

MAJOR-GENERAL
J. G. ELLIOTT

The Frontier

1839—1947

The Story of the North-West Frontier of India

Preface by Sir Olaf Caroe, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.

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TO THE
PUNJAB FRONTIER FORCE
who showed the way

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PREFACE

TO distil the flavour of a book it is sometimes well to turn the pages and pick out the last sentence. General Elliott ends by quoting a conversation with a young Pathan officer of Frontier Constabulary, who looked him between the eyes, as is the habit of these men, and expressed his pleasure to have had occasion to talk to an English General. Said to please? Partly perhaps. But he who knows Pathans and reads this book to the end will assign a deeper, truer meaning to it—an affinity born of a hundred years of conflict, a mutual sense of honour, affection and esteem.

But in no land, and among no people, is it possible, I think, to feel quite that lifting of the heart that is the experience of so many who have crossed the Indus at Attock to live among Pathans. In some strange way they are made to feel they have come home. Yet this community of thought and feeling has emerged from a century of desultory warfare, punctuated by sharp and bloody engagements.

It is altogether fitting that the long story of conflict should be unfolded by a General officer of the old Indian Army, nurtured in a never-failing tradition of racial harmony and understanding, and a close student of that tribal warfare that did so much to forge our regiments into the weapon that turned the scale in greater wars. Twice in this century, around the Mediterranean and in the Middle East, once in Burma, lessons learned on the North-West Frontier availed to protect the free world in vital sectors from the assaults of those who would subject it to domination. It was not so much that Pathans themselves fought in the armies from India (though they were included); it was rather that tactics and discipline learned from fighting them on their own ground became instinctive with the units who had served their turn on that Frontier. Hill warfare, it is true, was more in their line than that of the desert or the jungle, but whatever the tactics needed, the spirit of Harry Lumsden, first commander of The Guides, lived on—'to be alert and ready; to rise equal to the occasion, be the call small or great; to be not easily taken aback in a sudden emergency; to be a genial comrade'—these were the maxims learned by him who lived among Pathans.

Rightly, General Elliott has set his picture of wars against individual tribes, whether Mahsuds, Mohmands, or Afridis, in the wider context of the Afghan wars. The relationship of the tribes with Afghanistan is seldom grasped; it was, and is, one of ethnic kinship, but of freedom from domination, administrative or political. It would be true to say

that while all Pathans are Afghans by race as all Highlanders are Scots, all Afghans are no more Pathans than are all Scots Highlanders. The tribes that live between the border of the administered districts of what is now West Pakistan and the international frontier of the Durand Line have for the most part *never been taxed or administered by any organized state in history*. Even Akbar, the greatest Mughal emperor, was only able to pass his armies through their main corridors; in 1586 his forces were destroyed by the Yusufzais in the passes of Swat and Buner. The British forced their way through every tribal valley, even, for the first and last time in history, into Tirah; they were never able to disarm or administer any but a few of the more accessible tribes. Today Pakistan, a Moslem state, is unable to enter Tirah, and finds her movements restricted in Waziristan; though much is being done to educate the tribesmen by giving them a stake in the districts and in the armed forces, the tribal areas remain free, untaxed, unadministered, one of the few regions in the world not yet subject to the discipline and legalities of an organized state. It is this lasting autonomy that has tempted the Kabul Government to put forward the political theory of a separate Pashtunistan.

An organized Pashtunistan will never emerge. The separatism of the tribes will always work against an organism, and such economic viability as the tribes possess depends almost entirely on Pakistan. The theory is only mentioned here as illustrative of the fact that the tribes remain as it were a prickly and untrimmed hedge between Rawalpindi and Kabul. Such they have always been, and such they still are today. But there is something to be said for setting up and maintaining hedges on difficult and disputed boundaries; the British built better than they knew. The Western notion of a fixed frontier, with boundary pillars and *douanes* is still new to Asia.

No reader of this book will fail to be struck with the determination of the Pathan tribes to resist penetration of their territory and with their success in avoiding its absorption into British India, even when they were forced to submit. There has been a tendency among military writers to depict the tribesman in battle as a savage, ruthless opponent, ready to break his word when it suited him, a turbulent rebel and generally an abominable nuisance. Just the same was said by the Mughal Chroniclers, who in Shah Jehan's time referred to 'the beast-of-prey—like Orakzais and Afridis, two branches of the many-branched, tumult-raising Afaghinah of this mountainous tract,

outwardly obedient servitors but inwardly delighting in disorder and ever ready to plunder and molest'. But these men, whether fighting Shah Jehan or the British, were defending the freedom of their homes; had we in 1940 had to fight on the beaches, it is to be hoped our battle would have been as ruthless and as bloody as theirs. This General Elliott avoids; the tribesmen have as they deserve his esteem. Nor does he undervalue the sincerity of the mullas, whom so many English writers are inclined to write off as fanatics preaching war and assassination but avoiding it in person. Among them were truly pious and saintly men, men too such as the Powindah Mulla, the Miangul of Swat and the Fakir of Ipi, ruthless in an Old Testament way, but men of God according to their lights, who fasted regularly, said their prayers, judged fairly between man and man, and loved nature. They were able to crystallize tribal thought and serve as a focus for the tribal passion for independence.

The military reader will find the disquisitions on tactics that he expects, not least concerning the mysteries of the art of hill-piqueting, learned, some say, by Pollock (when he forced the Khaibar in 1842) who had it from Mackeson, who had it from the Afridis themselves. There is also the undoubted truth that the tactic best calculated to defeat the tribesman in the field was to take him from two directions, so exposing his flank. This was done with great success in the 1897 operations against the Mohmands from Bajaur, and a little later when the Mahsuds were disconcerted at the simultaneous advance of four converging columns. But behind the tactics is something even more fundamental—the readiness of juniors in the field to take on themselves a vast and terrifying responsibility without waiting for orders. Such success as was achieved, whether military or political, was mainly owing to local bravery and initiative taken in often hazardous conditions and without the knowledge that support would be forthcoming. It was that quality above all that won the esteem of Pathans—an esteem which endures to this day.

On the international stage there is a comment worth making. It has long been the fashion to decry the Victorian imperialism of the British in carrying arms into Afghanistan in the two Afghan wars of the nineteenth century. To that 'aggression' British writers—as always in the forefront—attribute Afghan dislike and distrust of the English name. But, whatever may be thought of Auckland's and Ellenborough's extravagances in the First Afghan War, or Lytton's in the

Second, an impartial study of the political background in Central Asia at these times leads to the conclusion that the object and result of those wars was to keep the young Afghan state out of the orbit of Tsarist Russia and within that of the sub-continent. Again we built better than we knew. Afghanistan remains, even lacking a supporter to the south-east, a substantial independent piece on the Asian chess-board. Where are now the Chiefs of the Kazak and the Kirghiz steppes; where are Tashkent, Khiva, Kokand, Samarkand and Bukhara today? It is most improbable that Russia could have been kept from extending her imperial power south of the Hindu Kush by diplomacy alone. Moreover, neither the Durand Line, nor the frontiers between Russian Central Asia and Kabul, could have been laid down lacking the British power and prestige resulting from the two Afghan wars. Finally, speaking with some knowledge of current Afghan attitudes, I believe that there is now in Kabul a fairer estimate of British relations with the Afghan state, and some appreciation of what the British presence in Asia did in its time achieve and of what it has left in its wake that endures. It will not go unremarked that Afghan attitudes to Pakistan, a fellow Moslem state, are no more cordial than were their relations with the British power in India.

The value of this book is that it sets out from a soldier's angle the causes that enabled opposition in arms to grow almost into a brotherhood of spirit. And what is to be the end of all this? It can hardly be that this tribal belt will remain for ever in this age unadministered, untaxed, and in a tribal state of society. It must move into the contemporary world. Who can achieve this but Afghanistan and Pakistan, working in harness? Or is the task to be left to the Russians—or the Chinese? Surely not. Here is a field in which contemporary Britain is qualified to help soothe asperities and to deploy the knowledge and wisdom of the past in the service of a great people today.

May 1967

OLAF CAROE

FOREWORD

IN *A Roll of Honour** I told the story of the Indian Army in the Second World War, when they fought with a gallantry and skill that on occasion surprised even their admirers. But the secret of Cadmus has not been handed down: armies do not spring up overnight, armed to the teeth and ready for war, and in search of the underlying cause of their success one must take a look at their activities in the preceding years, when service on the Frontier was probably the landmark for most people. This book is an attempt to show what that service was like.

There were three parties to the struggle—the soldiers, the Pathans, and the political agents, the officers of the Indian Political Service who were responsible for the management of tribal affairs. In this book the political agent does not always appear in a very favourable light for the good reason that it was only when he failed to control his unruly charges that the army was called upon to help. But more often than not failure was due to the policy he was trying to carry out, or to circumstances outside his control, and I am conscious that in its concern with military affairs the book does less than justice to the day-to-day work of the politicals that most soldiers knew little about. With Colonel Frederick Mackeson at the head of the list the roll of those who lost their lives in that service is tribute enough to how difficult and dangerous it was.

Like many authors I did not realize how little I knew about my subject until I began to write a book about it and I must express my gratitude to the very many officers, political and military, who have helped me. Two must be mentioned by name: Field-Marshal Auchinleck, who has read the whole book in draft, and Sir Olaf Caroe whose encyclopaedic knowledge of the Frontier and the Pathans has saved me from a hundred pitfalls. He has also allowed me to quote from his book *The Pathans* and to reprint his translation of the lines by Khushal Khatak that appear in Chapter 6.

Spelling of proper names is always a problem. I have preferred the more accurate Khaibar but have had to allow Khyber Rifles and *Eighteen Years in the Khyber*.

All references to the Government of India or the Indian Army are to what existed before Partition.

I must thank also the staffs of the following libraries: Royal United

* Cassell 1965.

Service Institution, Ministry of Defence (Central and Army), India Office, and R.A.M.C., Millbank; and of the Imperial War Museum and the Air Historical Section.

I am indebted to Major-General I. C. Katoch and Colonel Muhammad Aslam, the Army Advisers to the High Commissioners for India and Pakistan respectively, and to all ranks of the Indian and Pakistan Armies who made my visit to their countries such a pleasant occasion.

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JAMES ELLIOTT

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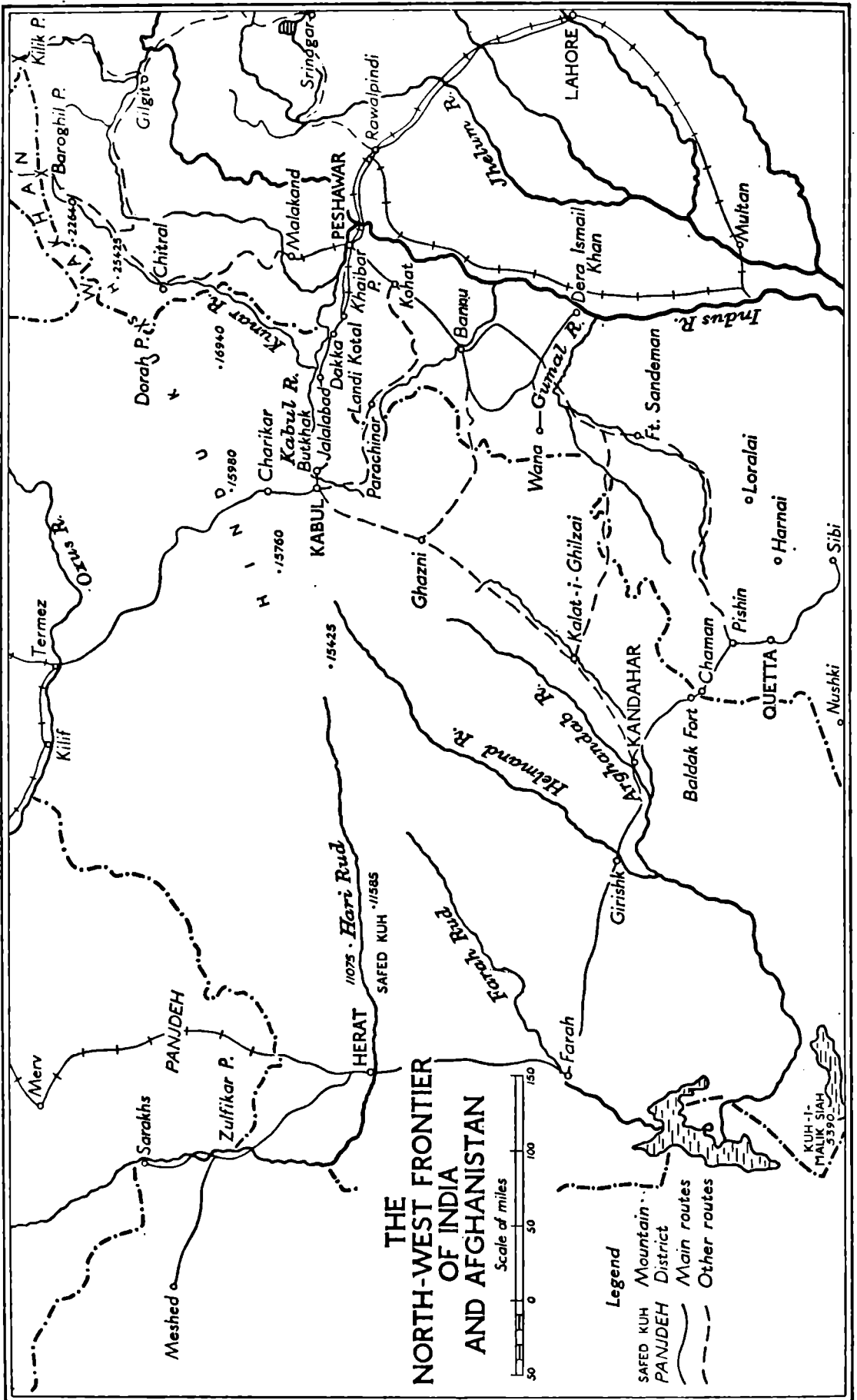
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1 THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

IN January 1839 Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India, let slip the dogs of war against Afghanistan, and at the end of that month a small British and Indian army crossed the Indus and marched up the Bolan Pass. It was directed on Kandahar and Kabul with the object of reinstating on the throne the refugee Shah Shuja who had already proved himself unable to remain there unaided. Lord Auckland was encouraged in his decision by three of his closest advisers, one of whom was to pay for his advice with his life; and he had the backing of the British Government who were at that moment hag-ridden by stories of a phantom Russian army moving south across the Kazakh steppes. On the other hand, Sir Henry Fane, his Commander-in-Chief, had little liking for the plan, and an impressive array of elder statesmen and soldiers in England prophesied disaster with all the relish and accuracy of Cassandra.

As a side issue of this disastrous campaign the British made a first brief contact with the independent tribesmen of the frontier hills. Ten years later, when the frontier of India was advanced to the foot of those hills, contact was renewed and remained unbroken until 1947. Successive Indian General Service medals bear witness to the number of small wars considered large enough to merit the distinction of a clasp and, in between, probably not a year passed without some minor passage of arms; and even when about their ordinarily peaceful occasions there was imposed upon the army a constant vigilance which they relaxed at their peril.

Fighting on the frontier called for specialized skill and tactics, and for the first sixty years it was largely the concern of the Punjab Frontier Force, which had been raised for that very purpose. The Kitchener reforms of 1905 were designed to fit every unit in the Indian Army for service on the frontier in the ordinary course of relief, and after the First World War they came fully into effect with the result that by 1939 there can have been very few officers or men who had not served at least one term in a frontier station; and many officers had also done a spell seconded to one of the Frontier Militias. One battalion, whose record is probably not exceptional, went straight to the Khaibar in 1920 on return from overseas. They did not leave the military district of Peshawar till six years later, when they went to Waziristan, and at the outbreak of war in 1939 they were back again in the Khaibar, having meanwhile served for two years in Chitral. Such frequent spells of what amounted to active service, since they were spent in



MAP 1. The North-West Frontier of India and Afghanistan

contact with a vigilant people who overnight might turn into a relentless enemy, must have affected the fitness for war, and indeed the whole outlook, of the army which fought so well in the years 1939-45.

It is the object of this book to portray something of the conditions of what so many in those days came to accept as a way of life. On the face of it, perhaps not a very difficult thing to do, even less so if the story dealt only with the army and was restricted to events more or less within living memory, but such an approach would invite the facile criticism that a lot of fuss was made about what was really a rather trifling problem.

The north-west frontier, or rather the countries to the north and west again, was a cockpit of international rivalry half a century before it ever became the frontier of India; it was an area in which London was as much interested as Calcutta. The problems that arose had their origins and early growth in a setting of imperfect knowledge and rudimentary communications, judged by the standards of today, and each change of policy, each campaign that was fought, added some fresh complication to the legacy inherited by successive commanders and statesmen who came to tackle it. To pronounce fair judgement it is necessary to go back and, before attempting to write of the part played by the army, to seek answers to such questions as: Why were the British so sensitive about this frontier? What sort of man was the enemy they were up against? Why did the tribes give so much trouble? And was no attempt made to control them by ordinary peaceful methods?

Geography is only one of the factors taken into account by the statesman in the shaping of international frontiers, but for the soldier, who may or may not have been consulted when they were drawn, it is of paramount importance. The land frontier of India ran in a rough semi-circle for a total distance of about three and a half thousand miles. On the east, the first six hundred miles of frontier with Burma were closed not so much by geographical obstacles, though these were formidable enough, as by the dense jungles and pestilent diseases engendered by the monsoon rains.

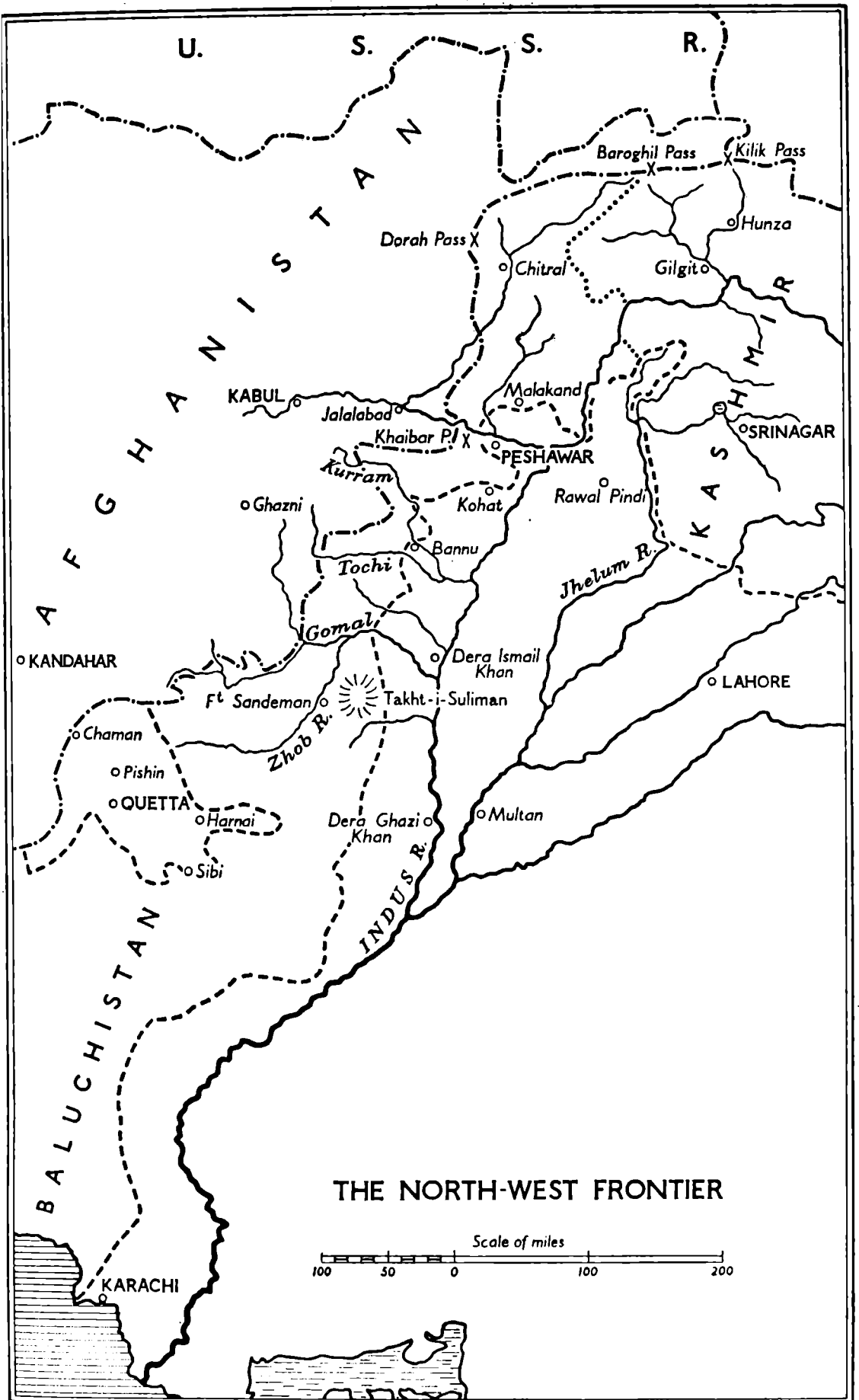
The first gap in the towering Himalayas that form the northern frontier is where the trade route to Lhasa passed through Sikkim, then for the next thousand miles the highest mountains in the world stand

unchallenged; but where the northern frontier of Kashmir marched with Sinkiang there were two clearly defined routes, used alike by pilgrims and merchants. In early days the British, in ignorance of the difficulties of the tangled mountains through which they passed, very much over-estimated the extent of a military threat from this direction, but right down to the time of the First World War the area was the scene of intrigue and diplomatic manœuvring, a stamping ground for explorers and secret agents, and the Indian Government became involved in several small wars undertaken to protect the rulers of the primitive states of the locality from the machinations of Imperial Russia.

When the frontier reaches the Hindu Kush and turns south-west on the long stretch down to the Arabian Sea the whole picture changes. It is an area through which it is possible to trace over the past three thousand years the ebb and flow of conquest, migration and trade; more important still, for close on one thousand miles it was India's frontier with Afghanistan—the frontier from which this book takes its title. Accepting the proposition that a country's concern with the safety of a frontier varies inversely with the stability of the régime on the far side of it, it is easy enough to understand why this area was always one of the main preoccupations of the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India. It was not so much a question of whether successive amirs of Afghanistan were able to keep their own house in order, but whether on the one hand they were strong enough to repel the diplomatic advances of Russia, and on the other could resist the temptation to intrigue with the Pathan tribes who lived astride their frontier with British India.

The geography and climate of Afghanistan range between greater extremes than any other small country on the face of the globe. There are immense snow-clad mountains in the north whose uplands even to this day present the mapmakers with a host of unsolved problems; in the south are vast deserts scoured by blistering sandstorms. In the east there are stretches of inhospitable stony hills, the home of fiercely independent tribesmen who bow to no man, not even their own elders; magnificent fighting men who on their home ground are a match for any army in the world. Set between these extremes are fertile valleys where clear mountain streams run through fields and orchards of incomparable beauty.

Afghanistan has three international frontiers. On the north lies



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 MAP 2. The North-West Frontier

Russia, to the west Persia, or Iran, and on the south-east face of what is very roughly a right-angled triangle are the tribal tracts that merged into India.

The apex, or north-west corner, of the triangle is at Zulfikar, and from here the frontier with Russia runs north-east till it meets the Amu Dar'ya (Oxus) at Khamiab. Upstream from Khamiab, past Kilif to Termez, the Amu Dar'ya presents no obstacle to movement except in summer when it is swollen by the melting snows, and it is on this stretch that the invading hordes from the north, starting with the Scythians in the first century before Christ, have crossed into what is now Afghan Turkistan. The line follows the river eastwards to Victoria Lake, which has as good a claim as any other place to be considered its source. There is a final stretch of seventy-five miles east to a point in the tangled snowy uplands of the Pamirs, close to the Wakhjir Pass, where a track crosses into the south-west corner of the Chinese province of Sinkiang.

From Zulfikar the Persian frontier runs more or less due south for six hundred miles to Koh-i-malik Siah, then the Indo-Persian frontier runs south-east and south to the Arabian Sea, leaving what was the Indo-Afghan border to run east to about twenty miles north of Nushki, no more than fifty miles from Quetta.

The remaining, south-eastern, side was the north-west frontier of India, and the last two hundred miles of it ran along the southern edge of that intruding finger of Afghan territory, the Wakhan, which at its narrowest point, north of Chitral, is only nine miles across.

West from Khamiab, and indeed pretty well the whole way round to Nushki, the frontier runs through steppe and desert, but once it turns north-east it follows a wayward course through a wide and broken tract, mile after dreary mile of stony mountains; in the south the Sulemans, then the Birmal Hills of south Waziristan up to where the great buttress of the Safed Koh comes in at right angles, and looks down alike on Kurram and Khaibar. North of the Kabul river the line followed the heights east of the Kunar river, ran west of Chitral and finally joined the Hindu Kush.

From the north-east corner of the Wakhan, the Hindu Kush mountains run south-westwards past Kabul, then continue west as the Koh-i-Baba and the Koh-i-Sufed as far as Herat—a lofty barrier that shuts off the province of Afghan Turkistan from the rest of the country to an extent that one might justifiably wonder whether its fortunes do

not rightly tie up with the Power across the Oxus. In the south-west half of the country, below Kabul, from the former Indian border on the east to the Hazara Highlands on the west, parallel ridges of stony mountains run south-west to peter out in the desert about the latitude of Kandahar. Three great rivers, the Farah Rud, the Helmand and the Arghandab, follow the grain of the country and empty their waters into the salt-laden lakes and marshes on the Persian frontier.

The fortunes of north-west India and Afghanistan have always been closely interwoven. Of the two dozen commanders who have invaded India over the past three thousand years no more than three have been Afghan born and bred, but one and all have had perforce to pass through the country, first conquering it and then reorganizing their armies before marching eastwards, led on by tales of gold and ivory in the land of apes, elephants and peacocks. If history carries a lesson, therefore, it is that the major threat to India has been not so much from the rulers of Afghanistan as from greater powers to the west and north, who have used the country as their immediate base of operations.

The main roads forward into India, well-trodden both in peace and war, were: Through Makran bordering the north coast of the Arabian Sea. These were used mostly in the heyday of Arab trade in conjunction with coastal shipping and, as they were not a proposition for a military force except for a power that had command of the sea, they do not concern this book.

The road from Herat to Kandahar and the Indian frontier about Chaman, then by way of Quetta and the Bolan to Sibi; or by Harnai, Loralai and the Zhob valley to the Gomal. The difficulties of the sector west of Kandahar were formidable. There were blinding sand storms driven by gale-force winds and to stray from the beaten track meant almost certain death, but for all its hazards the road is hundreds of years old. It is three hundred and sixty miles from Herat to Kandahar, which is eighty miles from Chaman. And from Herat to the Russian frontier post and railhead at Kushk it is only sixty miles over a road that crossed the mountains where the lofty Koh-i-Sufed has dropped to a mere five thousand feet.

There was also a road east from Herat to Kabul but it ran into such difficulties about the headwaters of the Hari Rud that it can be ignored for military purposes. The approaches to the capital from north of the Hindu Kush were both easier and more direct. There were many of them and they were all used at one time or another by successive

invaders engaged in establishing control over Afghanistan before turning their attention to India. There are now good roads built by the Americans and Russians, from both Mazar-i-sharif and Kunduz to Kabul, which for years have been fit for motor traffic, and they are liable to no more than temporary interruption in winter. From Kabul onwards there is a road south-east, south of the Sufed Koh, over the Peiwar Kotal to the Kurram valley; and another, surely the best known of them all, down the Kabul river valley and through the Khaibar Pass to Peshawar.

The approaches from Badakhshan over the northern stretch of the Hindu Kush into Chitral from the west included the Mandal, Nuksan and Dorah Passes. They were all practicable in summer and the Dorah, at a modest 14,500 feet, was open throughout the year. The traffic was probably restricted to pack animals carrying westwards wood and cloth goods, and in the reverse direction firearms and cutlery and, it was rumoured, Badakhshi slaves. The possibility of a force of any size using these routes was remote but, leading as they did into a turbulent area over which the British had very little control, their nuisance value was considerable.

The approaches from the north merited more serious attention. If there was ever any melodrama about India's north-west frontier this was the stage, with its backdrop of towering mountains, where surveyors, spies and agents moved as puppets in a giant Punch and Judy show; and Kipling's Hurry Chunder Mookerji had as his counterpart in real life such mysterious figures as The Havildar, I.K., F.B., and The Mullah, who travelled in the guise of a timber merchant. It is a feature of that part of the world that the approaches from the north are far easier than from the Indian side, and disquieting reports came in. The Baroghil Pass was described 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; and the opinion was expressed that from the Russian post at Osh, seventy miles from the frontier, there was 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.

And that was the crux of the whole matter: just how near, how real,

was the threat from Russia? On the bare facts of geography it does not seem at this distance of time to have been very pressing, but in the light of international politics a different picture appears. The original frontier of Russia proper on the fringe of the Kazakh steppes was a good thousand miles farther north than it is today, but as the East India Company spread north-west across India the Russians, and perhaps with some justification, had been extending their sway over the nomad tribes to the south. The events of the First Afghan War certainly gave them something to think about, and after the Crimean War of 1854-6, which Britain fought in furtherance of a policy of containing Russia's ambitions in Europe and the Near East, they very much accelerated the pace of their advance in Central Asia—and, really, who should blame them? After no more than twenty years their frontier was, by 1873, to all intents and purposes coterminous with northern Afghanistan, four hundred miles from Peshawar and five hundred from Chaman.

All things considered the gap seemed none too large to men concerned with the integrity of a frontier that was, geographically and ethnically, the most tangled in the world. It is only fair to conclude that the successive viceroys, foreign secretaries and commanders-in-chief in India had something to worry about.

It is hardly surprising to find that the armies which through the centuries marched and counter-marched over Afghanistan left their mark on the racial make-up of the country. Anthropologists are by no means unanimous, and that perhaps is an understatement, as to the true origins of some of the tribes, including that of the main group, and for this reason alone it is wiser to concentrate on essentials, the end product, the people of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with whom the Indian Government and the Indian Army had to deal.

Afghan Turkistan, the point of entry of so many invasions, had probably the greatest mixture of peoples, with Turkic stock predominating. Here lived the Uzbeks, across the Oxus from Uzbekistan, one of the republics of the U.S.S.R. They were a settled people with a high standard of agriculture, and no great love for their rulers, the Afghans. There were traces still of the ancient Greek colonists, and it was in this area that Buddhism became most firmly established as it moved north-west out of India.

The Tajiks, the second largest group, lived mainly around Herat and Kabul. The uplands high up around the head waters of the Farah Rud

and the Helmand were the home of the Hazaras, who are distinctly Mongolian in appearance and are said to be descended from settlers left by the armies of Genghis Khan. They were a stable and useful community and they found the men for a battalion of the Indian Army, 106th Hazara Pioneers, until it was disbanded in the economy drive of the 1930s.

The Afghans proper, the race from which for the past two hundred years the amirs of Afghanistan have come, originated probably from as far west as the Mediterranean and may claim to be the original inhabitants of the country, established before the rude invaders came in from the north. They lived in Herat and Seistan, and in the south-east and east, and included the Pathans, connected by race and language with the tribes of India's north-west frontier; by ties that were so close that it often proved difficult, dangerous and sometimes impossible to disentangle them.

This welter of different races were grouped into four main provinces which all enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy: Afghan Turkistan, Kabul, Kandahar and Herat. At various periods in history Kabul had formed part of the Mughul empire in Delhi, and Kandahar and Herat had belonged to Persia.

The founder of the Durrani dynasty and the first Afghan ruler to make any attempt to weld them into the state of Afghanistan as it is known today was the Sadozai, Ahmed Shah Abdali, who rose to power in the wake of the mighty Persian, Nadir Shah, who in 1737 had had himself proclaimed Shah, and then set in train the operations which were to take him to the gates of Delhi. Kandahar, Kabul and the provinces over the Hindu Kush to the Amu Dar'ya all acknowledged his sway. He was assassinated in 1747. In accordance with the general practice of those days he had built up his army from contingents enlisted in the provinces he had conquered, and the day after his death Ahmed Shah, his Afghan commander, declared his independence, although he must be acquitted of any hand in the murder of his master. By energy and good government he established law and order in a kingdom stretching from the Amu Dar'ya almost to the Arabian Sea, and from Persia to the Sutlej. He even invaded India though, like Nadir Shah, was wise enough not to attempt to stay there, though he did keep Kashmir, and most of the country west of the Indus, including, of course, Peshawar, which had always been the winter capital of the province of Kabul. He died in 1773 and was succeeded by his son,

Timur Shah, who, although not of the same calibre as his father, ruled for twenty years. His son, Zaman Shah was even less fitted to rule and the anarchy that followed his succession contributed materially to the miscalculations that encouraged Lord Auckland to embark on the First Afghan War.

He succeeded at first in putting down revolts that broke out in Herat and Kandahar but made the ultimate mistake of alienating the influential Paindah Khan, a member of the Barakzai section of the Durranis, who claimed the hereditary right to fill the office of prime minister. Paindah Khan promptly instigated a plot to place Zaman Shah's brother, Shah Shuja, on the throne. The plot miscarried and Paindah Khan paid the penalty, though the pretender, unfortunately for the British, lived to fight another day. Paindah Khan's son made one more inconclusive attempt to bring Shah Shuja to power and then, wearying of the futility of supporting the royal family, he installed in 1818 his own younger brother, Dost Mohammad, as governor of Herat. It was a step that led to his own downfall but it resulted in the elevation of his own people, the Barakzais, to power.

While the Saddozai kingdom was disintegrating a new power was arising in the Punjab. The Sikhs owed their origin to their first religious teacher, the Guru Nanak, who broke away from Hinduism and founded a sect on a basis of strict monotheism. His tenets attracted a following large enough to incur the persecution of the Mughuls and, stimulated by this oppression, what had begun as a purely religious reformation became, under the tenth and last Guru Govind Singh, an aggressively militant creed. Establishing themselves on the ruins of the Mughul empire the Sikh sirdars, entrenched in their petty baronies, for some years intrigued and fought contentedly among themselves until the advent of Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab, a masterful character who by a judicious mixture of diplomacy and force welded them into a single kingdom. With the title of Maharajah he extended his sway over the whole of the Punjab, the Land of the Five Rivers, south and east of the Indus down to the Sutlej.

He had completed his task and was casting his eye round for fresh fields to conquer just about the time of Shah Shuja's second failure to stake a claim to the throne. He decided to turn to good account the turmoil in Afghanistan, where any claimant to power was far too busy trying to consolidate his position in Kabul and Kandahar to have either the time or the resources to devote to the outlying provinces, Kashmir

and the lands west of the Indus. Ranjit coveted three things; Kashmir, which for the past seventy years had been in Afghan hands, the lovely vale of Peshawar, and the Koh-i-noor diamond, which had fallen into Ahmed Shah's hands on the death of Nadir Shah. With his own inimitable blend of guile and force he possessed himself of all three.

In 1818 he made a first visit, no more than a reconnaissance, to Peshawar. In the following year he took over Kashmir, and in 1822 acquired the districts of Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan and subdued the unruly tribes around what was later known as Abbottabad. Finally in 1823, after a hard-fought battle near Nowshera, he occupied Peshawar, where he established the Barakzai chiefs as tributary governors. In the years that followed he never succeeded in establishing anything approaching settled government and was more than once defeated locally by the Yusufzais.

In 1832 the state of affairs in Afghanistan was still so unsettled that the ever optimistic Shah Shuja was encouraged to approach Ranjit Singh for support in yet one more attempt to regain the throne. Whatever his own ideas of a deal may have been he was completely outmanœuvred, for in return for help, money and troops, to support an advance on Kandahar by way of Sind, he ceded in August 1833 the whole of what eventually became the North-West Frontier Province, and gave quittance for the Koh-i-noor which he had actually handed over ten years previously.

Shah Shuja got as far as Kandahar but he was there defeated by Dost Mohammad, and early in 1835 he was back in India with only empty hands to show for all he had given away. Dost Mohammad had by then consolidated his rule over most of Afghanistan south of the Hindu Kush, and fought two battles near Jamrud in a bid to regain Peshawar. On the second occasion, in 1837, he gained a tactical victory but he was unable to exploit his success and withdrew back through the Khaibar.

Such, then, was the state of affairs in Afghanistan and the former Afghan possessions west of the Indus when the pressure of world affairs forced the Government of India to recognize that they must come to terms with its ruler.

2 THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR 1839-42

TOWARDS the end of the eighteenth century Russia, under the Empress Catherine, began to encroach southwards into Persia west of the Caspian Sea, a move that might have escaped the attention of Great Britain but for the intrusion of Napoleon into the Near East a few years later. His armies were halted on the shores of the Mediterranean, but he extended diplomatic activity much further afield in pursuit of his ultimate objective, an attack on the British power in India. At Tilsit, while the followers of Alexander and Napoleon were abandoning themselves to convivial pleasures, these monarchs were spending quiet evenings together discussing their future plans, and projecting joint schemes of conquest. It was then they meditated the invasion of Hindustan by a confederate army uniting on the plains of Persia; and no secret was made of the intention of the two great European potentates to commence in the following spring a hostile demonstration—against the possessions of the East India Company.

In 1809, in the very nick of time, England reached an understanding with Persia by which the Shah abrogated his former treaties with France and Russia and undertook to forbid the passage of any forces through his country towards India. There was a further, more ambitious, treaty three years later, but when Britain was unable to honour the obligations she had assumed, her influence very much diminished while that of Russia increased to the point that in 1837 she was able to persuade Persia, by besieging Herat, to make a bid for territory that had once been hers.

In 1832 Lord William Bentinck, then Governor-General of India, while on a visit to Maharajah Ranjit Singh in Ludhiana, met the exiled Shah Shuja and turned down his request for support for the plans he was hatching for his bid to regain his throne. However, as Dost Mohammad in Kabul was reputed to be flirting with the Russians, a mission under Alexander Burnes was sent to spy out the land. As a feat of geographical exploration in a part of the world that was represented by a blank on the maps it was a notable achievement, and five years later when the Russian threat seemed even more serious, and an approach to Dost Mohammad became a matter of urgency, Burnes was chosen for the task. Whatever his successes in other fields he was totally unsuited for his new role.

As the British frontier was still on the Sutlej they could not ignore the Sikhs whose territories lay between them and Afghanistan;

moreover they were on good terms with the Maharajah. An essential preliminary then to any negotiations with Dost Mohammad was to reconcile his relations with Ranjit Singh, the bone of contention between them being, of course, the vale of Peshawar and other former Afghan possessions appropriated by the Sikhs fifteen years earlier. Lord Auckland, who was by then Governor-General, seems at first to have thought that in all justice the disputed territory should be returned to Dost Mohammad, and in the opening stages of the negotiations Burnes encouraged the Amir to suppose that the British would support him.

Various complications arose, the first of which was a doubt as to the willingness of the inhabitants to return to the rule of a Durrani family which in their eyes enjoyed a poor reputation for constancy and fair dealing. There was also advice of unquestioned authority from another quarter, but this was ignored. The American traveller, Masson, had spent two years in the country in the role of an Afghan, clothed in Afghan garments, living with the people, partaking of their hospitality, studying their ways, joining their pursuits, discussing their politics and placing himself on terms of familiarity, if not of intimacy, with his many hosts in a way which has never been imitated since. The whole tenor of his advice was, in the modern idiom, to play it cool, study the course of the many intrigues in progress and above all seek to promote some agreement between Dost Mohammad and the Sikhs who, truth to tell, were none too happy in their conquests west of the Indus. Matters were made no easier by the arrival in Kabul of a Russian, Lieutenant Vitkevich, a professional agent who had been in Afghanistan for some time. His orders may well have been no more than to find out what was going on but, thanks to Burnes's indiscretions, and the fact that Lord Auckland was addressing dictatorial and supercilious letters to Dost Mohammad, Vitkevich found himself promoted to favour.

Neither Auckland nor Burnes emerge with any credit from the tortuous negotiations that went on. Let it suffice that when it became apparent that Ranjit Singh was in no mood to yield the envoy was instructed to retract his words and return to India. His master cast round for someone to replace Dost Mohammad, someone who would acquiesce in what was a *fait accompli* as far as the Sikhs were concerned. The only man who seemed to fit the bill was Shah Shuja, who had already, by his treaty of 1833, given them all they wanted. Blithely ignoring the fact that his protégé had already three times tried and

three times failed to fill the role for which he was now cast, Lord Auckland pressed blindly on. In 1838 the Indian Government found itself a poor third in a new tripartite treaty the essential provision of which was the final and irrevocable surrender of Shah Shuja of the territories which five years earlier he had already ceded to Ranjit Singh. It was on the basis of this extraordinary document, which in fact committed them to no action at all, that the British entered on the First Afghan War.

The British Government supported Lord Auckland, being concerned at bogymen stories reaching them from Russia. Far out in the distance beyond the mountains of the Hindu Kush there was the shadow of a great northern army, tremendous in its indistinctness, sweeping across the wilds and deserts of Central Asia towards the frontiers of Hindustan. Not till the spring of 1840 did it become known that this army was a column under General Perovski which in 1839 had left Orenburg for the attempted conquest of Khiva, but which had perished from hardships and pestilence in the snowy wastes north of the Aral; but no doubt it was all very frightening in London at the time.

On the other hand unofficial but well-informed spokesmen in England made no bones about expressing their disapproval, nor does there seem to have been any public enthusiasm for the project. The Duke of Wellington considered 'that our difficulties would commence where our military successes ended. The consequences of crossing the Indus once, to settle a government in Afghanistan, will be a perennial march into that country.' Elphinstone, who had been on a mission to Kabul thirty years before, wrote, 'If you send 27,000 men up the Bolan to Candahur, and can feed them, I have no doubt you can take Candahur and Caubul and set up Shujau, but as for maintaining him in a poor, cold, strong and remote country, among a turbulent people like the Afghans, I own it seems to me to be hopeless. If you succeed you will I fear weaken the position against Russia. The Afghans are neutral, and would have received you and your invaders with gratitude. They will now be disaffected, and glad to join any invader to drive you out.'

There was in fact one reason which could have been held to justify an invasion of Afghanistan, and that was to raise the siege of Herat, or to recapture it if it had fallen to the combined Russo/Persian army which had been attacking it since November 1837. It is of passing

interest to speculate just what calculations, based on what certain information, were made in deciding on the strength and composition of the force necessary for this task; or what plans there were for maintaining it three hundred and sixty miles beyond Kandahar, every mile taking it further from the main political objective, the establishment of the Amir in Kabul.

