 and 17 of 21, India, 22 Feb. 1878, PFI/17, p.963.

127. Gilgit Diary, 31 July-7 Aug. 1878, PFI/19, p.783.

128. 49, India, 28 Feb. 1879, AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.2.

129. Enclosure 9 of 103, India, 15 July 1881, PFI/29, p.235.

130. Elias, *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*, pp.14-15.

131. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *op. cit.*, p.392; cf. Elias, *op. cit.*, pp.14-15.

head. On 7 June 1888 the Yamen asked for information about it from Sir John Walsham, the British representative at Peking.¹³² Dufferin's telegrams to Walsham put the attitude of the Indian Government unambiguously. Hunza, only fifty miles from Gilgit, they said, was the 'natural and necessary' dependency of Kashmir.¹³³ It was out of the question that it should be allowed to create disturbances with impunity, relying on its 'pretensions to be a tributary State of the Chinese Empire'.¹³⁴ These 'pretensions' were expressly repudiated.

The important imperial considerations which underlay this attitude were summarized by Dufferin for the Secretary of State. From Hunza, he wrote:

. . . Chinese Turkistan can be reached by a pass or passes hitherto unexplored, and immediately to the north, across the Kilik Pass, lies the gap between Afghanistan and China. By pushing through this gap, in however insignificant numbers, or by becoming the successors of the Chinese in Kashgar, which can hardly again be an independent Mussalman Power, the Russians might at any time, if the suzerainty of Kashmir were not previously established, acquire very inconvenient rights or claims over Kanjut [Hunza]. The country is, no doubt, rough and difficult, but the embarrassment caused by its turning to the Russians would none the less be material. . . . It is imperative that in this quarter, we should keep the Chinese and every other power to the north of the barrier formed by the line of the Himalayas and Hindu Kush.¹³⁵

This was precisely the view of the northern frontier problem expressed by Lytton's despatch of 28 February 1879,¹³⁶ and Dufferin decided to tackle the whole question in a manner Lytton would have approved. Captain Algernon Durand, the younger brother of the Foreign Secretary who had played such an important part in forming Dufferin's views on the frontier question, was sent to examine the military and political position on the northern frontier as it stood after the tribal rising of 1888. The official acceptance of the basic strategic conclusion of Lockhart's

132. 21, Walsham to Salisbury, 17 Feb. 1892, HC/129, p.1379.

133. Tel., India to Walsham, 16 June 1888, enclosed with *ibid.*

134. Walsham to Yamen, 21 June 1888, enclosed with 173, India, 15 Oct. 1888, PFI/55, p.667.

135. 110, India, 30 June 1888, PFI/54, p.289.

136. Above p.13.

inquiry – that the Russians threatened Chitral but that they could be checked from Gilgit – can be plainly seen in Durand's instructions, although Lockhart's objection to the use of Kashmir forces and some of his other specific proposals were overruled on the grounds of expense.¹³⁷ Captain Durand was instructed by his brother to

work out a scheme for rendering Gilgit secure without the aid of British troops, and for dominating from Gilgit, through the Kashmir forces, the country up to the Hindu Kush; thus rendering Kashmir territory thoroughly secure against attack, and guarding against the possibility of a Russian force penetrating to Chitral and threatening our line of communication between Kabul and Peshawar through the Kunar Valley.¹³⁸

The proposals for the re-establishment of the Gilgit Agency which Captain Durand eventually produced were a modest version of Lockhart's. At Gilgit, four British officers and some two thousand troops were to be the basis of the defence of the northern frontier, and the area was to be opened up with roads and telegraphs and subsidies to the local Chiefs. In Chitral, five thousand local levies were to be organized to defend positions in Chitral, and the Dir–Chitral road was to be opened as soon as possible. The report containing these proposals was submitted just five days before Dufferin left India.¹³⁹ Lord Lansdowne,¹⁴⁰ who succeeded to the Viceroyalty in December 1888, accepted them almost without modification, and with high hopes of success this time:

. . . we shall have the Upper Hindu Kush well watched, and the countries to the south of it closed against interference *from China and Russia and Afghanistan*, and we shall get some useful information from the districts beyond. We shall be protected against any *coup de main* from the northward *and we may eventually succeed in establishing our influence in Kafiristan also*. We shall thereby have provided for a really

137. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *op. cit.*, p.388; 58, India, 6 May 1889, extract in AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.7.

138. Letter of 22 June 1888, enclosed with 58, India, 6 May 1889, PFI/57, p.27.

139. Report on the present military position at Gilgit, 5 Dec. 1888, PFI/57, p.33.

140. Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5th Marquess of Lansdowne (1845–1927), Viceroy of India 1888–93.

important part of our scheme of frontier defence, and at small cost to ourselves.¹⁴¹

And so Captain Algernon Durand, this time as British Agent, returned in 1889 to the isolated little bungalow at Gilgit to begin the mammoth task of putting the defences of India's northern frontier in order. He was only just in time, for the next six years were marked by almost continuous disturbance in the tribal lands south of the Hindu Kush. Moreover, these disturbances coincided with a major international dispute about the territories just beyond the mountains to the north. The chapter which follows examines the origins of that dispute during the two decades prior to Lansdowne's arrival in India.

141. 58, India, 6 May 1889, PFI/57, p.27. The italicized phrases were omitted for obvious reasons from the published version in AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.7.

The Upper Oxus Frontier of Afghanistan 1865 - 1888

(1) *The Anglo-Russian 'Agreement' 1869-1873*

IN 1865, the Central Asian question as a diplomatic issue between Britain and Russia had been in abeyance for almost twenty-five years. But the diversion of Russian energies southwards again when the Crimean War ended in 1856, and the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny a year later, heralded the beginnings of a new phase, in which a steady Russian advance in Central Asia was matched by a growing British concern at its implications for the safety of the Indian Empire. In the years before 1869 there was not much more than some gentle diplomatic skirmishing between St Petersburg and London,¹ but a few days before Lawrence left India he came out with some uncompromising proposals. Russia, he said, should be told

that it cannot be permitted to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan, or in those of any State which lies contiguous to our frontier.² . . . If this failed, we might give that Power to understand that an advance towards India, beyond a certain point, would entail on her war, in all parts of the world, with England.³

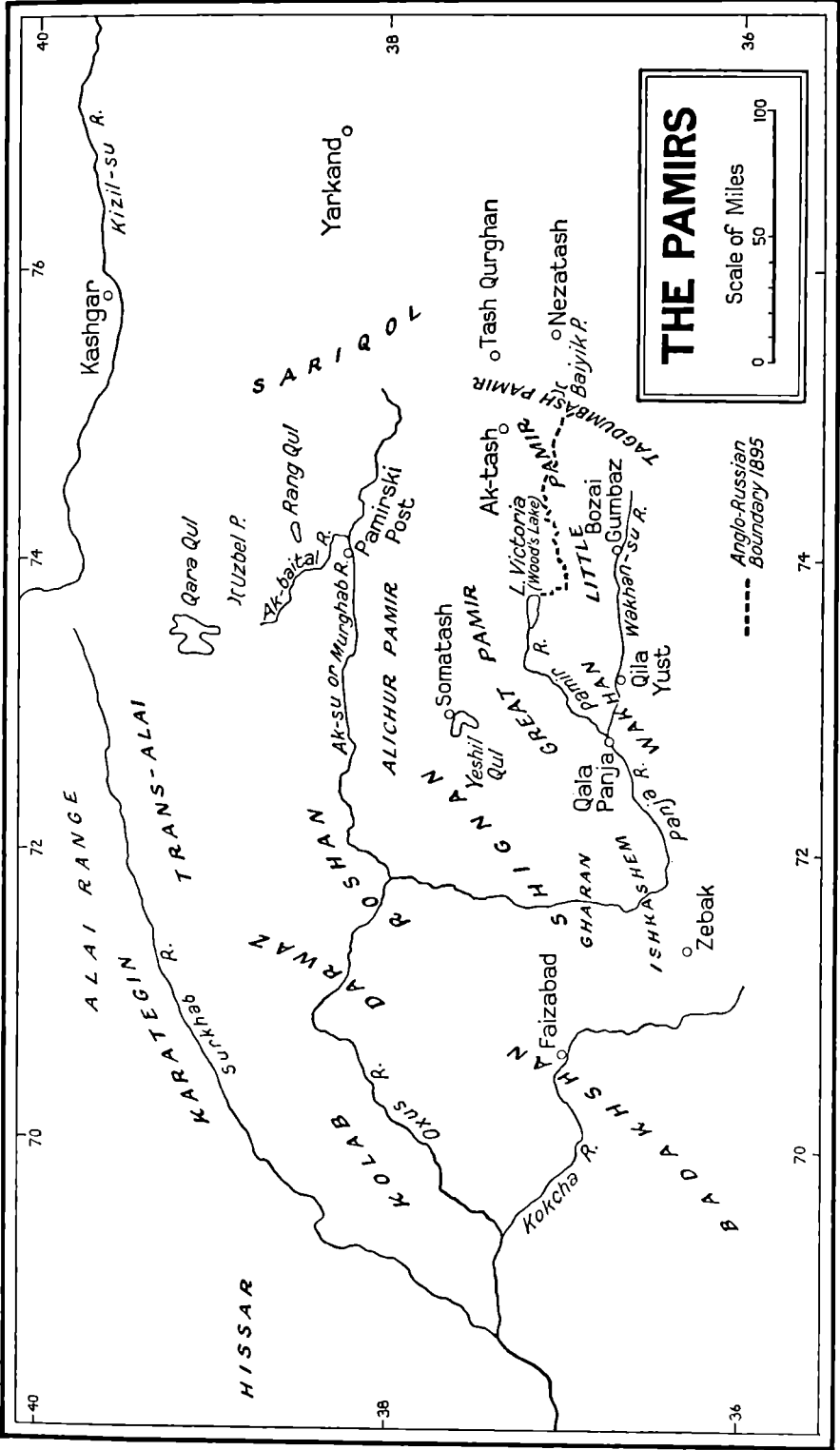
These proposals fell on the receptive ears of Lord Clarendon⁴ at the Foreign Office. He, bred in the anti-Russian school of Palmerston, was inclined to take the Russian advance in Asia much more seriously than his Conservative predecessors had done. In March 1869, therefore, he took up again the old idea that Britain and Russia should agree to recognize 'some territory as neutral'

1. See A. P. Thornton, 'The reopening of the Central Asian Question, 1864-9', *History*, XLI (1956), pp.122-36.
2. 1, India, 4 Jan. 1869, LIM/4, p.1, extract in AP 1878-9 LVI C.2190, p.43.
3. Lawrence Memo., 25 Nov. 1868, enclosed with above.
4. George William Frederick Villiers, 4th Earl of Clarendon (1800-70), Foreign Minister 1865-6 and 1868-70.

between them in Central Asia.⁵ The neutral zone as a practical proposition foundered almost at once in the negotiations which followed, largely because no agreement could be obtained about the territory which it should cover.⁶ Instead, the discussions became centred on the more specific issue of what was the true northern limit of Afghan territory. Prince Gortchakov, the Russian Chancellor, had unwittingly raised this whole question by his response to Clarendon's original neutral zone suggestion. His reply had sought to make Afghanistan the proposed neutral zone, but had made it clear at the same time that the Russian view of what comprised Afghan territory was very different from the view held in India.⁷ The disagreement over this issue in the spring of 1869 seems to have arisen because it was just at this time that Sher Ali was emerging from his six-year struggle for supremacy at Kabul, and beginning to reassert his authority in the north between the Hindu Kush and the Oxus.⁸ A clear demarcation of his northern frontier was all the more necessary at this time, because there was a real danger of a collision between his forces and those of Russian-influenced Bukhara. The most knotty problems were in the extreme north-east on the Upper Oxus and, both during the negotiations and for a quarter of a century afterwards, it was this part of the northern frontier of Afghanistan which caused the most trouble.

The Indian Government was certainly very quick to see the real nature of the issue which had been raised, and had taken steps to prepare its own case on the question of the Afghan frontier before the matter ever became the subject of Anglo-Russian exchanges. In reply to a telegraphic request from Lord Mayo, Sir Henry Rawlinson laid down the basis of the attitude consistently maintained by the British authorities for the rest of the century. 'On no account', he emphasized, 'should the national

5. 88, Clarendon to Buchanan, 27 Mar. 1869, AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.1.
6. It nevertheless led to an almost incredible amount of misconception later. See W. Habberton, 'Anglo-Russian relations concerning Afghanistan, 1837-1907', *University of Illinois, Studies in the Social Sciences*, XXI (1937), pp.33-4.
7. Gortchakov to Brunnow, 7 Mar. 1869, AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.2.
8. J. T. Wheeler, Memorandum on Afghan Turkistan, SHC/69, p.477; Faiz Baksh, Report on Badakhshan, Balkh and Bukhara, LIM/12, p.6a; Report on Political Status of Badakhshan, enclosed with 21, India, 5 Apr. 1872, LIM/12, p.1.



dependence of Afghan Turkistan and Badakhshan on Kabul be called in question.'⁹ The Indian Government followed his detailed suggestions closely, and in July forwarded to London a long statement of its views. The gist of it was that Bukhara possessed no territory south of the Oxus, save Kerki and Charjui farther west, and that under Dost Muhammad 'Afghanistan possessed the whole tract of country up to the Oxus'. Not only did Sher Ali have a right to inherit all of that territory, but he was now in effective control of it.¹⁰

There was no lack of evidence that Russia was going to contest this interpretation, and Sir Andrew Buchanan, the British Ambassador in St Petersburg, felt it wise to emphasize to the Tsar himself that

Her Majesty's Government could not reasonably deny to Sher Ali a right to re-establish his authority over the Provinces which had acknowledged the sovereignty of his father.¹¹

The dispute came to a head very quickly when Forsyth reached St Petersburg in the autumn of 1869. He went, as has been seen, primarily to discuss a commercial understanding with Russia,¹² but he became involved at once in the wider issues of Central Asian policy raised by Clarendon earlier in the year. There was a misunderstanding over Badakhshan at the very first meeting.¹³ At the next meeting, therefore, armed in advance with a brief in the form of a long memorandum sent privately to the British Ambassador by Mayo,¹⁴ Forsyth set out

to convince Stremoukov [Director of the Russian Asiatic Department], that Badakhshan not only was held by Dost Muhammad but is now actually annexed to the dominions of Sher Ali.¹⁵

The Russian was unconvinced.¹⁶ But agreement *was* reached upon the general principle that everything in the actual possession of

9. To Mayo, 18 June 1869, SHC/64, p.303. Also see below p.183.

10. Memo., enclosed with 213A, India, 7 July 1869, LIM/51, p.71 and passed to Buchanan in St Petersburg, 14 Sept. 1869, FO 65/870.

11. 112, Buchanan to Clarendon, 26 July 1869, AP 1873 LXXXV C.704, p.12.

12. Above pp.40-1.

13. 222, Buchanan to Clarendon, 2 Nov. 1869, AP 1873 LXXXV C.704, p.12.

14. This was J. T. Wheeler's Memorandum on Afghan Turkistan, SHC/69, p.477 sent Mayo to Buchanan, 26 Sept. 1869, BP/7.

15. Buchanan to Clarendon, 2 Nov. 1869, BP/2, p.68.

16. Forsyth to Buchanan, 5 Nov. 1869, AP 1873 LXXXV C.704, p.15.

Sher Ali at that time would be considered as Afghan territory.¹⁷ If Indian information was correct, this had settled the matter as far as Badakhshan was concerned, for it was believed to have acknowledged Sher Ali's authority already. There is no evidence to suggest that Forsyth deliberately trapped the Russians on this point. He certainly claimed that he had not misinterpreted their views,¹⁸ and left St Petersburg firmly convinced that the Oxus had been recognized as the boundary of Sher Ali's dominions, and that Badakhshan and Wakhan were included within them.¹⁹ Buchanan was perhaps more astute. He jubilantly informed Clarendon that,

if our facts are correct as to Badakhshan having acknowledged his [Sher Ali's] authority, they [the Russians] will have got into a fix by thinking their information better than ours.²⁰

The latent disagreement over this issue remained concealed until the end of 1871.

Forsyth also secured from Stremoukov a promise to obtain from General Kaufmann, the Governor-General of Turkistan, a specific report on the boundary question.²¹ The Indian authorities were not inclined to let the Russian Government forget this promise and, in the ensuing months, frequent attempts were made to obtain the Governor-General's report. For one thing, it was never believed that Kaufmann could do other than support the Indian point of view.²² Moreover, Stremoukov's assertion that the report would, if found to substantiate the Indian Government's viewpoint, be 'equivalent to an engagement that their definition of the frontier would be respected',²³ made the prospect doubly attractive.

Buchanan, too, was anxious to clinch the matter, all the more because he realized that a misunderstanding existed. Early in

17. Gortchakov to Brunnow, 13 Nov. 1871, *ibid.*, p.54.

18. To Buchanan, 2 Nov. 1869, *ibid.*, p.13.

19. 254, Buchanan to Granville, 24 Oct. 1871, FO 65/873. Cf. E. Forsyth (*ed.*), *Autobiography and Reminiscences of Sir Douglas Forsyth*, pp.49-50. A. P. Thornton, *Cambridge Historical Journal*, XI (1953-5), p.213 misinterprets what passed between Forsyth and the Russians in this respect.

20. Letter of 2 Nov. 1869, BP/2, p.68.

21. Forsyth to Buchanan, 5 Nov. 1869, AP 1873 LXXXV C.704, p.15.

22. 27, India, 20 May 1870, *ibid.*, p.45. It is also printed in A. W. F. S. Loftus, *Diplomatic Reminiscences*, II, Appendix, p.277.

23. 263, Buchanan to Granville, 21 Sept. 1870, AP 1873 LXXXV C.704, p.51.

1870 he suggested that the Indian Government should lay down its views as to the territory in which Sher Ali had a clear title, and then invite the assent of the Russian Government. If this was not forthcoming, it would at least have been stated 'in terms which would admit of no evasion' the limits which Sher Ali 'would have a right to defend against aggression'.²⁴ These words point to the latent dangers in the situation. Lord Mayo had already reached the conclusion that, inadmissible as was interference in the family quarrels of the Afghan rulers,

the case would be quite different if Afghanistan were attacked from without – then it *might* be indispensable to the safety of India that we should support the Ruler of Kabul with men, money and arms.²⁵

As will be seen, it looked increasingly in the following months as if that attack was about to be mounted by Bukhara.²⁶

In the event, Buchanan's attempt to 'place on record in official form the engagements which they [the Russians] have verbally made to us'²⁷ failed. India re-defined its attitude as he suggested,²⁸ its views were laid before the Russian authorities with a request for their assent, and Stremoukov forwarded them to General Kaufmann at Tashkent. There, they disappeared into the same abyss of procrastination which had swallowed all the other attempts to extract some official statement of opinion from the Governor-General.²⁹

As 1870 passed into 1871, the centre of interest in Central Asia shifted to the west as the expected Russian offensive against Khiva became imminent. The northern boundary question languished. Khiva, like the other excuses offered by Stremoukov,³⁰ was doubtless only part of the reason for the prodigious delay in the matter of the northern frontier. The nucleus of the opposition to any admission that the disputed territories belonged to Afghanistan was coming from the Russian War Ministry, and in particular

24. 63, to Granville, 21 Feb. 1870, FO 65/871.

25. To Argyll, 7 July 1871, AP/Reel 314, extract in Duke of Argyll, *The Eastern Question*, II, p.280.

26. Below p.179.

27. Buchanan to Mayo, 13 July 1870, BP/2, p.223.

28. 27, India, 20 May 1870, AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.45.

29. Buchanan to Mayo, 21 Sept. 1870, BP/2, p.271.

30. Excuses such as the need for accuracy, the distance from the capital and the absence of Kaufmann's diplomatic agent.

from the War Minister himself.³¹ On the Russian maps at least, Badakhshan stretched 'in a wedge-like form towards the north, coming into contact with Kokand, Bukhara and Kashgar' and the Russians feared that in the possession of Sher Ali it could be used as a springboard for intrigue and even conquest in the areas set aside for Russian influence.³² The needs of offensive as well as of defensive strategy also played their part in the Russian attitude. Buchanan's successor at St Petersburg, Sir Augustus Loftus, believed that at the bottom of it was a simple objection to anything which would hinder the long-desired extension of Russia's strategic frontier to the Hindu Kush.³³

Buchanan himself was more inclined to stress the commercial factors behind the Russian attitude.³⁴ The main high road of commerce between Eastern and Western Turkistan ran along the Oxus valley in Wakhan and, as has been seen, the Russians were very anxious at this time to monopolise this artery to the allegedly limitless markets of Western China.³⁵ Here too there was probably an interplay of offensive and defensive motives, and the wish to forestall the real or imagined British commercial ambitions must have played its part.³⁶ For whatever reason, the Russians in November 1871 came out with a flat denial that Sher Ali had any right to Badakhshan and Wakhan.³⁷

In one sense, all the Russian reasons for denying Sher Ali's claims to Badakhshan and Wakhan were good reasons for Britain to uphold them.³⁸ It was, after all, an important line that was being discussed. For, since Russia had declared Afghanistan to be beyond her sphere,³⁹ the line of Afghanistan's northern frontier

31. General Miliutine. See 113 and 254, Buchanan to Granville, 26 July 1869 and 24 Oct. 1871, FO 65/870 and 873. Some new evidence of his role in Russian policy is adduced in *Journal of Modern History*, XXVI (1954), pp.255-9.

32. 254, Buchanan to Granville, 24 Oct. 1871, FO 65/873.

33. Loftus, *Diplomatic Reminiscences*, II, p.54; Loftus to Granville, 21 Mar 1872, PRO 30/29/91 and 25 Dec. 1872, FO 65/875.

34. 113, to Clarendon, 26 July 1869, FO 65/870; 234, to Granville, 4 Oct. 1871, FO 65/873.

35. Above p.34.

36. See, e.g., Terentyef, *Russia and England in Central Asia*, II, p.143.

37. Gortchakov to Brunnow, 13 Nov. 1871, AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.54.

38. E.g. Hammond to Granville, 26 Dec. 1872, PRO 30/29/105 regarded the Russian objections as 'unaccountable on any honest ground'.

39. Gortchakov to Brunnow, 7 Mar. 1869, AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.2.

would probably one day mark the southern limit of the Russian Central Asian Empire. The position of this limit would not only condition the extent of the Russian threat to India on this part of the frontier, but might one day become the line which British forces would have to defend. Mayo, like Lawrence, was moving towards the idea of a line beyond which any Russian advance would mean war, and Buchanan had unofficially already made it clear in St Petersburg that Britain could not permit any Russian occupation on the left bank of the Oxus.⁴⁰ It is not really surprising, when seen in this light, that the Indian Government regarded the whole question as 'perhaps the most important of the questions of foreign policy which have come under our consideration'.⁴¹

The strategic importance of the Upper Oxus provinces, touching directly on the disturbed tribal lands south of the Hindu Kush, was considerable.⁴² In 1875 the Russian, Veniukov, described Badakhshan as

unquestionably the most important of all those in Central Asia from a political point of view. . . . Possessed of it we could command the outliers of the Hindu Kush and the passes over this range to the valley of Kunar where lie Chitral and Mastuj. . . .⁴³

Mayo, and Lytton a few years later, agreed, and for this reason wanted Russia kept out of the Upper Oxus provinces as long as possible. But whereas Lytton tended to be philosophical about the eventual loss of Badakhshan and Wakhan to Russia, because they could never be defended by putting an Indian force across the Hindu Kush,⁴⁴ Mayo was willing to fight on the Oxus – or at least to push British claims and threats of military intervention there to the very limit.⁴⁵

Above all, Mayo was bound by political considerations to support Sher Ali. He had only recently won the Amir's friendship at a meeting at Amballa, and the encouragement and material support which he had been able to give Sher Ali at that meeting

40. To Granville, 25 Oct. 1871, BP/3.

41. 21, India, 5 Apr. 1872, LIM/12, p.1.

42. Above pp.153-4.

43. *The Progress of Russia in Central Asia*, p.19, Secret and Political Memo., C.17.

44. To Cranbrook, 9 Nov. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.1013; Minute, 4 Sept. 1878, AP 1881 LXX C.2811, p.4.

45. To Buchanan, 26 Sept. 1869, BP/7.

had done much to help him to re-establish his supremacy right up to the Oxus.⁴⁶ The dangers of any 'seeming desertion of his cause'⁴⁷ now were obvious. It would not only, in Lord Northbrook's words, have had 'a most injurious effect upon our influence in Afghanistan', and have weakened Sher Ali's already insecure position,⁴⁸ but it might possibly have driven him in disgust into the arms of Russia.

Lord Granville,⁴⁹ who had succeeded Clarendon at the Foreign Office, was well aware that the Indian Government could not be compromised over this issue. A number of factors eventually seem to have convinced him that the time had come to make a bid for a final settlement: the reiterated warnings of Loftus in St Petersburg that Russia was delaying until she was in a better position to dictate terms,⁵⁰ the growing Russian preoccupation with Khiva, the apparent weakness of her position in Central Asia,⁵¹ the reported existence of serious internal divisions over the policy she should follow there⁵² and, above all, the presence of the elusive General Kaufmann in the capital. After consultation with India and the India Office, an amended form of the earlier Indian statement on the boundary question was sent to St Petersburg together with the statement that it described the territory Her Majesty's Government considered to belong to Afghanistan, and which the Amir would have a right to defend if attacked.⁵³

This communication, both by its mode of presentation and by its contents, caused understandable and considerable soreness at St Petersburg. Gortchakov regarded it as an 'ultimatum'⁵⁴ and, possibly for that reason, showed no inclination to meet the British viewpoint at all. In fact his reply, enclosing Kaufmann's long-awaited memorandum, maintained unchanged the view that Badakhshan and Wakhan were independent of Sher Ali. Brunnow,

46. Argyll, *The Eastern Question*, II, pp.280-1; 213, India, 1 July 1869, AP 1878-9 LVI C.2190, p.92.

47. Rawlinson undated Memo., FO 65/875.

48. To Argyll, 31 Jan. 1873, AP/Reel 317.

49. Granville George Leveson-Gower, 2nd Earl Granville (1815-1891), Foreign Minister 1851-2, 1870-4 and 1880-5.

50. E.g. 295, Loftus to Granville, 16 Oct. 1872, FO 65/874.

51. Loftus to Granville, 16 Apr. 1872, AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.58.

52. 295, Loftus to Granville, 16 Oct. 1872, FO 65/874.

53. 197, Granville to Loftus, 17 Oct. 1872, AP 1873 LXXV C.699, p.1.

54. Loftus to Granville, 25 Dec. 1872, PRO 30/29/91.

the Russian Ambassador in London, took the matter much more seriously,⁵⁵ and seems to have felt it his duty to appeal direct to the Emperor above the Chancellor's head.⁵⁶ This undoubtedly helps to explain the strained relations which existed between Gortchakov and the London Ambassador when, as one result of Brunnow's intercession, Count Schouvalov came to London in January 1873 to conduct private negotiations with the British officials on behalf of the Emperor.⁵⁷ Brunnow himself was delighted at the Tsar's readiness for conciliation and, waxing lyrical on Christmas Day 1872, wrote to Granville of 'ce joli arbre de Noël que le Prince Gortchakov et Loftus viennent de planter sur les bords de l'Oxus'.⁵⁸

His optimism, or rather his inside information, was amply justified. Schouvalov visited Granville at Walmer early in January, and gave an assurance that Russia had no intention of occupying Khiva permanently after the campaign scheduled for the spring. As for Badakhshan and Wakhan, he expressed the Emperor's determination 'that such a question should not be a cause of difference between the two countries', and privately held out hopes of a speedy settlement.⁵⁹

Paradoxically, the readiness of Russia for a settlement seems to have weakened Granville's determination to hold his ground.⁶⁰ When he consulted the Indian Secretary of State about the reply he proposed to make to the Russian Government, the Duke of Argyll criticized very forcibly the frequent use of the word 'claim' to describe what the Indian Government had already recognized as the long-established 'right' of Sher Ali to the disputed territories.⁶¹ It was even urged in the India Office that

we should in no way commit ourselves to any agreement whatever —but merely in a friendly and courteous manner tell Russia that our

55. Granville told the Cabinet on 10 Dec. 1872 that Brunnow had spoken 'in alarm' about his despatch, BM Add. Mss. 44640, p.328.

56. 6, Granville to Loftus, 1 Jan. 1873, FO 65/875.

57. Brunnow to Granville, 3 Feb. 1873, PRO 30/29/97; Granville to Loftus, 1 Jan. 1873, PRO 30/29/114.

58. The letter is PRO 30/29/98.

59. Granville's Memo. written immediately after this conversation is *ibid.* Cf. Granville to Gladstone, 8 Jan. 1873, A. Ramm (ed.), *The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville*, p.371, no.810.

60. Gladstone too was looking for a compromise, to Hammond, 2 Jan. 1873, BM Add. Mss. 44542, p.128.

61. SHC/72, p.387.

recognition of Sher Ali's right to Badakhshan and Wakhan was a *fait accompli*—adding at the same time that we would use our best endeavours to restrain him from any frontier aggression: but in no way 'agreeing' to be responsible for the good conduct of the Amir of Afghanistan. . . . We cannot, from an Indian point of view, admit any right on the part of Russia to define the boundaries of Afghanistan.⁶²

Granville seems to have been unwilling to slap Russia like this again after she, in the person of Schouvalov, had offered the other cheek in such a conspicuously friendly manner. With Cabinet agreement, the draft reply was 'amended and approved', but the word 'claim' was still left in it in several places. Moreover, Granville added an important final paragraph without officially consulting Argyll at all.⁶³

Kaye, the Secretary of the Political and Secret Department of the India Office, was most indignant. He pointed out to Argyll that the original objections to Granville's proposed reply still stood:

I fear much trouble lies before us. The Government of India, I am afraid, will say that after the India Office had defined the boundary it drew back on the first word of remonstrance from the Russian Government.⁶⁴

It must be admitted that this India Office view that Russia had no right to be consulted was a little unrealistic. It is quite true that Bukhara was still nominally independent, and Russia's only relations with her were commercial. But it was hardly consistent to urge Russia to use her influence with Bukhara to keep the peace, and at the same time to deny her a say in the determination of the limits within which that influence was to be exercised.

As it happened, the fears of the India Office were groundless, although the unwillingness of the Russians to give way completely is plain in almost every sentence of their guarded reply. In view of the difficulties involved and the superiority of the British information, ran Gortchakov's despatch, the Russian Government as 'an act of courtesy' did 'not refuse to accept the line of boundary laid down by England', especially in view of the 'indisputable'

62. Merivale Memo., 23 Apr. 1873, SHC/73, p.201.

63. But merely informed him after the despatch had been sent, Merivale Memo., 23 Apr. 1873, SHC/73, p.201. The despatch is Granville to Loftus, 24 Jan. 1873, AP 1873 LXXXV C.699, p.13.

64. Letter of 27 Jan. 1873, SHC/72, p.469.

material, moral and financial influence exercised by the Indian Government over Sher Ali.⁶⁵

With this concession, such as it was, the negotiations ended. There was no 'agreement' of 1873 as such at all. Only a series of 'long and languid'⁶⁶ negotiations in two capitals and at a Baden watering-place which were terminated by no final article nor formal exchange of notes embodying the points on which agreement had been reached. Clarity in these circumstances was hardly to be expected – and certainly was not obtained.

Nevertheless, the negotiations of 1869–73 did set the essential pattern for most of the subsequent attempts to settle the Central Asian question by diplomacy in the nineteenth century. Probably the most decisive influence on the course of all these negotiations was the protracted internal struggle in Russia between the civil and military elements for control over Central Asian policy.⁶⁷ In such a situation, the personal inclinations of the Emperor were of great importance, and the restraining influence of Alexander II is as clearly visible in these negotiations as that of Alexander III was often conspicuous by its absence in the Pamir negotiations of the 'nineties. The real attitude of Gortchakov is not entirely clear. In the main, the British statesmen felt that he could be trusted, but his general ignorance of Central Asian geo-politics, which made him dependent upon the ubiquitous Stremoukov, and his tendency to indulge in grandiloquent explanations of his policy, disposed them to take his assurances with a pinch of salt.⁶⁸ Without in any sense subscribing to the extreme expansionist views of the Imperial War Ministry, Gortchakov does not seem to have been inclined to give way on the Badakhshan issue, although he was probably strengthened in this attitude through pique at Brunnow's appeal to the Emperor over his head.

It was certainly fortunate that Brunnow was in London, for Loftus at St Petersburg never inspired the Russian or British authorities with the same confidence as Buchanan had done.

65. Gortchakov to Brunnow, 31 Jan. 1873, AP 1873 LXXV C.699, p.15. Brunnow thought this reply 'not half civil enough', A. Ramm, *op. cit.*, p.376, no.818.

66. *Hansard*, CCXV, p.852.

67. 220, Buchanan to Granville, 18 Sept. 1871, FO 65/873.

68. Clarendon to Hammond, 8 Sept. 1869, FO 391/4. Gortchakov earned himself the very apt title 'narcisse de l'encrier', H. Rumbold, *Recollections of a Diplomatist*, II, p.246.

Nor did he ever establish the same valuable personal relationship with the Viceroy of India as existed between Lord Mayo and Buchanan. By writing privately, Mayo got his opinions and information to St Petersburg a month earlier than by way of 'the circumlocution office'⁶⁹ – and Buchanan did not hesitate, on occasions, to read 'slightly cooked' versions of Mayo's letters explaining Indian policy to the Russian officials without authority from London.⁷⁰ Brunnow did most to keep the discussions amicable, once Buchanan had gone. Indeed, he leaned over so far backwards to do so that his conduct, like his metaphorical posture, was sometimes scarcely upright. There are several instances when he exceeded his instructions, told half-truths or worse, and even betrayed confidences if he believed that by doing so, mutual suspicions would be reduced. His influence was always in the direction of peace and his cordial relations with Clarendon, and later with Granville, were of great value in keeping the negotiations on a friendly basis when so many potential elements existed to drive the two nations into conflict.

Unfortunately, the Russian acceptance of the line of boundary laid down by Britain was only the beginning of disagreement about it. Schouvalov's optimistic belief that his visit to London had solved the Central Asian question for 'at least twenty-five years'⁷¹ was scarcely true for the same number of days. There was a sudden and marked deterioration in the tone of both the British and Russian press which was accentuated by the Russian activities in Khiva.⁷² The Russian newspapers particularly attacked the boundary agreement on the ground that it set a limit to a hitherto unlimited field of expansion.⁷³ Stremoukov even excused himself against this charge, by the outrageous allegation that Russia had only been compelled to agree by British violence and threats of war.⁷⁴

Two aspects in particular of the 1873 'agreement' as it affected the Upper Oxus caused disagreement and ill-feeling. In the first

69. Buchanan to Mayo, 29 June 1870, BP/2, p.210. All news from India had to pass through both India and Foreign Offices before reaching St Petersburg.

70. Buchanan to Mayo, 9 Mar. 1870, BP/2, p.146.

71. Loftus, *Diplomatic Reminiscences*, II, p.54.

72. See especially 211, Loftus to Granville, 27 May 1873, FO 65/878.

73. Enclosures of 90, Loftus to Granville, 5 Mar. 1873, FO 65/876.

74. 118, Loftus to Granville, 27 Mar. 1873, FO 65/877.

place, there was a misunderstanding as to how far Britain had assumed obligations to defend the new frontier from attack and to restrain the Afghans themselves from aggression beyond it. Secondly, there was growing doubt as to whether the frontier as defined accurately represented the true limits of Afghan territory on the Upper Oxus. These twin aspects of the 1869-73 negotiations run like a thread through all the subsequent diplomatic exchanges about the Upper Oxus question.

Right from the early months of 1869, the Russian Foreign Ministry had been showing considerable anxiety about the situation on the Afghan-Bukhara border. There was a widespread belief in Russia that Lord Mayo had been sent to India to pursue a 'forward' policy,⁷⁵ and no doubt the Amballa meeting with the Amir gave the impression that something more was afoot than would ever have been tolerated in Lawrence's time. To the Russians, it looked as though a powerful Afghan state might one day arise on Russia's southern border, in firm alliance with India, and a standing menace to the still troubled Muslim areas under Russian control.

In June 1869 Gortchakov sought assurances that Britain would restrain Sher Ali from aggression on his northern frontier.⁷⁶ Mayo, although he was unwilling to deny the Amir a right to all the territories once possessed by his father, recognized that expansion beyond those limits would give Russia justifiable cause for complaint.⁷⁷ Fortunately, the Amballa meeting had enabled Mayo to establish a personal ascendancy over the Afghan ruler which helped him to forestall many of the dangers which lurked in any Afghan-Bukharan collision. An incipient crisis in September 1869, when Sher Ali wished to attack some Bukharan outposts, was nipped in the bud by the unequivocal language which India promptly addressed to the Amir. Two months later, the Russians were suggesting to Forsyth that the two Powers should agree to restrain their respective protégés from aggression, and Mayo subsequently made great efforts to secure a public and official 'declaration on the part of the Russian Government in the sense of the

75. Terentyef, *Russia and England in Central Asia*, II, pp.61-2; Buchanan to Mayo, 6 Nov. 1869, BP/2, pp.97-100.

76. 68, Rumbold to Clarendon, 2 June 1869, FO 65/870, extract in AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.6.

77. To Argyll, 1 July 1869, AP/Reel 311, p.577.

statements made to Mr Forsyth . . .', in order to ' . . . avert a war which is still possible between Afghanistan and Bukhara'.⁷⁸ In fact the Forsyth conversations were never formalized, despite renewed pressure at St Petersburg when matters threatened to flare up again with the crossing of the Oxus by a Bukharan force. Nevertheless, the Indian Government was well pleased with the 'excellent results' of the Forsyth understanding from this point of view.⁷⁹ For in 1870, General Kaufmann categorically refused an offer by Abd-ar-Rahman, the exiled nephew of Sher Ali, to work in Afghanistan in Russia's cause and warned him that continued asylum depended on his complete abstention from intrigues.⁸⁰ Subsequently, the general reduction of tension on the Afghan-Bukharan border rendered the whole question of restraint much less urgent. But it was not completely forgotten. In the final Russian acceptance of Granville's definition of the Afghan boundary, great emphasis was laid on Britain's promise to 'use all her influence with Sher Ali, in order to induce him to maintain a peaceful attitude'.⁸¹ No mention was made of any equivalent Russian undertaking with respect to Bukhara but, in a retrospective summary of the negotiations, the Indian Government was at special pains to stress that promises had been made on both sides:

We understand that the result of the late correspondence is that the Russian Government have agreed to co-operate with us in our endeavours to establish and maintain peace in Central Asia by impressing a similar policy on those States and tribes beyond the limits of Afghanistan, which come within the sphere of Russian influence or control.⁸²

That this was a fair interpretation of one aspect of the negotiations was confirmed in 1876, when the Russian Government stated that the two Powers had a mutual interest in

avoiding, as far as possible, any immediate contact with each other, and any collisions between the Asiatic States placed within the circle of their influence.⁸³

78. Mayo to Buchanan, 25 Jan. 1870, BP/8.

79. 28, India, 26 May 1871, LIM/8, p.1033.

80. Buchanan to Clarendon, 19 Apr. and 18 June 1870, AP 1873 LXXV C.704, pp.40 and 43; Terentyef, *op. cit.*, I, pp.343-4.

81. Gortchakov to Brunnow, 31 Jan. 1873, AP 1873 LXXV C.699, p.15.

82. 33, India, 28 Mar. 1873, AP 1878-9 LVI C.2190, p.101.

83. Gortchakov to Schouvalov, 3 Feb. 1876, AP 1878 LXXX C.2164, p.68.

Although this feature of the negotiations seems to have led to a relaxation of tension on the Oxus at first, there were many at home who saw real dangers in the situation, and regretted the obligations which had been assumed. As Ripon put it, much later in 1881:

The moment one great nation says to another, 'I will not permit you to interfere with this small state on my border', it becomes responsible to the other nation for restraining the smaller state from injuring its neighbour, and may justly be called upon to exercise that restraint or to allow the other nation to redress its own wrongs.⁸⁴

Northbrook, who succeeded Mayo, very quickly became aware of this unpalatable truth, and as early as mid-1872 was even beginning to doubt the wisdom of the whole policy of negotiating the Afghan boundary with Russia.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, once agreement had been reached with Russia, it was imperative both to make the position clear to the Amir, and to restrain him within the territorial limits agreed upon. Sher Ali had first learned of the negotiations from the Russians because Mayo, working on the sleeping dogs principle, had decided to say nothing so long as relations with Kabul were fairly satisfactory.⁸⁶ The Amir was several times informed of the Russian assurances to respect his possessions, but, incredible though it may seem, he was not consulted about the details of his boundary until agreement about it had been reached.⁸⁷ Fortunately, he raised no objections to the boundary settlement, although he made it clear that he put no faith in Russian promises and wanted definite guarantees of assistance from India. Northbrook and his Council were ready to give him these guarantees, but only on strict conditions:

. . . if he unreservedly accepts and acts on our advice in all external relations, we will help him with money, arms and troops if necessary to repel unprovoked invasion. We to be the judge of the necessity.⁸⁸

84. To Kimberley, 29 Mar. 1884, RP/6, p.55 citing an earlier memo. The letter is quoted in L. Wolf, *Life of the first Marquess of Ripon*, II, p.64.

85. To Argyll, 24 June 1872, AP/Reel 317.

86. Mayo to Buchanan, 24 June 1870, BP/8.

87. In 1893, the existence or not of prior British consultation with Kabul became a matter of dispute between Britain and Russia. See HC/138, pp.781-804.

88. Tel., India, 24 July 1873, AP 1878-9 LVI C.2190, p.108.

But earlier correspondence had already made it plain that Northbrook was in advance of Whitehall over this issue. Argyll, with Cabinet approval, therefore proposed the more evasive formula:

inform the Amir that we do not share his alarm . . . you may assure him we shall maintain our settled policy in favour of Afghanistan if he abides by our advice in external affairs.⁸⁹

It was a waste of ink, for Northbrook in fact gave the Amir's representative promises of aid in certain conditions almost exactly as in his original statement. He later justified himself to Argyll, arguing that it was a necessity 'if we wish to retain our proper influence in Afghanistan'.⁹⁰

As far as Russia was concerned, Northbrook's attitude, avowedly based on the 'antecedents of the Crimean War', was that peace is more secure when mutual obligations are known.⁹¹

In plain terms, if we could not consistent with our honour and our position in India allow Afghanistan to be molested . . . without aiding her by arms, should not Russia be told that such is our determination, and would not such a communication be more conducive to peace than to maintain silence?⁹²

With our knowledge of the criminal confusions of August 1914, this policy probably makes more sense to us than it did to the Liberal Cabinet and Foreign Office of the day. Northbrook's proposal was rejected for the very reason that he had proposed it – that it would make it plain to Russia that Britain intended to resist any Russian aggression on Afghanistan by force of arms.⁹³ After a great deal of discussion, refuge was sought in a less-binding formula, and early in 1874 Russia was merely told that Britain regarded Afghan independence as 'a matter of great importance'.⁹⁴

89. Tel., 26 July 1873, *ibid.*

90. To Argyll, 25 Aug. 1873, NoP/1, p. clxi. An account of his interview with the Amir's representative is AP 1878–9 LVI C.2190, p.112. It is therefore hard to see how the *Cambridge History of British India*, VI, p.11, following the Conservative party-line of the day, can call Argyll's telegram of the 26 July a 'decisive' rejection of India's policy which may have greatly affected future developments in Central Asia.

91. To Argyll, 9 June 1873, AP/Reel 317.

92. To Argyll, 5 Feb. 1874, AP/Reel 318.

93. See Hammond's Minute, with marginalia by Gladstone and Granville, FO 391/24; FO to IO, 25 Aug. 1873, FO 65/878.

94. 23, Granville to Loftus, 7 Jan. 1874, Loftus, *Diplomatic Reminiscences*, II, p.296.

Liberal policy was naturally to minimize the commitments entered into, especially as Russia for her own purposes tended to exaggerate them. On 22 April 1873, Gladstone publicly denied that Britain had undertaken to use anything more than 'moral' influence on Sher Ali in the direction of peace.⁹⁵ This statement sparked off a regular Anglo-Russian pen-and-ink war, in which those Russian journals hostile to the 1869-73 negotiations retaliated by attempting to minimize the Russian undertakings which had been made during those years.⁹⁶ Fortunately Gortchakov, ignoring his own advisers as well as the newspaper clamour, admitted the truth of Gladstone's proposition.⁹⁷ But the basic dilemma of the British position on the northern Afghan frontier remained. It was quite simply the dilemma of responsibility, whether 'moral' or not, without control. And as Anglo-Afghan relations deteriorated towards war, the problem became more acute. Lytton's more active Afghan policy was explicitly justified by the need to exercise the control,⁹⁸ and indeed the Treaty of Gandamak for a time gave Britain the position in Afghanistan which she was always claiming in theory. But with the withdrawal of British troops from Southern Afghanistan, and the establishment of the wayward Abd-ar-Rahman on the Kabul throne, the whole problem was posed afresh.

All this was very relevant to the Upper Oxus frontier. The responsibility for keeping the Amir within all of the 1873 frontier line was heavy, but on the extreme north-east it proved especially burdensome. This was chiefly because it soon became obvious that the line of the River Oxus, which had been agreed upon as the Afghan limit in this direction, actually deprived the Amir of territories on the other side of the river which were legitimately his.

The difficulties which could stem from this error were foreshadowed within a few months of the end of the 1869-73 negotiations, when intelligence was received in India that Afghan forces were proceeding against Yusuf Khan, the ruler of Shignan. The Amir was warned at once against interference beyond the line so recently fixed⁹⁹ and on this occasion he was conciliatory. He denied

95. *Hansard*, CCXV, pp.874-7.

96. See, e.g., *The Times*, 20 May 1873 and the *Moscow Gazette*, 16 May 1873.

97. 195, Loftus to Granville, 14 May 1873, FO 65/877.

98. 13, India, 10 May 1877, AP 1878-9 LVI C.2190, p.160.

99. Enclosures 20 and 21 of 69, India, 11 Aug. 1873, LIM/15, p.961.

any desire to interfere across the river and claimed that Shignan 'lies this side of the Oxus'. So much was satisfactory. But, he added, 'two or three of its small villages are situated the other side of the Oxus'.¹⁰⁰ A year later, one of the Indian Government's native explorers revealed the ominous fact that more than half the population of Shignan, which was claimed by the Amir as 'from ancient times a dependency and a feudatory of Badakhshan', dwelt beyond the river.¹⁰¹

It was only then that the implications of the error began to be realized. Since it lay at the root of nearly all the Anglo-Russian disagreements about this part of Central Asia for the next twenty-five years, and played an important part in the Pamir crisis of 1891-5, the origins of the error deserve some attention. The whole episode is a classic example of the dangers of that popular governmental activity in the age of imperialism, which Lord Salisbury later described as

drawing lines upon maps where no human foot has ever trod . . . giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, . . . only . . . hindered by the small impediment that we never knew exactly where those mountains and rivers and lakes were.¹⁰²

In 1869, Rawlinson had answered Mayo's urgent telegraphic request for information about the Afghan border, by suggesting that

The most convenient line of division that could be adopted would be to follow the main stream of the Oxus from the Sirikal Lake (of Wood) on the Pamir plateau to the Kirki ferry.¹⁰³

He *was* aware that in Kolab the Oxus line would deprive the Amir of some territory to the north of the river, but does not seem to have realized that there were any other Afghan lands beyond the river in this direction as well. The Indian Government followed Rawlinson's general view that the Oxus should be the line chosen, but at first took, not the tributary which flowed from Wood's Lake, but 'the stream which passes Wakhan up to the point where the range of the Hindu Kush meets the southern angle of the Pamir

100. Enclosure 9 of 71, India, 8 Sept. 1873, LIM/15, p.1019.

101. Below, pp.189-90.

102. A. L. Kennedy, *Salisbury 1830-1903: Portrait of a Statesman*, p.224.

103. Memo., 18 June 1869, SHC/64, p.311. See above p.166. The identification of 'Sirikal' with Wood's Lake was in itself erroneous.

Steppe'.¹⁰⁴ The dangers of this line were implicit in the words used, for it would have allowed Russia to expand right up to the Hindu Kush just north of Yasin and Chitral. And to this there were obvious political, commercial and strategic objections, as Rawlinson pointed out at the end of 1871.¹⁰⁵ His view was finally adopted by the Indian Government in April 1872.¹⁰⁶

A few months later, as has been seen, Granville determined to force the boundary issue to a head by naming the territories which, in the British view, belonged to Afghanistan. Rawlinson was obviously the man to define them and his draft read:

Badakhshan with its dependent district of Wakhan from the Sarikul (Wood's Lake) on the East to the junction of the Kokcha River with the Oxus *on the West, the line of the Oxus* (or Penjah) forming the Northern boundary of this Afghan province throughout its entire extent.

The words italicised here formed one line of Rawlinson's draft and, through an unfortunate though understandable slip of the eye, were omitted completely by whichever clerk made the final draft. In this emasculated form, the faulty definition passed quickly to the Foreign Office, and thence to St Petersburg.¹⁰⁷

For some time the omission remained unnoticed and even the Indian Government, consulted after the despatch had already gone to St Petersburg, expressed its full approval of what was, at best, ambiguous and ungrammatical jargon.¹⁰⁸ It was not until Saunders, the Geographer in the India Office, saw the printed draft of the impending Blue Book, that anyone pointed out that the crucial sentence was meaningless as it stood. Naturally ignorant of the wholesale omission that had been made, he attempted to make sense of what was left by moving the comma which had been put in by someone – not Rawlinson – after 'Penjah', to a position after the words 'Kokcha River'. This ingenious bit of verbal surgery would certainly have restored the original meaning of Rawlinson's draft – that the Oxus up to Lake Victoria formed the northern limit of Badakhshan and Wakhan. But, as Saunders went on to point out, this in itself was not true.

104. 27, India, 20 May 1870, AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.45.

105. Undated Memo., enclosed with IO to FO, 5 Dec. 1871, FO 65/873.

106. 21, India, 5 Apr. 1872, LIM/12, p.1.

107. The final draft is SHC/71, p.675 and the FO copy is FO 65/874.

108. 5, India, 10 Jan. 1873, LIM/14, p.79.

In words which his superiors would have done well to heed, he urged that not only did Wakhan extend across the river but

it will be found that the line of the Oxus . . . intersects other parts of this mountainous region which are almost certain to be occupied by communities whose settlements are on both banks of the river.¹⁰⁹

Because time was short, Saunders's memorandum was despatched with the Under-Secretary's permission direct from the India Office Geographical Department to the Foreign Office. The only reaction there was the lofty and irrelevant comment that this was 'an irregular proceeding'.¹¹⁰ Saunders himself had certainly made it easier for the Foreign Office to ignore his warnings by pointing out that, since the Russians had admitted that Badakhshan and Wakhan belonged to Afghanistan, this would

appear to preclude the Russian Government from insisting upon an adherence to any misconception that may have been expressed as to their actual or supposed limits.

It was the only mistake Saunders made, and unfortunately it was the only one of his opinions that the Foreign Office entertained.¹¹¹ The false draft, garnished with the comma after 'Penjah' which Saunders had opposed, became immortalized in print a few days later with the publication of the Blue Book.¹¹²

Perhaps Saunders, frustrated by official red tape, determined to appeal to a wider audience. Whatever the source, an article in the *Morning Post* the day after he had written his memorandum drew attention to the 'great and embarrassing blunder' which had been made. On 17 February 1873, Argyll told Granville privately that he thought the 'row' about Wakhan was 'all nonsense'.¹¹³ He seems to have based his activities for the rest of the day on that assumption, for first of all he conveyed to the Foreign Office India's official approval of the boundary as laid down,¹¹⁴ and then defended Granville in the House of Lords as having based his definition on India Office information.¹¹⁵ Four days later, on

109. Memo., 14 Feb. 1873, FO 65/875.

110. Hammond Minute, *ibid.*

111. FO Minute on Saunders' Memo, 13 Feb. 1873, *ibid.*

112. AP 1873 LXXV C.699, p.1.

113. Letter of 17 Feb. 1873, PRO 30/29/51.

114. IO to FO, 17 Feb. 1873, AP 1873 LXXV C.704, p.68.

115. *Hansard*, CCXIV, pp.537-8.

21 February, the India Office was still referring the Foreign Office to Argyll's unyielding statement in the Lords of the 17th.¹¹⁶ But the official spokesman of the India Office in the Commons, Grant Duff,¹¹⁷ was that very day already on the defensive. Even if it *could* be proved that the Amir had a claim to 'certain hut-villages' beyond the Oxus, he said, it would have been 'a very cruel kindness' to have encouraged him to lay claim to them.¹¹⁸ Rawlinson, before the Royal Geographical Society on 24 February, carried the strategic withdrawal a stage further. The Afghan outposts north of the river were 'not worth having' and, since some Bukharan territory came south of the river, 'one irregularity, therefore, balanced the other'.¹¹⁹

That really was the gist of the matter. The Oxus was the most *convenient* line to take. As the Indian Government put it later:

. . . the river is a boundary which cannot be ignored or effaced, nor can it be easily encroached upon. If transgressed it must be transgressed openly and deliberately.¹²⁰

The alternative, to follow the line of the watersheds, required a topographical knowledge which in 1873 just did not exist. The need for definition to forestall Russian encroachments could not wait for the chance visits of explorers. Nevertheless, it is *not* true, as some of the British authorities asserted later, that the Oxus line was believed to mark the actual limits of Afghanistan in this direction.¹²¹ Certainly Rawlinson, when first approached in 1869, was apparently not aware of any important exceptions. But by December 1871 he at least knew that Badakhshan did not reach entirely to the Oxus where it makes its sweep to the north; that Darwaz, which had never in modern times belonged to Badakhshan, came south of the river; and that the Afghan ruby mines at Gharan were on the 'wrong', that is the right, bank of the river. Nevertheless, both he and the Indian Government continued to lay down the river line without any qualifications as the northern

116. SHC/72, p.921.

117. Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff (1829-1906), Under Secretary of State for India 1868-74, later Governor of Madras 1881-6.

118. *Hansard*, CCXIV, p.787.

119. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XVII (1872-3), p.108.

120. 16 of 11 Mar. 1884, PFI/39, p.1137.

121. S. C. Bayley, Note on the Pamir Question and the North-East Frontiers of Afghanistan, 19 Nov. 1891, Secret and Political Memo., A.82.

limit of Afghanistan in this direction and, notwithstanding the missing words, this was the meaning of the 1873 formula to which Russia agreed.

By ignoring realities like this, the British laid up for themselves a quarter of a century of embarrassment on the Upper Oxus. It would have been a wise precaution to make the line provisional only, and subject to adequate topographical examination on the spot later. For, except in its lower courses, the Oxus had never been a political limit. Where a wide river runs through open downs or across a plain, it often does mark a clear and distinct political boundary, although, even in a case like this, command of both banks is often deemed a strategic necessity by the neighbouring states. But in mountain districts like those of the Upper Oxus, where valleys are often separated from one another by impassable peaks, the rivers become the main thoroughfares and the same people dwell on both banks. A river in such country is almost unknown as a boundary, and is as artificial as a wire fence or a degree of latitude.¹²²

The results of ignoring these elementary facts of political geography were likely to be very uncomfortable for the British authorities. To correct the error, there were really three alternatives open to them: they could try to gain Russian approval of a new boundary;¹²³ they could unilaterally issue a revised list of the respective districts belonging to Afghanistan and Bukhara;¹²⁴ or they could insist, as Saunders had suggested, that since Russia had accepted Badakhshan and Wakhan as Afghan territory, the faulty limits which had been assigned to them must be altered so as to bring the letter of the agreement into line with its spirit. Every one of these courses was bound to lead to trouble with the Russians.

But the consequences of trying to maintain the 1873 frontier were possibly worse, for the Indian Government would be in the embarrassing position of having to restrain the Amir by the terms of the understanding from occupying territories which that understanding stated were his. That was bad enough, but it was not

122. A useful discussion is S. W. Boggs, *International Boundaries*, especially pp.23 and 165. The Indian Government did not give this view its support until 126 of 21 Oct. 1890, PFI/61, p.559.

123. As suggested by Burne Minute, HC/59, p.549.

124. As suggested by Rawlinson Minute, *ibid.*, p.563.

all. For the Afghan rule had never been popular in the Upper Oxus states and disturbances there were frequent. Moreover, the Afghan grip on them was always weak, for they were far from the reservoirs of Afghan strength south of the Hindu Kush. It was the opinion of Ney Elias for instance, after a visit in 1886, that Roshan and Shignan would welcome the Russians as deliverers whenever they chose to come.¹²⁵ And this on a frontier which was practically impossible for either the Amir or the Indian Government to defend. But strategic reasons apart, an agreement which fastened Afghan rule where it was hated was not likely to be permanent.¹²⁶ There were political dangers too. As Lord Ripon put it:

Unless the Amir is strong he cannot maintain order on his frontier and fulfil the obligations of good neighbourhood; if he is strong he may become a cause of great trouble if not of danger to ourselves.¹²⁷

One unpleasant possibility, in view of the Afghan intrigues among the Dard tribes, was that hostile Afghan influence would be turned against them from the Upper Oxus on the north, as well as direct from the west. Relations north and south across the Hindu Kush had always been close¹²⁸ and consequently the Upper Oxus tribes were liable to appeal for help against Afghanistan to the Dard tribes which owed allegiance to Kashmir. Since India backed both Afghanistan and Kashmir with arms and money, the embarrassment which this situation could cause can be easily imagined.

In this way, the 1873 arrangements for the Upper Oxus left a legacy which Sir Robert Morier in St Petersburg, still trying to sort out the mess twenty years later, ruefully described as 'pregnant with the utmost confusion'.¹²⁹ The ironic feature of it all is that the superiority of the British information, of which Mayo had boasted to Argyll and which the Russians themselves frankly admitted, was not taken advantage of. The adjustment of rival interests and conflicting claims must always be a delicate business, but when it

125. *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*, pp.75-6. Also see below pp.200 and 203.

126. It had ethical and humanitarian objections, too, which were widely criticized. See, e.g., the lecture given to the Royal United Services Institution on 12 Feb. 1873.

127. To Kimberley, 16 May 1884, RP/6, p.92.

128. Above p.119.

129. Note to Chichkine, enclosed with 70, to Rosebery, 27 Feb. 1893, FO 65/1461.

deliberately ignores the true situation it becomes doubly dangerous. Rawlinson has a great deal of responsibility for this. He was the one who first sketched the outlines of the proposed frontier in 1869, it was he who, in December 1871, laid down the basis of the Indian Government's case, and he, at the end of 1872, who postulated a line which ignored the facts as he had described them in 1871. It is arguable that no one in 1873 could foresee the importance which Afghanistan would attach to the missing territories, nor have an accurate idea of their extent. What is less excusable, is the misleading and highly tendentious account of the whole affair which Rawlinson gave to the world in his address to the Royal Geographical Society. He even denied his responsibility for the decisions made about the boundary.¹³⁰ One hopes he at least had his tongue in his cheek when, in 1884, he wrote of the arrangement in which he played a leading part:

Probably a territorial delimitation between the dependents of two such powers as England and Russia was never before discussed in such an irregular manner, or formulated in such loose and unintelligible language . . . so ambiguous and contradictory as to be almost incomprehensible.¹³¹

(2) *The Anglo-Russian 'Agreement' in decay 1873-1888*

The serious inaccuracy of the line of the River Oxus as the north-eastern boundary of Afghanistan was confirmed almost before the ink was dry on the despatches which constituted the 1873 'agreement'. Two of the native explorers attached to the mission Forsyth led to Kashgar a few months later, 'the Havildar' and 'the Munshi', ascended and descended the Upper Oxus respectively. Although they failed to link their observations because of the hostility between Darwaz and Shignan, they did discover enough to undermine very seriously the 1873 line.¹ Not only were Roshan, Shignan, Darwaz and Wakhan all found to occupy territory on both sides of the river, but it appeared that the main stream of the

130. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XVII (1872-3), p.108.

131. Memo. on Shignan and Roshan, 12 Apr. 1884, HC/63, p.209.

1. Abdul Subhan's ('The Munshi') Report is enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303. The Havildar's Report is H. Trotter, *Secret and Confidential Report on the Trans-Himalayan Explorations by the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India during 1873-5*, p.4.

Oxus was not Rawlinson's tributary flowing from Wood's Lake, but the Murghab feeder fifty miles farther north.² Moreover it appeared that the restriction of Afghanistan to the left bank of the Oxus had already some unhappy political results. The ruler of Shignan had made Roshan over to his young son, and was apparently all ready to abandon to Badakhshan all his territory on the Afghan side of the river, and throw himself on the mercies of Russia and Bukhara. All this, apparently, because he believed that an Afghanistan confined to the south bank of the river would no longer be able to help him in his quarrel with his old enemy, Darwaz.³ It was not until 1878, that one of the Indian native surveyors, 'M.S.', finally managed, after two unsuccessful attempts, to complete the river survey between Darwaz and Shignan, and he returned with a great deal of valuable political information.⁴ The Russians, too, were accumulating evidence about the inaccuracy of the 1873 Oxus boundary. The Russian Pamir Expedition of 1876 supported Forsyth's belief that the Murghab was the main source of the Oxus and, two years later, Oshanin confirmed 'the Munshi's' evidence that Darwaz had territory south of the river.⁵

The Indian Government had been particularly impressed by the 'important matter' of the Upper Oxus situation revealed by Forsyth's Report.⁶ When a rumoured Afghan incursion into Darwaz north of the Oxus caused Gortchakov to raise the matter with the British Ambassador in 1876, India wanted to throw down the gauntlet by asserting that Sher Ali had a title to interfere in cis-Oxus Darwaz by the spirit of the 1873 agreement. But the feeling in Whitehall was that discretion was the better part of valour:

We can make out a good case on the documents as they stand, if the point ever has to be argued; but it may be as well not to start the argument prematurely or without real necessity.⁷

2. *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*, pp.271-2.

3. Forsyth Confidential Report, 21 Sept. 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.

4. His report is H. C. Tanner (*ed.*), *Secret and Confidential Reports of trans-Himalayan explorations in Badakhshan*.

5. For these explorations, see above pp.113-14 and 151-2.

6. India to Forsyth, 8 Oct. 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.

7. Moore Minute, HC/18, p.747. Most of the correspondence about this incident has been published in AP 1878 LXXX C.2164, pp.93-4, 99-100, 101-2, 103-4, 105-6, 110-11, 113 and 115.

So long as neither Afghanistan nor Bukhara attempted, or were compelled, to assert their authority in their respective territories across the river, the *quieta non movere* policy had some chance of success. But in December 1877 the rough balance of injustices was destroyed when the Bukharan Beg of Karategin marched his troops into Darwaz and extended his sway south of the river.⁸ This caused hardly a ripple at the time, for all attention was focused on the deteriorating relations between the Indian Government and the Amir.

The outbreak of war between them naturally turned upside down the British policy of strengthening Afghanistan on the Upper Oxus, in order to keep those provinces out of Russia's hands. Russia had made it abundantly clear that she had only accepted the Afghan title to Badakhshan and Wakhan with great reluctance, and probably only as a result of direct pressure from the Emperor himself. Stremoukov, followed by much of the Russian semi-official press, was denying the Afghan claims within a few weeks of the agreement.⁹ Then, in 1874, the very eminent Russian explorer, Fedchenko, publicly expressed doubts about their validity,¹⁰ and early the next year Gortchakov himself laid what must have seemed unhealthy emphasis on the fact that Sher Ali's claims were only conceded as an act of courtesy, and not as a matter of historical fact.¹¹ With the rapid deterioration of Anglo-Russian relations before the Congress of Berlin, the situation on the Upper Oxus became very menacing indeed. In the summer of 1878, as has been seen, a Russian force began its abortive march towards the Upper Oxus from Margilan.¹² Later, in February 1879, with the British advance into Southern Afghanistan and the flight and death of Sher Ali, a new danger of a Russian forward move arose. Afghan influence on the Upper Oxus collapsed, and the Russian press began to call for territorial compensation in the area on the ground that the 1873 agreement had lapsed with the British absorption of Afghanistan.¹³

8. North-West Frontier Diary, August 1878, PFI/19, p.562. A more detailed account is *Royal Geographical Society Supplementary Papers*, I (1882-5), pp.241-2.

9. Enclosures of Loftus to Granville, 5 and 27 Mar. 1873, FO 65/876 and 877.

10. *Geographical Magazine*, I (1874), p.53.

11. Memo. enclosed with Gortchakov to Schouvalov, 5 Apr. 1875, AP 1878 LXXX C.2164, pp.25-40.

12. Above p.152.

13. Enclosure of Lytton to Salisbury, 18 Dec. 1878, HC/30, p.55.

Direct British military intervention on the Upper Oxus was right out of the question, as Lytton well realized. He knew the dangers which would follow the establishment of Russian supremacy in the Upper Oxus lands, but he just did not believe that very much could be done about it.¹⁴ Even with Kabul nominally friendly, it had been difficult enough for India to exert any effective influence on the Upper Oxus. In 1874, Sher Ali had taken offence at an Indian attempt to reward the Mir of Wakhan for his kindness to the members of Forsyth's party,¹⁵ and from that moment, with the exception of the amicable but meaningless exchange of compliments between Biddulph at Gilgit and the rulers of Shignan and Wakhan, the Indian authorities had no official dealings at all with the Afghan states along the Upper Oxus.

Once it became Indian policy, after the Treaty of Gandamak in May 1879, to establish at Kabul a friendly and influenced ruler in the guise of Yaqub Khan, it was even more important not to offer any friendly encouragement to the anti-Afghan Upper Oxus Chiefs. For, out of the *mêlée* which had followed Sher Ali's death, one Mir Baba had fought his way to supremacy in Badakhshan, and he turned to the British power south of the mountains for support.¹⁶ Biddulph at Gilgit was helpless, for he could not aid a rebel against the friendly power now in Kabul. The other Chiefs in Dardistan were also ordered to do nothing.¹⁷ But by the winter of 1879 the situation had changed again. Mir Baba had been defeated by his cousin, Shahzada Hassan, who likewise offered allegiance to the British representative at Gilgit and sought for allies among the Dard Chiefs south of the mountains. This time, the Indian Government was no longer hamstrung by its policy of friendship with Kabul, for in the intervening months Cavagnari had been murdered, and Roberts had returned to the Afghan capital in the October with an army. By then, as has been seen, Lytton had revised his Afghan policy completely. He was ready to take over southern Afghanistan direct, and replace Kashmiri influence in Dardistan by direct British control from Jalalabad.¹⁸

Against *this* background the overtures from Shahzada were regarded as 'important', especially as he had coupled his request

14. Above p.172.

15. The correspondence is LIM/19, p.313.

16. North-West Frontier Diary, Apr. 1879, PFI/22, p.687.

17. PFI/22, pp.1062-5 and PFI/23, pp.661-2.

18. Above p.129.

for help with a very clear hint that, if neglected, he would look north to Russia and Bukhara.¹⁹ Henvey in Kashmir was convinced that a turning-point had almost been reached. 'In the spring', he wrote, 'the question must probably be faced whether Badakhshan is to be controlled by us or to become a Russianised Province'. Henvey's own solution was that he should inform Shahzada that he must become an Afghan feudatory and accept a British Officer at his capital.²⁰ Even this was going much too far for Lytton. He did not believe that Russia would cross the Oxus in the spring, and he was convinced that nothing could be done about it even if she did.²¹ Shahzada was therefore offered a British native agent, and the advice that he should get in touch with Roberts at Kabul. Meanwhile Roberts himself was ordered to leave Shahzada in peace.²²

But the situation was changing yet again. In the first weeks of 1880 rumours began to circulate that the exiled Abd-ar-Rahman had left Samarqand and crossed the Oxus. Sure enough, early in February he appeared in Badakhshan, where his cause was joined by Mir Baba and Muhammad Omar Khan.²³ Shahzada Hassan fled south to Gilgit once again to enlist British support in a fresh attempt to recover control of Badakhshan,²⁴ and for a time he did have a certain value as a weapon for possible employment against Abd-ar-Rahman. But once Abd-ar-Rahman was established as Amir of Kabul – and it is noteworthy that Ripon was forced to negotiate with him partly because he feared that his newly consolidated position on the Upper Oxus would be invincible with Russian help²⁵ – then poor Shahzada became merely an embar-

19. Lytton to Cranbrook, 18 Nov. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.1047.

20. To Lyall, 30 Oct. 1879, enclosed with 253, India, 31 Dec. 1879, PFI/23, p.1737.

21. To Cranbrook, 5 Dec. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.1076.

22. Enclosure 13 of 253, India, 31 Dec. 1879, PFI/23, p.1737; Lytton to Cranbrook, 18 Nov. 1879, LyP/518/4, p.1047; enclosure 2 of 9, India, 14 Jan. 1880, PFI/24, p.121.

23. Narrative of events in Afghanistan, Aug. 1878–Dec. 1880, HC/44, p.743. Omar Khan was a cousin of Shahzada Hassan, who had been expelled by him earlier.

24. Enclosures 11, 13 and 15 of 66, India, 17 Mar. 1880, PFI/24, p.1479; enclosure 7 of 122, India, 1 June 1880, PFI/25, p.917.

25. To Northbrook, 29 June 1880, RP/2, p.19. There was evidence in St Petersburg that Russian intervention was being contemplated, HC/35, pp.223, 507 and 875.

raising liability, to be kept in reserve at Gilgit in case something turned up.²⁶

Even then the situation was still very uncertain. The power of the new Amir was by no means firmly established in Badakhshan, and a rising against him resulted in the death of Mir Baba and the establishment of Omar Khan as sole ruler.²⁷ There was also still an external danger of a head-on collision with Bukhara. In October 1880 Omar Khan was himself overthrown by one Mir Alum Khan, assisted by a Bukharan force which came well into Badakhshan.²⁸ The new ruler declared himself independent of Kabul, but his triumph was very short-lived. With his defeat by an Afghan force in 1881,²⁹ and the convenient death of Shahzada Hassan in British hands, the Upper Oxus problem for the British resumed once again the form it had taken under Mayo and Northbrook. It became, in other words, a problem caused not so much by the absence of Afghan power in the extreme north-east, but by its tendency to expand there.

Coming events had cast their shadow before in 1880. For when Muhammad Omar Khan had brought the Afghan power back to Badakhshan in the summer of that year, he had then advanced against the ruler of Shignan, who was threatening to transfer his loyalty to Bukhara, and had imprisoned him.³⁰ The Indian Foreign Secretary on several occasions drew attention to this 'rather curious and possibly important fact', since Shignan was known to be in part beyond the Oxus.³¹ But the matter did not come to the notice of the Russians until, in March 1883, a Russian exploring party under Dr Albert Regel was allowed by the Chief to stay in Shignan. A few months later Abdulla Jan, the Afghan Governor of Turkistan, was ordered to seize the Shignan Chief at his capital south of the Oxus, and take over the administration of the province. A month after this, another Russian party under one Captain Puttiata arrived in Wakhan, and its ruler, fearing the same fate as his neighbour in Shignan, fled with many of his

26. 122, India, 1 June 1880, PFI/25, p.917.

27. Enclosure 14 of 108, India, 11 May 1880, PFI/25, p.551; enclosures 12 and 13 of 65, India, 27 July 1880, PFI/26, p.293.

28. Gilgit Diaries, PFI/26, p.2045; PFI/27, pp.1489 and 1491.

29. Enclosures 23 and 25 of 103, India, 15 July 1881, PFI/29, p.235.

30. Gilgit Diaries, PFI/26, pp.1039 and 1115; enclosure 4 of 40, India, 27 June 1884, PFI/40, p.1815.

31. H. M. Durand Minute, 8 Sept. 1880, BM Add. Mss. 43574, p.302.

people. Then, towards the end of November 1883, matters were further complicated by a rising in Roshan and Shignan which compelled the Afghan troops to withdraw to await reinforcements. The people of Roshan meanwhile appealed to Bukhara and to a Russian party in Roshan for help.³²

It began to look as though the whole tangled question of the 1873 boundary, which had been so sedulously shelved by the British authorities whenever it had arisen, would have to be faced at last. With Russian officers on the spot, the news of the arrest of the Shignan Chief reached St Petersburg so quickly that it first came to London ears by this route. On 27 August, the British *chargé d'affaires* at St Petersburg, Kennedy, reported that Shignan 'is considered by Russia to form part of the territory of the Khan of Bukhara'.³³ It was widely reported in the Russian press from this standpoint and Zinoviev, the Director of the Imperial Asiatic Department, spoke of it to Kennedy on more than one occasion. But no action seems to have been taken in London until, on 17 October 1883, the Foreign Office asked for the Indian opinion about it.³⁴

Sir Henry Rawlinson, ten years older and ten years wiser, took up his pen again to lead the assault on the 1873 line which he had done so much to define. In two memoranda he defined his new position. The 'obsolete notion' of an Oxus frontier, he said, should be abandoned. It was irrational, unjust and dangerous since, 'as far as principle is concerned, there is absolutely no distinction between the cases of Wakhan, Ishkashem, Gharan, Shignan and Roshan. These districts are, one and all, bisected by the Panja'. Afghanistan had an undeniable right to the trans-Oxus territories which could be historically proved:

If then we . . . insist on the withdrawal of the Afghan troops, Russia will, in all probability . . . secure a permanent footing in an advanced and most important strategical position. From the southern skirts of the Pamir, indeed, Russia would keep up communication in one direction with her military stations of Kokand and Samarqand,

32. These events are described in the diaries PFI/37, pp.307 and 1005; PFI/38, pp.273 and 401 and PFI/39, p.141. See too enclosures of 158, India, 27 Nov. 1883, PFI/38, p.719.
33. 192, to Granville, 27 Aug. 1883, HC/59, p.105.
34. HC/59, p.571. This was prompted by Kennedy's despatch of 7 Oct. 1883, AP 1884 LXXXVII C.3930, p.93.

while to the east she would hold in check the Chinese of Kashgar . . . and to the south she would command access by the easy Baroghil pass, both to Kashmir and Kabul, through the open valleys of Gilgit and Chitral.

Rawlinson proposed, therefore, that in place of the Oxus line, Russia and Britain should simply name 'on either side the limitary districts which thus came under the respective influence of Russia and of England'.³⁵ In other words, a settlement was to be based, as Saunders much earlier had suggested it might be,³⁶ on the 'spirit' of the 1873 Agreement. Its letter – the line of the river – was to be abandoned.

Kimberley was in no hurry, and indeed no official Russian complaint had yet been made. It was not until another appeal from the Foreign Office was received that Rawlinson's first memorandum was hastily sent off to India for comment, and a new note of urgency added to the original covering letter.³⁷ If the Home Government was coming under pressure from Russia, so was India from the Amir himself. In October 1882 he had asked to have his boundaries defined and had been informed in reply that 1873 had settled a matter which it would be unwise to reopen.³⁸ This was hardly satisfactory, and there is plenty of evidence that, in the spring of 1883, Abd-ar-Rahman was greatly alarmed by the Russian activity on his northern frontier. As he later put it:

Should I let Roshan fall into the hands of an outsider today, I must waive my claim tomorrow to Shignan and the places below it, viz., Badakhshan territory itself.³⁹

In March 1883 he asked for a map defining his territory in the north-east, to which Ripon countered by asking him to state what he considered his.⁴⁰ Abd-ar-Rahman in reply laid claim to Shignan and Wakhan.⁴¹ He made no mention of Roshan, but asserted his rights far more effectively on 12 January 1884 by marching his

35. Rawlinson Memos. of 26 Oct. 1883 and 12 Apr. 1884, HC/59, p.563 and HC/63, p.209.

36. Above p.185.

37. 34, Sec. of State, 23 Nov. 1883, PTI/9, p.127.

38. Enclosures of 36, India, 27 Feb. 1883, PFI/35, p.711.

39. To his Agent, 9 Feb. 1884, enclosed with 16, India, 11 Mar. 1884, PFI/39, p.1137.

40. Enclosures 7 and 13 of 119, India, 13 July 1883, PFI/37, p.161.

41. Enclosure 10 of 16, India, 11 Mar. 1884, PFI/39, p.1137.

troops into it. Just five days too late, the Indian Government warned him against any steps likely to involve a collision with Bukhara.⁴² In this way, the 1873 Oxus line and the policy of control implicit in it failed simultaneously. All the Indian authorities could do was to warn the Amir that his attack was 'a very serious matter', that by crossing the Oxus he had committed a breach of the 1873 arrangement, that he could not look for assistance if he came into collision with the Russians, and that he should withdraw at once behind the Oxus which was, in any case, the most advantageous boundary he could have.⁴³

This was very much more than mere politic advice designed to keep the peace. It really represented the views of the Indian authorities about the whole problem and they answered Rawlinson's proposals in the same spirit. They admitted that the Oxus line did not agree with the facts but preferred it, at least downstream of Gharan, because it was clear beyond all argument.⁴⁴ This view was repeated when the Russians eventually lodged their inevitable protest about the Amir's advance across the Oxus, made 'in flagrant violation of the terms of the Arrangement' of 1873.⁴⁵

At bottom, there was not a great deal of difference between the views of the Indian Government and those of Rawlinson. India did not deny the injustice of the Oxus line and, in fact, adduced further evidence in June 1884 to confirm it.⁴⁶ Nor was the Indian Government prepared to stand unequivocally on that line. The difference was simply a quantitative one. Rawlinson wished to support the Amir's claims to *all* the territories to which he had a claim north of the river, and justified it by the 'spirit' of the 1873 agreement. Ripon maintained, on the other hand, that although their extent was not known exactly in 1873, some of the Amir's trans-Oxus territories were deliberately excluded for political reasons which were still valid. Both Rawlinson and Ripon were basing their arguments on expediency – the one, stressing the dangers of Russian encroachment southwards; the other, of Afghan encroachments northward. But, whereas Rawlinson

42. Enclosure 7 of 18, India, 18 Mar. 1884, PFI/39, p.1239.

43. Enclosure 14 of 16, India, 11 Mar. 1884, PFI/39, p.1137.

44. 158, India, 27 Nov. 1883, PFI/38, p.719.

45. Thornton to Granville, 31 Dec. 1883, AP 1884-5 LXXXVII C.4387, p.1.

46. 40, India, 27 June 1884, PFI/40, p.1815.

coupled expediency as he saw it with the justice due to Abd-ar-Rahman, the Viceroy believed that justice to Russia required a settlement at least 'within the four corners of the Granville agreement'.⁴⁷ There was one important element of common ground between the two. However much they disagreed about the exact means of correcting the confusion of 1873, both believed that it was the result of inadequate topographical knowledge and agreed that the whole problem should be investigated locally by a joint Anglo-Russian commission of inquiry.

This proposal was passed to St Petersburg in April 1884, but the Russian reaction was not very hopeful. Afghan claims to Roshan and Shignan were categorically denied as lying outside the 1873 'agreement', and the Russians refused to consider sending any investigators until the *status quo* had been restored. Even then their task would only be to examine 'partial modifications' of the 1873 line 'without trenching upon the principles' on which it was based.⁴⁸ All this must have sounded very much like a judgement in advance. The true *status quo*, as the Indian Government pointed out, was just the one thing which could *not* be decided in advance of investigation on the spot, and therefore the enquiry must be made 'without any foregone conclusions either way'.⁴⁹

Later evidence suggests that the Russians would almost certainly have rejected this pre-condition, but apparently it was never passed on to them at all. In the middle of 1884 the Upper Oxus question seemed to be 'for the moment . . . comparatively unimportant', for the Amir had agreed to evacuate Roshan.⁵⁰ Instead, all eyes were concentrated on the lands beyond the Afghan frontier farther west where, in February 1884, the Merv Turcomans had submitted to the Russians. It was this more than anything else which finally forced the unwilling British authorities to embark on all the complexities of a joint Anglo-Russian demarcation of the north-western frontier of Afghanistan, though India was insistent even then that it would be 'absolutely necessary' to

47. Ripon to Kimberley, 29 May 1884, RP/6, p.98.

48. 219, Thornton to Granville, 7 July 1884, AP 1884-5 LXXXVII C.4387, p.53.

49. IO to FO, 28 July 1884, HC/65, p.845; Ripon to Kimberley, 24 June 1884, RP/6, p.120.

50. Ripon to Kimberley, 16 May 1884, RP/6, p.92; enclosure 5 of 25, India, 5 May 1884, PFI/40, p.781.

continue the demarcation along the Upper Oxus as well.⁵¹ In the first phase of the negotiations, the Merv episode made the western frontier so important that neither the Foreign nor India Offices were prepared to jeopardize a settlement in that direction by the introduction of the thorny question of the Upper Oxus. By 1885, however, some months before the Penjdeh incident brought Britain and Russia to the verge of war, the situation began to look nearly as menacing on the Upper Oxus as it did on the Herat frontier farther west.

The news diaries were full of a rumoured Russian advance towards Chitral in conjunction with a bridge across the Oxus and a projected road through Wakhan towards the Chitral passes. But, quite apart from reports of troop movements and of disguised Russian survey parties along the Upper Oxus, the Russians were said to be intriguing in Afghan territory and making public warning that Badakhshan had only been granted to Kabul temporarily and in default of true information. There were certainly many dissident elements in the north of Afghanistan ripe for Russian promises. The loyalty of Ishaq Khan, the Afghan Governor of Turkistan, was extremely suspect, and he was even said to have received arms from the Russians.⁵² Moreover, the military preparations which Abdulla Jan was making on the Amir's behalf in Badakhshan, coupled with the heavy Afghan oppression, were driving many people away from the Upper Oxus states. More than one British observer of the Amir's visit to Rawalpindi at this time received the impression that Abd-ar-Rahman was much more interested in Afghan Turkistan than in Herat, and was even toying with the idea of using one of the exiled sons of the Amir of Bukhara to raise an insurrection in the trans-Oxus states.⁵³ Relations between Afghanistan and Bukhara were certainly strained, and the tension was heightened by the general impression that Russia would soon annex Bukhara – probably when the ruler died.⁵⁴ The Russian telegraph to Bukhara was pushed on and

51. Tel., India, 24 Feb. 1884, HC/61, p.1065; Ripon to Kimberley, 19 and 24 Feb. 1884, RP/6, pp.28 and 42.

52. 90, Ridgeway to Salisbury, 15 Oct. 1885, HC/82, p.381; Elias, *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*, pp.88-91.

53. See, e.g., enclosure 3 of 71, India, 4 May 1885, PFI/44, p.213.

54. On the general ferment on the Upper Oxus in 1885-6, see the diaries PFI/43, p.495; PFI/44, p.857; PFI/45, pp.73 and 311; PFI/46, p.1469.

completed, the garrisons were increased, and a permanent mission was appointed instead of the special envoys as previously.

This ferment of rumour and suspicion in Afghan Turkistan and on the Upper Oxus strengthened the Indian conviction that the demarcation must be continued eastward and upstream of Khoja Saleh, especially as the Amir seemed willing to have his frontier defined and was prepared to abide by the decisions reached.⁵⁵ So, soon after the Afghan Boundary Commission went into winter quarters in January 1885, and again in May when the war scare had passed and negotiations with Russia were resumed, Dufferin's Government urged the need for demarcation beyond Khoja Saleh.⁵⁶ On both occasions the reply from London was that delimitation in the north-west should be settled first.⁵⁷ There was, however, no objection at home to the securing of adequate topographical knowledge in advance of demarcation and ready approval was given to the proposal that some members of the Boundary Commission should return home at the end of 1885 by the eastern route and across the passes into Chitral.⁵⁸

The Amir was therefore sounded and Colonel Ridgeway⁵⁹ made his plans to return the bulk of the Commission by the Upper Oxus, leaving a small party to winter in Shignan.⁶⁰ At the same time, a small complementary Mission was despatched to Chinese Turkistan under Ney Elias, with the task of exploring the Upper Oxus from its eastern side. Elias was instructed

to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the recognised boundaries between . . . Wakhan and Shignan and the Russian and Chinese possessions on and near the upper waters of the Oxus. It is possible that the Afghan Boundary Commission may delimit the frontiers of Afghanistan in this direction in the course of the year and the more information you can collect meanwhile, the better.⁶¹

55. H. M. Durand, Memo. on the Amir's visit to India, enclosed with 69, India, 4 May 1885, PFI/44, p.169.
56. Tel., India, 3 Jan. 1885, enclosed with 9, India, 13 Jan. 1885, PFI/43, p.255; tel., India, 6 May 1885, HC/73, p.1069.
57. Tels., Sec. of State, 8 Jan. 1885, KP/10 and 8 May 1885, HC/73, p.1071.
58. Tel., Sec. of State, 7 Feb. 1885, HC/70, p.137.
59. Later Sir Joseph West Ridgeway (1844-1930), Governor of Ceylon.
60. Enclosure 25 of 103, India, 26 June 1885, PFI/44, p.907.
61. Elias, *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*, p.3. For the other purposes of his mission, see above pp.82-3 and 154.

Finally, as has been seen, the passes into the Upper Oxus Valley from the south were to be explored by a party under Colonel Lockhart which had left India in June 1885.⁶² In this way Dufferin hoped to strengthen India's hands when the hoped-for demarcation took place.

There was certainly every indication that the Russians expected the demarcation to go on beyond Khoja Saleh, although it was not clear on what basis, since the discussions had been deliberately allowed to lapse by the British Government. On 10 September 1885 the final Protocol which completed the frontier from the Heri-Rud to the Oxus was signed. Four days later, Dufferin once again urged the extension of demarcation eastwards, and the new Indian Secretary, Randolph Churchill, thoroughly endorsed his opinion.⁶³ He, like Kimberley before him, believed that Britain should go on and delimit alone if Russia prevaricated, but the question never arose for the simple reason that the Russian attitude to further demarcation was never discovered. Sir Robert Morier, the Ambassador in St Petersburg, was instructed to sound out the Russians in October 1885, but decided to wait until the Russian soreness over British policy in the Bulgarian crisis had been soothed.⁶⁴ In March 1886 he reported the moment suitable for an approach,⁶⁵ but by that time a decisive change in the situation had taken place which, in Whitehall's opinion, made it unnecessary to raise the question at all.

For, although the end of what might be called the 'Merv' phase of the frontier negotiations may have removed the Foreign Office's objections to further demarcation eastward, it led directly to Afghan opposition to any such scheme. The reason for Abd-ar-Rahman's changed view was simple: 'if there had been no Commission he would have kept Penjdeh and if there be a Commission he would lose Shignan'. The Afghan Agent on the Boundary Commission was therefore instructed to make no mention of the north-eastern frontier at all.⁶⁶ This *volte-face* made a successful

62. Above pp. 154-6.

63. Tel., India, 14 Sept. 1885, HC/78, p. 865; tel., Sec. of State, 23 Sept. 1885, HC/77, p. 1583.

64. 396, Salisbury to Morier, 27 Oct. 1885, HC/79, p. 475.

65. Tel. 37, to Rosebery, 7 Mar. 1886, FO 65/1284.

66. Ridgeway to Durand, 23 Oct. 1885, cited Younghusband, *Précis of Papers regarding the Upper Oxus Boundary*, p. 27; see also Amir to Ridgeway, 19 Jan. 1886, enclosed with 41, India, 2 Mar. 1886, PFI/44, p. 1021.

demarcation along the Upper Oxus almost impossible. For, quite simply, if Russia would not agree to demarcate on the basis of the 'spirit' of the 1873 'agreement' as interpreted of course by Britain – that is, on the basis of the *status quo* with Afghan power reaching north of the Oxus – then the Amir would not agree to demarcate at all. At home there was a strong feeling that it was not worth while even to make the attempt. Ridgeway was therefore ordered back to India, and the Boundary Commission returned in the autumn of 1886 through Kabul. The whole Upper Oxus frontier issue was shelved once again – this time for five years – and the demarcated frontier of Afghanistan ran no farther east than Khoja Saleh.

There were good reasons on the British side for lying low. For one thing, the Amir could not possibly get all he claimed, and would resent the fact as he had done on the north-west. Moreover even under Dufferin, who favoured the Amir more than Ripon had done, the Indian Government by no means wholly accepted Rawlinson's argument that the Amir's interests would best be served by extending his territory across the Oxus. His grip in this direction was already too loose for safety, and it was not forgotten that, in certain contingencies, these were the territories which India would be committed to defend. Moreover, all the information obtained by Elias and the Boundary Commission had confirmed both the unpopularity of Afghan rule in the Upper Oxus states⁶⁷ and the embarrassing fact that Badakhshan, Roshan, Shignan, Wakhan and Darwaz all straddled the 1873 Oxus line.⁶⁸ If only from a psychological point of view, it was not really surprising that the British authorities fought shy of further demarcation. For the thorniest problems in the settlement of the demarcated frontier, those of the position of Khoja Saleh and of Afghan pasturage rights at Khamiab, were exactly the same as those still to be faced on the Upper Oxus. In both of them, a

literal interpretation of the . . . agreement of 1873 supports the Russian claim on both questions but equity and the spirit of the correspondence and the agreement fully justify the Afghan claim.⁶⁹

67. Enclosure 3 of 145, India, 20 Aug. 1886, PFI/47, p.1233; for Elias, see above p.188.

68. A good summary of the situation is the Introduction to E. G. Barrow, *Gazeteer of the Afghan Upper Oxus Provinces*, quoted in Secret and Political Memo., A.82.

69. Tel., Ridgeway to Salisbury, 5 Apr. 1886, FO 65/1285.

Exactly the same was true of Badakhshan and Wakhan. It must have been particularly unpleasant to contemplate embarking on the Upper Oxus embroglio, since all the evidence was that Russia intended to stand firmly on the letter of the 1873 agreement, and was quite willing to compel Bukhara to evacuate whatever territory she held south of the river in order to get it.⁷⁰

India did not have this sort of control over the Amir. It had proved impossible even to survey the Afghan territory on the Upper Oxus. Instructions from Kabul were issued which turned back Lockhart's party trying to cross over from Chitral into Wakhan, and Ridgeway was prevented from exploring beyond Balkh.⁷¹ For a time there was a chance that Elias would achieve something useful but he, believing that the Boundary Commission was not far behind him, made no efforts to survey or explore and returned with Lockhart to Chitral.⁷² In this way the Indian Government lost the best opportunity it ever had, or was likely to have, of obtaining exact topographical knowledge of an area which was bound to become the subject of dispute sooner or later.

Whatever the reasons for the Amir's obstructiveness, and some thought it nothing more than his gout, Dufferin reacted with a stiff letter.⁷³ It produced only an impertinent reply.⁷⁴ The Viceroy then took up his pen again in June 1886:

If misunderstandings arise hereafter regarding, for example, the boundaries of Shignan and Wakhan, about which Russia may at any time raise a discussion, you must blame your own agents, not the officers of the British Government.⁷⁵

In these words, Dufferin was unconsciously admitting the bankruptcy of British policy on the Upper Oxus. Having failed to exercise the control, he was contracting out of the responsibility. It was the argument Ripon had used in March 1884 to bring the Amir's forces back on to this side of the Oxus⁷⁶ and again a few

70. Lessar, one of the Russian representatives on the Boundary Commission, made this quite plain and was busily working up the whole subject, enclosure 8 of 120, India, 9 July 1886, PFI/47, p.851.

71. Tels., Ridgeway to Durand, 13 May 1886, enclosure 4 of 85, India, 28 May 1886, PFI/47, p.243 and 6 May 1886, HC/87, p.717.

72. Elias, *op. cit.*, p.94.

73. Of 18 May 1886, enclosure 5 of 85, India, 28 May 1886, PFI/47, p.243.

74. Of 28 May 1886, enclosure 1 of 107, India, 25 June 1886, *ibid.*, p.463.

75. Letter of 19 June 1886, enclosure 11 of *ibid.*

76. Above p.197.

months later, when he had countered a proposed increase in the Indian forces by pointing out that no *casus foederis* could arise out of the Amir's doings on the Upper Oxus, because he had disregarded British advice. Sir Mortimer Durand's comment of August 1886 sets the seal on this episode:

Under the present circumstances there is not the same urgent necessity for defining the northern frontier of Afghanistan as there was two years ago, when the theory was that we are bound to assist the Afghans against encroachment. The Amir has put it out of our power to take proper measures for guarding against encroachment. . . . Perhaps this is fortunate for us.⁷⁷

For all these reasons, it was Britain in the end which backed out of further demarcation. In August 1887 the Indian Government refused the Amir's request for it,⁷⁸ and later in the same year the India Office urged that 'all references to demarcation beyond the Oxus in a North Easterly direction should be expunged' from the forthcoming Blue Book about the Afghan Boundary demarcation.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, the real nature of the problem remained unaffected by these verbal shufflings. If there were important imperial reasons for keeping Russian influence out of the Upper Oxus provinces and preventing the direct contact with tribal territories under British influence which such a position would involve – and India had stated many times that there were – then the attempts of Dufferin and Ripon to contract out of their responsibilities to the Amir were really only an evasion of imperial responsibilities. It was clear from the evidence of the Afghan Boundary Commission that

the only consideration which will prevent the early absorption by Russia of Afghan Turkistan and Badakhshan is the certainty that any aggression in that direction must involve war with England all over the world.⁸⁰

And, as events in the Pamir crisis were soon to reveal, the Indian Government was prepared to consider such a war in defence of

77. Quoted Younghusband, *Précis of Papers regarding the Upper Oxus Boundary*, pp.27–8.

78. 142, India, 19 Sept. 1887, PFI/51, p.349.

79. To FO, 5 Nov. 1887, HC/97, p.1465. There is no mention of it in AP 1887 LXIII.

80. 67, Ridgeway to Iddesleigh, 8 Sept. 1886, HC/89, p.1423.

the Amir's interests beyond the Oxus.⁸¹ In other words, the net result of all the years of discussion was almost nil, and the situation on the Upper Oxus was as dangerous in 1887 as it had been in 1874. In the last year of Dufferin's Viceroyalty, in 1888, events on the Upper Oxus deteriorated rapidly towards a crisis which involved the whole of the northern frontier and dragged on until 1895. The reckoning could not be postponed much longer.

81. Below pp.268-9 and 273.

The Settlement of the Northern Frontier 1888-1895

(1) *Prelude to Crisis 1888-1891*

LANSDOWNE arrived in India in December 1888 to face a situation on and beyond the northern frontier which was deteriorating rapidly. Paradoxically enough, this was in some ways due to the Anglo-Russian agreement about the Afghan border, which had been recently concluded despite the opposition of the Russian War Ministry. Generally speaking, the senior Russian soldiers were

strongly opposed to any boundary being laid down which would prevent them from carrying out their ambitious designs of adding more territory in Central Asia to the Russian Empire.¹

The need to absorb northern Afghanistan up to the Hindu Kush was a constant theme in the Russian military-inspired press and was said to be 'the common and almost invariable topic of conversation' among the officers of the Turkistan garrisons.² It seems that the weakness of the Amir's hold over his northern territories had come as a revelation to the Russian soldier-members of the Boundary Commission, and almost certainly intensified their dislike of the pen-and-ink frontier they were demarcating.³ Their only hope, according to Morier, was that 'a hole would be somewhere left in the line of frontier, to be utilized in the future.'⁴ And this is just what happened, for, as has been seen, demarcation went no farther east than Khoja Saleh. Beyond that point there was only the 1873 line, and that had been violated by both Afghanistan and Bukhara. East of Lake Victoria, across the Pamirs, no line ran at all.

1. Thornton to Granville, 31 Dec. 1884, HC/69, p.546.
2. 164, Wolff to Salisbury, 4 May 1890, FO 65/1393.
3. 67, Ridgeway to Iddesleigh, 8 Sept. 1886, FO 65/1291.
4. 138, to Rosebery, 7 Apr. 1886, FO 65/1285.

Extraordinary Russian activity on the Upper Oxus had been noticed in 1888, and it seemed doubly ominous in view of the seething discontent with Afghan rule there, and the dubious attitude of the Governor of Afghan Turkistan, Ishaq Khan. Great Powers, like lesser gamblers, often back the wrong horse for the right reasons, and India was no exception. Abdulla Jan, the Amir's representative in Badakhshan, was detested for his oppression whereas Ishaq seems to have been extremely popular. It was concern about the situation on his northern frontier which had eventually compelled Abd-ar-Rahman to ask for a British Mission to go to Kabul in the early summer of 1888, but the open revolt of Ishaq Khan in the August of that year postponed it indefinitely.⁵

This revolt was considered to be 'very serious',⁶ both by India and the Amir. Abd-ar-Rahman even went so far, after news of the defeat of his forces, to request the Indian military occupation of some points in Southern Afghanistan. There were, inevitably, repercussions along the Upper Oxus. Wherever possible, Ishaq invited back those former rulers who had opposed Kabul, and there was some bitter fighting in Badakhshan. After Ishaq's eventual defeat, his nominees along the Upper Oxus fled. New, pliant, pro-Kabul rulers were appointed, and Abd-ar-Rahman advanced into Turkistan to supervise its pacification. Reports of new Russian moves in 1889, 1890 and 1891 coincided with sinister rumours of the Amir's activities during his prolonged stay in the north, and with intrigues from Ishaq Khan's adherents in Shignan.⁷ It later transpired that a plan of the local Russian military leaders to attack the Afghan forces on the Bukharan frontier was only foiled just in time by the intervention of Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister.⁸ As ever, the Government of India was dangerously short of both political and topographical information about the real situation on the Upper Oxus. In 1891, a new attempt was made to obtain permission from Kabul for Younghusband to pass through Wakhan or Shignan into Badakhshan and Darwaz, to

5. Tels., India, 16 and 21 Aug. 1888, HC/103, pp.973 and 975. Correspondence about the Kabul Mission is PFI/55, pp.1, 943, 949 and 1219.

6. IO Minute, HC/103, p.993.

7. The wires were fairly humming at this time and India had what Lansdowne called a 'very *mauvais quart d'heure*'. To Lyall, 20 Apr. 1889, LaP/11, p.56.

8. 12, Morier to Rosebery, 12 Apr. 1893, FO 65/1463.

complete the inquiries left unfinished in 1886. Permission was refused.⁹

This refusal was merely one symptom of a marked deterioration in Afghan-Indian relations at the beginning of Lansdowne's Viceroyalty, with all the usual symptoms of hostile speeches, frontier intrigues and acrimonious correspondence. Lansdowne wrote to his mother at this time:

The Amir is giving me some trouble. . . . He is a cantankerous and suspicious old savage, and I don't think he has ever forgiven me for writing him a letter in which I told him that . . . he should stop gouging out his prisoners' eyes.¹⁰

As a matter of fact he had not, but more important than any personal antipathies were the fears and suspicions which Lansdowne's new frontier policy was creating at Kabul.

Ever since Lytton had based his policy towards the frontier tribes on grounds of imperial and strategic necessity, his chief lieutenant, Roberts, had never ceased to advocate the same line. There were signs, as has been seen, that Dufferin was coming round to his point of view,¹¹ but it was in Lansdowne that Roberts found, to his delight, an active supporter of his schemes. Soon after his arrival, the Viceroy wrote to his Commander-in-Chief:

I am much impressed with the necessity of 'assimilating' the frontier tribes as rapidly as possible. They are an important factor in the calculation, and we should see to it that they do not pass on to the wrong side of the account.¹²

A tour of the frontier with Roberts confirmed Lansdowne's inclination towards an active policy.¹³ Shortly afterwards, he embarked on a lengthy and important correspondence with the Panjab Government in which he pointed out that:

Recent events – such as the rapid advance of Russia towards the frontiers of India; the extension of the trans-Indus railways; and the decision of the military authorities, that, if any invading force is to be resisted, it should be met beyond the frontier, and not within

9. 38, India, 11 Mar. 1891, PFI/62, p.775.

10. Baron Newton, *Lord Lansdowne, a biography*, p.106. The letter he refers to is enclosure 4 of 137, India, 16 Sept. 1889, PFI/58, p.141.

11. Above pp.159 and 162.

12. To Roberts, 17 Feb. 1889, LaP/1, p.82.

13. To Cross, 8 Nov. 1889, LaP/16, p.177.

British India; have rendered it absolutely necessary to abandon the policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the frontier tribes.¹⁴

Approval was given to the new policy in London, but it was coupled with a warning about the need for great caution, especially in view of the possible effects on the attitude of the Amir.¹⁵ Lansdowne in private often expressed himself well aware of this consideration, and yet by 1892 the railway had been pushed through the Bolan, Quetta had been fortified, the Gomal had been opened, communications through the Zhob valley had been improved – and, inevitably, relations with Kabul were strained almost to breaking-point.

The explosive features of the general frontier situation in the early years of Lansdowne's Viceroyalty – forward policy on the Indian side and retaliatory advance and intrigue on the Afghan – were as clearly visible on the northern frontier as anywhere. Although, at the end of 1889, the Indian Government was congratulating itself on the 'very favourable results' of the re-establishment of the Gilgit Agency,¹⁶ the political situation in Dardistan was really very far from satisfactory. There was a distinct 'feeling of uneasiness' among the small states of the Agency,¹⁷ and doubtless the presence of two official missions in the area under Younghusband and Robertson,¹⁸ taken in conjunction with Captain Durand's activity at Gilgit, strengthened the belief that annexation was imminent. Defensive alliances between the smaller states began to spring up once again.

One of the trouble-spots, of course, was Hunza. While he was waiting for the Secretary of State's decision about the re-establishment of the Gilgit Agency, Durand visited the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar in 1889. Both rulers agreed to the conditions attached to the increased subsidies he offered them, but Durand came away

14. India to Panjab, 16 June 1890, enclosed with 124, India, 7 Oct. 1890, PFI/61, p.455.
15. 40, Sec. of State, 26 Dec. 1890, PTI/16, p.243; see H. M. Durand, *Life of Sir Alfred Lyall*, pp.338–9.
16. Enclosure 1 of 124, India, 7 Oct. 1890, PFI/61, p.455.
17. North-West Frontier Diary, Feb. 1890, PFI/59, p.825.
18. Later Sir George Scott Robertson (1852–1916). He had been appointed Surgeon to Durand at Gilgit and later in 1894 took over the Agency while Durand was on leave. For his explorations, see his *Confidential Report on a Journey to Kafiristan*. Younghusband's 1889 Mission is described above, pp.89–90 and below pp.210–11 and 279.

convinced that Safdar Ali of Hunza, who claimed descent from Alexander and a fairy of the Hindu Kush and pitched his pretensions correspondingly high, would have to be punished.¹⁹ After Gromchevsky's visit in the previous year, the serious danger of further Russian intrigues in Hunza could no longer be ignored. All the information available confirmed the 'perfectly easy' approaches to Hunza from the north in summer and the execrable approaches from the south,²⁰ but almost nothing was known in detail about the Hindu Kush passes in this direction. The only Europeans known to have crossed the main range by any of them were Younghusband and Gromchevsky himself. There was an obvious need for a full strategical study of the frontier east of the Baroghil Pass to supplement Lockhart's work in 1885-6 to the west of it.

Interestingly enough, it was Lockhart who had picked Younghusband out as ideal for this sort of hazardous secret service work in 1885,²¹ and it was Younghusband who was sent to supplement Lockhart's investigations in 1889. On the way up the Nubra Valley, he learned of a Russian party heading in the same direction from Yarkand and pushed on rapidly to Shahidulla in order to deal with the Khirghiz there first.²² He then explored the Saltoro Pass and found that, like the Mustagh he had crossed in 1887, it was impracticable as a military route. His conclusion was, therefore, that no feasible routes into Baltistan existed at all. But, in words reminiscent of those often used about the Baroghil, he reported that the Shimshal Pass farther west, was

very easy . . . and low (only 14,700 feet), crossing the range at a remarkable depression. The Great Mustagh Mountains, which up to this point are so rugged and lofty, suddenly break down, and the Shimshal Pass is an almost level Pamir.²³

19. Enclosures of 165, India, 3 Dec. 1889, PFI/58, p.731; Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, pp.137-73.
20. Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *Confidential Report of the Gilgit Mission 1885-6*, pp.83 and 389; Gordon, Special Report on Kashgar, the Pamirs and Wakhan, 14 July 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303; Biddulph, Report on a journey to Gilgit, Hunza and the Karoombar Valley, 15 Nov. 1876, Appendix IV of 17, India, 11 June 1877, PFI/14, p.537.
21. Lockhart to Neel, 8 Jan. 1890, DOC/3, p.185.
22. See above p.89.
23. Younghusband, *Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, p.53.

Moreover he also discovered that the upper course of the Yarkand River, where it flows through the Raskam Valley, was fertile enough to support a small force all the year round.²⁴ As if to underline the point, it was in this valley that Younghusband came across Gromchevsky and a party of Cossacks, back again after their visit to Hunza the previous year.²⁵ It was probably the first meeting of British and Russian explorers on the Indian border, and was well in the traditions of the 'great game'. For, behind the personal goodwill, Younghusband conspired with the friendly Khirghiz to lead the Russians well out of harm's way on a fruitless journey far to the east. This, as the British explorer later admitted, was designed to 'cause extreme hardship and loss to the party' and succeeded so well that Gromchevsky lost all his horses and returned destitute to Shahidulla on foot.²⁶ Younghusband himself advanced to the Tagdumbash Pamir to meet two British officers,²⁷ with whom he had been in touch to counter the Russian moves, and then went on to explore the Khunjerab and Mintaka passes into Hunza. Both of them lay across the same low depression as the Shimshal and he found them almost as easy.²⁸

Younghusband's discoveries, taken in conjunction with the activities of Gromchevsky, the Russian Tibetan mission under Pievtsov, and the suspicious activities of the French explorer Dauvergne,²⁹ put the ambiguous activities of Safdar Ali in a much more dangerous light. Moreover, on his way south through Hunza at the end of his mission, Younghusband received the same sort of cavalier treatment as Durand a few months earlier. And, like Durand, Younghusband became convinced that sooner or later Safdar Ali would have to be punished.³⁰ Strangely enough, in the discussions which both Durand and Younghusband had with Hunza and Nagar in 1889, apparently no mention was made of those old trouble-spots, Chalt and Chaprot. Durand, in 1888, had pointed out the strategic necessity of a feasible road to Chaprot,

24. Younghusband to Durand, 26 Aug. and 7 Oct. 1889, DOC/3, pp.191 and 196.

25. Younghusband, *op. cit.*, pp.58-67.

26. Younghusband to Nisbet, 26 Oct. 1889, DOC/3, p.211.

27. Major Cumberland and Lieut. Bower. See Bower, *Confidential Report of a Journey in Chinese Turkistan 1889-90*, Chapters I and II.

28. Younghusband, *op. cit.*, p.103.

29. See the letters in DOC/3, p.191 *et seq.*

30. Younghusband, *op. cit.*, Chap. V.

but at the same time had counselled delay until the military position was stronger.³¹ There was bound to be trouble over Chalt and Chaprot – both of them, according to Safdar Ali, ‘more precious to us than the strings of our wives’ pyjamas’.³² In 1890, the rulers of Hunza and Nagar had concluded some sort of agreement to resist by force any improvement of the road to the forts, and had both begun to send defiant letters to Gilgit.³³ At the end of the year, their *vakils* came in late for their subsidies,³⁴ and by the spring of 1891 the whole Gilgit Agency was buzzing with rumours of war.

It looked like beginning in the May. In that month, Durand received the news that Uzr Khan of Nagar had murdered his brother and was preparing to attack Chalt and Chaprot. The Gilgit Agent, finding ‘the absence of a telegraph line . . . a godsend’, made a dash with a small Kashmiri force to forestall Uzr Khan at Chalt. The Nagar forces dispersed without firing a shot, and Durand took the opportunity to strengthen the fort and its Kashmiri garrison and improve the disputed road before withdrawing once more to Gilgit.³⁵ Although he had managed to do all this without the long-promised war, and although the advance with guns had had a wholesome moral effect on the tribes, Durand had no illusions that more than a respite had been won. It was because of his conviction that Hunza and Nagar would have to be humbled in the autumn, and that the Gilgit Agency staff and forces were inadequate for this task, that he was called to Simla to discuss the whole situation.

But it was not only the Indian policy towards Hunza which was alarming the tribes. Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral was particularly concerned about the British efforts to open the route to his territory through Dir. And with good reason. For Durand, just as his predecessors in Lytton’s time, had all along recommended the route primarily as a means of controlling Chitral and its northern

31. Durand, Report on the present military position at Gilgit, 5 Dec. 1888, enclosed with PFI/57, p.33.

32. E. F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, p.362.

33. North-West Frontier Diaries, PFI/59, p.1057; PFI/60, p.427 and PFI/61, p.943.

34. North-West Frontier Diary, Feb. 1891, PFI/62, p.759.

35. Durand’s official account of this affair is enclosed with 1c, India, 25 Oct. 1891, PFI/64, p.899 and his published account is *The Making of a Frontier*, pp.227–43.

approaches by making it possible to throw a brigade quickly into Aman's kingdom.³⁶ Dufferin had raised the whole question of the road in 1886 and, although political factors at that time made its opening impracticable, the Indian Government had expressed its keen interest in the project.³⁷ The local British officials subsequently made sure that it was not forgotten and, in the spring of 1889, the whole question was under review again. Lansdowne's Government commented:

... it is evident that the advantage of having such a short and direct road open to us in the same manner as the Khyber is open would be very great. It is not easy to overcome the fears and prejudices of the people of Swat and Bajaur with regard to this point; but we have some reason to hope that in course of time we may succeed in doing so.³⁸

The new optimism was based on the fact that Umra Khan of Jandul³⁹ and his enemy, the Khan of Dir, had once more been making overtures to the Indian Government for support, as in Dufferin's time. Unfortunately for the British plans, Durand's intended visit to both Chiefs in the autumn of 1889 was frustrated by Umra Khan's unreasonable demands and the intrigues of Aman-ul-Mulk.⁴⁰ A year later, the ten-year-old struggle for supremacy was ended when Umra Khan expelled the Khan of Dir, absorbed his territories, and extended his own frontier southward. But even this simplification of the political map south of Chitral did not really enhance the prospects for the opening of the Dir-Chitral road, and fruitless negotiations with Umra Khan dragged on well into 1892 and beyond. Indeed, the new power of the Jandul Chief was in many ways a setback for the scheme, because the Indian authorities were naturally reluctant to give him the arms and guarantees he asked for, as long as relations between him and Aman-ul-Mulk remained so delicate. Any Indian involvement in a struggle between the two of them would have been fatal to the plans for an extension of British influence over their respective territories.

36. Gilgit Agency Report 1889, enclosed with 43, India, 28 Apr. 1890, PFI/59, p.1193.

37. 156, India, 4 Oct. 1886, PFP/2923, Frontier, Apr. A, no.1.

38. 58, India, 6 May 1889, AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.8.

39. For whom, see *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, I, pp.44-5.

40. AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, pp.11-12.

Unfortunately, there was a third factor in the account too. For Umra Khan, as 'the representative of Bajauri independence', had aroused the hostility of Abd-ar-Rahman himself. As long ago as 1853 the close connection between the situation on the frontier and the state of India's relations with Kabul had been remarked upon,⁴¹ and Lytton's Viceroyalty had underlined the fact. The sharp deterioration in Indo-Afghan relations after Lansdowne's arrival in India certainly had speedy repercussions on the northern frontier. Like Aman-ul-Mulk, the Kabul ruler was considerably irritated by India's desire, and Umra Khan's apparent willingness, to open the Dir-Chitral road; and for an equally good reason, for the British intended it as much 'to give the death-blow to the Amir's intrigues in these regions' as to control Chitral.⁴² It was probably as a direct counter-move that, at the end of 1891 and again early in 1892, an Afghan force under the Commander-in-Chief, Gholam Haidar Khan, began to advance from Jalalabad.⁴³ In March 1892 Asmar was seized – 'a trumpery little place' but significant because it was only four miles from the nearest outposts of Umra Khan's forces.⁴⁴

Both Lord Kimberley at the India Office and Lansdowne regarded this as the Amir's most serious advance of all.⁴⁵ It brought him to within forty miles of the Chitral capital, enabled him to put far more effective pressure on Aman-ul-Mulk from the south-west than he had ever been able to do from Badakhshan on the north, threatened the projected direct road-link between Chitral and Peshawar, created a serious risk of Kabul-Chitral co-operation against Umra Khan, and was bound to lead to a general uneasiness, if not 'possibly very serious troubles', among the tribes.⁴⁶ The usual warning that the Amir was to keep out of this area had been conveyed in the Indian instructions to its new Kabul Agent in 1891.⁴⁷ In January 1892 a more specific warning was delivered and finally, in the April, both Abd-ar-Rahman and Gholam Haidar were told bluntly that any further advance would be

41. Morison, *From Alexander Burnes to Frederick Roberts*, p.13.

42. Elgin to Fowler, 13 Mar. 1895, ELP/2, p.36.

43. 155, India, 16 Aug. 1892, PFI/67, p.385.

44. Lansdowne to Cross, 4 May 1892, LaP/19, p.51.

45. Kimberley to Lansdowne, 8 Sept. 1892, *ibid.*, p.57; Lansdowne to Kimberley, 26 Oct. 1892, KP/6.

46. 155, India, 16 Aug. 1892, PFI/67, p.385.

47. Enclosure 3 of 66, India, 6 May 1891, PFI/63, p.3.

regarded as a hostile act.⁴⁸ The Amir's reply was about as unsatisfactory as it could be. A clash between the Afghan and Janduli troops, followed by extensive Afghan preparations for the invasion of Umra Khan's territory, forced the Indian authorities to intensify their warnings to both Chiefs to withdraw their troops.⁴⁹ At the same time, Aman-ul-Mulk was told to stop intriguing in Bajaur, and his request for arms was refused.⁵⁰

Nothing could better illustrate the Indian Government's dilemma. Three powerful and capable rulers – Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral, Umra Khan, the so-called 'Napoleon of Bajaur', and Amir Abd-ar-Rahman of Kabul – were all exerting hostile pressures in dangerous proximity to one another. The friendship of each had important political and strategic advantages for India. On Chitral depended the safety of the vulnerable northern passes; on Jandul, the short route to Chitral by which those passes could be effectually guarded; and on Kabul, the security not only of the northern outlets of the Chitral passes but of the whole north-west frontier. Each had been offered arms earlier, and from each further arms had to be withheld in case those arms were used against the others or, even worse, against Indian troops. The result, aggravated by warnings to each against interference with the territories of the others, was further hostility between them and the Indian Government.

The case of Jandul in particular caused 'anxious discussions' in Council.⁵¹ The Panjab authorities who were handling the road negotiations, as well as some of Lansdowne's advisers, were inclined to advocate the cause of the Amir against that of Umra Khan. Neither Sir James Lyall nor Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick, who succeeded him as Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab in March 1892, liked giving arms to Jandul, but were compelled to defer in this to the Central Government.⁵² Roberts and the Viceroy took the opposite view⁵³ and in July 1892 a new offer was made to Umra Khan to keep open the road for travellers and the mail, in

48. Enclosure 17 of 90, India, 24 May 1892, PFI/66, p.567.

49. Tels., India, 23 and 28 June 1892, HC/130, pp.979 and 1177.

50. Enclosed with 149, India, 9 Aug. 1892, PFI/67, p.303.

51. Lansdowne to Cross, 28 June 1892, LaP/19, p.75.

52. Lyall to Lansdowne, 11 Jan. 1891, LaP/5, p.48; Fitzpatrick to Lansdowne, 28 June 1892, LaP/7, p.473.

53. Roberts Memo., 7 July 1892, RoP/1, p.291; Lansdowne to Fitzpatrick, 28 June 1892, LaP/7, p.293.

return for a gift of arms and ammunition, and protection against external aggression.⁵⁴ One can sympathize with both points of view. On the one hand, events had shown, and were to do so again, that any failure to give Umra the arms and assurances he wanted very quickly aroused his hostility. On the other hand, it can be fairly argued that his hostility in any case was almost inevitable as the internal situation in Chitral deteriorated. And, before very long, the Indian Government was to have good cause to regret the protection against Afghan and Chitrali hostility which it had extended to Jandul.