The siege of Herat was not conducted with very much skill or vigour, or it must inevitably have succeeded, and after the failure of an attack in June 1838 the Shah was perhaps only too glad to take advantage of an ultimatum informing him that a British expedition from Bombay had landed on the Persian island of Kharog (fifty miles north-west of Bushire) and demanding that he should forthwith abandon the siege.

The immediate consequence of this diplomatic triumph was not only to kick away the main prop of justification for sending an army to invade Afghanistan, but seriously to weaken such slender ones as did remain. The failure of the force that Russia and Persia between them had been able to put into the field must have discredited both countries in Dost Mohammad's eyes to the extent that, if Lord Auckland had chosen to reopen discussions with him, there should have been little difficulty in reaching an agreement by which he would have undertaken to resist any further advances from Russia.

The original project, embodied in the tripartite treaty of 1838 between the Indian Government, Maharajah Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja, was that the latter should attempt to regain his throne with an army of six thousand men, recruited in India, paid for by the Indian Government and officered from the Indian Army, and proceeding with the general goodwill and support of the Sikhs. It was then suggested that these mercenaries should be stiffened by the addition of a couple of British regiments. The Commander-in-Chief very naturally vetoed the proposal to risk such a weak detachment so far from home and, in the end, a full-scale invasion was decided on. The force to be assembled was to consist of fourteen thousand seasoned troops from the Bengal Army, organized in two divisions, who were to effect a junction about Rohri, the crossing-place over the Indus, with a contingent some five thousand strong from the Bombay Army which would land at Karachi and march up the river.

The Bengal contingent was still concentrating at Ferozepore when the news arrived that Herat was no longer threatened, whereupon the

Commander-in-Chief, who had viewed the expedition with disfavour from the start, declined to have anything more to do with it. One of the divisions was ordered to stand fast in Ferozepore, but although under the treaty there was no obligation to send so much as a corporal's guard across the frontier the rest of the plan went forward. On 10 December the Bengal Army under Major-General Sir Willoughby Cotton left on its long march to Kabul, over twelve hundred miles away; it would not reach there till 6 August the following year. The most direct road of course lay across the Punjab and through the Khaibar Pass, but as Ranjit Singh was fulfilling his share of the treaty by sending Shah Shuja's son, Timur Mirza, by that route, with a Sikh contingent to support him, the Governor-General was unwilling to ask for further concessions and there was no choice but to march by way of Kandahar. It was eight hundred miles to Quetta, which was not yet in British hands, and from there a further four hundred and fifty miles on to Kabul and, after crossing the Indus, the country traversed was without relief, rugged and inhospitable, and throughout its length the road was liable to attack from the neighbouring tribes.

Shah Shuja had moved several marches in advance of the Bengal Army and after crossing the Indus he was joined at Shikarpur by Mr Macnaghten of the Company's civil service who had been gazetted as 'Envoy and Minister on the part of the Government of India at the Court of Shah Soojah-ool-Mulk'. The selection was not a happy one, for Macnaghten, long accustomed to irresponsible office, inexperienced in men, and ignorant of the country and people of Afghanistan, was, though an erudite Arabic scholar, neither practised in the field of Asiatic intrigue nor a man of action. His ambition was, however, great, and the expedition, holding out promise of distinction and honours, had been backed by his strenuous advocacy.

Save for heavy losses of draught cattle the march as far as Rohri was uneventful, but it there ran into trouble with the amirs of Sind. However, they were warned that 'neither the ready power to crush and annihilate them, nor the will to call it into action, was wanting if it appeared requisite, however remotely, for the safety and integrity of the Anglo-Indian empire and frontier'; and there was no great opposition to the march upstream of the Bombay Army, under Major-General Sir John Keane, who now assumed overall command of the whole force. Cotton resumed his march and by the end of March he was in Quetta. There he had been ordered to halt, which he did, and

indeed remained inactive until brought almost to the verge of starvation, for supplies were short and there had been further heavy losses of transport animals. When Keane arrived he allowed the advance to be resumed but progress was slow as Cotton while sitting in Quetta had taken no steps to reconnoitre and improve the road through the Khojak defile. The passage cost the army losses in baggage, transport, supplies and ordnance stores, while further back in the Bolan the writing could already be seen on the wall when the Bombay column suffered heavily from plundering tribesmen.

Once through the Khojak Shah Shuja and his contingent led the advance to Kandahar and by 4 May the whole army was encamped around the city, its passage in the later stages having been considerably eased by lavish bribes distributed by Macnaghten among the local chiefs. A ceremony of solemn recognition of Shah Shuja was celebrated with oriental pageantry but the arena set apart for the inhabitants was empty, in spite of eastern love of a tamasha, and the display of enthusiasm was confined to the immediate followers of His Majesty.

Macnaghten then pressed for an early advance to Kabul, predicting confidently that the march would be unopposed. There was in fact absolutely no reliable intelligence of any sort on the hundred and one points on which General Keane should have been informed, and when he marched on 27 June he was forced to do so as much as anything else by the shortage of supplies in Kandahar. He left behind, curiously enough, the siege train which with infinite labour had been dragged up the Bolan, and took with him no more than half rations for the march. Money had been spent so lavishly on other less worthy objects that ready cash for the purchase of supplies was running short, while the attitude of the Afghans to their new ruler was made clear by the ruthless slaughter of any stragglers from the line of march.

The column reached Ghazni on 21 July and found that the fortress was strongly occupied and, in the absence of the siege train, the attack bristled with problems. As Keane was relying on the capture of the town to replenish his scanty supplies, it was out of the question to mask the place and continue the advance with the main body of his force. Fortunately his chief engineer, Thomson, collected the invaluable information that the approach by the Kabul gate to the north was still open and intact, and the decision was made to assault from that direction. The main column consisted of two European regiments, with a third in support, the whole commanded by Brigadier Sale. Captain

Peat, of the Bombay Engineers was in command of the demolitions with a young lieutenant of Bengal Engineers, Durand, at the head of the party carrying the powder bags to lay against the gate.

Covered by darkness and a high wind the preparations were completed, the charge was blown and the assaulting party rushed in. The garrison fought in a most determined fashion and a body of fanatical Afghan swordsmen cut in between the storming party and the main body. Sale, at the head of the latter, was cut down by a tulwar stroke in the face; in the effort of the blow the assailant fell with the assailed, and they rolled together among the shattered timbers of the gate. Sale, wounded again on the ground and faint with loss of blood, called on one of his officers for assistance. Brigadiers came up the hard way in those days.

The British lost over two hundred killed and wounded but by sunrise Ghazni was in their hands. The booty was found to consist of numerous transport animals, weapons and ammunition, and a vast quantity of supplies. Dost Mohammad was unable to rally sufficient force to oppose the advance on Kabul which was resumed nine days later and, covered by a rearguard commanded by his son, Akbar Khan, he withdrew with his immediate following and his family to Bamian.

On 7 August there took place the public entry into the capital. 'Shah Shuja, dazzling in coronet, jewelled girdle and bracelets, bestrode his white charger whose equipments gleamed with gold. By his side rode Macnaghten and Burnes. But neither the monarch nor his pageant kindled any enthusiasm in the Cabulees. There was no voice of welcome; the citizens did not trouble themselves so much as to make him a salaam.'

Macnaghten had placed Shah Shuja on his throne and for over two years he persisted in the Sisyphean task of keeping him there. It appears from his dispatches that from time to time he deluded himself with the thought that he was succeeding, but the plain truth is that he was trying to achieve the impossible and, when the two years were over, the whole situation deteriorated sharply, and there began that fateful sequence of events leading to the slope down which the fortunes of the whole expedition, individual and collective, were to plummet to disaster.

Afghanistan had disintegrated into separate provinces, for allegiance to Kabul was a reality only when there was established a king with sufficient personality to dominate the unruly tribal chiefs, by force of arms if words were ineffective.

In 1839 all the essentials were lacking. Not only was Shah Shuja unequal to the task, but he was now forced to share his authority with Macnaghten who kept in his own hands control of foreign affairs and dictated the policy designed to bring the rebellious tribes to heel. There was an army, of course, but it was ludicrously inadequate for the size of the country and was never able to do much more than dominate the immediate surroundings of Kandahar, Ghazni and Kabul; moreover it was an army of infidels whose very presence was an insult to a proud and independent people.

Whatever pipedreams the Governor-General and Macnaghten may have had a swift, decisive campaign, followed by a speedy withdrawal of British forces, leaving Shah Shuja firmly seated on his throne, it was at once transparently clear that the British stay in Kabul to consolidate such success as they had achieved was likely to be measured in months if not in years. It is hard to say which of the ill-assorted pair contributed most to the utter failure of all they were trying to do. Although the paramount need was to stabilize matters to the point where he could safely withdraw, Macnaghten set about controlling the tribes by ignoring and discrediting the feudal tribal chiefs, and enlisted local levies commanded by British officers and paid from Kabul. For the general control of policy he studded the country with British political officers who, whatever their devotion to duty, lacked the vital qualifications of a knowledge of Pashtu, and of the temper and customs of the people with whom they were dealing.

Shah Shuja was permitted to supervise the administration of justice and the settlement and collection of revenue. He made the same unforgivable mistake of ignoring the claims of men of established standing and influence and promoted to the most lucrative posts those who had shared his exile. He was even allowed to appoint as his minister of state his boon companion the old Mulla Shikore, who had lost both his memory and his ears, but who had sufficient faculty left to hate the English, to oppress the people, to be corrupt and venal beyond all description, and to appoint subordinates as corrupt as himself. The oppressed people appealed to the British, who remonstrated with the minister, and the minister punished the people for their presumption. Dost Mohammad may have chastised them with whips, but the new king, foisted on them by the British, was chastising them with scorpions.

The winter of 1839-40 passed without major incident and by the

spring the army, no longer an expeditionary force, was settling down as an army of occupation. Bungalows were built, gardens laid out, wives sent for. The trivial round set in, and as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away.

In the summer of 1840 there was severe fighting against the Ghilzais in the south, while Dost Mohammad, who had a considerable following in Kohistan, north of the capital, was a constant source of trouble, eluding by will-o'-the-wisp tactics the columns sent to deal with him. And there was trouble on both lines of communication. Ranjit Singh had died before the army reached Kabul, the Sikh kingdom he had built up began to crumble, and safe passage across the Punjab, which had been thought reasonably secure, was in jeopardy. The Afridis in the Khaibar, disappointed in their hopes of an increase in the tolls they levied for a right of way through the pass, attacked and invested the fort of Ali Masjid. The Sikh troops were unable to quell the trouble, which ceased only when the tribes were bought off by an annual increase in their subsidy negotiated by Mackeson, the political officer in Peshawar.

About the same time the contingent of the Bombay Army withdrew through Kandahar with orders to take punitive action on the way against the Khan of Kalat who, during the advance, was held to have failed in his promise to supply provisions and to have insulted Shah Shuja by omitting to come in to pay homage. He resisted and was killed in the fighting. His rightful heir, Nasir Khan, who was passed over in favour of a pretender, took to the hills and became the scourge of all Baluchistan. A convoy escort was cut to pieces in the hills and he even attacked Quetta, and was not subdued until Brigadier Nott, the garrison commander in Kandahar, marched back with a strong force and restored order.

In November Dost Mohammad was once again on the rampage south of the Hindu Kush, and a column sent against him was roughly handled fifty miles north of Kabul, two squadrons of Bengal cavalry being routed by a charge of Afghan horsemen led by the Dost in person. The news reached Macnaghten next day as he was taking his evening ride, and while he was digesting this unwelcome piece of intelligence a horseman galloped up to him and announced that the Amir was approaching. 'What Amir?' he asked. 'Amir Dost Mohammad' was the reply. The Afghan prince saluted and tendered

his sword, which Macnaghten refused. The two men rode back to Kabul together and although a month earlier he had contemplated 'putting a price on the fellow's head', we find him writing to the Governor-General begging that 'Dost Mohammad be treated more generously than was Shah Shuja, who had no claim on us. We had no hand in depriving Shah Shuja of his kingdom, whereas we ejected the Dost, who never offended us, in support of our policy, of which he was the victim.'

Dost Mohammad spent a few days in the British camp in Kabul, an honoured guest rather than a prisoner. His soldierly frankness, his bearing at once manly and courteous, his honest liking for and trust in his captors, notwithstanding the experiences which he had undergone, won universal respect and cordiality. Various interpretations have been placed on his surrender but it is at least reasonable to suggest that once he realized that he had no chance of returning to power while the British remained in Kabul he decided that he best served the interests of his people by giving up the attempt. At the end of the month he set out on his journey to India accompanied by Sir Willoughby Cotton, who was relinquishing his command, and escorted by a considerable force of troops who had completed their tour of duty. Brigadier Sale assumed command until the arrival of the new commander, General Elphinstone—a most gallant soldier, but with no experience of Indian warfare, and utterly ignorant of the Afghans and of Afghanistan. Wrecked in body and impaired in mind by physical ailments and infirmities, he had lost all faculty of energy, and such mind as remained to him was swayed by the opinion of the person with whom he had last spoken. The poor gentleman was so exhausted by the exertion of getting out of bed, and being helped into his visiting-room, that it was not for half an hour, and after ineffectual efforts, that he could attend to business. He would complain bitterly of the way in which he was ignored—'degraded from a general to the Lord-Lieutenant's head constable'. Such was the man Lord Auckland appointed to his most responsible and arduous command, not in ignorance of his unfitness for active service, but with the fullest knowledge of it.

The force moving into Afghanistan in relief in January 1841, under Brigadier Shelton, had to fight its way through the Khaibar against opposition from the Afridis, and at the same time severe trouble broke out in Kandahar province where the people were driven to desperation by the extortions of Timur Mirza, Shah Shuja's son and viceroys.

Fighting went on until June against both Durranis and Ghilzais, the latter proving so recalcitrant that a garrison had to be put into their capital, Kalat-i-Ghilzai.

For two years now the British had occupied the main cities of Kandahar, Ghazni and Kabul and it was clear that they were as far off attaining their object as they had been in August 1839. The Court of Directors in London expressed the view to the Governor-General that the time had come to choose between remaining in Afghanistan for 'many years to come', and with an increased force, or of getting out altogether. 'We are convinced that you have no middle course to pursue with safety and with honour.' Lord Auckland chose the middle course and so directly precipitated disaster. Occupation was to continue but, as it was imposing an intolerable strain on the Indian treasury, Macnaghten was instructed to effect every possible economy, the subsidies paid to the tribal chiefs, in particular, being marked for reduction. Macnaghten protested, but in vain.

It is relevant here to quote what Brigadier Nott thought about it all; he was commanding at Kandahar and had had the task of fighting the Ghilzais. He was a shrewd, clear-headed old gentleman, who believed in speaking his mind with great directness, and his views, though highly coloured, express a conflict which will recur throughout this book, the difference of outlook between the political and the military. The political officer, pursuing the long-term policy of achieving his ends by peaceable methods, is reluctant to admit failure when it becomes apparent that the use of force is necessary to restore order or to punish aggression, and deprecates any undue use of force that may prejudice his relations when he again assumes responsibility. The soldier, who has the lives of his men to answer for, feels that once he has been called in he should take action that really will teach a lesson, and resents half measures, or any interference that trammels his freedom. Nott wrote to his own political officer: 'I have no right to interfere with the affairs of this country, and I never do so. But in reference to that part of your note where you speak of political influence I will candidly tell you that in my opinion you have not had for some time past, nor have you at present, one particle of political influence in this country. The conduct of the thousand and one politicals has ruined our cause, and bared the throat of every European in this country to the sword and the knife of the revengeful Afghan and bloody Belooch; and unless several regiments be quickly sent, not a man will be left to

describe the fate of his comrades. Nothing will ever make the Afghans submit to the hated Shah Soojah, who is most certainly as great a scoundrel as ever lived.'

In pursuance of the policy of retrenchment Macnaghten summoned the tribal chiefs to Kabul and broke to them the unwelcome news that their subsidies were to be reduced. Sparked off by the hair-trigger temper of the Ghilzais, trouble broke out immediately. They occupied the passes between the capital and Jalalabad and cut the road to India by way of the Khaibar Pass, and they were joined by the tribes in Kohistan north of Kabul, led by Dost Mohammad's son, Akbar Khan, who in his implacable hatred of the British had refused every offer of reconciliation.

Sale's brigade was on the point of leaving for India and Macnaghten, who had been appointed to the dignified and lucrative post of Governor of Bombay, planned to accompany them. However, the trouble was so widespread and serious that immediate action was necessary and a battalion was sent to Butkak, the first camp down the road, on 9 October, the rest of the brigade following the next day. Sale had a strong force and if he had handled it resolutely he might well have restored order but at the very outset, when about to assault the stronghold of a leading Ghilzai chieftain, which he had explicit orders to destroy, he called off the attack and allowed his political officer to enter into negotiations and conclude a truce which was entirely to his disadvantage. Then, with no very clear object in view the column fought its way onwards, suffering heavy casualties. At length it reached Gandamak, two thirds of the way to Jalalabad, where Sale halted for orders from Kabul, whence disquieting rumours had been filtering through. The orders, which came on 9 November, were for him to return, but at a council of war it was decided, by a majority vote, that this was impossible. Of the alternatives of remaining where he was, or of pressing on to Jalalabad, the latter was chosen on the grounds that the force would there be equally well placed to support a withdrawal from Kabul or the advance of a relieving force from India. Of the two the need to help Kabul was by far the more urgent, and by moving clear of the Ghilzai country he effectually removed his brigade from the conflict, and they played no part in the events of the next six weeks.

The cardinal error in the British dispositions for the defence of Kabul

had been made months earlier when Macnaghten had weakly given in to the objections raised by Shah Shuja and failed to occupy the Bala Hissar, the great fort which dominated the city from its eastern end, to repair its defences, and consolidate it as an impregnable keep to which everyone could withdraw in case of trouble. Instead the troops were scattered all over the plain, in camps with no defences worthy of the name, the main supply depot being sited on its own with a guard of a paltry hundred rifles. The whole area was dominated by Afghan forts which were neither occupied nor destroyed.

The events of November and December 1841 tell a story of timorous and uncertain councils; the political at odds with the military, who fought even more bitterly among themselves. Commanders, although at the end they fought bravely with the courage of despair, lacked the powers of leadership to inspire their men. The signal for a general rising came on 2 November when a mob attacked and killed Burnes in his house on the edge of the city. Macnaghten then became involved in a maze of tortuous negotiations with the Afghan sirdars, which culminated in his own murder by Akbar Khan when he was attending a conference at which he hoped to secure terms for the safe withdrawal from the country of the whole force.

His mantle fell on Pottinger, a political officer who had distinguished himself at the siege of Herat, and whose voice over the two years had sounded the one note of sanity and realism to be heard in all the land. His advice was that all further negotiations were useless. The Afghans had consistently failed to date to honour any agreement entered into, and in the flush of success were even less to be trusted. He pointed out that a strong brigade was still in being, reinforcements were known to be on their way from India via the Khaibar, and that resolute action, either to occupy the Bala Hissar, or to fight a way out, taking the bare minimum of useless months, stood a fair chance of success. His advice was rejected and he was instructed to get what terms he could. A treaty imposing terms of great humiliation was at length concluded, which professed to guarantee withdrawal under the safe custody of the Ghilzai chiefs.

On the morning 6 January 1842, with snow lying thickly over the plain, the retreat began, in bitter cold which penetrated the warmest clothing and bit fiercely into the debilitated and thinly clad frames of the sepoy. The military force consisted of 'about 4,500 men, of whom about 690 were Europeans, 2,840 native soldiers on foot, and 970

native cavalrymen. The gallant troop of the Company's Horse Artillery marched out with its full complement of six guns.' In sound heart and unencumbered they might have given a good account of themselves, but the column was burdened with twelve thousand camp followers and a number of women and children.

The utter worthlessness of Afghan promises was shown when the rear guard was fired on before it even left cantonments. The heights commanding every defile down the road were crowned not by British piquets but by Ghilzai marksmen who fired without mercy into the confusion on the road below. Small parties fought hand to hand with swordsmen cutting their way through the press, and it was about all they could do. For three days the slaughter went on until on 9 January there was a slight lull when Akbar Khan offered sanctuary to such women and children as remained, the husbands to accompany their families. The rest of the force pressed hopelessly on till at last on the 12th, just beyond Jagdallak, only three full marches out of Kabul, the last handful were treacherously put to death. On the 13th a solitary Englishman, Dr Bryden, the sole survivor, rode into Jalalabad.

On the same day a small column of families and hostages, escorted by Akbar Khan, marched back the way they had come, along a road strewn with its ghastly tokens of slaughter, recognizing almost at every step the bodies of friends and comrades.

On the fourth day Akbar Khan left them at a fort in the Laghman valley and returned to the siege of Jalalabad.

Sale's brigade had reached there on 12 November and its success in holding out until relieved from India enabled the British to redeem some few shreds of self-respect from the depths to which they had fallen. As late as mid-March there was still no forecast of the date of arrival of General Pollock, who had been appointed by Lord Auckland to command the relieving army but, on 7 April, Sale was prevailed on to order a sortie which routed the Afghans who were investing the town. Ten days later Pollock's column marched in, played into camp to the significant tune 'Oh, but ye've been lang o' coming'.

No one was more conscious of the date than Pollock, but on his arrival in Peshawar early in February he had found the morale of the troops so low—they had already tried and failed to force the passage of the Khaibar—that he decided that, however mortifying the delay, he would not advance until he had restored their confidence in themselves.

The Afridis had blocked the mouth of the Khaibar at Ali Masjid, but Pollock, helped by Mackeson, had made a study of the enemy's tactics and now took a leaf out of their own book. By moving strong detachments along the crests on either flank he manœuvred them out of their position. The first lesson of mountain warfare—that there is little danger from the tribesman to a force that holds the hills above him—had been learnt for the benefit of future generations.

Since the beginning of the month there had been a new Governor-General, Lord Ellenborough, who heralded his arrival by a declaration of policy that was a masterpiece of ambiguity; it would be tedious to detail the vacillations, the obscurities, and the tortuosities of his successive communications to his two generals in Afghanistan.

On 29 April the Commander-in-Chief, with Ellenborough's full approval, ordered Pollock to withdraw to India leaving the hostages and families in Afghan hands, and the reverses suffered by a British Army unavenged. That this was never obeyed is due entirely to Pollock's refusal to accept the shameful consequences of such action. By playing on one small ambiguity in his instructions he delayed compliance and was eventually able to gain agreement to a reversal of policy. Encouraged by the insubordinate Pollock, Nott was still in Kandahar and was eventually given the choice of returning to India down his lines of communication through Quetta or of a 'retirement' via Ghazni, Kabul and Jalalabad. In the event of his choosing the latter Pollock was authorized to advance to Kabul 'to cover Nott's withdrawal'. It is not surprising that these two very forthright commanders seized their opportunity with both hands. Pollock, with small loss to his own column, crushed a force of fifteen thousand strong that attempted to bar his way through the Khurd Kabul defile and reached the capital on 15 September, two days ahead of Nott who had also won a decisive victory south of Ghazni.

The first thing was to rescue the families and hostages. They had been forced to move from one camp to another as Akbar Khan's fortunes fluctuated, and at times had lived in great discomfort, but on the whole he kept his faith and they were not unfairly treated. They reached Kabul on 21 September. The great bazaar below the Bala Hissar was blown up, and on 12 October, the whole force began the final withdrawal to Peshawar. The main body passed through the Khaibar without trouble, but the rearguards were severely harried. Shah Shuja had been murdered in Kabul in April when on his way to

review reinforcements that were leaving to join the army besieging Jalalabad, and as the troops marched through the Punjab on their way to Ferozepore they met Dost Mohammad returning to the throne from which he had been driven nearly three years before. He soon restored order, and ruled wisely and well for over twenty years. In the hope of recovering his lost province of Peshawar he sent a contingent to help the Sikhs during the Second Sikh War but, despite all they had done to him, he resisted the temptation in 1857 to take advantage of British weakness at the time of the Mutiny.

The First Afghan War signally failed in its purpose of establishing a friendly buffer state. After an enormous waste of blood and treasure they left every town and village of Afghanistan bristling with our enemies. Before the British Army crossed the Indus the English name had been honoured in Afghanistan. Some dim traditions of the splendour of Mr Elphinstone's mission had been all that the Afghans associated in their thoughts of the English nation, but in their place they left galling memories of the progress of a desolating army.

It would be nearly forty years before the British again entered Afghanistan but, on a level below international politics and strategy, they were soon to make for themselves a new north-west frontier and come face to face with tribes who were related by ties of race and language to those living east of the road from Kabul to Kandahar, the tribes at whose hands they had suffered so much during the years 1840-1842.

With no history books to guide them they were not to know that no part of tribal territory had ever been effectively ruled or administered by any empire that had passed that way; and with so many other things to think about they may also be excused for failing to realize that in the ebb and flow of migration across Afghanistan the high-water mark was always the Indus. It was the river itself and not the foothills to the west that was the dividing line between the Pathan and the Punjabi speaking people of the plains to the east.

Had these things been clear to them the British would have learnt two lessons that would have stood them in good stead when they came to impose the pax Britannica upon the frontier in 1849.

3 THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR 1878-80

THE Second Afghan War, although it did not repeat the military disasters of the first, ran very much the same course. The leading parts were the same: a Foreign Secretary in London apprehensive as to the designs of Russia; a Viceroy blind to all facts and reasoning that did not fit his own theories; and an oriental monarch proudly determined to maintain the independence of his country without offending either of two powerful neighbours. The stages were also much the same: a long diplomatic approach was broken off at the moment when a little patience might have achieved success; the appearance of a Russian mission in Kabul at a critical juncture; a first successful military campaign against not very serious opposition; the murder in Kabul of a British envoy; and a second campaign to avenge his death.

The Amir Dost Mohammad, before his death in 1863, had brought all five provinces of Afghanistan under his control. He had nominated to succeed him Sher Ali, his eldest son by a princess of the blood, and the succession was recognized by the Government of India.

Sher Ali at once ran into trouble from rival claimants, but by 1869 he had consolidated his position. He was not an easy man to deal with. He was proud and touchy, and too much inclined to nurse a grievance over any setback or refusal to agree to his requests; but he kept firmly in mind two factors which he felt should govern his foreign policy, and, above all, he was consistent. He knew he had nothing to fear except from Russia and Great Britain, and he knew also that Afghanistan was only one of the points of contact and potential difference between the two powers, and that India, vulnerable to land attack only through his own country, was the Achilles heel of British foreign policy: so that if Russia was losing ground on other fronts she had at hand a very effective means of restoring the balance. He foresaw that he might, and in fact he did, find himself in a dilemma arising from the course of international events elsewhere that were totally outside his control. Unless therefore Britain was prepared to come down firmly on his side and guarantee the integrity of his country against encroachments from Russia, and this they were not willing to do, he felt the freer he kept from outside entanglements the better.

The other point on which he was clear was that his people fiercely resented the presence in their country of Europeans; and after the events of 1840 that is hardly to be wondered at. It had been implicit in all dealings with his father that the British would not require him to

accept a mission as a permanency anywhere in Afghanistan. Sher Ali knew that any reversal of this policy would be most unpopular with his subjects, and he was not so firmly seated on his throne that he could afford to risk unpopularity; moreover, he knew that with the best will in the world he could not guarantee the safety of a mission in Herat, or anywhere else, and that if anything unfortunate did happen he alone would be held responsible. It was the British demand that they should have an envoy permanently located in Herat that was the basic cause of the Second Afghan War.

In the years between Sher Ali's return to the throne in 1869 and the outbreak of war he had to deal with four viceroys of India. Lord Lawrence pursued, even to extremes, the policy of 'masterly inactivity', of accepting the course of events in Afghanistan as the factor determining the man best fitted to rule the country; he might have done better to support Sher Ali more firmly in his early struggle for power. Lord Mayo, who was the only Viceroy Sher Ali met in person, on the occasion of a darbar arranged at Ambala in his honour, made a great personal impression but was not allowed by the government at home to give the guarantee against external attack that the Amir asked for. Mayo was succeeded by Lord Northbrook whose relations were adversely affected by the fact that it fell to him to convey to Sher Ali the unwelcome award of the British commission which had been demarcating the disputed frontier between Persia and Afghanistan in Seistan. Northbrook then clashed with the home government as to the extent of the support to be offered to the Amir; and as to how much Sher Ali could be asked to concede in return. He firmly opposed a suggestion made early in 1875 by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, that he should demand the right to maintain a mission permanently in Herat on the grounds that the information coming from the Indian agent in Kabul was inaccurate and inadequate to keep the government informed of what was going on to the west and north. The date is significant for it marks the start of a period of diplomatic activity at home occasioned by Turkey's maladministration of her provinces in Europe which contained a considerable Christian population. Pressure was put on her to mend her ways by several powers, Russia among them, but when this looked like developing into an attempt to gain control of the Dardanelles, the home government, in 1878, sent an Indian contingent of five thousand men to Malta. Russia countered by dispatching three columns totalling fifteen thousand men,

to the Amu Dar'ya, with orders to establish Russian authority over the province between the river and the Hindu Kush; and it is certain that the numbers lost nothing in the telling in the bazaars of Kabul and Kandahar.

Lord Northbrook had resigned in 1876 and was succeeded by Lord Lytton who had instructions to step up the demands on Sher Ali—though he needed no prompting at all, as witness his *bon mot* in which he likened the Amir to an earthen pipkin between two iron pots. He applied himself with vigour to his task and on the evidence of a paper he submitted to his council it appears that not the Hindu Kush but the Amu Dar'ya marked the limit to his ambitions.

In 1877 Sher Ali's distrust of British intentions increased when he learned of an agreement reached with the Khan of Kalat whereby a garrison was to be located permanently in Quetta, and he was encouraged to persist with the negotiations he had already opened with the Russians. In an attempt to reach a peaceful solution a conference was held in Peshawar in the spring of 1878 but it terminated with the untimely death of the Afghan delegate, the Prime Minister, Nur Mohamad, and although Sher Ali had actually started a successor on his way Lord Lytton chose to break off the negotiations altogether, so that during a very critical period there was no contact between the two parties. Worse still, Sher Ali had just been notified by General von Kaufman, the Governor-General in Russian Turkestan, that he proposed to send to Kabul a mission consisting of seven officers, escorted by twenty-two Cossacks, headed by General Stoletoff. It is impossible not to sympathize with Sher Ali that all this should happen at a time when he was resisting Lytton's demand for a permanent resident in Kabul. He had already been approached by Russian agents with offers of a treaty, he was aware of the significance of the latest Russian move in the context of European politics, and he knew that they held a trump card in the person of his nephew Abdur Rahman, who had taken refuge in Bokhara, and was rumoured to be willing to accept the Afghan throne on any terms dictated by his hosts.

He could hardly refuse to receive the Russian mission but, with the probability that if the tension eased in the Mediterranean the pressure the Russians were putting on him would relax, he tried desperately to play for time. The progress of the mission was delayed on every pretext possible, and when they did arrive they were kept shut up in the Residency in the Bala Hissar, guarded alike from danger and from

mischievous. The Amir's forecast was correct. Stoletoff's negotiations were cut short by the signature of the Treaty of Berlin, he received imperative instructions to return immediately, and he left in a hurry for Tashkent, leaving his second-in-command to follow with the rest of the mission.

This was the moment, the end of August 1878, when a fresh look might have been taken at the whole problem and, indeed, a new Foreign Secretary, Lord Cranbrook, was already advising caution. But Lord Lytton had been assembling a mission under General Sir Neville Chamberlain for dispatch to Kabul to counter the Russian move, and had sent an Indian envoy in advance to make the necessary arrangements; for this delicate task he chose a man who was *persona non grata* with the Amir as he had been withdrawn from Kabul some years previously for intriguing against him. At this moment there was a second undeserved stroke of ill-fortune: the death of Sher Ali's favourite son and heir. After a token period of delay the envoy set off, and Chamberlain was given a date, as early as possible after 16 September, by which he must be ready to start even though no formal reply had been received from Kabul.

It is easy enough to see that Lord Lytton and General Chamberlain reacted unfavourably to what was considered to be Sher Ali's unreasonable procrastination, but at a moment when, after Stoletoff's departure from Kabul, all need for haste had vanished, Sher Ali, in a moment of great personal grief, found a pistol presented at his head. He heard, moreover, that Cavagnari, the assistant commissioner in Peshawar, had been negotiating with the Afridi tribes to secure an unmolested passage through the Khaibar, and had gone so far as to address the Amir's own commander of the garrison at Ali Masjid as to his intentions if confronted by the mission demanding onward passage to Kabul.

Chamberlain appreciated that if he in person was halted with his whole party it would constitute an insult that would have very wide repercussions, and he accordingly sent Cavagnari forward with a small escort to ask the Afghan commander whether he proposed to allow the mission to pass on the following day. The Amir's representative gave the courteous but firm reply that he had had no instructions to allow them to enter the Khaibar, that without such orders he could not let them proceed and would in fact oppose them. In the centre of a semi-circle of truculent Afridis the two men shook hands and

Cavagnari, fortunate in such a setting to have been so considerately treated, rode back to Peshawar.

Chamberlain's mission was dissolved and preparations for an immediate invasion of Afghanistan were put in hand.

On the face of it Lytton had a cast-iron case—he had been driven to take action against a ruler with whom it was impossible to come to terms, and who was moreover heavily committed to dealing with the Russians. The public in England were satisfied as to the justice of the cause, and those who spoke out in defence of Sher Ali could not make their voices heard.

Considering that at any rate in the mind of the Viceroy the outcome of the negotiations of the past six months had been a foregone conclusion the army was quite unready for war, not least in its administrative services, upon whom the nature of the theatre of war and the length of the lines of communication were obviously going to impose a heavy load. By way of increasing the burden the plan involved an advance on three lines: from Quetta to Kandahar; from Kohat, through the Kurram valley, over the Peiwar Kotal, to the Shutargardan Pass, which was only fifty miles from Kabul; and from Peshawar through the Khaibar to Jalalabad.

The final ultimatum sent to Sher Ali expired on 20 November and on that date all three columns advanced. In the south General Sir Donald Stewart made an unopposed march through the unfriendly wastes of northern Baluchistan, through the Bolan and Kojak Passes, and early in January encamped on the plain about Kandahar.

The Khaibar column under General Sir Sam Browne found itself confronted by a strong Afghan position holding the narrow gorge at Ali Masjid and the battle was fought out on the heights on both flanks. The attack on the right was held by a precipitous cliff crowned by the enemy, but the left after some hard fighting was more successful and next morning at dawn it was found that the garrison of the main position had gone. No further opposition was encountered and by 20 December the leading brigade was in camp at Jalalabad, where it spent the winter. The reserve division under General Maude was fully occupied in dealing with Afridi and Mohmand attacks on the lines of communication, which went on intermittently throughout the war.

The Kurram Force, under Major-General Frederick Roberts* had

* Later Field-Marshal Lord Roberts.

the most difficult task in every respect as its first battle, at the Peiwar Kotal, was fought a hundred and thirty-six miles from Kohat, a poorly equipped base, over a hundred miles from Rawalpindi, and dependent on a bridge of boats which was the only means of crossing the Indus. Roberts applied all his remarkable talents to his task, and thanks to his masterly handling of the Turi headmen of the Kurram valley, which was still Afghan territory, he was in a position to attack the Peiwar Kotal by 1 December. As at Ali Masjid it was found that the centre of the enemy position, where the track ran over the kotal, was too strong to be taken by a frontal attack, and the main operation was a flank attack carried out by a strong brigade, with a mountain battery in support, led by the column commander in person. The march, which had been planned in great secrecy, began at ten o'clock at night. The 5th Gurkhas and a wing of 72nd Highlanders bore the brunt of the very heavy fighting which went on throughout the day, but resulted finally in the eviction of the enemy along the whole front.

It had been a near thing. The position was found to be immensely strong, and the defenders outnumbered the attackers and were waiting only for the arrival of reinforcements from Kabul to take the offensive then, with the backing of very large numbers of tribesmen who were swarming over the surrounding hills, they might have had the whole of the Kurram force in grave danger. Roberts pushed on to the Shutargardan Pass, which he reached on 8 December, returning two days later to Ali Khel at the foot of the Peiwar Kotal on the Afghan side.

On Christmas Eve news was received that Sher Ali, realizing that further resistance was useless, had decided to cast himself upon the mercy of the Russians. He sent to General Sir Sam Browne a dignified letter announcing his departure for St Petersburg where he proposed to lay the whole matter before a congress of all the European powers, inviting the British to state their case on that occasion. Luckless to the last he found that he had exchanged the frying pan for the fire: the Russians would not even allow him to quit his own country, and he died worn out with illness in Balkh, in Afghan Turkestan, on 21 February.

Before leaving Kabul he released from captivity his eldest son, Yakub Khan, who had been thrown into gaol for expressing resentment when he was passed over in favour of the younger son who had died the previous autumn. In the New Year Yakub Khan was proclaimed

Amir, but his health and vitality had been sapped by long years of cruel imprisonment and he was to prove himself quite unfitted for the position he assumed. His overtures for the re-establishment of friendly relations were so protracted that both the Khaibar and Kurram columns were ordered forward, to Gandamak, and towards the Shutargardan Pass respectively, in readiness for an advance on Kabul. These moves had the desired effect and it was arranged that Cavagnari and the Amir should meet in the capital; however at the last moment it was decided that the latter should be received in the British camp at Gandamak, the feelings of the anti-peace party in Kabul being so strong that doubts were expressed as to the possibility of guaranteeing the safety of a foreign mission.

Yakub Khan reached Gandamak, wearing a Russian uniform, on 8 May 1879 and was received with royal honours. Negotiations conducted by Cavagnari resulted in a peace treaty which was signed on the 26th. Under its terms the Amir became virtually a feudatory of the British Crown which assumed the right to control the external relations of his country; he agreed moreover to accept British agents in his dominions, guaranteeing their safe and honourable treatment; the Kurram was ceded to Britain, together with the control of the Khaibar Pass and the tribes living in the vicinity. In Baluchistan the Amir gave up his claim to the districts of Sibi and Pishin. (The affairs of Baluchistan are dealt with more fully in Chapter 5.) The British for their part undertook to support him against foreign aggression with arms, money or troops, at their discretion, and to pay him an annual subsidy of £60,000.

It remained only to withdraw their forces within the new frontiers and to dispatch to Kabul the first Resident to be accepted under the treaty. The return of the Kandahar force was delayed till the autumn for reasons of health; the Khaibar column withdrew, suffering severely from cholera on the way; while Roberts remained at the Shutargardan Pass to speed Cavagnari, who had been selected for the new appointment, on his way to Kabul.

It will be appreciated that apart from the two engagements in December the British had not defeated the Afghan army, and their troops had not been closer than fifty miles to Kabul. They had not by any means convinced the people of the country that they were in a position to enforce the treaty, and grave doubts were entertained as to its wisdom on that account. Roberts recalled that when, at a farewell

dinner given in honour of the mission, he was asked to propose a toast, he did not feel equal to the task: 'I was so thoroughly depressed, and my mind was filled with such gloomy forebodings as to the fate of these fine fellows, that I could not utter a word.'*

Cavagnari was accompanied by a surgeon and a small staff, and had as escort, under Lieutenant Hamilton v.c., twenty-five sabres and fifty rifles of the Corps of Guides, the numbers being considered sufficient as the Amir had pledged himself personally for their safety. The envoy was received with high honour and installed in quarters in the Bala Hissar which had been prepared for him.

He arrived on 24 July and it was at once apparent that his presence was bitterly resented by both ruler and people. In August two regiments from Herat arrived and went into the near-by cantonments at Sherpur. They had been inspired by their commander with intense hatred of the British and thronged the streets shouting abuse and attempting to pick quarrels with the men of the escort. Cavagnari was warned of the danger, but was disinclined to credit it.

Then one morning Afghan troops in the Bala Hissar, mustered to receive their pay, found they were being paid for a month only out of the arrears that were due to them. A riot broke out and the mob moved on the Residency, which was soon under fire from the arsenal which overlooked it. Cavagnari sent a message to Yakub Khan, who had two thousand troops at hand, still nominally loyal, but beyond a somewhat half-hearted order to his commander-in-chief to go out and remonstrate with the insurgents, he did nothing. The little garrison made three sorties but about noon the Residency gates were broken down and the buildings set on fire. There were no survivors, and Hamilton was said to have died sword in hand in a last desperate charge.

The news reached Simla early on 5 September. The Khaibar column had returned to India and had been broken up, the Quetta force was in the process of withdrawing from Kandahar, and only from the Kurram was there any chance of rapid action. There were still troops in the valley and if they could seize the Shutargardan Pass it was only fifty miles on to the capital; but the pass, over eleven thousand feet high, would be closed by snow before the end of the year and it was therefore essential that a second column should open up the longer road by way

* *Forty-One Years in India*, Field-Marshal Lord Roberts—Bentley 1897.

of the Khaibar and Jalalabad. And as the people of southern Afghanistan could by no means be expected to remain inactive while their country was invaded from the north it would also be necessary to secure Kandahar.

General Roberts was again appointed Commander of the Kabul Field Force, which consisted of a cavalry brigade of four regiments, and eight battalions of infantry organized in two brigades, supported by four batteries of artillery. As always, his most serious weakness was shortage of transport, which was such that only one brigade could be moved at a time; indeed, on the first march forward from Ali Khel the cavalry marched on foot, leading their horses laden with grain.

When General Roberts reached Ali Khel the political officer handed him two letters from Yakub Khan, the first apparently written while the attack on the Residency was still going on. The tenor of both was the same, that the writer had done everything he could, that the situation was completely out of hand, and that he himself was besieged. It was probably true that the Amir had not planned the attack but it was not true that he had done much to stop it, and there was evidence that he was playing for time. In fact he was inciting the Ghilzais to oppose the British advance and to impose delay until a truly formidable opposition could be organized to defeat them. However, he had appealed for help and for the moment the fiction was accepted that the British were going to Kabul to help him take such action as seemed necessary to avenge the attack on the mission. He sent two of his leading ministers to meet Roberts at Ali Khel and on the 27th, very much to Roberts's embarrassment, he arrived in person with a party of about two hundred and fifty men in the camp of the leading brigade. The move was probably precipitated by the news that his uncle and several other sirdars were on their way to join the British. Although given a large escort he could not be prevented from receiving and sending messages and, in spite of his protestations, it was clear throughout the operations that he was kept fully aware of what was going on, and right up to the end was confident that his troops would be victorious.