Chitral, as always, was the centre of political gravity east of the Kunar, and the key to the whole ironic situation. Aman-ul-Mulk, despite his age, had lost none of his flair for treachery and intrigue. In the 'eighties it had looked as though he was becoming increasingly reliable as far as the British were concerned.⁵⁵ He certainly agreed readily to the new conditions in return for the increased subsidy and arms which Durand offered him in 1889, and he did a great deal to improve the road to Gilgit as he had promised. Gradually, however, his hostility towards Umra Khan, the road project and British interests in general began to assume serious proportions, especially as Afghan pressure on his western borders grew. By the beginning of 1891, both Durand and the Kashmir Resident were convinced that it was necessary to get a firmer grip on Chitral before increasing its offensive capacity any further by the gift of the increased subsidy which Aman was demanding. Only the arrival of the Russians on the Pamirs persuaded the Indian Government to overrule the objections of its local officers, and grant Aman both arms and an increased subsidy. In return, among other things, he was asked to consent to the extension of the telegraph from Gilgit to Chitral and the permanent residence of a British officer in his territory.⁵⁶ It is very significant that, although a British officer remained in Chitral in the winter of 1891-2, Aman-ul-Mulk rejected the increased subsidy on those conditions. From that moment, his relations with India deteriorated rapidly. The June intelligence diaries spoke of 'tension', and in August things were 'delicate'.⁵⁷ Aman began intriguing with the dispos-

54. North-West Frontier Diary, July 1892, PFI/67, p.275. 55. Above p.148.

56. Correspondence is enclosed with 170, India, 14 Oct. 1891, PFI/64, p.239.

57. Peshawar Diary, PFI/66, p.1357; enclosure 13 of 179, India, 21 Sept. 1892, PFI/67, p.1121.

sessed Muhammad Sharif of Dir against Umra Khan and entered into negotiations with the Afghans at Asmar. In retaliation, Umra Khan finally closed the road through his territories to Chitral,⁵⁸ mainly as a blow against Aman-ul-Mulk, but of course striking right at the root of the policy the Indian Government was trying to pursue.

In all this welter of conflicting interests, one thing was clear in 1892: whatever the tensions between each of the three Chiefs, the situation was unlikely to get right out of hand as long as all three remained strong and mutually hostile. The real danger lay in the destruction of the rough equilibrium which had been achieved, either by the alignment of two against the third, as seemed likely against Jandul, or by the weakening of one by internal dissensions in which the other two could profitably intervene. This is eventually what happened. On 30 August 1892 the formidable Aman-ul-Mulk died – and it was his final triumph – of natural causes in his bed.

For the sake of clarity, the story in the Chitral sector of the northern frontier has been carried down to August 1892, and the Russian *coup* on the Pamirs just twelve months previously has been mentioned only in passing. Really, however, the Afghan-Chitral-Jandul affair can no more be explained than the Hunza war or the re-establishment of the Gilgit Agency itself without a consideration of the Russian movements north of the mountains.

On 29 September 1886, the semi-official *Novoe Vremya* had warned,

... it is likely that after the conclusion of the work of demarcation in the North-East, Russia will proceed to formulate her rights and claims in this part of the Pamir, rights whose maintenance is indispensable to the security of our frontiers.⁵⁹

Evidence was not lacking to support this view. The activities of the Russian soldier-explorers, which in the early 'eighties had been mainly along the Oxus line, switched again in 1884 to the Pamirs. Between 1884 and 1887 Grum Grjmailo explored all over them and, in the latter year, penetrated right up to Hunza and along the upper courses of the Yarkand River.⁶⁰ Then, in 1888, Grom-

58. Enclosure 9 of 194, India, 26 Oct. 1892, PFI/68, p.205.

59. Morier to Iddesleigh, 29 Sept. 1886, FO 65/1291.

60. J. Deniker in *Annales de Géographie*, VI (1897), pp.422-3.

chevsky crossed the Pamirs before his visit to Hunza across the Kilik Pass.

The Indian Government had been aware for many years of a possible danger from the direction of the Pamirs. As early as 1873, Northbrook had been inspired by Yaqub Beg's envoy to propose soundings at St Petersburg for a joint Anglo-Russian definition of the northern and western limits of Kashgar, and the extension of the Afghan frontier eastwards across the Pamirs to meet it.⁶¹ The essence of this proposal, as may be guessed from its source, was the desire to make Kashgar as safe as possible from Russian encroachments. The idea of a simultaneous extension of the Afghan frontier was simply a reflection of the belief, generally held at the time, that the Afghan territories on the Upper Oxus stretched across the Pamirs and were coterminous with those of the Ataliq.⁶²

But this was no more than an unverified assumption. The Forsyth Mission, which was just about to start when Northbrook's proposal was made, was therefore instructed to pay particular attention to the relationship and whereabouts of the Afghan and Kashgarian boundaries on the Pamirs.⁶³ The results were disquieting. Not only were Afghanistan and Kashgar found *not* to meet across the Pamirs, but it was also discovered that Russia, by her threatened absorption of Kokand, would be able to claim the vague rights which that state possessed to parts of the Pamirs lying between the Afghan and Kashgar limits. She would, as a result,

command Tash Qurghan, Sariqol, and the road across the Pamir to Wakhan, and thus . . . be within a few miles of touching Kashmir. . . . Russia will inevitably declare . . . all the country not declared to be Afghanistan in her dominions, and it will be easy for her to push her claim so as to take possession of the Little Pamir Lake, and thus insert a very narrow wedge of actual Russian territory between Afghanistan and Kashgar.⁶⁴

Worse, it was discovered that not only could Russia penetrate by unclaimed territory between Afghanistan and Kashgar almost to the Hindu Kush, but that the very passes laid bare in this way

61. Above p.49.

62. See, e.g., Rawlinson Memo., 18 June 1869, SHC/64, p.311 and Saunders Memo., 10 Jan. 1873, FO 65/875.

63. Enclosure 5 of 70, India, 1 Sept. 1873, LIM/15, p.1003.

64. Forsyth Confidential Report, 21 Sept. 1874, enclosed with 22, India, 21 June 1875, PFI/4, p.303.

appeared to give unexpectedly easy access to the tribal territory to the south.⁶⁵

The Russians had already shown a distinct interest in this eastern portion of the Pamirs. They were reported to have obtained the right to a cantonment at Sariqol even before the Chinese were expelled from Turkistan, and in 1872 pressed Yaqub Beg hard for permission to take up the right again.⁶⁶ In the following year there was some evidence that the Maharaja of Kashmir had been intriguing with the Russian authorities in connection with Sariqol.⁶⁷ But, as long as Yaqub Beg was strong in Kashgar and his troops remained at the Tash Qurghan fort, and as long as the Russian frontier rested to the north of the Trans-Alai, there was very little cause for alarm, especially as the Russians themselves also appeared to believe that there was no gap between Kashgar and Afghanistan.⁶⁸ From the middle 'seventies these conditions ceased one by one to apply. The Russian absorption of Kokand in 1876 was followed by a thorough exploration of the Pamirs, and in 1878 the Russian frontier was moved forward about eighty miles beyond the Kizil-su.⁶⁹ The collapse of the Ataliq Ghazee's régime in that year created a vacuum on the Pamirs, and a Russian advance to Sariqol was clearly not unexpected by the Indian Government.⁷⁰ Certainly some wild rumours were afloat, although most of them were probably stimulated by the presence of the Russian exploring party on the Pamirs in 1878.⁷¹ As long as the Sino-Russian war-scare after the Treaty of Livadia persisted, attention was inevitably focused on the Pamir approaches to Kashgar, especially as the defeated successor of the Ataliq was for some time using Sariqol as a base for forays into the plain against the Chinese, allegedly with Russian backing.⁷²

With the restoration of normal relations between Russia and China which followed the Treaty of St Petersburg, there arose for

65. Above pp.111-12.

66. 49, India, 28 Feb. 1879, PFI/21, p.859; enclosure 6 of 35, India, 4 Apr. 1873, LIM/14, p.649.

67. R. H. Davies to Northbrook, 6 Feb. 1873, AP/Reel 317; Rawlinson to Granville, 9 Mar. 1873, PRO 30/29/75.

68. E.g. Kaufmann's Memo., 29 Nov. 1872, AP 1873 LXXV C.699, p.7.

69. On these explorations and advances, see above pp.113-14.

70. 49, India, 28 Feb. 1879, PFI/21, p.859.

71. Frontier Diaries, PFI/21, pp.91, 189 and 565.

72. Frontier Diaries, PFI/23, pp.1717 and 1769.

India the new menace of a joint Sino-Russian frontier settlement on the Pamirs which could bring the Russian green line still closer to the vulnerable Hindu Kush passes.⁷³ That the Russians by now knew of the gap between Afghan and Chinese territory was quite certain. The official Russian map of 1884 showed it marked in the same colour as that of Bukhara, and Gromchevsky's map, which Younghusband saw in 1889, had it especially picked out in red.⁷⁴ As early as 1880 a Russian official military publication had stated:

The extent of country between the most southern portion of the province of Fergana and the [Darkot] Pass . . . lies in the Pamirs and belongs to no one. . . . This belt of no-man's-land must probably, sooner or later, be included in Russian dominions, which will thus be in immediate contact with the range forming the water-parting from the Indus.⁷⁵

As has been seen, Lytton in 1876 had attempted to tighten the Indian grip on the territory to the south of the vulnerable passes by the creation of a Political Agency at Gilgit, but it was obvious that no amount of activity south of the Hindu Kush could in itself prevent Russian infiltration down to the northern slopes of the range. And so, since the territories north of the mountains were beyond the range of effective Indian influence, diplomacy had to be employed to achieve what was impossible by any other means. In the decade between 1879 and 1889, its use was proposed in three distinct ways.

It has already been shown how the ferment on the Upper Oxus in the middle 'eighties, and the simultaneous crisis farther west, had forced the Government of India against its will to consider the whole question of an Anglo-Russian delimitation to modify the 1873 line. Even then, a blind eye was turned to the question of the 'no-man's-land'. It was proposed, quite simply, to extend the Afghan boundary eighty miles eastward to meet that of Chinese Turkistan at Nezatash, a pass on the borders of Sariqol which Gordon of the Forsyth Mission had pointed out as the natural limit of Afghanistan in the extreme north-east.⁷⁶ The subsequent

73. Such an agreement *had* been negotiated but nothing was known about it until some years later. See below p.243.

74. Younghusband to Nisbet, 24 Oct. 1889, DOC/3, p.206.

75. Kostenko, *The Turkistan Region*, II, p.241.

76. 16, India, 11 Mar. 1884, PFI/39, p.1137.

shelving of the Anglo-Russian demarcation beyond Khoja Saleh, because the disparity between the 1873 line and the reality made it too hot to handle, naturally also made a Pamir demarcation impossible. In any case, so long as the gap between the Chinese and Afghan territories remained, the Russians would probably have denied the Amir a right to anything east of Lake Victoria on the strength of the 1873 line, which ended there. As the Government of India admitted, 'this claim would at the present time be difficult to resist, owing to the fact that the Afghans are not in effective occupation of the tract'.⁷⁷ Better to consolidate quietly than provoke a Russian advance by an unsuccessful attempt to demarcate, based on no more than a theoretical claim.

The obvious step was to make the Afghan occupation effective, and Elias in 1885-6 had already sketched the best way of doing this.⁷⁸ So when, in the middle of 1887, the Amir asked for demarcation of his Pamir territories,⁷⁹ the Indian Government suggested that he should be told that no objection would be made if he quietly extended his effectual occupation up to the Chinese border. This policy, it was pointed out, had the additional advantage that it offered a glimmer of hope of escape out of the Upper Oxus impasse. For if, after some years of effective Afghan occupation of part of the Pamirs, demarcation was forced on the British authorities; and if there proved no choice but to surrender to Russia the Afghan trans-Oxus possessions; then it would be possible, in return, to 'insist upon the Afghans being left in undisturbed possession of that tract of country east of Wood's Lake, which is not touched by the Agreement of 1873'.⁸⁰ As a matter of fact, this is roughly how the Pamir crisis was finally settled in 1895. But it was an extremely risky policy to pursue, since the very difficulties on the Upper Oxus which recommended it, were difficulties caused by just such an extension of Afghan territory in a quarter where the hold of Kabul was already perilously weak. It had the additional disadvantage, as the India Office which heartily disliked the proposal pointed out, that it

77. 191, India, 27 Dec. 1887, PFI/51, p.1377.

78. *Confidential Report of a Mission to Chinese Turkistan and Badakhshan in 1885-6*, p.71.

79. Enclosure 1 of 148, India, 19 Sept. 1887, PFI/51, p.349.

80. 191, India, 27 Dec. 1887, PFI/51, p.1377.

could well have provoked the very situation it was designed to prevent and arouse Russian and Chinese hostility.⁸¹

The risks were obvious but, in view of the Russian activity, Lord Lansdowne felt that the problem could not merely be ignored. A less dangerous alternative to Afghan extension from the west would have been the expansion of China to fill the vacuum from the east. This had the additional incidental advantage that it solved another problem of unclaimed territory farther east between the Kuen-lun and Karakoram ranges,⁸² and at the same time increased the likelihood of Sino-Russian hostility. In July 1890, therefore, the Indian Government proposed, as part of a general settlement with China in this direction, that negotiations should be opened to persuade Peking to assert its authority westward on the Pamirs, right up to the Afghan limits.⁸³

The first thing was to remove the doubt which existed as to how far the Chinese claims on the Pamirs really extended. Chinese influence had first been felt there in the modern period when Kashgar was conquered in 1759. Eighty years later, in Wood's time, Chinese territory still reached as far as Lake Victoria. More recent accounts, however, had put the Chinese limit farther east, on or about the line of the Ak-su River.⁸⁴ In 1890 Younghusband was sent to make an accurate survey of the theoretical limits of Chinese claims on the Pamirs, and to encourage the assertion of Chinese authority up to those limits.⁸⁵

Although the extension of China did not have the same objectionable features as that of Afghanistan, it obviously called for 'confidential and delicate treatment'.⁸⁶ The view of the Foreign Office in London seems to have been that discussions would be 'useless and dangerous', unless the Peking Government could be offered a definite line of frontier as a basis for negotiation.⁸⁷ After its Afghan and Burmese experiences, India was well aware of the

81. To FO, 15 Feb. 1888, HC/99, p.1243; 2, Sec. of State, 2 Mar. 1888, PTI/14, p.5. 82. Below pp.278-80.

83. 87, India, 14 July 1890, PFI/60, p.961.

84. Wood, *Journey to the Source of the River Oxus*, p.243; Elias, *op. cit.*, pp.18 and 28; Bonvalot, *Through the Heart of Asia, over the Pamirs to India*, II, pp.173 and 202-3.

85. Younghusband's instructions, 23 June 1890, are enclosed with 87, India, 14 July 1890, PFI/60, p.961.

86. Tel., Sec. of State, 8 Sept. 1890, HC/116, p.1515.

87. Sanderson Note, 10 Sept. 1890, FO 65/1394.

need for clarity in frontier settlements, but in this case it had no wish for formal delimitation. This, it was felt, would only attract Russian attention, and would almost inevitably let out of the cupboard once more the embarrassing skeleton of the 1873 Upper Oxus line. In the Indian view, it would be enough merely to seek Chinese recognition of a predetermined line as the Afghan-Chinese frontier. In 1891, with Younghusband's information before it, the Indian Government was ready to suggest this line.⁸⁸

Just how successful this approach would have been it is impossible to say. Certainly it was a little optimistic to think that Younghusband's activities would go unnoticed, especially with Petrovsky in Kashgar soaking up all the exaggerated rumours which generally circulated there. The Russians were always very sensitive to rumours of British intrigue, and their rule was probably less secure in Fergana than in any other of their Central Asian possessions. They seem to have believed, although erroneously, that Younghusband was stirring up the people round the Qara Qul.⁸⁹ The military party in Russia even seems to have been genuinely afraid of an impending British attack on them across the Pamirs.⁹⁰ But, on the whole, the Russian concern in 1891 was probably not so much at the offensive, as the defensive, implications of Younghusband's activities. According to the *Novoe Vremya*:

Captain Younghusband . . . is already in Kashgar with the object of obtaining as quickly as possible from the Chinese authorities, the delimitation of the frontier between Afghanistan and China. In this we find ourselves on the eve of a complete seizure of the Pamir and nobody asks whether Russia agrees. . . .⁹¹

Although, as has been mentioned, there was no question of 'delimitation', this report was right enough in all other particulars. By a judicious mixture of threat and persuasion, Younghusband in the spring of 1891 was busy urging the Taotai of Kashgar to strengthen the walls of the town and to send armed parties on to the Pamirs to make good the Chinese claims.⁹²

88. 39, India, 11 Mar. 1891, PFI/62, p.793.

89. Enclosure 25 of 158, India, 8 Sept. 1891, PFI/63, p.1359.

90. 341, Rosebery to Howard, 22 Nov. 1893, FO 65/1470.

91. Edition of 28 Jan. 1891. This paper was the organ of the military party and maintained these warnings all through the spring and summer of 1891.

92. Younghusband Report, 18 Nov. 1891, enclosed with IO to FO, 31 Dec. 1891, FO 65/1417.

One can see in retrospect that, by the spring of 1891, there was something of a race in progress between Russia and India on the Pamirs. By June, Younghusband thought he had won it for his Government:

It really does seem now as if we had gained our object and put a barrier in between the Russians and the Hindu Kush, and at any rate the Russians will not be able to advance on to the Pamirs without committing an act of very open aggression.⁹³

As far as a paintbrush and the map went, Younghusband *had* closed the gap between the Afghan and Chinese territories. The Chinese boundary was brought westwards on to the Alichur up to the Yeshil Qul west of Somatash, and on to the Great and Little Pamirs some distance west of the Ak-su River.⁹⁴ But it was a race Younghusband was almost bound to lose in the end, especially if, as Petrovsky later asserted,

all the while that Captain Younghusband was interviewing the Taotai and urging him to despatch troops to the Pamirs, to complete an effective occupation in anticipation of a Russian advance, the Taotai was keeping Petrovsky informed of the purport of Younghusband's proposals, acting on which the Russian agent took steps to render the Russian occupation effective before the Chinese troops were halfway to the Pamirs.⁹⁵

There are some inherent improbabilities in this story but, however the Russians came by their information, it is quite certain that they knew of Younghusband's doings and were considerably irritated by them.⁹⁶ In the spring of 1891 a series of conferences was held between General Vrevsky, the Governor-General of Turkistan, and the Minister of War.⁹⁷ Then things moved fast. Gromchevsky suddenly arrived back at Margilan early in June and the intention of the Governor-General to visit the Alai

93. To Cunningham, 1 June 1891, DOC/3, p.1368.

94. Later Younghusband brought the proposed Chinese frontier back to Somatash.

95. R. P. Cobbold, *Innermost Asia*, p.67.

96. Younghusband to Lansdowne, 20 Aug. 1891, LaP/6, p.98; 20, Morier to Salisbury, 20 Jan. 1892, FO 65/1417. See Younghusband, *The Light of Experience*, pp.63-4.

97. Eliot Confidential Memo., 14 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416.

frontier was announced. Rumours of some imminent Russian move thickened and Younghusband warned:

Things seem to be coming to a head, and I think your Excellency may fully expect to hear of some decisive movements on this three-sided frontier during the summer.⁹⁸

He was right. On 30 July 1891 a report from a German source that a Russian party was heading for the Pamirs to 'declare the country to be their own territory',⁹⁹ was said by the Russian Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Chichkine, to have 'absolutely no foundation'.¹⁰⁰ Just five days later the Foreign Minister admitted, and it is not without irony in view of what happened, that a detachment *had* gone 'to shoot game for rifle practice, and to note and report what the Chinese and Afghans are doing in these regions'.¹⁰¹

On 13 August Younghusband came across the Russian party, under Colonel Ianov, at Bozai Gumbaz on the Little Pamir. He was coolly informed that Russia had annexed the Pamirs, including Rang Qul, the Ak-su valley, the Great and Little Pamirs, and perhaps the Tagdumbash as well.¹⁰² Four days later, in the friendliest manner possible and after a good supper, Younghusband was expelled from Bozai Gumbaz by the Russians and forced under protest to withdraw. He set up camp just north of the Kilik Pass leading into Hunza, and settled down to keep an eye on the next move of the Russians.¹⁰³ As if that was not enough, one Lieutenant Davison, a British officer who had been sent by Younghusband to the Chinese post at Somatash, was accused of trespassing on Russian territory and was hauled off as a prisoner back to Margilan to meet the Governor-General of Turkistan.¹⁰⁴ Finally, and perhaps most serious of all, a Russian party from Bozai Gumbaz explored as far as the summit of the Darkot Pass, asked a lot of questions about the routes on the other side of it, returned north across the Hindu Kush by the Baroghil into

98. To Lansdowne, 22 Apr. 1891, LaP/5, p.371.

99. DMI to FO, 27 July 1891, FO 65/1415.

100. Tel. 34, Howard to Salisbury, 30 July 1891, *ibid.*

101. Tel. 35, Howard to Salisbury, 5 Aug. 1891, *ibid.*

102. Enclosure 15 of 158, India, 8 Sept. 1891, PFI/63, p.1359.

103. Enclosure 23 of *ibid.*; tels., to and from India, 3 and 7 Sept. 1891, HC/124, p.539 and HC/125, p.215.

104. Enclosures 11 and 17 of 212, India, 16 Dec. 1891, PFI/64, p.1483.

Afghan Wakhan, forded the Wakhan-su at Sarhad, and so returned to Bozai.¹⁰⁵

It was these moves, described by *The Times* special correspondent as 'generally . . . equivalent to a declaration of war',¹⁰⁶ which triggered off the first Pamir crisis of 1891.

(2) *The first Pamir Crisis 1891-1892*

It is not really surprising that the Indian authorities took a grave view of the 'outrageously aggressive and lawless'¹ moves of the Russians in 1891. By crossing the Hindu Kush, which since Lytton's time had been regarded as the limit of British influence in this quarter, they had entered subsidized Chitral and the dangerously fermenting tribal area south of the mountains. In the process they had violated Wakhan, which in 1873 they had recognized as belonging to Afghanistan. They had acted in a 'very insulting manner' towards two British officers and expelled them from territory regarded as either Chinese or Afghan. They had put forward a claim, with the aid of a force varying according to report from eighty to a thousand men,² to annex the whole of the Pamirs and had thereby pushed their frontier to the crest of the Hindu Kush passes. In one stroke they had shattered the Afghan or Chinese barrier which the Indian Government had been so patiently constructing to protect itself from just such a move, and enormously augmented the Russian potential for menace and mischief on the whole northern frontier. Control of the Little Pamir not only gave them command of the Wakhan-Kashgar trade route, which had been so carefully preserved in 1873, but of the northern approaches to Hunza too. Bozai Gumbaz, 'a deserted uninhabited spot only marked by the existence of a small mud tomb',³ was hardly the 'Gibraltar of the Hindu

105. The Russians' own account to Younghusband of this is enclosure 20 of 158, India, 8 Sept. 1891, PFI/63, p.1359.

106. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, pp.268-9.

1. IO Memo., HC/124, p.537.

2. 80 was Giers' first figure. 1,000 was mentioned in enclosure 1 of 158, India, 8 Sept. 1891, PFI/63, p.1359. The real figure seems to have been 45 with Ianov and 100 with Vrevsky on the Alai.

3. Enclosure 13 of 212, India, 16 Dec. 1891, PFI/64, p.1483.

Kush', as Rosebery⁴ ludicrously described it later,⁵ but the Russian advance there, only a few hours away from the northern approaches to Hunza, was serious enough. Roberts, who was visiting Quetta when he received the news, apparently thought so. He immediately mobilized the Division there and characteristically called for action: 'Now's the time to go for the Russians. We are ready and they are not.'⁶

The real menace in the Russian moves lay in the unsettled state of the Dard tribes a few miles to the south. Rumours of Russian intrigue in Chitral had been heard for a long time, but now a direct Russian intervention in the three-cornered Afghan-Jandul-Chitral struggle became a real possibility. Certainly the expulsion of Younghusband from the Pamirs had a bad effect in Chitral, and the British newswriter there warned that the Chitralis could no longer be trusted where the Russians were concerned.⁷ Fortunately, as has been seen, Aman-ul-Mulk did not die until 1892, when the Russians were withdrawing from the Pamirs at the end of the 1892 season. The resulting upheavals in Chitral therefore took place without the threat of direct Russian intervention, and only the exceptional amount of comment which was devoted to Chitrali affairs in the Russian press showed what might have happened had the timing been different.⁸

But although Aman-ul-Mulk timed his departure from this world nicely for the Indian Government, Safdar Ali of Hunza could hardly have chosen a more dangerous time to defy the British authorities. Hunza's relations with India were already seriously strained, and Durand was on his way to Simla to discuss the whole situation when the news arrived of the Russian annexations up to Hunza's northern limits. Safdar Ali was immediately warned to keep all the Russian parties out of his kingdom,⁹ but he had already shown where his real sympathies lay. A Hunzakut mission was sent to Kashgar which ostentatiously ignored Young-

4. Archibald Philip Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery (1847-1929), Foreign Minister 1886 and 1892-4, Prime Minister 1894-5.

5. 321A, to Howard, 13 Nov. 1893, FO 65/1470.

6. Younghusband, *The Light of Experience*, p.62.

7. North-West Frontier Diary, Oct. 1891, PFI/64, p.1323.

8. See especially the *Svet* of 18 and 27 Oct. 1892, FO 65/1442 and 1443; *Novoe Vremya*, 9 Dec. 1892, FO 65/1444; and the remarkable series of articles in the Tiflis *Kavkaz*, FO 65/1460.

9. Acting Gilgit Agent to Safdar Ali, 18 Aug. 1891, PFI/63, p.1375.

husband, gave presents to Petrovsky, had a meeting with the Russian Governor-General at Osh in great secrecy, and then returned with presents including arms and ammunition.¹⁰ After the Chalt affair in May 1891, Durand had requested more British officers.¹¹ There was a great deal of justice in this demand because, almost alone, he was in command of a force at brigade strength scattered in forts up to a hundred miles from Gilgit. Durand had been thinking primarily of tribal hostility, but it was the advance of the Russians on the Pamirs which led to the acceptance of all that he proposed and more. Two hundred Gurkhas (the first British native troops to be employed on the northern frontier), two mountain guns and thirteen British officers were added to Durand's command as quickly and stealthily as possible.¹² The force, in other words, was made capable of opposing a small European force, and if necessary 'of serving as an engine of attack as well as of defence'.¹³

The Indian Government believed that 'an entirely new aspect was given to the case' of Hunza by the Russian advance. For the first time there was a real danger that Safdar Ali might 'introduce a Russian force into Hunza within a few marches of Gilgit'.¹⁴ No longer was it possible to overlook incidents like the May attack on Chalt, the treasonable correspondence with Russia and China, the failure to send *vakils* to Kashmir, the raids on the Kashgar trade, the refusal to pass mail through to Younghusband, and the breach of almost every other promise made to Durand in 1889. All this, and India's consequent decision to force a show-down with Hunza, was explained to the Foreign Office in November 1891:

. . . beyond strengthening the fort at Chalt . . . and improving the road to it from Gilgit, no forcible measures are at present contemplated. . . . Colonel Durand has been instructed to acquaint the Raja of Hunza that the British Government claim the right of free access to his territory, and that of making roads therein for military

10. Enclosure 4 of 1c, India, 25 Oct. 1891, PFI/64, p.899; Eliot Memo., 14 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416. Russian Berdan rifles were used against the British in the campaign that followed.

11. Sub-enclosure 3 of 1c, India, 25 Oct. 1891, PFI/64, p.899.

12. Enclosure 7 of *ibid.*

13. Enclosure 13 of *ibid.*

14. 1c of 25 Oct. 1891.

purposes, and it is not concealed . . . that these measures are likely to lead to forcible resistance on the part of the Raja and eventually to his removal.¹⁵

After a considerable delay, due to mislaid orders and supply difficulties, Durand reached Chalt at the end of November 1891 and sent his ultimatum to Safdar Ali. A defiant answer¹⁶ led to an advance on 2 December. Almost at once, the small British force was brought to a halt by a much bigger force of tribesmen before Nilt – ‘practically a precipice unturnable at both ends’. Four officers were lost and no advance was made for over two weeks. The situation was very serious indeed for the Indus Valley tribes were contemplating an attack on Bunji and reinforcement from India was out of the question until the spring. Eventually, after some individual acts of great bravery, the Nilt position was captured, Safdar Ali and Uzr Khan fled, and all resistance collapsed.¹⁷ India’s hope, that ‘the capture or disappearance of these ruffians will be the end of our difficulties with Hunza and Nagar’, was soon justified and the pacification of the two remote little kingdoms was extraordinarily rapid.¹⁸ By 1893 they were the only quiet part of the Gilgit Agency, and they remained steadily loyal both during the Chitral crisis of 1895 and in the tribal risings of 1897 when the Indian force in Hunza was withdrawn.

The final strategic exploration of the Hunza frontier was made between 1892 and 1894 by Lieutenant Cockerill.¹⁹ His conclusion, that ‘we have no reason to fear a Russian advance through the passes to the east of Bozai Gumbaz’,²⁰ and the existence of the British garrison in Hunza, tended to reduce fears about the vulnerability of the Hunza line. Nevertheless, the Hunza campaign had at least proved that forces and artillery *could* operate in Hunza, and at intervals afterwards the Indian Government

15. IO to FO, 27 Nov. 1891, HC/126, p.107.

16. The ultimatum and its reply are enclosed with 51, India, 23 Mar. 1892, PFI/65, p.1041.

17. Accounts of this exciting little campaign, in which 3 V.C.’s were awarded, are AP 1892 LVIII C.6621; Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, pp.251–64; Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, pp.350–484.

18. The post-war settlement is described in enclosure 5 of 43, India, 16 Mar. 1892, PFI/65, p.923.

19. Later Brig.-General Sir George Kynaston Cockerill. A summary of his explorations is in *Himalayan Journal*, XI (1939), pp.15–41.

20. Lansdowne Note on IO to FO, 29 June 1894, FO 65/1486.

showed a considerable sensitiveness about any Russian advance which might bring her near to the Hunza passes. The route to the south of them down to Baltit was deliberately kept in a bad state of repair and was completely closed to ordinary travellers.²¹ In 1894, India fought hard to keep Russian territory back from the Baiyik Pass²² which, as Younghusband had pointed out earlier,²³ was important because it gave access both to the Hunza passes and to the fertile upper reaches of the Yarkand River. The Baiyik was eventually given up by the British Pamir Boundary Commissioners because, as their leader Major-General Gerard²⁴ pointed out, it was militarily unimportant whether the Russian frontier was four or five hours nearer the Kilik Pass or not.²⁵ In any case, the conclusion of the Commissioners was that invasion by that route into Hunza would be impossible anyway, even for five hundred men.²⁶

The subjugation of Hunza and Nagar was the most striking and effective riposte which the Indian Government made to the Russian claim to advance its territory up to the Hindu Kush passes, but it was by no means the only one. Chitral, as well as Hunza, was warned not to let any Russians across the passes²⁷ and, as has already been mentioned, an increased subsidy was offered to Aman-ul-Mulk in return for a permanent British Resident in his kingdom.²⁸ Between these two danger-spots, British officers with small armed parties were sent up the Yasin and Ishkoman valleys with orders to resist Russian encroachments by force if necessary.²⁹ The forces of the Gilgit Agency were augmented and improvements to its communications were pushed on feverishly. It must be admitted that Durand's efforts to link Gilgit with the outside world by telegraph were not very much

21. 186, India, 25 Sept. 1895, PFI/82. Curzon in 1894 covered the sixty miles to Baltit in 3 days but beyond found it 'one of the worst tracks in the world', *The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus*, p.8.

22. Tel., India, 3 May 1894, HC/149, p.189.

23. *Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, p.73.

24. Later Sir Montagu Gilbert Gerard (1842-1905).

25. To India, 16 Aug. 1895, enclosed with 195, India, 9 Oct. 1895, PFI/82.

26. Gerard to Brackenbury, 7 Aug. 1895, RoP/9, p.92d.

27. Enclosure 5 of 212, India, 16 Dec. 1891, PFI/64, p.1483.

28. Above p.216

29. Tel., India, 26 Aug. 1891, FO 65/1415. Native agents were also sent on to the Pamirs to get information of the Russian movements.

more successful than previous attempts had been, and the line was not working properly even by 1892.³⁰ In the August of that year a message *did* get from Gilgit to Gulmarg in less than three hours, but communication was interrupted again in the following winter.³¹ In any case, the line from India to Kashmir across the Zojila Pass was often out of order for as much as eight months every year.

More important was the road to Gilgit. Although its construction had been sanctioned in 1887,³² only forty miles were complete by October 1890, and the system of reliefs for the Gilgit garrison had broken down completely.³³ A civilian firm, Spedding and Company, contracted to complete the road by the summer of 1893 but, under pressure of the preparations for the Hunza campaign of 1891 and the Russian moves on the Pamirs, two-thirds were finished during that summer and the work went on right through the winter.³⁴ In 1892, the Burzil Pass was not open until June, but in that year an important improvement was made with the completion of the Indus bridge at Bunji.³⁵ The road itself was finished in 1894.³⁶

From a military point of view, it was not enough to link Gilgit with Kashmir by road, as the chaos before the Hunza campaign had revealed. In the spring of 1891, supplies in the hands of a Panjabi contractor broke down completely and, despite frantic efforts during the summer, by the early winter 'the Burzil was . . . strewn with corpses, and the campaign itself was attended with far less loss of life and fewer horrors than were the preparations for it'.³⁷ Early the next year therefore, a Captain Yeilding was sent to organize a regular supply system for the Gilgit garrison, which he found to be in an extremely 'critical' situation. The elaborate scheme of supply from the Panjab which he worked out did ensure that the northern frontier forces were never again

30. IFP/4182, Oct., pp.45-68.

31. Enclosure 3 of 127, India, 6 Sept. 1892, PFI/67, p.737.

32. Above p.146.

33. IFP/3962, Jan., pp.183-5 and Apr., pp.1-13.

34. Progress up to November 1891 is reported IFP/4182, Feb., p.15; and to the end of 1892 in IFP/4397, May, pp.5-16 and Sept., pp.47-9.

35. Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, p.290.

36. The Pamir Boundary Commission found it 'easy and excellent' the following year.

37. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, pp.324 and 339-41.

faced with death by starvation as they had been in 1891 and 1892.³⁸

Unfortunately for the Indian Government, no amount of frenzied activity south of the Hindu Kush could really solve the problem which made it all necessary – the extension of Russian territory up to the northern side of the range. It was easy enough to postulate ‘that at no point is the Russian territory allowed to abut on our own natural frontier, the Hindu Kush’,³⁹ but preventing it was quite another matter. Certainly direct Indian action on the Pamirs was right out of the question. When, in January 1892, Morier in St Petersburg proposed to threaten Russia with a British expedition, the India Office was quick to point out the dangers. If the threat should fail, the proposed force would be so small because of the supply difficulties that it would be an incentive rather than a check to Russia.⁴⁰ In the end, as Morier had to admit, India would probably have had to choose between ‘a collision and a repetition of Penjdeh’.⁴¹

The simple fact, ‘that the [Russian] encroachment was upon no territory of ours’⁴² also helped to make direct British action all but impossible. Worse, it seriously weakened the only practicable alternative – a settlement by diplomacy. The Indian Government had first to show that it *was* either Afghan or Chinese territory which had been infringed, and that proved no easy matter. Not only did the Russians have nine-tenths of the law on their side by possession, but it soon became apparent in many cases, especially on the Great and Little Pamirs, that they had the other tenth as well and were claiming territory that belonged to no one. The British authorities soon learned, and in a rather painful manner, that the gap between Afghan and Chinese Turkistan was a reality. After confirming with Younghusband, the Indian Government maintained that Bozai Gumbaz, from which that officer had been expelled, was part of Afghan Wakhan and this statement was

38. The correspondence is IFP/4182, Mar., p.11 and Aug., pp.27–55, and IFP/4397, *passim*.

39. Barrow Memo., enclosed with Chapman to Currie, 30 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416.

40. IO to FO, 4 Feb. 1892, HC/127, p.1091. India had already vetoed a similar proposal the previous October.

41. Tel. 14, to Salisbury, 2 Feb. 1892, FO 65/1435.

42. *Hansard*, 4th series, XI, p.1775.

passed to St Petersburg as part of the official complaint.⁴³ A few days later, India telegraphed to say that Bozai in fact appeared to lie beyond territory claimed by the Afghans.⁴⁴ The Russians were quick to exploit this *faux pas*⁴⁵ and Salisbury minuted, 'after such a mistake the Viceroy must not be surprised if we are circumspect in forwarding telegraphic complaints to St Petersburg'.⁴⁶ A few weeks later, Howard, the British *chargé* at the Russian capital, was trying to argue that Bozai, if not Afghan, must be Chinese.⁴⁷ But China had never laid claim to territory so far west, and the gap, however inconvenient, did exist. Salisbury even doubted whether there were any grounds for protest at all about the Russian incursions.⁴⁸ Younghusband certainly thought there were and argued that, since Afghan and Chinese territory appeared to meet farther north at Somatash on the Alichur Pamir, Russia could not overstep that junction to make claims farther south.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, however, it had been made all too clear that even good arguments were poor weapons against Russian force. The Chinese General Chang at Somatash, whether he had been sent there to oppose the Russians as Younghusband believed, or simply to pay his respects as in the Russian version,⁵⁰ had been totally disregarded and Lieutenant Davison arrested under his very nose for being on Russian soil. For a time, deceived by the Chinese movements, the collection of stores and the assembly of a force for Sariqol, Macartney in Kashgar thought that the Chinese really meant business.⁵¹ But, by January 1892, even he was warning against relying on China to pull the English chestnuts out of the fire.⁵² Three months away in Peking, Walsham was asserting even more emphatically that the British Government should not entertain 'for a moment even the remotest belief or hope that

43. 154, Salisbury to Howard, 11 Sept. 1891, FO 65/1415.

44. IO to FO, 21 Sept. 1891, HC/124, p.1105.

45. Memo. enclosed with 234, Howard to Salisbury, 7 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416.

46. Minute, FO 65/1415.

47. To Bertie, 29 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416.

48. To Cross, 31 Dec. 1891, HC/126, p.1117.

49. To India, 7 Nov. 1891, FO 65/1417.

50. Enclosure of 239, Howard to Salisbury, 14 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416; cf. DOC/3, p.1368.

51. Enclosure 20 of 212, India, 16 Dec. 1891, PFI/64, p.1483.

52. Sub-enclosure 13 of 51, India, 23 Mar. 1892, PFI/65, p.1041.

China would make any stand whatever'.⁵³ The sheer physical difficulty of the approaches to the Pamirs from the Kashgar side was an important factor, even if the Chinese *had* intended to make extensive claims. But, on the contrary, it seemed that all their preparations were only for the defence of Kashgar itself and Sariqol. And both were well to the east of the disputed area and the territory claimed by Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, the attempt to enlist the support of China was made, for she could have been a valuable ally for Britain in the dispute. It was in her power to cause Russia a great deal of trouble along a very extensive land frontier. Moreover, there was much that Russia wanted from China and this would also tend to make her responsive to Chinese pressure.⁵⁴ As soon as the first news of the Russian advance arrived, China was consulted and a few days later was urged to occupy all she claimed on the Pamirs.⁵⁵ The suggested division of the Pamirs with Afghanistan along the lines sketched by Younghusband was passed to the Chinese Legation in London shortly afterwards.⁵⁶ No reply was received for nine months. Then, in May 1892, it was announced that China found the projecting tongue of land which Younghusband had assigned to her on the Alichur to be 'strategically indefensible'. Instead, China urged again the proposal she had made earlier – that the Pamirs should be neutralized. With a logic as cold as the comfort it must have given, the Chinese Minister added:

. . . as China was not desirous of retaining this territory, and as he understood that England had no intention of advancing beyond the Hindu Kush, the only alternative seemed to be the occupation by Russia.⁵⁷

Neutralization had never found favour in India as a solution of Central Asian problems. In this case it was extremely unlikely that the Russians, let alone the Afghans, would waive their claims to Pamir territory. Besides, the practical difficulties of neutralizing

53. Tel. 10, to Salisbury, 29 Jan. 1892, HC/127, p.1028.

54. Such as permission to take the Trans-Siberian across Manchuria to Vladivostok. Howard to Bertie, 29 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416.

55. Tels. 40 and 43, to Walsham, 17 and 29 July 1891, HC/123, pp.801 and 807.

56. Sanderson to Sir Halliday Macartney, 15 Aug. 1891, FO 65/1415.

57. 73, Salisbury to Walsham, 12 May 1892, FO 65/1437.

an area like the Pamirs, inhabited as it was by a wandering population, were considerable. Which Power would keep these people in order, and when would intervention to punish them be permissible? Who would guarantee the neutrality? India could never undertake to punish aggression north of the mountains, and the field would be dangerously clear for the Russians.⁵⁸ Besides, it was by now obvious from experience that any neutralization of the Pamirs would have to be preceded by their delimitation.

Delimitation was a solution which the Chinese rarely favoured since, as Howard put it, 'in such delimitation they may lose some ground, however small, and thus destroy their Fungshui [good luck]'.⁵⁹ And delimitation *without* China would have been unsatisfactory, even dangerous, for if a demarcated line between Russian and Indian (or, rather, Afghan) territories simply stopped in the air on the east side of the Pamirs, there would be nothing to prevent Russian pushing into the cultivated land along the upper course of the Yarkand River round the eastern end of the line, in order to achieve the coterminity with India which she sought.⁶⁰ To prevent this, Chinese co-operation was essential, and hence the bid for it which Britain made.

But – and here was another lesson from previous experience in Central Asia – delimitation often involved an unwelcome definition of rights and interests. In this case it would scarcely be possible to avoid the whole contentious question of the international status of Hunza.⁶¹ Although the Indian Government had ignored the question of Chinese claims in the despatch of October 1891 which dealt with future policy towards Hunza, both the enclosures to the despatch and all previous experience suggested on the contrary that the Chinese factor could not be ignored.⁶² All the signs had pointed at the very least to a Chinese diplomatic offensive if Hunza was attacked, even if military measures were most unlikely. From 1890 the Chinese had begun to describe the customary annual exchange of gifts with Hunza as 'tribute', and the tone of their inquiries about the Chalt episode of May 1891

58. Bayley to Sanderson, 25 Apr. 1892, DOC/11, p.129.

59. 228, to Salisbury, 25 Sept. 1891, FO 65/1415.

60. Tel., India, 23 Nov. 1891, HC/125, p.1673; 239, Howard to Salisbury, 14 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416.

61. India pointed this out in tel., 23 Nov. 1891, HC/125, p.1673.

62. 1c, India, 25 Oct. 1891, PFI/64, p.899.

suggested that they regarded Hunza as theirs.⁶³ Petrovsky naturally did all he could to foster this belief.

The Chinese factor in the Hunza problem led, in the summer of 1891, to some disagreement on the British side about the timing of the proposed Hunza campaign. Some, like Durand, urged that the Chinese claims could best be met after Hunza had been seized. Others, like Younghusband, urged that China should be consulted first.⁶⁴ It was the Russian advance on to the Pamirs which finally persuaded both Lansdowne and Lord Cross⁶⁵ at the India Office that they could afford to wait no longer, China notwithstanding. The Foreign Office, and in particular the Permanent Under-Secretary, Currie, flatly disagreed. He, too, based his argument on the Pamir events and foresaw a

serious complication with China if the steps which the Indian Government propose to take in Kanjut (Hunza) lead . . . to the removal of the Raja . . . which might lead to joint action on her part with Russia in the Pamir district.⁶⁶

These views were passed officially to the Viceroy on 9 December.⁶⁷ The following day, news arrived that the war with Hunza had begun.

China soon showed her hand. In January 1892 the authorities at Kashgar claimed Hunza as a tributary, demanded to know why troops had been sent, and despatched an envoy to Hunza.⁶⁸ In February the first diplomatic moves were made in London and Peking. Salisbury and the Foreign Office still insisted that

it is a matter of serious importance to have the friendship and goodwill of China and her officers in Kashgar and that it is worthwhile to purchase that friendship and goodwill even at the expense of slight inconvenience. . . .⁶⁹

Salisbury took a similar view at the same time about the Burma

63. Diaries enclosed with DMI to FO, 11 Sept. 1890, FO 65/1394; Sanderson Note, 14 Aug. 1891 and letter to Macartney, 22 Aug. 1891, FO 65/1415.

64. Enclosures 4 and 5 of 1c, India, 25 Oct. 1891, PFI/64, p.899.

65. Richard Assheton Cross, 1st Viscount Cross (1823-1914), Secretary of State for India 1886-92.

66. Note, 30 Nov. 1891, FO 65/1417.

67. Tel., HC/126, p.479.

68. Enclosures of 51, India, 23 Mar. 1892, PFI/65, p.1041.

69. FO to IO, 5 Mar. 1892, FO 65/1436.

and Siam frontier disputes. In all three cases he hinted that India tended to subordinate imperial to local interests by an unnecessary obstinacy on minor issues and a tendency to treat China as if she were 'some weak and petty frontier state'.⁷⁰ Lansdowne hotly denied these charges,⁷¹ and in the following months there was laboriously hammered out a settlement which tried to preserve the goodwill of Peking by recognizing her special interests in Hunza, and at the same time maintained the political supremacy of Kashmir there.⁷²

During these difficult negotiations, it was only the delicacy of the Pamir situation which kept British patience in the face of a mounting sequence of 'tricks of the Heathen Chinese' to extort concessions. Certainly China showed a disconcerting tendency to mix the Pamir and Hunza questions, as the Foreign Office had feared she would. In London, for instance, the Chinese Minister at first declined to pass on British warnings about the Russian Pamir advances until he had received a satisfactory answer to his inquiries about the status of Hunza.⁷³ Later, the Yamen refused to give Walsham a copy of an earlier Sino-Russian treaty which had a bearing on the Pamir dispute until the Hunza affair was settled.⁷⁴ He was warned that 'China could not remain silent as to the British action in Kanjut [Hunza] while challenging a Russian invasion of the Pamirs'.⁷⁵ There was some logic in this,⁷⁶ especially if, as seems likely, Russia was justifying her Pamir advances to the Chinese by the British seizure of Hunza.⁷⁷ There is certainly no doubt at all that British relations with the all-important local authorities in Kashgar were seriously strained by the Hunza affair.

That is why the twin British needs for Pamir delimitation on the

70. FO to IO, 7 Mar. 1892, HC/128, p.671. See above pp.93-4.

71. To Cross, 3 Feb. 1892, LaP/19, p.16.

72. The exchange of presents between China and Hunza was continued, the new ruler was to belong to the former ruling house, a Chinese observer was to be present at his enthronement, and India promised not to annex his territories.

73. Sanderson Memo., 22 Aug. 1891, FO 65/1415.

74. 29, Walsham to Salisbury, 17 Mar. 1892, HC/130, p.135.

75. Enclosed with 22, Salisbury to Walsham, 22 Feb. 1892, HC/128, p.325.

76. Although Walsham indignantly denied it in tel. 16, to Salisbury, 25 Feb. 1892, *ibid.*

77. 67, O'Connor to Rosebery, 27 Feb. 1893, FO 65/1461.

one hand, and for active Chinese co-operation on the other, were often incompatible. But all this was as nothing compared with the intractable problems connected with Afghanistan on the west side of the Pamirs. And, in addition, the Afghan and Chinese policies were themselves extremely difficult to reconcile. Early in 1891 for example, Younghusband, believing that the Chinese had a just claim to the whole of the Alichur Pamir, requested on their behalf the removal from Somatash of a small Afghan force. When the Amir questioned this, the Indian Government was forced into the embarrassing position of having to disown Younghusband's action.⁷⁸ Then, towards the end of 1891, the Afghans returned to Somatash and seem to have co-operated with the Chinese for a short time in face of the Russian threat.⁷⁹ But this uneasy equilibrium was destroyed in the middle of 1892, when an armed clash occurred between the Afghan and Chinese forces somewhere east of Somatash. This time it was China's turn to protest. She demanded satisfaction from Britain on the double ground that Afghan external policy was an Indian responsibility, and that the Chinese forces had occupied Somatash at Younghusband's instigation. She also warned that a force was being prepared which would punish the Afghans if the prisoners taken were not released.⁸⁰

The Foreign Office admitted to 'considerable perplexity' in this situation for, as Sanderson, the Assistant Under-Secretary, put it, 'we are on very uncomfortable terms with the Amir on several other questions'.⁸¹ It is just another example of India's diplomatic dilemma that her relations with Kabul were at their very worst in 1892, to a large extent because of measures which she had taken in the tribal area south of the Hindu Kush to counteract Russia's advance north of the range. Naturally enough, one manifestation of the Amir's ill-will was that he showed himself 'discourteous and unaccommodating with regard to the Russian encroachments on the Pamir',⁸² and this just when his co-operation was as urgently needed as was China's. He, like the Chinese, had been approached

78. Viceroy to Amir, 6 Mar. 1891, enclosure 5 of 39, India, 11 Mar. 1891, PFI/62, p.793.

79. Enclosure 6 of 212, India, 16 Dec. 1891, PFI/64, p.1483.

80. FO to IO, 27 June 1892, HC/131, p.381. There followed a long correspondence between Peking, Kabul, Simla and London about satisfaction for this incident.

81. Note, 17 June 1892, FO 65/1438.

82. Lansdowne to Cross, 19 Nov. 1891, LaP/18, p.139.

as soon as the news of the Russian incursion had been received.⁸³ If any proof was needed of the importance of a prior understanding about the extent of Afghanistan's territorial claims on the Pamir, the initial Indian misunderstanding about the ownership of Bozai Gumbaz provided it. The Afghan clash with the Chinese at Somatash was further evidence. Obviously *something* had to be done, particularly as there was a strong likelihood of a similar Afghan conflict with the Russians, either on the Pamirs or in the Upper Oxus lands beyond the river.⁸⁴

In every case the old problem of Indian responsibility for the Amir, without proper control over him, is visible. China, as has been seen, was very quick to hold the British responsible for the Afghan activities on the Alichur. The patent failure to control the Afghans considerably weakened Chinese confidence in either their own or Britain's ability to resist the Russian encroachments.⁸⁵ As for the Russians, Morier very quickly found it necessary to stifle their attempt to deal with Afghanistan direct about the Pamirs.⁸⁶ Even Abd-ar-Rahman himself later reproached the Indian Government with the remark that it must either defend Afghan interests or let Afghanistan take her own measures of defence.⁸⁷

The difficulties which faced the British in enlisting Afghan and Chinese support on the Pamirs to keep Russia away from the Hindu Kush were enormous. Moreover, there was still the difficulty of how that support was to be enlisted. Direct action had been ruled out and neutralization judged impracticable. The only feasible alternative – delimitation – did, despite the difficulties, have some solid advantages. It usually favoured the passive Power, which in this case was certainly India. Moreover, the success of the 1885 settlement gave reason to hope for a similar result on the Pamirs. And, just as in the earlier case, demarcation always tended to strengthen the peace party in St Petersburg. Once it was accomplished, the expansionist military authorities were faced with a clear choice between respecting the *status quo* and war.

83. Enclosure 21 of 158, India, 8 Sept. 1891, PFI/63, p.1359.

84. Large reinforcements had been sent to the Upper Oxus in 1891, North-West Frontier Diary, August, *ibid.*, p.1349.

85. Enclosure 1 of 127, India, 19 July 1892, PFI/66, p.1561.

86. Enclosure of 56, Morier to Salisbury, 4 Mar. 1892, FO 65/1436.

87. Enclosure 21 of 179, India, 21 Sept. 1892, PFI/67, p.1121.

Without a clearly-defined line, there was no way of stopping the Russian soldiers from roaming over the Pamirs right up to the Indian limits. That is precisely why the military party always opposed delimitation. They wanted acceptance of the valuable *fait accompli*, which they believed they had secured by extending Russian territory up to the Hindu Kush. Moreover, they do seem to have sincerely believed, as their propagandists never ceased to reiterate in print, that the Kokand claims stretched as far south as the main range and that Russia was the natural and legitimate heir to them.⁸⁸ For the Russian civilian peace party, especially Giers and the Ambassador in London, Staal, delimitation was the 'one hope of escape from dangerous complications'.⁸⁹ In fact, the progress of the delimitation project is a not inaccurate guide to the relative ascendancy of the civil and military influences in the counsels of the Tsar.

For the British, the need to support the Russian peace party would have been sufficient recommendation by itself for delimitation, Hunza notwithstanding, had it not been for one other great overriding objection. The trouble was that delimitation would almost certainly raise again the embarrassing discrepancy between the 1873 'agreement' and the real state of affairs on the Upper Oxus. It was fairly easy to rebut the latest Russian assertions that that 'agreement' had fixed the Afghan frontier as a straight line running east from where the Kokcha joins the Oxus,⁹⁰ and had allocated all north of it to Russia.⁹¹ But the Russian claim to exclude the Amir from his trans-Oxus possessions was, on the basis of 1873, unassailable. Many in Britain and India believed that, if the Amir was forced to evacuate those territories,

... he would resent it bitterly and not improbably throw us over and endeavour to come to terms with Russia. The result would inevitably be, if not actual hostilities with the Government of India, at all events such an attitude as to lead to the withdrawal of our subsidy

88. See, e.g., the obviously inspired article in the *Novoe Vremya*, 23 Nov. 1891, enclosed with 274, Howard to Salisbury, 26 Nov. 1891, FO 65/1417.

89. Tel. 14, Morier to Salisbury, 2 Feb. 1892, FO 65/1435. Cf. Meyendorff, *Correspondence Diplomatique de M. de Staal*, II, p.155.

90. The course of the 1873 negotiations did not support this but the omitted line of the British definition did make such an interpretation possible.

91. This belief goes back to 1873. Morier flatly denied it in his Note to Giers, 6 Jan. 1892, FO 65/1434.

and our moral support, the outbreak of revolution, and the collapse of the 'strong and friendly' Afghanistan which for fourteen years we have been endeavouring to build up.⁹²

The only hope was that Russia might be persuaded to recognize the *status quo* on the Upper Oxus, and for this purpose 'almost the only good card' in the British hand was the fact that Bukhara had broken the 1873 agreement first by crossing on to the south side of the Oxus in 1877.⁹³

There was certainly no prospect of dodging the issue any longer. On the map which Ianov showed Younghusband, the new Russian claims spread over the Upper Oxus territories as well as the Pamirs.⁹⁴ And when the British made their ill-advised protest about Younghusband's expulsion from Bozai Gumbaz on the ground that it was in Afghan Wakhan as recognized by the 1873 agreement, the Russians immediately replied that they were sorry if they had inadvertently trespassed on Afghan territory, but the Afghans had broken the agreement first by crossing north of the Oxus.⁹⁵ After that, although Morier in St Petersburg tried hard to keep the 1873 difficulty out of sight,⁹⁶ he was never again able to disentangle it from the negotiations for a Pamir settlement. In the early exchanges, indeed, the Russians persisted in concentrating their attention almost exclusively on the Upper Oxus issue.

But quite apart from all these particular problems, there were more general difficulties in the way of a Pamir delimitation. In inhabited areas, the actual exercise of government is usually the best guide to territorial ownership. But in tracts like the Pamirs, which are almost uninhabited, the problem is much more difficult. As Rosebery later put it, 'the title deeds of this, the wildest region of the world, would not be easily discovered in any charter-chest'.⁹⁷ Carved stones, verbal traditions, travellers' tales – these were the primary materials for judgement about ownership in an area where topographical knowledge was still inexact and where the nomad Khirghiz grazed their flocks at will, paying

92. Bayley, Note on the Question of Delimitation in the Upper Oxus Territories, 1 July 1892, Secret and Political Memo., A.86, p.4.

93. Lansdowne to Kimberley, 3 Nov. 1892, KP/6.

94. Enclosure 15 of 158, India, 8 Sept. 1891, PFI/63, p.1359.

95. 234, Howard to Salisbury, 7 Oct. 1891 and enclosure, FO 65/1416.

96. Enclosure of 5, Morier to Salisbury, 2 Jan. 1892, FO 65/1434.

97. 178, to Morier, 4 June 1893, FO 65/1465.

tribute to several masters at once. To the Chinese and Afghans even the broadest principles of geography were obscure. The Amir's maps were like something out of Europe's Middle Ages, and the Chinese seem to have been basing their claims on a map in the *Statesman's Year Book*.⁹⁸ The whole situation, which one British official, with some understatement, described as 'a little mixed',⁹⁹ was further complicated by some amusing attempts to tamper with such evidence as there was.¹⁰⁰

On historical grounds, the British authorities in 1891 were singularly ill-equipped to defend Afghan and Chinese claims to the Pamirs, even supposing either Power wanted Pamir territory. The Russian claim, although never distinctly formulated, was implicitly based on two separate lines of argument. The first was that, just as all north of the 1873 line was Russian, so all to the east of where it ended at Lake Victoria was Russian too.¹⁰¹ This had just enough support, to be plausible.¹⁰² The other Russian claim to the Pamirs, on the basis of earlier rights enjoyed by Kokand, was very much harder to oppose,¹⁰³ and a great deal of diligent research in the India Office records only resulted in the negative conclusion that no reference to Kokand territory on the Pamirs could be found.¹⁰⁴

Morier tried to attack the Russian claim on the grounds that only Kokand proper, and not its dependencies, had been annexed

98. Tel., O'Connor to Rosebery, 26 Dec. 1892, FO 65/1444; V. Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question or Some Problems of Indian Defence*, p.365.