By 19 September the leading infantry brigade had seized the Shutargardan Pass and began improving the road forward. Roberts decided not to show his hand prematurely, but when he advanced on the 27th a broad hint of the temper of the enemy came when he was waylaid and fired on by an ambush in the defile of the pass, which was

found to be blocked by two thousand Afghans. On the evening of 5 October, just one month after the receipt of the news in Simla of the fate of the British envoy, Roberts camped, with his leading infantry brigade, the cavalry brigade, and most of his artillery, at the village of Charasia. The hills beyond it barred the road to Kabul, no more than twelve miles away across the plain, while reports from the city told of intensive preparations to resist him. Roberts might well bewail the absence of his other infantry brigade, one march behind due to shortage of transport, which prevented him from seizing the hills that same evening.

He had ordered the cavalry to reconnoitre at dawn the road through a gorge that cut the line of hills, and improve the road to take the guns.

The growing daylight discovered large numbers of Afghan troops in regular formation crowning the hills that I ought to have been in a position to occupy the preceding evening. It was evident that trained troops were employed. Immediate action was imperatively necessary; their occupation of the heights was, I felt, a warning that must not be disregarded, and a menace that could not be brooked. It did not require much experience of Asiatics to understand that, if the enemy were allowed to remain undisturbed for a single night in the position they had taken up their numbers would increase to an extraordinary extent.*

Roberts now heard that the road was cut behind him and that the arrival of the rear brigade would certainly be delayed, while tribesmen could be seen massing on the hills around the camp. The situation was one of great anxiety; he had only four thousand men and eighteen guns with him, and the numbers of the enemy were increasing hourly. The only chance of success was to attack the main position at once. A column under Brigadier Baker was sent to assault the enemy's right, an earlier movement of troops having deceived him into expecting an attack on the other flank. By dint of the most spirited action over rocky ground of great difficulty the attack was successful and by 3.45 p.m. British troops had seized the whole of the main ridge. It was no doubt with some satisfaction that Roberts conveyed to the Amir, who had been watching the fight from the camp, the 'joyful intelligence of our success'. The monarch 'received the news with Asiatic calmness merely requesting my aide-de-camp to assure me that, as my enemies were his enemies, he rejoiced at my victory'.

* *Forty-One Years in India.*

The rear brigade arrived just before dark and 'at the first streak of dawn' on the 7th Roberts ordered the advance to be resumed. By nightfall they were just short of the city and cavalry patrols reported that the Bala Hissar had been evacuated and that the only part of the city visible was deserted. Further patrols the next morning reported that the cantonment of Sherpur was empty, the magazine having been blown up. Roberts went to the Bala Hissar, and wandered over the scene of the Embassy's brave defence and cruel end. The walls of the Residency, closely pitted with bullet holes, gave proof of the determined nature of the attack and the length of the resistance. The floors were covered with bloodstains and amidst the embers of the fire was found a heap of human bones.

He was now faced with the problem of how to carry out the instructions given by the Foreign Office, which were couched in very general terms. The fate of the Amir had also to be decided. Having regard to the fact that practically the whole nation had been accessories to the murder of Cavagnari it was doubtful whether the infinitely laborious task of discovering those directly responsible, and punishing them in the only way possible, was going to be worth the disadvantages involved. There was much to be said for swift and condign retribution on the city and people, followed by a rapid withdrawal while the defeat at Charasia was fresh in their minds. However, orders were orders, and Roberts set about carrying them out.

Yakub Khan had been told that he must be present at the ceremony in the Bala Hissar on 12 October when a proclamation was to be read, but early that morning he presented himself at Roberts's tent and announced that he wished to abdicate. He was told that such a step would require the approval of the Viceroy and that the announcement that the British proposed to take over the government of Kabul and the surrounding country in his name must be made, and would stand for the time being. The people appear to have been relieved at the leniency of the terms, and the triumphal march through the city the following day passed off without incident.

Preparations began for spending the winter in Kabul: the collection of supplies, the closing of the Kurram line of communications and the relief of the garrison left on the Shutargardan Pass, and the opening up of the Khaibar line, which was much delayed by the grave shortage of equipment in India. It was decided to concentrate the whole force in Sherpur cantonment. At the end of October agreement was received

to Yakub Khan's abdication and a suitable proclamation was made to the people that he was to be sent under strong escort to India. Those in authority were adjured to discharge their functions in the maintenance of order and good government, but the sting of the announcement lay in the tail. 'The British government, after consultation with the principal Sirdars, tribal chiefs and others representing the interests and wishes of the various provinces and cities, will declare its will as to the future permanent arrangements to be made for the good government of the people.'

By early December the Afghan people had had time to recover from the shock of the defeat they had suffered in October, the rout of their army and the flight of their leaders, and they were faced with some extremely unpalatable facts: the occupation of Sherpur cantonment by an army of occupation and the loss of a great park of artillery and connected munitions of war; the destruction of the historic Bala Hissar; the deportation of their Amir and his leading ministers; and the fact that for some months at any rate they were to be subjected to foreign rule.

Up to then disunion and jealousy had prevented the tribal chiefs from combining against the British, but there now appeared the aged Mulla Mushk-i-Alam to fan the slumbering embers of fanaticism into a blaze. The priests became masters of the situation; the cry of jihad—a religious war—spread like a forest fire. By the end of the first week in the month columns from all quarters were marching on the city, gaining in strength and temper every day. Roberts realized that his only salvation lay in breaking up the concentration before it was complete, but the concerted movement he planned to achieve his purpose miscarried. There was heavy fighting south of the city that went on for nearly a week and at the end of it Roberts had to face the fact that he was hopelessly outnumbered. The arrival of reinforcements by the Khaibar route had brought his strength up to about ten thousand but he estimated the enemy strength at ten times that figure. Reluctantly he withdrew into the fortified perimeter of Sherpur and awaited the inevitable attack. He was fortunate to receive from a spy accurate information of what was intended and when the blow came at dawn on the 23rd he was ready for it, and the main assault on the eastern face of the defences was beaten off with tremendous loss. Soon after noon the attack ceased and the enemy were seen to be in full flight; next morning 'not only had the assault been abandoned, but the great tribal

combination had been dissolved, and not a man of the many thousands who had been opposed to us the previous day remained in any of the villages or on the surrounding hills'.[★]

A proclamation of great leniency was made. Tribal leaders responded favourably and many came in to pay their respects, the opportunity being taken to find some agreeable arrangement for the peaceful administration of the country until some permanent settlement could be arrived at. In that connection two decisions had been taken: that, come what might, the British were not going to spend another winter in Afghanistan, and that the country was to be broken up into its component provinces. It was desirable to have to deal with a single ruler, but Dost Mohammad had struggled for twenty-one years to maintain that position and whenever an Amir died there always followed a period of anarchy and unrest. The problem then was to find rulers, particularly one for Kabul, to whom to hand over. There was a party in favour of the return of Yakub Khan, which had to be told, not once but several times, that he was not acceptable. The post was hawked around without any acceptable name being put forward till at length it was suggested that Abdur Rahman was a suitable candidate. He had had a chequered career. At the time of Sher Ali's accession in 1863 he had been active in supporting the cause of his father, Dost Mohammad's eldest son, but when Sher Ali was established on the throne Abdur Rahman fled north of the Hindu Kush and became a pensioner of the Russians.

This was not at first sight much of a qualification, but an approach was made to him and after several months of rather difficult negotiations, on 22 July, at a grand darbar in Sherpur camp, a proclamation was made naming him as the new Amir. He was not too pleased to find that a governor had already been appointed for the independent province of Kandahar, but he was assured that, with this exception, the country was his to make what he could of it, including Herat, if he could bring it under his sway.

Early in May General Sir Donald Stewart arrived from Kandahar with a division of the Bengal Army to assist in the pacification of the northern part of the country. There had been little trouble in the south during the winter but Stewart's march north ran into strong opposition short of Ghazni where the enemy, inflamed by the preaching of the

[★] *Forty-One Years in India.*

Mulla Mushk-i-Alam, charged with a fanatical fury unmatched in any other battle. Over a thousand of their dead were counted on the field.

The strength of the Kandahar garrison had been reduced below what was really desirable, and the new Afghan Governor did not seem to be a very forceful character. At the end of May news was received that Yakub's brother, Ayub Khan, who was Governor of Herat, patching up his differences with the local sirdars, had proclaimed a jihad and was advancing on Kandahar. The Governor at once announced that his own troops could not be trusted and would go over to Ayub as soon as he came within deserting distance. His forecast proved correct and Brigadier-General Burrows, who with a brigade had gone forward to the Helmand, found himself in a very difficult position and in danger of being cut off from Kandahar. He moved on Maiwand where, owing to faulty intelligence, he was forced to fight with a force ill-disposed for battle and suffered a heavy defeat. Out of a strength of just under two and a half thousand over a thousand were either killed or missing. The remainder, thanks to lack of enterprise by the enemy, managed to reach Kandahar. The cantonments were abandoned and the decision made to retire into the city and accept siege until help should arrive.

In India, it was at first proposed that help should be sent by way of Quetta, but Roberts pointed out that not only would this take very much longer, but the force would be composed of units with no experience of battle and hardly fitted for their task. Confident that his own troops would respond to his lead, he offered to march a column for the relief of Kandahar with the sole condition that, as soon as the operation was over, his men, who were already preparing to leave Afghanistan via the Khaibar, should immediately be sent back by way of Quetta. He took with him three infantry brigades, each of four battalions, a cavalry brigade of four regiments, and three batteries of artillery, all on pack; not a wheel turned along the whole column. The total strength was just under ten thousand fighting men, three thousand British and seven thousand Indian. They marched the 313 miles in twenty-two days. The daily supply for over eighteen thousand men and eleven thousand animals had to be drawn from the country after arrival in camp, and the fuel with which it was cooked had often to be brought from long distances. Water was scarce, and the thermometer varied from below freezing at dawn to 110 degrees at noon. The 'rouse' sounded at 2.45 a.m. and by four o'clock the tents had been

struck, the baggage loaded, and everything was ready for the start. The march, which was a masterpiece of planning and execution, showed what seasoned troops under an inspired leader could achieve.

The new Amir sent messages to the tribes down the road bidding them offer the supplies the army would need, and, thanks to his help and to the effect of the decisive victory won by Stewart at Ghazni four months earlier, the march was virtually unopposed.

When he heard of Roberts's approach Ayub Khan raised the siege of Kandahar and took up a defensive position a few miles north of the city. He was not kept waiting. After a reconnaissance by the cavalry brigade on the day they reached Kandahar Roberts attacked the next morning and won a decisive victory.

The troops left in Kabul marched back to India two days after Roberts's departure and one week after the battle of Kandahar the first brigade was on the road for Quetta. Roberts, whose health had been very poor, left for England on 12 October and recorded that as he rode down the Bolan he overtook the regiments who had served under him on their way to India.

As I parted with each corps in turn its band played 'Auld Lang Syne' and I have never since heard that memory-stirring air without its bringing before my mind's eye the last view I had of the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force. I hear the martial beat of drums and the plaintive music of the pipes; and I see riflemen and Gurkhas, Highlanders and Sikhs, guns and horses, camels and mules, with the endless following of an Indian Army, winding through the narrow gorges.*

The 72nd Highlanders and 5th Gurkhas had been brigaded together throughout the campaign and a lasting friendship grew up between them. It was a bond that always united them and when Roberts was raised to the peerage he chose as supporters of his coat of arms a soldier of the 72nd Highlanders and a soldier of the 5th Gurkhas.

One brigade remained to winter in Kandahar, and debates, in Parliament and elsewhere, were vehement and prolonged as to the wisdom of remaining in permanent occupation of the province. To do so would have been in flagrant breach of the promises made to Abdur Rahman and in March it was decided that Kandahar should be incorporated once more with the kingdom of Afghanistan. The last brigade left during the first days of April 1881.

* *Forty-One Years in India.*

As the British under their treaty retained a measure of control over Afghan foreign affairs the Russians suffered a reverse from which they never recovered; but that is not to say that they did not persist in their efforts to promote a general sense of uncertainty as to what their intentions might be.

The aftermath of the war had its repercussions on relations with the tribes living across the administrative border. The cession of the districts of Pishin and Sibi, and a realization of the importance of the approach to Kandahar from Quetta, provided the motive force behind Sandeman's policy in Baluchistan; and although the forward policy was not enforced to the same extent elsewhere along the frontier the Kurram valley, lying west of the Tirah, became British territory, and the Indian Government assumed responsibility for dealing with the Afridis and with the affairs of the Khaibar Pass. Their increasing stake in tribal affairs undoubtedly encouraged the Amir to feel that he too must have a finger in the pie.

Certain military lessons emerged from the campaign. The Afghans were a proud and independent people, upon whom, because of their loosely knit tribal society, it was hard, if not impossible, to inflict a decisive defeat. When religious fervour played on their natural hatred of foreigners resistance might flare up even though their so-called regular army had been beaten in the field.

The Indian Government would have done well to realize that what was true of their late enemy applied with equal force to the tribes with whom they were soon to become more closely involved.

4 AFGHANISTAN 1881-1947

BY the end of 1881 Abdur Rahman had, after some further trouble with Ayub Khan, brought the whole of Afghanistan under his control, but the effort of keeping it there involved stationing troops at a number of trouble spots, and left little for the defence of his frontier with the Russians who were giving just cause for alarm by the seizure of Merv and Sarakhs, the latter town belonging to Persia.

In 1884 it was agreed that a joint Russo-British commission should determine a line acceptable to both powers. On arrival at the starting-point at Kushk, after a journey of hundreds of miles over a barren waterless desert, the British representatives were told that owing to the ill-health of the Russian commissioner work could not begin until the spring. And before even a start was made in March a provocative attack by the Russians drove a detachment of the Afghan Army from the oasis of Panjdeh. The Afghan claim to the spot was ill-founded, but naked aggression, when the whole matter was about to be settled amicably, was inexcusable, and it was only by great good fortune that the Amir was in Rawalpindi on a state visit to the Viceroy, and that temperate counsels prevailed. The storm blew over and the work was transferred to London where negotiations were continued with the Russian Ambassador. At the end of the year the commission re-assembled and erected pillars to demarcate the line that had been agreed upon. There was some scepticism at the time, but the arrangement stood the test of time and contributed greatly to good relations between the three interested parties. It was a direct consequence of the Second Afghan War, which was a victory over the Russians as much as over the Afghans, that the British were able to intervene so decisively and so forestall any attempt by Russia to extend her influence up to the Hindu Kush.

By 1892 relations between Abdur Rahman and the Indian Government were somewhat strained, as he had taken umbrage at an ill-considered rebuke administered by the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, on a matter of 'internal administration'. He was intriguing with the ruler of Chitral and the khans of Bajaur; he had never really accepted the annexation of the Kurram valley, and was doing his best to stir up trouble there; and he resented even more strongly the construction of a tunnel through the Khojak, and the establishment of a railway station at New Chaman. He was also claiming overlordship of the Afridis, which was particularly serious as they were the guardians of the

Khaibar and had large numbers of men enlisted in the Indian Army, as well as in the Afghan Army and police force.

After some demur he agreed to receive a mission headed by Sir Mortimer Durand who, by his masterly conduct of the negotiations that followed, did much to restore harmony and secure the Amir's agreement to the settlement of the Indo-Afghan frontier that is still known as the Durand Line. Durand's success was founded on the prestige Britain enjoyed as the result of her intervention in Afghan affairs twelve years earlier. In the course of the next two years, though not without some incident, the line was demarcated on the ground, except for the stretch immediately north of the Kabul river, where it bisects the territory of the Mohmands. The alignment remains unsettled to this day.

The main purpose of the agreement was to make it possible to define responsibility for tribal raids on either side of the line and, with certain reservations, it was extremely successful in clarifying what was always a difficult and contentious problem. The British, for their part, observed it scrupulously. Successive amirs honoured it to the point that they resisted appeals for direct help from tribes who were in trouble with the British, but it is a fact that in every major campaign from 1897 onwards Afghan influence could be traced as having instigated the outbreak, or helped to prolong the fighting with supplies of ammunition or support from tribal levies. Sometimes men of influence, like the disgruntled Nasrulla, the second son of Abdur Rahman, or General Ghulam Haidar, the eastern army commander in Jalalabad in 1897, would intervene without or in excess of authority from Kabul; more often it was the work of mullas and malcontents who had taken refuge across the Afghan border.

The crux of the matter was that no amir could allow British influence among the tribes to grow to the extinction of his own; particularly not on the Waziristan border where the Mahsuds and Wazirs were potential allies if an amir was in trouble with the Ghilzais who were the main opponents of the ruling Durrani clan.

The Anglo-Russian boundary commission of 1885 had settled the frontier only as far east as Khamiab on the Amu Dar'ya; beyond that, geographical knowledge was scanty and in 1891 the Russians began infiltrating into disputed areas with the object of confronting any attempt at a settlement with a *fait accompli*. One Colonel Yonov, with a squadron of Cossacks, even illegally arrested two British officers

while ostensibly on a shooting trip. However, in 1895 an agreement was reached and the line was demarcated on the ground up to the point where the boundary projected into a place where no pillars or mark-stones could be raised to witness it, amid 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 creatures but the Pamir eagles.

In 1892 Abdur Rahman had begun to chafe at having to conduct his dealings with Great Britain through the Viceroy of India and expressed a wish to visit England where his purpose was to negotiate for the establishment of an embassy in London. Nothing happened till 1895 when the state of his health was such that it was not possible for him or his heir, Habibulla, to leave the country, and his second son, Nasrulla, made the journey. The request for an exchange of ambassadors was refused on the ground that it could not be considered until the British representative in Kabul could live there with safety, and move freely through the land. The refusal rankled, and for all the hospitality lavished on him Nasrulla was for ever afterwards a bitter enemy of the British.

Afghanistan took no active part in the fighting in the Malakand and the Tirah in 1897 but the Amir was known to have addressed a gathering of influential mullas, when he urged the view that it was the duty of all true believers to kill infidels. He had assumed the title of Light of the Nation and Religion, and published an *Almanac of Religion*—a treatise dealing with religious war. The Hadda Mulla, who was a Mohmand, and the Mulla Sayed Akbar, the Afridi, were both in touch with General Ghulam Haidar in Jalalabad in the early part of 1897; and it was an influx of fifteen hundred mullas from across the Afghan border that was probably the final decisive factor that persuaded the Afridi lashkar to attack Landi Kotal and the posts in the Khaibar.

In 1901 Abdur Rahman died. Profiting by the experience of his predecessors he had not appointed his sons to provincial governorships where they would have been free to intrigue in readiness to contest the succession on his death. Instead, he kept them safely in Kabul, under his fatherly eye—under the eye also of the heir, Habibulla, who was able to assume power without incident or interruption. It was perhaps the greatest service that Abdur Rahman rendered to his country and to India.

The inevitable wild rumours of unrest in Kabul sped through the

bazaars of India, but they came to rest when Habibulla formally notified his accession to the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, who on somewhat debatable grounds claimed that all existing treaties had been personal to his father and could not be renewed until the Amir had paid a visit to India to discuss certain 'outstanding problems'. This dictatorial approach did not endear the Viceroy to the powers in Kabul, and he received the reply that the new Amir did not feel sufficiently securely seated on his throne to allow him to leave his country, even for a short time. Instead a mission under Sir Louis Dane went to Kabul and after some months of patient negotiation, and thanks to the fact that the British Government kept a brake on Lord Curzon, a new treaty was signed in 1905. The lesson had still not sunk in that there was little trouble from Afghanistan when the ruler was secure, and that stability depended very much on the recognition and support given him from India. In 1907 Habibulla paid a long state visit to India, and it was the reception given him by Lord Minto, more than any treaty, that set relations on a firm footing.

Over the next few years there were a few minor scares on the northern frontier, where the Russians claimed that they were nervous about the possibility that the Afghans might cross the Oxus and stir up trouble among the disgruntled Muslims of Turkestan, and it was at this time also that the mailed fist of Germany first appeared as a threat in the background.

Having secured construction rights for the railway from Aleppo to Baghdad and on to Basra, she was taking a lively interest in Persia and the Persian Gulf, and was trying to detach Russia, by any and every means, from her alliance with France and Great Britain. Eventually in 1907 an Anglo-Russian convention was signed defining the respective spheres of influence of the two powers from Tibet through Afghanistan to Persia. It was held in England at the time that the treaty gave away too much, but it was a matter of urgency to reach agreement as there were Grand Dukes at the court of St Petersburg who were strongly pro-German and were doing their best to wreck the negotiations. The treaty certainly hampered German plans in stirring up trouble after war broke out in 1914.

At a darbar in Kabul on 24 August 1914 Habibulla announced that the firm policy of Afghanistan would be to remain neutral, and despite the considerable pressure of events he never wavered. He had to deal with a strong anti-British element, headed by Nasrulla, whose hands

were strengthened by the fact that the Sultan of Turkey, Caliph and titular head of the Mohammedan world, had proclaimed a jihad; but in spite of pressure from the mullas he refused to follow that example. In 1916 a Turko-German mission reached Kabul. Habibulla played his cards with consummate skill, helped, no doubt, by the fact that he was reading most of the letters sent back to report progress, and in May felt strong enough to dismiss the mission. They had brought with them several Indian conspirators, Mahendra Partap and Barkatulla among them, who remained behind and were implicated in a plot, by which an Afghan army was to cross the frontier and the amir was to be recognized as king of India. Thanks to the firm hand of Sir George Roose-Keppel there was little trouble during the First World War with the tribes on the British side of the frontier; and it was no more than a fraction of what it might have been if they had received encouragement and support from Kabul.

Towards the end of the war Habibulla put forward a claim to be represented at the Peace Conference. It was refused on the grounds that attendance was restricted to the belligerents but, in view of the signal service he had rendered to the British cause, often at personal risk to himself, it would have been an act of enlightened policy to recognize the motive that inspired his request, a wish for his country to be proclaimed an independent state, free of all trammels as to foreign policy or otherwise. For the want of such recognition his popularity declined and in October 1918, while he was on a shooting trip in the Laghman valley, an assassin crept into his tent at night and shot him through the ear.

Nasrulla was a member of the shooting party and, feeling that he had the support of the mullas and many of the tribes, he had himself proclaimed Amir at Jalalabad the following day. But his nephew, Amanulla, a younger son of Habibulla, who was in Kabul, made a rival bid for power by offering the army terms that almost doubled their pay. This, together with his hold on the capital, the treasury and the arsenal, proved decisive. Nasrulla threw in his hand, and the accession of Amanulla was announced to the Viceroy.

He proceeded to arrest his uncle, had him tried for the murder of Habibulla and, when found guilty, had him sentenced to life imprisonment. This alienated the parties who supported Nasrulla and by the end of April the new Amir was fast losing his grip on affairs. Misled, no doubt, by exaggerated accounts reaching him of the seriousness of the

civil unrest that was rife in the Punjab, he made a bid for popularity by proclaiming a jihad and sent his army to invade India.

The political situation had resulted in heavy demands for troops for internal security duties, and a completely new war presented Army Headquarters with a desperate situation. British units were weak, short of reinforcements and fast losing men for demobilization; many of the regular units of the Indian Army were still in Palestine and Mesopotamia; and there was a shortage of supplies, munitions, and transport.

The Afghans opened the war on 6 May 1919 by attacking the western end of the Khaibar Pass. For three days, until the arrival of regular troops, the Khyber Rifles, the irregular militia, who held the forts up the pass, gave a good account of themselves but Khilafat agitators had been busy among them preaching the cause of a holy war, and when Afridi tribesmen, who had been watching events from the surrounding hills, joined the enemy, they deserted on a large scale. The corps was disbanded and was not reformed until 1945.

The arrival of reinforcements from Peshawar had been delayed by the need to deal with a rising in the city which was part of the same wave of unrest that had swept over the Punjab. The attack on Landi Kotal was repulsed with little difficulty and the war carried into the enemy's territory by an advance as far as the Khurd Khaibar defile. The army was notably supported by the Royal Flying Corps who sent a machine to Kabul which bombed the Amir's palace and the arsenal.

A second Afghan army under General Nadir Khan moved into Khost and from there attacked the fort at Thal, at the south end of the Kurram valley. The army was repulsed and defeated by a relieving force under Brigadier-General Dyer, who had been in command at Amritsar. Requests for an armistice had already been received and by 3 June the war was over. The garrison of Chitral in the far north had had no difficulty in beating off a small force that attacked them, and in the south the Quetta garrison crossed the frontier about Chaman and captured the Afghan fort of Spin Baldak.

While Nadir Khan's army was still in Khost, before moving to attack Thal, there was the possibility that his objective might be the posts in the upper Tochi valley held by the North Waziristan Militia, who could not be expected to hold out unsupported by regular troops—and there were no troops to send to help them. When the decision was taken to evacuate the garrisons the Wazir element deserted during the withdrawal, and there followed two anxious days at the headquarters

of the Militia at Miranshah. The Afridi platoons, who were also showing signs of restlessness, were sent away to Dera Ismail Khan, but the remainder of the Corps remained loyal to render useful service during the troubles of the ensuing twelve months.

Similar action had to be taken at Wana, the headquarters of the South Waziristan Militia, where the British officers led out the loyal elements by way of the Zhob valley. The official dispatch described the exploit as one of the finest recorded in the whole history of the frontier. There was nothing left on which to keep the Corps in existence, and it was not re-raised until three years later.

The tribesmen, the richer by two thousand rifles and nearly a million rounds of small arms ammunition, saw the withdrawals as a sign of weakness, presaging a complete withdrawal from Waziristan, if not to beyond the Indus; and they were only too ready to listen to intrigues and encouragement directed at them by Amanulla's agents. Waziristan relapsed into a state of anarchy, leading directly to the bitter fighting that began in November 1919 and went on for two years.

On a public at home accustomed to judge its wars by the standard of the casualty lists of France and Flanders the Third Afghan War made little or no impact, but for all that within a fortnight India placed a hundred and forty thousand men on the frontier, and in eight days, at one of the hottest seasons of the year, defeated the main thrust of the enemy. The situation was now much as it had been at the end of the first stage of the Second Afghan War: the British had defeated their enemy in battle but had failed to impress the fact on the Afghan people and it was a very truculent party of delegates who arrived at Rawalpindi to discuss a treaty of peace. There were eventually two treaties: the first, an interim agreement, signed in August 1919; the second at Kabul on 22 November 1922. The Afghans got less than they had asked for, but they did secure what might well have been given them without a war, the recognition that Afghanistan was officially free and independent in its internal and external affairs. It had in truth been won by Habibulla's constancy in the years 1914-18, but Amanulla was able to declare that he had drawn the sword to vindicate the claim of Afghanistan to independence.

Both treaties reaffirmed the Durand Line as the Indo-Afghan frontier, and in the main treaty there was a new departure in a clause by which the two parties undertook to inform each other of any military operations of any importance they might propose for the maintenance

of order in their respective spheres. The Afghans used this concession later as supporting their claim to speak for tribes on both sides of the border.

During Amanulla's reign he concluded an important treaty with Russia, and it was about this time that the Russians strengthened their hold in central Asia and established four Soviet republics in place of the former quasi-independent states of Bokhara, Khiva and Kokand.

In a feudal Muslim country Bolshevism, as it was then called, was disliked and distrusted to an extent that it could have made no headway in Afghanistan in its own right, but with Amanulla's connivance the Russians used the country as an advance base for the operation of agents to stir up trouble among the frontier tribes or even further into India.

Perhaps the main feature of Amanulla's reign was his attempt, ill-judged because he tried to rush his fences, to Westernize his country. Many of his early reforms were entirely for the good, but after his tour of Europe in 1928 he threw discretion to the winds and such measures as the emancipation of women and the introduction of Western dress brought him into bitter conflict with the mullas.

On 7 January 1929 he abdicated and, at the time when he was seated in the Viceroy's train on his way to Karachi to take ship for Europe, the Russians made a belated and abortive attempt to intervene to save him. Russian troops, dressed in Afghan army uniforms, and accompanied by Amanulla's ambassador to Moscow, crossed the northern frontier of Afghanistan; but when it was realized that it was too late the project was summarily abandoned. Amanulla was succeeded by his elder brother, who ruled for only a few days before being supplanted by one Habibullah, Bacha-i-Sakao (son of a water-carrier) a brigand from Kohistan who had won himself a large local following and was proclaimed Amir.

The country was plunged into chaos, during which the Royal Air Force evacuated first of all the women and children, and finally the British Minister himself, from Kabul. In eight-two flights, carried out with consummate skill over snow-clad ranges, in the depth of winter, and in a country practically devoid of landing-grounds, they evacuated 580 passengers of many nationalities without a single casualty.

At this juncture Nadir Khan, who had been in command of the attack on the fort at Thal, and had been relegated by Amanulla to the embassy in Paris, decided to make a bid to save his country from disruption. He

was a sick man and for the first six months after his arrival in Khost he met with a series of reverses; but he persevered and eventually on 10 October he entered Kabul and was proclaimed king. He had received no backing from the Government of India but he owed his success largely to the help given him by lashkars of Mahsuds, Wazirs and Afridis from the British side of the Durand Line. He granted them allowances for this service—an award that later became a bone of contention with the Government of India.

He reigned with great firmness, wisdom and distinction for just four years before being assassinated as an act of revenge for the execution, a year earlier, of a man who, with the support of Soviet agents, had been conspiring with tribal leaders for the return of Amanulla. Fortunately for the country there was a strong sense of loyalty in that family of the Barakzai clan and his two brothers, as regents, ruled until the accession of the present king, Zahir Shah, in 1946. To Mohammad Hashim, the Prime Minister for sixteen years, must go the credit for the remarkable progress the country made under his care. Relations with India improved and there was active co-operation by both sides in frontier affairs.

The British never had any desire to annex Afghanistan, but they were compelled, whatever the cost or risk, to retain it within their sphere of influence to ensure its independence from any other power. Such independence has always been essential to the security of any rule or dynasty in India.

Accepting this, the tribes between the administrative border and the Durand Line were a buffer to a buffer, and the line had none of the rigidity of other international frontiers. The countries on either side of it had each to realize that any attempt to enlarge their influence with the tribes must excite the suspicions of the other. It was the usual British compromise, but there was no other acceptable solution and, considering the complexity of the problem, it worked very well.

The administrative difficulties facing a large-scale Russian attack on India through Afghanistan were enormous, and there is every reason to suppose that their presence would have been resented and their lines of communication subjected to attack by the tribes in exactly the same way as the British had been; it is almost certain that no such attack was ever seriously contemplated. But Russian viceroys in Central Asia enjoyed and took great liberties, and they were past masters of the art of exploiting the nuisance value of minor acts of aggression. Moreover,

there were plenty of halfway steps that might have been taken: the capture of Herat, or of the provinces north of the Hindu Kush, or of Chitral. It must be remembered that such possibilities were very real to British soldiers and statesmen with first-hand memories of the Afghan wars. Any success gained would have been a tremendous blow to British prestige in the east, and would have left the Russians the better placed for the next step forward—the use of Afghanistan as a base for the activities of agents of all kinds, whether to stir up trouble among the tribes, or to establish contacts with conspirators attempting to spread disorder and bloodshed in India itself.

5 BALUCHISTAN

THE strategic importance of Baluchistan as the main avenue of approach to Kandahar linked it far more closely to affairs in Afghanistan than the rest of the north-west frontier, and it was this factor that influenced the Government of India in their decision to give whole-hearted support to Sandeman's recommendations to extend the British sphere of influence up to the Khojak range and beyond it to Chaman. In forty years the whole matter was virtually settled, leaving a clear-cut and on the whole satisfactory frontier with Afghanistan which presented few opportunities for international misunderstanding. It is accordingly convenient to tell the story of Baluchistan here and have done with it.

The approaches to Baluchistan were by way of Sind, the province through which the Indus flows on the last five hundred miles of its course to the Arabian Sea. Just to the west of its delta there is the port of Karachi, the natural outlet for the grain and merchandise of the Punjab and north-west India.

In 1760 the Amir Ahmed Shah overran the province but when, on his death, the power of the government in Kabul declined a handful of Baluch chieftains, with bands of marauding tribesmen, moved down and established themselves as the amirs of Sind. They were oppressors, like all irresponsible autocrats, and ruled the natives with iron rods by terror of the mercenaries who were paid by rapine. They remained under the nominal suzerainty of Afghanistan, but were no more than cocks on their own dunghills, for ever quarrelling among themselves, and easy game for any power with the force and determination to put them down.

In the early 1830s the British sent Alexander Burnes, ostensibly on a trade mission, to spy out the line of the Indus as a flank approach to the Punjab; then in 1839, as has been related in Chapter 2, they became almost irrevocably involved when they marched through Sind on the way to Kandahar and Kabul. The treaties then concluded with the amirs, at the point of the bayonet, left them in nominal charge of their own affairs but there were a number of provisions they must have been tempted to break if ever they had reason to suppose they could with impunity do so. Accordingly, when, in 1842, the British withdrew from Afghanistan the amirs decided that their moment had come, sank their feuds, and united to present an aggressive front. The advantages that Sind offered the British in the way of a base should an army ever again have to take the road to Kandahar were so compelling that there

could be no question of withdrawing altogether, leaving the province to the amirs; and, if the British stayed, they had no choice but to establish law and order.

The man who conquered Sind, and went on to become Commander-in-Chief in India, was Sir Charles Napier who at the age of sixty had recently come out from England. His treatment of the amirs aroused much controversy, but it suffices here to say that he did the job, and did it quickly, at the battles of Meanee and Hyderabad in February and March 1843. In the next three years he was remarkably successful in reorganizing the administration of the province and absorbing it as part of British India.

Profiting by their experiences in Afghanistan the Government of India laid down in general terms that there must be no political interference with tribes or states lying beyond the frontier of the settled districts, and with that reservation the governments of the Punjab and Sind were left a fairly free hand to decide their policy for the pacification and defence of their borders. The problem confronting the administrators of Sind differed in three important respects from that of their neighbours to the north. The first was geographical. Between the borders of Sind and the hills which were the homes of marauding Marris and Bugtis lay a desert tract which can fairly claim a place, at any rate in summer, among the top ten of the world's plague spots. To the intense heat—which inspired the local adage, 'Having Dadar, why did God make hell?'—must be added acute shortage of water, clouds of suffocating dust, and such endemic diseases as cholera, dysentery and malaria.

For the first four years the scheme of defence seems to have been singularly ineffective, and the state of affairs in January 1847 was described: 'Everywhere was desolation and dismay; there was no security for life or property. The British garrisons, shut up in mud forts, looked on in impotent inaction. They did not attempt to forage or find food in the neighbourhood; supplies were brought up from Sukkur and Shikarpur, and the convoys were in constant peril.'

It was at this juncture that Captain John Jacob was appointed to political charge. He had won fame as commander of the Sind Horse—Jacob's Horse—which had been formed from irregular squadrons recruited in the Bombay presidency from 'the true descendants of Seewajee's mountain rats whom not all the pride and power of the armies of Hindustan could prevent from marching to the gates of Delhi'.

Jacob revolutionized the whole system. Passive defence was abandoned and detachments were posted without any defensive works of any kind; there was constant patrolling on a co-ordinated programme over the length and breadth of the desert strip to ensure contact and immediate support if needed. Describing his methods, Jacob wrote at the close of his first year: 'Wherever a party of the Sind Horse came on any of the plunderers it always fell on them at once, charging any number, however superior, without the smallest hesitation. Against such sudden attacks the robber horsemen never attempted a stand; they always fled at once, frequently sustaining heavy loss in men and never succeeding in obtaining any plunder. These proceedings and particularly the tracks, daily renewed, of our parties all over the desert and in all the watering-places near the hills, far beyond the British border, alarmed the robbers and prevented them from ever feeling safe, and they soon ceased to make attempts on the British territory.' He remarked in another memorandum that frontier works against predatory tribes were most pernicious. 'They proclaim that we are afraid and provoke attack.' At the same time he started the construction of roads and canals which brought great prosperity to the inhabitants of the frontier district of Sind.

The second point of difference lay in the contrast between the characteristics of the people, the Pathans in the north and the Baluch in the south. 'Both are warlike, revengeful and predatory; but while the Pathan is a republican, having little reverence for the person of his chief, the Baluch respects and obeys the head of his clan; while the Pathan is bigoted and priest-ridden, the Baluch pays scant respect to his priest, the sayyad or maulavi. Conciliate a Baluch chief and you in most cases conciliate the whole clan; the Pathan chief is head of a dominant faction only, and friendliness with him secures ill-feeling from his opponents, while priestly influence may be at work to destroy or thwart, it may be in a few hours, the conciliatory policy of years. The Baluch is thus easier to deal with than the Pathan, and consequently better suited for initial experiments in a peace and goodwill policy.'*

The third point was in the same category as the second; there was over the southern half of what later became Baluchistan a paramount chief, the Khan of Kalat, the head of a loosely knit confederacy. He exercised certain central powers, but otherwise each tribal chief had

* *Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman*, T. H. Thornton—Murray 1895.

full control over his own people. Apart from levies furnished by the tribes the Khan had no troops of his own and it was therefore unlikely that the standard of law and order he was able to maintain was very high. It may have sufficed in the days when they had no one to fight and quarrel with but themselves, but with the advent of settled government in Sind and, even more important, the possibility that the British might again have to use the Bolan Pass on their way to Kandahar, they could not tolerate such a happy-go-lucky state of affairs on their western border.

There had been trouble in Kalat in 1838 when the Khan, Mahrab Khan, had upset his tribes by violating certain of the unwritten laws of confederacy. After the draconian treatment meted out to him for his alleged discourtesy to Shah Shuja on his way to Kandahar the whole countryside was for some time in a state of unrest. A fresh treaty was concluded in 1854 by which the new Khan accepted certain obligations for maintaining law and order, and agreed to British troops being stationed in his territory; commitments which he could not fulfil because he was at loggerheads with most of his tribal chiefs. In 1869 the latter presented the British agent a formidable list of grievances against their overlord, claiming that on perhaps half a dozen major counts he had flouted their constitution. The state of the country was deplorable. Traffic to the Punjab had ceased altogether, and that to Sind was interfered with as the subsidy paid for tribal allowances to keep the routes open had been misapplied to maintain a private army in Kalat. The chiefs could not approach the Khan for fear of their lives, and the Khan remained shut up for long periods in his fortress, neglecting his administration; his mercenaries enjoyed uncontrolled licence, and were the scourge of the countryside. The only ray of hope was that the attitude of both parties during the struggle towards the British Government was of the most friendly and respectful character. The Government of India felt they could no longer remain as spectators of this free-for-all, but there was a sharp division of opinion between the men on the spot as to what form any intervention should take.

Colonel Phayre, the political superintendent for Upper Sind, favoured a completely fresh approach. The Khan seemed deaf to all reason; he was attempting to assume authority to which he was not entitled, and he was in imminent danger of being overthrown. There was therefore a duty to the tribal chiefs, who were far too powerful to be ignored, to intervene and restore order—and to do so before matters

got worse. Colonel Phayre's immediate superior, Sir William Merewether, Commissioner of Sind, who had been identified all along with the policy followed to date, thought otherwise. In his view the trouble was temporary and no more than could be expected when feudal government first came into contact and collision with a central power accustomed to higher standards of administration, law and order. To intervene would only weaken the Khan's authority: 'we should on the contrary do everything we could to strengthen it and, above all, on no account listen to representations from his rebellious subjects, unless preceded by their absolute submission.'

Phayre found an unexpected ally in Captain Robert Sandeman, deputy commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan, the southernmost district of the Punjab although, strictly speaking, he had no right to express an opinion. He had for two years been much concerned with the troublesome Baluch tribes who had a common frontier of two hundred miles with the Punjab. Sandeman, recognizing that the hereditary influence of their own chiefs, the tumandars, could be a potent factor in restoring order had directed his energies to settling factional disputes and re-establishing the position and dignity of these tribal leaders. However, as the tribes lived on the far side of the Punjab border he ran into the difficulty that they were subjects of the Khan and that all dealings with them had to be made through the Commissioner of Sind.

Sandeman had a remarkable power of gaining the trust and co-operation of tribesmen and he now entered the fray to suggest that it should be possible by friendly inquiry and intervention to settle the differences between the Khan and his sirdars. The Government of India was sufficiently interested to direct that the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab should confer with the Commissioner of Sind, Phayre and Sandeman being in attendance. Unluckily the Governor, Sir Henry Durand—he had led the demolition party at the gate at Ghazni—was killed on his way to the meeting when his elephant took fright and bolted through the narrow gateway of the fort at Tank. His successor Mr H. Davies took his place. Some progress was made in sorting out the division of responsibility for the control of the Baluch tribes along the Punjab border, but as the new Governor did not feel qualified to express an opinion on the relations between the Khan and his sirdars no recommendation was made on this thorny topic.

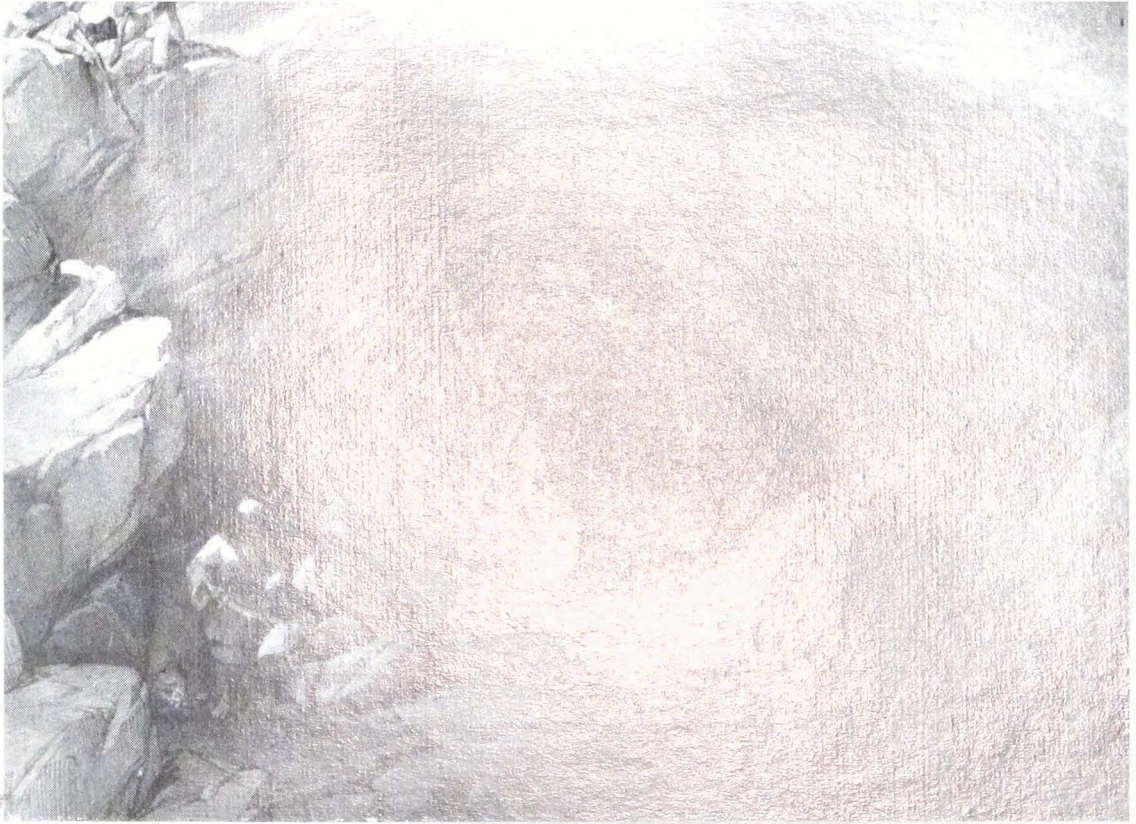
The ink was barely dry on the paper of their report when news came in of serious disturbances at Quetta and Mastung which Colonel

Phayre reported as 'a national uprising against oppression'. His commissioner preferred to describe it as 'a local *émeute* got up by the local chiefs, encouraged by the sympathy in their cause indiscreetly exhibited by our frontier officers'. By the end of 1871 the revolt had spread over the whole khanate. In this crisis the Commissioner was instructed to review the problem afresh and it was suggested he might avail himself of Captain Sandeman's experience: but when the latter arrived at Jacobabad he was ignored. The central government once more intervened and a dispatch signed by the Viceroy in council directed that the Khan should accept the mediation of a commission set up to inquire into the grievances of his sirdars. Sandeman was directed to attend, and submitted a trenchant memorandum expounding what he considered to be the errors of the government's policy: for all that he was not allowed to be present or take any part in the inquiry.

After a painstaking and elaborate investigation lasting several days the Commissioner found, rather surprisingly, that 'the sirdars had no valid grievances, and were wholly in the wrong, but as they had been misled, he promised that the Khan would, as an act of clemency, restore the lands and allowances that had been confiscated on the condition that they for the future paid due allegiance to their ruler and that all property plundered be restored'. With regard to the idea of giving the principal chiefs a share in the administration he felt that it would be 'difficult and probably dangerous'. It was a patched-up truce. The recommendations were laid before the new Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, and he recorded his emphatic approval. Phayre, who had gone on leave, was told he would not return to his appointment, and Sandeman was firmly reminded of his place and station.

A lull followed, but matters steadily got worse and, after a daring raid by two hundred Brahuis into Sind early in 1874, the Commissioner proposed to send a military expedition to depose the Khan and install a more capable and amenable successor, and at the same time impose a blockade against the aggressors along the Sind and Punjab borders simultaneously. The Government of India received a strong protest from the Punjab that the blockade was more likely to harm British subjects than the guilty tribesmen and refused to sanction the expedition.

Sandeman once more took the initiative and made a suggestion which proved to be a turning-point in the conduct of frontier affairs. He proposed the dispatch of a mission composed of Sind and Punjab officers, accompanied by friendly Baluch chiefs, into enemy territory

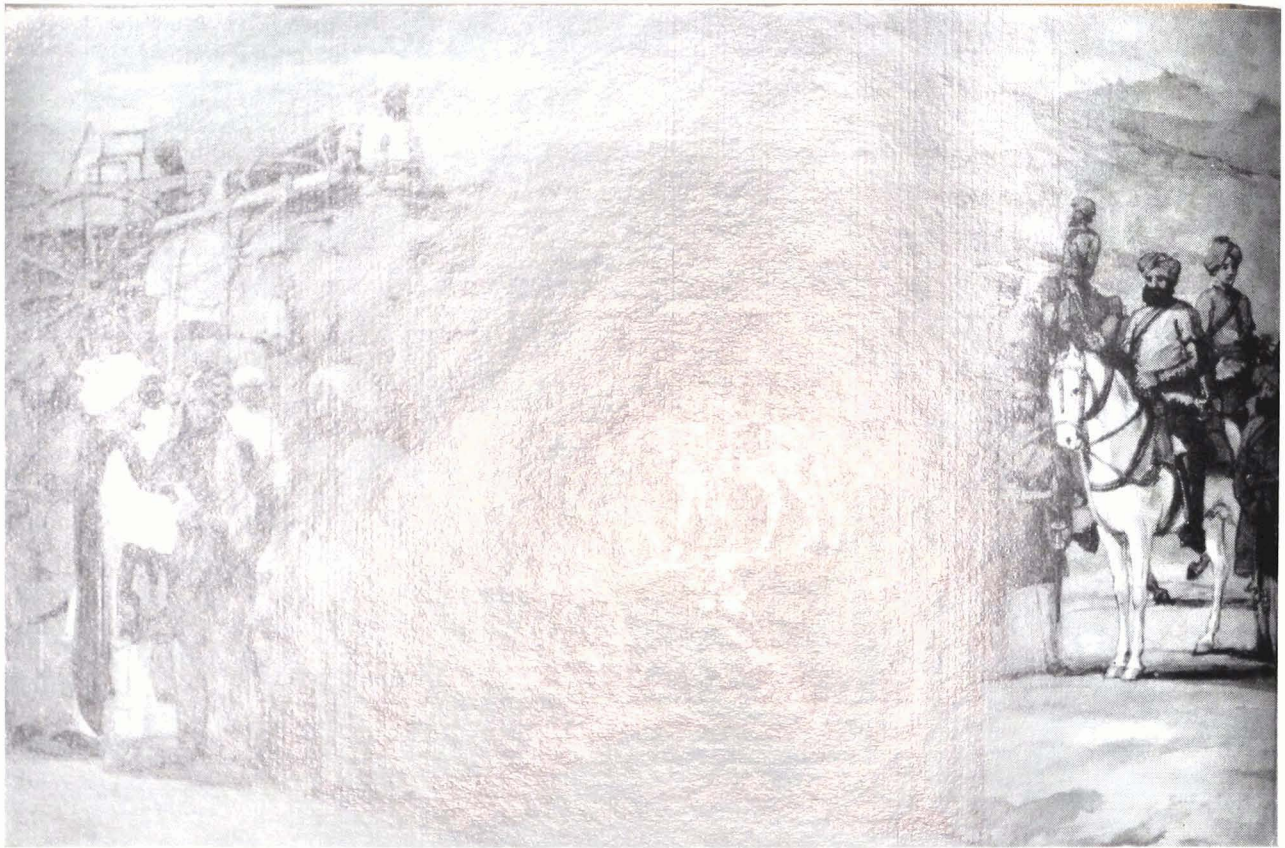


The Bolan Pass 1839

Chitral Fort and Tirch Mir

R. Holmes





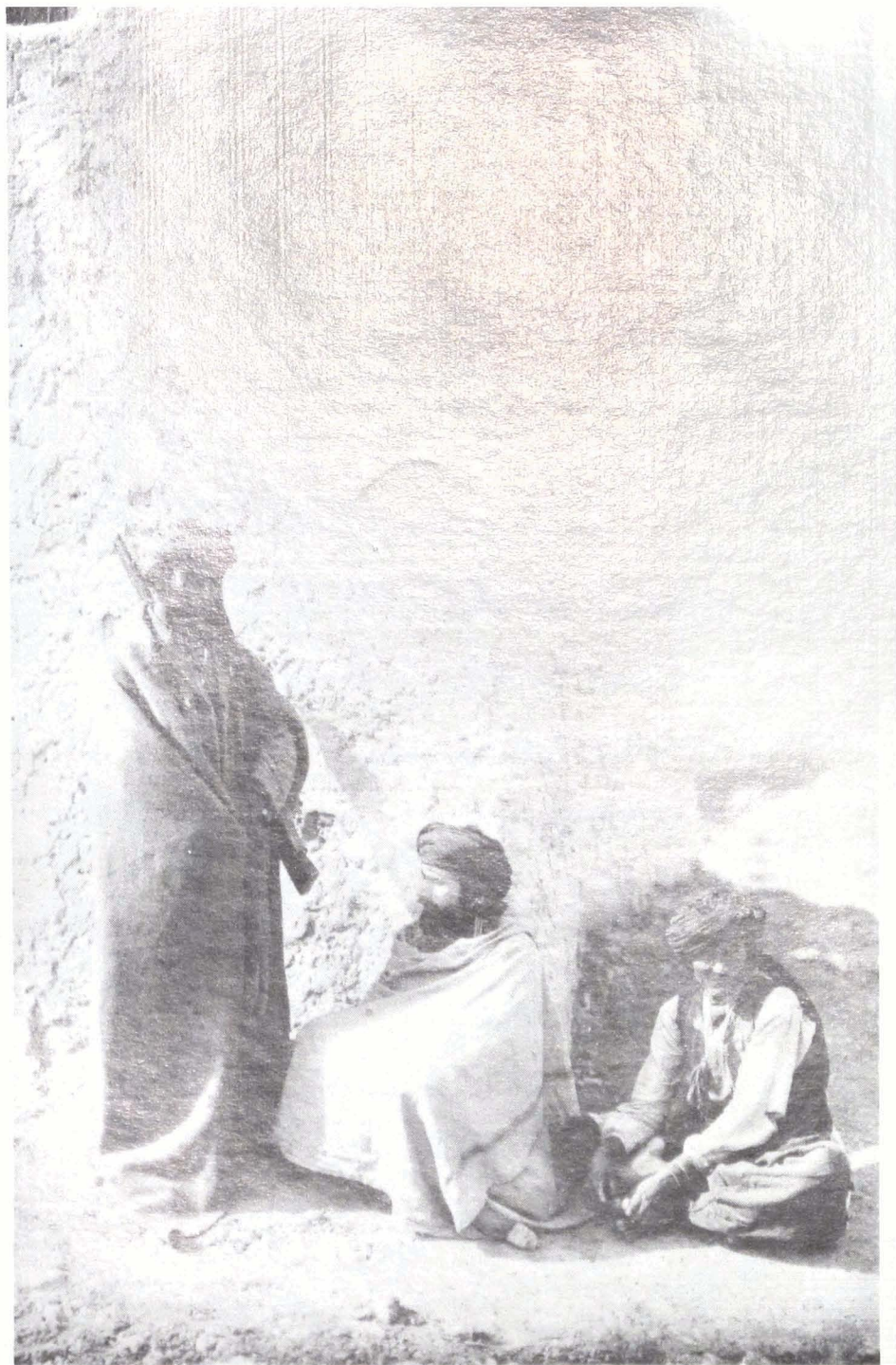
Nine-pounder gun on elephants

Captain Colin Broun Lindsay



Coke's Rifles (circa 1855)

Colonel J. L. Jones



A tribal house

R. Holmes



A Wazir khassadar

R. Holmes

The Shahur Tangi



Imperial War Museum

to inquire once more into tribal grievances. The Governments of India and of the Punjab approved, but, not surprisingly, the Commissioner of Sind recorded his strong disagreement. After prolonged correspondence, lasting the best part of a year, in the course of which the Commissioner seems to have been invited to Calcutta to explain his objections to the Viceroy, Sandeman's proposal was accepted, to be put into effect in two stages: the first being that he should secure the submission of the Marri chiefs and the surrender of the booty; the second that he should then take the mission over the border as he had suggested.

Sandeman succeeded by a measure as intrepid as it was effective. He went himself into the Marri hills, unaccompanied by any military escort. In his own words:

I went to a spot near the Marris headquarters, well-known as a trysting place. I had no troops with me. There I summoned the Marri chiefs and explained the whole matter to them. Vainly they pleaded that they had not committed the raid. I could but answer, 'Restore the cattle, proceed to Jacobabad, and ask for pardon, or take the consequence.' They said, 'If we go there we shall be imprisoned.' I answered, 'No, you will not.' At last it was settled that I should remain in the hills as a hostage for their safe return. I did so. All the principal chiefs, including Sirdar Ghazan Khan (who was supposed to be endowed with super-natural powers and to be too holy a man to visit our stations) set out for Jacobabad, saying, 'Sahib, we will do your bidding: you are responsible for the result, or words to that effect.' All ended well.

Stage one had been successful. On 18 November 1875 Sandeman left Dera Ghazi Khan on the second stage, armed with a copy of the instructions of the Government of India. He had a small military escort from the Punjab, and a larger and more impressive following of Baluch horsemen, headed by their tumandars, over one thousand men in all. Merewether made several attempts to hamper his progress but, in those days before the advent of wireless and motor-cycle dispatch riders, each message reached Sandeman just too late for him to obey it, and if he ever felt embarrassed he made no bones about referring the matter for a decision to the Foreign and Political Department in Calcutta. At length when Merewether sent him peremptory orders to return to his base the Government of India relieved Sind of all responsibility for the affairs of Kalat, and transferred it for the time being to the Commissioner of the Derajat division of the Punjab.

The mission did a great deal to settle the differences between the Khan and his sirdars but there was a setback no more than a few days

after they left Kalat when the Khan executed a tribal chief who was there on a visit, justifying his action by the plea that he had done no more than anticipate an attempt on his own life. Once again there might have been a general rising of the clans, but such was the reputation Sandeman had established for himself that it was decided to send him once again to try to reach a settlement. At this juncture Lord Northbrook, who had sanctioned the attempt, left India, to be succeeded by Lord Lytton.

On this occasion Sandeman took with him an imposing military escort, and he was fortunate to be halfway up the Bolan, with Lord Northbrook's letter to the Khan in his pocket, before Lord Lytton assumed office. The new Viceroy was not pleased as he had come to India with an ambitious scheme for the dispatch of an envoy to Kabul to set relations with the Amir on a more satisfactory footing. This entailed a completely fresh approach to Kalat and one of the first topics he considered was the feasibility of recalling Sandeman. In the end he decided to let him go on his way, with the rather sinister reservation that for the time being no communication, official or otherwise, should be made to him.

The mission did not start till 4 April 1876, the hot weather had set in, and it was clear that the journey itself was going to tax the resources of its leader: fifty miles of desert lay before him, then a toilsome journey of sixty miles along the shingly bed of a dry torrent, shut in by stupendous cliffs without a blade of vegetation, before the uplands could be reached. On the far side of the desert cholera struck the escort and he was counselled to return and await orders, but he pressed on, and at length reached Kalat. It was only then, when the Commissioner of the Derajat had reported to Simla that the Khan was once again willing to accept the offices of Sandeman as a mediator, that the Viceroy permitted the dispatch of a telegram of congratulation, tempered with the warning that he must on no account commit the Government of India to any line of policy towards the Khan or his sirdars.

The committee of arbitration, which assembled at Mastung, consisted of three members nominated by the Khan, and three by the Brahui chiefs, with Sandeman himself as referee and final arbiter. In the words of the official dispatch:

With great judgement he threw upon a body of arbitrators, nominated by the two parties, the difficult and invidious task of deciding between their rival

claims; skilfully reserving to himself the advantageous position of an impartial adviser to both parties in the dispute, rather than that of judge. He brought his influence to bear with excellent effect on the wild tribesmen who seem to have followed his advice with unlimited trust; he calmed their apprehensions; he judiciously upheld the position of the Khan; and thus, by dint of impartial honesty of purpose, by well-directed sympathy and unfailing patience, he persuaded both the Khan and the sirdars to meet each other half-way in a rational and amicable spirit.

By 11 July all matters in dispute were finally settled and at a grand darbar the terms of reconciliation, agreed to on both sides, were ratified on oath in the most solemn manner according to Mohammedan custom. In making his report Sandeman recorded his considered opinion that there was little hope of permanency for the settlement unless it was backed by the continuing supervision of the British Government. A separate instrument to give effect to this recommendation was drawn up, agreed to by the Khan and the sirdars, and submitted with the report.

The decision caused the Viceroy and his council to think furiously and it is on record that the dispatch embodying their final agreement was drafted and redrafted no fewer than seventeen times. Expressing their natural reluctance to risk casting away the advantages gained by Sandeman's efforts, the pith of the matter was contained in the following sentence:

Whatever may have been the personal disinclination of this Government in times past to exercise active interference in Khanates beyond our border it must now be acknowledged that, having regard to possible contingencies in Central Asia, to the profound and increasing interest with which they are already anticipated and discussed by the most warlike population within as well as without our frontier, and to the evidence that has reached us of foreign intrigue in Kalat itself (intrigue at present innocuous, but sure to become active in proportion to the anarchy or weakness of that state and its alienation from British influence) we can no longer avoid the conclusion that the relation between the British Government and this neighbouring Khanate must henceforth be regulated with a view to more important objects than the temporary prevention of plunder on the British border.

In November the Viceroy travelled to Jacobabad to meet the Khan for the ceremonial signing of the new treaty, accompanied on the final stage of his journey by Sir William Merewether, Sandeman's determined but not unfriendly opponent, who bore his trying position with

dignity, and throughout the subsequent proceedings displayed the best qualities of a loyal public servant. Four areas, including Quetta and the Bolan Pass, were leased by the Khan in perpetuity to the British to be administered by the Government of India. This regularized the garrison already established and the development of Quetta as an important military centre. Sandeman was appointed agent to the Governor-General and before taking up the appointment applied for a much-needed period of leave, but in view of 'the ambiguous and critical position' of our relations with Afghanistan and Russia the Viceroy asked him to remain at duty.

There is no doubt that his continuing presence in Baluchistan during the ensuing year set the seal on all that he had done, and when in 1878 war was declared against Afghanistan he was well established to render invaluable service during the advance to Kandahar. To mention but two of his successes: he detached the Pathan tribes north of Quetta from their allegiance to the amirs; and above all convinced the Khan that it was in his best interests to remain loyal to the British.

As there had been no fighting on the southern front and because of the expense of maintaining a large garrison in Kandahar it was decided early in 1879 that about five thousand men under General Biddulph should withdraw to Quetta, and in March, much to Sandeman's satisfaction, those due to return to the Punjab travelled by the Tal-Chotiali road. It was a route at one time in regular use by caravans, but had been abandoned of recent years because of depredations by tribesmen. Sandeman accompanied the column which met with no more than trifling resistance and marched out by way of Fort Munro on to the plains of the Punjab at Dera Ghazi Khan.

Under the treaty concluded with the Amir Yakub Khan in May 1879 the districts of Pishin and Sibi, an awkward and quite unjustifiable salient of Afghan territory, were ceded to Great Britain, and Sandeman was busy during the summer reorganizing their administration. Then on 3 September came the news of the murder of Cavagnari and his escort, and it needed all the reassuring influence of the political officers to persuade the tribes to turn a deaf ear to the call for a religious war reaching them from the north.

In the spring of 1880, as Roberts was to remain in Kabul until the autumn, it was decided to bring up a division of the Bombay Army to relieve Stewart in Kandahar, and for him to withdraw to India through Kabul, with the idea of showing the flag through the Ghilzai country.

There was such difficulty in finding transport for the move that sanction was given for the construction of a broad gauge railway as far as Sibi. After the unfortunate defeat at Maiwand on 9 August, followed by the investment of Kandahar by Ayub Khan, the sobering influence of Sandeman and his officers once more kept the countryside quiet.

In the spring of 1881 Sandeman was at last allowed to go on leave—he had spent twenty-four out of his twenty-five years' service in India—but to his dismay found on his arrival in England that, in the likely event of the return of Kandahar to the Afghans, it was proposed that the districts of Pishin and Sibi should also be handed back. It is hard at this distance of time to understand the reasoning behind the suggestion, which seems to have had the backing of such a leading member of the forward school as Sir Henry Rawlinson. A hundred years earlier Ahmad Shah had granted the district of Sibi in fief to an Afghan family, but no attempt was made to govern or protect it, or even collect the revenue, and it had become a no-man's-land for plundering tribes from all around. So slender, indeed, were the claims of Kabul that after the First Afghan War both Sibi and Pishin were conferred on the Khan of Kalat, who failed to occupy them only because he lacked the power to restore them to law and order. On the other hand both districts were of the first importance to Britain and India. To the west of Pishin a mountain barrier, the Khwaja Amran, forms a natural frontier with Afghanistan, while to the east the plain has access over low passes to three roads communicating with British India: to the north-east by the Zhob valley to the Gumal; east by the Bori valley to Dera Ghazi Khan; and south of east by the line of the streams that run into the plain by Sibi. Sibi itself was an essential stage on the railways built up the Harnai and Bolan Passes. The possession of these two districts shortened India's defensive frontier by some three hundred miles; moreover, it facilitated the control of the border tribes and offered the troops employed on frontier defence stations rather more attractive than the feverish heat of the Indus valley. It is not surprising that for the first six months of his leave Sandeman is said to have divided his time between the Foreign Office, the India Office and the lobbies of the House of Commons. Fortunately his views prevailed and when he returned from leave—to a tumultuous welcome from the people of Baluchistan—all major territorial problems had been settled and he was free to devote his time to the consolidation of the prizes he had won over the past eight years.

Within five years of the end of the Second Afghan War railway lines had been built up the Harnai valley and the Bolan Pass, joining again at the eastern end of the Pishin plain; and with the decision to build a road down to Dera Ghazi Khan a military cantonment was located at Loralai.

Politically, Sandeman was faced with two tasks: the first to bring under British control the newly assigned districts of Sibi and Pishin, peopled by turbulent Pathan tribes unused to any form of orderly government. In the wider field he had to establish on the only possible basis, custom and usage, the relations between the Khan and his sirdars envisaged in the treaty of 1877. The Khan was still nominal head of the Baluchistan confederacy, his accolade the final act legitimizing the succession of tribal chiefs, but the *de facto* head was the agent to the Governor-General. The discharge of these duties called for great tact and determination to ensure that decisions were reached by the natural deliberations of tribal councils or jirgas, and not arbitrarily imposed from above.

The crowning triumph of the closing years of Sandeman's life was the extension of British control and influence over that vast tract of country, twice the size of Wales, that lies to the west of the Takht-i-Suliman. When in 1886 the construction of the road down to the Punjab along the southern edge of the tract was begun dealings with the tribes did not go beyond what was necessary to secure the road itself, but towards the end of 1887 marauders based in the lower Zhob began beating up the construction gangs. With a small escort of troops and a following of Baluch and Brahui chiefs Sandeman went down the valley as far as Apozai, and from there reconnoitred forward to within twenty-five miles of the Gumal Pass. He met with little opposition and the delinquents gave themselves up, but what was more important was that on his way back he received petitions from the tribes along the road praying that the Indian Government would take the Zhob under its protection, and expressing their willingness to pay revenue in return for the enforcement of law and order.

Sandeman at once saw the possibilities that were opened up; a further shortening of the defensive frontier, and the chance of coming to terms with the problem of the Gwaleri Pass, where the river Gumal flows out into the plains. It was the junction of two very important caravan routes, by the Gumal valley from Ghazni and Kabul, and by the Kundar from Kandahar. Every autumn and spring large camel

caravans of powindahs travelled along these roads on their way to trade in India. They were a quarrelsome lot and if they suffered from the Mahsuds living along the road they often gave as good as they got. About the same time as Sandeman's trip down the Zhob the Punjab Government had made an attempt to arrange for the ordered protection of these caravans by the local tribes acting under the supervision of British officers, but the Wazirs misbehaved and the plan came to naught. The approach from the Zhob, of course, commanded the western approach to the pass and dominated the tribes on the reverse slopes of the Takht.

In the early autumn of 1889 the problem was reviewed on the spot by the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, during a visit to Dera Ismail Khan, and just before Christmas Sandeman was given instructions to occupy Zhob and to renew the attempt, in concert with the interested tribes, to occupy and open the pass. By Christmas Day the mission had reached Apozai—the cantonment established there bears the name Fort Sandeman—a grand darbar was held, and the new agency of the Zhob formally established. Invitations were sent to the Sherannis who live north-west of the Takht, and to the Mahsuds, and the Wazirs whose territory lies along the left bank of the Gumal, to attend a jirga to debate the next step forward. The leaven of Sandeman's personality was at work and by the end of January he was one march short of the pass. Writing to his wife he recorded, 'the Waziri headmen up to date have behaved in a most exemplary way, not even a petty theft has occurred, and we have 700 in camp, many of them most accomplished thieves. They [the Waziris] have clearly made up their minds to serve us loyally.' On the night of the 27th there was an untoward incident when a non-commissioned officer of the escort was shot, when against all orders he had strayed away from the vicinity of the camp, but Sandeman insisted that the orders for the march next day should stand. That night, the eve of the passage through the pass, the Mahsuds alone stood guard over the whole camp. The expedition ended with a grand darbar at Tank when the remainder of the fines imposed on the Wazirs and Mahsuds for past misdeeds were remitted and rewards and dresses of honour liberally bestowed on the tribal chiefs. To quote from *The Pioneer* of 14 February 1890:

Probably no expedition organized for operations on the north-west frontier, since we acquired it, has been more successful in its work or more important

in its results than Sir Robert Sandeman's last achievement in the Zhob valley. It practically amounts to this, that by a masterly piece of strategy a position almost impossible to attack in front has been turned and occupied, though held in great force by some of the most turbulent border clans we have had to deal with, without the loss of a man. In the whole scheme of frontier defence, no measure can rank with the occupation of the Zhob valley and the passes inwards for completeness and effectiveness. And the way in which it has been brought about may be regarded as in all respects a model of border administration.

Implicit in the final sentence was the hope that a new day had dawned in dealing with the frontier tribes. The hope was stillborn. In fact, the road linking Baluchistan through Fort Sandeman to Waziristan never became a main highway in regular use. The trouble was that on the strength of a brief acquaintance Sandeman misjudged the Mahsuds. They were opportunists and never, at any time, 'clearly made up their minds' to do anything but extract the last rupee of advantage from the situation as it existed at any given moment. Sandeman's right-hand man, Bruce, moved to the Punjab and tried to carry on the good work but he failed—and for three good reasons.

The first was that in the path of the extension of Sandeman's policy to the rest of the frontier stood the Mahsuds, the most difficult and stubborn of them all. The second was that the very essence of the policy was to find tribal leaders of sufficient standing with whom to deal, and to back them to the hilt, by force of arms if necessary, in their attempts to carry out the policy of government. Maliks of this level of influence did not exist among the Mahsuds. Bruce thought he had found them but when the crunch came he was not able to give them the necessary degree of support, and they were murdered or forced to flee the country. The third reason was that Waziristan did not have the strategic importance of Baluchistan as the high road to Kandahar—a road which both British and Indian Governments had decided must be kept clear at all costs because of the threat from Russia.

6 THE PATHANS

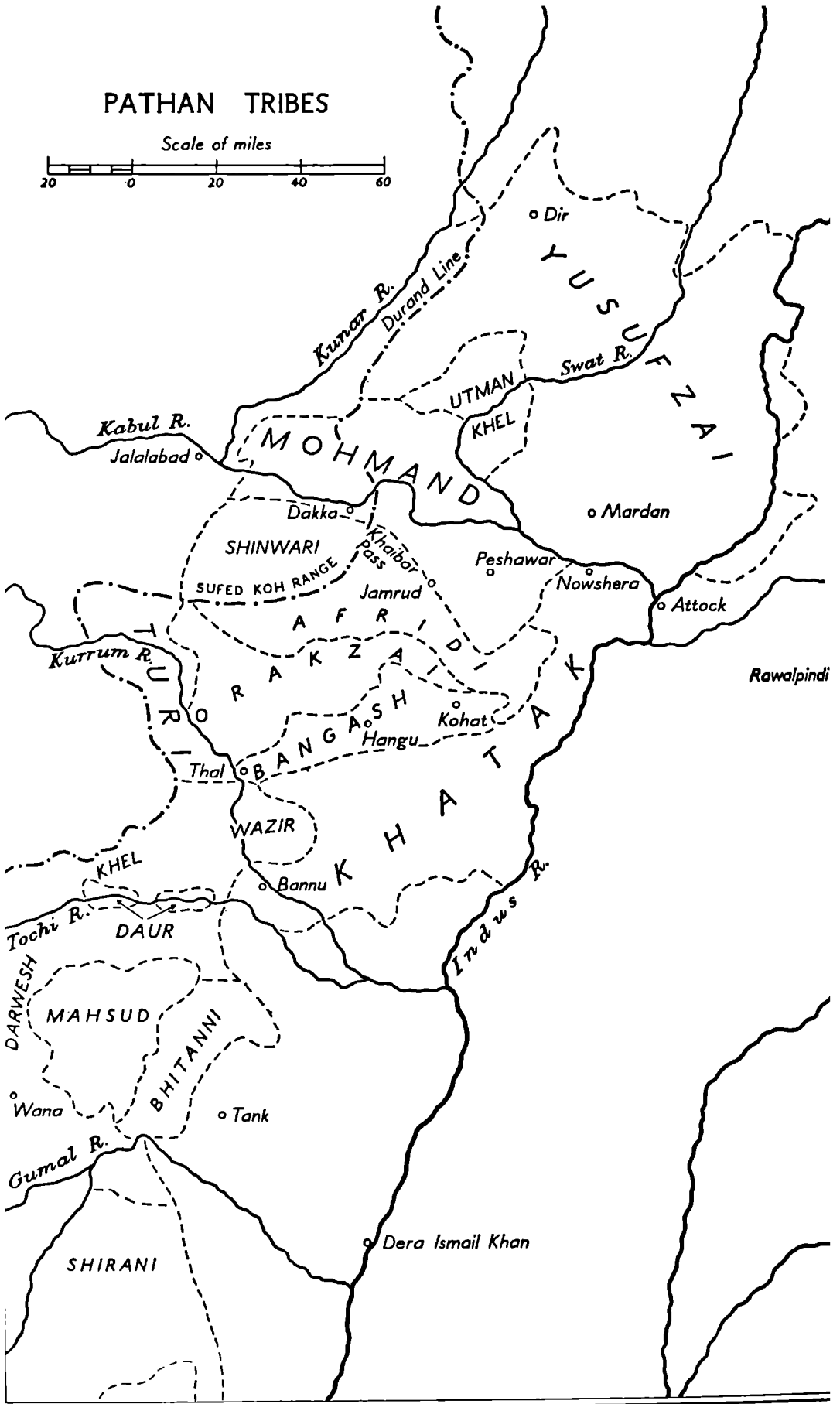
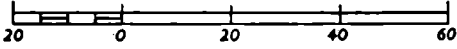
THE essential problem facing the Government of India on its north-west frontier was to persuade a proud and warlike people, the independent tribes from across the administrative border, to live on neighbourly terms with the inhabitants of the settled and administered districts who were themselves Pathans and spoke the same language, Pashtu. It was a problem so shot through with conflicting considerations that it is unwise to over-simplify, but at the root of the matter lay three factors inherent in the character of the Pathan and his way of life. First and foremost the Pathan was a hard man reared in a hard school, his life dominated by the law of *badal* or retaliation, one of the three principal maxims of the Pakhtunwali—the tribal code. *Badal* must be exacted for personal insults or blood feuds, which might be inherited, and if a man failed to discharge his liabilities he was exposed to scorn and ridicule. Feuds might originate from intrigues with women, murders, violation of safe conduct, or disputes about debts, or inheritance, or tribal quarrels about land or water. The causes were often quite trifling but a feud might go on for years, long after the death of the original parties to it. The daily round, the common task—whatever he was doing or wherever he went, the Pathan carried his rifle with him. The siting and construction of his house might be dictated by the necessity to protect himself from his enemy. When a feud was at its height men have been known to dig a communication trench to get them from their house across a dangerously open stretch of ground to the safety of the road or to their fields. He was obliged from youth upwards to employ every means to get the better of his enemies; revenge, treachery and sudden death were part and parcel of his daily life. It was then only natural that his dealings with the outside world should be governed by the same rules.

Secondly, he was fiercely independent. Hard though his life might be he sought no other: the blessings of civilization had no message for him. He not only asked, he demanded, to be left alone. Neither Mughal, Durrani nor Sikh had dared to penetrate deeper than the fringes of his territory, and when they did as much as that they paid heavily for their presumption. After the arrival of the British the Pathan came to accept the minor punitive expedition, but at any suggestion that this might lead to permanent occupation a whole tribe would be up in arms.

Finally, although there were rich and fertile valleys in Buner, Tirah and the heart of Waziristan the Pathan lived in a poor country.

PATHAN TRIBES

Scale of miles



© Major-General J. G. Elliott 1968

MAP 3. Pathan Tribes

It would be wrong to say that he raided to earn his daily bread, but for the great majority their stony fields and lean and hardy flocks yielded little beyond the bare necessities of life, and there was not much they could do to better themselves; so, if money was short for some such pressing need as the purchase of a new rifle, what simpler than to descend on the villages of the plain in search of plunder? Life was pretty uneventful, and the risks in a well-planned raid were negligible.

There was one other consideration which might complicate decisions on frontier policy. Successive amirs of Afghanistan claimed an ill-defined suzerainty over the independent tribes and were apt to intervene in tribal politics either to enhance their own prestige or in furtherance of any negotiations they might be conducting with the British.

The obvious remedy to stop raiding was to improve the financial standing of the trans-border Pathan by the payment of subsidies that would make good the loss he suffered by refraining from these depredations, and there grew up over the years a widespread and intricate system of tribal allowances. The British inherited from the Sikhs, who probably took them over from the Durranis, certain blackmail payments, the term being defined in the Oxford dictionary as 'tribute exacted by freebooters for protection and immunity'. The chief of these were for the free passage of traffic through the Khaibar and Kohat Passes. An attempt was made to extend the practice to the Mahsuds in return for non-interference with Powindah migration up and down the Gumal, but otherwise in the early days it was the policy of the Punjab Government that blackmail should not be paid merely to stop raiding. However, as time passed tribal allowances became fairly general, being liable to forfeit for misbehaviour. Payments were also made for services rendered, the provision of khassadars or tribal police, maintenance of roads or water rights for permanent posts. There is no doubt that over the years these allowances achieved a considerable degree of success but they were a palliative and not a cure, and on occasion they could be the cause of trouble when those who were receiving what they felt to be less than their fair share stirred up trouble to discredit those through whom the political agent dealt when making the payments.

The second tenet of the Pathan code, *nanawatai*, in so far as it related to an obligation to grant protection to those in distress, was a frequent cause of trouble with the government. A man who had committed murder or other serious crime in a settled district would cross the

border and seek asylum with an individual or section of a tribe, maybe on the strength of no more than a casual acquaintance. One or both of two things could then happen. In due course the question of repayment would arise and the outlaw would discharge his debt by placing his local knowledge at the disposal of his hosts in the execution of raids on villages in the district where he had once lived. Later, if raiding became so frequent as to provoke retaliation there would come the point where the tribal jirga would be assembled to hear the terms on which the government was prepared to withdraw the punitive column or call off the bombing, as the case might be. After some haggling, agreement would be reached on the fine to be paid but the stumbling-block would be a flat refusal to transgress the law of asylum by surrendering any outlaws the tribe might be sheltering.

The Pathan was, of course, a Mohammedan. There were small numbers of Shiahhs in districts west of Kohat but all the others were Sunnis who represent the orthodox church of Islam. They observed quite strictly the faith and practice of their religion but like most illiterate people they were very superstitious and were susceptible to the influence of their priests, or mullas, who, as the reactionary party, were the first to perceive or even invent a threat to tribal independence, and to rally the clans to meet it. The extent of the influence the mulla could exert is described by Edwardes, writing of the Wazirs in 1849:

Their vilest jargon was pure Arabic from the blessed Koran, the clumsiest imposture a miracle, the fattest faqir a saint. The myriads of holy vagabonds were armed in a panoply of spectacles and owl-like looks, miraculous rosaries, infallible amulets, and tables of descent from Mohammed. Each newcomer, like St. Peter, held the keys of heaven, and the whole like Irish beggars were equally prepared to bless or curse to all eternity him who gave or who withheld. Against them the tribesman had no defence. For him the whistle of the far-thrown bullet had no terrors; blood was simply a red fluid; and to remove a neighbour's head at the shoulders as easy as cutting cucumbers. But to be cursed in Arabic, or anything that sounded like it; to be told the prophet had put a black mark against his soul; to have the saliva of a disappointed saint left in anger on his door-post; or behold a haji who had gone three times to Mecca deliberately sit down and enchant his camels with the itch and his sheep with the rot; these were the things which made the dagger drop out of the hand of the awe-stricken savage, his knees to knock together, and his parched tongue to be scarce able to articulate a full and complete concession of the blasphemous

demand. They contributed nothing to the common stock but inflammatory counsel, and a fanatical yell in the rear of the battle.*

Applied to recent times the picture is very much overdrawn, and it goes without saying that there were many saintly figures among the mullas, some with the uncompromising sincerity of Old Testament prophets; but it is equally true that there was no frontier campaign of any magnitude that did not have a mulla in the background. Regard, for example, the paramount role played by such men as the Akhund of Swat, the Mulla Powindah, the Hadda Mulla and Fakir of Ipi. In their day they were the dominant figures on both sides; and it is difficult to assess just how far genuine religion inspired their call to arms. There are stories of ghazis, religious fanatics who singly or in screaming hordes murdered or fought in the sure conviction that they were immune to the enemy's bullet, but much religious agitation was calculated to secure the ends of tribal policy. It might be a fairer estimate to say that these leaders were all men of character in their own right and that they exploited, sometimes from conviction, sometimes to further their own ends and ambitions, the fight for independence, a cause which had a sure and universal appeal, something that transcended the petty frontiers of tribal jealousy. And that was why they were so dangerous.

It is small wonder then that the Pathan enjoyed a most unenviable reputation among those who had no more than a superficial knowledge of his customs or who met him as an enemy in the field. The Mughal chroniclers of Shah Jehan complained of 'the tumult-raising Afaghinah of this mountainous tract, outwardly obedient servitors, but inwardly delighting in disorder and ever ready to plunder and molest'. The Victorians, when they came on the scene two hundred years later, expressed very much the same sentiments. They were not remarkable for their tolerance or sense of humour. People conformed to the rigid code of morality, or they remained outside the pale. Political officers were strictly barred from any contacts with the tribes with the result that impressions current at the time were inevitably exaggerated and one-sided, but they are relevant because the policy that was adopted to deal with the problem was based upon them.

It is worth quoting a few extracts from a report written by the

* *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, Major H. B. Edwardes—Bentley 1851.

secretary to the Chief Commissioner of the Punjab in 1856. It smacks more than a little of the secretariat, collated and compiled meticulously from reports coming in from those in closer contact with its subject, but it paints the picture as those in Lahore saw it; and Calcutta was even further away.

These tribes are savages, noble savages perhaps, and not without some tincture of virtue and generosity, but still absolute barbarians nevertheless. They have nominally a religion, but Mohammedanism, as understood by them, is not better, or perhaps is actually worse, than the creeds of the wildest races on earth. In their eyes the one great commandment is blood for blood, and fire and sword for the infidels. They are superstitious and priest-ridden. But the priests (mullas) are as ignorant as they are bigoted, and use their influence simply for preaching crusades against unbelievers. They are thievish and predatory to the last degree. The Pathan mother often prays that her son may be a successful robber. They are utterly faithless to public engagements. They are never without weapons: when grazing their cattle, when driving beasts of burden, when tilling the soil, they are still armed. They are perpetually at war with each other. There is hardly a man whose hands are unstained. Each person counts up his murders. Reckless of the lives of others, they are not sparing of their own. They consider retaliation and revenge to be strongest of all obligations. They possess gallantry and courage themselves, and admire such qualities in others. Such briefly is their character, replete with the unaccountable inconsistencies, with that mixture of opposite vices and virtues, belonging to savages.*

It is a harsh and lurid picture which takes no account of the fact that the tribesman was no more, no less, no better and no worse, than was to be expected from the circumstances of his beliefs and upbringing. Views expressed by others who had the opportunity and took the trouble to learn more about the people throw a kindlier light on the subject. Elphinstone, who passed that way before there arose the barrier of bitterness that followed on the regrettable sequence of raid and reprisal, wrote: 'Their vices are revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity, and obstinacy: on the other hand they are fond of liberty, faithful to their friends, kind to their dependants, hospitable, brave, hardy, frugal, laborious and prudent; they are less disposed than the nations in their neighbourhood to falsehood, intrigue and deceit.'† A hundred years

* *Relations of the British Government with the Tribes on the North-West Frontier*, Punjab Government—Lahore 1865.

† *An Account of the Kingdom of Canbul*, Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone—circa 1840.

later Sir Evelyn Howell in his classic monograph *Mizh*, on the Mahsuds, toughest and most obdurate of all the Pathans, surmises in his preface that any intelligent Mahsud malik would protest emphatically at being termed a barbarian. He suggests that his argument might run: "A civilisation has no other end than to produce a fine type of man. Judged by this standard the social system in which the Mahsud has been evolved must be allowed immeasurably to surpass all others. Therefore let us keep our independence and have none of your qanun [laws] and your other institutions which have wrought such havoc in British India, but stick to our own riwaj [tribal customs] and be men like our fathers before us." And after prolonged and intimate dealings with the Mahsuds I am not at all sure that, with reservations, I do not subscribe to their plea.'

There was of course another side to the picture, and it is well put in the recruiting handbook for Pathans, which pointed out that, however unfavourable many of the traits in the Pathan character, it was beyond question that he appealed strongly to and enlisted the sympathies of British officers who had dealings with him. Deep called to deep and there were some who said the call came through more clearly when the Briton was a Scot. His manliness, proverbial hospitality, courtesy, courage, cheerfulness and loyalty made him an excellent companion, a valuable soldier, and entitled him to respect and admiration. More outspoken and free in his manner than other enlisted classes it was in a mixed regiment or battalion the ambition of many British officers to command the Pathan squadron or company.

In his introduction to *The Pathans*,* Sir Olaf Caroe writes:

There is a strange fascination in living among Pathans. Many attempts have been made to catch and convey that feeling, but the spell is elusive. One secret of the hold of the North-West Frontier is to be sought in the tremendous scenic canvas against which the Pathan plays out his life, a canvas brought into vivid relief by sharp cruel changes of climate. Sometimes the assault on the spirit is that of stark ugliness and discomfort—appalling heat, a dust-storm across the Peshawar plain, the eroded foothills of the Khaibar or Waziristan; more often it is an impression of beauty indescribable in its clarity and contrast with the barren emptiness that went before. 'The life of a frontiersman is hard,' wrote Ronaldshay, 'and he treads it daily on the brink of eternity. Yet, despite its obvious drawbacks, the fact remains that these endless ranges of rugged

* Published by Macmillan, 1958.

rocks rising from lower levels do possess the power of inspiring in those whose lot is cast among them an extraordinary enthusiasm.'