99. DMI to FO, 11 Sept. 1890, FO 65/1394.

100. The Russians carried off the stone commemorating a Chinese victory at Somatash, the Afghans in turn destroyed Russian marks there, and the Chinese retaliated by carefully scratching out a Russian mark on a rock at Ak-tash which had reminded Younghusband of Mr Pickwick's 'Bill Stumps, his mark'. Indian officials even discussed whether or not Britain should efface any inscriptions the Russians may have set up.

101. See, e.g., enclosure of Howard to Sanderson, 1 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416; 7, Morier to Salisbury, 6 Jan. 1892, FO 65/1434; 36, Morier to Salisbury, 3 Feb. 1892, FO 65/1435.

102. If the phrase 'throughout its entire extent' (above p.184) is considered as referring to 'this Afghan province'. This was later urged at length in the enclosure of 106, Morier to Rosebery, 31 Mar. 1893, FO 65/1462.

103. Ianov used it to justify his expulsion of Younghusband, enclosure 19 of 158, India, 8 Sept. 1891, PFI/63, p.1359.

104. Bayley, Note on the connection between the Khanate of Kokand and the Pamirs, 14 Dec. 1892, Secret and Political Memo., A.89. India came to the same conclusion in 4 of 4 Jan. 1893, PFI/69, p.33.

by Russia.¹⁰⁵ But a better card in his hand was the Sino-Russian Frontier Delimitation Protocol of 22 May 1884, which carried the frontier between the two Powers down to the Uzbel Pass. The third clause of this Protocol stated:

This valley [Uzbel] is the terminus of the boundary line of the two countries, the Russian boundary turning south-west, and the Chinese boundary due south.¹⁰⁶

Morier was delighted with it.¹⁰⁷ A Chinese boundary running due south of Uzbel appeared to him to solve all the British problems. For, by striking Lake Victoria, it would join up with the 1873 line and thereby give China, not Russia, strategic control of the passes across the Hindu Kush into Hunza.

There is little doubt that the British Ambassador greatly exaggerated the value of this agreement. The Chinese would almost certainly have rejected the line due south of Uzbel because it gave them more than they wanted. Besides, it was rather naïve to claim that the Chinese boundary according to the Protocol not only ran south in a straight line, but ran straight all the way to Lake Victoria and the Hindu Kush too. Such a line would correspond to no natural features whatsoever. The more natural line along the Ak-su River, which is what the Chinese showed signs of claiming at first, would have left the gap round the end of the 1873 line as wide as before. Nevertheless, the discovery that Britain knew about the Protocol seems to have come as an unpleasant shock to the Russians,¹⁰⁸ and at least gave Morier a bargaining counter with which to oppose their claims.

In the middle of November 1891 he returned to St Petersburg. Some steps had already been taken, on strong Indian initiative, to find out how far the Russian Government supported the annexationist claims of its subordinates.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the first signs were not unhopeful. Giers had immediately stated that the orders of the Pamir expedition contained no mention of annexation. Later, Chichkine's official reply, although greatly lacking in politeness,

105. 10, Morier to Rosebery, 4 Jan. 1893, FO 65/1460.

106. Enclosed with 281, Howard to Salisbury, 8 Dec. 1891, HC/127, p.245.

107. 29, Salisbury, 28 Jan. 1892, FO 65/1434.

108. 176, Howard to Salisbury, 6 Aug. 1892, FO 65/1440.

109. But there was nothing like the events described by Younghusband and cited G. Seaver, *Francis Younghusband KCSI, KCIE, 1863-1942*, p.145. They sound like a garbled version of what happened early in 1892.

made no reference to the new Russian territorial claims and simply justified Younghusband's expulsion on the ground that he had earlier entered Russian territory near the Qara Qul.¹¹⁰

This was the situation facing Sir Robert Morier, who took the Central Asian question very seriously indeed.¹¹¹ Unable to match force with force, and with almost no diplomatic or historical cards in his hand at all, his conduct of this first difficult phase of the negotiations was masterly. At the end of December 1891, in conversation with Giers, he fired his first warning shots:

. . . the northern slopes of that range [the Hindu Kush] formed, as it were, the glacis of the fortress and to suppose that we should allow a powerful and rival nation to effect a lodgement on this glacis, and that in the free and easy manner contemplated by Colonel Ianov, was not a wise proceeding . . . [and would lead to] very great trouble.¹¹²

Morier's real diplomatic offensive began on 2 January. He mocked at Chichkine's justification of Younghusband's expulsion from Bozai on the ground that 'on some past occasion' he was alleged to have entered Russian territory, and pointed out that, without annexation, the action was flatly illegal. He attacked the incursion across the Hindu Kush as 'very serious', and the claim to annex up to it as 'of a gravity which could not well be surpassed'. He pointed out that it was the Russians themselves who, in February 1876, had expressed the undesirability of Anglo-Russian coterminity, and that, in any case, the visit of 'a small party of sportsmen' cannot constitute a claim to sovereignty.¹¹³ A few days later, Morier told Giers that if an immediate apology was not received, 'the question would assume very grave international proportions'.¹¹⁴ When therefore, in a Note delivered on 23 January, Giers simply repeated Chichkine's lame excuse for Younghusband's expulsion,¹¹⁵ Morier really got tough. Giers' 'unfriendly . . . and inconceivably fatuous' reply, he said, amounted to 'a

110. Memo. enclosed with 234, Howard to Salisbury, 7 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416.

111. C. L. Smith, *The Embassy of Sir William White at Constantinople 1886-91*, pp. 51-5 and 171.

112. Morier to Salisbury, 30 Dec. 1891, FO 65/1417.

113. A series of notes enclosed with 3, 4 and 5, Morier to Salisbury, 2 Jan. 1892, FO 65/1434. For Gortchakov's remark, see above p. 179.

114. Morier to Salisbury, 20 Jan. 1892, FO 65/1434.

115. Enclosed with 24, Morier to Salisbury, 24 Jan. 1892, *ibid.*

crude refusal to do justice'. The excuse given for Ianov's action was 'one of the flimsiest and most ridiculous kind', and the whole answer possessed

a character of arrogance, superficiality, contempt for facts, and offensive self-assertion which we might expect to meet in a missive of the Tsar to the Amir of Bukhara.¹¹⁶

These phrases are vintage Morier at his best. He used two old diplomatic tricks to bring them home to the Russian Ministry. First of all, he wrote a private letter to Giers, ending with a powerful hope and warning combined. The Russian attitude, he wrote, 'ouvre des perspectives remplies de danger. Que Dieu nous réussissions à les écarter'.¹¹⁷ Then, he enlisted the help of a sympathetic and powerful intermediary, one General Vishnegradski, by frightening him with the prospects of what would happen if Russia refused to make at least a verbal apology. In that case, Morier said, he would recommend that he be recalled:

If the Pamir question was left in its present chaotic state, reprisals would necessarily take place and without wishing to be a prophet of evil I thought it probable that within six months of my quitting St Petersburg upon my indefinite leave war would break out between the two Asiatic Colossi in spite of everything the British and Russian Governments might do.¹¹⁸

The General was suitably alarmed and the trick seems to have worked. The next day, Giers privately expressed, in chastened language, his regret at the expulsion of Younghusband and Davison.¹¹⁹ The Russians were, as Morier put it, 'caving-in'. Eventually, on 3 February 1892, and after a great deal of recrimination, Morier read to the Foreign Minister a formula that would satisfy the British Government. Whereupon, Giers,

with a very peculiar smile which seemed to say I am going to astonish you, observed to me 'mais nous avons fait beaucoup plus que cela'. In utter amazement I asked when and where. 'I have written to Staal', he said, 'with the authority of the Emperor to express our regrets and to declare that we regard Colonel Ianov's acts as illegal.'¹²⁰

116. 27, Morier to Salisbury, 27 Jan. 1892, *ibid.*

117. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.157.

118. 28, Morier to Salisbury, 28 Jan. 1892, FO 65/1434.

119. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, pp.160-1.

120. 36, Morier to Salisbury, 3 Feb. 1892, FO 65/1435.

Nine days later, Staal called on Lord Salisbury in London. He had, according to the dry comment of the latter, 'the peculiarity of never finishing a sentence, which makes him an admirable channel for an awkward apology'. However, he did make it more or less clear that Ianov's expulsion of Younghusband was illegal and that his penetration of the Hindu Kush was simply as a tourist.¹²¹ Morier was not satisfied. Staal, he said, 'has minimised M. de Giers' minimum', and he did not rest until the Russians had agreed to the statement that they condemned 'the action of their officer as illegal and declared it regrettable'.¹²² Even then, the Russian press, as 'officially' as possible, declared that no apologies had been made. Shortly afterwards, 'as a mark of his disapproval', in the sarcastic words of one British official, the Tsar presented Ianov with a ring engraved with the royal cypher.¹²³

Morier's determined insistence on the admission of illegality, and Giers' unwillingness to give it in public, were both inspired by very much more than the need to save honour on the one hand and face on the other. Behind it all was the fact that the Russian civil-military feud had flared up again in an acute form in 1891 over the Pamir crisis. The Foreign Ministry had known of Ianov's trip but had not been privy to the annexation orders it carried.¹²⁴ The War Ministry, on the other hand, almost certainly *did* know about them. During the whole of his tour of inspection along the Alai, the Governor-General of Turkistan, General Vrevsky, was in constant touch with St Petersburg and with Ianov.¹²⁵

The subsequent reluctance of Giers to disavow Ianov's action publicly, although in private he denied its justification right from the start, was primarily due to the temporary supremacy of the military party, and especially of the War Minister, General Vannovsky, in the counsels of the Tsar. Moreover, Giers himself was in bad health, even 'senile', and finding it increasingly difficult to

121. Salisbury Memo., 12 Feb. 1892, *ibid.* Staal's vagueness was of course deliberate, Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.162.

122. Tel. 20, Morier to Salisbury, 15 Feb. 1892, FO 65/1435.

123. Memo. on questions pending in the Eastern Dept. of the FO, 6 Aug. 1892, KP/Bundle G.27.

124. This is confirmed by Staal's letter to Kapnist, 10 Feb. 1892, Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.155.

125. Eliot Memo. enclosed with 239, Howard to Salisbury, 14 Oct. 1891, FO 65/1416.

stand up to the Tsar and the military party.¹²⁶ It was partly to help Giers win this battle that Morier took such a firm stand from the beginning:

the Military party insist that the Pamirs are Russian territory and it is to the disavowal of this theory by the Russian Government that I am most anxious to secure publicity.¹²⁷

His firmness was justified, the Tsar gave his assent, and a full apology followed which cleared 'the ground very effectively for delimitation negotiations'.¹²⁸

For, on the same day that Staal delivered the apology in London, he suggested the appointment of a joint technical-geographical expedition to make the necessary preliminary inquiries before delimitation.¹²⁹ This would both meet the British insistence on prior discussion, and for Staal would 'help to calm our military men'.¹³⁰ Salisbury had the same sort of thing in mind when he wrote of the Russian suggestion, 'I think it will be worth developing as it will occupy a great deal of time'.¹³¹ He seems to have felt that as long as delimitation negotiations were in train there would be no further direct action by the Russian soldiers.

But it was a misplaced hope. Even while Giers was categorically denying that a second mission would be sent to the Pamirs in 1892,¹³² the soldiers were laying their plans. It is therefore hardly surprising that the idea of a topographical commission of inquiry made little progress. Finally, in July 1892, Staal admitted that it had been adjourned.¹³³ In any case, by then it had completely lost its *raison d'être* as far as the British were concerned, for it had failed to prevent either a new Russian expedition to the Pamirs or a new Pamir crisis.

126. 27, Morier to Salisbury, 27 Jan. 1892, FO 65/1434; cf. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.221.

127. Tel. 20, Morier to Salisbury, 15 Feb. 1892, FO 65/1435.

128. 43, Morier to Salisbury, 17 Feb. 1892, *ibid.*

129. 42, Salisbury to Morier, 12 Feb. 1892, *ibid.*; Meyendorff, *op. cit.* II, p.162.

130. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.164.

131. Memo., 12 Feb. 1892, FO 65/1435.

132. 38, Morier, 4 Feb. 1892, HC/128, p.54, and 94, Morier, 10 May 1892, HC/130, p.81.

133. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.178.

(3) *The second Pamir Crisis 1892-1893*

The second Pamir crisis really dates from a top-level and highly secret meeting between the Russian War and Foreign Ministries which was held in St Petersburg sometime in May 1892. Although the Russians officially denied its existence,¹ Staal in London was soon writing privately to Giers about the 'décisions arrêtées . . . dans le but d'étendre notre domination à toute la région de ces plateaux élevés de l'Asie centrale'.² It is impossible to say exactly what these decisions were, but there are good reasons for believing that the Russians had decided to establish an effective occupation on the Pamirs as near to the Hindu Kush passes as possible, so as to create for themselves a strong bargaining position before a joint delimitation. During this delimitation they would offer to accept the *status quo* on the Upper Oxus, on condition that they were allowed to retain their Pamir gains.³ There had almost certainly been a military triumph at the Imperial court which was doubtless made easier by Giers's illness. The result was this return to the forceful Pamir programme embodied in Ianov's maps and claims of 1891. The civilian interlude, in which diplomacy, delimitation and emphasis on the Afghan breach of the 1873 line on the Upper Oxus had been stressed, was for the time being over.

Staal's correspondence from the Russian Embassy in London reflects the change. He was generally on the side of Giers, and that for three main reasons. He believed that the military policy merely attracted British attention to an area which Russia could always occupy in time of trouble anyway;⁴ he felt that the military claims were in themselves based on no right; and he feared the wider repercussions of the resulting British hostility in Europe. On 31 May 1892 he wrote to Chichkine:

. . . vous me dites que nos militaires convoitent les passes du Hindoukouch pour pouvoir menacer les Indes à un moment donné. C'est là une prétension . . . exorbitante et peu conform à la politique de paix que nous poursuivons. Ce serait trop ouvertement demander la

1. Howard to Salisbury, 106 of 12 May and 13 of 25 May 1892, FO 65/1437.

2. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.176.

3. *Ibid.*, p.181.

4. *Ibid.*, p.181.

clef de la maison du voisin pour la mettre dans la poche. Le jour où une pareille prétention serait émise, la Quadruple Alliance serait faite.⁵

Staal was a *Realpolitiker*. The military programme was objectionable to him because the price of its implementation would be too dear. Nevertheless, his letters of mid-1892 make it quite clear that he was ready to take every advantage of the impending British political crisis and of Lord Salisbury's difficulties at the head of an expiring administration.⁶ Moreover, he was irritated by the repeated British demands for information about the Russian moves, and by the need to explain away the topographical inquiry which he had been the first to propose the previous year. Whatever the reasons, there is a distinct 'tournure aggressive'⁷ in his sayings and writings at this time. This not only alarmed Kapnist and Chichkine,⁸ who were holding the civilian fort in St Petersburg, but contributed materially to the concern of the British authorities, who were banking on Staal while Giers was away.

The 1892 crisis was certainly much sharper than that of the previous year, for the Russian claims could no longer be put down to the irresponsible aggressiveness of a junior officer like Ianov. In fact, Younghusband's expulsion in 1891 had not caused any great sensation outside Simla and Whitehall, and had not even provoked a parliamentary question. In 1892-3, however, there was a continuous stream of comment about the Pamirs in the British press and in the Commons. The new Liberal Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery, was deeply preoccupied with the crisis, and even the veteran Prime Minister, Gladstone, was said to be 'taking for the first time a tremendous interest' in it.⁹ British concern in the early summer of 1892 owed a lot to the vastly exaggerated reports of the size of the Russian forces in-

5. *Ibid.*, p.156.

6. *Ibid.*, pp.174 and 180.

7. Meyendorff's phrase, *ibid.*, p.156.

8. Kapnist was Head of the Asiatic Dept. of the Foreign Ministry and Chichkine was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

9. A. West, *Private Diaries*, p.58. There is much Pamir correspondence between Gladstone and Rosebery in BM Add. Mss. 44289, although it is not mentioned in the Marquess of Crewe's *Lord Rosebery* and only mentioned once in the new (1963) biography by R. R. James. Four-fifths of Staal's correspondence in 1892-3 was devoted to the Pamir crisis.

volved, and to the official silence in St Petersburg.¹⁰ The dangers which could follow another Russian military excursion were obvious. It

may result in a conflict between the organised forces of Russia and the scattered detachments both of the Amir and the Chinese on the Pamirs, in which case, if ever a delimitation Commission is appointed the British Government will take it up from a much worse position than they would if it were now entered upon. There is the likelihood of another Panjdeh business, and of the Commission having to deal with accomplished facts.¹¹

The accuracy of this forecast was soon revealed. As has been seen, the Chinese troops on the Alichur Pamir were forced to withdraw in mid-1892 by a superior Afghan force.¹² The Afghans were thus left alone to meet the Russians – and did so shortly afterwards in a sharp and bloody little clash at Somatah.¹³ Later the Russians were reported far to the south – at Ak-tash they destroyed the Chinese fort which commanded the approach to the Kilik Pass, they reappeared at Bozai Gumbaz once more, and they penetrated as far as the crest of the Khorabhort Pass leading across the Hindu Kush. Finally, a force was left to winter near the junction of the Ak-su and Ak-baital rivers and Ianov reached Margilan once more with his main force early in October 1892.¹⁴

When asked what it proposed to do, the Indian Government made it quite clear, without actually saying so, that as far as the Pamirs were concerned, it pinned all its hopes on delimitation and diplomatic action in Europe.¹⁵ South of the mountains of course,

10. 1,000 men with 2 guns and 2,000 men with 12 guns were reported. India was alarmed (tels., 4 and 31 Aug. 1892, KP/5) but these figures only caused amusement in St Petersburg (177, Howard to Salisbury, 6 Aug. 1892, FO 65/1440). The total Russian force on the Pamirs in 1892 seems to have been about 750. The Russians did not break silence at St Petersburg until 13 July.
11. Bayley, Note on the Question of Delimitation in the Upper Oxus Territories, 1 July 1892, Secret and Political Memo., A.86, p.10. 12. Above p.238.
13. The Russian version is 154A, Rosebery to Howard, 26 Aug. 1892, FO 65/1440 and enclosure 22 of 179, India, 21 Sept. 1892, PFI/67, p.1121; the Amir's is Mahommed Khan, Life of *Abdur Rahman*, I, pp.288–9; Lord Dunmore's, who was on the spot shortly afterwards, is in his *The Pamirs*, II, pp.167–70.
14. The best account of the Russian moves in 1892 is Dunmore Report, enclosed with Lansdowne to Kimberley, 22 Feb. 1893, KP/6.
15. Tel. of 25 Aug. 1892, FO 65/1440.

defensive measures were taken as in the previous year and, in October 1892, the Gilgit Agency garrison establishment was increased to twenty-three British officers.¹⁶ Lord Rosebery, however, wanted action on the Pamirs too, for he believed that 'matters have now come to such a pass that Her Majesty's Government cannot remain purely passive'.¹⁷ His suggestion of a British 'commission of exploration' found no more favour with the Indian authorities than had Morier's similar proposal a year earlier, and for the same reasons.¹⁸ Rosebery was unimpressed, and not a little irritated:

This gives us no guidance and no ideas. Of course the Indian Office must be aware of what is perfectly clear—that the Russians wish to postpone delimitation until they can point to some *de facto* occupation in the Pamirs and, I presume, the Indian Government have no wish to interfere with this process. . . .¹⁹

Ignoring the Indian views, he instructed Morier to hint at a British mission if he could not get a satisfactory promise of a Russian withdrawal in any other way. The British Ambassador did so – in December 1892, and again in the following March.²⁰ As a bluff, this was not only unconvincing because of the obvious lack of preparations, but positively dangerous. For Staal countered with the warning that if Britain sent a commission Russia would have to reconsider the whole question.²¹ Obviously the only thing to do was to continue the thankless attempts to checkmate the Russian military activity by diplomatic pressure for delimitation. Rosebery's instructions to Morier, when he returned to his post in September 1892, were built round this view:

It is on the completion of the frontier delimitation commenced in 1885 and the spirit in which it is approached on either side that peace in these regions depends.²²

By the beginning of the winter of 1892, the Pamir crisis had entered

16. 192, India, 19 Oct. 1892, PFI/68, p.129.

17. To Kimberley, 25 Aug. 1892, FO 65/1440.

18. Tel., India, 1 Sept. 1892, HC/132, p.415; Lansdowne to Kimberley, 6 Sept. 1892, KP/6; Roberts Memo., 31 Aug. 1892, RoP/1, p.303.

19. Minutes, FO 65/1441.

20. Morier to Rosebery, 307 of 14 Dec. 1892, FO 65/1444 and 84 of 14 Mar. 1893, FO 65/1462.

21. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, pp.201–3; 19, Rosebery to Morier, 17 Jan. 1893, FO 65/1460.

22. 157A of 6 Sept. 1892, FO 65/1441.

a new phase. Obviously, with Ianov safely in his barracks at Margilan for the winter, it had changed from a military to a diplomatic crisis. But, for the British authorities, the nature of the problem had changed too. In July, it was the likelihood of armed clashes which had made the situation so serious; by October, it was the result of them. No longer did the magnitude of the Afghan and Chinese claims create difficulties – but the lack of them.

In July 1892 the Viceroy had warned the Amir to cause no trouble by an active policy on the Pamirs, a warning which reached him, ironically enough, at the same time as news of the Afghan casualties in the collision at Somatash.²³ But just at that very moment, the Amir, from asserting his rights up to the range north of the Murghab and eastwards to the upper waters of that river, suddenly announced that he proposed to withdraw all these claims and confine himself to what amounted to longitude 73°E.²⁴ A glance at the map reveals at once the significance of the Amir's unwillingness to 'stretch his legs beyond his coverlet', as he put it. While retaining territory on the 'wrong' side of the Oxus in the north, he had renounced parts of Wakhan to which he was entitled by the 1873 line, and by so doing had laid bare the Dora group of passes into Chitral west of the Baroghil, which so far the Russians had been unable to approach. The Indian Government was therefore compelled to try to dissuade the Amir from any evacuation in the north-east pending a settlement with Russia, although this meant a continuation of the troublesome Afghan claims on the Alichur.²⁵

A number of difficulties stemmed from the Amir's withdrawal which revealed themselves more plainly when the hard bargaining for a settlement was begun in 1893. But in 1892 the most striking feature of the situation was that the Afghan retirement in the west almost coincided with a similar Chinese withdrawal on the eastern side of the Pamirs. In May, Macartney reported that the Chinese, who 'were all energy in the spring', were withdrawing to Sariqol all the troops previously at Rang Qul and Somatash, and would make no stand against the Russians so long as they kept west of a line from Sariqol to Ak-tash.²⁶ In other words, the

23. Enclosure 1 of 179, India, 21 Sept. 1892, PFI/67, p.1121.

24. Enclosures of 188, India, 12 Oct. 1892, PFI/68, p.83.

25. Enclosure 30 of 179, India, 21 Sept. 1892, PFI/67, p.1121.

26. Enclosure 8 of 125, India, 19 July 1892, PFI/66, p.1525.

gap between Afghan and Chinese territory, which the Indian Government had been trying to close for two decades had, in the moment of need, opened up to nearly a hundred miles at its widest point. It offered to the Russians a swathe of unoccupied territory which led right down to the passes across the Hindu Kush and to the British limits.

This rapid and almost simultaneous change from defiance to retreat on the part of Afghanistan and China, naturally provoked the disquieting suspicion that the moves had been done in collusion with Russia. Although there was plenty of evidence that the Chinese had not renounced their theoretical claims to the Pamirs,²⁷ there *were* signs from the summer of 1892 onwards that Russia was seeking a separate arrangement with them.²⁸ The idea, of course, as the Chinese Minister warned Morier, was to secure a prior Chinese recognition of the Russian Pamir claims and thereby present Britain with a *fait accompli*.²⁹ Equally understandable was the British reaction. Warnings were issued that Britain would not permit any separate arrangement which took no heed of her interests, and that she insisted on being consulted,

partly as being to some extent the Protector of Afghanistan, partly as being interested in the Chinese boundary, and partly because we considered it essential to have control over the northern slopes of the Hindu Kush.³⁰

In St Petersburg, Morier was told to work in close touch with the Chinese Minister, and did so as far as he could.³¹ The trouble was that Hsü set little store by the Chinese claims to the Pamirs, and tended to pass on to the Russians all that Morier was telling him.³²

The Chinese, in fact, were as much divided over Pamir policy as the Russians. Li Hung Chang, who had no use for his colleague

27. E.g. 49, Walsham to Rosebery, 25 Aug. 1892, HC/133, p.1363.

28. E.g. 201, Howard to Rosebery, 1 Sept. 1892, FO 65/1441; 273, Rosebery to Morier, 27 Dec. 1892, FO 65/1444.

29. 297, Morier to Rosebery, 28 Nov. 1892, FO 65/1443.

30. 19, Rosebery to Morier, 17 Jan. 1893, FO 65/1460. And earlier in Aug. and Sept. 1892.

31. 225, Morier to Rosebery, 27 Sept. 1892, FO 65/1441.

32. 114, Morier to Rosebery, 12 Apr. 1893, FO 65/1463. Rosebery even tried to get the Yamen to ginger him up Tel. 9, to O'Connor, 30 Jan. 1873, FO 65/1460.

in St Petersburg, wanted to maintain the Chinese claims on the Pamirs as far west as the line of the Sino-Russian Protocol of 1884, running south from Uzbek to Lake Victoria. He was opposed in the Yamen by Hung Ta-jên, 'the advocate of surrender'.³³ By February 1893, O'Connor was talking of a 'ministerial crisis' over this issue in Peking.³⁴ There was an obvious and urgent need for firm British support if Li's point of view was to prevail, so O'Connor was instructed to assure the Chinese that no Pamir agreement would be concluded between Britain and Russia without consulting them.³⁵ It was certainly unfortunate for the British that, just at this time, their relations with China were badly strained by a dispute over the Sino-Burmese frontier.

But India's relations with Afghanistan were far worse. The Indian Government had been trying since 1887,³⁶ as the situation along the tribal frontier had gradually deteriorated, to get a mission to the Afghan capital. Eventually, with his patience nearly exhausted, Lansdowne in August 1892 got really tough with the Amir.³⁷ The reaction from the India Office was swift and hostile.³⁸ More than anything else, it was feared in London that the Viceroy's 'unwise and most dangerous policy' would drive Abd-ar-Rahman straight into the arms of Russia, just when his help was needed to defend the Pamirs and Upper Oxus.³⁹ The India Office view was that the Russian advances there could be used to persuade the Amir to open negotiations with the Indian Government. On the contrary, however, Abd-ar-Rahman's hostility towards India seems to have been a major cause of his withdrawal from most of the Pamirs.⁴⁰

33. 13, Brennan to O'Connor, 26 Jan. 1893, *ibid.*

34. Tel. 16, to Rosebery, 22 Feb. 1893, FO 65/1461.

35. Tel. 14, Rosebery, 9 Feb. 1893, *ibid.* In St. Petersburg Morier *was* loyally insisting on Chinese co-operation, enclosure of 70, to Rosebery, 27 Feb. 1893, *ibid.*

36. The efforts are conveniently summarised in 35, India, 9 Mar. 1892, PFI/65, p.773.

37. Tel., Viceroy, 16 Aug. 1892, HC/131, p.1082; Lansdowne to Kimberley, 23 Aug. 1892, KP/6.

38. For the subsequent dispute by telegraph between India and London, see 178, India, 13 Sept. 1892, PFI/67, p.1089.

39. Bayley Minute, HC/131, p.1073.

40. He mentioned the two things together in his letter to Lansdowne, 13 Apr. 1893, enclosure 11 of 85, India, 3 May 1893. See Rosebery's minute on this in FO 65/1464.

The whole of the tribal frontier was tense in 1892. The uneasy triangular equilibrium between Umra Khan of Jandul, the Afghan forces at Asmar, and Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral, was shattered when the latter died at the end of August 1892.⁴¹ It looked as though the long-awaited explosion had come at last, and the forces of both the Amir at Asmar and those of Umra Khan prepared for an early march. But, for the time being, the change passed quietly enough. Although Nizam-ul-Mulk seems to have been nominated as his father's successor, the other brother, Afzal-ul-Mulk, was on the spot and seized power. Nizam fled to Gilgit and the new Chief was congratulated by the Indian Government.⁴² Indian official opinion tended to welcome the change as a clarification of a dangerous situation – but not for long. At the end of September, on the pretext of supporting Nizam's claims, Umra Khan advanced and seized the long-disputed Narsat fort at the southern end of the Chitral valley.⁴³ When Afzal asked for help, India proposed that a mission under Robertson should be sent to negotiate a new agreement with him by which, in return for a subsidy, he would raise levies in his territory and supply information.⁴⁴ The Secretary of State approved all of this, although reluctantly, because of the danger from Russian intrigues in Chitral and the slim hopes of keeping the Russians off the Pamirs in future.⁴⁵ But even before Robertson could start, the situation changed once again. After a brief and bloodthirsty rule, and the alienation of almost all his supporters by acts of almost incredible stupidity, Afzal was surprised by his uncle, Sher Afzal, and a small force which had slipped over the Dora Pass from Badakhshan, and was killed.⁴⁶

Whatever the Amir's role in this affair, and Sher Afzal had been living in Afghan territory on a large allowance from Kabul, the situation was extremely 'disquieting',⁴⁷ in view of the strained Indo-Afghan relations. Lansdowne was determined not to oppose

41. Above p.217.

42. On these events, see AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.17.

43. Tel., Kashmir Resident, 5 Oct. 1892, *ibid.*, p.18.

44. Enclosure 7 of 233, India, 28 Dec. 1892, PFI/68, p.1153.

45. Tel., 16 Nov. 1892, KP/5, no.17; Kimberley to Lansdowne, 24 Nov. 1892, LaP/19, p.83.

46. AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.20.

47. Lansdowne to Kimberley, 23 Nov. 1892, KP/6.

Sher Afzal simply because he came from Afghan territory. The policy he favoured was one of wait and see.⁴⁸

But it was hardly possible for Durand, with the alarmist reports crowding into Gilgit, to take the same detached view:

With Russian posts on the Pamirs, a Chitral in anarchy is too dangerous a neighbour for us, and too tempting a field for Russian intrigues and interference to be tolerated.⁴⁹

On his own responsibility and without sanction, Durand sent off men and guns to support Nizam's claims, Sher Afzal fled to the Afghans at Asmar, and Nizam made himself supreme in Chitral and Yasin. Subsequently, Durand found it fairly easy to convince the Viceroy that only his swift action had 'prevented our frontier being set on fire'.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Nizam's position was at first far more unstable than Afzal's had been, for he was a poor creature – 'an unnerved terror-stricken Chief who ruled . . . on the merest sufferance a thoroughly disaffected people'.⁵¹ By the end of 1892, Lansdowne was convinced that a more decisive intervention to bolster him up was essential.⁵² Robertson, with Younghusband and Bruce to assist him, was therefore sent temporarily to Nizam with much the same terms of reference as his projected mission to Afzal earlier – he was to avoid any commitments, Nizam was to be recognized only *de facto* and, in return for a subsidy, was to supply information and receive British officers when necessary. Nevertheless, the situation in Chitral remained about as unsatisfactory as it could be. Nizam was unpopular and the Chitrali ruling classes were irreconcilably hostile, both to him and to the British party in their midst. The Afghan force at Asmar was also an unsettling influence, and the return of Sher Afzal was expected at any moment. And, in the south, Umra Khan was biding his time, sullen and defiant. On news of Sher Afzal's arrival, he had advanced again into Chitral, ostensibly on behalf of Indian interests although he was told plainly enough that his activities

48. 'Laissons les événements se débrouiller', to Kimberley, 28 Nov. 1892, *ibid.*

49. Enclosure 5 of 3, India, 4 Jan. 1893, PFI/69, p.15.

50. Lansdowne to Kimberley, 14 Dec. 1892, KP/6. Durand was praised in the official account AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.20.

51. Robertson Report, 17 June 1893, extract in *ibid.*, p.25.

52. To Kimberley, 28 Dec. 1892, KP/6.

were disapproved of. Failing to take the fort at Drosh, he had eventually retired again and occupied Dir. The arrangements for opening the Dir-Chitral road remained in abeyance.⁵³

As if the Russian activities on the Pamirs and the chaos in Chitral in 1892 were not bad enough, events in Chilas at the same time were heading rapidly towards a showdown. Ever since the establishment of the Gilgit Agency, every major political crisis in Dardistan had brought rumours of a rising of the independent Shinaki communities along the Indus Valley. The importance of Chilas for the safety of the Gilgit route, which it flanked, was manifest. As Robertson wrote later:

Chilas is our sheet anchor. It protects Bunji, our supplies, bridges and roads. . . . Formerly we were always in terror about the Ramghat Bridge, and felt, during one of the many threatened attacks, we should find ourselves cut off and blocked at Gilgit.⁵⁴

It is probable that this catastrophe had only been avoided so far by the rapid collapse of every crisis. But after the Hunza campaign, which so nearly became a lengthy business, Durand felt that the time had come to remove the danger and force the Chilasis to receive a British officer. His views were not shared by the Government and in May 1892 he was ordered to leave Chilas alone as long as possible.⁵⁵ As it happened, that was not for very long. With the upheavals in Chitral which followed the death of Amanul-Mulk, Chilas became highly unsettled. The raids into Kashmir territory, which had made its original subjugation necessary, began again and, in reply to a protest by the British Agent, the Chilasis declared that they would never permit a road to be built through their territory and would obey no orders from Gilgit. As if to underline their point, an attempt was subsequently made on the life of the Kashmir representative in Chilas, and he was recalled to Gilgit. It began to look like the Hunza situation of 1891 all over again.⁵⁶

When, shortly afterwards, a request was received from Gor, a small community on the right bank of the Indus, for closer links

53. C. G. Bruce, *Twenty Years in the Himalaya*, pp.243-64; AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, *passim.*; Lansdowne to Kimberley, 22 Mar., 26 Apr. and 3 May 1893, LaP/20, pp.37, 59 and 62.

54. Quoted approvingly in Lansdowne to Kimberley, 12 Sept. 1893, KP/7.

55. Enclosures 1 and 4 of 192, India, 19 Oct. 1892, PFI/68, p.129.

56. For the general situation, see Bruce, *op. cit.*, pp.194-5.

with Gilgit and protection against Chilas on the opposite bank, the opportunity to put a curb on the Chilasi raids seemed to Durand at Gilgit too good to miss.⁵⁷ Robertson, who was waiting at Gilgit to visit the short-lived Afzal-ul-Mulk in Chitral, therefore set off down the Indus Valley early in November 1892 with a small force to visit Gor. His visit was unauthorized, but it was hoped that 'much good may result'.⁵⁸ The party *was* well received at Gor, but just at the time Durand sent off a force to help Nizam regain the Chitral throne from Sher Afzal, a rising of the Indus tribes behind him forced Robertson to march farther on down the Indus and prepare for a siege. For a time this double crisis taxed the slender resources of the Gilgit Agency to the limit, but most of Robertson's force was eventually extracted after very sharp fighting, and a force of Kashmir Imperial Service troops was left in the Chilas fort.

The Indian Government only consented to a short occupation,⁵⁹ but the activities of the garrison in strengthening the fort and opening out routes seem to have persuaded the tribes that the occupation was not going to be short enough to save their independence. In March 1893, fifteen hundred tribesmen attacked the Chilas fort, reinforcements were again rushed up from Gilgit and eventually, although only after some more bitter fighting,⁶⁰ the tribes dispersed. The following month, after a new scare, Durand requested that reinforcements should be sent up the Kaghan valley direct from Abbottabad. When Lansdowne reached Mashobra in April 1893, he found the troops all ready to start.⁶¹ Fortunately the Government held its hand and decided against the despatch of a regiment by the little-known Kaghan route northward. Instead, only a company of Pioneers was sent to improve that section of the road which lay in British territory.⁶²

57. Enclosure 1 of 39, India, 15 Feb. 1893, PFI/69, p.759. On Gor, see J. A. Douglas, *Report on Gor* (Simla 1894).

58. Tel., Kashmir Resident, 5 Nov. 1892, enclosure 3 of 39, India, 15 Feb. 1893, PFI/69, p.759.

59. India to Kashmir Resident, 30 Jan. 1893, enclosure 28 of *ibid.*

60. The official narrative is 142, India, 11 July 1893, PFI/70, p.1653. All references to Chilas were omitted from the excerpt of this despatch published in the Blue Book. See also Durand, *op. cit.*, pp.273-4 and 277-90 and Bruce, *op. cit.*, pp.194-211.

61. Tel., Viceroy, 23 Apr. 1893, KP/5, no.44; Lansdowne to Roberts, 26 May 1893, LaP/15, p.50.

62. Tel., Viceroy, 24 Apr. 1893, KP/5, no.46.

The rumours of further risings along the Indus Valley soon died away. Nevertheless, these crises, coming on top of Robertson's unauthorized visit to Gor, which had entangled Gilgit with tribes which Durand had expressly been told to leave alone, and the Gilgit Agent's equally unauthorized move in support of Nizam-ul-Mulk, crystallized the opposition to the whole policy on this northern frontier which had been growing in the Viceroy's Council for some time. Brackenbury, the Military Member, took the lead. He had signed the despatch of October 1892 increasing the garrison of the Gilgit Agency, and had taken no part in the minute of dissent recorded by Sir David Barbour and Sir Charles Crosthwaite which had expressed fears that the reinforcements would encourage a departure from the policy laid down by the Indian Government.⁶³ But now, in April 1893, after the simultaneous crises in Chilas and Chitral, Brackenbury's strong attack on Durand's activities followed very closely the line they had laid down. The only way to curb Durand, he urged, was to refuse him any more troops. These were only required 'for a policy of conquest and military occupation of fresh territory upon which he has entered'. Brackenbury claimed that he had the support of several other members of Council, and warned Lansdowne of a 'widespread feeling abroad that in this direction Your Excellency is entering upon a dangerous and very costly policy'.⁶⁴

At the beginning of June 1893 the Council met to consider the whole question of future policy on the northern frontier. As far as Chilas was concerned, it was decided, with Barbour and Pritchard dissenting but not Brackenbury, that a road should be opened out all the way and that a military post should be retained at Chilas itself.⁶⁵ Kimberley had already privately assured the support of the India Office for the road project⁶⁶ and the Pioneers were, of course, already at work on the British section of the road. Compared with the four hundred difficult and often desolate miles of the Kashmir road from the railhead at Rawalpindi to Gilgit, the Kaghan Valley route was a much easier and well-supplied two hundred

63. The most useful copy of this minute is that with Lansdowne's marginal notes enclosed, in his letter to Kimberley, 19 Oct. 1892, KP/6.

64. To Lansdowne, 3 Apr. 1893, LaP/9, p.278a; note by Brackenbury, 21 Apr. 1893, enclosed with his letter to Lansdowne, 21 Apr. 1893, *ibid.*, p.348.

65. 142, India, 11 July 1893, PFI/70, p.1653.

66. To Lansdowne, 5 May 1893, LaP/20, p.33.

and eighty miles from railhead at Hasan Abdal to Chilas. Moreover, nearly half of those miles were in British territory.⁶⁷ The road was obviously valuable and a reliable means of preventing Chilasi flank attacks on the Kashmir-Gilgit road. But its special justification in mid-1893 was that it made it possible for India to reinforce Gilgit *via* Chilas in mid-May, *before* any possible Russian crossing of the Pamirs, instead of too late in mid-July or early August by the Kashmir route.⁶⁸ Fortunately, such a move never became necessary, and the Chilas route to Gilgit remained only a reserve, since it was found both possible and more convenient to supply and reinforce Gilgit from Kashmir.⁶⁹

Nevertheless in June 1893, it was the events on the Pamirs which appeared to make the Chilas road essential. They had an important bearing on the decision about future policy in Chitral too. By May 1893, Robertson was reporting a much improved situation there, and at the end of that month he had set out for Gilgit, leaving Younghusband at Mastuj a safe distance away from the Chitral capital. His task was to supply information and give Nizam-ul-Mulk 'that amount of encouragement which the presence of a British officer within Chitral limits will not fail to afford'.⁷⁰ This decision was confirmed at the same June meeting of Council as had decided to open the Chilas road. It was also agreed to lessen the risks giving Younghusband an adequate escort of Sikhs, and by garrisoning a line of posts along the Gilgit and Ghizr rivers to within forty-five miles of him.⁷¹

Brackenbury flatly opposed these decisions. He countered the argument that they were dictated by the Pamir situation as much as by the events in Chitral, with a bold composite solution of both problems:

67. J. A. Douglas and C. H. Powell, *Report on the road between Chilas and the Lulusar Lake etc.*, p.4, called it 'absurdly easy'. See also Major Gambier Memo., HC/138, p.625a.
68. Enclosure 1 of 142, India, 11 July 1893, PFI/70, p.1653.
69. No work was done on the road and by 1895 it was scarcely fit for mules, A. H. Mason, *Report on Kaghan and adjoining independent territory*, p.11. The present cease-fire line in Kashmir has given this route to Gilgit a new lease of life.
70. 142, India, 11 July 1893, AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.22. Younghusband's instructions are sub-enclosure 3 of 188, India, 29 Aug. 1893, PFI/71, p.1047.
71. 142, India, 11 July 1893, AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.22.

... if Russia is allowed to dispossess the Amir from [*sic*] Shignan and Roshan, and to extend her influence to the Oxus west of Lake Victoria, the wisest policy would be to give to the Amir suzerainty over Chitral, thus at once compensating him for the loss of his Trans-Oxus provinces, and giving him a direct interest in maintaining his occupation of the strip of territory between the Oxus and Chitral.⁷²

When the Indian Government's proposals about Chilas and Chitral were received in the India Office, opinions were nearly as divided about them there as they had been in the Viceroy's Council. The opposition at home to Lansdowne's general forward policy on the frontier was of long standing.⁷³ But disquiet about the northern frontier in particular seems to have begun with the Hunza campaign,⁷⁴ although its very success had stifled overt criticism. When India asked for more reinforcements for Gilgit in 1892, Kimberley had added to his assent a very clear warning:

... looking to the rapid expansion, since the Agency was restored in July 1889, of the sphere of our operations around Gilgit, to the difficulty, so constantly proved by experience on our Indian frontiers, of restraining the tendency to multiply political relations and responsibilities, and remembering that our movements may have a disturbing as well as a pacifying effect among the independent tribes and Chiefships of this remote borderland, I attach great importance to the close supervision by Your Excellency of the conduct of political affairs in the quarter.⁷⁵

How necessary this warning was, was shown even before it was despatched, by the coincident Chilas and Chitral crises.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the Indian recommendations of June 1893 had a mixed reception. The majority agreed that the opening of the Chilas road 'seems to be almost a necessary consequence from our occupation of Gilgit'.⁷⁶ But the retention of Younghusband in Chitral was a much more thorny question about

72. Cited in India 142 of 11 July, PFI/60, p.1653 but omitted from the Blue Book and not sent home.

73. Above pp.209 and 254.

74. Cross to Lansdowne, 8 Jan, 1892, LaP/19, p.1; see e.g., Durand, *Life of Sir Alfred Lyall*, pp.335-6.

75. 45, Sec. of State, 2 Dec. 1892, PTI/18, p.353, extract in AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, no.15.

76. Kimberley Minute, 12 Aug. 1893, PTI/19, p.121; Bayley Minute, HC/141, p.1155; Lyall Memo., *ibid.*, p.1159.

which Kimberley himself had grave doubts.⁷⁷ All at least were agreed about the dangers of Brackenbury's scheme:

. . . the risk involved in controlling the external relations of Chitral from Gilgit is far less than that we should run were we to hand over its administration to the Amir.⁷⁸

So much was obvious, but Brackenbury's suggestion at least offered a solution to the twin dilemma caused by the Amir's retreat from the Pamirs and his retention of Roshan and Shignan north of the 1873 Oxus line. And it was based on principles which both the Home and Indian Governments could support: that Indian activity on the northern frontier should be cut to a minimum *if* it could be fortified by an understanding with Afghanistan and a diplomatic agreement with Russia. Even Lansdowne himself had admitted that, if the Russians relaxed their activity on the Pamirs, then he would do as little as possible in the tribal areas to the south of them.⁷⁹ He also believed that if Afghanistan would declare Chitral beyond her sphere, then 'we can afford to leave the Chitralis very much to themselves'.⁸⁰

This was the line taken in the India Office to the Indian Government's Chilas and Chitral proposals of mid-1893. Kimberley wrote in reply:

*. . . the question must be looked at with reference to the general aspect of affairs in that region, which may in a short time be considerably changed. If the Amir could be brought to abandon all idea of bringing Chitral under his control, the danger of a chief under Afghan influence, such as Sher Afzal, obtaining power over Chitral would be much lessened. Again, should the present negotiations with Russia be brought to a successful issue, and a line of boundary be agreed on and delimited, even though in close propinquity to the Chitral boundary, another danger which you now apprehend would be materially reduced. . . . It seems to me, therefore, . . . premature to decide now on permanent political and military arrangements for this frontier.*⁸¹

77. Minute, 12 Aug. 1893, PTI/19, p.121; to Lansdowne, 18 Aug. 1893, LaP/20.

78. Bayley, Gilgit Agency, Chilas and Chitral, Secret and Political Memo., A.92.

79. To Kimberley, 12 Apr. 1893, LaP/20, p.55.

80. To Kimberley, 20 Sept. 1893, KP/7.

81. 134, Sec. of State, 1 Sept. 1893, PTI/19, p.141. All but the italicized words were omitted from the extract in AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.30.

Approval was given to the Indian proposals for Chilas and Chitral, but as 'temporary' measures only.⁸² Meanwhile, British and Indian diplomacy addressed itself to the task of removing the twin problems which, according to Lansdowne's diagnosis, still prevented a final settlement – the problems of Afghan designs in Chitral and of Russian designs on the Pamirs.

(4) *The third Pamir Crisis and its settlement 1893–1895*

The spring of 1893 was marked by the usual crop of rumours about a new 'annual filibustering expedition to the Pamirs'¹ by the Russians. It does look in fact as though yet another advance was only forestalled at the last moment by a counter-order from St Petersburg.²

Nevertheless, there were one or two good signs early in 1893 that the Russians were going to abandon direct action and take up delimitation as a solution of the Pamirs dispute. Morier in January felt that for the first time Chichkine took 'a genuine interest in the successful issue of the undertaking', and in that month the Russians made it clear, both in London and in St Petersburg, that they *would* consider delimitation if the principles on which it was to be based were agreed upon first.³ All this had been heard before. But what made 1893 decisively different was the series of important meetings between the War and Foreign Ministries which took place in St Petersburg in March. The exact nature of the decisions reached is unknown, but the general tenor of the Protocol which summarized the discussions was, despite the absence of Giers, favourable to the civilian programme of Staal, Kapnist and Chichkine. The demand of the soldiers for a new expedition to the Pamirs was overruled.⁴ From this point, delimitation and diplomacy held the field and the final Pamir crisis of

82. Tel., Sec. of State, 17 Aug. 1893, KP/5, no.52.

1. Sub-enclosure 5 of 85, India, 3 May 1893, PFI/70, p.277. The rumours continued to come in well into the summer.

2. Various enclosures of 168, India, 8 Aug. 1893, PFI/71, p.423.

3. Tel. 4, Morier to Rosebery, 21 Jan. 1893, FO 65/1460; 19, Rosebery to Morier, 17 Jan. 1893, *ibid.*; Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, pp.201–3.

4. Inferential evidence in Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, pp.194, 197, 208, 224 and 227; tel. 29, Morier to Rosebery, 27 Mar. 1893, FO 65/1462.

1893, unlike those of the previous two years, was entirely a diplomatic one.

There *was* a new crisis because the decisions of the March meetings did not by any means imply a speedy settlement of the dispute. This soon became evident when Staal returned to London to present the Russian case. His demands were stiff. On the Oxus, as might have been expected, the Russians insisted on the 1873 line and the abandonment by the Amir of trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan, in return for a Bukharan evacuation of all of Darwaz south of the river. On the Pamirs, Staal suggested as the Russian frontier, not the Lake Victoria feeder of the Oxus as in the 1873 'agreement', but the line of the Wakhan-su to the south of it.⁵

In mid-April, Rosebery summoned his own 'council of war' between Foreign, India and War Office representatives to hammer out a counter-claim.⁶ The Foreign Secretary had all along been inclined to 'make a fight for it'.⁷ He disliked the 1873 Oxus line on the twin grounds of historical fact and present expediency. The 1873 'agreement', he argued, had loosely defined the Afghan limits but had not assigned territory beyond them to anybody. Now, since the Amir's claims to Roshan and Shignan were undisputed, the time had come to recognize those claims. Whatever the logic of the Oxus line, it would, if maintained, leave 'a rankling sore both in Bukhara and Afghanistan'. Furthermore, if Russian territory extended as far as the southern bend of the river Oxus, it would be a standing menace both to Afghan Badakhshan and to British Chitral.⁸

The strategic implications of the Wakhan-su line which Russia was demanding on the Pamirs seemed at least equally dangerous for Yasin. It was true that it left Britain the Hindu Kush frontier, as Staal pointed out; but only just. So close was it to the mountains that any British posts would have to be south of the passes. Moreover, the country to the north of the river was capable of supporting permanent Russian posts and there was nothing to prevent them extending round to the east of the river and menac-

5. Russian Note and Memo. enclosed with 106, Morier to Rosebery, 31 Mar. 1893, FO 65/1462.

6. Rosebery to Kimberley, 18 Apr. 1893, KP/Bundle E.26; Kimberley to Lansdowne, 21 Apr. 1893, LaP/20, p.30; Chapman to Currie, 22 Apr. 1893, WO 106/16, p.344.

7. To Kimberley, 18 Apr. 1893, KP/Bundle E.26.

8. Memo. to Staal, 24 Apr. 1893, FO 65/1463.

ing Hunza.⁹ Rosebery all along had emphasized the need for Britain to control the northern slopes of the Hindu Kush. He proposed to secure them now by fixing the Russian frontier along a line running east from Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier.¹⁰ It was the more cautious Kimberley who pointed out that it was no use insisting on a more northerly line than the Russian proposed, unless there was a positive advantage to be gained. He doubted whether it would be possible for the British to occupy any territory north of the mountains at all, because of the dangerous passes behind them, but he agreed to seek India's views.¹¹

The Viceroy was unequivocally behind Rosebery on this issue. Both privately and officially he had stated his support for the line east of Lake Victoria and the sphere north of the Hindu Kush which it implied.¹² Now, as he told Kimberley, the essential thing was to keep Russia away from the northern slopes of the Hindu Kush, although he agreed that it was unlikely that anything more than observation posts would ever be needed north of the passes.¹³ Apart from the more obvious political and strategic reasons for keeping Russia away from the British frontier, Lansdowne was probably also being influenced by the argument of his Private Secretary that it was essential to have free access to the longitudinal valleys which existed north, but not south, of the mountains. Only thus, it was argued, would it be possible to watch and counteract quickly any Russian movements.¹⁴

The Note which Rosebery addressed to Staal on 24 April 1893, reflected his own and Lansdowne's views, rather than Kimberley's. It demanded the *status quo* on the Upper Oxus west of Lake Victoria, and the straight line to the Chinese frontier on the east of it.¹⁵ The Russians were astonished. Kapnist even wondered whether the British were serious, and Chichkine gloomily forecast virulent marginal notes from the Emperor and an explosion from

9. To Rosebery, 18 Apr. 1893, KP/Bundle E.26.

10. 101A, to Morier, 13 Apr. 1893, FO 65/1463.

11. To Rosebery, 18 Apr. 1893, KP/Bundle E.26. He consulted India the next day.

12. To Kimberley, 3 Nov. 1892, KP/6; tel. of 27 Mar. 1893, KP/5, no.64.

13. Tel., 23 Apr. 1893, KP/5, no.43.

14. This was John Ardagh. He later committed his views to paper in a Memo. of 9 July 1893, KP/7. See Countess of Malmesbury, *The Life of Major-General Sir John Ardagh*, Chap. XVI.

15. To Staal, 24 Apr. 1893, FO 65/1463.

'Protzenko and Co'.¹⁶ On 19 May, Staal presented a Russian reply which stood firm on exactly the same demands as had been made at the end of March.¹⁷

In this deadlock there was the constant danger of yet another Russian appeal to 'les petits bonshommes de Mourgab'.¹⁸ In June, Kapnist wrote gloomily to Staal, 'Si ces offres sont repoussées, il ne nous restera plus que l'action – j'espère et je crois que ce ne sera pas la guerre'.¹⁹ The danger was increased because China was for the moment becoming extremely bellicose in her negotiations with Russia. The Dowager Empress had finally declared for a policy of firmness and, while her representatives insisted on a Russian withdrawal from the Pamirs as a necessary preliminary to further negotiation, arms were despatched to Sinkiang and on to the Pamirs. The Russian troops were also being reinforced, and eventually there was a minor collision between the Russian force which had wintered on the Murghab and some Chinese Khirghiz.²⁰ Rosebery, already immersed in a sea of serious problems in South Africa, Egypt and Indo-China, soon became seriously alarmed at the consequences of continued deadlock. At the end of June, and again early in July, Kimberley warned the Indian Government of the situation:

The Russians are already impatient, and are beginning to allege that the Chinese preparations call for immediate action on their part. We believe that the Russian War Office is opposed to all negotiations, and that if we break off they would advance into Roshan and Shignan, and to the east of Lake Victoria, and unless you have means of preventing this, of which we do not know, they would secure the region up to the Hindu Kush. We should then have to deal not with a disagreeable proposition but an accomplished fact.²¹

16. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, pp.197–8. Protensko was the most bellicose of all the Generals.

17. 154, Rosebery to Howard, 19 May 1893, FO 65/1464; Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.207.

18. That is, to the force which had wintered at the Pamirsky Post. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.207.

19. *Ibid.*, p.210.

20. O'Connor's despatches of 6 Feb. (FO 65/1461), 15 Mar. (FO 65/1462) and 20 Apr. (FO 65/1463); Macartney's letters to Kashmir Resident of 13 May (enclosed with 145, India, 11 July, PFI/70, p.1747) and 4 Aug. (enclosed with 241, India, 1 Nov., PFI/72, p.983); 215, Howard, 15 Aug. 1893, FO 65/1467.

21. Tel., 5 July 1893, KP/5, no.19.

The time seemed to have come for a concession by both sides, and the glimmerings of a settlement are already visible in the conversation which Rosebery and Staal had on 19 May. Rosebery admitted that Britain would be unable to oppose if Russia continued to insist on the 1873 Oxus line. Staal, in return, made this admission more palatable by expressing Russia's willingness to restore the former rulers in Roshan and Shignan.²² Kapnist had hinted to Staal that if Britain *did* give way on the Oxus, 'je pense que nous pourrions nous montrer bons princes pour le reste'²³ – and the hint was later passed on to Rosebery and confirmed by Morier when he got back to the Russian capital after a health trip in the Crimea.

Whatever the difficulties still to be faced, Rosebery had no doubt at all that he was carrying out the wishes of the Indian Government by sacrificing the Amir's trans-Oxus territories in order to keep the Russians away from the Hindu Kush farther east.²⁴ In March, Lansdowne had telegraphed that 'it would be better to risk offending the Amir than to allow the presence of Russians on the northern slopes of the Hindu Kush'.²⁵ Soon afterwards, Roberts had come home expressing the confident opinion that the Amir was most unlikely to be seriously offended at the loss of his trans-Oxus territories, and that the Indian Government believed that the line east of Lake Victoria was the most important one to gain.²⁶ Moreover, on the very day that India had sent home a memorandum by Brackenbury painting the blackest possible picture of the results of a failure to support the Amir's claims across the Oxus,²⁷ Lansdowne had written privately expressing quite the opposite view. The Amir, he said, would neither oppose the Russians nor turn to them in preference to the English alliance, for 'he is accustomed to the idea that he will not be allowed to keep those [trans-Oxus] provinces'.²⁸

No wonder there was astonishment at home when the Indian

22. 154, Rosebery to Howard, 19 May 1893, FO 65/1464.

23. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.198.

24. This is clear from his June despatches and telegrams to Morier in FO 65/1465.

25. Tel., 27 Mar. 1893, KP/5, no.64.

26. Rosebery to Kimberley, 22 May 1893, KP/Bundle E.26.

27. Memo., 30 Apr. 1893, enclosed with 99, India, 17 May 1893, PFI/70, p.569.

28. To Kimberley, 17 May 1893, LaP/20, p.71.

Government suddenly expressed the 'gravest apprehension' at Rosebery's proposal to agree to the line of the Oxus as the Afghan limit.²⁹ A hasty exchange of telegrams between Simla and London in the first ten days of July soon showed just how strong were the views of Lansdowne's colleagues on this issue. Although the remoteness of Roshan and Shignan made them 'strongly opposed to dealing with the case as one of mere local resistance' at short notice, they stated emphatically that they *would* be prepared to defend trans-Oxus Shignan and Roshan against the Russians if time could be won and support from home guaranteed. London's speedy refusal, both of more time and of support in a serious quarrel, virtually decided the question. For the Indian Government had already made it clear that it would risk a showdown

. . . only if Her Majesty's Government was prepared to insist at whatever cost upon a reasonable division of the no-man's land lying beyond the Oxus.³⁰

And this London was not prepared to do. On 14 July, a meeting at the Foreign Office thrashed out the question from every point of view and decided that trans-Oxus Shignan and Roshan were not worth a war. The only concession made to the Indian viewpoint was that Rosebery agreed, although without much hope, to pass on to Russia the suggestion that Afghanistan might be given a bit of trans-Oxus Wakhan so as to widen the gap between Russian territory and the Hindu Kush, and make the retention of Wakhan a more attractive proposition to the Amir than it would otherwise have been.³¹

There is no doubt at all that the Indian Government was largely to blame for this misunderstanding. For Lansdowne had changed his position completely and adopted all of Brackenbury's beliefs about the evil effects of abandoning the Amir's claims to trans-Oxus territory which he had previously denied.³² He now believed that Abd-ar-Rahman would feel 'ignominiously deserted', that he would probably resist expulsion, and that the resulting

29. Tel., 30 June 1893, KP/5, no.90.

30. Tels. from India, 30 June, 4 and 10 July and to India, 30 June, 1 and 5 July 1893, all in KP/5.

31. Memo. of meeting is in FO 65/1466.

32. His letter to Kimberley on 4 July 1893, LaP/20, p.95 follows very closely the note Brackenbury had sent him the previous day, LaP/10, p.12.

hostilities 'may not be confined to the trans-Oxus region'.³³ Not only was Lansdowne very bitter about what he described as the 'scuttle'³⁴ from trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan, but about the general 'half-hearted and intermittent'³⁵ Foreign Office handling of Indian interests.

And yet, despite Lansdowne's personal change of view, there was an essential consistency in his Government's position. Right from the start, it had taken the view that Russia must be kept away from the Hindu Kush everywhere, and that meant north of Hunza as much as on the Oxus.³⁶ Rosebery seems to have been misled into believing that the Hunza end was more important. On the contrary, however, the 1893 events in Chitral, in contrast with the calm in Hunza and the more accessible parts of the Gilgit Agency, made it much more urgent to keep the Russians away from the bend of the Oxus, where they would be only twelve miles from the Chitral passes. It was these passes, especially the Baroghil and the Khorabhort, which had most interested Ianov's military reconnaissance party in 1891.³⁷ And with good reason, apparently. For, after examining the route south of the Baroghil to Mastuj in October 1893, Younghusband attacked Lockhart's conclusion that it was 'impassable . . . in summer and very difficult in winter' and resurrected Biddulph's earlier opinion of its relative ease. Younghusband demonstrated that from mid-September the Baroghil-Mastuj route was easy for all transport and that the Pass itself, far from being closed during the winter, was impassable only for a few weeks in late spring when the snow was soft. In other words, a force operating from the north had access to Chitral practically all the year round, either by the Baroghil or by an alternative summer route across the neighbouring Khan Khon Pass.³⁸ Younghusband's opinion was confirmed by Lieutenant Cockerill a month later.³⁹

33. Tel., 10 July 1893, KP/5, no.36.

34. To O'Connor, 13 Aug. 1893, LaP/15, p.91.

35. Note, 6 May 1893, LaP/21, p.598.

36. Cf. tel., 23 Nov. 1891, HC/125, p.1673 with that of 27 Mar. 1893, KP/5, no.64.

37. The Russians' own account is enclosure 20 of 158, India, 8 Sept. 1891, PFI/63, p.1359.

38. Younghusband, Report on the Baroghil, Mastuj, Chitral Route, 25 Dec. 1893, enclosed with 69, India, 25 Apr. 1894, PFI/74, p.285.

39. Above p.229, n.19.

But whether the Russians would come into Chitral by the Pamirs-Baroghil route as Younghusband argued, or by the Upper Oxus-Dora line as Lockhart's Mission had believed, was really immaterial. The real problem was whether they could actually move a force to the passes at all. As far as the Pamirs were concerned, opinions varied. To some they were 'a certain death-trap for invading armies', to others 'the vulnerable gates of Hindustan'.⁴⁰ There were certainly no real physical obstacles to the movement of sizeable bodies of men, as Gordon and Biddulph had pointed out in 1874. But what *they* had failed to stress sufficiently was the inhospitable climate, which rendered an advance by this route only feasible during the three summer months, and the complete absence of supplies of any kind. The terrible experiences of 'the Mirza'⁴¹ in 1868, and of Bonvalot, Capus and Pepin in 1887,⁴² showed just what a winter crossing of the Pamirs could be like. It must have been rather disconcerting for the three Frenchmen to be told by the Viceroy himself, perhaps rather unkindly in the circumstances, that 'whatever personal sympathy' he might feel, he considered their sufferings and hardships 'to be very excellent news'.⁴³ From a British point of view, so it was. But many believed, like Younghusband, that if the Russians only crossed the Pamirs in summer, they would arrive without real trouble in the autumn just when the routes to the south became practicable.⁴⁴ As for the supply difficulty, it was Durand, with the evidence of Gromchevsky's explorations before him, who concluded that the Pamirs would offer 'no great difficulty to the passage of a Russian force driving with them flocks of sheep to subsist on', especially as Kashgar offered a rich supply base.⁴⁵

The Russian activities on the Pamirs after 1891 provided evidence for both sides to quote. On the one hand, the Russians had shown that they could reach and cross the Hindu Kush, their

40. Curzon, *The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus*, p.2. Cf. Wood, *Journey to the Source of the River Oxus*, p. lvi with Gordon, *The Roof of the World*, p.161; Hansard (4th series), XI, p.1782.

41. Above p.110.

42. Above p.158.

43. Dufferin to Cross, 8 Sept. 1887, DP/20, p.259.

44. *Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, p.106.

45. Gilgit Agency Report 1889, enclosed with 43, India, 28 Apr. 1890, PFI/59, p.1193.

approaches to the Pamirs on the north were constantly being improved, and they achieved what many had hitherto regarded as impossible by wintering a force for three years at the Pamirsky Post on the Ak-su. On the other hand, however, their experiences there had confirmed the difficulties of a Pamir crossing on any scale. So intense was the cold and so barren the landscape that they were only able to grow a 'few indifferent radishes' and their poultry died in a few days.⁴⁶ Communications with Osh were only maintained with the greatest difficulty in winter and even the small forces used by the Russians taxed the resources of Margilan to the limit.⁴⁷ Certainly the experiences and supply difficulties encountered by the British members of the Pamir Boundary Commission in 1895 convinced *them* that the Pamir route was impossible for a Russian advance and could be left 'outside the pale of strategical consideration'.⁴⁸

But Chitral was open from the Upper Oxus across the Dora as well as from the Pamirs. Many believed that this was the more dangerous and likely approach route of the two, for it was capable of supporting far more than the thousand or two troops that could be deployed across the Pamirs. The Indian Commander-in-Chief, Sir George White,⁴⁹ estimated in 1895 that the Russians could easily concentrate five thousand men on the fertile bend of the Upper Oxus a few miles from the Chitral passes.⁵⁰ The Indian Government thought so, too, and that is why it fought so hard in 1893 against Rosebery's proposal to base a Pamir settlement on the 1873 line of the Oxus.

It is interesting to note that, like the British, the Russians too were divided about the relative importance of the Oxus frontier and the Pamirs, although of course most of them would have liked to win both if possible. The division, as has been suggested already, roughly corresponded to that between the War and

46. Gerard to Cunningham, 2 Aug. 1895, PFI/82.

47. Macartney to Kashmir Resident, 29 July 1893, enclosed with 208, India, 20 Sept. 1893, PFI/72, p.19.

48. T. H. Holdich, *Indian Borderland 1880-1900*, p.313; tel., Gerard to India, 2 Aug. 1895, enclosed with 173, India, 27 Aug. 1895, PFI/81; *Report on the Proceedings of the Pamir Boundary Commission*, p.1.

49. Sir George Stuart White (1835-1912), Indian Commander-in-Chief 1893-7.

50. Minute, 6 May 1895, enclosed with Cunningham to Bayley, 8 May 1895, PFI/79.

Foreign Ministries.⁵¹ Early in 1893, the civilian victory meant a return to the legalistic view that trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan were 'indispensable',⁵² and that concessions might be made on the Pamirs. It was because Rosebery was ready to overrule the Indian Government and make concessions on the Oxus, although holding firm on the Pamirs, that an agreement between the two Powers came, for the first time, within the bounds of possibility in mid-1893.

But not for long. The hopes of each were soon dashed by a fresh victory for the Russian War Ministry. That trouble was impending became clear when on 19 July, Giers warned that the Russian reply to the latest British statement was being drawn up by the War Ministry.⁵³ In flat contradiction to the decisions of March 1893, which had emphasized Roshan and Shignan, the new Russian telegram demanded a line east of Lake Victoria not very different from that marked on Ianov's map in 1891, running down from the lake to the Hindu Kush and including within it Bozai Gumbaz.⁵⁴ British opposition to what Rosebery called these 'quite inadmissible'⁵⁵ claims was inevitable.

For one thing, of course, Rosebery had only just persuaded the Indian Government to accept the Oxus line in return for keeping the Russians well back from the Hindu Kush east of Lake Victoria. A further concession was out of the question, and in any case it was doubtful if British public opinion would have accepted it. Staal was well aware of this. Of the Russian claims he wrote, 'Pour les réaliser, il ne faut pas négocier, mais canonner'.⁵⁶ This apparently is what Rosebery was afraid of. He wrote an excited private letter to Staal – 'très confidentielle et très extraordinaire' – suggesting, according to Staal's doubtless exaggerated version, that the Russian telegram was 'le signal de la tempête. . . . On dirait qu'il entend déjà la fanfare de la guerre, et que sous peu il m'enverra mes passeports'.⁵⁷ Staal dryly attributed the Foreign Secretary's

51. Above p.248.

52. 269A, Rosebery to Howard, 19 Sept. 1893, FO 65/1468; cf. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, pp.208 and 224.

53. Giers to Staal, 19 July 1893, Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.213.

54. Giers to Staal, 16 Aug. 1893, communicated with many regrets by Staal on 21 Aug. 1893, FO 65/1467.

55. Rosebery Note on Currie Minute, 21 Aug. 1893, *ibid.*

56. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.200.

57. *Ibid.*, p.199.

excitement to overwork. Whatever view is taken of the seriousness of the Siam crisis⁵⁸ which, in these summer months of 1893 was coinciding unpleasantly with the Pamir dispute, Rosebery and the India Office were certainly impressed at the time with the coincidence of simultaneous Russian and French activity on the Indian borders. So was British public opinion. This is one reason why Rosebery and Kimberley were so determined not to be pushed by the Indian Government into a war for the sake of Roshan and Shignan.⁵⁹ But the latest Russian demand was a very different matter and Rosebery warned Staal that if no agreement was reached there would be 'the certainty of conflict with possibly the gravest consequences'.⁶⁰

All this talk of war found an echo in the attitude of the Government of India, doubly and understandably bitter about the latest Russian demand after its own surrender on the question of trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan. When asked once again what steps could be taken to meet the Russians from the Indian side, Lansdowne wrote:

The fact is that Her Majesty's Government prefer local resistance, because it looks smaller, regardless of the fact that it is more likely to bring about a collision, from which we could not extricate ourselves except by war, or the humiliation of one side or the other.⁶¹

The Viceroy was not afraid of war, but he believed that 'if we had stood firm, Russia would probably have come to terms sooner than provoke a rupture'.⁶² Hence his plea that the Russian demands should be met by the distinct warning that they would, if persisted in, lead to a breach of diplomatic relations 'and possibly a declaration of war'.⁶³

58. Historians have differed. Cf. W. L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, p.45, with A. J. P. Taylor, 'Les premières années de l'alliance franco-russe 1892-5', *Revue Historique*, CCIV (1950), p.68.

59. See the important letters, Kimberley to Lansdowne, 27 July and 1 Sept. 1893, LaP/20, pp.59 and 75.

60. 263A, Rosebery to Howard, 8 Sept. 1893, FO 65/1468; Rosebery to Staal, 19 Sept. 1893, HC/143, p.549.

61. To H. M. Durand, 14 Oct. 1893, LaP/10, p.194.

62. To Kimberley, 1 Aug. 1893, LaP/20, p.113.

63. 235, India, 25 Oct. 1893, PFI/72, p.717. This was a private letter of Lansdowne's rendered in official form so as 'to leave something on record to show that we had not patiently acquiesced in this succession of surrenders' (LaP/10, p.228).

By October 1893 there was an additional and very special reason for rejecting the Russian demands. For the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand, was in Kabul. His unenviable and, if the Indian Government was right, practically impossible and politically dangerous task was to persuade the Amir to renounce his rights to trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan and to confine himself to the 1873 river line. Abd-ar-Rahman also had to be persuaded, if it was possible, to maintain his claims to the Pamirs. The obvious danger was that the new Russian demands would render Durand's already difficult task completely impossible.⁶⁴ Even before Durand reached Kabul, the Indian Government had been urging the importance of reassuring the Amir that the Russians had agreed to stay north of a line east of Lake Victoria.⁶⁵

The negotiations for a British Mission to Kabul had been going on spasmodically all through Lansdowne's Viceroyalty, and had always sprung primarily from the need to reach agreement about the problems of the Afghan-Indian tribal frontier. Not the least of these was that caused by the Amir's occupation of Asmar and his interference in Bajaur and Chitral. A memorandum designed for Abd-ar-Rahman's consumption, and intended to prepare the way for a Kabul Mission in 1893, made no mention of the Oxus frontier at all.⁶⁶ But it was the sharpening of the Pamir crisis in July 1893 which reversed these priorities. The decision of Whitehall to abandon the Amir's claims to trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan made a conference with him essential, and India was forced to consider making generous concessions on the tribal frontier – even including permission to retain Asmar – in order to retain Abd-ar-Rahman's friendship and secure his co-operation on the Oxus.⁶⁷ Durand's new instructions reflected the important change which the July crisis had wrought in the whole concept of the Kabul Mission. His 'primary duty' was now said to be to persuade the Amir to abandon his trans-Oxus lands. The tribal frontier was not even to be mentioned unless Abd-ar-Rahman showed himself willing to discuss it.⁶⁸

64. As he later admitted to Howard, 371 of 13 Oct. 1893, FO 65/1470.

65. Tel. of 8 Aug. 1893, KP/5, no.18.

66. Enclosure 1 of 186, India, 29 Aug. 1893, PFI/71, p.995.

67. The details were settled in great haste by telegraph in July, KP/5, nos.45, 53, 63 and 66.

68. Enclosure 3 of 213, India, 27 Sept. 1893, PFI/72, p.1459.

That the Indian Foreign Secretary had a tough assignment, no one doubted. Although the Indo-Afghan correspondence of 1884 about Roshan and Shignan had left the Amir not a leg to stand on,⁶⁹ 'he may', as Durand put it, 'elect to stand on his head'.⁷⁰ Certainly, his indignation was not likely to be soothed by arguments of legal right or by I-told-you-so's, however nicely expressed. Moreover, there was always the danger that the evacuation of Roshan and Shignan beyond the Oxus would intensify his determination not to hold the indefensible strip of Wakhan south of the river. This was, in fact, the attitude he adopted. Durand reported:

He says he had a hand cut off at Somatash the other day, and he is not going to stretch out a long arm along the Hindu Kush to have that shorn off also. The power that holds Chitral must hold all east of Qila Yust.⁷¹

And yet, despite all the difficulties, Durand somehow managed to persuade Abd-ar-Rahman not only to evacuate trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan in return for cis-Oxus Darwaz, but also to retain nominal Afghan suzerainty in the Wakhan strip, although he refused to garrison it with troops. The price, of course, was high. It was paid in considerable concessions on the Indo-Afghan frontier.⁷²

Nevertheless, from the British point of view, Durand's Mission was a great success, although it was not achieved without what looks like an attempt at sabotage by the Russian War Ministry. The Russians seem to have been convinced, quite erroneously, that Durand had gone to Kabul in order to persuade Abd-ar-Rahman to tighten his grip upon the trans-Oxus lands.⁷³ Obviously, an attempt to anticipate this development by forcing a collision with the Afghan forces on the spot before Durand could reach Kabul, was thus extremely likely. Indeed, it was the danger which Durand himself feared most of all.⁷⁴ Sure enough, a small Russian force

69. Above p.197.

70. To Lansdowne, 11 Oct. 1893, LaP/10, p.359.

71. To Lansdowne, 15 Oct. 1893, *ibid.*, p.373.

72. Great but unavailing efforts were made to keep the Upper Oxus part of the agreement quiet and it was not published in full until 1905. The relevant sections are Appendix VI.

73. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.222; cf. *ibid.*, p.227.

74. To Bayley, 1 Aug. 1893, FO 65/1467; cf. Lansdowne to Kimberley, 8 Aug. 1893, LaP/20, p.118a.

under the son of the War Minister, Vannovsky, entered Roshan, and was refused permission to advance. Shots were exchanged. Ianov thereupon marched reinforcements into Roshan and wrote threatening letters to the Afghan General. The first reaction of the Amir to all this was regret at having agreed to receive Durand. But, ironically enough, the Vannovsky incident eventually helped the Indian Foreign Secretary to persuade Abd-ar-Rahman of the dangers of holding on to isolated territory beyond the Oxus.⁷⁵

It was a near thing. But Durand's successful agreement with the Amir ended a doubt about the Afghan intentions on the Upper Oxus which had been confusing and sapping Indian policy for twenty years. Now the Indian and Home Governments could unite in bringing a new and confident pressure upon the Russians to reduce their claims to the Pamir lands east of Lake Victoria, although India still hankered after a slice of territory which would keep the Russians out of the bend of the Oxus.⁷⁶ The Russians also seem to have become convinced at about this time that the Emperor would ultimately decide against the pretensions of the War Ministry.⁷⁷ For the time being, however, the negotiations lapsed. Everyone was out of the Russian capital and Giers and Morier were both seriously ill.⁷⁸ The long-awaited Russian reply did not reach the Foreign Office until 7 December 1893, and with it the third and most dangerous Pamir crisis may be said to have come to an end. It stated that the Russians were willing to accept a line east of Lake Victoria which, if not the one due east as far as the Chinese frontier that Britain had demanded, at least followed the crest of the mountains in a rough easterly direction.⁷⁹ As soon as Kimberley read the Russian document he was convinced that it offered a basis for a settlement.⁸⁰ And so it proved.⁸¹

75. On the Vannovsky incident, see KP/5, nos.67, 69, 6 and 21 and enclosures of India despatches PFI/72, pp.229 and 629 and PFI/73, p.3.

76. 235 of 25 Oct. 1893, PFI/72, p.717.

77. There is a note of optimism in the correspondence at this time. See Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, pp.225-9 and the despatches between London and St. Petersburg in FO 65/1468.

78. Morier died at Montreux on the 16 November 1893.

79. Giers to Staal, 30 Nov. 1893, FO 65/1470.

80. To Lansdowne, 15 Dec. 1893, LaP/20, p.102.

81. After further negotiations, Kimberley formalised the agreement reached in a letter to Staal, 18 July 1894, FO 65/1485 and it remained virtually unchanged in the final understanding. See Appendix VII.

With the line east of Lake Victoria agreed upon in principle, four things remained to be done to complete the settlement north of the Hindu Kush: (i) a decision had to be made as to how the territory between the agreed line and the Hindu Kush was to be controlled and administered: (ii) some means had to be found of ensuring that the line met the Chinese frontier and that no gap remained through which the Russians could filter down to the Hindu Kush: (iii) the line itself had to be demarcated: and (iv) the evacuation and exchange of territories on the Upper Oxus had to be carried out.

The difficulty about the administration of the strip of territory between the line on the Pamirs and the Hindu Kush arose because, while the principal aim of Russian military men was to extend their territory to the mountains so as to menace India when required, their chief fear was that Britain would come north of them in order to menace the Russian possessions. When, at the end of 1893, they were compelled to renounce their claims to territory up to the Hindu Kush, they naturally insisted all the more strongly that their chief fear should be removed as well. Britain was to be kept out politically and militarily and she was to undertake to move no troops north of the mountains at all. Russia, in turn, promised to restrict her forces to the line of the Murghab.⁸² This was a proposal which in the main was acceptable to India. She had no wish to have either territory or troops of her own north of the mountains, and had only considered it at all when the proximity of the line the Russians claimed, and the refusal of the Amir to be responsible for the vulnerable strip of territory, left her no choice.⁸³ By the end of 1893 both objections had disappeared. In the following months, the detailed arrangements along the lines of the new Russian proposals were being hammered out when suddenly, for reasons which are not altogether clear, the Russian military authorities recommended the abandonment of the twin demilitarized spheres they had proposed, while still insisting that the territory between the demarcated line and the Hindu Kush should belong to Afghanistan and be inviolable as a neutral zone.⁸⁴ This was the basis of the final agreement of March 1895. In it, the phrase British and Russian 'spheres of influence'

82. Giers to Staal, 30 Nov. 1893, FO 65/1470.

83. 235, India, 25 Oct. 1893, PFI/72, p.717.

84. 184B, Kimberley to Howard, 11 July 1894, FO 65/1487.

was retained, but only for the British sphere were detailed stipulations made. It must always belong to the Amir and must remain unfortified.⁸⁵

The second problem – that of preventing any Russian infiltration down to the Hindu Kush through unclaimed territory – was an older and much more obstinate question altogether. There were two dangerous ‘gaps’ – one between Chinese and Kashmir territory in Ladakh and the other between the Chinese and Afghan lands on the Pamirs. India had been trying to close the gap on the Ladakh frontier ever since the abortive Boundary Commissions of 1846 and 1847. The boundary, of course, had remained undefined, but between the Karakoram and Mustagh passes it was generally regarded as being the watershed of the Karakoram Range.⁸⁶ In 1863, however, Kashmir showed some inclination to push it forward to the Kuen-lun by establishing a post of sepoy at Shahidulla, north of the Suget Pass.⁸⁷ These claims were disputed by Yaqub Beg, and were never recognized by the Indian Government. In 1870, before the negotiation of the commercial treaty with Kashmir, Forsyth was instructed to commit his Government ‘in no way as to the boundaries of the possessions of the Maharaja in any direction’.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it was Forsyth himself who, only three years later, urged the wisdom of pushing the Kashmir boundary up from the Karakoram to the Kuen-lun, which Yaqub Beg regarded as his limit, so as to absorb the lofty no-man’s-land between the two ranges.⁸⁹

For a long time nothing was done and the ground remained unclaimed. British official maps continued to show the Maharaja’s boundary as running along the Yarkand River far short of the Kuen-lun, while the Chinese, after their return to Sinkiang in 1878, only claimed up to the Kilian, Kogyar and Sanju passes north of the Kuen-lun. The fort at Shahidulla remained deserted. As long as Russia stayed well to the north this did not matter very much, but in the late ‘eighties the Russians began to pay con-

85. Appendix VII.

86. See, e.g., Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories*, p.496 and Maisey, *The Topography, Ethnology, Resources and History of Ladak*, p.34.

87. Enclosures of 153, India, 9 Oct. 1867, CPD/94, no.206.

88. Enclosure 6 of 25, India, 17 May 1870, LIM/6, p.381.

89. See the correspondence IFP/765, July, nos.52 and 53 and IFP/766, Sept., nos.304–8.

siderable attention to this region. In 1887, Grum Grjmailo explored along the upper reaches of the Yarkand River, and the following year Gromchevsky, after entering Hunza, examined the country at the back of the Kashmir frontier right up to Shahidulla.⁹⁰ The need for accurate information of the area was paramount. For it was possible that Russia would drive a wedge between China and Kashmir and so not only dominate the trade between the two, but threaten Ladakh by the various caravan routes which entered it. This danger was certainly an important reason for Younghusband's visit to the area in 1889.⁹¹ At Shahidulla, he encouraged the local Khirghiz to rebuild the fort and promised to forward to the Indian Government their request to be taken under British protection, since the Chinese seemed unable to protect them against the Hunza raids.⁹²

This request might well have proved embarrassing, for the Indian authorities had no wish to push their own influence 'to the further side of a great natural barrier like the Karakoram mountains', especially as Younghusband had reported the whole range between the Karakoram and Shimshal passes impenetrable from a military point of view. Luckily, however, the Chinese officials in Kashgar became alarmed by reports of Younghusband's activities among people who had hitherto acknowledged Chinese suzerainty. Officials were sent to Suget, eight miles south of Shahidulla, and Chinese claims were asserted up to the Karakoram.⁹³ Younghusband, who had been sent back in 1890 to watch the situation, reported these Chinese moves with considerable satisfaction: 'The Government of India [he wrote] may . . . take as an accomplished fact that the boundaries of Kashmir and Chinese Turkistan meet at the Indus watershed.'⁹⁴ Lansdowne was equally pleased, and impressed upon Lord Cross in private that he attached the 'greatest importance' to the extension of Chinese influence into this gap.⁹⁵ British officials in Kashmir were therefore instructed to

90. Above pp.217-18.

91. Above pp.89-90 and 210-11.

92. *Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, pp.12-15.

93. Proceedings of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, XXVI (1890), FO 65/1395; Bower to Ramsay, 20 Dec. 1889, IFP/3737, Apr., p.34.

94. Enclosure 2 of 39, India, 11 Mar. 1891, PFI/62, p.793.

95. Letter of 5 May 1890, LaP/17, p.78.

regard the Karakoram watershed, now the southern limit of the Chinese claims, as the northern boundary of Kashmir.⁹⁶ In 1892 the Indian Government was congratulating itself because the Chinese were erecting boundary pillars on the summit of the Karakoram Pass⁹⁷ and it was only when China showed signs of withdrawing from the watershed boundary that action was taken in Peking.⁹⁸

The complementary problem of sealing the north-western approaches to any unclaimed corridor between China and Kashmir had also preoccupied the Indian Government long before the Pamir crisis of 1891 brought it to a head.⁹⁹ The British attempts to close the gap between Afghanistan and China on the Pamirs in 1891 and 1892 have already been noticed.¹⁰⁰ It would have been very much simpler if the Russians had consented to tripartite British, Russian and Chinese negotiations. But they insisted that the Sino-Russian boundary on the Pamirs was a matter for those two Powers alone and Britain was perforce relegated to the role of Chinese adviser. In May 1893 it was the magnitude of the Chinese claims on the Pamirs which alarmed Rosebery, not only because he feared that they would provoke a new Russian move, but because they interfered with Britain's own plans for territory on behalf of the Amir.¹⁰¹ The British Foreign Secretary had also to prevent the Chinese from asking too little, and only a month later he reacted sharply when it was rumoured that they were going to give the Russians all they wanted on the Pamirs in return for territorial compensations north of the Tien Shan.¹⁰² The delicate steering between this Scylla and that Charybdis went on all through the summer and autumn of 1893, and it was made infinitely more hazardous by the fact that no clear picture could be obtained of what the Chinese really wanted. The information from Peking, Kashgar and the Chinese Legation in London was all different.

The British attitude was simple enough. There must be no gap between the end of the Afghan-Russian frontier running east and

96. 87, India, 14 July 1890, PFI/60, p.961.

97. 18, India, 18 Jan. 1893, PFI/69, p.423.

98. 203, Kimberley to O'Connor, 30 Aug. 1894, FO 65/1487.

99. See above pp.218-23.

100. Above pp.234-5 and 238-9.

101. Tel., Rosebery to O'Connor, 2 May 1893, FO 65/1464.

102. Tels., to O'Connor, 12 and 13 June 1893, FO 65/1465.

the Sino-Russian frontier running south. The only way to make sure of this was to get the Sino-Russian line settled first.¹⁰³ Early in 1894, when a stiffer Chinese attitude had interrupted negotiations with Russia, O'Connor delicately pointed out to the Chinese the relative sizes of their own and Russian forces on the Pamir.¹⁰⁴ Later, not so delicately, he passed on to China a 'sort of ultimatum' that if she did not soon conclude an agreement with Russia, Britain would go ahead without her.¹⁰⁵ This of course was largely bluff, since no Afghan-Russian line was any good unless it met a predetermined Chinese frontier.

In any case it failed, for the Sino-Russian negotiations in St Petersburg were abandoned without a settlement. The Russians did however give an assurance that no troops would be moved farther south than they were already, and that, until a formal agreement was concluded, they would remain on the west of the Sariqol watershed.¹⁰⁶ Cease-fire lines have a habit of crystallizing into international boundaries and this one was no exception.¹⁰⁷ The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War really ended the Pamir dispute as far as China was concerned. Many of the troops from Sariqol were withdrawn, and the military budget of Sinkiang was severely cut. Although the final Anglo-Russian agreement of March 1895 was notified to the Chinese, it was never recognized by them and, so far as is known, the Sino-Russian frontier settlement envisaged in that agreement was never made.

The only alternative for Britain was to insist that Russia recognized that the demarcated line east of Lake Victoria terminated at the *de facto* Chinese frontier, and great emphasis was given to this in the instructions drawn up for the British section of the Boundary Commission.¹⁰⁸ Although the Commission itself ran into unexpected difficulties, these were not, as anticipated, over the question of the junction with the Chinese frontier but arose because the negotiated line was found to have little in common with the topographical reality as the Commission found it on the spot. Perhaps after earlier experiences of Central Asian frontier-

103. Tel. 70, Rosebery to Morier, 23 June 1893, *ibid*.

104. 39, O'Connor to Rosebery, 18 Feb. 1894, FO 65/1484.

105. Tel. 22, Kimberley to O'Connor, 13 Mar. 1894, FO 65/1485.

106. 87, Howard to Kimberley, 26 Apr. 1894, *ibid*.

107. A useful description of the line generally recognized as the Sino-Russian frontier after this, is in *Confidential Military Report on Kashgaria*, pp.4-5.

108. Enclosure 3 of 122, India, 25 June 1895, PFI/80.

making, this was only to be expected. Unfortunately for Britain, in nearly every case the discrepancies tended to favour the Russians and in the end brought their line almost as far south as that which had been described by Rosebery as 'wholly inadmissible' in April 1894. The problem came to a head over who should possess the Baiyik Pass and it nearly led to a rupture.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the firmness of the Russians on this issue may well have been the last attempt of the Imperial War Ministry to wreck a negotiated settlement, for the most unyielding of them was the military representative on the Commission, one Colonel Galitzine.¹¹⁰ Probably only the British decision to give way saved the demarcated frontier on the Pamirs.¹¹¹

Clause V of the final Protocol was signed on practically the last day on which the British party could remain on the Pamirs and still get back to India before winter closed the passes. It recorded that the imaginary line projected into the main range of the Sariqol watershed met there 'la frontière Chinoise actuelle'.¹¹² Holdich's description, less prosaic and not strictly accurate, nevertheless seems more suitable:

Amidst the voiceless waste of a vast white wilderness 20,000 feet above the sea, absolutely inaccessible to man and within the ken of no living creature but the Pamir eagles—there the three great empires actually meet. It is a fitting trijunction. No god of Hindu mythology ever occupied a more stupendous throne.¹¹³

The Indian Government, however, was not quite satisfied that 'the three great empires' or, rather, their spheres of influence, would *always* meet there. The determined stand which the Russian Commissioners had made for the Baiyik Pass was only explicable, at least to the leader of the British party, if Russia intended in the future to by-pass the newly demarcated line and occupy the Tagdumbash.¹¹⁴ Both he and the Indian Government believed that

109. The published Report gives no hint of the seriousness of this disagreement. But see the telegrams between London and India, HC/160, pp.899, 1321 and 1335 and HC/161, p.193.

110. It is significant that he was also the correspondent of the militarily inspired and notoriously anglophobe *Novoe Vremya*. 111. See above p.230.

112. Enclosure 38 of 195, India, 9 Oct. 1895, PFI/82.

113. *Indian Borderland 1880-1900*, pp.293-4. It is hardly necessary to point out that for four years British diplomacy had been trying to ensure, with eventual success, that the three empires did *not* meet.

114. Enclosure 31 of 195, India, 9 Oct. 1895, PFI/82.

this was a real danger, and two ways of meeting it were suggested. The first was a revival of the earlier attempts to persuade China to agree to a delimitation of her frontiers with Kashmir, Hunza and Afghanistan, so as to minimize the danger which would follow a Russian conquest of Sinkiang and the inheritance of Chinese claims to Sariqol and the Raskam Valley.¹¹⁵ Not until the following year, in 1896, did the Foreign Office reply that it would be impolitic to raise the matter in view of the state of the Chinese Government. The frontier has remained undefined to this day, although a delimitation of the boundary between West Pakistan and China seems imminent.

The other method of checkmating the suspected Russian designs was more subtle. Hunza had for a long time claimed the right to levy tribute on the Khyrgyz of the Tagdumbash Pamir and the Raskam Valley and, except during the reign of Yaqub Beg in Kashgar, Hunzakut raids on them had been frequent. A correspondence found in the captured Hunza fort in 1891 revealed that exchanges about this had taken place between Safdar Ali and the Chinese authorities in which the latter had at least not denied the Hunza claims.¹¹⁶ When the Pamir dispute flared up in the early 'nineties, most of the local officials had agreed that the Hunza claims should not be maintained if there was any danger of their straining relations with China. Younghusband and Durand, however, had pointed out that they might be useful as a means of encouraging China to maintain her claims to the Tagdumbash and of opposing its eventual Russian occupation.¹¹⁷ The Indian Government had adopted the scheme, and the Hunza claims were mentioned to the Chinese envoys who came to Hunza for the inauguration of the new ruler.¹¹⁸ The rumoured Russian activity against the Chinese on the Pamirs in 1893, the demands of the Russian soldiers later in that year, and the evidence that China was reducing her claims – had all revived the scheme again.¹¹⁹ Now, in 1895, the Indian Government decided to hold the Hunza

115. Elgin to Hamilton, 18 Sept. 1895, HP/D.509/1, p.97; 186, India, 25 Sept. 1895, PFI/82.

116. Enclosures of 164, India, 6 Sept. 1892, PFI/67, p.621.

117. Enclosure 2 of 127, India, 19 July 1892, PFI/66, p.1651.

118. Enclosure 3 of *ibid.*

119. Durand to Kashmir Resident, 3 Mar. 1893 enclosed with 85, India, 3 May 1893, PFI/70, p.277; Macartney to Kashmir Resident, 23 July 1893, enclosed with 214, India, 27 Sept. 1893, PFI/72, p.159.

claims in reserve, and Gerard was told that they were only to be used in case China ceded the Tagdumbash to Russia.¹²⁰ Fortunately she did not, but the fear that she would remained until well into the twentieth century.

The final completion of the Pamir settlement was dependent upon the exchange of trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan for cis-Oxus Darwaz, and this at first ran into considerable trouble. Early in 1894, the Russians protested against the Amir's rumoured intention of transferring the populations.¹²¹ A few months later, despite a promise not to move troops, they sent a force into trans-Oxus Shignan. The inevitable clash with the Afghans occurred near Qala Panja¹²² and, despite British protests, intermittent rumours of both Afghan cruelties and Russian movements continued to be heard well into 1896.¹²³ The date for the completion of the Afghan evacuation was another source of trouble. Afghan announcements of a full evacuation in June 1894 were followed by Russian complaints of continued Afghan abuses on the far side of the Oxus for another two years!¹²⁴ Moreover, it proved alarmingly difficult to extract from Russia an assurance about the evacuation of cis-Oxus Darwaz territory by Bukhara.¹²⁵ The Afghan grip on this newly-acquired territory remained extremely weak, and the inflamed Afghan-Bukharan relations on the Upper Oxus continued to be the subject of diplomatic exchange between London and St Petersburg as late as 1899.¹²⁶ As for the Wakhan strip, the Amir at first demanded excessive reimbursement from the Indian Government for administering the territory. That difficulty was not ironed out until 1897.¹²⁷

And yet, despite all the alarms, the 1873 line running from the Kokcha junction along the Oxus to Lake Victoria, which was in 1895 confirmed and continued eastwards across the Pamirs to the

120. Tel., Sec. of State, 16 Aug. 1895, HC/160, p.895.

121. 89, Kimberley to Howard, 11 Apr. 1894, FO 65/1485.

122. The Indian end of the correspondence is enclosed with India, 159 of 28 Aug. PFI/75, p.1269 and 177 of 26 Sept. 1894, PFI/76, p.315. The correspondence between London and St Petersburg in the August and September is in FO 65/1487.

123. See e.g., IO to FO, 22 Feb. 1896, FO 65/1528.

124. See e.g., FO to IO, 2 Jan. 1896, *ibid.*

125. See e.g., Hamilton to Elgin, 21 Feb. 1896, EIP/4, p.23.

126. 66, Scott to Salisbury, 8 Mar. 1899, FO 106/1.

127. 45, India, 7 Apr. 1897, PFI/91.

Chinese frontier, has remained unaltered ever since. Today it marks the southern limit of the Soviet Central Asian Empire and its nearest approach to the political frontiers of the Indian sub-continent.¹²⁸ The permanence of the line, at least in the years immediately after its completion, perhaps owes something to the fact that it represented a genuine compromise. Russia gave up all chance of direct contact with the passes into India, but gained instead a great deal of territory on the Pamirs. India gave up the chance of direct control to the north of the passes, but maintained the glacis free from Russian occupation. Of course, the 'long attenuated arm of Afghanistan reaching out to touch China with the tips of its fingers' would have been useless as a defensive barrier in time of war, as both sides realized.¹²⁹ But, in the words of the Indian Government earlier, 'what can be guarded against . . . is unopposed territorial and political encroachment in time of peace'.¹³⁰ Russian military opinion lined up solidly against the agreement.¹³¹ But the fact that many Russians were pleased with it is probably a tribute to its general fairness as a settlement.¹³²

It had not been achieved without fighting and even talk of full-blooded international conflict. In 1891 there was certainly very little *real* excitement about the Pamirs in Britain, and Morier's talk of war at that time was only intended to frighten the Russians into an apology. But it was a very different matter in 1893 when, first the Russians and then the British authorities in London and India, genuinely anticipated and feared the outbreak of war. In fact, the Pamir disagreement was one of those relatively minor clashes of imperial interests in the pre-1914 era which could conceivably, if mishandled, have so involved the two Powers that honourable withdrawal would have become impossible.

It is quite certain that neither of them wanted a war at this time, and contemporary British fears that Russia and France were concerting a joint attack on India were wide of the mark.

128. For a discussion about this see O. Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia*, Appendix III and *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, XXXVIII (1951), pp.73-81.

129. Holdich, *Indian Borderland 1880-1900*, p.284; M. Grulef, *The Rivalry of Russia and England in Central Asia*, p.50.

130. 191, India, 27 Dec. 1887, PFI/51, p.1377.

131. There is ample evidence of this in FO 65/1505-7 and in Secret and Political Memo., A.135, p.5. But cf. Sumner, *Tsardom and Imperialism 1880-1914* (Raleigh Lecture 1940), p.39 where the opposite view is stated.

132. 179, Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 July 1895, FO 65/1506.

The disposition of the Russian armies, about which the War Office commented in 1895:

special activity has . . . been confined to the two opposite extremities of the Empire, whilst the stagnation which has prevailed for ten years past in Central Asia still continues.¹³³

accurately reflected the true gravitation of Russian interest in the 'nineties. 'It is to the Dardanelles and the Far East that they are looking', wrote Hamilton a year later.¹³⁴ As for Britain, it almost goes without saying that she would have shunned war like the plague over an issue like the Pamirs.

Nevertheless, feelings did run high, and from time to time the Pamirs practically monopolized the diplomatic correspondence between London and St Petersburg. It was the only real issue keeping Russia and Britain apart before the new Far and Near Eastern crises of the mid-'nineties, and its conclusion is therefore of some significance. Indeed, high hopes were entertained that it would be an end to conflict and tension in Central Asia, as they had been after the settlements of 1873 and 1885-6. But this time they had rather more justification. There was a marked reduction of Anglo-Russian hostility at the end of 1894 and early in 1895, in which the Pamir settlement undoubtedly played a part.¹³⁵ The *Turkistan Vedomosti*, not usually pro-British by any means, was even talking at the height of the Chitral campaign of 'our new friends',¹³⁶ and the visit of the Tsar to London in the next year greatly cleared the air in Central Asia. Hamilton, among others, began to look forward to a period of peace there.¹³⁷ There *was* peace but that was largely due to external circumstances. As the Indian Secretary wrote in 1897, 'the danger of a direct attack by Russia upon India yearly lessens, as Russia has other and larger fish to fry'.¹³⁸ Two of the largest were Manchuria and China, and in 1905 they brought upon Russia a resounding defeat at the hands

133. Intelligence Division, Confidential Report on the Changes in Foreign Armies 1895, p.36, WO 33/56.

134. To Elgin, 8 Oct. 1896, ELP/4, p.109. Lord George Francis Hamilton (1845-1927), Sec. of State for India 1895-1903.

135. DMI to FO, 13 Feb. 1895, FO 65/1504.

136. Enclosed with 23, British Consul in Batoum to Kimberley, 10 May 1893, HC/158, p.1047.

137. To Elgin, 8 Oct. 1896, ELP/4, p.109.

138. To Elgin, 23 Sept. 1897, ELP/5, Appendix, p.60.

of Japan. This not only sobered those Russian military men who advocated an attack on India,¹³⁹ but at about the same time made possible the extension of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to cover India.¹⁴⁰ The Pamir demarcation completed the southern limitation of Russia's Central Asiatic Empire and made further advance impossible except at the risk of war. And this was a risk which a weakened Russia, faced with the growing threat of Austrian ambitions in the Balkans and German designs at Constantinople, was unable to face. A partial result was the Anglo-Russian entente of 1907 and it was based almost entirely on a removal of old rivalries in Central Asia. The settlement of 1895 was a considerable step in this direction. To that extent, it played its part in the shifting of alliances which preceded the outbreak of war in Europe nearly twenty years later.

(5) *The settlement in the tribal territories 1894-1895*

Once the northern approaches to the Hindu Kush had been diplomatically sealed, there remained for the British the problem of hammering out a permanent political settlement south of the mountains, which would satisfy defensive needs with the minimum of expense. It will be remembered that in September 1893 the Secretary of State had virtually made a final settlement in Chitral dependent upon three conditions – the removal of the Russian threat by a settlement on the Pamirs, the removal of the Afghan threat by a voluntary abandonment of the Amir's designs on Chitral, and the removal of the tribal threat by a general pacification in Dardistan.¹ Within a few months the last two of these conditions appeared to have been satisfied. Durand at Kabul had negotiated a line between Afghan and Indian territory which excluded the Amir from Chitral, although leaving him in possession of Asmar. Moreover, the tribes were quiet, with Nizam-ul-Mulk in Chitral 'as firmly established in possession of the territories his father left as any ruler in these countries has ever been'.² The

139. See Grulef, *op. cit.*, Author's Note.

140. The Anglo-Japanese staff discussions on the defence of India can be conveniently consulted in WO 106/48.

1. Above pp.262-3.

2. Enclosure 2 of 99, India, 12 June 1894, PFI/74, p.1015.

hopeful turn of the Pamir negotiations early in 1894, and the accession to the Viceroyalty of Lord Elgin³ who was, according to his own description, firmly opposed 'to any advance beyond our frontier which is not absolutely forced upon us'⁴ – all seemed to make an early withdrawal from Chitral possible. One of Lansdowne's last acts as Viceroy had been to order Younghusband to leave when the winter was over, and Elgin completely endorsed this policy in January 1894.⁵ He also announced at the same time his intention to reduce the garrison of the Gilgit Agency.

A few months later the outlook was not so bright, for Umra Khan had begun a new series of attacks on Lower Kafirstan and the Chitrali border villages. Apart from that, the post along the Dir-Chitral road had not been working well under his protection and his continued retention of Narsat in Southern Chitral added to the tension. It had been hoped that the British Boundary Commissioners working on the demarcation of the new Durand Line in this direction would be able to settle the Narsat dispute, but the demarcation ran into difficulties and was repeatedly shelved.⁶ It soon became very obvious that the Amir was being deliberately disloyal to the Durand agreement.⁷ There is little doubt, too, that the agreement and the subsequent demarcation attempts had led to a general belief among the tribes that Afghanistan and India were about to partition the country.⁸ Rumours of a new bid by Sher Afzal for the Chitral throne heightened the excitement. When to all this is added a hitch in the Pamir negotiations, the decision of the Indian Government in June 1894 to postpone the withdrawal from Chitral is not really surprising:

The consideration to which in our opinion much weight must at present be attached is that . . . immediate withdrawal would deprive us of the best means we possess of watching events on the Hindu Kush frontier . . . we are convinced that to withdraw our political officer

3. Victor Alexander Bruce, 9th Earl of Elgin (1849–1917), Viceroy of India 1893–8.

4. To Kimberley, 28 Feb. 1894, ELP/1, p.9. Elgin always claimed to stand midway between the 'forward' and the 'inactivity' schools of frontier policy.

5. Enclosure 1 of 99, India 12 June 1894, PFI/74, p.1015.

6. The correspondence is PFI/74, pp.11 and 1157.

7. Tel., India, 1 Sept. 1894 and minutes HC/151, p.1715.

8. Gilgit Diary, w/c 22 Sept. 1894, PFI/77, p.907.

from Chitral, while the Pamir question is still unsettled, would be premature and unwise.⁹

Nevertheless, and Elgin emphasized this privately, there was no question of supporting the 'policy of activity' favoured by the local officials. As soon as possible the British force would be removed from Chitral.¹⁰

He was quickly forced to change his mind. On the first day of 1895, a few short weeks before the final exchange of notes which terminated the Pamirs dispute, Nizam-ul-Mulk was murdered by his almost equally incompetent brother, Amir-ul-Mulk. The change seemed unlikely at first to cause even local fighting.¹¹ Yet on 14 March, just three days after the Pamir settlement, orders had to be issued by the Indian Government for the mobilization of a large force of fifteen thousand men to relieve the small British garrison besieged at Chitral.

This dramatic development came about because, within two months of Nizam's death, the two pressures which from different directions had been threatening the stability of Chitral for years were suddenly exerted at the same moment and apparently in concert with one another. Umra Khan advanced with several thousand men into Southern Chitral and shortly afterwards Sher Afzal appeared on the scene from Kabul with the support of most of the Chitralis. This peculiar and entirely unforeseen combination – a popular claimant to the Chitral throne in agreement with the fanatical Pathan tribes who stood astride the only feasible route from India to Chitral – was, of course, extremely serious. It turned almost the whole of Chitral against the handful of British troops beleaguered there, and at the same time made it extremely difficult to relieve them.¹²

Nevertheless the attempt to save them from annihilation had to be made. Besides a direct assault in force along the Dir road, the Indian Government tried to enlist the help of Afghanistan against

9. 99, India, 12 June 1894, extract in AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.31.

10. To Fowler, 31 July 1894, ELP/1, p.72b.

11. This was the opinion of the men on the spot, sub-enclosure 32 of 46, India, 6 Mar. 1895, PFI/78, p.1453.

12. For the events of the first phase of the crisis, see AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, pp.34–42; tels. in HC/156, pp.83, 173, 287, 379, 507, 845, 1099; Elgin's letters to Fowler, especially ELP/2, pp.32–6; enclosures of India despatches 46 of 6 Mar., 66 of 17 Apr., and 78 of 1 May 1895.

Umra Khan. The correspondence leaves little doubt that the decision taken at this time to cede to the Amir the Bashgal Valley denied to him by Durand, was intended to involve the Afghans with Umra Khan's men. Ideally, the Afghan force under Gholam Haidar at Asmar, would have created a hostile diversion to bring Umra Khan post-haste out of Southern Chitral. At least the British hoped that the Amir would not give the Jandul Chief any active assistance.¹³ But they were disappointed on both counts. For on 26 March, Gholam Haidar refused to escort the British survey party into the Bashgal Valley, 'thus destroying all idea of creating a diversion'.¹⁴ It soon became clear that the Amir was co-operating with Umra Khan in support of Sher Afzal and against the British garrison in Chitral.¹⁵ Fortunately the relieving forces arrived in time.¹⁶

But almost before they set out, Elgin had become convinced that a new policy was necessary and that, to prevent a similar crisis arising again, the Dir road would have to be opened permanently and guarded by levies along the whole of its length as in the Khyber Pass. This, he emphasized, was a change of means not of ends. The reduction in the establishment on the northern frontier which he had advocated in 1894, and which would have made the road unnecessary, was now to be achieved by opening the road. It would enable Chitral to be held cheaply and the Gilgit garrison to be greatly reduced. Other positive and negative advantages were urged too. The Durand Line made it impossible to abandon Chitral to Afghanistan completely, for, apart from the blow to British prestige which would result, there would be the danger of Abd-ar-Rahman circumventing the Kabul agreement by similar methods elsewhere. The road would give

13. Elgin to Fowler, 13 Feb. 1895, EIP/2, p.24 and Fowler to Elgin, 22 Mar. 1895, *ibid.*, p.17; enclosure 50 of 40, India, 27 Feb. 1895, PFI/78, p.1199; enclosures 55 and 56 of 46, India, 6 Mar. 1895, *ibid.*, p.1453.
14. North-West Frontier Diary, Mar. 1895, PFI/79.
15. All mention of Afghan treachery was suppressed in the Blue Book but in fact both Afghan arms and men were playing their part in the siege. See enclosure 98 of 113, India, 11 June 1895, PFI/80.
16. On the relief of Chitral, see the published despatches in AP 1895 LXXII C.7864 and AP 1896 LX C.8037 and the works of, *inter alia*, W. G. Beynon, L. James, H. Newton, G. Robertson, H. C. Thomson and G. and F. Younghusband. The official account is *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, I, pp.38-81.

the death-blow to the Amir's intrigues in Chitral and at the same time avoid any complications which would follow a breach of the Kashmir relationship with the kingdom. The only possible ruler in Chitral was Shuja-ul-Mulk, for the Indian Government was determined that Sher Afzal, otherwise the best candidate as all agreed, was out of the question because of his Afghan affinities. But Shuja was only a boy and would need support. All these points, and many others, were urged officially and privately by Elgin through the spring of 1895. He carried the Indian Government with him.¹⁷

Behind this important change of view lay some fundamental and, it must be admitted, long-overdue re-thinking of the whole strategic problem of the northern frontier. The weakness of a defensive scheme which, based on Gilgit to the east, was intended for the defence of Chitral on the west had been made very plain by Lytton's experiences with the first Gilgit Agency.¹⁸ Later, Lockhart's conclusion that Russia chiefly menaced Chitral but could be checked from Gilgit perpetuated the weakness. It even seems to have led the Indian Government for a time to the opposite conclusion – that Gilgit was more important strategically than Chitral.¹⁹ The establishment of the second Gilgit Agency was in line with Lockhart's proposals, although by then (1889) the Indian Government *had* realized the limitations of the Gilgit position:

We shall not have secured ourselves against a serious advance by the Dora Pass. Such an advance cannot in all probability be repelled except by a British force moving from Jalalabad up the Kunar valley, or from Peshawar via Dir. But everything will have been prepared for such a movement, and Kashmir at least will be safe from attack.²⁰

In the following years the Indian Government did what it could to minimize this weakness, but the results were almost nil. The road to Chitral from the south through Dir remained closed, and

17. See Elgin's letters to Fowler in EIP/2, pp.36, 42, 46, 54 and 67. The official request for the opening of the road was made by telegraph on 18 Apr. 1895. Elgin's important speech to the Legislative Council on 29 Mar. 1895 is cited in full in H. C. Thomson, *The Chitral Campaign*.

18. Above pp.136-7.

19. 156, India, 4 Oct. 1886, PFP/2923, Frontier, Apr. A, no.1.

20. 58, India, 6 May 1889, PFI/57, p.27. Omitted from the Blue Book version.

the notorious unreliability of the Chitral rulers meant that India could neither freely arm them nor place among them for any length of time a British officer to organize their defences.

The 1895 decision to force the Dir road was made because of the impossibility of relieving Chitral in force from Gilgit. In one stroke it revealed the fallacy which, ever since the days of Madhopore, had lurked behind every attempt to base the defence of the northern frontier on Gilgit. There was no going back. The Commander-in-Chief wrote:

If . . . the Chitral bastion is evacuated, the approaches to India from Jalalabad to Jammu are uncovered. . . . The true support of this bastion is the line of communication with its base at Nowshera via Dir. The line via Gilgit and Kashmir is exposed and undoubtedly false.²¹

The despatch which gave cover to this expression of views underlined them forcibly:

The length of time occupied and the difficulty incurred in sending troops and supplies by way of Kashmir and Gilgit and the expense of doing so are so great that some of us would prefer to abandon all attempt to occupy Chitral rather than try to hold it by so precarious a thread.

And if Chitral was evacuated, the Indian Government argued, it would fall to Russia whenever she chose to take it from the new position which the Pamir settlement had given her on the fertile bend of the Oxus, only eighty-four easy miles away to the north.

Politically and militarily, it was argued, such a step would be disastrous. The disturbances which would follow Russia's unopposed entry into the tribal territory would absorb the energies of ten times the number of troops required simply to contest the easily defensible passes.²² This view naturally presupposed that Russia would be able to enlist tribal support with 'the bait of the plunder of Hindustan',²³ and the advocates of Chitral retention vied with one another in painting graphic verbal pictures of the results if Russia set a tribal avalanche going in the hills:

. . . think what the effect in India would have been when the Maharaja and his Court, the Resident, and any Europeans in the country,

21. White Minute, enclosed with 210, India, 8 May 1895, PFI/79.

22. Elgin to Fowler, 24 Apr. 1895, EIP/2, p.67.

23. 210, India, 8 May 1895, PFI/79.

came tumbling out of Kashmir, flying from a Russian force, the strength of which no one could tell. There would have been no British troops within two hundred miles of Kashmir, all eyes would have been turned to the Peshawar and Bolan fronts where our troops would have been massing, and the word would suddenly have gone forth—‘the Russians have turned our flank, they are in Kashmir, and will be in the Panjab and on our line of communications in a week’.²⁴

Even without a war, ‘unofficial hostility’, as White called it, and the adroit infiltration of political agents and arms among the Dard tribes, would have been dangerous enough. This is what Lytton was chiefly thinking of when he wrote that the Russians south of the mountains would be as dangerous as if they were at Merv,²⁵ and it is the reason why he and later Viceroys were ready to resist their coming by force. Resistance would of course have been easier if India, and not Russia, had the assistance of the tribes, for they were excellent military material. But this in turn, it was argued, implied an active policy right up to the watershed. Finally, there were the arguments of expediency. The Chitral campaign had created a providential opportunity for holding the valley and the road to the south which could not be expected to occur again. Withdrawal would be a blow to British prestige, for it would look as if it had been caused either by the Russian advance on the Pamirs or by the opposition of the tribes. And, despite the unhappy implications of the word, there is no doubt that ‘prestige’ was a factor nearly as important as bayonets and subsidies in the success of tribal frontier policy – it was, in fact, simply ‘military credit’ written another way.

Ultimately, the decision about Chitral and the northern frontier had to be taken in the wider framework of Indian defence. As far as full invasion was concerned, British attention was primarily focused farther west on the open fertile plains of Herat and Kandahar and the narrower valleys of Kabul. Opinions varied about which of the two would carry the main weight of the Russian attack. The difficulties experienced by the British forces in Southern Afghanistan during the Afghan War seem for a time

24. Durand, *The Making of a Frontier*, p.42; cf. Younghusband to Gilgit Agent, 12 Feb. 1894, enclosed with 99, India, 12 June 1894, PFI/74, p.1015.

25. Above p.114.

to have led to an almost unanimous belief in the Herat line of advance.²⁶ But in Ridgeway's words of 1887:

The explorations of the Afghan Frontier Commission have, however, exploded this dangerous theory. It has now been ascertained that the value and fertility of the Herat Valley have been greatly exaggerated, and that the country about Balkh [on the Kabul line] has much greater capabilities and is inhabited by people who would welcome Russian rule.²⁷

Later the Russian failure to extend the railway from Charjui to Kilif, coupled with the 1898 extension from Merv to the Khushk Post only sixty miles from Herat, seems to have revived the idea of advance by *that* line.²⁸ But whichever was believed to be the main and whichever the secondary advance route, almost everyone of importance in India was convinced by 1892 that, for political as well as military reasons, Russia would have to be met on the Kabul-Kandahar line.²⁹

The decision to hold the advanced mountain-line on the north-west obviously had a bearing on its flank defence in the north, especially as an important and easy route from Chitral down the Kunar River to Jalalabad gave lateral communication between the Kabul and Chitral lines. The strategic significance of this 'back-way' into Afghanistan was plain even in Lytton's day. Roberts, in 1880, justified his preference for the Khyber line to Kabul because of its proximity to the Chitral-Badakhshan route³⁰ and, by the same token, others advocated the Tochi line farther west because of its freedom from a flank attack from Chitral.³¹ That, of course, was the point. The Kabul-Kandahar line could be turned, and the communications of a British force fighting at Kabul cut by a Russian force advancing down the Chitral and Kunar valleys. But conversely, and this is what Roberts had in mind, a Russian force in Chitral could be taken in flank from

26. Roberts Memo., 12 May 1880, enclosed with 208, India, 14 Sept. 1880, PFI/21, p.1117; 23, Sec. of State, 21 May 1880, PTI/6, p.107; Ripon Minute, 11 Nov. 1880, BM Add. Mss. 43610, p.102.

27. Memo., 4 May 1887, HC/94, p.73.

28. E. Altham, Military Needs of the Empire in a War with France and Russia, WO 106/48/E.3/2.

29. 132, India, 6 Sept. 1892, PFI/67, p.773.

30. To Lytton, 5 Mar. 1880, RoP/13, p.367.

31. Lytton Memo., 20 May 1880, PFI/26, p.1131.

Jalalabad if it attempted to march on Peshawar, and from Peshawar if it struck from Chitral towards Jalalabad.