For the stranger who had eyes to see and ears to hear, always as he drove through the Margalla Pass just north of Rawalpindi and went on to cross the great bridge at Attock, there was a lifting of the heart and the knowledge that, however hard the task and beset with danger, here was a people who looked him in the face and made him feel that he had come home.

By no means the least of the attractions of living among Pathans was listening to the language they spoke. Pashtu is a virile tongue, rich in earthy proverbs of remarkable pungency and, although harsh-sounding, well suited to the nature of its speakers and the mountains which form its home. It had in such surroundings a remarkable carrying power and a man could converse without apparent effort and hardly troubling to raise his voice with a friend on a neighbouring hilltop or a mile away in the valley below him.

The third tenet of the Pathan code, *mailmastia*, or hospitality, reflected entirely to his credit and in his observance of it, which he regarded as a sacred duty, he set an example that many in the western world might find it hard to follow. Most villages had their hujra, or guest house, where guests and strangers were entertained with open-handed generosity; and the person and property of the guest were inviolable while he was in the care of his hosts.

The young Pathan began to think about marriage when he was about twenty and generally took only one wife. The women did not appear at social gatherings when men were present. They might enjoy dancing and singing in their own assemblies, but except on feast days they were kept busy with household duties: cooking, carrying water, milking and cutting grass and wood. The men worked in the fields and tended the flocks.

Artisans such as potters, weavers, blacksmiths and carpenters, and shop-keepers were mostly Hindus or Khatri Sikhs, and were regarded as permanent tenants under the patronage of a powerful malik or the protection of the tribe as a whole. There are to this day a few Hindu shop-keepers still living in tribal villages.

The Pathan had a long memory and despite his apparent isolation from the world was well-informed on the progress of current affairs and in particular kept a close watch on political developments in India.

The greater part of what has been written in this chapter applies to the independent tribes living across the administrative border, but the rural population of the plains between the Indus and the hills were also Pathans. They spoke the same language and observed the same customs. It was the attempt to fit these people into the straitjacket of the Indian Penal Code and subject the conduct of their disputes to the formalities and delays of the High Court in Lahore that very often obstructed the course of justice.

In 1872 the Frontier Crimes Regulation was introduced which allowed a magistrate to withdraw a case and submit it for arbitration by a jirga. There was a considerable improvement as a result of this measure but it was still only a halfway stage between opposing camps. Pathan custom required the satisfaction of the aggrieved rather than the punishment of the aggressor, who had probably acted under the compulsion of tribal law. The law as the British understood it concentrated against the aggressor and compensation for the aggrieved hardly entered into the picture.

The index to the recruiting handbook lists a hundred and twenty-six tribes and sub-tribes but it will suffice here to mention briefly only the more important.

The Yusufzais proper lived in Dir, Swat, Buner, the Indus valley, and the Black Mountain. Their cousins, the Mandanrs, who were also generally known as Yusufzais, without the qualification, inhabited the Chamla valley and the hills to the south, and the plains around Mardan in British India.

The Black Mountain, which takes its name from its dense pine forests, extends up the left bank of the Indus for twenty-five miles from just above Darband, which was the capital of the small state of Amb, whose ruler held it as a grant from the Punjab Government. The mountain is a long narrow ridge of an average height of eight thousand feet, the upper slopes being densely covered with pine, oak, sycamore, horse-chestnut and wild cherry. The inhabitants of the outer or eastern slopes are the cis-Indus Swatis, taking their name from having lived in the Swat valley until they were driven eastwards on the arrival of the Yusufzais from Kabul. On the slopes towards the river are the Hassanzais, a tribe of the Yusufzais. Interspersed among them are small religious colonies of sayeds who provoked much of the turmoil and bloodshed that plagued the area for the first forty years. A contributory cause of trouble was the perennial feud between the Khan of Agror on

the south-east corner of the mountain who lost no chance of intriguing against and making trouble for his neighbour, the Nawab of Amb, whose territory lay almost wholly in British India.

Of the other cis-border Yusufzais and kindred tribes there were in the army a few Mashwanis, the little tribe who sheltered Abbott in 1848 in their mountain fastness at the south-west corner of the Hazara district. From the earliest days there were enlisted a number of Mandanr Yusufzais who were cheerful, talkative and hospitable and made good soldiers if kept in their place. But as the Swat river canal brought them increased prosperity they became less interested in the army, and the water that brought them wealth brought also malaria, which in some parts sapped their physique so seriously that recruitment had to be discontinued.

The southernmost Yusufzais, living across the border to the east and south-east of Mardan, call for no comment. For the Bunerwals to the north of them it has been claimed that there was no finer race on the frontier. They were a reserved people who kept very much to themselves. Simple and austere in their habits, religious and truthful in their ways, hospitable to all who sought shelter among them, free from secret assassinations, they were bright examples of the Pathan at his best. Ignorant by nature, they held trade in the very lowest estimation; excessively susceptible to the influence of mullas and religious leaders they were prone to be deluded by precepts and orders emanating from such sources. A remarkable feature was their trustworthiness: their word once given could be depended on with certainty, even when unaccompanied by any surety for the fulfilment of the contract. The Guru mountain divides their country from the Chamla valley, and the Morah hills and the Ilam range stand along the border with Swat in the north.

The Yusufzais of Dir and Swat were also men of their word and had a certain stability and regard for their own rulers. In consequence the Malakand Agency achieved a standard of prosperity and development that far exceeded any other part of the frontier. It may be that this sense of discipline made possible the remarkable display of collective fanaticism which was the distinguishing feature of the outbreak in 1897.

After the Malakand rising of 1897 when punitive columns entered both Bajaur and the territory of the Utman Khel there was little trouble from these tribes, though the latter were concerned in harbour-

ing gangs of raiders which led to the operations by the Nowshera Brigade in 1935.

There is less information to throw sidelights on the character of the Mohmands than about any other major tribe on the frontier. There was not, under British rule, a separate political agent in charge of them as their affairs were in the hands of the deputy commissioner, Peshawar. The lower Mohmands, with a stake in British territory, were prosperous enough, but only a few ever enlisted in the army, and comparatively small numbers in the Frontier Corps. As to the upper Mohmands, if economic necessity was any justification for raiding they had it in good measure. Nowhere in their land were to be found the fertile valleys of Buner, Swat, Maidan and Makin: indeed, the whole tract consisted of rows of rocky hills, scantily clothed with coarse grass and dwarf palm, and broad dry ravines. In summer the heat was intense, and water everywhere scarce. Springs were infrequent, and the water supply of many of the villages drawn from rain water collected in tanks. And because their country was dry and relatively free from malaria they were physically tough.

An officer who knew them well in both Tochi Scouts and South Waziristan Scouts contests emphatically any suggestion that they were less popular than other Pathan tribes enlisted. They were perhaps more reserved, even dour, than others, but they made excellent Scouts and produced some of the finest Pathan officers. Moreover, during the campaigns of 1933 and 1935 they gave no trouble. As a tribe they were as much torn by the blood feud as any other. As witness the sad case of Jemadar Akram (Tochi) and Subedar Hujam (South Waziristan Scouts). They met fairly often on duty, and were good friends, despite a long-standing family feud. The adjutants of the two corps usually liaised to see that they did not both have leave at the same time. But in 1945 by some mischance they both did have leave together. Only Hujam, who was a magnificent rifle shot, returned.*

The road linking Peshawar and Kohat, till 1922 the two most important stations on the frontier, ran for over ten miles of its length through a salient of tribal territory jutting out of the main line of the mountains to within fifteen miles of the Indus between Attock and Khushalgarh. It was the home of the Adam Khel Afridis and their geographical separation from the main block of the tribe kept this

* See also *The Pathans*, pp. 174-5.

section apart politically. In the early days, when they were most troublesome, they failed to persuade the others to come to their help, and when the rest were up in arms almost to a man in 1897 they remained aloof.

The main block of Afridi land was divided into three parts: the Khaibar Pass; the mountainous valleys running away to the west of it that are the real home of the tribe; and the Kajuri plain. The Khaibar runs through its own corridor of hills, in which there were only a few scattered villages, and the interest of the Afridis in the pass was largely financial, represented by the allowances paid for keeping it open as an international highway. Their true homelands consisted of three valleys. The Bazaar, whose stream joins the Khaibar river just as it spills out into the plain, was approached by a pass over the low hills between Shagai and Ali Masjid, with a backdoor from Dacca in the north. To the south lay the eastern extremity of the Safed Koh, dividing the Bazaar from the Rajgal valley and Maidan, from which flowed the Bara river. This is the very keep of the Afridi castle, remote and inaccessible, though, again, with a backdoor from the Orakzai country at the south-west corner. In it was located the important mosque at Bagh where all the major tribal decisions were taken. Over another range of hills to the south was the valley of the Mastura, which the Afridis shared with the Orakzais and which joined the Bara river and flowed into the Kajuri plain at Fort Bara twenty miles south of Peshawar. For the Afridi going about his lawful affairs the plain was his grazing ground in winter when the clans forsook the snow-covered uplands of Tirah; when on mischief bent it afforded him a most favourable tactical approach to the rich Khalil and Bara Mohmand villages, and to the city of Peshawar itself.

The Afridis were by no means the largest of the trans-frontier tribes but, when they elected to sink their sectional differences, it was easy for them to unite, and, operating as they did a flourishing armament industry of their own, they were well armed. Moreover, from their location they were, together with the Mohmands, the nearest and most obvious hatching-ground for plots against the Power that held Peshawar.

Their character could hardly be painted blacker than in the words of some of their stoutest champions. Mackeson wrote of them: 'The Afridis are a most avaricious race, desperately fond of money. Their fidelity is measured by the length of the purse of the seducer and they

transfer their obedience and support from one party to another of their own clansmen according to the comparative liberality of the donation.' Even Elphinstone, who was a great admirer of the Pathan, could find little good to say about the Afridi.

He carried the blood feud to greater lengths than any other tribe, though he may share this doubtful distinction with the Mahsud.

When so many harsh words have been spoken about him the picture takes on a fresh perspective when viewed through Warburton's* eyes. 'The Afridi lad from his earliest childhood is taught by the circumstances of his existence and life to distrust all mankind, and very often his near relations, heirs to his small plot of land by right of inheritance, are his deadliest enemies. Distrust of all mankind, and readiness to strike the first blow for the safety of his own life, have therefore become the maxims of the Afridi. If you can overcome this mistrust, and be kind in words to him, he will repay you by great devotion, and he will put up with any punishment you like to give him except abuse.†

The Afridi was the only trans-frontier tribesman to enlist in any numbers in the regular Indian Army. Up to 1914 the Afridi had a fine record but during the First World War there were cases of desertion and refusal to fight, attributable to religious scruples. Afridi companies were disbanded and all recruiting was stopped. It was eventually re-opened for the Adam Khel section but for the rest, despite frequent petitions, it remained closed for the army until 1939. A number continued to serve in Frontier Scouts and Militias. Despite this disgrace there were many occasions when the Afridi showed a constancy and devotion to duty that one might look for in vain from the Mahsud.

In the mountains to the north of the Miranzai valley, which runs west from Kohat, were the Orakzais and the Zaimukhts. The Orakzais live on both sides of the Khanki valley the whole way up from where it joins the Miranzai valley fifteen miles above Kohat; in the southern part of the Tirah on the right bank of the Mastura; and to the west of the Tirah in the hills that look down on the Kurram. At the turn of the century their fighting strength was given at just under twenty-nine thousand men, a thousand more than all the Afridis including the Adam Khel. About six thousand of them were Shiah and a reputable authority rates that section of them to be the bravest of all the Pathans.

* Colonel Sir Robert Warburton, see Chapter 15.

† *Eighteen Years in the Khyber*—Murray 1900.

They were not such determined characters as the Afridis but they were fanatical and more easily set alight, and because of their scattered location it was not easy to come to terms with the tribe as a whole. The closing figures showed nearly two thousand serving in the Frontier Corps and the Constabulary but only three hundred in the army. They made excellent soldiers, reliable and trustworthy, well-behaved and intelligent.

The Zaimukhts lived in a very fertile pocket north of Thal. They were never enlisted in the army or Frontier Corps.

In the Kurram valley lived the Turis. Although the valley lay in tribal territory its affairs were very much more closely controlled by the political agent at Parachinar than was the case anywhere else on the frontier. The Turis are a bold and vigorous people, still proud of the fact that they conquered their valley from their neighbours the Bangashes. There were nearly a thousand of them in the Kurram Militia but they were never recruited in the army.

In the lower end of the Kurram and down the Miranzai valley lived the Bangash. They suffered much from their neighbours, the Orakzais, Turis and Wazirs and, prompted originally by self-interest, they gave little trouble to the British. They had a reputation as quiet and well-disciplined soldiers.

The reputation of the Pathan as a soldier and a militiaman rests firmly on the broad shoulders of the loyal and cheerful Khataks who live round Kohat and from there south to Bannu. There were over three thousand in the army and nearly as many again in the Frontier Corps and Constabulary. Geographically in a halfway house the Khatak was not afflicted with the fickleness of his trans-border neighbours, and he had more dash and sparkle than the Punjabi Mohammedan from across the Indus. Caroe attributes their collective character partly to their history and their tradition of government service under the Mughuls—and against the Mughuls. They were very proud of their khans, and of their literary history. He gives a translation of some lines written by their poet, Khushal Khan Khatak, that describe the happy warrior. They merit a place in any anthology.

Whose word's his word, his face his very face,
Who knows no guile, whose glance bestows a grace;
Who, when the challenge calls him to the race,
Speaks not, does mightily, from eager start,

Throws to the beckoning goal an open heart.
Who, be the call for pride or humbleness,
Is lowly with the low, but strong to impress
High looks upon the proud, in charity
Rich as the vine's grape-laden tracery.

There were four Pathan tribes in Waziristan. The Bhitannis in the hills facing the settled districts between Bannu and Tank; the Dauris for a short distance up the Tochi; the Wazirs who continued from there the whole way round to the Gumal; and in the centre, with access to the settled districts only through the encircling tribes, the Mahsuds, who were Wazirs but were never known by that name.

Very little need be said about the Dauris, the Bhitannis and the Wazirs. They were no plaster saints but their misdeeds pale into insignificance when compared with the veritable Newgate calendar of crimes that must be laid at the door of their neighbours, and hereditary enemies, the Mahsuds.

The Dauris were a small tribe of no great fighting value. They were men enough to harass the Bannuchis in the early days, but they were themselves the prey of the Wazirs, and they gave little trouble after the arrival of the British. If they had a claim to be noticed it was that they were an easy prey to religious excitement, and it was by playing on their feelings that the Fakir of Ipi sparked off the fighting that began in the autumn of 1936 and went on for over a year. The Bhitannis, with a frontier stretching along the administrative border, gave little trouble; they seldom if ever took the initiative or earned a punitive expedition in their own right, but they were not above playing jackal to the Mahsuds, affording them safe passage on their forays into the settled districts, and snapping up any scraps of loot that came their way. The Wazirs were divided into the Utmanzai, in the north-west, and the Ahmedzai, mainly in the south. Their territory touched that of the Mahsuds at two points of great political and tactical importance, Razmak and Wana, and at both places they welcomed British occupation as affording them some degree of protection against expansion by their neighbours. But for their size they gave less trouble than might have been expected. In particular the Wana Wazirs, largely because of the ease with which they could escape over the border, seldom came into conflict with the British or suffered the bitterness of defeat. In the view of one political agent in south Waziristan the Wana Wazir was

a coward and a bully by nature. There were two things of which he was very frightened, work and prison. The Wazir was credited with a sense of humour but any display of joviality was considered to be in the worst possible taste. A joke that would be greeted with roars of laughter in a Mahsud jirga would evoke covert smiles, hastily concealed. On the other hand Edwardes, writing eight years earlier, had a good word or two to say for the Utmanzais. 'Though they are notorious plunderers the smallest escort secures a traveller a hospitable reception among the whole tribe. Such is their veracity that if there is a dispute about a stray goat, and one party will say it is his and confirm his assertion by stroking his beard, the other instantly gives it up without suspicion of fraud.'*

Turning to the Mahsud the difficulty is not to find reasons why they continued to present the one consistently intractable problem on the whole frontier, but rather to pick out those which were the most important. To start with their historical background, they had perhaps better ground than any other Pathan tribe for boasting that while kingdoms and dynasties had passed away they alone had remained free; the armies of kings had never penetrated their strongholds; and in their intercourse with the rest of mankind they recognized no law or will but their own. They were celebrated as the earliest, the most inveterate and the most incorrigible of all the robbers of the border, and from generation to generation had regarded the country of the plains, within a night's run to the hills, as the hunting-ground from which they might enrich themselves.

Successive political officers have testified to the physical, mental and moral strain of combating the peculiar qualities of toughness, persistence and ingenuity which the Mahsud brought to the conduct of his everyday affairs. And among a people where lack of constancy was a general failing the Mahsud positively prided himself on his unreliability. He had moreover a most unenviable record of murdering British officers, often in circumstances of blackest treachery and, although each outrage was the act of an individual, as a whole they formed part of a definite pattern.

Superimposed above all was the nature and organization of Mahsud tribal society. They were intensely democratic, and were split into such an intricate jigsaw of minor factions that it was difficult if not impossible

* *A Year on the Punjab Frontier.*

to define responsibility, geographical or otherwise. At the same time there was an element of rigidity about their society, where every man knew his place, and expected this rating to govern his dealings with the outside world, whether in the allocation of tribal allowances or his right to promotion in the army.

The army never took Wazirs, but Mahsuds were enlisted in three Baluch battalions from about 1900. As might be expected, with their qualities of toughness and self-reliance they made good soldiers and the numbers were increased. But the venture was summarily concluded in 1914 when many of them refused to go on service. They were given a fresh trial during the 1930s when there was a company in a Frontier Force battalion. By their insistence that their affairs and promotions must be governed by *nikat*, or hereditary right, rather than by merit they wrecked the experiment and the company was disbanded in 1937. They were never again taken in fighting units, though a Mahsud mechanical transport company served with great distinction in Burma in 1944.

7 THE POLITICALS

WHEN examining the efforts of the first British political officers to handle a situation of such complexity, for which no precedents existed, it must be remembered also that in 1845, only five years earlier, the north-west province of the day had its frontier not on the Indus, but on the Sutlej. And in that province during the first half of the century every British administrator who could be spared was busy with the overhaul of the creaking machinery of government taken over from the Mughuls—who in 1825 still had a king in Delhi—and in attempting to establish a system of revenue on a realistic basis, for India was still the territory of a great trading company from whose profits only the essential minimum must be deducted for the cost of administration.

What was in its own right a problem of the first magnitude was further complicated by the failure of their predecessors, the Sikhs, to come to terms with it. At the close of the Afghan War the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab was still in existence but it had begun to crumble. Ranjit Singh died in 1839 when the British armies were still on their way to Kabul and with him went the only force that had kept the Sikh sirdars in order. He left no legitimate heir but was succeeded by the boy Dhulip Singh under the care of his mother and her paramour Lal Singh, the prime minister.

It is likely that distrust of British plans for the vale of Peshawar—for after Ranjit Singh's death Macnaghten had planned to return his lost province to Shah Shuja—was a contributory cause in provoking the Sikh regency to attack across the Sutlej, but the basic cause was the large Sikh army, idle and arrogant, which could be conciliated only by giving them a war to fight. The First Sikh War ended inconclusively at the battle of Sobraon in February 1846, and for the British it was no more than half a victory. However, the hot weather was just beginning, they were short of troops, those they had were very tired, and they could do no more than occupy Lahore with a weak force of two brigades, and install a Resident. In this they had the agreement of the regency council who realized that without some stiffening they had little chance of controlling the truculent remnants of their army or of complying with the conditions on which they had made peace.

The first Resident was Henry Lawrence and he comes into the story of the frontier by his inspired choice of the men he sent to the outlying districts, charged with the establishment of some semblance of law and justice.

Although nominally servants of the darbar at Lahore they had a pretty free hand to establish, entirely by force of character, such dominion as they might over their turbulent charges, while the day-to-day conduct of affairs remained in the hands of Sikh officials. Unorthodox though their methods may have been they saved the frontier for the British when two years later war again broke out with the Sikhs after the murder of Agnew and Anderson in Multan. Then Edwardes in Bannu, Lawrence and Nicholson in Peshawar, and Abbott in the Hazara rallied the local tribes and kept the Sikh army of occupation from marching south to the battles between the main armies north of Lahore. It was at this moment that Dost Mohammad, judging himself to be well established in Kabul, made his last bid to regain Peshawar. Profiting by the concentration of Sikh forces away to the south he entered the city in December 1848 and over-ran the whole countryside down to the Indus. He would have been wiser to have halted there, but after some negotiations with the Sikhs he sent a strong force of cavalry to join their army at the battle of Gujerat where the British were finally victorious. The Afghans earned little gratitude, for their allies accused them of being the first to break. Be that as it may, they were hunted north by the vanguard of the British army into the very mouth of the Khaibar. They were the last Afghan troops to be seen in the vale of Peshawar.

And so the British crossed the river Indus. Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, Jhelum, the five rivers of the Punjab, they had crossed them all in four short stormy years; the whole countryside behind them was in a turmoil, and they had some excuse for failing to realize that they had taken one of the most critical steps in all their long history in India.

‘The north-western boundary of the new province was drawn along the foothills as far as the line where the Sikhs, and probably Durrani and Mogul before them, had claimed conquest and revenue. No attempt was made to advance into the highlands, or even secure the main passages through the mountains such as the Khaibar Pass. As in the Peshawar valley, so in Bannu and the Derajat, the line of administration stopped like a tide almost at the first contour of rough country. Beyond that lay Yaghistan—the land of the rebels.’*

As a result of the persecution they had suffered under the Moguls

* *The Pathans*, by Sir Olaf Caroe.

the Sikh community was cradled in hatred for the followers of the Prophet, and it was a sentiment that was cordially reciprocated by the people they attempted to govern during their short rule of twenty-five years across the Indus. At the battle of Nowshera in 1823 Ranjit Singh defeated not the Afghan Army, for the small detachment under Dost Mohammad's brother Azem took little or no part in the battle, but the Yusufzais and the Khataks. In a word, he annexed the province against the wishes not only of the ruling Afghan sardars but of the people as well. After the battle he advanced to Peshawar, 'slaying and plundering as he went. He battered down the Bala Hissar and sacked the fair palace within. He cut the cypresses and muddied the basins of the garden of Shah Leman below the Fort, and allowed his cavalry to ravish the square miles of delicious orchards, plum, peach, apricot and pear, the glory of Peshawar. The name of Sikhashahi—the Sikh rule—is a synonym of misgovernment and oppression in the mouths of teachers and children to this day.'*

For the next twenty years the Sikhs were constantly at war with the tribes of Swat and Buner while further south round Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan they ventured only in great force at two-yearly intervals in an attempt, and not always a profitable one, to collect some revenue. Their ideas of administering the territories they had acquired were so rudimentary, at any rate by British standards, as to be worse than useless. They made no attempt to learn the language or study the customs of the people and dealt with them entirely through arbabs or middlemen, and taxes were apt to be collected by the simple procedure of granting commanders a blank cheque on a group of villages for the pay of their men.

The arrival of British troops was accordingly hailed with acclamation, and it is likely that this feeling of relief, and the reputation established by the British political officers who had been working there for two years, gave them a good start in what became the administered districts. On the other hand, across the border, where their writ did not run at all, it is probable that Sikh misrule had fomented discontent and encouraged the practice of raiding into what was now British India so that it had become far more extensive and troublesome than anything that may have existed under the more tolerant rule of the Durrani. The sins of the Sikhs were visited on their successors, who

* Ibid.

were forced into taking retaliatory measures amounting to war before they had had time to assess the nature of the problem facing them, or of devising more rational methods of dealing with it.

Before going further it is worth taking a brief look at some of the political officers who went to serve under the Sikhs; the Paladins as Caroe calls them. Caroe admits four men to this select company, all of whom, with the exception of Edwardes, had started their careers in the army. Frederick Mackeson was the first to arrive, being sent to Peshawar in 1840 to negotiate with the Afridis for the passage through the Khaibar of reinforcements for the garrison at Kabul. He stayed there till he was murdered by an assassin thirteen years later. There is no portrait of him, and little in the written records to show what sort of man he was, but his name and fame rest securely in the hearts of the people he served and Caroe recalls that eighty years later the name of Kishn Kaka (Uncle Kishn) was still on men's tongues in the villages round Peshawar.

Of the four, the one who most caught the popular imagination was John Nicholson, the Lion of the Punjab. 'A commanding figure and presence, a pale, stern face with dark imperious eyes and great black, spade-like beard, a step vigorous and firm, a high proud carriage of the head, a look half sorrowful and scarcely relaxing to a smile, proclaimed the dedicated man.'*

In his book *Forty-One Years in India* Lord Roberts tells how he met Nicholson. He was reconnoitring in the hills south of the road from Nowshera to Peshawar for a sanatorium for British troops and found Nicholson in camp. He was invited to dine. 'His was a name to conjure with. He had only lately arrived in Peshawar, having been transferred from Bannu, a difficult and troublesome district ruled by him as it had never been ruled before. Nicholson impressed me more profoundly than any man I had ever met before, or have ever met since. I have never seen anyone like him. He was the beau ideal of a soldier and a gentleman with a sense of power about him which to my mind was the result of his having passed so much of his life amongst the wild and lawless tribesmen.' A remarkable tribute from one who was himself an outstanding leader of men. Nicholson was killed at the age of thirty-four leading the assault on the Kashmir Gate at the siege of

* Ibid.

Delhi in 1857. It is likely that he inspired awe and respect rather than love, and achieved his ascendancy over the tribesmen because they were themselves men who worshipped daring when it commands success.

Herbert Edwardes was a very different man, easy to approach, and a pious Christian who first introduced Christian missions to the Frontier. But he knew as well as any of them that the way to the heart of the Pathan is the direct approach by man to man, without fear, favour or affection. Perhaps his most remarkable exploit, of which he tells in his book *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, was single-handed to bring to heel the unruly Bannu district which until his arrival had defied the efforts of whole Sikh armies sent to enforce the payment of revenue. He succeeded Mackeson as Commissioner in Peshawar in 1853.

The fourth was James Abbott who gave his name to Abbottabad. He established in Hazara a bastion which defied the Sikhs during the Second Sikh War in 1849. Most of all he endeared himself to the Mashwanis, a small Pathan tribe who live, defying change, in a Lilliputian fastness in the hills south-west of Torbela. He became the first deputy commissioner of Hazara but in 1853 he crossed swords with Mackeson over the location of outposts to be established against marauding from the Black Mountain, and he had to go. He was returned to the army who, by a triumph of mis-posting sent, him to the Gun Foundry at Ishapur near Calcutta.

These men in their day saw quite clearly how to deal with Pathans. In notes compiled for handing over to Nicholson in Bannu one of them wrote:

It has always been my theory with regard to Pathans that there is no class of men over whom a more singular influence can be attained by attention to their habits, wants and troubles by an officer who has leisure to devote to them, such leisure as I had under the Resident previous to annexation, when details of district management were carried out by Sikh officials. We had leisure to listen to them, talk to them and act as arbitrators and advisers in all their difficulties. The burden entailed by accounts, the labours attendant on establishing new systems in a district, left me neither leisure nor temper for mixing freely with the people so that I possessed less personal influence the last year than the first. As my acquaintance with them diminished my influence declined and I attribute several of the difficulties that subsequently occurred to my not having been able to find time to interest myself in the case and exert time and care in healing growing sores before they reached a dangerous pitch. I am confident

that nothing will so far further the ends of government as this, ensuring that the political officer has time and leisure to study the tribes on his border.

The tragedy is that this first clarity of vision should have become obscured. Henry Lawrence, who in the first place chose the Paladins for their task, and his brother, John, the dedicated, methodical civil servant, never pulled together when they ran in dual harness in the Punjab, and in the end the younger man won, and Henry went off to kick his heels in Rajputana and Nepal. It is interesting to speculate what might have happened if at the very outset John had remained in Lahore, and Henry been left free to exercise his peculiar talents in the shaping of a new north-west frontier province.

With the formal annexation of the Punjab and of the lands across the Indus up to the foothills everything was changed. Imperfectly aware of the fact that they were dealing with a people, the Pathans, who were quite different from any they had come across during their long advance north from Calcutta and Bombay, the Governments in Lahore and Calcutta decided to enforce a code which may well have worked elsewhere but which, applied to the Pathan, created from its unsuitability problems which need never have arisen. That was the first mistake. The second was, as the above quotation shows, that the district officer found himself increasingly tied to his office by the demands of routine administration and correspondingly less free to go out among his people. As if this were not enough, from the very beginning the rule was strictly enforced that no political officer was allowed to cross the frontier and that any offers of friendship, which might lead to entanglements, were to be politely acknowledged, but no more than that. Forbidden to have any truck with the wild men of the hills the new deputy commissioners had no option but to work through the agency they had taken over from the Sikhs and Durranis, the arbabs, or middlemen. These were men of influence and property in the settled districts adjacent to the tribal border and, though there may have been good men among them, in general they had so many irons in the fire that they were seldom able to prevent their private feuds and interests from intruding on their duty to the government. The deputy commissioner had, willy-nilly, to accept the arbab's version of what was going on. Warburton, who pioneered the direct approach to the tribes, records the conviction, after twenty-nine years spent on the Peshawar frontier, 'that the majority of wars and fights between

the British government and the independent tribes were due entirely to the evil intrigues and machinations of arbabs and middlemen'.

It is small wonder that, reviewing relations at the end of the first eight years, during which there had been sixteen punitive expeditions into tribal territory, a report compiled by the Punjab Government recorded that:

For some years the Swatis uniformly proved themselves bad neighbours. They seem to have regarded the plains of Peshawar as a hunter does his hunting grounds. Plunderers and marauders, sometimes in bands, sometimes in twos and threes, sometimes on foot, sometimes mounted, issued forth from Swat, and proceeded to the plains. They would not make regular raids, and they would refrain from molesting Pathans; but they would attack persons of all other classes. They would carry off Hindus in particular, for the purpose of putting them to ransom.

They have kept up old quarrels, or picked new ones; they have descended from the hills and fought out their battles in our territory; they have plundered and burnt our villages and slain our subjects; they have fired upon our own troops, and even killed our own officers in our own territory. They traverse at will our territories, enter our villages, trade in our markets; but few British subjects, and no servant of the British Government, would dare enter their country on any account whatever. They have given asylum to every malcontent or proclaimed criminal who can escape from British justice.

The whole British approach to the problem of raiding from across the border differed radically from that of the Sikhs, whose only concern had been the amount of revenue they could collect and, as long as the raids did not harm their interests, did not consider them to be their problem at all; if the villagers did not like being raided it was up to them to do something about it, and if the methods they employed were such as would be frowned on in humane society, that again was no concern of the ruling power. The British not only assumed the burden of protection but felt it incumbent on them that it should be as complete as possible: 'making themselves responsible for every cow that was lifted'.

Until their arrival the villagers had maintained their own wild laws and relations with their neighbours, managed things their own way and retained their former warlike activity and watchfulness. Once the British took over they considered themselves virtually free from the responsibility of looking after themselves, and relaxed the vigilance on which they had depended. The presence of government forces, police

or army, sapped the spirit of independence and pride in holding their own which they formerly cherished. The spell was broken, and all the Queen's horses would not avail to set a village community in its former position again.

Apart from the fact that the British could not countenance the use of such crude methods as assassination by which the villagers of the plain had been used to retaliate, their own very much less drastic code for the enforcement of law and order became a matter of general knowledge, and advantage was taken of it. They were known to be opposed to tyranny, exaction and oppression in any form, but equally well-known to insist on justice in punishing the offender, to avoid revengeful and severe punishment and, lastly, when some punishment had been meted out, to forget and forgive and let things go as though the community had been a pattern of good behaviour from time immemorial. It had been very much otherwise in the days of the Sikhs who never forgot or forgave an injury or slight, and such knowledge had more effect in influencing their half-enlightened minds than unvindictive methods.

The British were indeed in a quandary—they had assumed heavier responsibilities, and were far more scrupulous in the methods they employed to discharge them. Since it would have needed a Great Wall of China, eight hundred miles long, to prevent these forays or, alternatively, a vast army shut up in detachments in little forts strung across the frontier, to deal with each raid as it happened, they had forced upon them the policy of reprisals. 'When outrages from their constant repetition exceed the bounds of toleration; when the blood of our subjects cries from the ground; when our sovereign rights have been flagrantly violated, then we either make reprisals from, or lay an embargo on, or use military force against the offending tribe.'*

The appointment during the 1890s of political agents responsible only for tribal affairs resulted in a far clearer understanding of the problems involved but by no means ironed out all the conflicting factors that could complicate the conduct of operations after the army had been called in to help. The political agent who, after the tumult and the shouting died, had to resume the conduct of everyday affairs naturally favoured the minimum use of force. The Pathan was quick to spot and hammer home the wedge between the political and military

* Report by the Punjab Government.

point of view: they would sue prematurely for peace, partly to see how little they could get away with, perhaps only to gain a breathing space while recruiting parties were busy and the lashkars replenished with ammunition and rations. Again, the standard of tribal discipline varied considerably. Among the Yusufzais in the north-east it was high, but among the Mahsuds in the south there were likely to be factions who would repudiate any agreement entered into by maliks or jirgas on the score that those contracting it did not speak for the tribe as a whole. Then there were the kashars, the young hotheads who were always keen to continue the fight and, in search of a little excitement, might come from areas remote from the scene of the trouble. Above all, in determining the dividing line between what began as a minor punitive expedition and might develop into a major tribal war, there was the cry of 'Independence', the call that the British had come to take over and administer the land. The Pathan, and who can blame him, was passionately determined to preserve his freedom from any sort of foreign yoke. There was no cause more likely to persuade the tribes to sink their sectional jealousies and rally against a common foe.

The routine duties of the ordinary civil police in the settled districts were essentially different from the requirements of border defence against armed raiders and it was always recognized that the political authorities must control a force that could take the field at short notice and without the formality and delay of calling on the army. In the early days the need was met by the Punjab Irregular Force—of whom more later. In 1879 the first units of the Border Military Police were raised for duty on the frontier running north from the Kohat Pass. In 1897 came the Samana Rifles who continued the cordon along the border between the Orakzais and Kohat district. In 1913 the Border Military Police were reorganized on a more efficient footing as the Frontier Constabulary, with officers seconded from the Indian Police. The Mohmand Militia, raised during the First World War, were incorporated in the Constabulary in 1922. The strength sanctioned in 1913 was two thousand four hundred but by the end of the Second World War it had grown to twice that figure, and their responsibilities extended down to the far south of the province. Except when actually in pursuit of a raiding gang they might not cross the administrative border. They led a life of Spartan simplicity manning small forts and piquets in remote, inaccessible spots, constantly on the move and

always ready to concentrate to meet a major threat. They recruited from practically every Pathan tribe along both sides of the border. The approach, unsupported by artillery, across an open field to the assault of a small village stronghold holding a couple of outlaws, each with half a dozen murders to his credit, called for calculated courage and the records of the Frontier Constabulary abound in such incidents. They numbered in their ranks many remarkable characters, none more famous than Handyside who was their commandant for five years from 1921. He was killed leading an attack on a village house occupied by a raiding gang, and as a tribute to his fearlessness, tenacity and almost quixotic bravery, which gained for him the name of Kishn Sani—Mackeson the Second—an arch was erected over the road at the summit of the Kohat Pass. It stands there to this day.

Across the border were the Militias serving under the political agents. First to come were the Khyber Rifles who in 1892, 1897 and 1908 had a fine record of loyal service: but in 1919 they failed to stand against the attack by the Afghan Army. Next to be raised were the Kurram Militia who were generally more concerned with preventing the Turis from fighting one another than with incursions into British territory; then the Zhob Militia who had a comparatively uneventful career; and lastly the North and South Waziristan Militias who were raised about the turn of the century. They got away to a good start, particularly in the south, but allowance had not been made for the instability of the Mahsud character and after the murder of two British officers men from this tribe were not again recruited to serve in their own territory. The general policy of recruiting trans-frontier tribesmen for local service was severely tried in 1919, and it failed to stand up to the test.

Operating as they did inside tribal territory the Militias had to be prepared not only to intercept raiding gangs but to chase and fight them on their own ground. A high standard of training and discipline was called for, and their British officers were seconded from the regular Indian Army. The main self-contained sub-unit was the wing of five hundred men based on a strong detached fort, and providing garrisons for several smaller posts. But their role was essentially mobile and their characteristic manœuvre was the gasht or patrol of never less than a platoon in strength, and covering as a matter of course thirty miles in a day at a steady five miles in the hour.

But a routine gasht moving on its lawful occasions might without

beat of drum find itself in trouble. In *Frontier Scouts** there is the story of an occasion in May 1941 when four platoons of the South Waziristan Scouts operating from Ladha towards Makin saw a large number of Mahsuds in the valley below them. The gathering was reported to be assembled to do homage to Fazal Din, son of the Mulla Powindah, one of the most influential men in the tribe. Greetings were sent down by khassadar and duly returned and all seemed well until the withdrawal began. Desultory sniping soon developed into furious fighting at grenade-throwing range, with several hundred tribesmen involved. The outbreak was almost certainly the work of hotheads anxious to discredit the Scouts. Although the withdrawal was conducted with great skill four men were killed and seven wounded. All the bodies were brought in and not a rifle was lost. One n.c.o., although severely wounded, arrived at the fort gate carrying five rifles. He collapsed dead in the archway. He was awarded posthumously the Indian Order of Merit, while the commander of the gasht received the Military Cross. One other, unofficial, award was made to an old Mahsud woman, a roll of cloth given by the garrison of Ladha. During the fiercest of the fighting she appeared among the wounded giving them water from a goatskin she was carrying.

Although the Scouts were up to a point well able to look after themselves there were many occasions when they worked in close co-operation with the army. It was, however, generally recognized that they gave of their best if allowed a reasonably free hand. Their superior mobility enabled them to move wide to a flank and secure lightly held positions ahead of the slow-moving regular column. They were, indeed, neither trained nor equipped to take part in an assault on a prepared defensive position. They had also contacts and sources of information which could provide up-to-the-minute intelligence to advanced guard and column commanders.

Lastly, there were the khassadars, who were levies with strictly localized duties, mainly for road protection, affording the political agent a basis for enforcing sectional responsibility; they also escorted him when he toured his area. They were by no means the figures of fun they were often made out to be—one of them was given the posthumous award of the George Cross—but as they were recruited, trained and administered entirely under tribal arrangements it was

* By Colonel H. R. C. Pettigrew—1965.

obviously impossible to count on their services if things were going badly. They were not above the well-worn device of creating trouble to prove their efficiency in dealing with it, and there is the story of Wana camp where the brigadier had complained that the khassadars seemed unable to prevent the camp being sniped at night. They pleaded shortage of ammunition and were given a box of a thousand rounds. That night the camp was treated to a remarkable firework display for what they had not been told was that the rounds were 'tracer'.

The picture that emerges, then, is that of a first fleeting insight into the problem of dealing with the Pathan, an insight all too soon to be obscured by the imposition of an administrative system that, because it had worked well elsewhere, was unthinkingly assumed to be the best for the frontier also. There followed an ostrich-like attitude of ignoring the trans-frontier tribes or, when they could be ignored no longer, of dealing with them through intermediaries who made more trouble than they ever settled—the close border policy at its most rigid.

In 1877 Lord Lytton came out as Viceroy with far-reaching plans for placing relations with Afghanistan on a more stable footing and it was probably the feeling that he must have the frontier districts under his direct control that inspired his plan for their separation from the Punjab. However, the Second Afghan War intervened and the project was dropped. There followed the gradual evolution of the forward policy, and the establishment of permanent posts across the administrative border either for strategic reasons or to secure what was hoped would be better control of the tribes. In the 1890s the Kurram, Wana, the Tochi, the Malakand and the Khaibar were all occupied by regular army garrisons and this encroachment, coupled with the demarcation of the new Durand Line, inevitably aroused the suspicions of the Pathan that slowly, slowly, corner by corner, the British designed to penetrate and take over his country. The forward policy was sharply checked and indeed reversed with the arrival of Lord Curzon as Viceroy in 1899. He had travelled extensively in Persia and Afghanistan and held strong views on India's foreign policy. Appreciating the extent to which the stability of the tribal areas affected the problem, he was not prepared to tolerate a situation whereby he was forced to deal with them through an intermediary, the Governor of the Punjab. In 1901 the new North-West Frontier Province under a Chief Commissioner was created. There is no trace in Curzon's dispatches that he

was influenced by any motives other than those arising from his pre-occupation in foreign affairs, but he built better than he knew for he gave the Pathan the feeling, after fifty years of playing second fiddle, that he was once again of first importance in the land in which he lived.

8 COMMANDERS AND TROOPS

A MODERN general sent to command at Peshawar and finding on his arrival a state of affairs such as existed there in 1853 would climb into his aircraft and fly back to see the War Office. Unfolding his tale of woe he would list his grievances in something like the following order. That, although he had a small hard core of British troops on whom he could rely, the only Indian troops directly under his command belonged to the Bengal Army of the East India Company, and they were in a state where their morale and loyalty were suspect. Trans-border raiding was endemic and there was no recognized dividing line between him and the civil authorities, who restricted his freedom of action at every turn and frequently interfered in matters of purely military concern. There was a body of troops calling itself the Punjab Irregular Force who were a private army belonging to the Punjab Government and not under his orders at all. They were newly raised, short of British officers, poorly armed and equipped and, as they were recruited from areas that had only just been brought under British rule, they could hardly be relied on in an emergency.

There were indeed grounds for complaint. In the opening stages of the Indian Mutiny every single regiment and battalion of the Bengal Army in the Peshawar district had to be summarily disarmed in May 1857, save only the 55th Regiment in Mardan who broke and fled to the hills before action could be taken to stop them. It was a moment of history. Cotton,* who was commanding the troops in Peshawar, was woken at midnight to find Edwardes and Nicholson standing by his bed. In the light of the warning they brought the decision was taken and the plan made. Six hours later, at 7 a.m. on 22 May, 'the affair was everywhere executed in the most dexterous manner. The infantry were marched away from their firelocks, which had been piled as if for some drill purpose, and when clear of them the European troops with loaded arms (who were concealed behind barracks and ready for action) rushed forth, seized the arms and conveyed them under sufficient escort to the arsenal.' Cotton concludes his account. 'Perhaps in no place in India did the disarming produce such beneficial results as on the Peshawar frontier, for it brought in the wavering inhabitants of the valley who had really, from the aspect of affairs, good reason to doubt our power to maintain our authority; and they had naturally hesitated

* Major-General Sir Sydney Cotton.

ere they espoused a cause which to all appearances would involve them in nothing short of ruin and destruction, in common with ourselves.'