These basic strategical and geographical facts were used both ways in the Chitral debate. White and Elgin employed them to demonstrate the need to hold Chitral:

the first thing a [British] General occupying Jalalabad would do, would be to protect his right flank up the Kunar valley, . . . he could only get hold of Chitral by using a considerable force. Indeed, if the Russians forestalled him, as they almost certainly would, with a comparatively small force, the nature of the country would make it impossible to dislodge them without the employment of an army.³²

If not dislodged, they would necessitate a force on the Peshawar border and in Kashmir out of all proportion to their size, and be a constant threat to the Kabul line. The easiest way to meet such a threat, therefore, seemed to be to hold Chitral and meet the Russians at the passes. Others, of course, argued the other way round. Major Deane, the Chief Political Officer with the Relief Force, believed that the threat of attack from Jalalabad would be sufficient to prevent the Russians attempting the Chitral route at all.³³ Crosthwaite pointed out that if the Afghans were working with the British, it would be an easy matter to cope with the thousand or so Russians that would be able to push down from Chitral towards Jalalabad. But if Afghanistan was an enemy, then the Kabul-Kandahar line could not be defended and the Afghans could attack the British troops in Chitral from Jalalabad, in conjunction with the Russians coming down from the north.³⁴

At home, the Liberal administration accepted the Indian view that Chitral could not be defended from Gilgit, but denied that the military threat was sufficient to justify the holding of the dangerous and expensive alternative route to the south.³⁵ Of those who opposed it, some like Sir Donald Stewart denied that the Russians would ever try to use Chitral for any significant military purpose – ‘in a great war such movements would count for nothing’.³⁶ As Lepel Griffin put it, the British Empire would not

32. Elgin to Hamilton, 13 Aug. 1895, HP/1, p.45.

33. Note, 25 Apr. 1895, enclosed with 172, India, 27 Aug. 1895, PFI/81.

34. Future Policy towards Chitral, Secret and Political Memo., A.102a, p.3.

35. 15, Sec. of State, 26 Apr. 1895, AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.45.

36. Cited Bayley, Chitral: British Relations and Policy, Secret and Political Memo., A.106, Pt.II.

collapse 'because a few Cossacks foolishly immured themselves in a death trap'.³⁷ The road which the India Government wished to construct would actually help their advance.³⁸ Far better that 'Russia should have to come through miles of inhospitable mountain-passes to attack us rather than that we ourselves should have to go into the middle of the mountains to meet Russia'.³⁹ The argument that more men would be needed to stop the outlets from Chitral than the southern outlets of the Hindu Kush passes was denied, because it was not believed that the tribesmen would rise:

A few murderers and cut-throats no doubt would attach themselves to the camp of an invading army. But the notion that the able-bodied population would leave their women, children, and household goods to the mercy of enemies . . . is absolutely chimerical and childish. They are for the most part people living by agriculture or pastoral [*sic*], and they have no means of feeding themselves away from their homes. Is it likely that the Russian troops who will have great difficulty in supplying themselves will provide food for a horde of savages?⁴⁰

If the tribesmen *were* hostile, it would be too costly to force a way into Chitral anyway. If they were not, then they would presumably oppose any Russian attempts to enter Chitral. 'Since it took us twenty thousand men to get into it why is it not to take the Russians more?'⁴¹ In any case, the easiest time to defeat the tribesmen would be when they issued out into the plains.⁴²

Behind all of these conflicting arguments lay a basic disagreement about the political validity and strategic significance of the newly demarcated Pamir line. Elgin's view was that the Pamir settlement had actually *increased* the need to hold Chitral 'because it has brought the Russians nearer to the passes'.⁴³ The Secretary of State, Fowler, believed on the other hand that the danger had been reduced,⁴⁴ although many of his Council went even further and maintained that the Pamir settlement removed altogether the

37. *Nineteenth Century*, CCXVIII (1895), p.986.

38. Crosthwaite, Future Policy towards Chitral, Secret and Political Memo., A.102a.

39. Fowler to Elgin, 12 June 1895, EIP/2, p.33.

40. Crosthwaite, Future Policy towards Chitral, p.3.

41. Cited Fowler to Elgin, 12 June 1895, EIP/2, p.33.

42. Stewart, Chitral and Gilgit, 26 Mar. 1895, HC/157, p.423.

43. To Fowler, 24 Apr. 1895, EIP/2, p.67.

44. To Elgin, 20 June 1895, EIP/2, p.38. Henry Hartley Fowler, later 1st Viscount Wolverhampton (1830-1911), Sec. of State for India 1894-5.

need for a British force and officer in Chitral.⁴⁵ The debate raged as fiercely outside the walls of Whitehall as within.⁴⁶ Opponents of the retention of Chitral pointed to the loyalty with which Russia had honoured the 1885–6 Afghan boundary settlement. The members of the ‘forward’ school, however, argued, like Curzon, that

if you agree upon a boundary with a great Power, one party cannot run away from its side; both parties must occupy, or must at any rate exert their influence up to the limit of their boundary.⁴⁷

That was spoken in the Commons in 1898 – an indication both of the longevity of the great Chitral debate and of its increasingly political nature. Most of the polemics were expended on the academic issue of whether the Indian Government had, or had not, broken the terms of its proclamation to the tribes about the Dir-Chitral road. But behind all the arguments lay this fundamental divergence of opinion about the true value of the new international line of frontier on the Pamirs. The predominance of one set of views eventually led Fowler and the Liberal Government in June 1895 to reject the Indian proposals, both for the opening of the Dir road and for the retention of a British officer and force in Chitral.⁴⁸ The other views played their part in the new Conservative Government’s reversal of the Liberal decision in August 1895. Behind all the innocuous verbiage of the Blue Book, the reasoning which led to the August decision is plain enough:

The delimitation of frontiers between the Indian Empire and neighbouring Governments has of recent years been more accurately defined, and it seems more than probable that if your [the India] Government had in these districts by its retirement announced its inability to discharge its previous functions, other authorities would step in and undertake the duties then cast off. . . . The advance of Russia to the line of the Oxus and that of the Amir to the Eastern border of Kafiristan are not likely to diminish the tension which has, in past years, prevailed on this part of the frontier.⁴⁹

45. Secret and Political Memos., A.96 (Lyall), A.102 (Crosthwaite) and A.98 (Stewart).

46. A useful summary is Elgin’s book of press cuttings in the Elgin Papers. The great Chitral Debate of 3rd September 1895 is *Hansard*, 4th series, XXXVI, pp.1582–1646.

47. *Hansard*, 4th series, LIII, pp.668–9.

48. Tel., Sec. of State, 13 June 1895, AP 1895 LXXII C.7864, p.51.

49. 30, Sec. of State, 16 Aug. 1895, *ibid.*, p.55.

The settlement of 1895 finally recognized that the defensive centre of gravity on the northern frontier lay in Chitral and not at Gilgit. The Gilgit garrison was reduced, and the bulk of the forces were concentrated either in Chitral, on the Malakand Pass, or along the Swat River. All were put under the control of a Political Officer stationed in Chitral. But even in 1895, at least on the political plane, the old policy of Madhopore still had some life in it, for the Chitral Political Officer was made subordinate to Gilgit and his writ was confined only to Lower Chitral. The sway of the young ruler Shuja-ul-Mulk was also limited to this area and he was granted his throne only as a suzerain of Kashmir. In Yasin and Mastuj, the old Upper Chitral, power was given to an independent Governor appointed by and directly responsible to the Gilgit Agent.⁵⁰ But the strategic shift in emphasis westward from Gilgit to Chitral was almost bound to be reflected sooner or later in the political arrangements as well. In fact only a year later, in 1896, the anomalous subordination of the Chitral Political Officer to Gilgit was ended, and in 1914 Chitral recovered control of the Mastuj and Yasin districts.

But these were minor readjustments. Essentially the Chitral settlement of 1895 remained unchanged. Taken in conjunction with the Pamir Agreement of the same year and the earlier Hunza, Nagar and Chilas arrangements, it really marks the end of the formative era of British policy on the northern frontier. A measure of stability was achieved, both north and south of the Hindu Kush, which lasted until the end of British dominion itself half a century later. 1895 was the end of an era in another sense too. For when the British and Russian surveys, carried up from baselines thousands of miles apart, met on the Pamirs in that year with an error of only a few feet between them,⁵¹ the period when exploration could alter strategical concepts really came to an end. Curzon sensed the changed situation when he wrote in that same year:

The era of exploration and discovery in this celebrated region may . . . now be said to have come to an end. The boundaries having been determined, there survives no legitimate cause of political quarrel; and the mystery and romance of the fabled Roof of the World [has]

50. Tel., India, 18 Aug. 1895, AP 1896 LX C.8037, p.3.

51. Holdich Report, enclosure 6 of 217, India, 13 Nov. 1895, PFI/83.

been extinguished by the theodolite and the compass, and superseded by the accurate delimitation of scientific maps. . . .⁵²

Curzon was writing of the Pamirs, but his words were generally true of the whole of the area covered by this study. Blanks on the map of such a wild region inevitably remain even today, and a steady flow of explorers, anthropologists, archaeologists, mountaineers, geologists and geographers have been, and still are, helping to fill them. But 1895 was certainly the end of the period when the work of such men had a special value in the formation of imperial policy.

52. *The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus*, p.83.

Conclusion

THE crescent-shaped northern frontier of the British Indian Empire had three main lines of approach from the north – on the east, from Kashgar towards Ladakh; in the centre, from the Pamirs towards Hunza and Yasin; and on the west, from the western Pamirs or the Upper Oxus provinces towards Chitral. Each line in turn from east to west had attention drawn to it in the second half of the nineteenth century by the discovery of apparently easy passes across the Hindu Kush. And yet, on the north, the Hindu Kush does not open out into a traversible plain as it does farther west, but into what one who knew the area well called a ‘mazy wilderness of subordinate spurs – lofty enough in themselves to be called ranges of mountains. . . .’¹ The passes across the Hindu Kush often seemed comparatively easy because there the main range merged into the lofty Pamir massif, and farther east into the Tibetan plateau. Almost the first European to visit the area in modern times, Lieutenant John Wood, remarked that from the Pamirs the mountains to the south appeared to have no great elevation.² The emphasis always given to the Hindu Kush passes was in fact extremely misleading. It was not until Lockhart’s Mission in 1885–6 that due weight was given to the difficulties of the routes south of the main range.

For the British, at least, it was perhaps extremely fortunate that, just where the British and Russian Empires almost met, there is one of the most stupendous mountain barriers in the world. It is higher than the Alps piled on top of the Pyrenees and is over four hundred miles wide between the plains of India and the plains of Turkistan. Badakhshan is fully two hundred miles from the Panjab as the crow, or more probably the eagle, flies. From Osh, the nearest Russian military base of any size in the nineteenth century, it was over nine hundred dreary miles across the Pamirs to Gilgit. The very lowest pass to be crossed in the main range stood almost two and a half miles clear above the sea.

1. Holdich in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, III (1881), p.72.
2. *Journey to the Source of the River Oxus*, p.235.

It was the distances to be covered, and nature of the terrain, and the absence of any adequate supplies over the routes which really made large-scale military operations on the northern frontier impossible. With insignificant exceptions, no grain was grown anywhere on the Alai or the Pamirs, and in the valleys south of the Hindu Kush supplies were scanty. Only in some of the Upper Oxus lands and in Kashgar was the amount adequate to support a considerable number of men. Some examples will prove the point. The modest garrison at Gilgit had to be supplied almost entirely from Kashmir, and Chitral managed to feed the hundred men of the Political Officer's escort only with the greatest difficulty. Hunza could feed almost none at all. In 1895, eight hundred baggage animals and two hundred men were necessary to keep the ninety British members of the Pamir Boundary Commission provisioned for a hundred days. One might well ask of the 'army of a northern power coming to attack us from the direction of Gilgit. What would they eat? What would they drink?'³

Had these enormous difficulties not existed, the northern frontier of India would probably have been the most likely invasion route of all. It is a fundamental military principle to keep all supply lines as short as possible. Here, where the Indian frontier jutted out to meet Russia on the north and the intervening waist of Afghanistan narrowed to a mere finger, was undeniably the 'shortest line of advance on India'.⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that the belief in the feasibility of invasion by the northern frontier was directly proportional to the geographical ignorance of it. At the end of the eighteenth century, Catherine the Great had considered a plan for the invasion of India *via* Badakhshan and Kashmir;⁵ and early in the nineteenth, British statesmen like Palmerston and soldiers like Lieutenant-Colonel Evans and Alexander Burnes believed it was possible.⁶ Later, an invasion of Kashmir from Kashgar was sketched by the Russian General Fadeyev and another by General Abramov through Badakhshan, Yasin and Chitral.⁷

3. Tanner to Henvey, 24 Dec. 1880, BM Add.Mss. 43575, p.77.

4. Grulef, *The Rivalry of Russia and England in Central Asia*, p.9. Cf. 210, India, 8 May 1895, PFI/79.

5. Secret and Political Memo., C.75.

6. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston 1830-41*, II, p.741; De Lacy Evans, *On the Practicability of an invasion of British India*, pp.95 and 99; A. Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, II, pp.199 and 290.

7. Enclosure 2 of 13, India, 5 Mar. 1875, PFI/2, p.1481a.

But with these exceptions, every Russian invasion scheme known to the British authorities in the second half of the nineteenth century – and this is as true of carefully planned and feasible schemes like that of General Kuropatkin⁸, as of the extravaganzas sketched by journalists like Lebedev⁹ – either ignored the Indian northern frontier altogether or assigned to it only a distracting force, ‘not with an idea of conquest, but for making a demonstration with the object of alarming the enemy and diverting his attention from other points’.¹⁰ General Annenkov, after describing how Russia would put one hundred and forty thousand men into action against India along the Herat line, asked a British officer:

When it comes to 140,000 men, what importance can be attached to a few sotnias of Cossacks on the Pamirs frontier? They will keep some of your troops tied up, but that will make no difference to the main issues.¹¹

The same conception of priorities was reflected in the disposition of the Russian strategic railways in Central Asia and of the Russian troops there.

The British authorities took a similar view and, in the period covered by this study, remarkably few of them believed in the possibility of a full-blooded invasion from the north. The military members of Forsyth’s Mission were undoubtedly misled about the ease of the routes across the Pamirs and south of the Hindu Kush, but even they never believed that Russia’s main invasion attempt would be in this direction. In every policy statement the Indian Government ever made about the northern frontier, it was either implied or stated that the prospect of invasion there was ‘remote’ because of the ‘formidable obstacles to military operations on any scale’, and that the only danger was from ‘a demonstration . . . to facilitate and support the flank of more serious operations in Afghanistan’.¹² The Defence Committee of 1885 made allowances for ‘an isolated attack in Kashmir’,¹³ but only very half-heartedly.

8. Enclosed with Nicolson to Rosebery, 3 June 1886, FO 65/1287.

9. V. T. Lebedev, *Vers l’Inde* (Paris 1900).

10. J. and R. Michell (eds.), *Russians in Central Asia*, p.404.

11. DMI to IO, 18 Mar. 1893, HC/137, p.9.

12. 49, India, 28 Feb. 1879, PFI/21, p.859. An entertaining fictional account which suggests that Russia did intend to invade India by the northern route is J. Masters, *The Lotus and the Wind*, especially p.277.

13. WO 32/263/40233.

All the main effort and expense was lavished on the defences of the frontier in the north-west.

In fact, the defensive measures taken on the northern frontier have a rather utilitarian appearance. The Commander-in-Chief, Roberts, had always opposed the locking up of any British troops in the north, and in 1892, he vetoed a scheme for the construction of permanent defensive works in the area because of 'the uncertainty of troops being able to be spared for the purpose of guarding such . . . defences or to ensure their being obstinately held by the natives of the country'.¹⁴ In fact, with the exception of the officers, white British troops were never employed on the northern frontier at all, and it was always a constant theme in official correspondence that the passes there should be held by native levies. It is a little misleading to claim that the strategic significance of the work of the Pamir Boundary Commission was that it 'at last . . . laid to rest the ghost of years of apprehension as to possible invasion of India from the extreme north'.¹⁵ For in fact, with few isolated exceptions, invasion in numbers had not been feared at all.

Nevertheless, although the northern frontier and the area beyond it was to this extent militarily unimportant, politically it was of considerable importance. With the Russian frontier scarcely a morning's ride away across a barren valley, it could hardly be otherwise. The Pamirs had become by the end of the nineteenth century a meeting-place where the interests of some seven hundred and fifty million people came into contact.¹⁶ Not, of course, into full collision, because the political control of all the Powers on this inner heart of Asia was slight. It was a junction of spheres of influence rather than of sovereign territories, as the Pamir settlement of 1895 explicitly testified.¹⁷ Nevertheless, on the northern frontier Russia came closer than anywhere else to that coterminity with India which, almost without exception, her publicists, statesmen and soldiers regarded as the desirable end to her advance across Asia.

The aim, of course, was not only to share a frontier 'with a neighbour who could be depended upon to keep order and pre-

14. Memo. enclosed with India Foreign Dept., 18 Aug. 1892, PFI/67, p.477.

15. Holdich, *Indian Borderland 1880-1900*, p.284; cf. Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, p.236.

16. India, 250 million; China, 400 million; Russia, 100 million.

17. At least for Britain and Russia. See Appendix VII.

serve the relations which exist between civilized states',¹⁸ but to be in a position to exert pressure on Britain if events elsewhere, especially in Europe and the Near East, demanded it.¹⁹ In 1900, the Russian Consul in Bombay was told officially

The fundamental meaning of India to us is that she represents Great Britain's most vulnerable point, a sensitive nerve on which one touch may perhaps easily induce Her Majesty's Government to alter its hostile policy toward us, and to show the desired compliance on all those questions where our . . . interests may collide.²⁰

The desire of most Russians was to achieve coterminity along the line of the Hindu Kush, and in moments of Anglo-Russian tension in Asia this became especially plain. Had Central Asia eventually been divided between Russia and England along this mountain range, and many in England and India thought it inevitable, Russia would have abutted directly on to India's northern frontier. Some British Liberals in the Radical tradition, like John Bright, believed that there would be no difficulty in keeping the peace with Russia in Asia, whether the common boundary were a 'mountain-ridge, or a stream, or a fence'.²¹ Experience, however, rather favoured Lytton's view:

Geographical contact between civilised nations in Europe has neither abolished wars nor rendered unnecessary the maintenance of military establishments. On the contrary it has lamentably increased the intensity of the former, and the magnitude of the latter.²²

Why should Central Asia be an exception to the European pattern? Most British statesmen disliked the idea of coterminity anywhere, and hence, of course, the traditional policy of maintaining on India's frontier the buffer-state of Afghanistan.

As it turned out, Central Asia did not follow the European pattern exactly. Military establishments certainly increased as the Russians came nearer, but there was no war, perhaps in part

18. Kimberley to Ripon, 7 Mar. 1884, RP/6, p.21, quoting the Russian, Mohrenheim.

19. In moments of candour, the Russians admitted this. See, among many examples, 268B, Morier to Salisbury, 2 Aug. 1887, FO 65/1321.

20. Cited *Russian Review*, XVI (1957), no.2, p.57.

21. Speech at Birmingham, 16 Apr. 1879.

22. 21, India, 2 July 1877, PFI/14, p.1113.

because there was no coterminity. It is a curious and interesting feature of the whole Central Asian question that, as the danger of actual Russian invasion was increased by the closer proximity of her frontier to British India, so responsible British opinion changed from the fear of invasion to the fear rather of intrigue and military demonstrations. Almost every Viceroy and every Indian Secretary of State in the last four decades of the nineteenth century believed that these were the real dangers. The Mutiny had so intensified fears of a Russian instigated native uprising in the rear of the British troops facing outwards, that many had come to regard such a rising almost as inevitable. Although the Indian Government in 1871, and again in 1888, denied any serious danger from Russian agents,²³ it nevertheless kept a very close watch indeed on native opinion and on any signs of Russian intrigue.

If any part of India was susceptible to intrigue and a demonstration it was the northern frontier. Only here had Russia almost direct access to the troubled tribal area directly on India's frontier, unimpeded by anything more than the demilitarized panhandle of Afghan territory. The tribes of the northern frontier were certainly not fanatical but, as this glance at thirty years of their history will have shown, they could be troublesome enough, especially as the nature of the terrain made it impossible for India to bring anything like her full military strength to bear upon them. Moreover, on the west of Dardistan the tribes were in close contact with the more formidable Pathans. Elgin was not the first Viceroy to feel that the only really hostile population in the peninsula was in Peshawar and the lands to the north of it.²⁴ For a hostile Russian military demonstration and active intrigue, the small force which geography would have compelled her to use would have been quite adequate, as most of the British authorities admitted. Lockhart was no alarmist, but he believed that a small Russian force

if encouraged by local Chiefs and well provided with money, might make the region here considered a focus for mischief of all sorts, whence independent tribes all along the Peshawar border could easily be incited to raid into British territory. The presence of even a

23. AP/Reel 313; 119, India, 14 July 1888, PFI/54, p.17.

24. Elgin to Hamilton, 30 Dec. 1897, EIP/5, Appendix, p.149; Lytton got the same impression, H. W. Paget and A. H. Mason, *Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes since the Annexation of the Punjab*, p.2.

handful of any hostile European troops on the south of the water-parting would produce infinite mischief throughout India.²⁵

The activities of the Russians on the Pamirs after 1891 demonstrated plainly enough their skill with small lightly-equipped forces. As Roberts put it, 'people who can exist on sheep alone are tolerably independent of ordinary supplies'.²⁶ Moreover, mechanical advances, and especially the introduction of the mountain gun, were revising opinions as to what constituted country impassable for artillery. Barrow, who knew the northern frontier as well as any man and was generally cautious in his views, estimated that it was possible for Russia to deploy at least two thousand men across the Darkot Pass into Yasin, and five thousand across the Dora Pass into Chitral, although probably none in Hunza.²⁷

There is, in fact, the strongest possible evidence for believing that the Russian military authorities *did* intend to menace this frontier with a small distracting force whenever the need arose. In 1879, as has been seen, a force actually set out for the Upper Oxus and during the war-scare after Penjdeh in 1885, troops were again marched down towards the Pamirs.²⁸ In the Pamir crises, it plainly was not only the fear of British influence north of the range which explains the constant desire of the Russian military authorities to push down to the Hindu Kush passes. The chief aim was to be in a position to menace the northern frontier.²⁹ Captain Skersky, one of Ianov's officers, wrote:

The annexation of the Pamirs by Russia . . . is . . . desirable for purely military considerations. Although the Pamirs, because of their harsh climate and difficult terrain, will probably never serve as a theatre for large-scale operations (war), detachments will undoubtedly be sent through these highlands in the event of a conflict with India.

In the first case . . . a detachment in the Pamirs would threaten northern Badakhshan and northern Afghanistan to such an extent

25. Note, 9 Mar. 1888, appended to Secret and Political Memo., A.79.

26. To A. Durand, 7 Feb. 1892, RoP/12, p.233.

27. Memo. on the strategical aspect of Chitral and the Hindu Kush Regions, cited A. Durand, Report on the present military position at Gilgit, 5 Dec. 1888, PFI/57, p.33.

28. Younghusband, *Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889*, p.2.

29. Staal was well aware of this, Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, p.181.

that it would inevitably divert a significant portion of the enemy's forces away from the main theatre of operations.

In the second case, the length of the operational line of advance on India would be shortened by 500 versts [1 verst = $\frac{2}{3}$ mile] if we hold the highlands. An operational line through the Pamirs is not exposed to any particular danger even under present political conditions. A serious threat from the Chinese is not to be expected. The attention of the Afghans, undoubtedly allies of England, would be fastened upon . . . our main army . . . and they would only become aware too late that we had cut off their relations with their subjects in the eastern part of the highlands.³⁰

Military activities and designs did not stop short at the Hindu Kush passes. In 1894, for instance, an attempt was made by diplomacy to confine Britain to a line south of the Hindu Kush, leaving a gap between it and the mountains.³¹ Speaking in 1892 of the Hunza campaign, Prince Galitzine used the rather significant phrase 'vous nous avez fermé la porte au nez'³² and Morier, from other evidence available in the Russian capital, wrote at about the same time:

The scheme accordingly gets clearer and clearer every day; the Khanate of Kanjut [Hunza], well inside the Hindu Kush, has been designated as the *tête de point* of Russia's Central Asian power. . . .³³

It was probably hoped at least to tighten the links with Safdar Ali which Gromchevsky had forged in 1888, although a few years later the Russians apparently discounted Hunza as a military route.³⁴ Chitral was very different. The Russian officer in charge of the Pamir district told Ralph Cobbold in 1898 that, at the time of the British occupation of Chitral, definite orders had been received at the Pamirsky Post to cross the Hindu Kush. Whatever truth there was in this, Cobbold confirmed that very complete plans existed for an advance on Chitral by the Dora and Badakhshan and that the project was 'a matter of common discussion at the dinner-table of the Governor of Fergana'.³⁵ A year later, in

30. Cited *Russian Review*, XVI (1957), no.2, pp.56-7.

31. Correspondence is HC/145, pp.1201 and 1419 and HC/149, pp.173 and 189.

32. Roberts to Duke of Cambridge, 1 Mar. 1892, RoP/9, p.252.

33. 7, to Salisbury, 6 Jan 1892, FO 65/1434.

34. Cobbold Report, 5 Oct. 1898, Secret and Political Memo., A.135, p.5.

35. *Ibid.*

1899, Colonel McSwiney pointed out that the very obvious Russian activity on the Upper Oxus at least made it clear that an advance on Chitral was intended when the time came.³⁶

As for intrigue, reports of sporadic Russian political activity south of the mountains were very old. By 1898, if Cobbold again can be trusted, a regular spy system had been organized from the Russian base on the Upper Oxus.³⁷ The northern frontier appeared to be excellent for this sort of political mole-work, and the Russians believed that the events of the 'nineties proved it. Their activity on the Pamirs had allegedly provoked in response the British activity in Gilgit and Chitral, and this in turn led to the 1897 risings. According to the Russian, Grulev:

the appearance and passive presence on the Pamirs of our small detachment was the fundamental cause of a period of military and financial stress in India, covering a period of some years and represented by a loss of 70,000 men and 480 million rupees in various expeditions in the direction of the Pamirs. . . . [Thus, in war] owing to the short distance and the special military-political conditions obtaining, it would undoubtedly be advantageous to despatch a small column . . . *via* the Pamirs, with a view to direct [*sic*] some of our opponent's forces to this wild frontier. . . . The history of the rising on the north-west frontier of India in 1897-98 confirms the idea that a diversion from the Pamirs might have a powerful influence on the course of military operations along India's principal lines of defence.³⁸

The northern frontier continued to attract the attention of enemy spies and agents. During the 1914-18 war, the activities of Turco-German agents necessitated a British post on the Tagdumbash Pamir and later, in 1922, a Russian camp was established near Qala Panja 'which appeared to be an advance base for Bolshevik intrigue'.³⁹

The events on the northern frontier in the period under review are of particular interest because they provide evidence for testing

36. Memo. of information obtained during a recent journey through Central Asia and Chinese Turkistan, 12 Oct. 1899, Secret and Political Memo., C.101, p.5.

37. Report, 5 Oct. 1898, Secret and Political Memo., A.135.

38. *The Rivalry of Russia and England in Central Asia*, pp.49 and 64. D. I. Logofet, *The Land of Wrong*, p.99 came to exactly the same conclusion.

39. P. T. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, p.262; L. V. S. Blacker, *On Secret Patrol in High Asia, passim*.

the truth of the belief, held at the time almost unanimously by Russians and British alike, that the proximity of Russia *could* unsettle the tribes. The evidence of direct intrigue is necessarily fragmentary. Safdar Ali's intransigence was undoubtedly increased by hope of help from Russia, and it must not be forgotten that he was receiving Russian arms as well as Russian promises. It is almost as hard to prove that the Russian activities led directly to disturbance although Younghusband's expulsion from the Pamirs had a marked influence in Chitral, and the subsequent movements of the Russians had a distinctly unsettling effect on general Indian native opinion.⁴⁰

There is much more evidence to suggest that the disturbing influence of the Russian moves was mainly indirect – that is, that British reactions to these moves, rather than the moves themselves, unsettled the tribes. The Russian and British Empires here on the northern frontier were closer together than anywhere else in the world. As the gap closed, so increasingly on each side did suspicion beget suspicion and activity beget activity in a sort of vicious chain-reaction. It is a classic example of the workings of those kind of 'preventive measures which insure a proximate and certain mischief'.⁴¹ The motivating force of this process was the inbred mutual suspicion of Britons and Russians – each, in the words of a shrewd neutral observer, having 'a national interest in looking at things from different points of view'.⁴² It was aggravated by the fact that the participants were predominantly soldiers. Salisbury had his finger on a significant truth when he warned Lytton:

You listen too much to the soldiers. . . . You should never trust experts. If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome: if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent: if you believe the soldiers, nothing is safe.⁴³

The same was true of the Russians. Staal realized the stupidity of the War Ministry's fears of a British attack or intrigues across the Hindu Kush on Fergana,⁴⁴ but there is no need for that reason to doubt the sincerity of the fears. They appeared not only in the

40. Roberts to Lansdowne, 2 Apr. 1893, RoP/5, p.180.

41. E. Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston: 1846-65*, II, p.333.

42. E. Reclus, *New Universal Geography*, VI, p.289.

43. Kennedy, *Salisbury 1830-1903: Portrait of a Statesman*, p.106.

44. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, II, pp.209 and 226.

Pamir crisis of the 'nineties, but during the pre-1873 discussions about the Upper Oxus and over British activities in Kashgar. Moreover, if everyone believed, like Colonel Yermolov, the Russian Military Agent attached to the London Embassy, that every step taken by the British to consolidate must be answered by a Russian step forward,⁴⁵ then the existence of an almost mathematically regular cause-effect-cause sequence is not hard to explain. It is even less so if the Russians were *deliberately* attracting British money and troops to the north, either to weaken the defensive effort on the main lines of advance or to aggravate tribal discontent. Some British observers during the Pamir crises thought this *was* their main object. Lord Dunmore, who was actually on the Pamirs at the time, believed that Russia

wishes to distract the attention of our Government from the more vulnerable points of the Indian Empire on its western frontier, and force the Indian Government to make roads, build forts, etc., on the south side of the Hindu Kush and thus withdraw a large number of troops from other parts of India to protect them when made. The Russians know as well as we do that they can never invade India that way.⁴⁶

There were, in any case, more general political and commercial factors in operation tending to bring the two frontiers together, quite apart from any deliberate designs of the Russian military planners.

Whatever the main reason for the inter-related sequence of Anglo-Russian activity on the northern frontier, there can be no doubt that the inter-relation existed. Younghusband's mission to the Pamirs in 1890-1 was undeniably caused by the unwelcome attention which the Russian explorers had been paying to the area in the previous years. That Ianov's visit was directly inspired by fear of Younghusband's activities and the political measures taken in the Gilgit Agency is equally undeniable. Although the decision to force a showdown with Hunza had already been decided upon, the preparations for a campaign may well have encouraged the Russians to advance,⁴⁷ and this advance was certainly the main

45. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

46. Report enclosed with IO to FO, 13 Mar. 1893, FO 65/1462.

47. Younghusband to Cunningham, 16 June 1891, enclosed with 1c, India, 25 Oct. 1891, PFI/64, p. 899.

reason which persuaded the Indian Government to force a show-down with Hunza when it did.⁴⁸ The Russians were genuinely alarmed at this step and believed, with some justice, that the British authorities at least intended to use Hunza as a sally-port to defend the Tagdumbash Pamir from Russian encroachment.⁴⁹ One result was Ianov's reappearance on the Pamirs in 1892. This, moreover, had probably been encouraged by Younghusband's successful attempts to bring the Chinese on to the Alichur Pamir and by the consequent advance of, and expulsion of the Chinese by, the Afghans. It was the Russian advance of 1892 which was used to justify the Gilgit reinforcements of that year, the despatch of a British Officer to Chitral, and the opening of the Kaghan road to Chilas. Despite great efforts to keep this activity quiet,⁵⁰ the Russians did learn of it⁵¹ and consequently a new expedition was planned for 1893. Later, in 1895, the British tried to stop this process and forestall any possible fresh Russian retaliatory measures by informing the Russians immediately the decision was made to attack Chitral.⁵² Some on the British side opposed the attack for that reason,⁵³ and in fact the Russians did threaten further advance on account of it.⁵⁴ Eventually Chitral was retained in British hands chiefly because of the Russian advances on the Pamirs and Upper Oxus.

It is equally easy to show that there was a direct connection between the British forward policy, dictated of course by the Russian advances, and tribal discontent. This was the great dilemma of imperial frontier policy ever since it had first become influenced by imperial considerations. Hamilton wrote to Elgin in 1897:

48. At the request of the FO, all reference to Russia was omitted from the Blue Book account of the Hunza campaign although the Indian view was that this left scarcely anything worth printing at all. Marginal Note, PFI/64, p.899 and Lansdowne to Cross, 23 Dec. 1891, LaP/18, p.156.

49. This *was* mooted in tel., India, 23 Nov. 1891, HC/125, p.1673.

50. Tel., Sec. of State, 23 Aug. 1893, KP/5, no.72.

51. And referred to it frequently. See Chichkine Note, 5 Jan. 1893, FO 65/1460.

52. 66A, Kimberley to Lascelles, 15 Mar. 1895 and 72, Lascelles to Kimberley, 26 Mar. 1895, FO 65/1504.

53. E.g. Pritchard in a Minute, 8 Mar. 1895, enclosed with 78, India, 1 May 1895, PFI/79.

54. 159, Lascelles to Kimberley, 17 June 1895, FO 65/1505.

If we can conciliate and attach to us these tribes, then from a military point we are greatly the gainers. If we only make them more hostile, whatever benefit we gain theoretically in strategy by occupying their country, we more than lose tactically by the forces locked up in maintaining our communications. . . . The question which it therefore seems to me you will have to answer . . . is, how can the principle of the forward policy (which I accept as I do the doctrine of gravitation) be best associated with the procedure likely to conciliate the tribes. . . . If I review the past I think our frontier policy has been right in principle; but the pace has been too rapid.⁵⁵

If Hamilton was right in his diagnosis, there is no doubt that the over-rapid pace was directly attributable to Russia's advance. On the northern frontier the measures taken after 1889 undoubtedly alarmed the tribes, and were strongly opposed both at home and in India for that reason. The tribesmen's greatest fear was that the new military roads would threaten their independence by breaking down their former immunity from attack. This is true of Hunza, of Chitral and of the Shinaki communities along the Indus Valley.

Thus, the claim of the Russians that their Pamir activity involved India in constant trouble and expense on the northern frontier had, one way and another, a great deal of truth in it. It would be as foolish to underestimate the political significance of the northern frontier as to exaggerate its very limited military significance. Morier's statement that it was 'little less than lunacy' to 'quarrel about a waste of impassable Alps which no armies could ever cross', and Salisbury's dismissal of the whole dispute for that reason as 'a foolish question', are both therefore a little beside the point.⁵⁶ The danger was not from armies but from emissaries and small mobile task-forces.

It was not, nevertheless, a *great* danger. The utilitarian nature of the British military defensive schemes for the northern frontier was matched by a similar economy on the political plane as well. It was obviously desirable, for political *and* military reasons, to keep Russia away from the Hindu Kush and Karakoram passes. And yet, over and over again, the Indian Government refused to consider pushing British troops into territory north of the main

55. Letter of 23 Sept. 1897, EIP/5, Appendix, p.60.

56. 20, Morier to Salisbury, 20 Jan. 1892 and Salisbury Minute on Morier's 36 of 3 Feb. 1892, both FO 65/1434.

range. The only alternative was therefore to employ someone else to do the job.

The most important of these proxy defenders of the north was of course Afghanistan, fortified by British help in securing a regularly demarcated frontier on the north and strengthened by arms, ammunition, promises and extensive subsidies. Nevertheless this encouragement involved considerable disadvantages, especially on the northern frontier. Relations with Kabul were almost constantly strained and, as a result, the British-assisted Afghan army was a very double-edged weapon. Britain could never even be sure that Afghanistan would remain loyal if Russia had advanced against India. Fortunately, Afghan loyalty was never put to such a test. It was quite bad enough that the Amir, whom it was desired to enlist as an ally north of the Hindu Kush, was a positive and constant menace to the Indian grip on the tribal area to the south of it. The attempts to tighten this grip naturally alarmed the Afghans. Roberts might cry plaintively, 'one would think that we were preparing to invade Afghanistan ourselves, instead of to prevent its being invaded by Russia',⁵⁷ but the Afghans, with the memory of two British invasions in a lifetime, could hardly be expected to see the difference. In the event, the Indian activity among the Muslim tribes of Dardistan, and especially in Chitral, was forced to direct itself as much against Afghan as against Russian incursions. The Amir was admittedly in a difficult position. With rare understanding, the Indian Government remarked of him in 1895:

We must . . . count upon his opposition to us, when we are treating with or engaged in military operations against Muhammadan tribes beyond our northern frontier. . . . The Amir cherishes his assumed position of 'King of Islam', and it is probably necessary for the safety of his throne, if not of his life, that he should never side with the Christian against the Mussulman.⁵⁸

If Afghanistan had been a satisfactory champion north of the Hindu Kush, its constant opposition south of the range would have been more tolerable. But in fact the Amir's grip on Turkistan, and especially on those remote territories along the Upper Oxus which shielded the Hindu Kush, was always suspect. Anti-Kabul

57. To Lyall, 19 July 1892, RoP/9, p.312.

58. 194 of 9 Oct. 1895, PFI/82.

risings, mass emigrations, the exile of rulers, embarrassing requests to Gilgit for help, or even more alarming overtures to the Russian-influenced lands to the north – all these were a constant feature of events on the Upper Oxus. Afghan rule there was hated to such an extent that almost all the British observers were agreed that,

With the Amir's army defeated, the whole of Badakhshan rapturously throwing itself into the arms of a deliverer from the hated Afghan yoke, the Russians would meet with absolutely no resistance.⁵⁹

This put Britain in a most difficult position for she was committed to assist Afghanistan against aggression wherever it should come, even on the Upper Oxus where it was agreed that effective British military operations were out of the question. Worse still, India was able to exercise only a slight control over the Amir's activities on this part of his frontier. His advance across the Oxus in 1884 and his withdrawal from the Pamirs in 1892 were both contrary to Indian policy, and both caused endless complications.

If the Amir was an unsatisfactory champion on the Upper Oxus and western Pamirs, the Government of India had difficulties only a little less serious in its attempts to build a barrier against Russia in Kashgar and on the eastern Pamirs. Yaqub Beg was assisted with arms, a trade treaty, the moral support afforded by British emissaries, and diplomatic assistance in the Russian capital. It is quite true that, unlike that of the Amir of Kabul, his hostility had never been aimed at India and, even if it had, would have been of little serious moment. But the Indian attempts to encourage him certainly had some other disadvantages. He was, after all, a rebel against a Power with whom Britain needed to be on friendly terms, it was impossible to control his doings, and he could offer no real resistance to Russia had she chosen to invade his territories. His defeat at China's hands made this very plain.

The Indian attempts to enlist the power of China in her defence raised problems of a rather different nature. The British activities in Chitral, inspired by Russian moves, weakened the willingness of the Afghans to defend Indian interests on the Pamirs, just as British activities in Hunza affected the Chinese. They, like the Afghans, withdrew from much of the Pamirs, failed to assert their

59. Robertson to Kashmir Resident, 18 Mar. 1893, enclosed with 142, India, 11 July 1893, PFI/70, p.1653.

claims in the manner that best suited the Indian authorities, favoured a solution which India opposed, and were generally unreliable and unco-operative. Moreover, their ability to resist the Russians was extremely suspect. It is not surprising that the problem of reconciling the claims of the two proxy defenders of Indian Pamir interests – China and Afghanistan – proved almost insuperable.

Although a more direct intervention was possible south of the Hindu Kush, the Indian Government was unwilling to take over direct control, and again tried to exercise its influence through a series of proxy champions. The most important of them was Kashmir. It is just another example of the secondary military importance of the northern frontier that the Indian Government was able to entrust much of its defence to a native state. Although the process, which has been noted already, of tightening the political grip on Kashmir was continued and reforms were instituted which had a distinct military significance,⁶⁰ yet the fiction that it was Kashmiri and not British influence which was being extended on the tribal frontier was studiously maintained – even after British troops had marched direct from India to relieve Chitral. Only after the end of the period under review was the pretence gradually abandoned.⁶¹ This persistence is all the more remarkable because the employment of Kashmir as proxy defender of the northern frontier had such serious disadvantages that at least one Viceroy contemplated abandoning the whole project and taking over control direct. There were two principal weaknesses. One was the unreliability of Kashmir *vis à vis* Russia and the Kashmiri resistance to the British efforts to open out the northern frontier. The other was the utter failure of the Maharaja to establish a firm military and administrative grip on the Dard territories up to the southern outlets of the Hindu Kush passes. One of the many reasons for this failure was the fact that a Hindu Power was a patently unsuitable agency for the control of Muslim tribes. Here, on a much smaller scale, the Indian Government

60. Both Lansdowne and Elgin were preoccupied with the whole problem of reform of Kashmir's internal affairs. See the correspondence in LaP/16 and 17 and EIP/1.

61. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, XI, p.263; V. P. Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, p.393.

was face to face with one of the difficulties which faced it in its attempts to reconcile the Chinese and Afghans on the Pamirs – the interests of proxies could, and did, conflict.⁶²

For, as well as the Maharaja of Kashmir, the Indian Government tried to enlist the help of some of the tribal Chiefs themselves. The experiment with Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral and his successors was a mixed success, and eventually broke down completely in 1895. To guard itself in some ways against Chitrali unreliability, the Indian authorities at times also tried to woo whichever Chief appeared to be the strongest along the road from Peshawar to Chitral. In the 'seventies it was Rahmatulla Khan of Dir, in the 'eighties and 'nineties it was Umra Khan of Jandul.

In other words, from 1865 to 1895 the Indian Government was maintaining on the northern frontier what was in effect an inner and an outer set of buffers against any contact between the Russian frontier and the limits of direct British administrative control. And yet, despite the enormous difficulties of the proxy buffer policy, the British authorities were completely successful in their prime aim of avoiding coterminity and of keeping Russia back from the Hindu Kush passes. On paper at least, Afghan and Chinese territories were joined in 1895 on the Pamirs in a barrier which, although thin, survives unchanged to this day. South of the mountains, in the same year, a politico-military administrative structure was created which also survived unchanged in its essentials as long as British India itself. It will never be known whether or not Russia would have established herself in Dardistan had the Gilgit Agency and the apparatus of northern frontier policy not been created. It seems quite certain that she would have at least extended her influence up to the northern skirts of the Hindu Kush. What is indisputable is that after 1895 the Russians could never again hope to win an uncontested footing south of the mountains. The various 'listening-posts [which had been established] . . . in the vast system of natural defences which keeps silent and eternal watch over the teeming plains of Hindustan'⁶³ saw to that.

Reading at leisure some of the documentary material on which

62. There were also conflicts of interest between some of the others: e.g. Dir and Kashmir, Chitral and Kashmir, Afghanistan and Kashmir, Jandul and Afghanistan, Chitral and Afghanistan, Chitral and Jandul.

63. Lord Ronaldshay, *Lands of the Thunderbolt*, p.141.

this study has been based, Lord George Hamilton in September 1896 confessed to being very much struck by 'the immense improvement in our position'⁶⁴ on this most remote of imperial frontiers. His is an irresistible conclusion – but the security system on the far north which brought it about took the best part of thirty years to create and complete.

64. To Elgin, 9 Sept. 1896, ELP/4, p.99.

APPENDIX I

STATISTICS OF THE INDIAN TRADE WITH EASTERN TURKISTAN 1863-1932.

N.B. The real gross value of the trade was only one-half of the apparent gross value shown here, for, as all goods were entered as 'imports' on their arrival at Leh, and as 'exports' on their departure, it follows that everything was counted twice.

*Total gross value of the export and import trade of Leh
(incl. a small trade with Tibet), in Rupees.*

1863	2,36,040	LIM/6, p.525
1864-6	1,00,000 approx	LIM/6, p.525
1867	5,54,945	AP 1868-9 XLVI 384, p.15
1868	10,38,401	CPD/109, no.244
1869	12,91,537	LIM/6, p.525
1870	15,48,000	LIM/8, p.746
1871	12,41,177	PFPI/142, p.245
1872	15,78,812	PFPI/143, p.456
1873	17,76,729	LIM/18, p.125
1874	26,30,932	PFPI/145, Appendix
1875	21,60,789	PFPI/859, p.525
1876	29,99,247	PFI/19, p.429
1877	20,24,362	PFI/19, p.429
1878	21,29,503	PFI/23, p.1711
1879	24,15,419	PFI/26, p.2113
1880	29,34,085	LIM/29, p.57
1881	34,26,315	PFI/32, p.339
1882	38,47,158	PFI/36, p.571
1883	32,49,682	PFI/41, p.353
1884	37,01,696	PFI/46, p.1007
1885	34,00,822	PFI/48, p.117
1886-7	28,84,642	PFI/50, p.1605
1887-8	34,28,573	PFI/55, p.149
1888-9	25,65,875	PFI/57, p.1247
1889-90	31,14,206	PFI/60, p.1035
1890-1	29,66,389	Godfrey to Kashmir Resident, 2 June 1894, PFI/75, p.405
1891-2	30,13,118	PFI/75, p.405
1892-3	33,86,685	PFI/75, p.405
1893-4	39,91,627	PFI/75, p.405
1894-5	60,00,000 approx	North-West Frontier Diary, July 1895, PFI/81
1901-2	24,55,160	V. Chirol, <i>The Middle Eastern Question</i> (London 1903), p.371

1904	24,01,000
1912	29,26,000
1913	28,79,000
1914	24,37,000
1915	22,00,000
1916	28,26,000
1917	54,84,000
1918	69,68,000
1919	81,45,000
1920	70,54,000
1920-1	76,93,000
1921-2	41,47,000
1922-3	44,92,000
1923-4	50,10,000
1924-5	43,94,000
1926	54,71,000
1927	32,19,000
1928	20,92,000
1929	25,98,000
1931	25,80,000
1932	27,52,000

1904 onwards. F. Kazak, *Ostturkistan zwischen den Grossmaechten* (Koenigsberg 1937), p.153

APPENDIX II

TREATY between the BRITISH GOVERNMENT and HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJA RUNBEER SINGH, G.C.S.I., MAHARAJA of JUMMOO and CASHMERE, his heirs and successors, executed on the one part by THOMAS DOUGLAS FORSYTH, C.B., in virtue of the full powers vested in him by HIS EXCELLENCY the RIGHT HON'BLE RICHARD SOUTHWELL BOURKE, EARL of MAYO, VISCOUNT MAYO of MONYCROWER, BARON NAAS of NAAS, K.P., G.M.S.I., P.C., etc., etc., etc., VICEROY and GOVERNOR-GENERAL of INDIA, and on the other part by HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJA RUNBEER SINGH aforesaid, in person - 1870.

C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads etc.* (Calcutta 1931), XII, pp.26-9.

Whereas, in the interest of the high contracting parties and their respective subjects, it is deemed desirable to afford greater facilities than at present exist for the development and security of trade with Eastern Turkestan, the following Articles have, with this object, been agreed upon:-

- Article 1. With the consent of the Maharaja, officers of the British Government will be appointed to survey the trade routes through the Maharaja's territories from the British frontier of Lahoul to the territories of the Ruler of Yarkand, including the route *via* the Chang Chemoo Valley. The Maharaja will depute an officer of his Government to accompany the Surveyors, and will render them all the assistance in his power. A map of the routes surveyed will be made, an attested copy of which will be given to the Maharaja.
- Article 2. Whichever route towards the Chang Chemoo Valley shall, after examination and survey as above, be declared by the British Government to be the best suited for the development of trade with Eastern Turkestan, shall be declared by the Maharaja to be a free highway in perpetuity and at all times for all travellers and traders.
- Article 3. For the supervision and maintenance of the road in its entire length through the Maharaja's territories, the regulation of traffic on the free highway described in Article 2, the enforcement of regulations that may hereafter be agreed upon, and the settlement of disputes between carriers, traders, travellers, or others using that road, in which either of the parties or both of them are subjects of the

British Government or of any foreign State, two Commissioners shall be annually appointed, one by the British Government, and the other by the Maharaja. In the discharge of their duties and as regards the period of their residence the Commissioners shall be guided by such rules as are now separately framed and may, from time to time, hereafter be laid down by the joint authority of the British Government and the Maharaja.

- Article 4. The jurisdiction of the Commissioners shall be defined by a line on each side of the road at a maximum width of two Statute koss, except where it may be deemed by the Commissioners necessary to include a wider extent for grazing grounds. Within this maximum width the Surveyors appointed under Article 1 shall demarcate and map the limits of jurisdiction which may be decided on by the Commissioners as most suitable, including grazing grounds; and the jurisdiction of the Commissioners shall not extend beyond the limits so demarcated. The land included within these limits shall remain in the Maharaja's independent possession; and, subject to the stipulations contained in this Treaty, the Maharaja shall continue to possess the same rights of full sovereignty therein as in any part of his territories, which rights shall not be interfered with in any way by the Joint Commissioners.
- Article 5. The Maharaja agrees to give all possible assistance in enforcing the decisions of the Commissioners and in preventing the breach or evasion of the regulations established under Article 3.
- Article 6. The Maharaja agrees that any person, whether a subject of the British Government, or of the Maharaja, or of the Ruler of Yarkand, or of any foreign State, may settle at any place within the jurisdiction of the two Commissioners, and may provide, keep, maintain, and let for hire at different stages the means of carriage and transport for the purposes of trade.
- Article 7. The two Commissioners shall be empowered to establish supply depôts and to authorize other persons to establish supply depôts at such places on the road as may appear to them suitable; to fix the rates at which provisions shall be sold to traders, carriers, settlers and others; to fix the rent to be charged for the use of any rest-houses or serais that may be established on the road. The officers of the British Government in Kullu, etc., and the officers of the Maharaja

in Ladak, shall be instructed to use their best endeavours to supply provisions on the indent of the Commissioners at market rates.

- Article 8. The Maharaja agrees to levy no transit duty whatever on the aforesaid free highway; and the Maharaja further agrees to abolish all transit duties levied within his territories on goods transmitted in bond through His Highness' territories from Eastern Turkestan to India, and *vice versâ*, on which bulk may not be broken within the territories of His Highness. On goods imported into, or exported from, His Highness' territory whether by the aforesaid free highway or any other route, the Maharaja may levy such import or export duties as he may think fit.
- Article 9. The British Government agree to levy no duty on goods transmitted in bond through British India to Eastern Turkestan, or to the territories of His Highness the Maharaja. The British Government further agree to abolish the export duties now levied on shawls and other textile fabrics manufactured in the territories of the Maharaja, and exported to countries beyond the limits of British India.
- Article 10. This Treaty, consisting of 10 Articles, has this day been concluded by Thomas Douglas Forsyth, C.B., in virtue of the full powers vested in him by His Excellency the Right Hon'ble Richard Southwell Bourke, Earl of Mayo, Viscount Mayo, Monycrower, Baron Naas of Naas, K.P., G.M.S.I., P.C., etc., etc., Viceroy and Governor-General of India on the part of the British Government, and by Maharaja Runbeer Singh aforesaid; and it is agreed that a copy of this Treaty, duly ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, shall be delivered to the Maharaja on or before the 7th September, 1870.

Signed, sealed, and exchanged at Sealkote on the second day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy, corresponding with the 22nd day of Bysack, Sumbut 1927.

Signature of the Maharaja of Cashmere.

(Signed) T. D. FORSYTH.

„ MAYO.

This treaty was ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India at Sealkote on the 2nd day of May 1870.

(Signed) C. U. AITCHISON.

*Officiating Secretary to the Government
Of India, Foreign Department.*

APPENDIX III

CONDITIONS OF FREE TRADE PROPOSED BY GENERAL AIDE-DE-CAMP von KAUFMANN TO YAQUB BEG, CHIEF OF DJETY-SHAHR – 1872.

1. All Russian subjects, of whatsoever religion, shall have the right to proceed for purposes of trade to Djety-Shahr, and to all the localities and towns subject to the Chief of Djety-Shahr, which they may desire to visit, in the same way as the inhabitants of Djety-Shahr have hitherto been and shall be in the future entitled to prosecute trade throughout the entire extent of the Russian Empire. The honourable Chief of Djety-Shahr undertakes to keep a vigilant guard over the complete safety of Russian subjects within the limits of his territorial possessions and also over that of their caravans, and in general over everything that may belong to them.
2. Russian merchants shall be entitled to have caravanserais, in which they *alone* shall be able to store their merchandize, in all the towns of Djety-Shahr in which they may desire to have them. The merchants of Djety-Shahr shall enjoy the same privilege in the Russian villages.
3. Russian merchants shall, if they desire it, have the right to have commercial agents (caravanbashis) in all the towns of Djety-Shahr, whose business it is to watch over the regular course of trade and over the legal imposition of customs dues. The merchants of Djety-Shahr shall enjoy the same privilege in the towns of Turkistan.
4. All merchandize transported from Russia to Djety-Shahr, or from that province into Russia, shall be liable to a tax of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, *ad valorem*. In every case this tax shall not exceed the rate of the tax taken from Mussulmans being subject to Djety-Shahr.
5. Russian merchants and their caravans shall be at liberty, with all freedom and security, to traverse the territories of Djety-Shahr in proceeding to countries coterminous with that province. Caravans from Djety-Shahr shall enjoy the same advantages for passing through territories belonging to Russia.

These conditions were sent from Tashkent on the 9th April 1872.

General von Kaufmann, Governor-General of Turkistan, signed the treaty and attached his seal to it.

In proof of his assent to these conditions, Muhammad Yaqub, Chief of Djety-Shahr, attached his seal to them at Yangi-Shahr on the 8th June 1872.

APPENDIX IV

TREATY between the BRITISH GOVERNMENT and HIS HIGHNESS the AMEER MAHOMED YAKOOB KHAN, RULER of the TERRITORY of KASHGAR and YARKUND, his heirs and successors, executed on the one part by THOMAS DOUGLAS FORSYTH, C.B., in virtue of full powers conferred on him in that behalf by HIS EXCELLENCY the RIGHT HON'BLE THOMAS GEORGE BARING, BARON NORTHBROOK of STRATTON and a BARONET, MEMBER of the PRIVY COUNCIL of HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY the QUEEN of GREAT BRITAIN and IRELAND, GRAND MASTER of the MOST EXALTED ORDER of the STAR of INDIA, VICEROY and GOVERNOR-GENERAL of INDIA in COUNCIL, and on the other part by SYUD MAHOMED KHAN TOORAH, Member of the 1st CLASS of the ORDER of MEDJEDIE, etc., in virtue of full powers conferred on him by HIS HIGHNESS - 1874.

C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads etc.* (Calcutta 1931), XIV, pp.7-11.

Whereas it is deemed desirable to confirm and strengthen the good understanding which now subsists between the high contracting parties, and to promote commercial intercourse between their respective subjects, the following Articles have been agreed upon: -

- Article 1. The high contracting parties engage that the subjects of each shall be at liberty to enter, reside in, trade with and pass with their merchandize and property into and through all parts of the dominions of the other, and shall enjoy in such dominions all the privileges and advantages with respect to commerce, protection or otherwise, which are or may be accorded to the subjects of such dominions, or to the subjects or citizens of the most favoured nation.
- Article 2. Merchants of whatever nationality shall be at liberty to pass from the territories of the one contracting party to the territories of the other with their merchandize and property, at all times and by any route they please; no restriction shall be placed by either contracting party upon such freedom of transit unless for urgent political reasons to be previously communicated to the other; and such restriction shall be withdrawn as soon as the necessity for it is over.
- Article 3. European British subjects entering the dominions of His

Highness the Ameer for purposes of trade or otherwise must be provided with passports certifying to their nationality. Unless provided with such passports they shall not be deemed entitled to the benefit of this Treaty.

- Article 4. On goods imported into British India from territories of His Highness the Ameer by any route over the Himalayan passes which lie to the south of His Highness' dominions, the British Government engages to levy no import duties. On goods imported from India into territories of His Highness the Ameer no import duty exceeding $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. *ad valorem* shall be levied. Goods imported as above into the dominions of the contracting parties may, subject only to such excise regulations and duties and to such municipal or town regulations and duties as may be applicable to such classes of goods generally, be freely sold by wholesale or retail and transported from one place to another within British India and within the dominions of His Highness the Ameer respectively.
- Article 5. Merchandize imported from India into the territories of of His Highness the Ameer will not be opened for examination till arrival at the place of consignment. If any disputes should arise as to the value of such goods, the Customs Officer or other officer acting on the part of His Highness the Ameer shall be entitled to demand part of the goods at the rate of one in forty in lieu of the payment of duty. If the aforesaid Officer should object to levy the duty by taking a portion of the goods, or if the goods should not admit of being so divided, then the point in dispute shall be referred to two competent persons, one chosen by the aforesaid Officer and the other by the importer, and a valuation of the goods shall be made, and if the referees shall differ in opinion, they shall appoint an arbitrator, whose decision shall be final, and the duty levied according to the value thus established.
- Article 6. The British Government shall be at liberty to appoint a Representative at the Court of His Highness the Ameer and to appoint Commercial Agents subordinate to him in any towns or places considered suitable within His Highness' territories. His Highness the Ameer shall be at liberty to appoint a Representative with the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and to station Commercial Agents at any places in British India considered suitable. Such Representative shall be entitled to the rank and privileges

accorded to Ambassadors by the law of nations, and the Agents shall be entitled to the privileges of Consuls of the most favoured nation.

Article 7. British subjects shall be at liberty to purchase, sell, or hire land or houses or depôts for merchandize in the dominions of His Highness the Ameer, and the houses, depôts, or other premises of British subjects shall not be forcibly entered or searched without the consent of the occupier unless with the cognizance of the British Representative or Agent and in presence of a person deputed by him.

Article 8. The following arrangements are agreed to for the decision of civil suits and criminal cases within the territories of His Highness the Ameer in which British subjects are concerned:

(a) Civil suits in which both plaintiff and defendant are British subjects, and criminal cases in which both prosecutor and accused are British subjects, or in which the accused is an European British subject mentioned in the third article of this Treaty, shall be tried by the British Representative or one of his Agents in the presence of any Agent appointed by His Highness the Ameer;

(b) Civil suits in which one party is a subject of His Highness the Ameer and the other party a British subject, shall be tried by the Courts of His Highness in the presence of the British Representative or one of his Agents or of a person appointed in that behalf by such Representative or Agent;

(c) Criminal cases in which either prosecutor or accused is a subject of His Highness the Ameer shall, except as above otherwise provided, be tried by the Courts of His Highness in presence of the British Representative or of one of his Agents;

(d) Except as above otherwise provided, civil and criminal cases in which one party is a British subject, and the other the subject of a foreign power, shall, if either of the parties is a Mahomedan, be tried in the Courts of His Highness; if neither party is a Mahomedan, the case may, with consent of the parties, be tried by the British Representative or one of his Agents; in the absence of such consent, by the Court of His Highness;

(e) In any case disposed of by the Courts of His Highness the Ameer to which a British subject is party, it shall be

competent to the British Representative, if he considers that justice had not been done, to represent the matter to His Highness the Ameer who may cause the case to be retried in some other Court, in the presence of the British Representative or of one of his Agents or of a person appointed in that behalf by such Representative or Agent.

- Article 9. The rights and privileges enjoyed within the dominions of His Highness the Ameer by British subjects under the Treaty shall extend to the subject of all Princes and States in India in alliance with Her Majesty the Queen; and if with respect to any such Prince or State, any other provisions relating to this Treaty or to other matters should be considered desirable, they shall be negotiated through the British Government.
- Article 10. Every affidavit and other legal document filed or deposited in any Court established in the respective dominions of the high contracting parties, or in the Court of the Joint Commissioners in Ladakh, may be proved by an authenticated copy, purporting either to be sealed with the seal of the Court to which the original document belongs, or in the event of such Court having no seal, to be signed by the Judge or by one of the Judges of the said Court.
- Article 11. When a British subject dies in the territory of His Highness the Ameer his movable and immovable property situated therein shall be vested in his heir, executor, administrator, or other representative in interest or (in the absence of such representative) in the Representative of the British Government in the aforesaid territory. The person in whom such charge shall be so vested shall satisfy the claims outstanding against the deceased, and shall hold the surplus (if any) for distribution among those interested. The above provisions *mutatis mutandis* shall apply to the subjects of His Highness the Ameer who may die in British India.
- Article 12. If a British subject residing in the territories of His Highness the Ameer becomes unable to pay his debts or fails to pay any debt within a reasonable time after being ordered to do so by any Court of Justice, the creditors of such insolvent shall be paid out of his goods and effects; but the British Representative shall not refuse his good offices, if need be, to ascertain if the insolvent has not left in India disposable property which might serve to satisfy the said creditors. The friendly stipulations in the present Article

shall be reciprocally observed with regard to His Highness' subjects who trade in India under the protection of the laws.

This treaty having this day been executed in duplicate and confirmed by His Highness the Ameer, one copy shall, for the present, be left in the possession of His Highness, and the other, after confirmation by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, shall be delivered to His Highness within twelve months in exchange for the copy now retained by His Highness.

Signed and sealed at Kashgar on the second day of February in the year of our Lord 1874, corresponding with the fifteenth day of Zilhijj 1290 Hijree.

(Signed) T. DOUGLAS FORSYTH.

Envoy and Plenipotentiary.

Whereas a Treaty for strengthening the good understanding that now exists between the British Government and the Ruler of the territory of Kashgar and Yarkund, and for promoting commercial intercourse between the two countries, was agreed upon and concluded at Kashgar on the second day of February in the year of Our Lord eighteen hundred and seventy-four, corresponding with the fifteenth day of Zilhijj twelve hundred and ninety Hijree, by the Respective Plenipotentiaries of the Government of India and of His Highness the Ameer of Kashgar and Yarkund duly accredited and empowered for that purpose; I the Right Hon'ble Thomas George Baring, Baron Northbrook of Stratton, etc., etc., Viceroy and Governor-General of India, do hereby ratify and confirm the Treaty aforesaid.

Given under my hand and seal at Government House in Calcutta, this thirteenth day of April in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy-four.

(Signed) NORTHBROOK.

APPENDIX V

TRANSLATION OF A TREATY BETWEEN HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR ON ONE SIDE AND AMAN-OOO-MULK, THE RULER OF CHITRAL ON THE OTHER – 1878.

J. A. Crawford, *Confidential Précis of Correspondence relating to the Kashmir State* (Calcutta 1884), p.169.

At this time with true intention and good faith this Treaty has been executed, with the following articles, on behalf of myself and my descendants: –

Article 1. I agree that I will always sincerely endeavour to be in submission and obedience to His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. I will inwardly and openly consider the friend of the Maharaja as my own friend, and the enemy of His Highness as my own ill-wisher. In recognition of the superiority and greatness of His said Highness I will present annually the following articles as *nuzzerana*: –

Horses	..	..	..	..	..	2
Hawks	..	..	..	..	..	2
Hunting dogs	..	..	..	..	..	2

Article 2. One confidential agent of the Sirkar shall always remain in Chitral and one at Yasin and due respect and regard will be shown to them. Similarly, an agent on my behalf shall always be present at the Durbar of His Highness and (an agent) on behalf of the Ruler of Yasin shall remain at Gilgit to carry out orders.

Article 3. On condition of my abiding by the above-cited articles and doing every act in accordance with the pleasure of the Sirkar, I shall receive an annual stipend of R12,000 Srinagar currency, from the Sirkar. If, instead of an agent, my son attends the Durbar, he shall receive a separate stipend from the Sirkar.

APPENDIX VI

RELEVANT SECTIONS OF THE 'DURAND AGREEMENT' - 1893.

AP 1905 LVII C.2534.

(1) *Agreement signed at Kabul on the 12th November, 1893*

Whereas the British Government has represented to His Highness the Amir that the Russian Government presses for the literal fulfilment of the Agreement of 1873 between Russia and England by which it was decided that the river Oxus should form the northern boundary of Afghanistan from Lake Victoria (Wood's Lake) or Sarikul on the east to the junction of the Kokcha with the Oxus, and whereas the British Government considers itself bound to abide by the terms of this Agreement, if the Russian Government equally abides by them, His Highness Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, G.C.S.I., Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, wishing to show his friendship to the British Government and his readiness to accept their advice in matters affecting his relations with Foreign powers, hereby agrees that he will evacuate all the districts held by him to the north of this portion of the Oxus on the clear understanding that all the districts lying to the south of this portion of the Oxus, and not now in his possession, be handed over to him in exchange. And Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, hereby declares on the part of the British Government that the transfer to His Highness the Amir of the said districts lying to the south of the Oxus is an essential part of this transaction, and undertakes that arrangements will be made with the Russian Government to carry out the transfer of the said lands to the north and south of the Oxus.

(Signed) H. M. DURAND

Kabul

12th November, 1893.

(Signed) AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN KHAN

12th November, 1893=(2nd Jamadi-ul-awal 1311)

(2) *Agreement signed at Kabul on the 12th November, 1893*

Whereas certain questions have arisen regarding the frontier of Afghanistan on the side of India, and whereas both His Highness the Amir and the Government of India are desirous of settling these ques-

tions by a friendly understanding, and of fixing the limits of their respective spheres of influence, so that for the future there may be no difference of opinion on the subject between the allied Governments, it is hereby agreed as follows: —

1. The eastern and southern frontier of His Highness's dominions, from Wakhan to the Persian border, shall follow the line shown in the map attached to this agreement.
2. The Government of India will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of Afghanistan, and His Highness the Amir will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of India.
3. The British Government thus agrees to His Highness the Amir retaining Asmar and the valley above it, as far as Chanak. His Highness agrees on the other hand that he will at no time exercise interference in Swat, Bajaur, or Chitral, including the Arnawai or Bashgal valley. The British Government also agrees to leave to His Highness the Birmal tract as shown in the detailed map already given to His Highness, who relinquishes his claim to the rest of the Waziri country and Dawar. His Highness also relinquishes his claim to Chageh.
4. The frontier line will hereafter be laid down in detail and demarcated, wherever this may be practicable and desirable, by Joint British and Afghan Commissioners, whose object will be to arrive by mutual understanding at a boundary which shall adhere with the greatest possible exactness to the line shown in the map attached to this agreement, having due regard to the existing local rights of villages adjoining the frontier.
5. With reference to the question of Chaman, the Amir withdraws his objection to the new British Cantonment and concedes to the British Government the rights purchased by him in the Sirkai Tilerai water. At this part of the frontier the line will be drawn as follows: —

From the crest of the Khwaja Amran range near the Psha Kotal, which remains in British territory, the line will run in such a direction as to leave Murgha Chaman and the Sharobo spring to Afghanistan, and to pass half-way between the new Chaman Fort and the Afghan outpost known locally as Lashkar Dand. The line will then pass half-way between the railway station and the hill known as the Mian Baldak, and, turning southwards, will rejoin the Khwaja Amran range, leaving the Gwasha Post in British territory, and the road to Shorawak to the west and south of Gwasha in Afghanistan. The British

Government will not exercise any interference within half-a-mile of the road.

6. The above articles of agreement are regarded by the Government of India and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan as a full and satisfactory settlement of all the principal differences of opinion which have arisen between them in regard to the frontier; and both the Government of India and His Highness the Amir undertake that any differences of detail, such as those which will have to be considered hereafter by the officers appointed to demarcate the boundary line, shall be settled in a friendly spirit, so as to remove for the future as far as possible all causes of doubt and misunderstanding between the two Governments.
7. Being fully satisfied of His Highness's goodwill to the British Government, and wishing to see Afghanistan independent and strong, the Government of India will raise no objection to the purchase and import by His Highness of munitions of war, and they will themselves grant him some help in this respect. Further, in order to mark their sense of the friendly spirit in which His Highness the Amir has entered into these negotiations, the Government of India undertakes to increase by the sum of six lakhs of rupees a year the subsidy of twelve lakhs now granted to His Highness.

(Signed) H. M. DURAND

„ AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN KHAN

Kabul, 12th November, 1893.

- (3) *Letter from Sir Mortimer Durand, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., to His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, dated Kabul, the 11th November, 1893.*

[After compliments] When your Highness came to the throne of Afghanistan, Sir Lepel Griffin was instructed to give you the assurance that, if any foreign power should attempt to interfere in Afghanistan, and if such interference should lead to unprovoked aggression on the dominions of your Highness, in that event the British Government would be prepared to aid you to such extent and in such manner as might appear to the British Government necessary in repelling it, provided that your Highness followed unreservedly the advice of the British Government in regard to your external relations.

I have the honour to inform your Highness that this assurance remains in force, and that it is applicable with regard to any territory which may come into your possession in consequence of the agreement which you have made with me today in the matter of the Oxus frontier.

It is the desire of the British Government that such portion of the northern frontier of Afghanistan as has not yet been marked out should now be clearly defined; when this has been done, the whole of your Highness's frontier towards the side of Russia will be equally free from doubt and equally secure.

APPENDIX VII

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND RUSSIA WITH REGARD TO THE SPHERES OF INFLUENCE OF THE TWO COUNTRIES IN THE REGION OF THE PAMIRS. 1895.

AP 1895 CIX C.7643.

The Earl of Kimberley to M. de Staal.

Foreign Office,
March 11, 1895.

Your Excellency,

As a result of the negotiations which have taken place between our two Governments in regard to the spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia in the country to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul), the following points have been agreed upon between us: —

1. The spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul) shall be divided by a line which, starting from a point on that lake near to its eastern extremity, shall follow the crests of the mountain range running somewhat to the south of the latitude of the lake as far as the Bendersky and Orta-Bel Passes.

From thence the line shall run along the same range while it remains to the south of the latitude of the said lake. On reaching that latitude it shall descend a spur of the range towards Kizil Rabat on the Aksu River, if that locality is found not to be north of the latitude of Lake Victoria, and from thence it shall be prolonged in an easterly direction so as to meet the Chinese frontier.

If it should be found that Kizil Rabat is situated to the north of the latitude of Lake Victoria, the line of demarcation shall be drawn to the nearest convenient point on the Aksu River south of that latitude, and from thence prolonged as aforesaid.

2. The line shall be marked out, and its precise configuration shall be settled by a Joint Commission of a purely technical character, with a military escort not exceeding that which is strictly necessary for its proper protection.

The commission shall be composed of British and Russian Delegates, with the necessary technical assistance.

Her Britannic Majesty's Government will arrange with the Ameer of Afghanistan as to the manner in which His Highness shall be represented on the Commission.

3. The Commission shall also be charged to report any facts which can be ascertained on the spot bearing on the situation of the Chinese frontier, with a view to enable the two Governments to come to an agreement with the Chinese Government as to the limits of Chinese territory in the vicinity of the line, in such manner as may be found most convenient.
4. Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia engage to abstain from exercising any political influence or control, the former to the north, the latter to the south, of the above line of demarcation.
5. Her Britannic Majesty's Government engage that the territory lying within the British sphere of influence between the Hindu Kush and the line running from the east end of Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier shall form part of the territory of the Ameer of Afghanistan, that it shall not be annexed to Great Britain, and that no military posts or forts shall be established in it.

The execution of this Agreement is contingent upon the evacuation by the Ameer of Afghanistan of all the territories now occupied by His Highness on the right bank of the Panjah, and on the evacuation by the Ameer of Bokhara of the portion of Darwaz which lies to the south of the Oxus, in regard to which Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia have agreed to use their influence respectively with the two Ameers.

I shall be obliged if, in acknowledging the receipt of this note your Excellency will record officially the Agreement which we have thus concluded in the name of our respective Governments.

I am, etc.

(Signed) KIMBERLEY.

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- EP/ *Elgin Papers*: correspondence of the 8th Earl. At the India Office (Eur. Mss. F.83). Of this collection, only the volume of letters from the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab, 1862-3, was used.
- EIP/ *Elgin Papers*: correspondence of the 9th Earl. At the India Office (Eur. Mss. F.84).
 1 Correspondence with the Secretary of State 1894

EIP/

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| 2 | Correspondence with the Secretary of State | Jan.-June 1895 |
| 3 | Correspondence with the Secretary of State | July-Dec. 1895 |
| 4 | Correspondence with the Secretary of State | 1896 |
| 5 | Correspondence with the Secretary of State | 1897 |
| | Book of Press Cuttings | |
| 6 | Correspondence in India | Jan.-June 1894 |
| 7 | Correspondence in India | July-Dec. 1894 |
| 8 | Correspondence in India | Jan.-June 1895 |
| 9 | Correspondence in India | July-Dec. 1895 |

BM Add.
Mss.

Gladstone Papers: correspondence of William Ewart Gladstone. At the British Museum.

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|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 44101-106 | Correspondence with Argyll |
| 44133-134 | Correspondence with Clarendon |
| 44145-148 | Correspondence with Hartington |
| 44165-180 | Correspondence with Granville |
| 44226-229 | Correspondence with Kimberley |
| 44286-287 | Correspondence with Ripon |
| 44288-290 | Correspondence with Rosebery |
| 44540-549 | Letters sent by Gladstone |
| 44609-635 | Cabinet Memoranda |
| 44636-647 | Cabinet Minutes |
| 44773-775 | Miscellaneous Memoranda |

PRO 30/29/ *Granville Papers*: correspondence of the 2nd Earl. At the Public Record Office.

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| 25-8 | Correspondence with the Cabinet | 1866-91 |
| 32-45 | Correspondence with the Queen | 1868-85 |
| 51 | Correspondence with Argyll | 1869-73 |
| 55 | Correspondence with Clarendon | 1869-70 |
| 57-62 | Correspondence with Gladstone | 1868-74 |
| 68-70 | Cabinet Memoranda | 1869-74 |
| 71-77 | Official Correspondence and Miscellaneous | 1868-74 |
| 79 | Correspondence with Russell | 1868-73 |
| 91 | Correspondence with Russia | 1871-74 |
| 97 | Correspondence with Russia | 1870-74 |
| 98 | Correspondence with Russian Embassy | 1869-74 |
| 104-5 | Correspondence with Hammond | 1869-74 |
| 106 | Correspondence with Tenterden | 1871-74 |
| 114 | Correspondence with Russia | 1870-74 |

- PRO 30/29/ 115 Correspondence with Russian Embassy 1870-74
- 123-29 Correspondence with Gladstone 1880-85
- 131-32 Correspondence with Hartington 1880-82
- 135-36 Correspondence with Kimberley 1880-85
- 143-45 Cabinet Opinions and Memoranda 1880-85
- 146-47 Official Correspondence 1880-85
- 148-53 Miscellaneous Correspondence 1880-85
- 185-86 Correspondence with St Petersburg Embassy 1880-85
- 326-28 Russia in Central Asia: Confidential Prints 1879-85
- 361-66 Memoranda 1853-85
- 378 Russia in Central Asia: Confidential Prints 1886
- 382 Afghanistan: Cabinet Confidential 1880
- HP/ *Hamilton Papers*: correspondence of Lord George Hamilton. At the India Office (Eur. MSS. C.125-6 and D.508-10).
- C.125/1-3 To Elgin 1895-98
- D.508 Telegrams Private 1895-99
- D.509/1-8 Elgin to Hamilton 1895-97
- FO 391/ *Hammond Papers*: correspondence of Edmund Hammond, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. At the Public Record Office.
- 7 Correspondence with Palmerston and Russell 1859-66
- 4 Correspondence with Clarendon 1856-70
- 24 Correspondence with Gladstone 1869-73
- KP/ *Kimberley Papers*: correspondence of the 1st Earl. On deposit with the Historical MSS. Commission.
- 1 Ripon to Kimberley 1884
- 2-3 Dufferin to Kimberley 1884-86
- 4 Kimberley to Dufferin Feb.-Sept. 1886
- 5 Telegrams to and from India 1892-94
- 6-7 Lansdowne and Elgin to Kimberley 1892-94
- 8 Cabinet Memoranda 1894-95
- 9 Private Letters from St Petersburg 1894-95
- 10 Kimberley to Dufferin 1884-85
- C.27 To and from Gladstone 1891-95
- C.28a-b Miscellaneous 1891-96

- KP/ D.68 Memoranda 1882-86
 E.2a-b From Ardagh 1892-94
 E.6b To and from Gladstone 1894
 E.21a From Lansdowne
 E.26 To and from Rosebery 1892-94
 E.60 Miscellaneous Memoranda on the Pamirs 1893
 G.27 Foreign Office: Printed Memoranda 1892
 G.106 Miscellaneous Minutes 1880-82
 G.107 Cabinet Memoranda 1880-82
 G.111 Memoranda on Russia in Central Asia
 J.3 Cabinet Memoranda 1883-85
- LaP/ *Lansdowne Papers*: correspondence of the 5th Marquis. At the India Office (Eur. MSS. D.558).
 1-10 Correspondence to and from persons in India 1888-94
 11-15 Correspondence to and from persons in England 1888-94
 16-20 Correspondence to and from the Secretary of State 1888-94
 21 Notes and Minutes by Lansdowne 1889-94
 22 Summary of measures considered and carried out 1888-94
 23-24 Secret Selection of Despatches and other papers 1888-94
- LP/ *Lawrence Papers*: correspondence of John, 1st Lord Lawrence. At the India Office (Eur. MSS. F.90).
 2 Secretary of State to Lawrence 1865
 3 Secretary of State to Lawrence 1866
 4 Secretary of State to Lawrence 1867
 5 Secretary of State to Lawrence 1868
 6 Lawrence to Secretary of State 1865
 7 Lawrence to Secretary of State 1866
 8 Lawrence to Secretary of State 1867
 9 Lawrence to Secretary of State 1868
 10 From the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab 1867-68
- BM Add. Mss. *Layard Papers*: correspondence of Sir A. H. Layard, Ambassador at Constantinople, 1877-80. At the British Museum.
 38969 From Lytton 1866-79
 38970 From Lytton 1880-91
 38971 To Lytton 1864-80

- BM Add. 39130 Letter-Books of private correspondence
Mss. Apr. 1877–Nov. 1878
- 39131 Letter-Books of private correspondence
Jan. 1878–Jan. 1879
- 39132 Letter-Books of private correspondence
Jan. 1879–May 1880
- 39164 Official and Demi-Official correspondence
- LyP/ *Lytton Papers*: correspondence of the 1st Earl. At the
India Office (Eur. MSS. E.218).
- 3/1 Letters Sent (printed series –
incomplete) 1876
- 3/2 Letters Sent (printed series –
incomplete) 1877
- 3/3 Letters Sent (printed series –
incomplete) 1878
- 3/4 Letters Sent (printed series –
incomplete) 1879
- 5/7 Printed Volume of Kabul
Correspondence
- 5/8–12 Miscellaneous notes and papers on
Afghanistan and Central Asia
- 5/31 Letters to Cranbrook, Secretary of
State
- 516/1–5 Letters from Secretary of State 1876–80
- 517/1–9 Letters from England 1876–80
- 518/1–6 Letters sent 1876–80
- 519/1–13 Correspondence in India 1876–80
- 520/1–3 Printed Minutes and Notes 1876–80
- 522/1 Minutes and Notes 1879–80
- NoP/ *Northbrook Papers*: correspondence of the 1st Earl. At the
India Office (Eur. Mss. C.144).
- 1 Correspondence with Argyll 1872–74
- 2–3 Correspondence with Salisbury 1874–76
- 4–7 Correspondence with Persons in
England 1872–76
- 8–14 Correspondence with Persons in India 1872–80
- 15 Correspondence with Dufferin and
Lansdowne 1880–90
- 16 Correspondence with Grant Duff and
Biddulph 1882–86
- 17 General Correspondence 1876–79

NP/

Northcote Papers: correspondence of Sir Stafford Northcote, 1st Earl of Iddesleigh. On deposit with the Historical MSS. Commission.

1	Letter Book	Mar.-Aug. 1867
2	Letter Book	Aug. 1867-Jan. 1868
3	Letter Book	Jan.-Aug. 1868
4	Letter Book	Aug.-Dec. 1868
4/18	Cabinet Memoranda	
5	Letter Book	Feb. 1874-Apr. 1876
6	Letter Book	Apr. 1876-Dec. 1878
7	Letter Book	Jan.-Dec. 1879

RoP/

Roberts Papers: correspondence of Earl Roberts. In the possession of the Ogilby Trust.

1	Notes on the Central Asian Question	1877-93
2	Correspondence with England while C.-in-C., Madras	1881-85
3	Correspondence with India while C.-in-C., Madras	1881-85
4	Correspondence with the Viceroy	1885-88
5	Correspondence with the Viceroy	1888-93
6	Minutes and Notes, etc.	(i) 1877-89 (ii) 1890-93
7	Correspondence with England while C.-in-C., India	1885-87
8	Correspondence with England while C.-in-C., India	1888-89
9	Correspondence with England while C.-in-C., India	1890-93
10	Correspondence with India while C.-in-C., India	1885-88
11	Correspondence with India while C.-in-C., India	1888-89
12	Correspondence with India while C.-in-C., India	1890-93
13	Correspondence while in Afghanistan	1878-80

RP/

Ripon Papers: correspondence of the 1st Marquis. At the British Museum.

- Printed Series -

1	Telegraphic Correspondence with the Secretary of State	1880-84
2-6	Correspondence with the Secretary of State	1880-84
7-16	Correspondence in India	1880-84

BM Add.

– Second Series –

- Mss.
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| 43510 | Correspondence with Royalty | |
| 43521 | Correspondence with Granville | 1871–88 |
| 43570–3 | Correspondence with Northbrook | 1873–1904 |
| 43593 | Correspondence with Aitchison | 1880–84 |
| 43602–3 | Correspondence with Lyall | 1880–1909 |
| 43604 | Correspondence with Grant | 1880–84 |
| 43617 | Correspondence with Frere, Perry
and Hunter | 1858– |
- PRO/30/22/ *Russell Papers*: correspondence of Lord John Russell,
Foreign Secretary, 1859–65. At the Public
Record Office.
- | | | |
|------|---|---------|
| 15–6 | Correspondence and Papers:
Boxes 1 and 2 | 1864–70 |
| 27 | Memoranda | 1859–65 |
| 28 | Official Correspondence | 1859–65 |
| 78 | Official Correspondence: with the
Russian Embassy | 1860–65 |
| 84 | Official Correspondence: with the
British Embassy in St Petersburg | 1863–65 |
- TP/ *Temple Papers*: correspondence of Sir Richard Temple,
Indian Civil Servant and Member of the
Governor-General's Council 1854–80. At
the India Office (Eur. MSS. F.86).
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| 1 | Letters to Lawrence | 1864–67 |
| 4 | Letters to Salisbury | 1874–77 |
| 5 | Letters to Lytton | 1877–80 |
| 6 | Letters to Cranbrook | 1877–80 |
| 9 | Letters from Lawrence as Viceroy | |
| 10 | Letters from Mayo as Viceroy | |
| 11 | Letters from Northbrook as Viceroy | |
| 15 | Letters from Lytton as Viceroy | |
| 16 | Letters from Salisbury | 1874–78 |
| 17 | Letters from Cranbrook | 1878–80 |
- FO 363/ *Tenterden Papers*: correspondence of Lord Tenterden,
Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign
Affairs, 1873–82. At the Public Record
Office.
- | | | |
|---|------------------------|---------|
| 1 | Correspondence A-Las | 1873–82 |
| 2 | Correspondence Lay-Par | 1873–82 |
| 3 | Correspondence Pau-Sai | 1873–82 |
| 4 | Correspondence Sal-W | 1873–82 |
| 5 | Miscellaneous | 1873–82 |

WoP/

Wolseley Papers: a large collection of miscellaneous papers and memoranda on military matters, many of them concerning Central Asia and India, belonging to the 1st Viscount Wolseley, Adjutant-General 1882-90, Commander-in-Chief 1895-99. At the War Office.

These Memoranda are referred to by a serial number and full title whenever they are cited.

WP/

Wood Papers: correspondence of Sir Charles Wood, 1st Viscount Halifax, Secretary of State for India, 1859-66. At the India Office (Eur. MSS. F.78).

Box 7. Correspondence with John Lawrence as Viceroy.

Parliamentary Papers

<i>Year</i>	<i>Vol.</i>	<i>Command No.</i>	<i>Short Title</i>
1857	XI	79	Copies of Minutes and Correspondence in reference to the Hindostan and Tibet Road, with the several Reports of Major Kennedy and Lieut. Briggs relating thereto.
1864	XLII	65	Copy of Mr. Davies's Report on the Trade of Central Asia.
1865	LIV	3477	Reports by Her Majesty's Secretaries of Embassy and Legation on the Manufactures, Commerce, etc. of the Countries in which they reside. — No. 8 Russia.
1866	LXXII	3603	Report on the Present State of Trade between Great Britain and Russia.
1867	LXX	3896	Reports by Her Majesty's Secretaries of Embassy and Legation, etc. — No. 6 Memorandum on the Tea Trade of Russia by J. S. Lumley.
1868–9	XLVI	384	Despatches and Memoranda, sent to the Government of India since 1866, as to the trade of India with Eastern Turkistan, or the countries between it and the Punjab.
1871	LI	60	Correspondence relating to the Mission of Mr. Douglas Forsyth to Yarkand.
1873	LXXV	699	Correspondence with Russia respecting Central Asia.
		704	Further Correspondence.
1874	XLVIII	217	Treaty of Commerce with the Amir of Kashgar, 2nd Feb. 1874.
1874	XLIX	1002	Reports on Trade Routes and Fairs on the Northern Frontier of India.
1874	LXXVI	919	Correspondence respecting Central Asia.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Vol.</i>	<i>Command No.</i>	<i>Short Title</i>
1876	LVII	1616	Statement of the Trade of British India with British Possessions and Foreign Countries for the years 1870-1 to 1874-5.
1878	LVIII	1898	Papers relating to the Re-organization of the Western and North-Western Frontier of India.
1878	LXXX	2164	Correspondence respecting Central Asia.
1878-9	LVI	2190	Correspondence respecting the relations between the British Government and Afghanistan since the accession of the Ameer Shere Ali Khan.
		2191	Further Papers relating to the Affairs of Afghanistan.
		2250	Further Papers relating to the Affairs of Afghanistan.
		2401	Further Correspondence.
		2402	Further Correspondence.
		2472	Minutes recorded by Lord Canning and the members of his Council in Feb. 1857 as to the Agreement with Afghanistan.
1878-9	LXXVII	2188	Further Correspondence respecting Central Asia.
		2209	Further Correspondence.
		2273	Despatches from the Governor-General of India in Council to the Secretary of State in 1861 on Central Asia and Quetta; and reply.
1880	LIII	2457	Correspondence relating to the Affairs of Afghanistan.
		2690	Papers relating to the Advance of Ayoob Khan and Kandahar.
		2736	Further Papers.
1880	LXXVIII	2470	Further Correspondence respecting Affairs in Central Asia.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Vol.</i>	<i>Command No.</i>	<i>Short Title</i>
1881	LXX	2776	Further Correspondence relating to the Affairs of Afghanistan, including the Recognition of Sirdar Abdul Rahman Khan as Amir of Kabul.
		2811	Papers relating to the Occupation of Kandahar.
		2852	Further Papers relating to the Occupation of Kandahar.
		2865	Further Papers relating to the Occupation of Kandahar.
		3090	Further Correspondence relating to the Affairs of Afghanistan, including the Transfer of the Administration of Kandahar to Amir Abdul Rahman Khan.
1881	LXXXVIII	2895	Statement of the Trade of British India with British Possessions and Foreign Countries, 1875 to 1880.
1881	XCVIII	2798	Correspondence respecting Affairs in Central Asia.
		2802	Further Despatch respecting Affairs in Central Asia.
		2844	Further Correspondence respecting Affairs in Central Asia.
		3032	Further Correspondence respecting Affairs in Central Asia.
1882	XLVIII	118	Return of the Amount of Money given by the Indian Government to the Ameers of Afghanistan since the time of Dost Mohammed; and, of the Amount of Ammunition, and the Number of Guns and Rifles given during the same period.
1882	LXXX	3136	Correspondence respecting the Affairs in Central Asia.
1883	LXXXII	3586	Despatches from H.M. Ambassador in St Petersburg, forwarding translations of the published Reports of Mr. Lessar's Journeys in Central Asia.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Vol.</i>	<i>Command No.</i>	<i>Short Title</i>
1884	LXXXVII	3930	Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Asia.
1884-5	LVIII	224	Copy of Map showing the new Railways and Roads made or proposed to be made upon the North-Western Frontier of India.
1884-5	LXXXVII	4363	Telegrams from Lieut-General Sir Peter Lumsden relative to the Fight between the Russians and the Afghans at Ak Tépé.
		4387	Further Correspondence respecting Central Asia.
		4388	Maps.
		4389	Further Correspondence.
		4418	Further Correspondence.
1886	XLIX	4729	Statement of the Trade of British India with British Possessions and Foreign Countries, for the years 1880-1 to 1884-5.
1887	LXIII	5114	Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Central Asia.
		5235	Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Central Asia.
1888	LXXVII	5561	Papers relating to the Expedition against certain Tribes inhabiting the Black Mountain.
		5254	Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Central Asia.
		5518	Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Central Asia.
1890	LIV	6072	Papers relating to Kashmir.
1890-1	LVIII	6341	Statement of the Trade of British India with British Possessions and Foreign Countries, for the years 1885-6 to 1889-90.
1892	LVIII	6621	Correspondence relating to the Operations in Hunza-Nagar.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Vol.</i>	<i>Command No.</i>	<i>Short Title</i>
1895	LXXII	7864	Correspondence relating to Chitral.
		117	Statement of Expenditure incurred on account of Military Expeditions to Gilgit, Chilas, Hunza, and intervening Places during the Financial Years 1890-91 to 1892-3.
		91	Return, showing Expenditure incurred out of the Revenues of India on the Construction of Railways and Roads, and on Military Expeditions and Explorations, and Subsidies to Native Chiefs beyond the West and North-West Frontier of India, from April 1882 to March 1891.
1895	CIX	7643	Agreement between the Governments of Great Britain and Russia with regard to the spheres of influence of the two Countries in the region of the Pamirs, 11 March 1895.
1896	LX	8042	Agreement signed by Mr. R. Udny and Sipah Salar Ghulam Haidar Khan, Joint Commissioners for laying down the Afghan Boundary from the Hindu Kush Range to Nawa Kotal, confirmed 19th Dec. 1895.
1896	LXI	262	Correspondence relating to Afghan Proceedings in Kafiristan.
1896	LXII	7997	Statement of the Trade of British India with British Possessions and Foreign Countries, for the years 1890-91 to 1894-5.
		8037	Correspondence relating to the Occupation of Chitral.
1898	LXIII	8713	Papers regarding British Relations with the neighbouring Tribes on the North-West Frontier of India and the Military Operations undertaken against them during the year 1897-98; Volume I.
		8714	Volume II.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Vol.</i>	<i>Command No.</i>	<i>Short Title</i>
1900	LVIII	13	Return setting out Wars and Military Operations on or beyond the Borders of British India in which the Government of India has been engaged since 1849, in chronological order; the causes of such Wars or Operations; the locality in which troops operated; the results obtained; the number of troops employed; the cost of such Wars or Operations; and the amount of any contributions towards such cost from the British Treasury.
1901	XLIX	496	Papers regarding British relations with the neighbouring tribes on the North-West Frontier of India and Punjab Frontier Administration.
1905	LVII	2534	Treaty between the British Government and the Amir, dated 21st March 1905, with papers relating thereto.

Anonymous Indian Official Publications

- Reports on the Administration of the Panjab* (1860-1 annually to 1895-6).
- Note on the Trade Statistics of the Panjab* (1869-70 annually to 1875-76).
- Panjab Trade Report* (1876-77 annually to 1879-80).
- Report on the External Land Trade of the Panjab* (1880-1 annually to 1895-6).
- Review of the External Land Trade of British India* (1878-9 annually to 1883-4).
- Review of the Trade of India* (1884-5 annually to 1894-5).
- Review of the Trade of British India with Foreign Countries* (1878-9 annually to 1895-6).
- Report on the Conditions and Prospects of British Trade in India, 1924-5; Annexe: Report on the Trade of Kashgar for the years 1923-4.*
- Report on the Trade of Chinese Turkistan with India and adjacent Countries 1931-2.*
- General Report on the Operations of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India* (1862-3 annually to 1876-7).
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- Confidential Gazeteer of Kashmir and Ladakh* (QMG Intelligence Dept. Calcutta 1890).
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Index

Page references in heavy type indicate maps.

- Abbottabad, **103**, 113, 258
Abd-ar-Rahman, Amir, in exile, 179; comes to the throne, 147, 182, 193; policy in Chitral, 147-8, 214-15, 261-2, 287; policy in Dir/Bajaur/Swat, 149-50, 214; relations with India, 147, 158, 208-9, 214, 238, 254, 274-6, 287, 288, 290; Kafiristan policy, 149-50; and Pamirs, 221, 238, 239, 250, 252, 280; Upper Oxus territories of, 188, 196-205 *passim*, 207, 240, 261, 264, 267-9, 284; and Wakhan, 275, 277-8, 284; visits India, 149, 199; Durand Mission to, 274-6, 287, 330-3
Abdul Mejid, explorer, 110
Abdul Subhan, explorer, 111, 189-90
Abdulla Jan, Governor of Afghan Turkistan, 194, 199, 207
Abramov, General, 152, 301
Afghan Turkistan, **xiv**, 1, 166, 168, 173, 199, 200, 204, 232
Afghan War, 2nd, 122, 123, 126, 136, 182, 191, 192, 293
Afghanistan, 1, **xiv**, 9; Bukhara and, 166, 170, 178, 179, 194, 197, 199, 207; Chitral and, 116-17, 119-23, 127-8, 147-9, 214-15, 227, 255-6, 261-3, 274, 287, 289-91, 314; Dir/Swat/Bajaur and, 120-1, 124, 126, 147, 149; Dufferin's policy towards, 149, 199; Durand Mission to, 274-6, 287, 330-3; 1885 Boundary settlement, 154, 157, 198-9, 200-1, 202, 203n, 204, 206, 294, 297; Kafiristan and, 149-50, 297; Mayo's policy towards, 38-9, 44, 170, 172-3, 178-9; Lansdowne's policy towards, 208-9, 214, 252, 254, 274; Lawrence's policy towards, 38, 165, 172, 178; Lytton's policy towards, 61, 66, 68, 121, 128, 182, 192; Moorcroft visits, 16; Ripon's policy towards, 146-7, 149, 180, 188, 193, 196; Indian policy towards, 81, 304, 307, 313; war of with India, 122, 123, 126, 136, 182, 191, 192, 293; threat of to frontier tribes, 100, 116, 117, 121, 124, 127-8, 188, 208-9, 214, 254, 274-5, 313; Upper Oxus territories of, 49, 119, 153, chap. IV *passim*, 206-8, 218, 221-2, 226, 232-3, 240-1, 242, 248, 252, 261-2, 264-9, 272-6, 277, 284, 285, 313-14; Pamirs and, 218-22, 232, 234, 238-9, 242, 250, 252-4, 274, 277, 280, 288, 311, 313-14; Russian policy towards, 171, 179, 199; possible Russian invasion of, 13, 98, 199, 206, 293-5, 302-3
Afzal-ul-Mulk, Ruler of Chitral, 255, 258
Agha Mehdi, Russian Agent, 16
Agnew, Lieutenant P. A. Vans, 106
Agreements, *see* Treaties and
Ahmad Shah, Ruler of Afghanistan, 1
Ahmed Shah Nakshabandi, British Agent, 31
Aitchison, J. E. T., Leh Joint-Commissioner, 15n.
Ak-baital River, **167**, 250
Akhund of Swat, 124, 125
Ak-su River, **167**; source of, 11, 190; Afghanistan and, 252; China and, 222, 224, 243; Russia and, 225, 250, 266, 271, 277
Ak-tash, **167**, 242n., 250, 252
Alai, **xiv**, 12, 111, 113, 152, **167**, 225, 246, 301
Alexander the Great, 210
Alexander II, Tsar, 63, 168, 174, 176, 191
Alexander III, Tsar, 176, 240, 246, 247, 265, 276
Alichur Pamir, **167**, 224, 233, 234, 238, 239, 250, 252, 311
Alingar River, **xiv**, 149
Alty Shar, *see* Eastern Turkistan
Alum Khan, Ruler of Badakhshan, 194
Aman, Gauhar, Ruler of Yasin, 102, 104
Aman-ul-Mulk, Ruler of Chitral, ability of, 107, 216; position of, 134-5; relations of, with India, 119, 120-3, 137, 147-8, 216-17; with Kashmir, 104, 114, 119, 121-3, 126, 137, 143, 147; with Yasin, 107-9, 141-2, 148; with Jandul, 212-17; with Badakhshan, 119-20, 127, 147; with Afghanistan, 119-23, 147-9, 214, 216-7; with Russia, 135, 154, 230; with Hayward, 107-8; with Biddulph, 122-3, 127, 141; with MacNair, 148; with Lockhart, 148, 155-6; with Elias, 157; death of, 148-9, 217, 227, 255, 257
Amballa Meeting, 172-3, 178
Amir-ul-Mulk, Ruler of Chitral, 289
'Amir-ul-Muminin', *see* Yaqub Beg
Amirs of Afghanistan, *see* Ahmad Shah, Dost Muhammad, Sher Ali, Yaqub Khan, Abd-ar-Rahman

- Amritsar, **xiv**, 15; Treaty of, 21, 100, 101, 105
 Amur River, 97
 Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 287
 Annenkov, General, 302
 Annexation, of Southern Afghanistan, 128-30; of Kashmir, 101, 145; of Pamirs, 225-6, 306; of Panjab, 1, 22, 100
 Aral Sea, 2, 11, 34
 Ardagh, Major-General Sir John, 265n.
 Argyll, 8th Duke of, 40, **50n.**, 174, 175, 181, 185, 186, 188
 Army, Chinese, 94-5
 Army, Indian, 3, 115; in Afghanistan, 180, 192, 293-4; in Chitral, 289, 298; in Gilgit Agency, 157, 163, 228-9, 251, 258-9, 298, 303; in Kashgar, 59, 70; in Kashmir, 146; on Pamirs, 232, 234, 251, 265; on Upper Oxus, 192, 204
 Army, Kashmiri, 96, 104, 135, 137, 140, 146, 157, 159, 160, 163, 212, 258
 Army, Russian, in Asia, 3, 36, 71, 76n., 286, 302; on Pamirs, 226, 249-50, 281, *see* Cossacks; Invasion; Russia, military
 Army, Yaqub Beg's, 53
 Artillery, mountain, 306; on Pamirs, 112; in Chitral, 112, 157; in Hunza, 212, 229; at Gilgit, 228; across Karakoram, 36-7; across Baroghil, 118; across Darkot, 118
 Asmar, **103**, 214, 217, 255, 256, 274, 287, 290
 Astor, 102, **103**, 133, 135, 160
 Ata Mohamed, explorer, 113
 'Ataliq Ghazee', 42n., *see* Yaqub Beg
 Austria, 287
 Azor Khan, of Chaprot, 139, 140, 159
 Baba, Mir, Ruler of Badakhshan, 192, 193
 Badakhshan, 12, **167**, 300; Sher Ali conquers, 1, 119; 1873 'agreement' and, 168-9, 171, 174-6, 183-7, 191, 203; Shignan and, 183, 190; Chitral and, 119-20, 147-8, 255, 294; Anti-Kabul risings in, 192-3, 207; Abd-ar-Rahman and, 193-4, 196, 199, 207; British explorers and, 31, 78, 154, 202, 207; Russian explorers and, 152-3; Russian invasion of, 157, 172, 204, 264, 301, 306-7
 Baghdad, 60, 62n.
 Baiyik Pass, **167**, 230, 282
 Bajaur, 9, 10, **103**, 121, 123, 149, 213
 Baksh, Faiz, explorer, 110, 111n.
 Balkans, 287
 Balkh, **xiv**, 203, 294
 Baltistan, **xiv**, 8, 9, 20, 101, 210
 Baltit, **103**, 160, 230n.
 Baluchistan, 61
 Baranovsky, 57
 Barbour, Sir David, 259
 Baroghil Pass, **103**, 210; invasion of Chitral by, 120; Biddulph explores, 111-12, 118, 136, 151; Lockhart explores, 155; Younghusband explores, 269; Russia and, 113, 117, 196, 225, 252
 Barrow, Sir Edmund, 154, 306
 Bashgal Valley, **103**, 290
 Beg Kuli Beg, Ruler of Kashgar, 66
 Bendersky, topographer, 152
 Bengal, 1
 Berlin, Congress of, 152, 191
 Biddulph, John, explores passes, 111-12, 114, 118, 136, 151, 156, 269, 270; as Gilgit Agent, 125, 129, 131-3, 140-4; and Hunza/Nagar, 138-41, 161; and Yasin, 122-3, 127, 132; and Kashmir, 130-1, 132, 139-40; and Upper Oxus, 141, 192; and Chitral, 122-3, 127, 129n., 132
 Black Mountain, 11
 Blue Books, 164n., 184-5, 204, 258n., 261n., 262n., 275n., 290n., 291n., 297, 311n.
 Bolan Pass, 209, 293
 Bombay, 54
 Bonvalot, G., 158n., 270
 Boundary Commission, *see* Afghanistan, Ladakh, Pamirs
 Bozai Gumbaz, **167**, 226-7, 229; ownership of, 232-3, 239, 241; Russians at, 225-6, 227, 241, 250, 272
 Brackenbury, Sir Henry, 259, 260-1, 262, 267, 268
 Bright, John, 304
 Bruce, Brig.-Gen. C. G., 256
 Brunnow, Baron P., 173, 174, 176-7
 Buchanan, Sir Andrew, 40-1, 168-72, 176-7
 Bukhara, **xiv**, 33, 171, 190, 220, 245; territory of, 168, 187; Darwaz and, 12, 153, 191, 241, 264, 284; Shignan and, 190; Roshan and, 195; Badakhshan and, 193; British explorers and, 16, 31; Russia and, 157, 175, 179, 199-200, 203; Afghanistan and, 166, 170, 178, 179, 194, 197, 199, 207
 Bulgarian Crisis, 201
 Bunji, 102, **103**, 133, 140, 160, 229, 231, 257
 Burma, 44, 83, 93, 222, 236, 254
 Burnes, Sir Alexander, 57, 301
 Burzil Pass, **103**, 231
 Bykov, explorer, 151
 Cabinet, British, 6, 175, 181
 Calcutta, 62, 94

- Camels, 46, 56, 145
 Canning, 2nd Viscount, 116
 Capus, G., French explorer, 158n., 270
 Catherine the Great, 301
 Cavagnari, Sir P. L. N., 124, 126, 128, 192
 Cayley, Dr. Henry, 39, 98, 131; at Leh, 28-30, 42, 81; relations with Kashmir, 28, 118, 131; and Chang-Chenmo, 45-7
 Central Asian Question, 177, 244; nature of, 4, 309; as a diplomatic issue, 165, 176; China and, 72, 75-6, 86, 95, 234, 286; Europe and, 2, 98, 303-4; Near East and, 61, 286, 304; explorers and, 4, 7; end of, 286-7
 Central Asian Trading Company, 55, 92n.
 Chalt, 103, 159-60, 211-12, 228, 229, 235
 Chang, General, 233
 Chang-Chenmo route, 36-7, 45-7, 56, 89, 95, 103
 Chaprot, 103, 138-40, 159-60, 161, 211-12
 Charjui, 157, 168, 294
 Chernaiev, General, 3
 Chichkine, N., 225, 243, 244, 248, 249, 263, 265
 Chilas, 11, 103; strategic significance of, 11, 111, 257, 258, 259-60, 263, 311; Kashmir and, 102, 104, 257; intrigues for attack on Gilgit, 139, 140-1, 257; 1892 crisis, 257-63 *passim*; settlement, 298
 China, x, 283, 303n.; army of, 94-5; conquerers and loses Eastern Turkistan, 1, 25, 35, 55, 63-7, 72, 81, 222; British relations with, 23, 26, 48-9, 52, 63-88 *passim*, 93-4, 95; Russian relations with, 52, 63-4, 65, 71n., 72-80 *passim*, 84-7, 95, 96-7; importance of in Central Asian Question, 72, 75, 76, 81, 86, 95, 234, 286; and Tibet, x, 20, 21; western frontier of, 237, 243, 254, 265, 278-82, 283, 285; and Hunza, 87, 236-7, 283; and Pamirs, 200, 219, 220, 222-4, 233-5, 237-8, 239, 242, 243, 250, 252-4, 266, 280, 281, 283, 307, 311, 314-15; and Tibet, 20
 Chinese Turkistan, *see* Eastern Turkistan, Sinkiang
 Chitral, ix, 13, 103, 300; geography, 10, 301; route to from Gilgit, 136-7, 145, 157, 216, 292; route to from Panjab, ix, 11, 56, 90n., 106, 111, 112, 124-5, 136, 156, 163, 212-16, 257, 269, 288-92, 295-8, 316; passes, 112, 118, 119, 123, 125, 135, 136-7, 152, 156, 199, 215, 252, 269, 295-6; Upper Oxus and, 150, 172; Badakhshan and, 119-20, 127-8, 147, 148, 214, 255; Afghanistan and, 116-17, 119-23, 127-8, 147-9, 214-15, 227, 255-6, 261-3, 274, 287, 289-91, 313; Kashmir and, 104, 114, 119, 121-3, 125, 136-7, 142, 148, 291, 329; Yasin and, 107-9, 127, 141, 142, 148, 256; Russia and, 57, 80, 149, 153-4, 155-8, 163, 184, 196, 199, 226-7, 230, 255-6, 264, 269-71, 291-3, 294-7, 301, 306, 307-8, 309, 311; India and, 119, 121-2, 127, 128-9, 147, 156, 158, 212-13, 216-17, 227, 260-3, 287-9, 290-8, 311; Dir/Jandul and, 121, 126, 213, 255, 256-7, 288, 289-90; British Agent in, 148, 154, 216, 230, 255, 256, 260, 261-2, 311; Afghan Boundary Commission in, 207; Biddulph in, 122-3, 131; Durand in, 216; Elias in, 157; Lockhart in, 155-7, 203; MacNair in, 148, 154; native explorers in, 106-7, 112; Robertson in, 255, 256, 260; Youngusband in, 256, 260, 261-2, 263, 269, 288; death of Aman-ul-Mulk, 255-7, 258, 259, 287; 1895 crisis in, 287-9; siege and relief of, 146, 289-90, 311; defence of, 136-7, 156-7, 162-4, 291-2, 294-8
 Chitral River, 10, 103
 Chung How, 75
 Churchill, Lord Randolph, 145, 201
 Clarendon, 4th Earl of, 40, 41, 165, 166, 168, 169, 173, 177
 Clerk, Sir George, 29n.
 Cobbold, Ralph, 307, 308
 Cockerill, Sir George, 229n., 269
 Commander-in-Chief, Indian, 4n., 129, 208; Afghan, 214, *see* under individual names.
 Commerce, *see* Trade
 Commons, House of, 37, 62n., 249, 297
 Company, East India, 1, 16-20 *passim*;
 Central Asian Trading, 55, 92n.
 Congress of Berlin, 152, 191
 Conservative Party, 129, 165, 181n., 297
 Constantinople, 49, 53n., 61, 62, 63, 287
 Consul, British at Kashgar, 81, 85, 86-7;
 Russian at Kuldja, 34; at Kashgar, 35, 79, 85; Chinese, 86, *see* Macartney, George and Petrovsky
 Conway, Baron, 5n.
 Cossacks, 160-2, 296, 302
 Cottons, British, 15, 88, 91; Russian, 89
 Crimean War, 165, 181
 Cross, 1st Viscount, 158, 236n., 279
 Crosthwaite, Sir Charles, 259, 295
 Currie, Philip, Baron, 236
 Curzon, 1st Marquess, 111n., 230n., 297, 298, 299
 Dalgleish, Andrew, trader, 77, 83, 85, 95
 Damascus, 60

- Dardanelles, 286
- Dardistan, **xiv**, 9n., 11, 101, 102, 106, 107, 109, 112, 128, 132, 134, 135, 147, 154, 159, 192, 209, 227, 257, 287, 293, 305, 316
- Darel, 11, 13, **103**, 104, 139, 141
- Darkot Pass, 59, **103**, 111, 118, 155, 220, 225, 306
- Darwaz, 12, **167**; territory of, 186, 189, 190; exploration of, 152, 189-90, 207; Afghanistan and, 190, 284; Bukhara and, 12, 153, 191, 241, 264, 284; Shignan and, 189, 190
- Dauvergne, H., 211
- Davies, Sir Robert Henry, 22, 24
- Davidson, Lieut. G. C., 225, 233, 245
- Deane, Sir Harold Arthur, 295
- Delhi Durbar, 121
- Dera Ghazi Khan, 158
- Dir, 9, 10, **103**; exploration, 107, 155; Afghanistan and, 121, 124, 126, 147, 149; Chitral and, 121, 126, 217; India and, 123-6, 129, 150, 213; Jandul and, 150, 213; Kashmir and, 119, 121, 126, 150; and Swat, 124, 125-6. For Panjab/Dir/Chitral road, *see* Chitral
- Djety-Shahr, *see* Eastern Turkistan
- Dora Pass, **103**, 107, 155-7 *passim*, 252, 255, 271, 291, 306, 307
- Dost Muhammad, Amir, 116, 168
- Dowager Empress of China, 266
- Drew, Frederick, 106, 109
- Drosh, **103**, 257
- Duff, Sir M. E. Grant, 186
- Dufferin, 1st Marquess, 82n., 94, 158, 270; and Eastern Turkistan, 82-5; and Dir/Chitral road, 212; and Kashmir, 144, 145; and Afghan boundary, 200-5 *passim*; active frontier policy of, 150, 159, 208; and Hunza, 162; meets Amir, 149, 199; leaves India, 163
- Dunmore, 7th Earl of, 250n., 310
- Durand, Algernon, 270; proposes Gilgit Agency, 162-3, 211-12; appointed Gilgit Agent, 164, 209; and Chalt/Chaprot crisis, 211-12, 228; and Chilas, 257-9; and Chitral, 216, 256, 258; and Dir road, 212-13; and Gor, 257-8; and Hunza, 89-90, 211, 227-9, 236, 283; and telegraph 230-1
- Durand, Sir Henry, 109
- Durand, Sir Mortimer, and tribal policy, 158; and Gilgit Agency, 158; and Upper Oxus frontier, 204; mission to Kabul, 274-6, 287, 330-3
- Durand Line, 288, 290
- East India Company, 1, 16-20 *passim*
- Eastern Turkistan, **xiv**, 8, 55; China conquers, 1, 22, 25, China expelled from, 19, 25, 35; China reconquers, 55, 63-7, 72, 81; Moorcroft and, 16-17; exploration of, 30-3, 34; 1st Forsyth Mission to, 42-4, 46, 71, 110-11; 2nd Forsyth Mission to, 49-51, 53, 55, 56-7, 59, 60, 71, 110, 111-12, 114, 151, 154, 189, 218-20; Kaulbars' Mission to, 45; Reinthal's Mission to, 54-5; Indian trade with, 15, 21, 23-4, 25-6, 30, 48-9, 55, 71n., 72, 76-7, 79-80, 82-3, 84n., 85, 87-93, 318-19; Russian trade with, 33-4, 34-5, 41, 44, 45, 72, 79, 80, 86, 88, 92n., 171; trade routes between India and, 9, 15, 22-3, 24, 27, 45-8, 53, 56, 80, 85, 88-90, 99, 109, 124-5; trade routes between Russia and, 33-4, 45, 77, 88-9; trade capacity of, 55, 92; late arrival of caravan from, 48, 82, 90n., 91; Russia and Yaqub Beg in, 35-6, 39, 43, 44, 45, 53, 68-71; India opens relations with, 14, 19, 21-2, 25-6, 33; British policy towards, 73-4, 98-9 (*see also* under individual Viceroy); Anglo-Russian relations and, 44, 53-4, 58, 61-3, 69-71, 87; possible Russian conquest of, 35, 36-8, 45, 53, 57-8, 59, 95, 97, 114-15, 161, 163, 283; possible invasion of India from, 16-17, 19, 33, 36, 56-7, 67-70, 94, 95, 97-8, 283, 301; strategic significance of, 57-8, 59, 91-2, 94-5, 96-8, 270, 301; frontiers of, 49, 58, 69, 218, 237, 243, 254, 265, 278-82, 283, 285; Russians and Chinese in, 52, 63-4, 65, 71n., 72-80, 84-7, 95; Britain and Chinese in, 52, 63-88 *passim*, 93-4, 95; effect of Sino-Japanese War on, 281
- Edinburgh Review*, 47
- Edwardes, Sir Herbert, 116n., 117, 120, 127
- Egerton, Sir Robert, 117n., 123, 128, 129
- Egypt, 266
- Elgin, 9th Earl of, 288n., 311; frontier policy of, 288, 305; and Chitral, 288-9, 290-1, 295; and Dir road, 290-1; and Pamirs, 296; and Kashmir, 315n.
- Elias, Ney, 66n., 98; at Leh, 66, 81; 1879 mission to Kashgar, 76-7, 82; 1880 mission, 77-9; 1885-6 mission, 82-3, 154, 161, 188, 200-1, 203; and Chitral, 157; and Pamirs, 221
- Elizabeth I, Queen, 1
- Emperor, of Russia, *see* Tsar
- Empress, Dowager of China, 266
- Evans, Lt.-Col. De Lacy, 301
- Exploration, physical dangers of, 4-5; political dangers of, 31-2; security aspects of, 5-7, 151; restrictions on, 5, 32, 154; importance of, 7, 298-9
- Explorers, role of in Central Asian Ques-