He does not exaggerate. All credit goes to the Amir, Dost Mohammad, who restrained his subjects and stood by the terms of his treaty, and to the regiments of the Punjab Irregular Force who stood fast, and later fought magnificently at Delhi. The turning point, however, was the decision taken with level-headed courage by those three men. If four thousand troops of the Bengal Army had broken out of Peshawar with their arms and spread over the countryside the dam would have burst and there can be no saying how far the waters would have spread.

As the British frontier spread northwards during the first half of the century one very popular method of recruiting the new entry to meet the ever-increasing demands of the civil administration was to take officers on transfer from the army to the political. Such was the boredom of life in cantonments and so poor the pay that there was no lack of volunteers, and it was the men of action who came forward. The Paladins and those who were with them on the frontier in the last days of Sikh rule enjoyed untrammelled authority; they were accustomed and encouraged to act first and report afterwards. In the eyes of Henry Lawrence there was no greater failing than failure to act.

Henry Lumsden, of The Guides, and John Coke, who raised the 1st Punjab Infantry, were at one and the same time regimental commanders and deputy commissioners of the districts of Mardan and Kohat. But there were occasions in the early days when those who had severed their connection with the army found it hard to remember that they were no longer soldiers and Cotton, in Peshawar, found it very galling that men who were far junior to him in army rank could dictate to him what he must do with his troops, even when he fundamentally disagreed with their decisions.

In 1852 Mackeson, the Commissioner of Peshawar, accompanied a column under Brigadier Sir Colin Campbell, commanding in Peshawar, which went to punish the tribes on the Swat border for failure to pay their revenue. The operations were completely successful and the troops pursued the tribesmen to the foot of the Malakand. Mackeson then urged on the brigadier the desirability of following up his success by advancing over the pass into Swat to enforce upon the Akhund the responsibility for the disturbances created by his tribes in British territory. There was a sharp difference of opinion. Campbell

agreed to go on only if there was to be a time limit of three or four days on the operation; beyond that he was not prepared to take a small force into mountainous, thickly populated and unknown territory, and he said that he needed another three battalions, and proper transport arrangements. It is possible that his reluctance was justified but the Governor-General accepted Mackeson's view of the affair and cast reflections on Campbell's refusal to act. Campbell at once asked to be relieved of his command but fifteen years later returned to India as Commander-in-Chief.

The question of responsible, considered, military advice on frontier problems was a tricky one and the existence of a separate Frontier Force answerable to the Punjab Government and with its own headquarters in Abbottabad did little to solve it. The commander administered the force and in the early days it was his right to lead it into battle, but it was not transferred to the Commander-in-Chief until 1885, and as there were always regular army troops serving in the same general area, the lines of responsibility must frequently have crossed.

The first commander of the Punjab Irregular Force was Hodson. He was succeeded by Neville Chamberlain, who surely ranks among the Paladins. There were early signs that he was unlikely to tread the beaten track. As a child of five, when an attempt had been made to burgle his home in the country, and the watchdog poisoned, he was found the following night patrolling the garden alone in the dark. When he was fifteen he secured a cadetship at Woolwich but was removed after a year as unlikely to pass his exams. He came home under surveillance, for he was in a rebellious humour, threatening to join the Spanish Legion. With a commission in the Bengal Army he sailed for India when he was seventeen. He served through the Afghan War under the redoubtable Nott and was six times wounded. He fought in both Sikh Wars and rode as Gilbert's brigade major when they chased the Afghan cavalry to the mouth of the Khaibar. After a spell under Abbott in the Hazara, when he found office work little to his liking, he was appointed at the end of 1854 to command the Punjab Irregular Force. This was the cause of a quarrel with John Nicholson who became offended when Chamberlain failed to answer a letter of congratulation which in fact he had never received. The affair was made up and at the meeting at which they were reconciled Nicholson became so agitated during their mutual explanations that he took up an ivory paper-knife and bit it in two. He served at the siege of Delhi and

subsequently led three smaller frontier expeditions before commanding the successful campaign in 1860 which for the first time penetrated Mahsud territory. He also commanded at Ambela and, when leading in person the third and final assault on Crag Piquet, he was wounded for the ninth and last time.

He showed always a chivalrous regard for the welfare of those who served under him. In 1849 he refused an offer dear to his heart, command of one of the newly rising cavalry regiments in the Punjab Irregular Force, on account of the wholly insufficient pay offered to the men. After the Mahsud campaign the policy, though not the conduct of operations, came in for severe criticism from a member of the Governor-General's council with the result that the officers and men of the force received no awards for their gallantry and services. When, three years later, Chamberlain was created Knight Commander of the Bath he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief that 'he felt disgraced at being singled out'.

In 1862 he was offered command of a projected 'Indus Division' which was to comprise all troops west of the river, including those in Peshawar. He felt obliged to refuse owing to ill-health and a proposal that might have revolutionized the control of operations on the whole frontier seems to have been dropped for the want of a suitable commander.

The forerunners of the Punjab Irregular Force, though they did not originally belong to it, were the Corps of Guides. With a strength of ninety-eight all ranks cavalry and a hundred and ninety infantry they were raised in Peshawar immediately after the First Sikh War by Lieutenant Henry Lumsden, acting under the orders of Henry Lawrence. The Sikh Army had been far from successful in its dealings with the trans-border tribes, due as much as anything to bad intelligence and to failure to understand the nature of their task, and the role of the new corps, as its name implied, was to be the eyes and ears of the regular army. Lumsden wrote to his father: 'It will be the finest appointment in the country, being the right hand of the army and the left of the political. I am to have the making of this new regiment all to myself. The arming and dressing is to be according to my own fancy. I consider it as good as a majority and C.B.-ship to any man in the first campaign he may get into.'

The Guides were the first corps ever to wear khaki, but if they were unconventional in some ways there was nothing irregular about their

discipline. By the kindness of Colonel Bradshaw, of the 60th Royal Rifles, a number of chosen men from the Guides were thoroughly drilled by the 60th on their own parade ground, and it was to these exercises that Lumsden attributed the special steadiness of the Guide Infantry on parade. In their early days, and around Mardan, which became their regimental headquarters, they undoubtedly fulfilled the role for which they were raised, but Lumsden was never one to report back for orders and when in 1849 the strength of the Guides was tripled there can have been few situations he was not happy to tackle with his own resources.

They were later merged into the Punjab Irregular Force which was raised in May 1849 with a strength of five cavalry regiments, five infantry battalions and three mountain batteries. The inspiration again came from Henry Lawrence, partly to meet the extended need for watch and ward along the frontier which now stretched all the way south to Dera Ghazi Khan, and partly to find employment for the disbanded soldiery of the Sikh Army, and to absorb the levies that had been raised to fight the Sikhs west of the Indus. In 1851 there were added four battalions of Sikh infantry which had been raised in the southern Punjab in 1846; and in 1858 a battalion of Gurkhas, later the Fifth, which was raised in Abbottabad with drafts of Gurkhas from other battalions, chiefly from The Guides and 2nd Sikhs. In 1866 the title was changed to Punjab Frontier Force. After the P.F.F. headquarters were abolished in 1903 the words 'Frontier Force' were added to the regimental designations of those who had comprised the force. The Mahsud expedition in 1860 was fought entirely by Frontier Force regiments but after that in successive campaigns more troops were needed to compete with a better armed enemy and British and Indian infantry battalions were brought in from the Punjab.

Many of these Indian battalions had been raised in very much the same conditions as those of the Frontier Force. A whole new field of recruitment had been opened after the annexation of the Punjab and successively units of the Madras and Bengal Armies were reconstituted with men from the north. The new classes comprised Sikhs, Dogras, Jats, and Punjabi Mohammedans, who came mostly from north of Lahore. Another Gurkha regiment, the 6th, came to Abbottabad, and five others were raised and established themselves in the small hill stations at the northern end of the United Provinces. These are the battalions who carry the battle honours of the frontier in the campaigns

between 1863 and 1908. After 1920 the Kitchener reforms, which imposed universal service all over India on all battalions and regiments, wherever recruited, were in full operation and by 1939 it would have been hard to find a unit that had not served a tour of duty on the frontier.

As with the Guides, the raising and equipping of these new regiments was left entirely in the hands of the men to whom the task was given. 'The regiment was raised unshackled by a bank and unaided by government advance,' wrote Daly who raised the 1st Punjab Cavalry. Horses, transport animals, equipment, uniforms, were bought wherever a man could lay hands on them, and only in the vital matter of weapons was there serious difficulty. For the want of any other source most of them came in the first place from the Sikh Army. One battalion reported that most of their muskets would go off if brought smartly to the 'ready', and that at least as much flame escaped from the touch-hole as from the muzzle. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Charles Napier, before accompanying the column that marched from Peshawar to establish 1st Punjab Cavalry and 1st Punjab Infantry as the garrison of Kohat, inspected their weapons, and at once ordered that they should be re-equipped from East India Company stocks. Almost every one had some serious defect, and he remarked that it was lucky that so few would go off or they would have burst and wounded half the regiment.

By 1863 it had been possible to give the Brunswick rifle to about a quarter of each battalion. It was more like an elephant gun than a weapon for an infantryman. Sighted to under three hundred yards, at distances above four hundred yards the shooting was so wild as to be unrecorded. It was a thoroughly bad weapon. The loading of the rifle was very difficult, and the force required to ram down the ball so great as to render any man's hand unsteady for accurate shooting.

As improved weapons were invented and brought into service in England the re-equipment of the Indian Army always lagged far behind. The Snider (1857), the breech-loading conversion from the Enfield, reached them in 1875. The Martini-Henry (1871) with the falling breech-block, the first rifle to have an effective range up to eight hundred yards, became available in 1891; and they had to wait till 1901, after the Tirah campaign, for the first magazine rifle, the Lee-Metford, which had been in the hands of British infantry regiments in England since 1888.

The first problem confronting the officer raising a cavalry regiment

was to mount his men. It was easy enough to find horses but not so easy to find the money to pay for what he bought. Daly solved the problem by the simple method of making stoppages from the pay of his men, a less arbitrary matter than it would appear to be today, for it was no more than a variation of the yeomanry system. The profession of arms in the Indian Army was, then and to the very end, an honourable one, regiments had long waiting lists of recruits, and a man was willing to pay for the privilege of being accepted.

The Frontier Force cavalry regiments were organized, equipped and trained for prompt action against marauding tribesmen. They were mounted on horses used to negotiating difficult going, they were extremely mobile and their striking power was adequate for the tasks likely to confront them. Training over rough ground was essential, and they became very clever at moving at speed over rocky country that would have brought an untrained regiment to a standstill. The horses' feet also became tough and there was little lameness from hoof injuries.

Although the Bengal Lancer regiments were, as their name implies, armed with lances, the Punjab Cavalry regiments carried the sword. Pictures of the period suggest that the non-commissioned officer probably carried a lance with a pennon that served to rally his men in action. The sword, up to 1920, was a cutting weapon for hand-to-hand combat, and until the tribesmen became armed with a better rifle that enabled him to sit back on his hills, a charge by even a small body of cavalry must have been a frightening affair to what was really only a collection of individuals, for the Pathan, however brave, lacked collective discipline.

There was an armoured car company of the Royal Tank Regiment in Peshawar as early as 1922 and a company was later included in the garrison of Razmak. They were used mainly for road protection. Light tanks did not make their appearance on the frontier until 1935 when a company was in action in the Mohmand operations. During the withdrawal of The Guides from pt 4080 they moved up to the foot of the main spur leading down from the ridge and were most effective in preventing the enemy from following up too closely. They were also used during the final withdrawal from Razmak in December 1947.

It was a pity that preconceived ideas as to the limitations imposed on their employment by the difficulties of the terrain prevented an earlier study of what might have been achieved. There were plenty of

wide open valleys where they could have been invaluable in situations similar to those mentioned above, or in speeding up the advance by securing covering positions for the vanguard. In particular the proper use of air photographs would have indicated the areas in which they could be used without risk of running up against obstacles that would have held them up.

The campaign in Nepal in 1814 and the First Afghan War had pointed the need for mountain artillery so that when the batteries of the Punjab Irregular Force were raised in 1851 there were establishments for them to work on. They had a mixed armament of three-pounder guns and 4½" howitzers. For carriage of guns and ammunition a battery had an establishment of a hundred to a hundred and fifty mules and elephants had also been found useful in hilly country.

In 1865 the seven-pounder rifled muzzle-loading gun came into service. It had a range of between two to three thousand yards and the complete equipment was carried on five mules. No increase in range could be looked for without lengthening the barrel to a point where it could no longer be carried on a mule. As a result of experiments in India there was evolved a gun in two pieces—the famous screw-gun. It was a muzzle-loader and fired the same weight of shell and came into service in 1878. It had a range of four thousand yards but in Kipling's well-known poem the gunner is quoted as saying 'we fancies ourselves at two thousand', and as Kipling generally took the trouble to check his facts it is likely that that figure represented the most effective range. The first breech-loader, the 2.75-inch gun, firing a ten-pounder shell to a range of six thousand yards, came into service in 1901 and was followed just before the First World War by another ten-pounder with a slightly shorter range, but having a smokeless cartridge. It was the first gun to have a recoil mechanism and to fire shells, high explosive and shrapnel with modern fuses. Finally in 1920 came the 3.7-inch howitzer firing an eighteen-pound shell with great accuracy up to six thousand yards, though one battery out of four in each brigade retained the 2.75-inch gun.

Mountain artillery always carried common or high explosive shell, shrapnel and a few star shell. The killing effect of light common shell bursting among the rocks of the typical frontier hilltop cannot have been very great, and a high proportion of the rounds carried were shrapnel. Despite the primitive device for timing the burst, the early shrapnel was extremely accurate and this type of fire was justly feared

by the tribesman. It was a most effective and immediate form of support for the infantry piquet or rearguard caught on the wrong foot by a sudden rush.

The screw-gun's well-earned reputation for being able to come into action with 'one wheel on the Horns of the Morning and one on the edge of the Pit' came from the sheer hard necessity for a weapon of limited range and flat trajectory to move well forward and, with only visual communication between gun and observation post, to find a position within voice control of the officer who was directing fire from a point where he could see his target.

Although they were at all times separate and distinct corps it is convenient to consider together the sappers and miners and the pioneer battalions. The Bengal, Madras and Bombay Sappers and Miners had their origins towards the end of the eighteenth century, and representative detachments of both Bengal and Bombay Sappers went with the army to Kabul in 1839. They were engaged in the demolition of the Kabul gate at Ghazni, and to commemorate the occasion the Bengal Sappers erected on their parade ground at Roorkee a replica of one of the towers built by Mamhud of Ghazni outside the city along the road to Kabul. There are also records of sapper companies in the order of battle of frontier expeditions as early as 1849, when there was a Bombay company stationed in Peshawar.

Sappers did not form part of the original P.I.F., but at the time it was being raised the Punjab Government had taken in hand, in the south-west corner of the province, the reformation of certain low-caste tribes by setting them to work on roads and canals. These tribes were the Mazhabis who had been admitted to the fringes of Sikhism, but never granted full status. The P.I.F., finding the need for engineers, and with no regular troops available in the south along the borders of Waziristan, had formed from them companies of Punjab Engineers. In 1857 their numbers were increased and although unarmed and untrained they served with distinction at the siege of Delhi. Subsequently a number of pioneer battalions were raised. Much of the engineer work on frontier expeditions, such as roadmaking and the construction of defences, was no more than semi-skilled work and, rather than use skilled sappers to supervise unskilled labour, it was found in every way better to use the pioneer. He was also an infantryman trained to find his own local protection, to take his place in the defence of the perimeter camp and, on occasion, save the day by fighting with great

determination when those more highly skilled than he had wavered.

With the advent of the pioneer battalions the sappers were free to undertake the more specialized tasks—the alignment of roads, bridging, skilled demolitions, and water supply. From about 1900 a sapper company formed part of every frontier brigade and there were many who thought it one of the best junior commands in the army. In this arm of the service above all others was to be seen at its height the characteristic genius of the Indian Army for making bricks without straw.

In the same way that the Royal Corps of Signals grew from the foundations laid by the Royal Engineers it was the sapper and miner companies who led the way in signalling in India. As early as 1869 the Bengal Sappers built a telegraph line from Rawalpindi to Kohat, and in 1876 they were manufacturing Bell telephones in their workshops at Roorkee. The correspondent of *The Times* reported General Stewart's battle at Ahmed Khel by telephone to a sapper heliograph station from which it went to cable head, and then via the lines of the Indian Telegraph Department to Eastern Telegraphs. The report appeared in the London edition the following morning.

The Roorkee workshops also perfected and manufactured the heliograph which became standard equipment throughout the British Army. Dependent though it was on the sun the heliograph in trained hands was a most effective piece of equipment. It was quick to establish, had a long range, and was not liable to enemy interruption. It was in constant use for the tactical control of operations. Telephone and telegraph lines suffered from the obvious disadvantages that they were liable to cutting and damage by the tribesmen through whose territory they ran. It was not until the 1930s that a reliable W/T set became available and even then wireless was liable to interruption by intervening hills or by atmospheric.

It was from the very early days accepted that regiments must have their own first line transport for the carriage of ammunition, tools, rations and water, and baggage. On the other hand as late as the Tirah campaign in 1897 all transport up to regimental headquarters was found by hiring or purchase. As soon as an expedition or campaign of any size was decided on a posse of hastily appointed transport officers would fan out over the Punjab buying up almost anything with four legs that would carry a load. As a force had to carry pretty well all its rations and other requirements with it the numbers of animals needed

was very large—for example, in the withdrawal from the Tirah one division alone was accompanied by over eight thousand animals. The tactical problems involved are discussed in the next chapter but the administrative disadvantages were clearly very great. There was great wastage from lameness and sore backs, and there was on occasion serious trouble from the undisciplined drivers, unwillingly recruited into service with their animals. It is small wonder that, crawling at snail's pace along the bottom of the valley, or huddled together waiting for their turn to pass a defile, they were an easy target for the sniper, and there were occasions when they failed to stand the strain.

The enormous losses in the Second Afghan War—sixty thousand camels alone—caused the Government to consider the formation of a transport branch and in 1883 one was eventually formed, but nothing effective was done until after the lessons learnt in the Tirah in 1897. The Supply and Transport Corps came into being in 1901 and various animal transport units were raised to meet the needs of the different formations. The first M.T. units, Ford Van companies, were in service in Waziristan in 1919. The designation Indian Army Service Corps came in 1923.

9 TACTICS

THE three factors that shape all tactics are the nature of the ground, the character of the enemy and the weapons available. In frontier warfare undoubtedly the dominating feature was the hills for there were few open spaces that were not within effective rifle range of high ground. It was not so much the height of the hills that mattered as the fact that they were usually steep, with a surface that varied from loose stones to enormous boulders; they might be bare, or covered with straggling bushes, thick scrub or ilex forest. Movement was never easy and might be halted altogether by knife-edged ridges, towering cliffs, or short precipices at which even a mountain goat might check and falter. The lie of the land was irregular and it was generally possible to pass from one valley to the next only at some recognized kotal or pass. The whole terrain was seamed with small rifts and crevices, and from the valley below, where plans were made, it called for a practised eye to determine which features must be crowned, and to choose the path the piqueting troops must take.

The Pathan could cover the most difficult hillside at top speed and on his home ground knew every yard of the way. Carrying only a rifle, a knife, and perhaps fifty rounds of ammunition, he was virtually tireless, as fresh at the end of a long day as when it started. Brought up in the shadow of the family blood feud, where his life and the prospect of discharging his obligations to his enemy depended on a highly developed sense of caution and cunning, he was a natural tactician, with a keen eye for a fleeting chance. His idea of an even battle was when the odds were at five to one or better in his favour. He could be very patient, and generally had plenty of opportunity to reconnoitre the scene of action before he committed himself to battle.

In the knowledge that once the effect of surprise had worn off he stood no chance against the superior fire-power and discipline of regular troops, he was content with small profits and quick returns. Half a dozen casualties, crudely mutilated, the same number of rifles, and a few hundred rounds of ammunition, would count as a rich prize.

The tribesman was by civilized standards reckless of human life, but he lacked collective discipline and would not stand against a determined charge, particularly if made by cavalry. The three things he really disliked were having an enemy on high ground above him, having his line of retreat threatened, and artillery fire which, as he had no guns of

his own, he always thought to be slightly unfair: attack by aircraft was held to be even more unsporting.

The Pathan's weapon was his rifle, his trusted friend and companion. Light automatics were too expensive in precious ammunition to be a practical proposition. It speaks volumes for the improvement in the quality of the weapon, and the enormous increase in the numbers in tribal hands that, in spite of the array of modern armaments deployed against them, in 1937 it took months longer to bring a recalcitrant tribe to terms than it had done ninety years earlier.

The original Pathan firearm was the jezail, a flintlock weapon with a rude stock fired from a two-pronged rest. The barrel might be six feet long and the range eight hundred yards. It gave way quite early to something more handy and at Ambela in 1863 the Indian battalions were complaining that their Brunswick rifle, sighted to only two hundred and fifty yards, was outranged by the tribesmen's Kohat-made weapon. Within the limits imposed by inferior steel the Pathan is a skilful craftsman who can copy faithfully even if he cannot invent, and the Adam Khel Afridis in the Kohat Pass were the armourers of the frontier, though there were many other sources of supply. Most prized of all was the service rifle stolen from a regiment, probably in a down country cantonment where the standards of alertness and suspicion among sentries were lower than in the north. There was a constant traffic across the Afghan frontier, and there was gunrunning on a large scale from the Persian Gulf, mostly of rifles thrown out by continental armies in the process of re-equipment. The traffic grew to such formidable proportions that the Royal Navy had to be called in to stamp it out. In 1895 the Chitral relief column were opposed by an enemy as well armed as themselves and they captured a letter from an enterprising Scottish firm in Bombay offering Umra Khan a wide range of arms and ammunition.

The real threat, however, was the tremendous increase in numbers. In 1902 there were estimated to be something over two thousand rifles in Waziristan; by 1921 there were twenty thousand. There was naturally over the years some modification in tribal tactics. The Pathan's early firearms were so inefficient that they were used only to give some sort of covering fire at short range to support an attack made by swordsmen. The changes resulting from improved fire-power probably began about 1890, when long-range sniping at columns, camps and British officers became a regular feature, and although the

final rush would be made by men armed with knives the real shock action came from a heavy burst of covering fire before the attack went in.

Man to man, the regular army started with the complementary disadvantage that the soldier was much less mobile than his enemy: the difference was less when the troops were themselves hillmen, Pathans or Gurkhas, and more marked when they came from the plains and were in the first months of a term of duty on the frontier. The army's assets were superior fire-power and discipline but they were assets only if the standard of training of the individual soldier was so high that he could carry on fighting during those critical moments when he was outnumbered and caught at a tactical disadvantage.

An even greater brake on the mobility of regular troops was the length of the administrative tail which imposed a collective handicap, for it slowed down almost every stage of operations. All loads were perforce carried on pack and the pack animal was extravagant in space and its own demands for forage; baggage, tools, stores, ammunition and rations, mules were needed for everything; and more mules or camels to carry rations for the mules. The deeper the advance into tribal territory the longer the accompanying column, every yard of which had to be protected throughout the twenty-four hours.

It was a far cry from the time when Commissioner Mackeson used to take the field in personal command of a punitive expedition to what later became the accepted practice whereby when hostilities began political authority was vested in the military commander, with the political officer responsible for the area acting as his adviser. But for all that, political considerations intruded on military plans to a far greater extent than in other forms of warfare.

Frontier expeditions were almost without exception undertaken to punish tribes who had wantonly attacked, with consequent loss of life, either the army or civil armed forces, or the inhabitants of the settled districts who looked to the government to protect them. The Pathan's own code was quite simple: a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—it was the language he understood. No expedition was likely to achieve its object without inflicting some casualties—and there came the rub. How many? The tribesman, though he might reluctantly accept it, did not like being killed, and after quite trifling losses was likely to go through the motions of repenting. The point then to be

decided was whether the casualties inflicted were severe enough to discourage the hotheads who were in the van of the battle, and to discredit the mullas who were behind it. Did repentance spell peace, or would there just be a pause before operations had to be resumed, a few months or even weeks later?

There was the further point that the Pathan, though not a fully-fledged British subject in the legal sense of the term, lived within the territorial boundaries of India, therefore the long-term policy must be by peaceful methods to civilize him to the point where frontier expeditions would be things of the unhappy past. This policy provided a valid reason against unnecessary harshness. As far as the political officer was concerned the enemy of the day were his charges of the morrow, with whom he must resume normal friendly relations. There could be no doubt then as to the general tenor of the advice he would give the force commander and, by and large, the political point of view prevailed. It is hard over the years to find even half a dozen occasions where the army acted more harshly than was necessary; and it is equally easy to find examples of operations being prematurely called off at the prompting of an over-tender political conscience.

The fact that a political officer accompanied every column was at best a mixed blessing and, less charitably, a necessary evil, since it entailed the presence in camp of a cluster of maliks, spies, and agents, with the consequent difficulty of concealing plans from these doubtful characters, many of whom had a foot in both camps.

A further factor that militated against surprise was the fact that military operations were always the last resort, undertaken when all variations of political pressure had failed. The offending sections of the tribe knew therefore almost to the day when the blow would fall and whence it would come.

Conversely the army found it hard to collect reliable information. It is axiomatic to good 'intelligence' that all reports must be cross-checked; and the more doubtful the source the greater the need for verification. In frontier warfare the usual channels—prisoners, signal traffic, deserters—were not available, and the intelligence officer had to rely largely on political sources which, viewed objectively, were suspect—someone, somewhere along the line had an axe to grind, and only too often important information never came in at all. Nor was there generally access to the actual source; what was supplied was the political officer's version—and he was sometimes parochial in his

outlook. On several occasions troops found themselves fighting very much at a disadvantage because the commander had accepted political intelligence which, though given in all good faith, proved to be completely misleading.

It was extremely difficult to establish alternative independent sources of information. Tribal society was small and close-knit, and a stranger was immediately suspect unless he could furnish some reason for his presence. A start was made in 1906, with the raising of the Frontier Intelligence Corps, to train a small body of independent observers, but no effective step was taken to bring all available sources under one single control until 1933 when a central bureau was established in Peshawar. At that time there were six different intelligence agencies in the North-West Frontier Province reporting to five different masters. The bureau was at first on trial, but, thanks to the unfailing support of the Governor it was made permanent two years later. It perhaps never had time to establish a reputation to the point where its reports would almost automatically have received the attention that their accuracy warranted. On at least three occasions—the battle at pt 4080 in September 1935 (Chapter 14); the Khaisora Valley, November 1936; and the Shahur Tangi ambush, April 1937 (Chapter 21)—full warning of enemy strengths and intentions was given, and disregarded, on each occasion at great cost to the troops involved.

The Pathan, then, enjoyed the inestimable advantage of being able to give or refuse battle and, when he chose to fight, to do so at a time and place of his own choosing. And it was generally far harder for the army than for the tribesmen to achieve surprise; so hard, indeed, that sometimes the attempt was not even made.

It followed that when regular troops were located in tribal territory, in war or peace, there were rules that they broke only at their peril. The first was that they must always assume that they might be ambushed at the next corner; the second that every detachment must be strong enough to look after itself until help could reach it; and when on the move, if it was not covered by outside support, it must always have a foot down, or be moving in two parts so that one was able to cover the other in case of sudden attack. To take these necessary precautions there evolved certain set forms of tactical manœuvre which merit some explanation as their full significance might otherwise be lost.

In conventional warfare, where army fights army, the attacker seeks to drive or manœuvre his enemy from ground of tactical importance,

and is left in possession of the 'battlefield'; then, except for the forward troops in contact, the rest can go about their business reasonably secure from interference. In frontier warfare there was no enemy army, the enemy was the whole population. A column advanced through a stretch of tribal territory like police forcing their way through a mob; the crowd closed in behind them. The enemy was always there, and there was immunity from attack only in areas protected by piquets established on the high ground.

A brigade column advancing might have five miles of transport to look after. There were alternative methods of allotting troops for protective duties, but, broadly speaking, the procedure was that a small advanced guard—consisting perhaps of two rifle companies, a troop of mountain artillery, some machine-guns, and a sapper reconnaissance party—under one of the battalion commanders, would move ahead, occupying the lower slopes on either side of the road. Then, from successive positions, it would send up piquets to both flanks to deny to the enemy all ground from which effective rifle fire might be opened on the main body of the column, and to guard all covered approaches, such as ravines or areas of scrub giving access to the route. In broken and difficult country a battalion might not be able to piquet more than a mile of route; in wider, more open valleys it might look after three or four times that distance. The advanced guard, with its supporting weapons in action, had to remain halted until piquets signalled back that they were safely established. If the enemy decided to oppose the advance, ordinarily piqueting would cease and a properly co-ordinated attack would be made under a brigade plan.

Whatever the cares and responsibilities of the advanced guard commander it was likely that the brunt of the day's work would fall on the rearguard. It was the rearguard commander's responsibility to withdraw piquets put out during the advance. His first care was to ensure that none was missed out and left up in position, his second to get them down in the right order ensuring that they were not withdrawn until the rear party was clear of the stretch of road they were established to protect. The tribesman could be counted on to do his best to turn what should have been an orderly and co-ordinated withdrawal into a running fight, which would be all to his advantage. It was in these withdrawals that the clearance of casualties was the most critical factor. The Pathan tribesman was not a signatory of the Geneva Convention and it had to be accepted that atrocities were likely to be perpetrated

on any wounded, at any rate British and Hindu wounded, who fell into his hands. A casualty was the loss to the troops withdrawing not only of the man wounded but also of those required to get him safely down the hill. The whole timing of a rearguard action could be checked and thrown out of gear if wounded had to be got away. Fortunately almost all wounds were gunshot wounds and an army surgeon, writing in 1899, stressed that medical care had to be related to tactical considerations. 'It is impracticable to find a medical officer with all the resources of a London hospital at the heels of every small party of soldiers spread out over many miles of rugged, ravine-divided, precipitous mountains. Medical care in war is a compromise and I hold that a man wounded on a hill side is lucky and has received the best ambulance attention if he is saved from the enemy's hands by being removed alive to a place of safety even if it be at some discomfort and without dressing his wounds.' For the latter, the most he considered to be immediately necessary was the application of 'the pad of tow carried by every man'.*

At the day's end the camp site to be occupied had to be protected by two quite separate defensive systems. Apart from sniping, which filled in the time agreeably for an hour or so after his evening meal, the Pathan did not generally favour night operations, but there were several occasions—the first in south Waziristan in 1860—when camps were attacked during the hours of darkness by very large bodies of tribesmen who swept through the sleeping troops cutting down anything, man or animal, that rose in their path. That these occasions were not more numerous is due to the fact that a standard form of protection, the perimeter camp, was invariably adopted. Around the whole perimeter of the camp a low ditch and wall was built and, on the alarm sounding, occupied by the infantry who were disposed along the outside of the actual camp space. Inside them was crowded everybody else and, as an infantry battalion could not be expected to cover more than three to four hundred yards of perimeter crowded was a fitting word. The result was of course a perfect target for the sniper who could hardly fail to hit something if he was allowed to shoot from short range. It followed that there had to be an outer ring of piquets to deny to the enemy ground from which snipers could effectively threaten the peace and security of the camp. Camp piquets were generally about a platoon

* Journal of the United Service Institution (India) 1899.

strong and, apart from establishing them with ammunition, rations, water and bedding, they also had to be protected by a stone sangar, at least breast high, and preferably surrounded by a light trip wire outside bombing distance. All work on the camp and its defences had to be complete and troops withdrawn behind their defences before night fell. Time was thus a factor that the column commander had to keep constantly under review and if, because of delays along the way, it looked as though he might be late in reaching the site projected for his camp, the decision to halt and get settled in for the night had to be taken with an ample margin of daylight to complete all that had to be done. Under favourable conditions and with no opposition a column consisting of a brigade of all arms could not hope to cover more than eight miles in a day.

So long as a force remained inside tribal territory these protective measures had to continue: piquets established for the opening of the line of communications, the garrison of camp piquets rationed or relieved. Topography being what it was there was not a great deal of choice as to which height had to be piqueted for the protection of road or camp, nor as to the path to be taken to reach it, but the invisible eyes were always on the watch. For days or weeks on end there would be no sign of an enemy, but unless there was some element of change—timing, route, strength, covering fire—the morning would come when there would be a sudden, ugly rush on a small party caught off their guard and unsupported in a fold of the ground—with the inevitable unfortunate consequences. No battalion, however good or famous, could afford to rest on its laurels and be careless, and when a unit was newly arrived in relief its every movement would be watched with hawk-eyed expectancy. Nor was the danger absent in the so-called days of peace for there was always the risk that out of a clear blue sky some stray malcontent would lay an ambush that would penalize the careless repetition of the daily round.

In the accounts that follow of frontier expeditions it may seem that the army grew over-cautious, its tactics too stereotyped; there were certainly factors that contributed to such a state of affairs. Due to regular reliefs there were always new units whose standard of training on arrival fell short of what it should have been, with a consequent lack of confidence and over-obsession with the ritual of protective duties. And to that must be added the restraining hand of the political, who regarded with disfavour the original or the unexpected manœuvre that

might have unexpected repercussions. And the pity of it was that the Pathan, that past master of the art of surprise, disliked nothing so much as a dose of his own medicine.

There was one form of tactical activity that achieved that end and it was so successful when it was used that it is surprising that it was not resorted to more often: night operations. However vigilant and aggressive by day the tribesman was inclined to relax by night, and in the dark his lack of cohesion and organization placed him at a disadvantage against the discipline of well-trained troops. These operations did not imply the movement of a complete force but action by compact bodies of fighting troops to secure a well-defined object. There was no need for dispersing troops in small protective detachments, and a night operation could be of great value to make an assault which, if carried out by day, might result in heavy casualties. A night operation could also secure important tactical localities from which a further advance could be made at dawn. Examples that come to mind are General Skeen's capture in 1919 of the heights astride the Ahnai Tangi which had three times resisted a day advance; the advance by Bannu Brigade to the Sham Plain in 1937; and the capture of the Nahakki Pass in 1935 when three brigades were on the move at once. But night operations were not necessarily confined to the advance; in 1920 the early stages of the withdrawal after the destruction of Makin were successfully carried out before daybreak. There was also scope for strong fighting patrols working to a limited plan to ambush enemy parties engaged in the sniping of camps or other mischief. This was successfully done in the Loe Agra and Mohmand operations in 1935, and by 2nd Gurkhas on road protection below Razmak in 1937.

The Royal Air Force contributed materially to the success of operations in Waziristan in 1919-20 but they earned little gratitude for all they had done. Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor, in his book *The Central Blue*,* makes some pungent comments on the state of affairs when he joined a squadron on the frontier in 1921. Air Force expenditure was shown as a sub-head of the Army in the Budget and when cuts were made in military expenditure the Indian Stores Department in London was instructed to place a complete embargo on all air stores and spare parts. He records that the engine of his antique Bristol Fighter disintegrated at two thousand feet over Waziristan, and

* Published by Cassell, 1956.

an overall survey showed that out of seventy-two aircraft on the strength of squadrons in India only seven were serviceable, of which some were so old and decrepit that they should have been struck off charge.

In 1922 Air Vice Marshal Sir John Salmond was sent to India charged with two responsibilities: 'to represent to the Viceroy and his senior military and political officers the possibility of effecting economies by the increased use of the Air Force, in co-operation with the army, for controlling territory' and to overhaul the existing organization and administration. He effected considerable improvements in the latter field but in the matter of a planned increase in the use of air forces progress was much slower.

The Air Ministry had in 1921 been given complete responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in Iraq, which it exercised through the medium of eight R.A.F. squadrons backed by a relatively small force on the ground. Much of the opposition to the extension of air control on the frontier stemmed from the conviction among senior army officers—for that is what it amounted to—that conditions in the two areas were so different that to hand over responsibility for watch and ward on the frontier to the Royal Air Force, lock, stock and barrel, was a risk that should not be taken. The crux of the matter seemed to be in defining the object of the exercise and the final impact of responsibility if things did not go according to plan. The object was to protect the settled districts from the depredations of tribesmen from across the administrative border. Air action was admirably suited to strike fast and strike deep to nip trouble in the bud; but there was not, as there had been between Sind and Baluchistan in the early days, a broad strip of neutral territory, and if air action failed trouble would very quickly have spilled over into administered territory, and it would have been the army who would have had to clear up the mess. In view of the high fighting value of the tribes and the specialized nature of frontier warfare they felt, with some justification, that they would do so more effectively under their own commanders.

It is hardly surprising that there was right up to the outbreak of war in 1939 much rivalry between the two services—a state of affairs that invariably results in both sides over-stating their case and being reluctant to see much merit in the arguments of the other. Punitive action by the R.A.F., which is described in more detail below, was eventually used on several occasions and was successful. It was much

hedged about with warnings and precautions to protect the innocent and to ensure that it fell only on the guilty, and it is possible that given greater freedom and rapidity of action more might have been achieved.

What was in effect direct retaliatory action could be taken by a pilot at any time if his aircraft had been fired on, or if tribesmen were actually attacking regular or irregular forces, but apart from such occasions all air action required the prior sanction of the Government of India. Preliminary warning notices were then dropped setting forth the nature of the offence, the terms to be complied with by a stated time, the exact tribal sections and areas to be attacked, and details regarding the removal of families and the method of submission. If these notices, which were printed on white paper, did not have the desired effect, final bombing notices on red paper were dropped at least twenty-four hours before air action began.

Air operations fell into three categories: air blockade, destructive action, and direct attack on tribesmen. The first two were exclusively the concern of the R.A.F. and intervention by the army was likely to confuse the issue except to the extent that the location of ordinary garrisons made blockade more effective. Air blockade was directed at the morale of the enemy. He and his wife and his ox and his ass and everything that was his were denied all access to house, grazing grounds, water, all the amenities of life. There were alternatives, the hospitality of neighbours to fall back on, but there was a limit to hospitality, and sooner or later the section under attack, goaded on by their womenfolk who felt the discomfort most acutely, would come to terms. The procedure generally was for a comparatively heavy attack on the opening day or two followed by lighter but relentless pressure, varying always the time and method of attack, so that the tribesman never felt secure, whether by day or by night, if he elected to return to his home ground. The absolute essence of blockade was that there must be no relief, however temporary, and it was particularly important to withstand the various political stratagems by which the tribesman would seek some fleeting relaxation of the pressure, a relief which would undo all the good that had been done.

It was found quite early on in the proceedings that the typical tribal house with enormously thick walls of hard-packed mud bricks was not easy to destroy; nothing but heavy bombs was of the least use, and the work of rebuilding was neither difficult nor expensive. It became the practice to reserve destructive air action for the punishment of

recalcitrant leaders or small tribal sections, particularly if these prided themselves on their remoteness, and heavy bombs were supplemented by incendiaries against stored grain and fodder.

Direct attack on tribesmen was most commonly made in support of operations by the army or the irregular forces and again, to make sure that neutral or friendly sections did not suffer, proscribed areas were defined in the immediate vicinity of land operations. Within those limits any tribesmen seen were liable to be attacked.

The object of the army co-operation pilot was the same on the frontier as in more conventional forms of warfare but the procedure differed. The conventional army has a recognizable layout of defensive localities, forming-up areas, headquarters, gun positions, transport movement, which gives the trained pilot some help in following the battle being fought below him. The tribesman had none of these things, his subfusc clothing matched perfectly with the greys and browns of the hillside, so it was essential for the army to tell the pilot where to start looking and what to attack.

In November 1936 an intensive period of combined training was carried out near Rawalpindi by 2nd Infantry Brigade and 3rd (Indian) Wing, R.A.F., commanded then by Wing-Commander Slessor, who wrote that some at least of the conclusions in their subsequent report might be recognized as bearing a close resemblance to the principles of land/air warfare which crystallized in the Desert fighting of 1942 and 1943. Prominent among them was the need for the Air Force Commander to be forward with the Force Commander where he could see for himself, think quickly, and if need be bring down the fire of his aircraft on his own responsibility. Other points included action by the army to identify their own positions and those of the enemy for the guidance of pilots, the availability of aircraft in the air on the 'cab-rank-system', and the improvement of signal communications which were then elementary and inefficient. Within a month both formations were taking part in operations in Waziristan and there were several occasions when ideas tried in training were put to the test in battle.

One quite novel idea was the use of aircraft for what may be described as high piqueting, that is to say for looking after localities wide to a flank that threatened the piquets established for the close protection of the column. This was done once when a close-support aircraft patrolled continuously over high ground overlooking the demolition of the Fakir of Ipi's village, and on another occasion to

speed up the advance of Razcol to Damdil when the route was flanked by very steep and difficult country.

Only once were aircraft called on to intervene in an emergency, when 2nd Infantry Brigade were hotly engaged during their withdrawal after destroying a village. During a period of three hours six aircraft were continuously in the air in pairs and were invaluable in thickening up artillery fire and staving off what might have been a minor disaster. They would have operated even more effectively if ground-to-air communication had been better. In moments of crisis it is unlikely that column headquarters know exactly what is happening and a direct call from the forward troops to the pilot in the air is the only answer. On this occasion experimental red flares were used but were not seen, probably owing to the considerable amount of shell smoke in the area at the time.

The R.A.F. also were invaluable in many forms of reconnaissance. The preparation of photographic mosaics of tribal areas in time of peace supplemented what was otherwise imperfect information available to political agents and at the same time familiarized the pilots with terrain over which they might one day have to fight. Tactical air photographs were of the greatest value when, as was often the case, ground reconnaissance was impossible, and if the picture of pt 4080 shown in this book had been in the hands of the officer commanding The Guides before and not after the battle on 30 September 1935 many valuable lives might have been saved.

IT was the Yusufzais who so continuously resisted the Sikhs, and it is hardly surprising that Lumsden led a punitive expedition against them in 1847, before the British assumed the responsibility for maintaining law and order. It is also significant that The Guides, the senior corps of the original Punjab Frontier Force, and the only one to have a permanent station, should have been raised and located at Mardan, where they were well placed to watch the exits from the Yusufzai hills, twenty-five miles to the north and stretching in an unbroken ring from west to east.

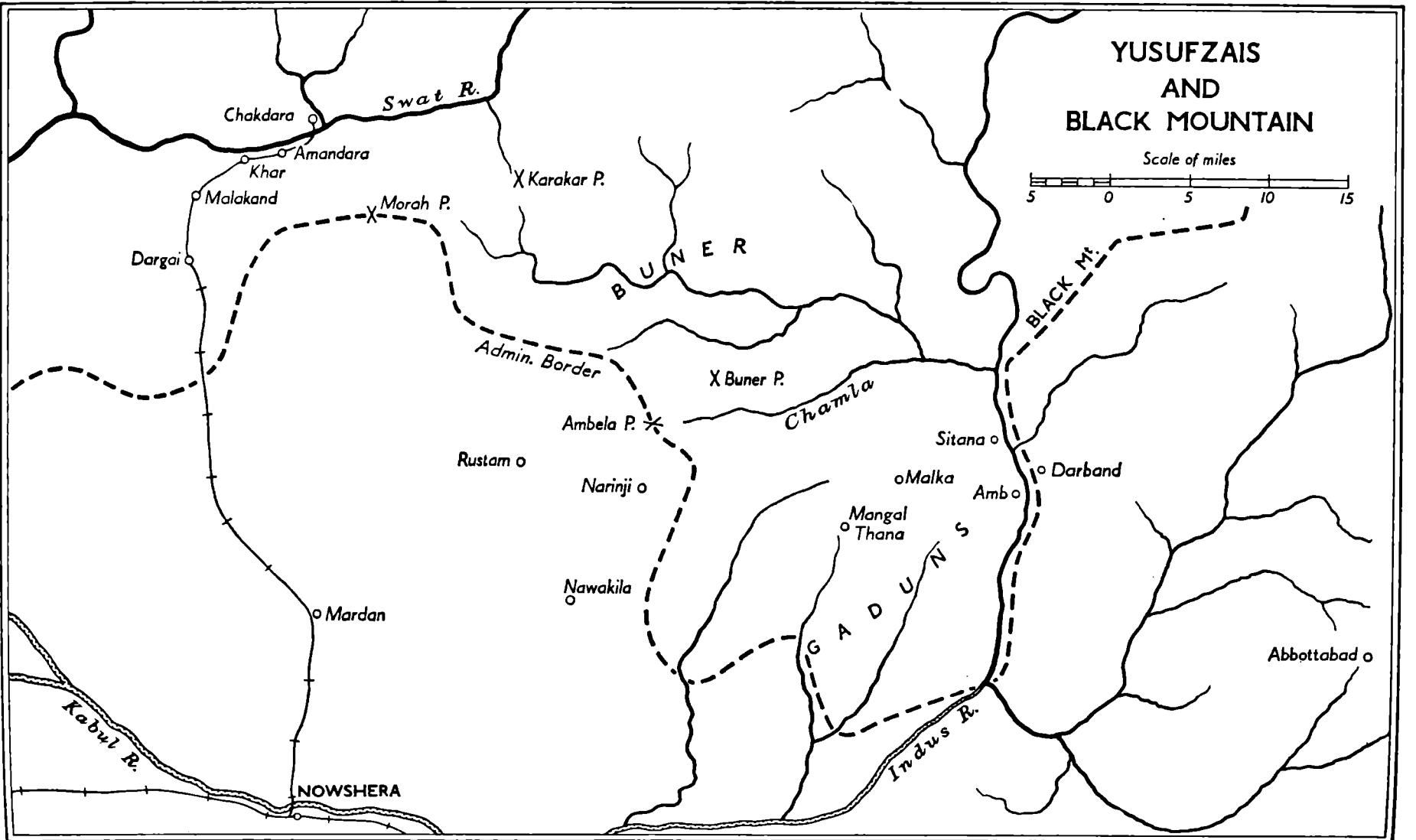
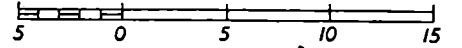
The Hassanzais of the Black Mountain first achieved notoriety in the autumn of 1851 by the gratuitous and cold-blooded murder of two customs officials who were reconnoitring a preventive line established shortly after annexation along the left bank of the Indus, to stop salt from tribal territory from being imported into the Punjab. As the crime was committed in Amb the Nawab was called to account and at once delivered up such Hassanzais as he could lay hands on. The tribe retaliated by laying waste his villages, seizing two of his forts, and inciting his subjects to rebel to the point where the British were bound to come to his rescue. The Hassanzais, if they deliberated the matter at all, may well have seen the whole affair as a trial of strength with the new power that had arrived on their borders: they were soon to be disillusioned.

Towards the middle of December a rather mixed force was concentrated on the southern border of their territory, the equivalent in modern terms of nearly two brigades of all arms. It consisted of two battalions of the Bengal Army, a battalion and a half of the Punjab Frontier Force, two battalions of Dogras from Kashmir state, a company of police, and one thousand levies—Abbott's friends the Mishwanis, whose standards of discipline and equipment were probably somewhat below the rest of the force. It cannot have been an easy army to command, and the responsibility was entrusted to a political officer, Colonel Mackeson, the Commissioner of Peshawar.

The Board of Directors ruled that troops were not to be employed on the mountain top so late in the year, but there is little evidence that anyone took much notice of the embargo. Scales of baggage and transport were still influenced by the standards that had been acceptable on the leisurely campaigns across the plains of India. The army had yet to learn that in the hills the loss of tactical mobility is a high price to pay

YUSUFZAIS AND BLACK MOUNTAIN

Scale of miles



MAP 4. Yusufzais and Black Mountain

© Major-General J. G. Elliott 1968

for creature comforts in the field. The expedition took an inordinate amount of transport and equipment with it, 'double-poled tents, *doolies*, *palkies*, and hundreds of camels' were passed through a most dangerous defile to reach the assembly area. The force met with considerable opposition, but their superiority in both rifle and artillery fire shook the enemy and, notwithstanding the cold and shortness of rations, the ability of the infantry to move freely over ground of great difficulty won the day. The destruction of a number of Hassanzai villages together with their grain and other stocks was held to be sufficient punishment, hostages were returned, and they were warned that if in future they sought to harbour offenders against the peace of the border the government would have no alternative but to hold the whole tribe responsible.

There were subsequently expeditions against the Black Mountain tribes in 1863, 1875, 1888, 1891 and 1892, after which they gave no real trouble. It is an imposing tally but in terms of size and significance of events elsewhere they merit no further attention. 'The tribes were not numerous, nor particularly warlike, and most of them miserably poor, but they, and the nest of fanatical hornets they sheltered, for long proved capable of inflicting an altogether disproportionate amount of annoyance.'

The tribes concerned in the events leading up to the battle of Ambela were the Mandanr living in the hills south of the Chamla river, which rises below the Ambela Pass and flows east to the Indus, and the Bunerwals who lived north of the Chamla up to the mountains bordering Swat. The Swatis, and men from the states of Dir and Bajaur, and the Utman Khel, joined only in the later stages of the fighting. The tribes south of the Chamla would not have figured so prominently in the early picture had they not acted as hosts to the Mujahidin, more generally known as the Hindustani Fanatics. Their founder, Sayed Ahmed Shah Brelwi, was a native of Rac Bareli in Oudh, and not by birth a Pathan. He had soldiered with the Pindaris, the freebooters who caused the British so much trouble in Central India, and when the Pindaris were dispersed made his way to Delhi, where his religious zeal and piety attracted a large following. His journey to Calcutta, *en route* for Mecca, was something of a triumphal progress. He halted at Patna, which was always a centre of nationalist activities opposed to British rule, and there achieved a great ascendancy over the minds of the

Mohammedans of Bengal; to the extent that there was later founded what in modern parlance would be called the Friends of the Hindustani Fanatics, a society of pious but politically conscious admirers who kept supplied with recruits and money the colony which Ahmed Shah later founded at Sitana, and which survived long after his death. After his pilgrimage to Mecca and subsequent wanderings he reached Peshawar in 1827 and attracted the patronage of Sayed Akbar Shah, a man of a well-known Yusufzai family who had led the tribes against the Sikhs at the battle of Nowshera. Ahmed Shah found the whole countryside smouldering with resentment at the defeats they had suffered and, with a nucleus of nearly a thousand of his own Hindustanis, raised a new army to fight the Sikhs. For two short months in 1830 he actually occupied Peshawar, but in the later stages of his meteoric career he became arrogant and high-handed and lost much of the support that he had attracted by his piety and zeal. He was killed in 1831 in a battle against the Sikhs. His Hindustani Fanatics settled at Sitana and were a thorn in the flesh of the British for many years to come.

The affairs of Swat do not properly belong to this chapter but a word must be said about the Akhund, who exerted a profound influence not only in the valley of Swat but over the whole Yusufzai border. He was born Abdul Ghafur, the son of parents of humble origin, and his boyhood passed tending his father's cattle, but it is related of him, even at that early age, that he was remarkable among his neighbours as a sober, thoughtful lad, with a predilection for a life of religious seclusion. At the age of eighteen he learnt to read and write and embarked on a life of unquestionable piety and devotion. He finally settled in Saidu, the present capital of Swat, and became the leading man among the people of the valley. Sayed Akbar Shah, the patron of Ahmed Shah, had also moved to Swat, where he died in May 1857 on the day that news of the Mutiny reached Peshawar. His son, Mubarik Shah, was not elected to succeed him and in a huff went off to raise the Chamla tribes. If the sobering influence of the Akhund had not restrained the Swat tribes from following his lead the balance of power on the whole frontier, which was most delicately poised, might have tilted against the British.

Of the half dozen or more religious leaders who dominated tribal affairs during the hundred years that Britain ruled the frontier he alone seems to have been inspired by genuine religious fervour, and it is perhaps no coincidence that, save in 1863 when his whole position was

at stake, he exercised a moderating influence on those who strove to make trouble along the border.

Apart from an ineffective attempt to intervene at the end of the Black Mountain expedition in 1853 the Hindustani Fanatics did not cause much trouble until 1857. Then, when The Guides left Mardan on their historic march to take part in the siege of Delhi, covering five hundred and sixty miles in twenty-seven days at the height of the hot weather, they were replaced by 55th Native Infantry. The news that this regiment was on the verge of mutiny reached Peshawar on 22 May and the following evening a column accompanied by John Nicholson was sent to deal with them. When he approached Mardan, over fifty miles away, at dawn on the 25th the mutineers broke and fled. The column pressed on in pursuit but they were far behind. Nicholson, taking a few mounted policemen with him, rode into the fugitives: 'all day long he pursued them and never rested until, having ridden over seventy miles, slain a hundred and twenty, taken a hundred and fifty prisoners and recovered two hundred and fifty stand of arms and the regimental colours, he was forced by night to draw rein, while those who had escaped him fled across the border into the hills of Swat.'*

On the advice of the Akhund the fugitives were refused asylum, conducted to the Indus and put across the river, and the majority of those who went this way perished during their attempt to return to India by way of Kashmir. A small number joined the Hindustani Fanatics at Mangal Thana and almost at once there began the series of outrages which culminated in the Ambela campaign six years later. Under the leadership of Maulvi Inayat Ali Khan an attempt was made in July 1857 to raise the standard of religious revolt at the village of Narinji, a well-known haunt of bad characters which prided itself on the fact that it had more than once resisted Sikh attempts to destroy it. The following month a small force attacked it and inflicted considerable loss, but the people would not give in. They refused to expel the Maulvi and, breathing fire and defiance, they made a raid into British territory and carried off some cattle. Reinforcements were sent from Peshawar and a strong column attacked and destroyed the village. The enemy dead included a number of men from the former 55th Native

* *The Life of John Nicholson*, H. Trotter—Murray 1897.

Infantry, while among the prisoners was a maulvi from Rae Bareli. The nest had been destroyed but not the hornets, and at the end of October the assistant commissioner, Lieutenant J. C. Horne, while encamped in British territory close to the tribal border was attacked by a large gang in which Fanatics and men from Narinji were prominent.

To punish this outrage a strong force of nearly five thousand men commanded by Major-General Sir Sydney Cotton, and accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel H. B. Edwardes, Commissioner of Peshawar, concentrated north of Swabi with the task of punishing the villages which had harboured the offenders and of penetrating to Mangal Thana and Sitana, the strongholds of the Fanatics. The operations lasted a fortnight and after severe fighting the object of the expedition was held to have been achieved. The villages had been destroyed, and the tribes concerned signed an undertaking to expel their unwelcome guests and at no time to allow them to return. The force returned to Nowshera and dispersed to its peace stations. Only the voice of the column commander, with the experience of ten years of tribal fighting behind him, was heard to express the view that the job had not been properly done. He was not listened to.

The Fanatics moved house only a few miles away to Malka and by 1861 were again active, raiding across the Indus into Hazara.

By the spring of 1863 they were moving freely wherever they pleased. The agreements given by the tribes had gone by the board, and when called to task they could give only evasive replies. It was decided that operations must be undertaken with the object of destroying, root and branch, the underlying cause of all the trouble. Whatever the urgency, the decision to employ military force on a large scale was left too late to allow reasonable time for preparations to be made for an autumn attack, and both the Commander-in-Chief, and Sir Neville Chamberlain, Commander of the Punjab Irregular Force, who was to command the expedition, were in favour of waiting till the spring. Their advice was rejected. An entirely new approach was planned. In the campaign in 1858 the tribal territory had been entered from the south-west and the enemy driven back along his line of retreat. It was now proposed to go in by the Ambela Pass and drive straight down the Chamla valley to the Indus, to the north of the Mahaban mountain, thus cutting off the enemy's lines to safety. A second force was to watch the left bank of the Indus and block the escape routes across the river.

To mislead the enemy into thinking that the former plan would be

repeated the force was assembled near Nawa Kilai, and to maintain secrecy as to the scope of the operations Chamberlain was ordered to defer joining his command until the last possible moment. He records in his diary some pungent comments on the shortcomings of his force, and the history of the Sappers and Miners remarks that so little account was taken of the engineering difficulties that might be encountered that only two weak companies of sappers were included in the original order of battle. On the political side the miscalculations were even greater and more serious. The proposed route down the Chamla valley was separated from Buner by the Guru mountain and, as the Bunerwals were known to be under the influence of the Akhund of Swat who had always counselled the expulsion of the Fanatics, it was decided in the interests of secrecy that they should not be informed until the column began to move up to the Ambela Pass. No attempt was made to seek the advice of the Sudhum maliks, in whose territory lay the approaches to Ambela and who belonged to the same Yusufzai clan as the people of Chamla.

The advance guard marched from Nawa Kalai after dark on 19 October, and only that afternoon was a proclamation sent by the Commissioner to the neighbouring tribes to announce that the force was entering the Chamla valley solely because it afforded the best route to Malka, and assuring them that there was no intention of injuring them or of interfering with their independence. But the cat was already out of the bag, released by other hands. Two days later there was found on the body of a battle casualty a letter written by the head of the Fanatics to the tribesmen of Buner. Point by point it exposed, refuted, and held to ridicule the proclamation sent out by the Commissioner. 'Immediately on receipt of this letter gird your waist and proceed to Chamla. If you delay, the evil-doing infidels will plunder and devastate the whole of Chamla, Buner and Swat, and annexe these countries to their dominions, and then our religion and worldly possessions will be entirely subverted. Consequently, keeping in consideration a regard for Islam, the dictates of faith and worldly affairs, you ought by no means to neglect the opportunity. The infidels are extremely deceitful and treacherous, and they will tempt the people with wealth, but if you give in to their deceit they will entirely ruin, torment, and put you to many indignities, appropriating to themselves your entire wealth and possessions, and injure your faith.' Striking, it will be observed, a very nice balance between God and Mammon.

The call had gone out 'and the tribesmen were collecting in thousands. It was the first time since Akbar's day that a serious incursion had been made into the mountains which screen the rich and lovely valleys of the Yusufzai Pathans. The Mughals had failed and been cut to pieces at Malandrai, only a few miles from Ambela; the Durrani and Sikhs had never dared to penetrate so far.'*

The advance guard consisting of 1st Punjab Infantry and 5th Gurkhas, supported by two mountain batteries, gained the head of the nala leading up to the pass at dawn on the twentieth without opposition, but when the next three battalions, The Guides and 5th and 20th Punjab Infantry, with a squadron each of Guides Cavalry and 11th Bengal Cavalry (Probyns) arrived, and the advance through the pass began, they at once ran into trouble and a complete battalion had to be put out on either flank to piquet the heights. The hills were steep, with enormous boulders, and in those days covered with a forest of pine. It was formidable ground for any but born hillmen, and it is on record that tribesmen approaching positions held by Pathans or Gurkhas would shout a mocking request to be allowed to deal with 'the goras or the lal pagris'—British infantry or Sikhs.

The approach up the nala is steep and tortuous, there is little or no space at the top fit for camping, and although there was water in plenty in the bed of the stream there was of course none on the hilltops where the troops were deployed. In the circumstances it would have been wiser to clear and consolidate a hold on the pass before bringing up more troops, but the rest of the force, consisting of two British battalions, 71st Highland Light Infantry and 101st Royal Bombay Fusiliers (Munsters), together with a British field battery, started from Rustam at the foot of the pass on the morning of the 22nd. A scene of intense military confusion resulted. The guns had been drawn forward as far as possible and were then transferred to elephants. The transport consisted of a medley of bullocks, ponies and mules, many of them unfit for their loads, and with raw undisciplined drivers. The leading battalions had taken their ammunition mules up with them, but when their baggage and ration animals tried to follow they were ordered back to make way for the transport of the British regiments, and the opposing streams met on what was quite literally a one-way track. The three leading Indian battalions were without food for the

* *The Pathans.*

first three days, and one officers' mess subsisted on a small sackful of atta (wheaten flour) filched from the rations of a single elephant, which had somehow reached the top.

On the 22nd also the cavalry, supported by 20th Punjab Infantry were ordered to reconnoitre forward. They reached a village seven miles down the Chamla valley, and with tribesmen pouring over the passes from Buner to the north they were lucky to succeed in fighting their way back to camp.

This marked the end of the first phase of the operations. For the next week there were heavy attacks on the piquets crowning the heights and the history of Vaughan's Rifles records how inferior were the rifles of their men to those possessed by the tribesmen. 'Most of the enemy were armed with a Kohat-made rifle, which made good shooting at 400 yards, while the regiment was armed with the Brunswick two-grooved rifle which could do nothing at all beyond 250 yards and was not even sighted to any greater distance.' Some of the troops still carried muskets which had been issued in the Peninsular War.

During a lull in the fighting the Bunerwals were invited to come down to remove their dead, and the opportunity was taken by the force commander and the commissioner to reason with them as to the folly of their ways; but they remained politely unimpressed. It was observed that they made little or no attempt to collect the bodies or care for the wounded of their allies, the Fanatics, regarding them as 'earthen vessels to be thrown at our heads on the day of battle, but of which it was quite superfluous to think of picking up the fragments'. One officer remarked that it was 'very wonderful to see how they seemed to invite death. They were insignificant-looking men, mostly from Bengal, with the physique of under-sized girls. Yet they did not hesitate to charge and meet Sikhs, their object being to die after doing all the injury they could to their enemies.'

There were rumours that the Bunerwals had appealed to the Akhund of Swat, and on the 29th it was reported that he had arrived on the scene. He was at the time seventy years old and, although he had no love for the Mujahidin, he perhaps decided that he could not afford to allow such a considerable part of his flock as the whole of the Bunerwals to fall under their influence. Whatever his reasons, his decision once taken he became a most implacable opponent, heaping anathemas on the Bunerwals until at last they realized the futility of the struggle and acceded to our demands. The Akhund had built for

himself a temporary mosque on the Guru mountain and, quite apart from the great moral effect of his presence, he brought in over the next few weeks large reinforcements from as far off as Dir and Bajaur.

It was now clear that the original object of the expedition must be abandoned for the time being for there was clearly no hope of reaching Malka with anything up to twenty-five thousand tribesmen of high fighting value harrying the line of communications. Sir Neville Chamberlain was in an awkward predicament, there was no railway north of Lahore and fresh troops from India could reach him only by march route. He pulled in any reinforcements he could lay his hands on from stations west of the Indus and decided to consolidate the position held, tactically and administratively, and to trust to the passage of time to cool the ardour of the tribesmen, whose great weakness was always the inability to maintain large forces in the field over long periods. For the next phase, lasting three weeks, the force was pinned to the ground and had to fight for its life. The key piquet on the right of the pass, Crag, was lost and won three times, and is still known as qatlgarh, the place of slaughter. In an attempt to rally his troops on one of these occasions Chamberlain himself was severely wounded—his ninth wound on service on the frontier. About 20 November the tide seemed to be turning, due partly to rather more positive measures put in hand for sowing discord among the tribes, partly to the heavy losses they had suffered. By 15 December the Bunerwals were quite ready to call it a day and accept the terms imposed, but they were overruled by the Akhund who had just received an unblooded reinforcement of six thousand men from Dir, only too anxious for an opportunity to realize their favourite dream of driving the British back across the Indus. Thus, although the Bunerwals held aloof, it was necessary to fight one last bloody battle on 16 December before finally dictating the terms of peace. There was then the choice of sending a strong brigade to Malka to destroy the place, or of compelling the Bunerwals to carry out the work themselves. The former would have meant a delay of at least a week to muster the necessary transport and would have given the Akhund the chance to rally the faint-hearted once again to the battle; the latter avoided this delay, and had the additional advantage that the Bunerwals would be committed, as well as the tribes who had in the past sheltered the Fanatics—a far better insurance that scattered survivors would not be permitted to return.

It was decided to send a small party of six British officers escorted by

The Guides and a body of levies under the Sudham Malik, Aziz Khan, to see that the task was well and truly carried out. Colonel J. M. Adye was in command, Major F. S. Roberts his senior staff officer, and Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor the political officer. They left on their delicate and dangerous mission on 19 December and at the entry into the Amazai territory found their way barred by a large army in full panoply of war, with standards and drums. However, after a long parley with the Buner maliks the force was allowed to pass, the Amazai headmen now accompanying the party. Malka was found to consist of several large buildings, a hall of audience for the Maulvi, barracks for the soldiers, stabling and a powder factory. The whole place was completely destroyed and burned by noon on 22 December. Then news came in that the Amazais had joined hands with the Mada Khels and that there was likely to be trouble at a difficult pass on the way home. Aziz Khan of Sudhum went ahead to reason with them, but when the column arrived and Colonel Taylor addressed the lashkar he met with sullen looks and a refusal to answer. There came to the rescue one Zaidulla Khan, a Buner malik, who stood forward with eyes flashing with indignation. Grasping his beard with his one remaining hand he said, 'I am answerable for these men, for their safe conduct, and for what they have done.' The scene was to be repeated more than once before the party safely reached Ambela. It illustrates alike the influence exerted by the Bunerwals over the smaller tribes to the south of them, and their characteristic, already remarked upon, of being men of their word. A subsidiary operation of the same nature to compel the Gadum tribe to destroy the village of Mandi, which had been a minor stronghold of the Fanatics, was carried out early in the New Year. British casualties in the Ambela campaign were 19 officers and 219 men killed, 48 and 632 wounded. The total losses of the enemy were estimated at three thousand.

The power of the Fanatics had been effectively broken. They remained in existence as a colony and continued their intrigues, but the tribes had learnt their lesson and the colony was continually being moved on and forced to pay heavily for the hospitality that was grudgingly given them. They took a minor part in the Black Mountain operations in 1888 and 1891, and continued to receive support from their friends in Patna, but they were never again a major cause of trouble.

But it was a long time before real peace descended on this part of the border, and a subsidiary operation into Buncer was undertaken in 1897

to punish the inhabitants for their share in the Malakand rising. For the quite numerous minor forays that occurred between 1864 and 1897 there was invariably one explanation to be found—intrigue among rival maliks or religious leaders, a factor that was very much aggravated whenever a particular individual sought to improve his own standing or undermine the influence of a rival with the British Government. Under the close border policy all dealings with the tribes living on the far side of it were conducted through middlemen who at a pinch could never resist the temptation to stir up trouble for their own personal advantage.

The classic example was that of Ajab Khan, who with his brother Aziz had rendered such signal service during the destruction of Malka. It became the practice that all negotiations affecting that area were conducted through him; but the day came when, imagining his influence to be on the wane, he provoked what was intended to be no more than a demonstration, for the suppression of which he would be given the credit. But the plan got out of hand, and the demonstration developed into a full-blooded raid resulting in much loss of life and property. The responsibility was brought home to him, he was tried and sentenced to death, and he was hanged in public outside the gaol at Peshawar.

Addressing his peers from the scaffold he gave this parting advice.

‘I brought the raiders down, intending to head them off at the border, and in this way demonstrate my power, and regain the favour of the government. I failed as I deserved to fail. That game is an old one, and my last word to you all is not to try to manufacture events which are in the hands of God.’★

His execution made a marked impression on the tribes, who never supposed that a man of his standing would meet the fate of a common criminal.

★ *The Pathans.*

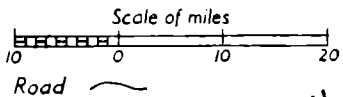
11 GILGIT AND CHITRAL

BETWEEN the northern boundaries of Dir, Swat and Kashmir and the international frontier of India there lay a sparsely populated rectangle, some two hundred miles from east to west and over a hundred and twenty-five miles in depth. In this great expanse of twenty-five thousand square miles there are only three places that really come into this story, Hunza and Nagir, which are so close together as to count as one, Gilgit and Chitral. The people of these states are not Pathans. The scattered villages are dwarfed into insignificance by the scenery against which they are set—towering peaks capped with perpetual snow, the valleys seamed with precipitous gorges and glaciers—and the only places of any importance are those located on the few routes that thread a precarious way along the larger valleys. This stretch of frontier ran for two hundred and fifty miles from the Kilik Pass, where the empires of China and India met, along the crest line of the Hindu Kush, south of the slender finger of the Wakhan, first due west and then south-west to the Dorah Pass, and from there south for sixty miles till it met the Kunar river at Arnawai.

The roads from Yarkand and Kashgar, in the province of Sinkiang, climbed over the Kilik and Mintake Passes to Hunza and Nagir. The snow and the glaciers presented in winter an insurmountable barrier to an invading force of any strength, though the Mintake Pass was used by the postal service to Kashgar whenever conditions allowed the journey to be made. From Hunza, which is eighty miles from the frontier, a good track ran south along the banks of the Hunza river into Gilgit. From Gilgit the road ran south again to Bunji, Astor and over the Burzil and Tragbal Passes, both closed in winter, to the Wular lake, forty miles north-west of Srinagar. It covered a total of three hundred and ninety miles to railhead at Rawalpindi. A shorter and easier route, with only one snow-bound pass, the Babusar, ran from Gilgit through Chilas down the Kaghan valley to Abbottabad.

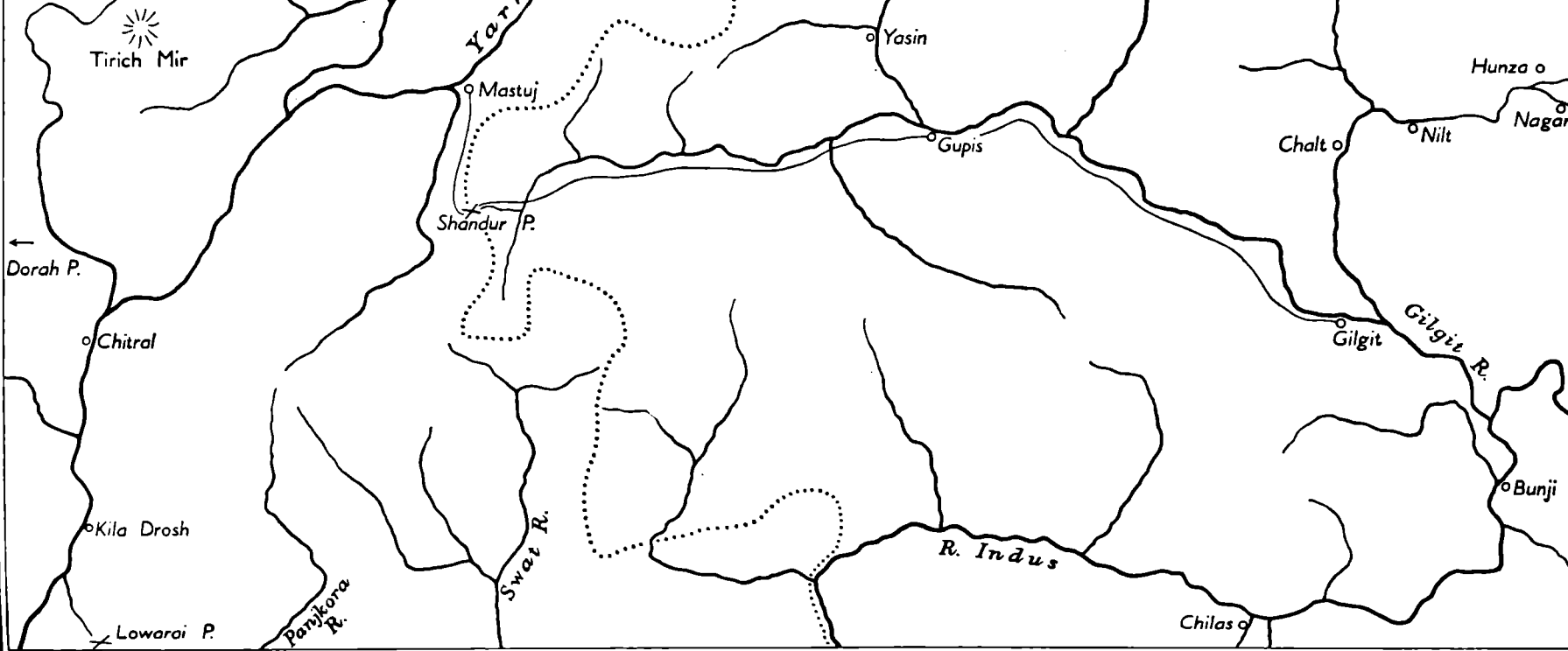
A road ran from Gilgit via Gupis to Chitral, a distance of two hundred and twenty miles. It crossed into the valley of the Yarkun river by the Shandur Pass, 12,250 feet. The Yarkun after entering Afghan territory at Arnawai became the Kunar and flowed into the Kabul river at Jelalabad. There was a road from the Wakhan into Chitral from the north over the Baroghil Pass, with a branch running down to Gupis. To the south, the road from Chitral to India crossed the Lowari Pass, 10,250 feet, and on through Dir and Swat to railhead at Dargai. There were several passes to the west of Chitral over the

THE NORTHERN FRONTIER



HINDUKUSH

Baroghil P. X. Kilik P. ↑



MAP 5. The Northern Frontier

© Major-General J. G. Elliott 1968

Hindu Kush into the Afghan provinces of Badakhshan and Kafiristan, of which the Dorah was generally open throughout the year.

Owing to the primitive nature of the communications and the sparsity of the population, who clung to the seclusion of their own valleys and generally were not on visiting terms with their neighbours, it is hardly surprising that information about this area, and particularly as to the existence or otherwise of practicable invasion routes from the north, was scanty in the extreme. As late as 1896 Colonel John Davidson commanding the troops in Chitral, was writing to the Adjutant-General to dispose of a story current in some quarters, that 'you could gallop a horse from the Baroghil down the Yarkun valley to Darband and Mastuj'. Himself a cavalryman and a matter-of-fact Scot, he set out for the source of the Yarkun later in October, of all times in the year to choose, to set the record straight. There are in his report details of tactical positions on which an advancing army might be halted, and notes of the availability of local supplies, grain, grazing and firewood, which read strangely in these airborne days, but they illuminate the way in which men's minds were working up to the turn of the century.

Apart from matters of purely military detail there was always the question of political influence. As will be seen, Umra Khan, operating from Dir and Bajaur, successfully interfered in the affairs of Chitral, and the reverse might equally have applied. An unfriendly or mischievous power established in Gilgit and Chitral would have been well placed to foment intrigues among the Yusufzais and Mohmands. Holdich sums it up in a sentence. 'It is just as dangerous an error to regard such approaches to India as negligible quantities in the military and political field of Indian defence, as to take a serious view of their practicability for purposes of invasion.'*

Up till 1877 the whole of this area was under the nominal suzerainty of the state of Kashmir which maintained a small garrison in Gilgit and held a number of outposts with levies armed with flintlocks. The Maharajah was answerable to the Governor of the Punjab. Responsibility was then transferred to the Foreign Department of the Government of India, which in 1876 had sent Captain Biddulph on a mission to Gilgit and Hunza. On the strength of his report they established

* *The Indian Borderland*, Sir Thomas Holdich—Methuen 1901.

him as agent in Gilgit where he remained till 1881, when the agency was closed. Five years later Simla once again seems to have had grounds for uneasiness as to what was going on in these snowy wastes and deputed Colonel Lockhart* to report how matters stood in Hunza, Nagir, Yasin and Chitral. Two years later there was even more serious cause for alarm as these feudatory states were in revolt against Kashmir. This time Captain Algernon Durand was dispatched to advise on what should be done. He recommended the reopening of the agency in Gilgit and the following year the Secretary of State sanctioned the proposal. At the same time a handful of British officers were attached to the Kashmir State Forces in an advisory capacity, and the success of their efforts in reorganizing and improving efficiency is witnessed by the part played by those troops in the operations against Hunza and Nagir in 1891, and in the relief of Chitral four years later.

The pocket-handkerchief states of Hunza and Nagir had a population of about ten thousand each and between them could put three and a half thousand troops in the field; men who for hardihood and achievements on the mountainside were famous even in the Hindu Kush. Marching to join the Chitral relief column in 1895 they covered a hundred and forty miles in four days. They had moreover some recent successes to their credit: in 1848 they had annihilated a Sikh army advancing from Gilgit; in 1860 they repelled an invasion by Kashmir troops; and in 1888 had seized the fort at Chalt, halfway down the road to Gilgit. Enjoying almost complete immunity from any attempt by their overlord to tax or otherwise oppress them the two rulers, the Thums, seem to have cherished a somewhat exalted idea of their own importance. Safdar Ali, the ruler of Hunza, claimed descent from Alexander the Great and, when asked why he did not visit India, is said to have replied 'It is not the custom for great kings like myself and my ancestor Alexander to leave their dominions'.

Had they been content to keep themselves to themselves they would have been left in peace, but this they were not prepared to do. Apart from allowing the Chinese to influence their affairs, they conducted a most lucrative business raiding the caravans from Yarkand, and made a handsome profit from a trade in slaves for whom there was always a demand in the markets of Turkestan. In 1889 a mission under Captain Durand visited them to point out that with the hand of civilization

* General Sir William Lockhart.

knocking at their door they must mend their ways, and to offer, provided they would sever relations with the Chinese, a reasonable subsidy to compensate them for abstaining from their medieval practices. The agreement made lasted less than two years. Raiding began again and they demanded a larger subsidy. Moreover Russia was at this time very active in the Pamirs and had sent small parties into both Hunza and Chitral. China, perhaps by tradition, was still the most respected power in the area, but Russia was overhauling her, while India, no doubt due to the vacillations of British policy, came a poor third.

In May 1891 the Hunza-Nagir Army, as a gesture of defiance, once again tried to seize the fort at Chalt, but Durand forestalled them by putting in a detachment of two hundred Kashmir infantrymen under a British officer. It was likely that as soon as winter closed the passes south to India they would renew hostilities, and Durand was lucky before the snow fell to receive a reinforcement of two mountain guns and two companies of 5th Gurkhas from Abbottabad. At the end of November he advanced from Gilgit to Chalt with a force consisting, in addition to the above, of three battalions of Kashmir State infantry, a battery of artillery, and two hundred Pathans who had been working on the road and had been formed into six companies of irregulars. An ultimatum was sent to the two rulers demanding that they should permit the construction of a road through their territories, but guaranteeing that there would otherwise be no interference with their internal affairs. Failing compliance, the troops at Chalt would advance to enforce these conditions.

A most uncompromising reply was received, couched in anything but diplomatic language. 'We will cut off your head, Colonel Durand, and then report you to the Government of India.'

The advance found its way barred at Nilt, twenty miles short of Hunza where there was a fort guarding a precipitous cliff at a point where a deep side valley entered the river on the opposite bank. The seven-pounder guns were quite unable to breach the immensely thick walls of the fort, so an assault was made by 5th Gurkhas under Lieutenant Boisragon to cover the demolition of the fort gate by the detachment of Sappers and Miners under Captain Aylmer. The attack was pressed with great dash under fire from the sangars above it, and both officers received the Victoria Cross. The road forward had been destroyed and it was three weeks before a path, steep and perilous in

the extreme, was found by which the attackers could climb to outflank the sangars that still blocked the way. The assault was made by Gurkhas and Dogras of the Kashmir State troops led by the assistant political officer, Captain Manners-Smith, who also won the Victoria Cross. Resistance now collapsed and the column advanced and occupied Hunza and Nagir. Safdar Ali, as the prime mover, could expect no leniency and he escaped to live as an unwelcome fugitive in Chinese territory, while his half-brother was installed to rule in his place.

The Russian foreign minister, on hearing the news, is credited with the remark, '*ils nous ont fermé la porte au nez*'.

The state of Chitral, which has an area of four and a half thousand square miles, extends along both banks of the Chitral or Yarkun river from its source in the glaciers at the foot of Baroghil Pass down to the watershed of the Arnawai river in the south. It is a rugged, mountainous country with barely enough cultivable land to support the population. The men are hardy mountaineers with great powers of endurance and when well led are good fighters. But their characters reveal a mass of contradictions. Sir George Robertson, who was political agent at the time of the siege, describes them as treacherous with a wonderful capacity for cold-blooded cruelty, yet with pleasant manners, light-hearted and invariably kind to children. 'No race is more untruthful, or has great powers of keeping a collective secret. They are revengeful and venal, but they are charmingly picturesque and admirable companions.'

The Maharajah of Kashmir and the Mehtar of Chitral seem to have been on reasonably good terms, and in 1874 the latter, suspecting that the Amir of Afghanistan had designs on his state, was seeking the protection of the Maharajah. He referred the matter to the Government of India, who looked so favourably on the idea that they granted a subsidy and a gift of rifles with the idea of strengthening Chitral against external intrigue.

On 30 August 1892 the Mehtar, Aman-ul-Mulk, died in open darbar. He was a masterful tyrant who had ruled his country for thirty years not only with a rod of iron but also with a very sharp sword, and he was in consequence universally feared and hated by his subjects. As his eldest son, Nizam-ul-Mulk, was absent from the capital at the time, the second son, Afzal-ul-Mulk, at once proclaimed himself Mehtar and, as a precaution, killed off three of his step-brothers and



A young Mahsud

Imperial War Museum



The Fakir of Ipi

Keystone Press Agency

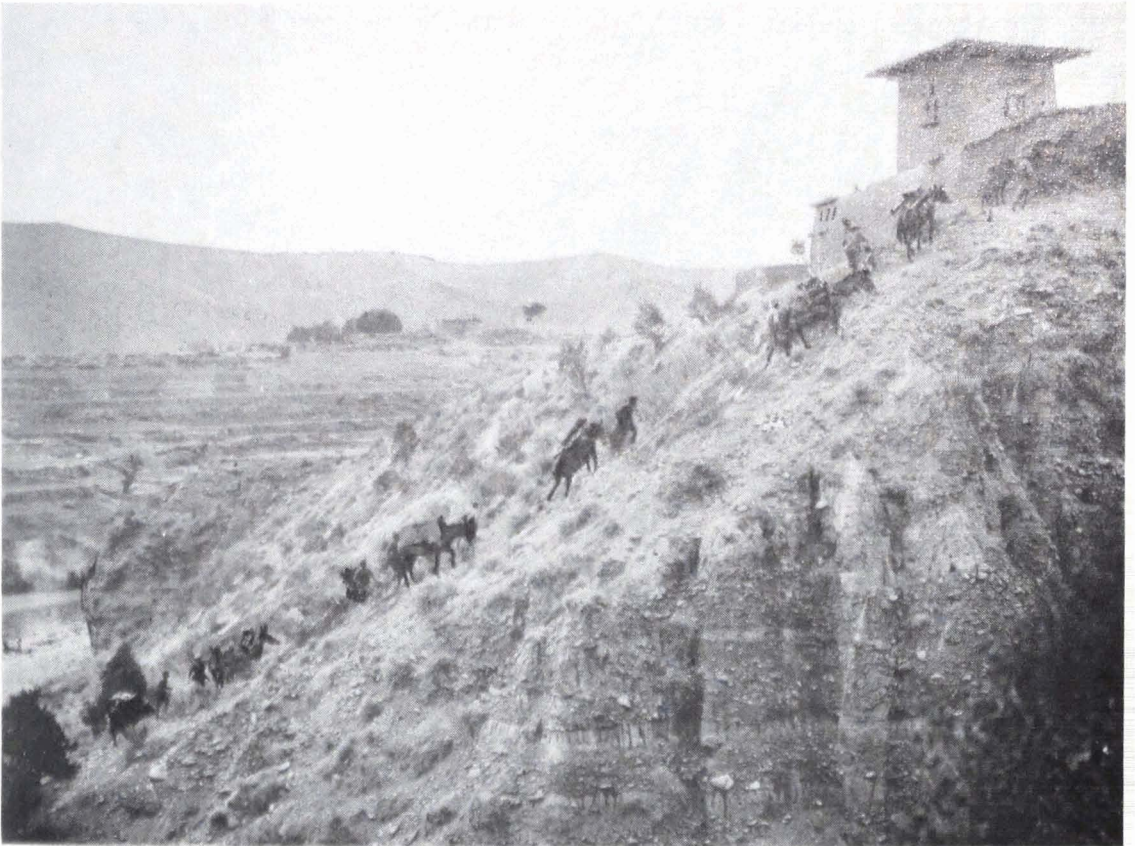


South Waziristan Scouts

R. Holmes

Mountain battery coming into action

R. Holmes





Armoured car and Mohmands

R. Holmes

Troops crossing Nahakki Pass

R. Holmes



a few leading nobles who, he thought, might dispute his claim. Three months later there came the first manifestation of outside interference in the country with the arrival of Sher Afzal, a brother of the old Mehtar, who had been in exile in Kabul, where the Amir was no doubt glad to have in his hand a card to play if occasion ever arose for a renewed attempt at annexation. Untainted with any association with the old régime he had a considerable following among the people, and with their connivance arrived in the capital unannounced and at the dead of night. In the resulting fracas Afzal-ul-Mulk was killed, and Sher Afzal proclaimed himself Mehtar in his nephew's place. He can only have done what he did with the help of the Amir but Abdur Rahman was far too shrewd to back him openly until he had proved himself able to stand on his own feet. This he proved unable to do, for when Nizam, who had taken refuge in Gilgit, plucked up courage and marched to assert his claim to his father's throne Sher Afzal withdrew for the time being to Kabul.