- tion, 4, 7, 298-9; Indian native, 31, 48, 106-7, 110, 112, 154, 183; Russian attitude towards, 5. *See* under individual names
- Eyre and Spottiswoode, 6
- 'F.B.', *see* Faiz Baksh
- Fadeyev, General, 301
- Faiz Baksh, explorer, 110, 111n.
- Faizabad (Badakhshan), **xiv**, 152, 167
- Falconer, Dr. H., 20
- Far East, 286
- Fedchenko, A., 113, 191
- Fergana, 12, 113, 220, 223, 307, 309-10
- Fergana Column, 152
- Fitzpatrick, Sir Dennis, 215
- Forces, *see* Army
- Foreign Office, 157, 181, 276; Salisbury at, 86; Clarendon at, 165; Granville at, 173; and Afghan frontier, 177n., 184, 185, 186, 195, 196, 199, 201, 264, 268; and China, 86, 87, 93-4, 228, 236-7; and Eastern Turkistan, 93; and Hunza, 228, 236-7; and Pamirs, 87, 222, 238, 264
- Forsyth, Sir Thomas Douglas, 23n., 47, 63, 72, 98, 113; and Leh Agency, 27, 29-30; and Palampur Fair, 29-30, 48; and Kashmir boundary, 278; treaty with Kashmir, 42, 278; and Kashgar trade, 23-4, 27, 30, 38, 42, 43, 46, 55; views on strategy, 36, 37-8, 97-8; fails to visit Khotan, 32, 47; visits Russia, 35n., 40-1, 168-9, 178-9; 1st Kashgar Mission, 43-4, 46n., 71, 74, 107, 110; 2nd Kashgar Mission, 49-53n., 55, 71, 74, 154; explorations and discoveries of 2nd Mission, 48, 56-7, 59, 110-11, 114, 136, 151, 189-90, 218, 220, 302; meditates on behalf of Kashgar, 64-5; and Gilgit Agency, 129-30; and Chitral route, 113
- Fowler, 1st Viscount Wolverhampton, 296n., 297
- France, 273, 285
- Frontiers, approach of British and Russian, 4, 39, 97, 304-5, 310; defence of mountain, 115, 158, 208-9; rivers as, 186, 187; northern of Afghanistan, 81, 157, 166, 198-202, 206, 251, 297, 313; Upper Oxus of Afghanistan, *see* Upper Oxus; of Kashmir, 19, 21-3, 100, 101, 102, 105, 107, 129, 143, 144, 278-80, 282; of Burma and Siam, 222, 236-7, 254; of China on Pamirs, 218, 220-4, 234, 243, 253, 254, 265, 277, 280; of Afghanistan on Pamirs, 218, 220-1; of Eastern Turkistan, 9, 49, 58, 69, 75-6, 79, 218, 237, 243, 254, 265, 278-82, 283, 285; of Russia and Eastern Turkistan, 69, 73, 97; of West Pakistan and China, 283; southern of Russia, 285, 287. *See* Afghanistan, Hindu Kush, Northern Frontier, Oxus Frontier, Treaties and Agreements
- Gakuch, **103**, 140
- Galitzine, Colonel, 282n.
- Galitzine, Prince, 307
- Gandamak, Treaty of, 128, 182, 192
- Gardner, Alexander, 31, 54
- Gartok, **xiv**, 15
- Gauhar Aman, Ruler of Yasin, 102, 104
- Gerard, Alexander and James Gilbert, 20
- Gerard, Sir Montagu Gilbert, 230n., 282-3, 284
- Germany, 65, 225, 287
- Gharan, 152, **167**, 186, 195, 197
- Ghazan Khan, Ruler of Hunza, 138-9, 159, 161
- Ghazanfur, Shah, Ruler of Hunza, 160
- 'Ghazee, Ataliqu', 42n., *see* Yaqub Beg
- Ghiz River, **103**, 260
- Gholam Haidar Khan, Afghan Commander-in-Chief, 214, 290
- Ghurkas, 228
- 'Gibraltar of the Hindu Kush.' *See* Bozai
- Gumbaz
- Giers, N. K. de, 72, 207, 225, 240, 243-9 *passim*, 263, 272, 276
- Giles, Surgeon G. M. J., 154
- Gilgit, 11, **103**, 144, 196, 212, 228, 255, 256, 257, 258, 300; Chitral route to, 136-7, 145, 157, 216, 292; direct route to, 11, 111, 257, 258, 259-60, 263, 311; Kashmir route to, 11, 125, 133-4, 138, 145-6, 160, 231, 259-60, 292; routes to passes from, 67, 111-12, 155-6; telegraph to, 96, 134; Kashmir position at, 101-2, 104, 108, 134, 135, 137, 139, 140, 143, 160; explorers at, 106, 107, 111; supplies to, 231-2, 260, 292, 301; defence of northern frontier based on, 136-7, 156-7, 162-4, 291-2, 295, 298, 316
- Gilgit Agency, 212, 229; establishment of, 118-19, 130, 220; abolition of, 129-30, 138, 141-3; Lockhart's proposals for, 156-7, 162-3, 291; re-establishment of, 158-64, 209, 291; forces of, 157, 228, 230, 251, 259, 261, 288, 290, 298, 311
- Gilgit River, 11, **103**
- Girdlestone, Charles, 106
- Gladstone, William, Prime Minister, 182, 249
- Golubev, Captain, 34
- Gomal Valley, 209
- Gor, **103**, 257-9
- Gordon, 'Chinese', 76

- Gordon, General Sir Thomas, 57, 111, 112, 113, 136, 220, 270
- Gortchakov, Prince M. A., 2, 166, 174-6n., 178, 182, 190-1
- Government of India, and Afghanistan, 128, 176, 215, 238-9, 254, 289; and Chilas, 257-8; and Chitral, 121-2, 215, 255, 288-90, 296-7, 316; and Dir, 213; and Eastern Turkistan, 14, 48, 51, 54, 65-6, 69, 85-6, 93, 99; and exploration, 5, 31, 106, 183; and Gilgit Agency, 82, 101, 128, 133, 142, 143, 150, 209, 259, 291; and Hunza, 162, 228-30, 236, 283; and Jandul, 215; and Kashmir, 100, 144, 278-80, 315-16; and Leh, 96; and Pamirs, 221-3, 226, 232-3, 238, 250-2, 262, 266-7, 271, 282, 285; and Upper Oxus, 166, 168-70, 172-5, 183-8, 190, 197, 200, 202-4, 207, 240, 262, 267-9, 272, 274, 276, 284
- Governor-General, of Turkistan, 3, 94, 113, 224, 225, 228; of Western Siberia, 35. *See* Kaufmann and Vrevsky
- Granville, 2nd Earl, 173-5, 177, 179, 184-5, 198
- Great Pamir, 11, 111, 167, 224, 225, 232
- Great Trigonometrical Survey, 30, 32, 298
- Grey, Captain, 41, 42
- Griffin, Sir Lepel, 295
- Gromchevsky, Captain B., 160, 210, 211, 217-18, 220, 224, 270, 307
- Grulev, M., 308
- Grum-Grjmailo, G. E., 153, 217, 278
- Guide Corps, 154
- Gulab Singh, Maharaja, 1, 9, 20-2, 100, 101, 102, 104
- Gulmarg, 230
- Hamilton, Lord George, 286n., 311-12, 317
- Hardinge, 1st Viscount, 101
- Hasan Abdal, *xiv*, 260
- Hassan, Shahzana, Ruler of Badakhshan, 192-4 *passim*
- 'Havildar', the, *see* Hyder Shah
- Hayward, George, explorer, 32, 35n.-38, 46, 56, 98, 106-7, 109n.
- Henderson, explorer, 20
- Henvey, Frederick, Kashmir Resident, relations with Gilgit Agent, 132, 141-2, and Chaprot, 139-40; and Chitral, 123, 127-8, 137; and Hunza, 161; and Kashmir, 131-2, 135-7, 142, 144; and Upper Oxus, 193
- Herat, 31, 199, 293, 294, 302
- Heri-Rud, River, 201
- Himalayas, 1, 8, 22, 52, 67, 68, 162
- Hindu, 282; rulers of Kashmir, 100, 102, 133, 134, 315
- Hindu Kush, *xiv*, 9-10, 103; passes of, 151, 155-6, 210, 218-20, 226, 248, 253, 264, 265, 285, 300, 306, 307, 312, 316. *See* Passes and under individual names; as limit of British influence, 11, 13, 67, 74, 109, 114, 162-4, 226, 244, 253, 293; as limit of British direct action, 13, 67, 172, 192, 220, 232, 234, 235, 265, 277, 312-13, 315; Russia tries to reach, 171, 184, 206, 218, 230, 232, 239, 240, 248, 266, 272, 277, 303-4, 306-7, 316; Russia fails to reach, 285, 287, 316; Russian activities south of, 154, 225-6, 244, 246, 250, 269, 270, 307, 316; British fears of Russia south of, 114, 154, 292-3, 305-6, 312; Russian fears of Britain north of, 277, 306-7, 309-10, 311; British need to keep Russia away from, 184, 224, 264-5, 267, 269, 277-8, 285, 312; lands north of, 1, 108, 110, 132, 153, 166, 183, 277, 300-1, 313; lands south of, 155, 164, 188, 219, 238, 288, 302, 310, 313; events north and south of related, 114-15, 119, 150, 153, 172, 188, 204
- Hindustan-Tibet Road, 24, 47-8
- Hissar, *xiv*, 12, 110, 151, 167
- Holdich, Sir Thomas, 282
- Hong Kong, 86
- Horses, 16, 19, 46
- Hoshiara, General, 140
- Howard, Henry, 233, 235
- Hsü Ching-ch'eng, 253
- Hung Ta-jên, 254
- Hunza, 13, 103, 300, 301, 312; Biddulph visits, 138; Durand visits, 89-90, 209-10; Gromchevsky visits, 160, 210, 211, 217-18; Grum-Grjmailo visits, 217; Lockhart visits, 155, 159, 161; passes of, 6, 111, 119, 162, 210, 229-30, 243; route from south into, 210, 230; trade route through, 89-90n.; raids on caravans, 23, 24, 26, 56, 89-90, 160-1, 228; raids on Khirghiz, 279, 283; Chalt/Chaprot dispute and, 138-40, 159-60, 212, 228; relations with Eastern Turkistan, 75, 138, 139, 160-2, 227-8, 235-6, 283, 314-15; China and, 87, 236-7, 283; Russia and, 57, 160, 162, 210, 226-7, 228, 229-30, 264-5, 269, 306, 307, 310-11; Kashmir and, 104, 138-40, 147, 160-1, 237; other causes of British attack on, 228-9, 236, 310-11; war and peace in, 5, 87, 146, 229, 230, 257, 261, 298; claims of on Tagdumbash, 283-4
- Hunza River, 103
- Hyder Shah, explorer, 107, 111, 189-90

- Hyderabad, 3
- 'I.K.'. *See* Ibrahim Khan
- Ianov, Colonel, 306; 1891 Pamir Mission, 225, 241-2n., 244-6, 248-9, 269, 272, 310; 1892 Pamir Mission, 250, 252, 311
- Ibrahim Khan, explorer, 107, 111
- Imperial considerations in Chinese policy, 237; in Dardistan policy, 108-9, 146-7, 293; in Eastern Turkistan policy, 81, 97-8; in frontier policy, 115, 117, 158, 208-9, 293, 311-12; in Kashmir policy, 100, 105-6; in Pamir dispute, 285; in Central Asian question, 2, 4, 309
- Imperialism, ix, 183
- Imperial Service Scheme, 146, 258
- India, border dispute of with China, x; British conquests in, 1, 102; fear of Russian advance towards, 2-3, 40, 165, 305, 309; population of, 3, 303n.
- India, Government of. *See* Government of India
- India Office, 177n.; Council of, 30, 52-3, 60, 110; Kimberley at, 5; Cross at, 236; Argyll at, 50; Kaye at, 175; and Afghanistan, 254; and Afghan border, 173, 174, 175, 186, 199, 204; and Chilas, 259, 261, 262; and Chitral, 261, 262; and defence, 145; and Eastern Turkistan, 65, 86, 93, 94; and Foreign Office, 93-4, 174-5, 236-7, 251; and Kashmir, 110. *See* Michell and Saunders
- Indian Strategic Committee, 145
- Indo-China, 266
- Indus River, **xiv**, **103**; tributaries of, 9, 13; navigation on, 24; watershed of, 8, 11, 220; at Bunji, 133, 231; as limit of Gulab Singh's territory, 21, 100-2; in British territory, 115, 150; in Shinaki area, 11, 104, 113, 141, 229, 257-9, 112; in Pathan territory, 121, 128, 132
- Intelligence Branch, War Office, 157, 158
- Invasion by Russia, schemes of, 2, 286-7, 301-2; into Afghanistan, 13, 98, 199, 293-5, 302-3; into Chitral, 269-70, 270-1, 291, 292, 294-6, 306-7; into Dardistan across Hindu Kush, 111-12, 156, 305-6; into Eastern Turkistan, 35, 36-8, 45, 53, 57-8, 59, 95, 97, 114-15, 161, 163, 283; into Hunza, 57, 95-6, 160, 162, 210, 228, 229-30, 264-5, 306, 307; into Kashmir and Ladakh, 16-17, 19, 33, 36, 56-7, 67-70, 94, 95, 97-8, 283, 301; across Pamirs, 57, 74, 81, 96, 111, 112, 114, 115, 136, 218-20, 260, 270-1, 302, 306, 308; into Upper Oxus provinces, 135, 152-3, 157-8, 188, 191-2, 193n., 194-5, 199, 204, 207, 306, 314; impossibility of on Northern Frontier, 13, 302-3, 308, 312
- Ishaq Khan, Governor of Afghan Turkistan, 199, 207
- Ishkashem, 155, **167**, 195
- Ishkoman Pass, **103**, 111-13, 117-18; River, **103**; Valley, 230
- Islam. *See* Muslim
- Ivanov, geologist, 152
- Jaffar Khan, Ruler of Nagar, 138, 139, 141, 143, 159
- Jalalabad, **xiv**; on route to Chinese Turkistan, 124; British control of Chitral from, 128-9, 192; British defence and, 291-2, 294-5; Afghan invasion of Chitral from, 148, 214
- Jammu, **xiv**, 20, 21, 41, 134, 146, 292
- Jan, Abdulla, Governor of Afghan Turkistan, 194, 199, 207
- Jandul, **103**, 150, 155, 213, 215-17, 227, 255. *See* Umra Khan
- Japan, 75n., 97, 281, 286, 287
- Jehandar Shah, Ruler of Badakhshan, 120
- Jihlam, **xiv**, 15; River, **xiv**, 145
- Johnson, W. H., 32, 38, 45, 47, 48
- Jullundur, Commissioner of. *See* Forsyth
- Kabul, **xiv**; Amirs of, 1, 54, 117, 127, 147, 166, 192, 193, 215; British explorers and agents at, 110, 202, 214; Roberts at, 130, 192-3; murder of Cavagnari at, 128; British Mission at, 207, 274-5, 287, 290; British relations with, 116, 128, 170, 180, 192, 208-9, 214, 238; Chitral and, 120, 123, 134, 147, 214, 255, 289; other tribes and, 124, 126, 127, 149; Upper Oxus territories of, 168, 194, 199, 203, 207, 221; Kashmir and, 108, 130; Russia and, 60, 128, 135; military line from, 128, 163, 196, 293-5; intelligence from, 120
- Kabul River, **103**
- Kafiristan, **xiv**, 10, 106, 149, 154-5, 163, 288, 297
- Kafirs, 122, 134
- Kaghan, 11, **103**, 258, 259, 311
- Kamri Pass, **103**, 133
- Kandahar, 293-4, 295
- Kangra, **xiv**, 26, 29, 40, 48, 91
- Kanjut. *See* Hunza
- Kansu, 25, 63
- Kapnist, N., 249, 263, 265, 266, 267
- Karakoram Range, **xiv**, 8-9, **103**; as a water-parting, 8; as a frontier, 97, 278, 279-80; lands north of, 8, 19, 22, 30, 222; Russian invasion by, 56-7, 67; railway across, 57; Conway's expedition to, 5

- Karakoram Pass, 1, 15, 17, 59, 85, 96, 103, 278
- Karakoram Route, 22-3, 45, 47, 56, 57, 89, 91
- Karategin, 12, 110, 152, 153, 167, 191
- Karayakash*, 46, 91
- Kashgar, town of, **xiv**, 8, 15, 81; British at, 31-2, 33, 80, 86-7, 233, 236, 237; Chinese at, 67, 72, 73, 160, 223, 280; Russians at, 34, 35, 44, 45, 79, 85, 94, 227-8
- Kashgar, Kingdom of. *See* Eastern Turkistan
- Kashmir, **xiv**; army of, 96, 104, 135, 137, 140, 146, 157, 159, 160, 163, 212, 258; route to Gilgit from, 11, 125, 133-4, 138, 145-6, 160, 231, 259-60, 292; route to Eastern Turkistan from, 9, 15, 22-3, 27, 48, 56, 109; route to India from, 15, 48, 145-6, 231; Ranjit Singh conquers, 116; Gulab Singh and, 21, 100; frontiers of, 19, 21-2, 100, 101, 102, 105, 107, 129, 143, 144, 278-80, 282; exploration and survey of, 20, 30; famine and maladministration in, 135-6, 139, 143; British policy towards, 100, 101, 104, 135, 143, 145-6, 315 (*see* under individual Viceroy); British officer in, 104-6, 109-10, 116, 118, 131, 144, 145, 216, 292; intrigues of, 43, 46, 82, 92, 106, 108, 109, 130-1, 132, 133, 134, 136, 142-3, 219, 315; Russia and, 17, 36, 96, 98, 108, 196, 218, 291, 292-3, 295, 301, 302, 315; restrictive commercial policies of, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 92; Hindu rulers of, 100, 102, 133, 134, 315; Muslim peoples of, 100, 135; position of at Gilgit, 101-2, 104, 108, 134, 135, 137, 139, 140, 143, 160; and Chalt-Chaprot affair, 138-40, 159-60, 211-12; and Chilas, 102, 104, 257; and Chitral, 104, 114, 119, 121-3, 125, 136-7, 142, 148, 291, 329; and Darel, 104, 139, 141; and Dir, 119, 121, 126, 150; and Hunza, 104, 138-40, 147, 160-1, 237; and Nagar, 104, 138, 147; and Ponial, 102; Yasin and, 102, 104, 107, 108-9, 114, 117-18, 119, 123, 136-7; general policy of in Dardistan, 101-2, 104, 188, 315-16
- Kaufmann, General C. P. von, 44, 54, 73, 96, 169, 170, 173, 179, 323
- Kaulbars, Baron, 34, 45, 48, 49, 50
- Kaye, Sir John, 29, 175
- Kelat, 39, 44
- Kennedy, John G., 195
- Kerki, 168, 183
- Khan Khon Pass, 269
- Khirghiz, 37; on Alai, 113; on Pamirs, 241-2, 266, 283; raids by and on, 26, 161, 279, 283; seek British protection, 89-90, 210, 211, 279
- Khirghiz Steppes, 1, 36
- Khiva, 39, 170, 173, 174, 177
- Khoja Saleh, **xiv**, 158, 200, 201, 202, 206, 221
- Khorabhort Pass, 103, 250, 269
- Khotan, **xiv**, 21, 32, 47, 48, 81, 86
- Khunjerab Pass, 103, 211
- Khushk Post, 294
- Khyber Pass, **xiv**, 213, 290, 294
- Kilian, 76, 77, 88, 103, 278
- Kilif, 294
- Kilik Pass, 103, 155, 162, 218, 225, 230, 250
- Kimberley, 1st Earl of, 5, 81-2, 196, 201, 214, 255, 259, 261-2, 265-6, 273
- Kizil-su River, 167, 219
- Kogyar, 56, 103, 278
- Kogyar Route, 56, 88, 89
- Kohala, 145
- Kokand, **xiv**, 171; Russia and, 2, 33, 44, 57, 88, 113, 117, 195, 219; Eastern Turkistan and, 15, 25, 33, 57, 63, 88; Pamirs and, 113, 218, 240, 242
- Kokcha River, 167, 184, 240, 284
- Kolab, 110, 167, 183
- Kostenko, Colonel L. F., 113-14, 151
- Krasnovodsk, fort at, 34
- Kuen-lun Range, **xiv**, 1, 8, 56, 103, 222, 278
- Kuldja, 34, 44, 73-4, 88-9, 94, 96
- Kulu, **xiv**, 9, 24, 26, 46, 48
- Kulu Mule Train, 91
- Kunar River, 150, 216; Afghan influence east of, 116, 120, 121, 127, 148, 149; British influence east of, 121, 128, 150
- Kunar Valley, 163, 172, 291, 294, 295
- Kunduz, **xiv**, 124
- Kuo Sung Tao, 64, 65
- Kuropatkin, A, N, 34, 76n., 302
- Ladakh, **xiv**, 103; description of, 8-9; boundaries of, 21-2, 278-80; Moorcroft visits, 16-20; British explorers in, 20, 21, 30; seeks British protection, 17-18, 20; British Agent in, 20, 45, 118; intelligence from, 35, 66; Russia and, 17, 36, 98, 279; Eastern Turkistan and, 15, 30, 55, 111, 124, 125, 300; Communist China and, x; Ranjit Singh and, 17; Gulab Singh and, 20, 101. *See* Leh
- Lahore, **xiv**, 26, 54
- Lahoul, **xiv**, 9, 24
- Lake Victoria, 167, 190; discovery of, 110; Chinese territory and, 222, 243, 254; 1873 frontier and, 115, 183n., 184, 206, 221, 242, 243, 261, 264, 265, 284;

- territory east of, 115, 206, 221, 242, 265-7, 272, 276-7, 281
- Lansdowne, 5th Marquess of, 163n., 206; attitude to Afghanistan, 208, 209, 214, 252, 254, 274; Chilas, 258; China, 237; Chitral, 255-6, 262, 288; Dir road, 213, 215-16; exploration, 5; Foreign Office, 233, 269; frontier policy, 208-9, 261; Gilgit Agency, 163, 259, 262, 263; Hunza, 236; Kashmir, 315n.; Ladakh, 279-80; Pamirs, 222, 265; Upper Oxus, 267-9, 273
- Lawrence, 1st Lord, 38; attitude to Afghanistan, 38, 165, 172, 178; Central Asian policy of, 38, 105, 115, 180; Chitral, 120; Eastern Turkistan policy of, 30, 33, 37-9, 59, 71, 75, 98; exploration, 5, 31-2, 106; Kashmir policy of, 27-8n., 30, 41, 105; Leh Agency, 27, 51, 105
- Lebedev, V. T., 302
- Leh, 103, trade route, 15, 17, 22-3, 24, 26, 85, 88, 89, 160; trade through, 15, 16, 23, 80, 318; late arrival of caravan at, 48, 82, 90-1; news from, 81-2, 89, 94; defence of, 96; Cayley at, 45-6; Elias at, 81; Forsyth at, 30; Molloy at, 56; Moorcroft at, 16; Shaw at, 50
- Leh Agency, 27-30, 81-2, 92, 105, 110. *See* names of individual Agents and Joint Commissioners
- Leitner, Dr., 6, gn., 106
- Lessar, P., 203n.
- Lesseps, Victor de, 56
- Lhasa, x, 86
- Li Hung Chang, 65, 83n., 253-4
- Liberal Party, 132, 181, 182, 249, 295, 297, 304
- Lieutenant-Governor of Panjab. *See* under individual names
- Lingzi-thang, 9, 103
- Little Pamir, 11, 111, 167, 224, 225, 226, 232
- Little Pamir Lake, 218
- Livadia, Treaty of, 73, 75-9 *passim*, 219
- Lockhart, Colonel W., mission to Northern Frontier, 154-5, 201, 203; visits Chitral, 148, 156; visits Hunza, 159, 161; conclusions on passes and valleys, 155-6, 269-70, 300, 305-6; defensive scheme, 156-7, 162-3, 291
- Loftus, Lord Augustus, 64, 70, 171, 173, 174, 176-7
- Lords, House of, 185-6
- Lyall, Sir Alfred, 127, 131, 132, 136, 137
- Lyall, Sir James, 215
- Lytton, 1st Earl of, 54n., 58n., 138, 294, 304, 305n., 309; arrives in India, 58, 116; attitude to exploration, 5; Afghan policy, 116-17, 121, 128, 182, 192; Eastern Turkistan policy, 58-61, 66-8, 70, 75, 115; frontier policy, 115-17, 158, 208; Kashmir policy, 130-1, 135-6, 144-5; Dardistan policy, 60, 74, 116-19, 121, 123, 128-37, 142-3, 146-7, 220, 291-2; establishes Hindu Kush as frontier, 13, 67, 74, 114, 226, 293; and Hunza, 161; and Dir/Swat, 123-6, 129, 137; and Central Asia, 62; and Upper Oxus, 133, 172, 192, 193; attitude to Henvey, 132; resigns, 129
- Macartney, George, 86, 87, 91, 98, 233, 252
- Macartney, Sir Halliday, 75-6, 84
- MacGregor, Sir Charles, 6
- McLeod, Sir Donald, 29, 38
- MacNair, William, 148, 154
- McSwiney, Colonel, 308
- 'M.S.', explorer, 190
- Madhopore, meeting at, 118, 121; policy of and Chitral, 123, 127, 136-7, 298; failure of policy of, 129-30, 134, 142-3, 292
- Maharaja of Kashmir, 292. *See* Gulab Singh, Ranbir Singh
- Mahmud Khan, Ruler of Nagar, 139, 159
- Mahomed Amin, 31
- Maiev, N. A., 151
- Malakand Pass, 103, 298
- Manas, 25
- Manchu Empire, 1, 97
- Manchuria, 97, 234, 286
- Maralbashi, 8
- Margary Affair, 65
- Margilan, **xiv**, 152, 191, 224, 225, 250, 252, 271
- Mashobra, 258
- Mastuj, 10, 103, 108, 118, 172, 260, 269, 298
- Matvaiev, Colonel, 152
- Mayo, 6th Earl of, 33n., 38, 180; Central Asian policy, 38, 105; Eastern Turkistan policy, 32-3, 38-40, 42-5, 49-50, 58, 67, 68-70; Kashmir policy, 41, 105, 106, 108; Dardistan policy, 107, 108-9, 114, 120, 143; Afghan policy, 38-9, 44, 166, 168, 170, 172-3, 178-9, 180, 183; Upper Oxus policy, 172, 188, 194; and exploration, 106-7; and trade, 40, 50, 67; and Buchanan, 177
- Mehdi, Agha, Russian Agent, 16
- Mejid, Abdul, explorer, 110
- Merv, 114, 188-9, 201, 293, 294
- Mian Gul, of Swat, 124, 126
- Michell, Robert, Russian translator at India Office, 153
- Militutine, General, 171
- Mintaka Pass, 103, 211

- Mir Alum Khan, Ruler of Badakhshan, 194
- Mir Baba, Ruler of Badakhshan, 192, 193
- Mir Izzet Ollah, servant of Moorcroft, 31
- Mir Wali, Ruler of Yasin, 107-8
- 'Mirza', the, *see* Mirza Shuja
- Mirza Schadi, Kashgar envoy, 43
- Mirza Shuja, explorer, 110, 270
- Molloy, Capt. E., Leh Joint-Commissioner, 56
- Montgomerie, Capt. T. G., 31, 48
- Montgomery, Sir Robert, 24, 27, 29, 113
- Moorcroft, William, 15-20 *passim*, 31, 36, 95
- Morier, Sir Robert, and Pamirs, 232, 239, 242-7, 251, 253, 254n., 263, 285, 312; and Upper Oxus, 188, 201, 206, 240n., 241, 267; and Hunza, 307; death, 276n.
- Morning Post*, 185
- Moscow Society for the Encouragement of Russian Trade, 34
- 'Most-favoured-nation' clause, 83, 84, 85
- Muhammad Omar Khan, Ruler of Badakhshan, 193-4
- Muhammad Sharif, Ruler of Dir, 213, 217
- Mulk Aman, Ruler of Yasin, 104
- 'Mullah', the, *see* Ata Mohamed
- Munphool, Pundit, Indian agent, 106
- 'Munshi', the, *see* Abdul Subhan
- Murghab River, *See* Ak-su River
- Murree, *xiv*, 145
- Muslim peoples, of Baltistan, 9; of British and Russians, 61, 62, 69, 97, 178, 223, 305; of Dardistan, 102, 108, 127, 134-5, 150, 313, 315; of Eastern Turkistan, 19, 25, 35, 64, 67, 71, 72, 75, 96, 114, 160, 162; of Kashmir, 100, 135; League of, 62
- Muslim Ruler, of Afghanistan, 313; of Eastern Turkistan, 16, 25; of Hunza, 75; Yaqub Beg as, 54, 62, 63, 71, 95
- Mustagh Pass, 95-6, 103, 210, 278
- Mustagh Range, *xiv*, 8, 9, 13, 103
- Mutiny, Indian, 28n., 305
- Nagar, 10, 90, 103; and Chalt/Chaprot, 138-40, 159-60, 212; and Kashmir, 104, 138, 147; defeat of, 229, 230, 298; Durand and Younghusband visit, 209, 211
- Nakshabandi, Ahmed Shah, Indian Agent, 31
- Nanga Parbat Range, 11
- Napoleonic Wars, 2
- Narsat, 255, 288
- Naryn River, 35, 36, 39, 53, 54
- Near Eastern crisis, 54, 61, 75, 152, 286; connection of with Central Asia, 61n., 286, 304
- Nepal, 44
- Neutral zone, in Central Asia, 165-6; on Pamirs, 234-5, 277-8
- Neverski, botanist, 152
- Nezatash, 167, 220
- Nicholas II, Tsar, 286
- Nilt, 103, 229
- Nizam-ul-Mulk, Ruler of Chitral, 255-6, 258-9, 260, 287, 289
- 'No-man's-land', between Kuen-lun and Karakoram, 278-80; on Pamirs, 218, 219-21, 232-3, 252-3, 278, 280; on Upper Oxus, 268
- Nomal, 159-60
- Northbrook, 1st Earl of, 6, 46, 96; and Afghanistan, 116, 173, 180-1; and Dardistan, 109, 114, 116, 120; and Eastern Turkistan, 49-55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 63, 66, 67, 68-71, 76, 111; and Kashmir, 109-10, 130; and Upper Oxus, 109, 194
- Northern Frontier, *xiv*, 7-12, 30; tribes of, 305; Afghan factor on, 115-16, 313-14; Kashmir factor on, 315-16; defence of, 136-7, 156-7, 162-4, 291-2, 295, 298, 316; topographical knowledge of, 151, 154-5, 299; conclusion on British policy on, ix, 13, 298, 312-17; political importance of, 12, 303, 309-12; limited military importance of, 13, 152, 293-5, 301-3, 306-7, 310-12; susceptibility of to intrigue, 305, 308; susceptibility of to military demonstration, 305-8; susceptibility of to disturbance, 309-12; importance of today, ix-x
- Novoe Vremya*, 217, 223n., 282n., 240n.
- Nowshera, 103, 125, 292
- Nubra River, 103, 210
- Nuksan Pass, 103, 107
- O'Connor, Sir Nicholas, 83, 84, 85, 254, 281
- Ollah, Mir Izzet, servant of Moorcroft, 31
- Opium, 15, 83
- Osh, *xiv*, 89, 111, 112, 114, 228, 271, 300
- Oshanin, B., 152, 190
- Osten Sacken, Baron F. d', 34
- Oxus frontier, 1, 166, 187; British view of, 166, 168-70, 171-3, 226; Russian view of, 166, 168-9, 170-1; Importance of Anglo-Russian disagreement, 120, 150, 166, 170, 171-2, 178, 264, 271; 1873 agreement concerning, 173-6; British obligations to restrain Afghanistan on, 178-80, 182; British obligations to defend Afghanistan on, 180-1, 203-5, 253, 314, 332-3; evidence that river not frontier, 182-7, 189-90, 191; dangerous consequences of, 187-9, 190, 199,

- 240; breakdown of 1873 line, 191, 194-5, 196-7, 206, 241, 314; restoration of 1873 line, 195-205, 240-1, 248, 260-1, 264-6, 267-9, 271-6, 284
- Oxus River, **xiv**, 8, 11-12, 34, 68, 74, 141, **167**; as a trade route, 80, 124, 171
- 'P.M.' *See* Pundit Munphool
- Pahlwan Bahadur, Ruler of Yasin, 108, 122-3, 127, 139-41, 143
- Pakistan, border agreement with China, **x**, 283
- Palampur, **xiv**; fair at, 29, 48
- Palmerston, 3rd Viscount, 165, 301
- Pamir Boundary Commission, 11, 230, 231n., 271, 281-2, 301, 303
- Pamir Crises, Russian annexation claims, 87, 225-6, 241; British policy before, 218, 220-4, 264-5, 272, 276, 277, 280-2, 285; Russian policy before, 206, 223-5, 310; significance of Russian claims in, 94, 218, 226-7; Britain seeks Russian apology for, 243-7; Indian policy south of Hindu Kush, 228-32, 250-1; no British action on Pamirs, 223, 232, 234, 251, 265; neutralisation impossible, 234-5; Britain favours delimitation, 232-3, 239-40, 240-3, 247, 250, 263-4; Russian policy after 1st crisis, 242, 243-7, 250, 263-4, 266, 271, 272, 276, 277, 283; 2nd Russian Mission, 248-50; 3rd possible Russian Mission, 263, 311; Afghanistan and, 218, 219, 220, 221-2, 232, 234, 238-9, 242, 250, 252-4, 274, 277, 280, 283, 311, 313-14; China and, 200, 219, 220, 222-4, 233-5, 237-8, 239, 242-3, 250, 252-4, 266, 280, 283, 307, 311, 314-15; Afghanistan and Russia and, 239, 250; China and Russia and, 233-4, 237, 250, 253, 266, 280, 281, 283; final settlement, 221, 267, 276-8, 334-5; demarcation of frontier, 281-2, 284-5, 316; influence of Tsar in crisis, 176, 245-7, 276; danger of war in, 226, 245, 266, 268-9, 272-3, 285-6; significance of settlement for Dardistan, 262-3, 296-7, 298, 308, 309-12; for Central Asian Question, 286-7; for Europe, 248-9, 286-7; military significance of, 285, 303, 308, 312
- Pamir River, 11, 12, **167**, 189-90, 264
- Pamirs, **xiv**, 56, 112, 183-4, 300; knowledge of, 110, 153, 298-9; British exploration of, 106, 107-8, 110-11, 114, 300; Russian exploration of, 85, 113-14, 151, 152, 160, 190, 217-18, 219, 310; climate of, 7n., 270-1, 306; description of, 7-8; population of, 7, 8, 235; hydrography of, 11, 189-90; possibility of Russian advance across, 57, 74, 81, 111, 112, 114, 115, 136, 218-19, 219-20, 270-1, 302, 306, 308; 'no-man's-land' on, 218, 219-21, 232-3, 252-3, 278, 280; Russian annexation of, *see* Pamir Crisis; Yaqub Beg and, 218, 219
- Pamirsky Post, **167**, 250, 266n., 271, 307
- Panja River, 11, 153, **167**, 184, 185, 195
- Panjab, **xiv**, 17, 91, 231, 300; annexation of, 1, 22, 100; insanity in, 15n.; railway to Kashmir from, 146; route to Kashmir from, 48, 145-6; route to Chitral from, ix, 11, 56, 90n., 106, 111, 112, 124-5, 136, 156, 163, 212-16, 257, 268, 288-92, 295-8, 316; route to Gilgit from, 11, 111, 257, 258, 259-60, 263, 311; frontier trade of, 93; Russians and, 98, 293; Government and officials of, 22, 23, 26, 28, 29, 30-3, 38, 56, 104, 105-6, 109-10, 113, 116, 123, 131, 159, 208, 215. For Lieut.-Governors of, *see* under individual names
- Parliament, *see* Commons and Lords
- Parliamentary Papers, 164n., 184-5, 204, 258n., 261n., 262n., 275n., 290n., 291n., 297, 311n.
- Paske, E. H., 90n., 91n.
- Passes, general significance of, 5, 13, 155-6, 301; extension of British influence up to, 60, 74, 114, 115, 117-18, 119, 123, 220, 315; north and west of Kashgar, 36, 58; between India and Kashgar, 43, 66, 74; of Hunza, 6, 111, 119, 162, 210, 229-30, 243; of Chitral, 112, 118, 119, 123, 125, 135, 136-7, 152, 156, 199, 215, 252, 269, 295-6; of Yasin, 57, 67, 111, 117-18, 119, 123, 125, 136, 155, 264; across Hindu Kush, 151, 155-6, 210, 218-20, 226, 248, 253, 264, 265, 285, 300, 306, 307, 312, 316; Bidulph's views of, 59, 61, 66-7, 111-13, 114, 118, 136, 151, 156, 269, 270; Lockhart's views of, 155-7; Young-husband's views of, 96, 210-11, 269; Cockerill's views of, 229, 269; north of Peshawar, 116; north of Upper Oxus, 153; on Kashmir route to Gilgit, 133, 231; on Chang-Chenmo route, 46, 47; on Kogyar route, 56. *See* passes under individual names.
- Pathan tribes, 10, 123, 124, 132, 289, 305
- Peking, British representation at, 75, 93-4; O'Conor at, 83, 254; Wade at, 63, 74, 76, 78, 80; Walsham at, 84, 85, 162, 233; Russia and, 72; Pamirs and, 222; Hunza and, 236-7; Kashmir boundary and, 80
- Penjah River. *See* Panja River
- Penjdeh Crisis, 199, 201, 232, 250, 306
- Pepin, Albert, 158n., 270

- Perovsky, General, 33
 Perry, Sir Erskine, 78
 Persia, 81
 Persian Gulf, 9
 Peshawar, **xiv**, 103, 148; Afghan threat to areas north of, 100, 116, 121; in war with Russia, 163, 293, 295, 305; Commissioners at, 116, 124, 125; route from to Chitral, ix, 11, 56, 90n., 106, 111, 112, 124-5, 136, 156, 163, 212-16, 257, 269, 288-92, 295-8, 316
 Peshawar Conference, 116-17, 120, 127
 Petrovsky, Consul-General in Kashgar, 79, 82, 84-7, 94, 99, 223, 224, 228, 236
 Pievtsov, Colonel M. V., 211
 Pir Panjal Pass, **xiv**, 98
 Plunkett, Sir Francis, 76
 Ponial, 10, 102, **103**, 140
 Pritchard, Sir Charles, 259
 Protsenko, General, 266n.
 Pundit Munphool, Indian Agent, 106
 Puttiata, Captain, 152, 194
- Qala Panja, 152, 155, **167**, 284, 308
 Qara Qash River, 46, **103**
 Qara Qul, 114, 167, 223, 244
 Qila Yust, **167**, 275
 Quadruple Alliance, 249
 Queen Elizabeth I, 1
 Queen Victoria, 67
 Quetta, 209, 227
- Rab Nawaz Khan, British Agent Chitral, 154
 Radionov, surveyor, 152
 Rahmatulla Khan, Ruler of Dir, 10-11, 121, 124, 126, 150, 316
 Railways, trans-Indus, 208-9; at Hasan Abdal, 259-60; at Rawalpindi, 259; between Kashmir and Panjab, 146; across Karakoram, 56-7; Russian, 89, 94, 157, 234n., 294, 302
 Ramghat, **103**, 133, 257
 Ranbir Singh, Maharaja, army of, 145; boundaries of, 278; maladministration of, 136, 144; and Dardistan, 60, 102, 105, 107-8, 118, 122, 128-9, 130-1, 139, 142-3, 147, 159, 161; and Gilgit Agent, 118; and Leh Agent, 26-8, 30, 118; and Resident, 110, 132, 144, 145; and Panjab road, 145; and Russians, 130, 219; death of, 144
 Rang Qul, **167**, 225, 252
 Ranizais, 124
 Ranjit Singh, 1, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 116
 Raskam Valley, 8, 95, **103**, 211, 283
 Raverty, H. G., 106, 112
 Ravi River, **xiv**, 21, 100
 Rawalpindi, **xiv**, 125, 259
 Rawalpindi Meeting, 149, 199
- Rawlinson, Sir Henry, 6n.; and Chang-Chenmo route, 37n.; and Khotan route, 48; and Eastern Turkistan, 52, 81; Dardistan, 106, 109, 116; Upper Oxus frontier, 166-7, 183-4, 186, 189, 190, 195-8
 Regel, Dr. A., 152, 153, 194
 Reinthal, Colonel, 34, 54-5
 Ridgeway, Sir Joseph, 200n., 202, 203, 294
 Ripon, 1st Marquis of, 80n; and exploration, 5; Afghan policy, 147, 149, 180, 188, 193, 196; Chitral policy, 146-8; Dardistan policy, 138, 142-3; Dir/Swat policy, 149-50; Eastern Turkistan policy, 80-2, 98; and Hunza, 161; and Kashmir, 137, 143-4, 145, 146
 Rivers, as boundaries, 186-7
 Roads. *See* Routes and
 Roberts, Earl, in Afghan War, 130, 192; and Dir road, 125, 215-16; frontier policy of, 208, 213; and frontier defence, 294, 303; and Pamirs, 227, 306; and Upper Oxus, 193, 267
 Robertson, Sir George, 209n., 255-60 *passim*
 Rosebery, 5th Earl of, and Upper Oxus, 264-9, 271-3 *passim*; and Pamirs, 227, 241, 249, 251, 265-7, 269, 271-3, 280, 282; and other crises, 266, 272-3
 Roshan, 12, **167**; Afghanistan and, 195, 196-7, 198, 261-2, 264, 274-5, 284; Bukhara and, 195; Russia and, 152, 188, 195, 198, 261, 264, 266-8, 272, 276, 284; Shignan and, 190; extent of, 189, 195, 198; possible Anglo-Russian war over, 268-9, 273
 Routes and roads, in Baltistan, 9; in Dardistan, 9-10, 112-13, 155-7, 269, 301, 310, 312; in Hunza, 90, 138, 139, 140, 211-12, 228-9, 230n., 312; in Lingzi-thang, 9; in Panjab, 22, 24; in Wakhan, 199; between Britain and India, 61; between Eastern Turkistan and Pamirs, 234; across Pamirs, 111, 136, 270-1, 302; between Russia and China, 44; between Russia and the Upper Oxus, 151, 153; between Kabul and India, 128, 163, 293-5; between Herat and India, 293-4, 302. *See* Chitral, Eastern Turkistan, Gilgit, Hindustan-Tibet Road, Kashmir, Panjab
 Royal Geographical Society, 5-6, 26n., 37, 186, 189
 Russia, advance of, ix, 1-2, 34, 44, 57-8, 68-9, 100, 102, 105, 113, 114-15, 149, 152, 157-8, 165, 170, 174, 177, 191, 198, 199-200, 219, 225, 240, 305; military element in Central Asian

- policy, 3-4, 61n., 68-9, 170-1, 173, 176, 206, 239-40, 246-7, 248, 263, 271-2, 276, 283; civil-military conflicts in, 3, 4, 61n., 68-9, 94, 170-1, 206, 223n., 224, 239-40, 247, 263, 266, 275-6, 277, 282, 285-7, 303, 306-7, 309-10
- Russian Turkistan, 31, 40, 89, 94, 206
- Russo-Japanese War, 97, 286
- Russo-Turkish War, 61, 62
- Russophobia, 3, 65
- Safdar Ali, Ruler of Hunza, 159-61, 210-12, 227-9, 283, 307, 309
- St Petersburg, British representatives in, 168-9, 171, 173, 176, 188, 195, 201, 232, 233, 241, 243; British diplomacy in, 49, 80, 93, 165, 172, 173, 177n., 179, 184, 198, 218, 232, 233, 253, 284, 286; Chinese representative in, 253-4, 281; Kashgar's representatives in, 16, 63, 94; Kaufmann in, 173; intelligence from, 35, 193n., 195; Russian policy in, 3, 60, 69, 94, 173, 239, 246, 248, 249, 250, 263
- St Petersburg, Treaty of, 73, 76, 79, 82, 84, 87, 94, 219
- Salisbury, 3rd Marquis of, 183, 249, 309; attitude to China, 86, 236-7; to exploration, 5; to Eastern Turkistan, 50, 52, 53-4, 59-60, 65, 68, 75; to Pamirs, 233, 246, 247, 312
- Saltoro Pass, 103, 210
- Samarqand, *xiv*, 2, 132, 152, 157, 193, 195
- San Stefano, Treaty of, 63
- Sanderson, Thomas, Baron, 238
- Sanju Pass, 103, 278
- Sarhad, 103, 111, 112, 226
- 'Sarikul Lake'. *See* Lake Victoria
- Sariqol, *xiv*, 167; valley, 8; mountains, 8, 9, 12; watershed, 281, 282; strategic significance of, 95, 111; British explorations of, 110-11, 218; China and, 219, 220, 233, 252, 282, 283; Russia and, 152, 218, 219, 281, 283
- Saunders, Trelawney, India Office Geographer, 120n., 150, 184-5, 196
- Schadi, Mirza, Kashgar Envoy, 43
- Schlagintweit, H., A. and R. de, 31, 45
- Schouvalov, Count P. A., 54n., 174, 175, 177
- Schwarz, astronomer and topographer, 152
- Secret Agents, 4; Indian, 31, 48, 110, 121, 132, 144n., 151, 154, 230n.; Russian, 6-7, 34, 108, 154, 305, 308-9
- Semenov, P., 34
- Sempalatinsk, 2
- Severtsov, P., 34, 114, 152
- Shah Ghazanfur, Ruler of Hunza, 160
- Shahidulla, 89, 103, 210, 211, 278, 279
- Shahzada Hassan, Ruler of Badakhshan, 192-4 *passim*
- Shandur Pass, 103, 136
- Shandur Range, 10
- Shaw, Robert, 70, 98; visits Eastern Turkistan, 32, 35n., 106; strategic views of, 36-7, 95, 98; commerce and, 38-40 *passim*, 48-9, 50, 71n., 91n., 92n.; and Chang-Chenmo, 46-7; second visit to Eastern Turkistan, 50-4; as Leh Joint-Commissioner, 56; nominated as British Agent in Kashgar, 60, 64, 66
- Shawl-wool, 15, 20, 21, 28
- Sher Afzal, Ruler of Chitral, 255-6, 258, 262, 288-91 *passim*
- Sher Ali, Amir, Mayo and, 39, 172-3, 178, 180; Northbrook and, 180-1; Lytton and, 120-1 191; Indian relations with, 54, 176, 182, 192; and Chitral, 119-20, 127; and frontier tribes, 120-1; Upper Oxus, territories of, 166, 168-76, 178, 180, 182-3, 186-7, 190-1; flight and death of, 126, 191
- Sher Qila, 103, 140, 141, 142
- Sherdil Khan, Chief of the Ranizais, 124, 126
- Shignan, 12, 167; Afghanistan and, 182-3, 194-5, 196, 198, 201, 203, 207, 261-2, 264, 267, 268, 274-5, 284; Bukhara and, 195; British exploration of, 183, 189-90, 192, 200, 207; Russia and, 74, 152-3, 188, 195, 198, 203, 261, 264, 266-8, 272; Roshan and, 190; extent of, 183, 189-90, 195, 200, 203; possible Anglo-Russian war over, 268-9, 273
- Shimshal Pass, 23, 103, 210, 211, 279
- Shinaki tribes, 11, 154, 257, 312. *See* Chilas, Darel, Gor and Tangir
- Shuja, Mirza, explorer, 110, 270
- Shuja-ul-Mulk, Ruler of Chitral, 291, 298
- Shyok River, 9, 45, 103
- Sialkot, 146; meeting at, 42, 107, 108, 143
- Siam, 237, 273
- Sikh Wars, 20, 22
- Sikhs, 1, 11, 18, 20, 22, 100, 102, 116, 136, 260
- Sikkim, 84, 93
- Simla, *xiv*, 24, 142, 212, 227, 249, 268
- Sinkiang, *x*, 79, 80, 82, 83, 87, 88, 161, 266, 278, 281, 283. *See* Eastern Turkistan
- Sino-Japanese War, 75n., 281
- 'Sirikal Lake', 183n. *See* Lake Victoria
- Skardo, 103, 135
- Skersky, Captain, 306
- Skobolev, General M. D., 113, 190
- Sobraon, 20

- Somatash, 167, 224-5, 233, 238-9, 242n., 250, 252
- South Africa, 266
- Soviet Russia, x, 285
- Spedding and Co., 231
- 'Spheres of influence', on Northern Frontier, 303; on Pamirs, 277-8, 282, 303; in Eastern Turkistan, 39, 45, 49, 54, 70, 80; in Central Asia, 179
- Spiti, **xiv**, 9, 46
- Srinagar, 36, 94, **103**, 125, 133, 134, 140, 145, 146
- Staal, G. de, 240, 245-9, 251, 264, 266-7, 272-3, 306n., 309
- Statesman's Year Book*, 242
- Stewart, Sir Donald, 295
- Stremoukov, P., 168, 169, 170, 176, 177, 191
- Subhan, Abdul, 111, 189-90
- Suchow, 63
- Suget Pass, **103**, 278, 279
- Sultan of Turkey, 52, 62
- Surkhab River, 12, 151, 152, **167**
- Survey of India, 30, 32, 298
- Sutlej River, **xiv**, 1, 20, 24
- Swat, 9, 10, **103**, 150; Afghanistan and, 121, 124, 147, 149; *Akhund* of, 124, 125; Dir and, 124, 125-6; India and, 121, 123-4, 149; route through, 124, 213; exploration of, 106-7
- Swat River, 10, **103**, 298
- Syr Daria River, **xiv**, 2, 58
- Tagdumbash Pamir, 5, 9, 155, **167**, 211, 225, 282-4, 308, 311
- Tangir, 11, **103**, 141
- Tarim River, **xiv**, 8, 13, 25, 59
- Tash Qurghan, 8, 153, 167, 218, 219
- Tashkent, **xiv**, 2, 58, 96n., 100, 108, 153, 170
- Tea, 26, 40, 70, 76-7, 88
- Teheran, 60
- Telegraph, to Bukhara, 199-200; to Gilgit, 96, 134, 163, 212, 230-1; to Leh, 96
- Terekty Pass, **xiv**, 36
- Terentyef, M. A., 96n.
- Tibet, 9, 15, 20, 21, 31, 34, 37, 83, 85, 93, 211, 300
- Tien Shan, **xiv**, 8, 12, 34, 44, 94, 97, 280
- Times, The*, 226
- Tochi Route, 294
- Torbela, 111
- Trade, Russia excludes British, 40-1, 168; Davies Report on, 22; of India, 93; of Ladakh, 18-19; of Panjab, 93; of Upper Oxus provinces, 12, 171, 226; Tibet with India, 15, 20, 21; Eastern Turkistan with India, 15, 21, 23-4, 25-6, 30, 48-9, 55, 71n., 72, 76-7, 79-80, 82-3, 84n., 85, 87-93, 318-19; Eastern Turkistan with Russia, 33-4, 34-5, 41, 44, 45, 72, 79, 80, 85, 88, 92n., 171; political implications of, 20, 33, 38-40, 50, 67, 72, 80, 82, 85, 98-9. *See* Routes and roads
- Tragbal Pass, **103**, 133
- Trans-Alai Range, **xiv**, 8, 12, 113, **167**, 219
- Trans-Caspian Railway, 157, 294
- Trans-Ili district, 2
- Trans-Siberian Railway, 234n.
- Treaties and Agreements: 1846 Treaty of Amritsar, 21, 100, 101, 105; 1873 Anglo-Russian Agreement, 109, 114-15, 150, 174-8, 184, 191, 240; 1885-6 Anglo-Russian Agreement about Afghan border, 157, 206; 1895 Anglo-Russian Pamir Agreement, 221, 267, 276n.-8, 334-5; 1907 Anglo-Russian Treaty, 87, 97, 287; 1873 proposed Anglo-Russian treaty about Kashgar border, 49, 58, 218; 1885-95 proposed Anglo-Chinese treaty about Kashgar, 83-7 *passim*; 1905 Anglo-Japanese Alliance Treaty, 287; 1870 British Treaty with Kashmir, 41-2, 46, 47n., 278, 320-2; 1874 British Treaty with Yaqub Beg, 49, 50-3, 58, 60, 324-8; 1821-2 proposed British Treaty with Ladakh, 16, 17-18; 1893 British frontier agreement with Afghanistan, 274-5, 287, 288, 290, 330-3; 1885 British defensive agreement with Chitral, 156; 1878 British telegraph agreement with Kashmir, 134; 1887-8 Franco-Chinese Trade Convention, 83; Treaty of Gandamak, 128, 182, 192; 1878-9 Kashmir Treaty with Chitral, 122, 125, 329; Treaty of Livadia, 73, 75-9 *passim*, 219; 1872 Russian Treaty with Yaqub Beg, 45, 48, 49-50, 51, 323; 1881 Treaty of St Petersburg, 73, 76, 79, 82, 84, 87, 94, 219; 1878 Treaty of San Stefano, 63; Sino-Russian Treaties about trade in Kashgar, 34, 35, 74, 79, 86; Sino-Russian frontier agreements, 237, 243, 254, 281; Treaty of Tientsin, 84
- Troops. *See* Army
- Trotski, Lieut., 152
- Tsar, 3, 71, 245. *See* under individual names
- Tso Tsungt'ang, 63, 65, 73
- Turkey, 52, 62, 63, 308
- Turkistan. *See* Afghan Turkistan, Eastern Turkistan, Russian Turkistan
- Turkistan Messenger, The*, 44
- Turkistan Viedomosti*, 286
- Turugart Pass, **xiv**, 36

- Umra Khan, Ruler of Jandul, 11, 213-17, 255-7, 288-90, 316
- Upper Oxus Provinces, 12, 77, 300, 301; Afghanistan in, 12, 49, 119, 153, chap. IV *passim*, 206-8, 218, 221-2, 226, 232-3, 240-1, 242, 248, 252, 254, 261-2, 264-9, 272-6, 277, 284, 285, 313-14; British exploration of, 82, 110-11, 154, 183, 189-90, 200-1, 202, 203, 207-8; British policy in (*see* under individual Viceroy); Russia and, 81, 108, 109, 113, 115, 135, 150-3, 157-8, 188, 190, 191, 193n., 194-5, 195-6, 199-200, 204-5, 207, 217, 221, 239, 241, 261, 306, 308; relation of with events in Dardistan, 114-15, 119, 150, 153, 172, 188, 204
- Urumchi, 25, 63
- Uzbel Pass, 114, 167, 243, 254
- Uzr Khan, Ruler of Nagar, 212, 229
- Valikhanov, Captain, 34-5
- Vannovsky, General, 246, 276
- 'Vannovsky Incident', 276
- Vans Agnew, Lieutenant P. A., 106
- Veniukov, M. J., 172
- Vernoe, Fort, 34, 36, 45, 73
- Viceroy of India, 98, 101, 293, 305. *See* under individual names
- Victoria, Lake. *See* Lake Victoria
- Victoria, Queen, 67
- Vigne, G. T., 20
- Vishnegradski, General, 245
- Vladivostock, 234n.
- Vrevsky, General, 224, 246
- Wade, Sir Thomas, 63, 64, 74, 76, 78, 80
- Wakhan, 1, 12, 103, 141, 159, 167; routes, 111, 171; exploration, 110, 111, 152, 159, 192, 194, 200, 202, 207; Russian advances towards, 152, 199, 218, 226; 1873 Anglo-Russian dispute over, 169, 171-5, 184, 185, 187, 191, 252; subsequent British and Russian policies, 195-6, 202-3; Pamir crises and, 226, 232, 241, 252, 268, 275, 284; importance of, 171, 172
- Wakhan-su River, 167, 183-4, 225, 264
- Wali, Mir, Ruler of Yasin, 107-8
- Walsham, Sir John, 84, 85-6, 162, 233-4, 237
- War, possible between Britain and Russia, 70, 76, 135, 152, 157, 165, 172, 177, 191, 199, 200, 204-5, 226, 245, 266, 268-9, 272-3, 285-6, 287, 304-5; possible between China and Russia, 73, 97, 219; possible between Yaqub Beg and Russia, 35-6, 39, 43, 44, 45, 53, 68-71. For other wars *see* China, Chitral, Hunza and under individual names
- War Office, 37, 145, 264, 286; Intelligence Branch, 157, 158
- White, Sir George, 271, 291, 293, 295
- Wood, John, 110, 183n., 184, 222, 300
- Wood's Lake. *See* Lake Victoria
- Woodthorpe, Colonel R. G., 154
- World War, first, 95n., 287, 308; second, 98n.
- Wyburd, Lieutenant, 31
- Yaqub Beg, Ruler of Eastern Turkistan, 30, 96; growth and decay of his kingdom, 25, 32, 35, 42, 55, 62, 63, 66-7, 219; frontiers of, 218-19, 278; Indian relations with, 26, 33, 42-4, 49-53, 54, 56, 59-60, 65, 68-70, 71-2, 74, 92, 95, 99, 111, 218, 314; Russian relations with, 35, 39, 41, 44, 45, 50, 52, 53, 54-5, 60, 63-4, 69-70, 72, 76, 88, 94, 218; fear of Russia, 33, 52-3, 58, 62-3, 71, 75, 86; as Muslim leader, 54, 62, 63, 71, 95; relations with Hunza, 26, 56, 75, 139, 160-1, 283; relations with China, 63-5, 74; successor of, 219
- Yaqub Khan, Amir, 192
- Yaqub Khan, Syud, 49, 60, 64, 65, 70, 72, 98, 218
- Yarkand, town of, **xiv**, 167; trade and, 15, 21-4, 54-5, 77, 86; Elias visits, 77; British Consul at, 86; explorers at, 31, 110, 210; Muslim insurrection at, 160
- Yarkand, country of. *See* Eastern Turkistan
- Yarkand River, **xiv**, 160, 211, 217, 230, 278-9
- Yarkhun River, 103, 155
- Yasin, 10, 13, 103, 121, 184, 300; exploration of, 107-8, 111; Biddulph visits, 122-3, 131; Chitral and, 107-9, 127, 141, 142, 148, 256; defence of Chitral from, 137, 156; Hunza and, 139-40; Kashmir and, 102, 104, 107, 108-9, 114, 117-18, 119, 123, 136-7; passes into, 57, 67, 111, 117-18, 119, 123, 125, 136, 155, 264; Russia and, 51, 67, 111, 123, 127, 136, 137, 156, 184, 230, 264, 301, 306; Upper Oxus and, 119, 150
- Yeilding, Captain, 231
- Yermolov, Colonel, 310
- Yeshil Qul, 114, 167, 224
- Young, Lieut. R., 106
- Younghusband, Sir Francis, 98; 1889 Mission of, 8n., 89-90, 96, 209, 210-11, 220, 230, 279; 1890-1 Mission to Pamirs, 222-4, 225, 227, 230, 233-4, 238, 241, 242n., 243n., 310, 311; expulsion of, 6, 225, 227, 232, 244, 245, 249, 309; 1891 abortive mission to Upper Oxus, 207-8; views about Hunza, 228,

- 236, 238; and Chitral, 256, 260, 261-2,
269-70
- Yunnan, 86, 93
- Yusuf Khan, Ruler of Shignan, 182
- Zebak, 155, 167
- Zhob Valley, 209
- Zinoviev, I. A., 195
- Zojila Pass, 103, 231