The mainspring of the troubles in 1895 was one Umra Khan of Jandol. Exiled during the lifetime of his father he returned to his native land in 1878 and in the next fifteen years made himself master of the whole of Dir and Bajaur, becoming so powerful that the Afghan commander-in-chief in Jelalabad, General Ghulam Haidar, was sent on a not altogether successful attempt to contain him. In 1893 the province of Asmar, to which Umra Khan laid claim, was awarded to Afghanistan under the Durand agreement and from that date his open hostility to the Government of India began.

Sher Afzal's second bid for power began with the introduction into the court at Chitral of a half-witted brother of Nizam's who, having disarmed suspicion by his antics, murdered the Mehtar on 1 January 1895, and took the throne, though no doubt on the tacit understanding that he was only keeping it warm for his uncle.

The situation was complicated by the presence south-west of Dir of the Indian/Afghan border commission, with a large escort from the Afghan Army, which was trying to define on the ground the line agreed between Durand and the Amir in 1893. Ghulam Haidar was the Afghan representative and was thus well placed to watch the exchanges between Sher Afzal and Umra Khan as to the terms on which the former was to be assisted to return to Chitral. All three of them were watching the Government of India, whose man in Gilgit, Surgeon-Major Robertson, can hardly have been helped in his efforts to frustrate

their knavish tricks by being often as much in the dark as they were as to the exact tenor of his instructions.

Robertson was in Gilgit at the time of Nizam's murder and at once began to reinforce forward to Mastuj and Chitral, where there was a young political officer, Lieutenant Gurdon, with an escort of eight Sikhs. On 15 January he started forward himself and, enduring great hardships on the Shandur Pass, reached Chitral by the end of the month. His escort now amounted to a hundred men of 14th Sikhs and three hundred of the Kashmir Light Infantry. Isolated and surrounded by enemy forces numbered by the thousand there was little he could do. He occupied the fort, and sent a detachment to put heart into a party that was trying to bar Sher Afzul's advance from the south, but on 3 March, after a disastrous last skirmish, in which, of his two senior combatant officers, one was killed and the other severely wounded, he was driven back into the fort and the siege began.

In the next few days disaster also overtook two small parties that were marching to reinforce him. On 5 March Lieutenants Edwardes and Fowler with an escort of sixty men left Mastuj with ammunition and engineer stores. On the third day they found their road barred, fought their way into a village and were there besieged until by the treacherous use of the white flag they were tempted to emerge and were then taken prisoners. Most of the escort were killed but the two officers after a hazardous journey reached Umra Khan's headquarters. Captain Ross, 14th Sikhs, who had remained in Mastuj, hearing that they were in trouble, left in an attempt to relieve them, taking with him one other officer and ninety-four men. It was a gallant but ill-considered decision which failed to take into account the strength of the enemy, not only in numbers but in fighting value when operating on their own chosen ground. His tiny force was caught in a formidable gorge and only fifteen men, nearly all wounded, managed to fight their way back.

The siege of Chitral lasted seven weeks and by any standards it was a remarkable feat of endurance, an example of making the very best of slender resources against an enemy who, if not very highly skilled, were by no means inactive. The troops were commanded by Captain C. V. F. Townsend, Central India Horse who, twenty-one years later, commanded the garrison during the siege of Kut in Mesopotamia. He had only two other combatant British officers fit and available for duty. Robertson himself was in constant pain for most of the time. Of the

infantry three hundred men were of the Kashmir Army, whose standards were below those of the Indian Army. There were over one hundred non-combatants, half of them Chitralis. On half rations, and very inferior rations at that, supplies were sufficient for ten weeks, and ammunition worked out at three hundred rounds a rifle. There was no water in the fort and a carrying party had to go by covered way daily to the river, thirty yards from the Water gate. Sher Afzul seems to have conducted operations in person, with Umra Khan playing an ill-defined role in the background. There was continual parleying with the enemy, sometimes as to the fate of Edwardes and Fowler, whose safety was a constant source of anxiety, and sometimes as to the terms on which the siege would be raised. Almost every night the enemy tried to establish small defensive works closer to the walls, and there was an attempt to tunnel forward from an old summerhouse to explode a mine under the gun tower of the fort. It was defeated by a most gallant sortie led by Lieutenant Harley, 14th Sikhs, with forty of his own men and sixty of the Kashmir Rifles.

There are frequent references in Robertson's book to Umra Khan's Pathans among the enemy but Holdich, who was with the Border Commission, is quite certain that a number of the Afghan army escort also took part in the siege. He describes Ghulam Haidar, the Commander-in-Chief, as a remarkable character. A great giant of a man, a fine horseman and a good shot, uncommonly well-informed on topics of the day, and as pleasant a companion on a day's ride as one could wish for. For all that he was at the bottom of most of the trouble in store for the British during the next few stormy years. To what extent he acted under the direct orders of the Amir it is not possible to say, but he led the boundary commission on the only stretch of frontier where no agreement was ever reached, and he was certainly making trouble at the time of the siege of Chitral. There is no direct evidence to link him with the agents who were trying to stir up the tribes in Buner and Swat in the summer of 1897, but he was known to have given encouragement to the mullas who instigated the rising of the Mohmands and Afridis that followed less than a month after the attack on the Malakand.

Apart from one or two small detachments the nearest troops to Chitral were at Gilgit: four hundred men of 32nd Sikh Pioneers, the same number of Kashmir Infantry, and a section of the 1st Kashmir

Mountain Battery, who had never fired their guns in anger. In command was Lieutenant-Colonel Kelly of the Pioneers. On 22 March he received a wire from army headquarters informing him that about 1 April a force of three brigades would advance to the relief of Chitral via the Malakand and Swat; apart from that he was given a completely free hand to act or not as he saw fit, with the proviso that he must not undertake any operation that did not offer a reasonable chance of success. His appreciation of the situation, if indeed he wrote one, must have bristled with adverse factors. Chitral was two hundred and twenty miles away across the Shandur Pass, at that time still deep in snow. To the west of the pass the whole countryside was known to be in arms against him; on the near side the people were on the whole well disposed, but it was not possible to discount the effect on their attitude of the reverses suffered in Chitral. Transport was short, and everything would have to be carried by coolies. Knowing full well that inaction would be interpreted as weakness he took the bold decision to advance at once to the relief of Chitral, taking with him his own half battalion and the two guns. Kit, with the temperature well below freezing at night, was limited to fifteen pounds a man.

A story that appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine** gives an excellent idea of the difficulties that the column had to overcome, the first major obstacle being the passage of the Shandur:

The labour was very great. Gun and carriage loads each weighed 200 lb., and each ammunition box 125 lb. The heat in the sun was great and the glare intense. We struggled slowly along, doing not more than one mile an hour, with the sweat streaming off us. The men stuck to it splendidly. The sun went down on a waste of snow, darkness came on and clouds gathered. The pace got slower and slower, and by 9 p.m. I realised that the men were exhausted. I saw one squad of three gunners trying bravely to get their gun along, but they could scarcely lift it. Dharm Singh then told them to help him get it on his own shoulder, and with only one man behind to assist and steady him, he tried to struggle forward. He only got a few paces and pitched into the snow, but it was a great effort and a gallant one. I went up to try and relieve him. I was no chicken and proud of my strength, but I went down like a child under the weight.

The villagers on the far side, who had thought the crossing impossible, were taken by surprise and offered no opposition. After joining

* 'The Baptism of a Battery' by Brigadier-General Cosmo Stewart.

hands with the garrison of Mastuj Kelly pressed on to Chitral, spurred by the news that the relief force from the south had reached the Malakand. One march short of the fort a most formidable obstacle awaited the column, where the Yarkun river passed through a narrow defile split laterally by a deep gorge, forty yards across and two or three hundred feet deep. It was one of the most famous darbands, or natural positions, in the land. Rope ladders were made for the crossing, and in the attack the little mountain guns were handled with great gallantry coming into action at a range of five hundred yards, where they destroyed the walls of a large sangar, and then, when the garrison broke for it, turned to shrapnel so that not a man escaped. The enemy were badly shaken and with the help of the Hunza levies who crowned the heights on either side the position was captured. The moral effect of the summary manner in which they had been evicted from their most cherished position was tremendous. The battle marked the end of organized opposition and on 20 April Colonel Kelly reached Chitral and raised the siege. He had made one of the most remarkable marches in history. In twenty-eight days a force of some five hundred men, most of whom were not accustomed or equipped to endure severe cold, tortured by snow blindness, marched two hundred and twenty miles through mountainous country practically without transport, crossed a pass 12,000 feet high with snow three to five feet deep, and fought two successful actions. Prestige in the district was firmly restored, but had Colonel Kelly met with the slightest reverse it is likely that instead of finding enemies only in front, he would have had a swarm of determined foes in rear, anxious only to be on the winning side. The whole operation was typical of the nonchalance and determination with which the Indian Army was accustomed to tackle any task, eking out their never very lavish standards of arms and equipment with whatever they could lay their hands on locally.

The main relief force from India under Major-General Sir Robert Low, with Brigadier-General Bindon Blood as his chief of staff, consisted of three infantry brigades, with two cavalry regiments, four batteries of artillery and three companies of sappers and miners as divisional troops. It attacked the Malakand and met with stiff opposition on 1 April and had to fight again to secure the crossings over the Swat and Panjkora rivers, and it was no further north than Dir when they heard of Kelly's arrival in Chitral. They had made plans to push a small column through for the immediate relief of the garrison but it is

doubtful if it could have got there before the end of the month, by which time the position of the besieged would have been critical indeed. They eventually arrived on 16 May when General Low held a parade which the garrison were still too feeble from their exertions to attend. The post of honour on the right of the line was generously and properly given to Colonel Kelly's column and on the extreme right, tattered and in rags, stood the Kashmir Mountain Battery, played on and off parade by the pipers of 2nd Derajat Mountain Battery who had come up with the relieving force.

The events in the Malakand belong to the next chapter, but it is convenient here to round off the story of Chitral. After crossing the Swat river at Chakdara General Low opened up negotiations with Umra Khan for the release of his prisoners and by 18 April both officers and the remaining survivors had been restored. When the column reached his main stronghold they found that he had fled for refuge to the camp of the Afghan Commander-in-Chief. Sher Afzul also was taken prisoner and escorted to India, safely removed from any temptation to interfere further in the affairs of his country.

The future of Chitral had been under consideration from the time that military operations were put in hand. The Government of India was in favour of retaining a garrison and of maintaining the road by way of Chakdara and Dir, but in June the Secretary of State for India decided that in view of the number of troops that would be needed, and the consequent financial strain on the revenues of India, these proposals were unacceptable. Preparations for withdrawal were put in hand when there was a general election in England. The new government intimated that they wished to reconsider the decision. On the understanding that the Khan of Dir and the Swat tribes undertook to guard the route with tribal levies, that regulars would be needed only at the Malakand, and that the troops then in Gilgit would be withdrawn, they decided early in August to retain a garrison in Chitral, to consist of two Indian infantry battalions, one company of sappers and miners, and a section of an Indian mountain battery. This force was subsequently reduced to a single battalion on a two-year tour of duty, cut off from the outside world, until the coming of the aeroplane, for four months each winter.

The whole throws into sharp relief the problems that beset statesman and soldier attempting to arrive at a policy for the external defence of a frontier, the internal defence of which remained a constant commit-

ment. Were the British right to take Russia so seriously? On the assumption that if they had not halted an unscrupulous opponent on a recognized frontier, it would have been hard to halt him anywhere, the answer was almost certainly 'yes'. Very much the same argument applied to the less serious but far more pertinacious attempts by the Amir to extend his authority across the Durand Line. How far should decisions have rested with Whitehall? And to what extent did divided control lead to constant reversal of policy? And what about the tribes? Until the advance of the Chitral relief column British troops had never crossed the Malakand, and in consequence there had been little trouble with those living to the north of it. Whatever it was that sparked off the rising two years later there can be little doubt that the events of 1895 provided the mullas with just the material they needed to set the whole countryside alight. And it is worth remembering that the Malakand rising was the first of the three that rocked the frontier in the latter half of 1897.

IT remains to deal with the tribes that live between Buner and the Afghan border, in Swat, Dir and Bajaur. Swat proper begins at the junction of the Swat river with the Panjkora, and lies along both banks upstream into Kohistan, but there are dependent tracts south of the Morah and Malakand Passes, inhabited by men of the same tribes. They are remarkable for an innate spirit of discipline, which enables their religious leaders to rouse them to collective fanaticism that is a most marked characteristic; it is a discipline that since the turn of the century has also been turned to good account.

In the very early days after British annexation the Swat tribes of the plains south of the Malakand were as troublesome as any on the frontier, and as early as December 1849 a force amounting to a brigade of all arms had to be sent to enforce payment of revenue. The rapidity and ease with which the operation achieved its purpose caused some concern in Swat that it might be the forerunner of an attempt to extend control into the interior, and three years later a second expedition was necessary to deal with parties that had crossed the border to raise the countryside against its new rulers. After that, apart from their participation in the Ambela campaign, the Swatis gave little or no trouble until 1878 when there was some restlessness following the death of the Akhund who during his lifetime had, as has been related, dominated their affairs. There was factional unrest, caused partly by the ambitious designs of Umra Khan of Jandol in the neighbouring state of Dir, and partly by rumours that the Amir was planning to annex the whole area of Afghanistan.

The state of Dir comprises the area drained by the Panjkora river down to its junction with the Bajaur, while Bajaur consists of the valleys draining into the river of that name. South of Bajaur and lying between it and the territory of the Mohmands are the Utman Khel. They also gave trouble in the early days and were notorious for a brutal and unprovoked attack in 1876 on a camp of unarmed coolies working on the new canal at Abazai, where the Swat river enters the Peshawar vale. Suspicion of the reason for building the canal was held to be the main contributory factor that led to the raid.

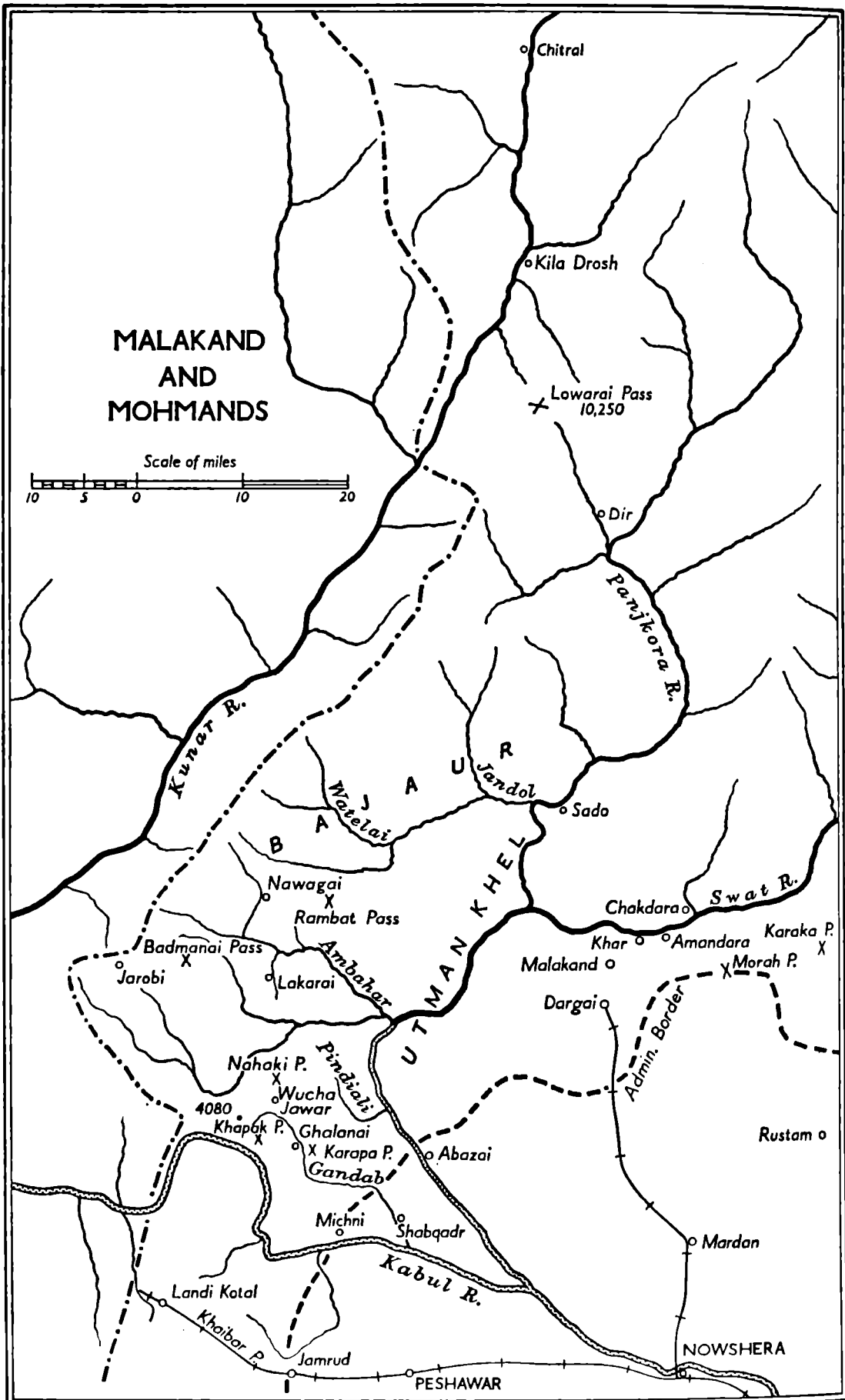
The tribes of Dir had a well-earned reputation for bravery in the field and differed from the general run of Pathans in one important respect, which is that they have always acknowledged one among themselves as khan or malik, lord over them all. It was a factor that simplified and indeed made possible the arrangements for road

protection consequent on the decision to maintain a garrison in Chitral. It was in these two states that Umra Khan established a supremacy extending up to the southern boundary of Chitral.

It was through these wild, unknown and inaccessible states, whose inhabitants had bowed the knee to no invader and, for many years, done nothing to molest the people of the settled districts of India, that it became necessary to send a force to the relief of the hard-pressed garrison of Chitral. On 17 March 1895, while the troops were assembling, a proclamation was issued to the people of Swat and Bajaur, stressing that the British were in dispute only with Umra Khan and those who sided with him. He had been given till 1 April to withdraw from and cease troubling Chitral, and if he failed to comply he would be compelled to do so by force. That done, British troops would withdraw: they had no designs on tribal territory, they would be scrupulously careful not to interfere with those who showed no hostility towards the advance, and all supplies and transport would be paid for in cash. Fair words indeed, but they failed to impress the tribesmen.

The ration strength of the Chitral relief force was fifteen thousand men and twenty thousand transport animals, rising later to thirty-one thousand; and at that there was no room for tentage except for hospitals, and scales of personal kit were cut to the bone. Forward from Dargai all loads were carried on pack animals.

On 1 April the enemy strengths on the three passes leading into Swat were reported at twenty thousand on the Shakot and Morah, and only three hundred on the Malakand. Leaving the first named, to avoid antagonizing the Bunerwals, Sir Robert Low decided to feint at the second and deliver his main attack on the Malakand, repeating the tactics of the Yusufzais themselves when they invaded Swat in the sixteenth century. The numbers of the defenders had swelled to twelve hundred when the 4th Sikhs and The Guides were sent up two very steep spurs, one of them leading to what is today still known as Guides Hill, to outflank the enemy's right, while the main attack was delivered by the Gordons and the King's Own Scottish Borderers who carried the crest at the point of the bayonet. The whole action lasted five hours, and the infantry were supported by the fire of sixteen guns. British losses in killed and wounded were only seventy, but enemy casualties were put at between twelve and fifteen hundred. Pressing on to Khar, the whole of 1st Brigade was concentrated on 4 April just



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MAP 6. Malakand and Mohmands

below Chakdara. They found themselves threatened by some two thousand tribesmen who towards evening came down into the plain. Two troops of Guides cavalry who had just joined the brigade took advantage of catching the enemy in the open and charged with great determination. They cut down about thirty and drove the remainder in headlong flight back to their hills. It was a sharp lesson, and it imposed a welcome degree of caution that persisted throughout the campaign.

It was at this moment that the Khan of Dir, who since his expulsion by Umra Khan had been a fugitive in Upper Swat, offered his services in return for help in the shape of arms and money. He crossed the Swat river with the purpose of raising the clans against the usurper and was of the greatest assistance in clearing the route ahead of the advance and in dissuading the doubtful on the fringe of the battle from joining the enemy. On 7 April there was a stiff battle against a lashkar of about four and a half thousand men who opposed the construction of the bridge at Chakdara, and relatives of Umra Khan and fanatics from Upper Swat were identified among the slain.

On 9 April, 2nd and 3rd Brigades with transport sufficient to lift baggage and twenty days' supplies resumed the advance towards Chitral. The 3rd Brigade built a bridge over the Panjkora, but the river rose during the night and brought down huge logs that partially destroyed the piers and thus prevented reinforcements from joining. The Guides who had crossed the previous evening. In an operation to destroy three villages, whose inhabitants had opposed the advance, the battalion became more heavily committed than was intended and about noon large parties of enemy were seen working round their left flank. The order for the withdrawal was left too late, but the actual conduct of the operation was a copybook example of how it should be done. Very deliberately the different companies retired, fiercely assailed on all sides, yet coolly firing by word of command and relinquishing quietly and almost imperceptibly one position only to take up another a few yards further back. As they came down to the open ground at the foot of the hills the enemy pressed forward with still greater boldness and Lieutenant-Colonel Battye, who had been conspicuous among the last group in each successive retirement, fell mortally wounded. When he saw his colonel fall Subedar Rajab, with a handful of men, rushed forward and shot down several of the tribesmen at close quarters thus checking their advance at a critical moment. Artillery and infantry from across the river were able to

give effective covering fire but the enemy kept up their fire till nearly midnight, and were only deterred from rushing the camp by star shell fired by the artillery.

There was one more battle on the 17th, before the leading brigade reached Umra Khan's headquarters. They were found to be deserted, except for a few Hindu traders. On the 19th news arrived from Chitral that the garrison was in some distress, and a small column of five hundred men was got ready to press ahead to their relief, but when two days later the Khan of Dir, who had gone ahead with his tribesmen, reported Colonel Kelly's arrival, the whole brigade resumed the advance.

Organized opposition was now over, only the obstacles imposed by nature remained to be overcome. The route lay for eleven miles beside the tumbling snow-fed torrent. The track was in general extremely difficult, frequently losing itself among the boulders that choked the bed of the stream, and stone staircase ramps had to be built in the water at more than one place to enable laden animals to pass where the stream washed the foot of precipitous cliffs.

While government departments minuted one another on matters of high policy much remained to be done by way of consolidation and general pacification, for the mullas, largely responsible for all the opposition, were still active. However, on 12 September an agreement was signed with the Khan of Dir for the protection with his own levies of the road, telegraph lines and camping grounds forward from Chakdara, and for the provision of postal runners. He was to receive an annual grant of Rs 10,000 and a present of 400 Sniders. The Khan of Nawagai also received a grant of Rs 6,000, and arrangements were made with the Swat maliks for the maintenance of the road through their valley. Fortified posts were built at Malakand and Chakdara for a garrison which amounted to a squadron of cavalry, a mountain battery, a company of sappers and miners and four battalions of Indian infantry. A new political agency of Dir and Swat was established with headquarters at Malakand, and Major H. A. Deane, who was to become the first Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province when it was formed six years later, was appointed as political officer.

Except for the establishment of these two garrisons, and it was a significant exception, the terms of the proclamation made to the tribes were observed. Deane directed his energies towards the stabilization of his agency, but there was little or no interference in the lives or customs

of the people. For just twenty-one months his methods achieved a quite remarkable degree of success. There was sparring for position among the rival khans and maliks, but no hostility towards the troops, and the Chitral reliefs in May 1896 passed off without incident. The trade of the Swat valley prospered greatly and the tribes, appreciative of the advantages of a reign of peace and order, were probably more willing than the British that control of their affairs should be carried even further.

However, the Malakand was only one of half a dozen potential trouble spots on the Frontier, and it was too much to expect that it would remain unaffected by the great wave of restlessness that in 1897 swirled over the whole Frontier; a wave that had been set in motion, albeit imperceptibly, on the day four years earlier when the Amir of Afghanistan signed the Durand agreement. Whatever the advantages to him, or to the British for that matter, there is evidence that he later regretted his decision. Maybe Oriental monarchs dislike being bound by definite agreements that restrict their scope for the political horse trading that is to them the very breath of life but, whatever the reason, although he never flouted the agreement or came out openly on the side of those who were successfully preventing it from being translated into effective terms on the ground, he was a party to a score of doubtful activities that came near to transgressing it. His assumption of the title of King of Islam and the publication of his *Almanac of Religion* provided a basis on which to interfere and intrigue in Bajaur, with the Mohmands, with the Afridis, and in both north and south Waziristan. The tribes, who had not even been consulted when the Durand Line was drawn, could see for themselves the gradual extension of British influence, slowly sapping away the traditional independence they had never before surrendered, to Mughul, Durrani, or Sikh. The actual demarcation, the erection of boundary pillars, had been going ahead, and in the Wana area had already precipitated a full-scale expedition against the Mahsuds and, possibly, strangled at birth the last chance of coming to terms with that recalcitrant people. The resulting situation was exploited by the mullas who needed no encouragement to oppose any extension of the blessings of civilization that might weaken their influence. Looking at the overall picture it was, really, a question of which of the smouldering fires would be the first to burst into flames.

Early in 1897 there were signs of trouble in Swat and Dir and it was thought that in the spring the Chitral reliefs might be the occasion for

an outbreak, but they passed off uneventfully, and after meeting representative jirgas at the end of June the political agent reported on 3 July that in his view the hostile coalitions had broken up and the horizon seemed clear. There were reports of the arrival in upper Swat from Buner of strangers who had been unsuccessfully trying to spread revolt among the Bunerwals and, also from Buner, came a fakir who had, equally unsuccessfully, been preaching a jihad. He was reputed to be mad and it was at first considered better to ignore him; but when he persisted in inflammatory sermons after evening prayers, and began handing round autographed copies of the Amir's book, the time had come to recognize him as a threat to peace. The khans indeed petitioned the political agent to forbid the people to visit or listen to him, but they were told the remedy was in their own hands, and as late as 25 July there was evidence that they were about to turn him out of the valley.

The next evening officers from Malakand and Chakdara met at Khar to play polo before the usual audience of local inhabitants, and only after dark did it become apparent that the mad fakir, with the whole Swat valley rallying to his standard, was advancing to the attack.

The Malakand camp area was not easily defensible, particularly against overwhelming numbers of fanatical tribesmen on a moonless night—a possibility that probably had not been taken into account in any alarm scheme that had been drawn up. As the road coming up from the plains crossed the kotal the fort proper lay to the left, a jumble of buildings on the spur running up to Guides Hill. The road passed between Castle Hill and the fort, then forked left to Crater Camp and the bazaar, and right to run east of Gibraltar down the graded road to Chakdara. The old Buddhist road ran from the kotal east of Castle Hill through a gorge before dropping to the Swat valley. The hills rose steeply from the bazaar and were covered in scrub and huge boulders.

The main part of the garrison lived under canvas in Crater Camp, 24th Punjabis with a company in the fort, 45th Sikhs with a company down at Chakdara; 5th Company Madras Sappers and Miners, and supply, transport, medical and ordnance services were also in the camp. Nearly a mile away to the north-west was a separate camp in which were a squadron of Probyn's Horse, less a troop down at Chakdara, 8th Mountain Battery, and 31st Punjabis, who had a company at Dargai at the southern foot of the pass. The camp defences consisted

of no more than some barbed wire and a low parapet running round the perimeter.

As soon as it was realized how serious the situation was a signal was sent to the Guides to move to reinforce the garrison. The message reached Mardan at 9 p.m. and the cavalry left just after midnight and covered the thirty-two miles in eight hours. Allowing a couple of hours for the dust to settle the infantry left at 2 a.m. and marched in at 7.30 p.m. The first twenty-seven miles lay across the plain, the season was the very height of the hot weather, and it would be invidious to judge between the two performances: both are typical of the standards of fitness and readiness for action expected of troops serving on the frontier.

At 10 p.m. Major Deane informed Colonel Meiklejohn, commanding the garrison, that a jemadar of levies had just galloped in with the news of the near approach of the Fakir with a rapidly increasing army of fanatically mad Swatis, and that the hills to the east of the camp were swarming with the enemy. Orders had already been given for a strong advanced guard to leave camp at midnight to seize the Aman-darra Pass some five miles down the road to Chakdara, but the plan was overtaken by events. The 'alarm' was sounded and troops went to their defence stations. Colonel McRae, 45th Sikhs, then made what was perhaps the most critical move of the whole battle: he sent a handful of men under Major Taylor to secure the gorge on the old Buddhist road. When they got there they realized that hundreds of tribesmen were rapidly and silently advancing towards them. The enemy, when they saw that they had been forestalled, made a desperate rush to drive the small party back, but the Sikhs stood their ground and opened rapid fire at point-blank range. When the tribesmen swarmed all over the commanding heights on either side of the gorge, Major Taylor, who had been mortally wounded, withdrew a short distance to where the rest of the battalion had taken up a position which they were able to hold until about 2 a.m. The enemy then withdrew leaving many dead on the ground. In the centre the enemy overran the bazaar and fought their way into the sapper camp; they were driven out and about 2.30 a.m. the sound of pipes and drums from down the road announced the arrival of reinforcements. Fighting went on till just before daybreak. Work began at once on reorganizing the defences against a renewal of the attack. The 31st Punjabis and the cavalry from the north camp, who had not been seriously engaged, were ordered to follow up the

retreating enemy and attempt to open up communication with the company in Chakdara who had reported that they had been heavily attacked. The column got no further than Khar where they encountered large numbers of enemy, but the squadron of Probyn's Horse, riding wide to the left, swam the river onto an island and succeeded in reaching Chakdara where they joined the garrison.

The attacks on the Malakand, pressed home with reckless determination, continued for three more nights, and it was not until 1 August that it was possible to dispatch a column to relieve Chakdara. The attempt failed, though Guides Cavalry, charging across ground cut up with deep dalas and strewn with large boulders, got in among the enemy and inflicted heavy casualties at little loss to themselves. That afternoon the heliograph from Chakdara flashed a laconic appeal 'Help us', and the next day the attempt was renewed just as it was getting light. The countryside had been swarming with enemy but after the advancing column had scored an initial success by advancing on a broad front, the tribesmen suddenly panicked, lost heart, and streamed away to take refuge in the villages. Once again the cavalry inflicted heavy casualties. At 10 a.m. the relieving column marched into Chakdara fort.

The garrison at the beginning of the outbreak consisted of twenty men of Probyn's Horse and a hundred and eighty of 45th Sikhs and the fact that so small a force was able to resist the furious attacks made on it was due to their occupying a properly constructed fort which the enemy was unable to rush. The fort had been built to protect the bridge carrying the road to Chitral, and it was the first place to be attacked. The official history records that about 2 a.m. on the 27th the troops at Chakdara saw a fire balloon with a scintillating ball of intensely white light sent up from the top of a hill about four miles off. As such a signal was quite different from the usual tribal custom of signalling by means of lighting fires and as moreover the balloon must have been an imported article, this strange occurrence is proof that the idea of a rising did not originate in the Swat valley itself, but was instigated elsewhere.

The garrison had a hard time of it, particularly when the enemy established themselves in the little hospital and built sangars on the spur over-looking the fort from which they were able to fire into the interior. On the last morning the enemy fought with the same reckless courage and only desisted from the final attack, which at 5 a.m. was

made by over eight thousand men, when the relieving cavalry were close at hand. The British casualties were five killed and eleven wounded, while the enemy themselves admitted to having two thousand three hundred men killed at Chakdara alone.

As soon as it became clear that the rising in the Swat valley amounted to a concerted attempt to expel the Malakand garrison the Government of India ordered the formation of a field force of two brigades, with divisional troops, under the command of Major-General Sir Bindon Blood who had been chief-of-staff during the relief of Chitral in 1895. Two British battalions, 1st Bn The Buffs and 1st Bn Royal West Kents were added to the troops already in the Malakand, and in view of the comparatively open ground of the valley it was decided to include a field battery as well as three mountain batteries. A third brigade was also concentrated at Mardan with orders to send two battalions forward to Rustam to threaten the rear of the Bunerwals in case they should contemplate interfering with operations in Upper Swat.

While the force was concentrating strong cavalry patrols went out daily, and punitive operations were carried out against the villages in Lower Swat which resulted in the inhabitants making unconditional surrender. On 8 August there came the disturbing news of the Mohmand attack on Shabqadr Fort, and rumours of Bunerwals and Hindustani Fanatics crossing over from Buner to oppose any further advance up the valley. On the 17th a pitched battle was fought at the Gates of Swat, where a long mountain spur closes down to the river about seven miles above Chakdara. The Gates are the entrance to the Upper Valley and the lower limit of the present state of Swat. In the fighting that followed the weight of the twelve-pounder field-gun shell came as an unpleasant surprise to the enemy and contributed materially to their defeat. The brigade advanced to a point about five miles above Saidu, the present capital of the state, to enable Major Deane to carry out a thorough investigation into the causes and extent of the recent trouble. It appeared that as many as twenty thousand had been in arms, mostly from Swat, but with numbers from Buner and Bajaur and the Utman Khel, including also two thousand from British territory. The tribes advanced no grievance of any sort to justify their action for one could hardly take seriously the Swati malik, who, when asked point blank to account for what had happened, replied somewhat naïvely that he was not aware that the government had issued any orders forbidding them to attack the Malakand. The

outbreak can only be explained as a most remarkable and sustained surge of fanaticism.

There was now a favourable opportunity to act in concert with the brigade at Mardan and Rustam to punish the Bunerwals for their part in the rising, but the situation north and west of Peshawar was so threatening that troops could not be spared; indeed the pressure was so great that only the most deserving cases could be attended to. A plan to castigate the Utman Khel had also to be shelved when news came in that the Hadda Mulla from the Mohmand country was leading a lashkar against the Khan of Dir, who had incurred his displeasure by remaining neutral in the recent fighting. The threat collapsed, and a brigade was ordered to advance up the Bajaur valley to Nawagai, and thence to co-operate with a force operating against the Mohmands from Peshawar. This project fitted in well with the general situation: there had always been trouble from tribes in this area, which lay on the flank of the Chitral reliefs. It was a hotbed of exaggerated reports regarding Afridi successes in the Khaibar, and from its proximity to Afghanistan they cherished the expectation, sedulously fostered by the Hadda Mulla and the mad Fakir, that the Amir was about to come to their help. Moreover, it was felt that it was high time to afford some outward and visible support to the Khan of Nawagai, who up till then had remained an uneasy neutral but was under great pressure from the mullas to change his mind.

By 14 September force headquarters and 3rd Infantry Brigade had reached Nawagai, leaving 2nd Brigade halfway up the valley with orders to turn left, cross the divide and deal with the Utman Khels. The actions of 3rd Brigade will be dealt with in the chapter on the Mohmands. That night the camp of 2nd Brigade was kept under heavy rifle fire from close range till two in the morning, which caused some casualties, and an abortive order to 38th Dogras to drive the enemy out of broken ground close to the perimeter was countermanded after three British officers had been killed while trying to organize the attack. When the news reached Sir Bindon Blood at Nawagai he had an awkward decision to make, as a move back to support 2nd Brigade would have been tantamount to a withdrawal in the face of an undefeated enemy. Feeling that the brigade was strong enough to look after itself he sent orders that its task now must be to deal with the Mamunds of the Watelai valley who had been the prime movers in the night attack.

Owing to shortage of water the brigade had to camp at the foot of the valley returning thereto at the close of each day's operations. The plan for the first day, the 17th, which rightly incurred the stricture of the Commander-in-Chief in the official dispatch, was based on an astonishing under-estimate of the resistance likely to be encountered from an enemy whose morale was obviously high, operating on their own ground, of which no reconnaissance had been carried out. The brigade moved out in three weak columns—two were below battalion strength and had no artillery—operating out of supporting distance of one another, and ordered to advance up to seven miles from camp and carry out the destruction of four villages each. The right-hand column very soon ran into trouble and had to call on the other two for help, and it was only the steadiness and discipline of the troops that saved the day from complete disaster. There is a graphic account of what happened in *The Malakand Field Force* by Lieutenant Winston L. S. Churchill, 4th Queen's Own Hussars, who had taken six weeks' leave of absence from his regiment and was present as the press correspondent of the *Pioneer* and the *Daily Telegraph*. He related that at a most critical moment a company of 35th Sikhs, who had been covering a flank and were withdrawing down a spur out of supporting distance of the main column, found themselves at bay with a howling mob of tribesmen no more than thirty yards away. Two British officers had been killed and it was clear that victory would fall to the side that did something first. He records that someone—who it was is uncertain—ordered the bugler to sound the charge. It was the supreme moment—the Sikhs rallied and started to advance, the tribesmen turned and began to retreat. A pencil note in the margin of one copy of the book reads, 'It was Winston who ordered the "charge" to be sounded.' There was worse to come for at the close of the day, the brigade commander found himself benighted in an angle of a burning village with no more than a handful of troops, exposed to galling enemy fire at a range of ten yards.

It was not an auspicious opening to a punitive expedition and it was seven weeks before retribution was exacted in full. There were several reasons. The tribesmen, resisting what they considered to be a deliberate threat to their independence, fought with great gallantry and skill; at least half the tribe lived across the international border, and there is no doubt that they received encouragement, to say nothing of plentiful supplies of ammunition, from the Afghan Commander-in-Chief;

lastly the operation was not preceded by any encounter in which, as at the Malakand, the enemy had suffered a decisive defeat, very much the reverse in fact, for it is likely that the success they gained on the opening day encouraged their resistance.

In December a brigade of all arms at last dealt with the Utman Khel who, after a brief operation lasting less than ten days, surrendered without a shot being fired. In the New Year of 1898 it was the turn of the Bunerwals. They had sent a most unsatisfactory reply to the terms imposed upon them to the effect that they had not harmed the government, that they had no rifles or stolen property in their possession, that they were not capable of paying a fine of Rs 11,500, and that they were far too busy to come down to Mardan to discuss matters. This bravado might be attributed to several causes. The fact that operations in September were called off may have been interpreted as reluctance to tackle a difficult task; they had certainly, as a result of the Ambela campaign, been living for thirty-five years on a not very well-merited reputation for valour, which would have been heavily tarnished in the eyes of their neighbours if they had surrendered too easily; and, in the words of the official history, it is even possible that their confidence in the inaccessibility of their country was reinforced by 'a lingering hope that their patron saint, Pir Baba, would exert his supernatural influence to prevent foreign troops from invading Buner'. Whatever the reasons they were in for a rude shock. On the day following the expiry of the ultimatum, 7 January, without further ado a column attacked a pass some twelve miles north of the Ambela leading into the heart of Buner. The operation was a model of its kind: there had been a proper reconnaissance; there was the most admirable co-ordination of the infantry and artillery plans; and a realistic appreciation of the administrative difficulties, down to the provision of five hundred coolies to carry essential loads until the track had been improved. The attack was a complete success and within five hours of the time that the first gun was fired the Bunerwal's boasted pride in the inaccessibility of his hitherto unexplored country was dissipated. It proved necessary to penetrate into the very heart of the country, exacting submission step by step from the various tribal sections, but by the 16th it was all over, and by the 20th the force was back in Mardan.

The results of the expedition were in every way satisfactory. The bubble reputation of the Bunerwals had been pricked, a new mule track into the country had been built, and the whole country accurately

surveyed. These advantages far exceeded the few thousands of rupees and the obsolete weapons that were collected.

Two months later Ghulam Haidar Khan, the Afghan Army Commander, died. It is not possible to say just how much he always acted on the exact orders of his master but for many years, from the Dorah Pass to the Kabul river, he was behind much of the unrest that occurred among the tribes living on the British side of the Durand Line.

In July the Khan of Dir had to be prevented from poaching on the preserves of the Khan of Nawagai but, thanks to Deane's intervention, peace was restored, their respective spheres of influence were defined, and over the next few years they learned the wisdom of living on terms with one another.

Twenty years later there came to power in Swat the Miangul Gulshahzada, grandson of the Akhund. For thirty years of great progress he ruled over Swat, bringing peace to a land that had not known it for centuries, building schools and hospitals everywhere. 'His wisdom and skill have given security to the Yusufzai border, and a growing wealth to one of the most heavenly valleys in the world.'*

It was indeed this characteristic of the tribes on this part of the frontier to acknowledge, despite their sectional intrigues, an overlord among themselves, that made it possible for the political agency of Swat and Dir to develop peaceably along the lines that were so successful in Baluchistan.

* *The Pathans.*

THE Mohmands harboured no colony of subsidized fanatics, no international highway, no road to an outpost of Empire ran through their territories, and until close on the turn of the century the British penetrated no deeper than the outer fringes of their land, and then only in retaliation for grievous wrongs committed against the peaceful villagers of the plains. They never fought with the inspired recklessness of the Swatis, or with the grim determination of the Afridis or the Mahsuds; but for all that, reviewing their record over the years, they vied with the Mahsuds as the most inveterate troublemakers on the frontier. In five short years during the 1850s they perpetrated eighty-five major raids, involving parties of seventy-five or more marauders; and another forty classified as minor, but with a total casualty list of eighty-five British subjects killed or wounded, and two hundred and seventy-six head of cattle plundered. They set themselves a high standard, and they did their best to live up to it, frequently interfering in British affairs without the palest shadow of justification.

The root cause of the trouble the Mohmands gave was geographical. Of the four main divisions of the tribe two, the Tarakzais and the Halimzais, lived astride the administrative border as it ran from Michni, on the Kabul river, north-east to Abazai, for they held revenue-free lands in the Doaba, the fertile triangle at the junction of the Swat and Kabul rivers. The grant dated back to the days of Ahmed Shah and was certainly continued by the Sikhs as blackmail to buy off depredations. Some of this land they cultivated themselves, some they let to tenants; some of them lived in the plains, but even those who were hill men traded in the vale of Peshawar. In the unsettled conditions that at first existed all along the administrative border there was, in their eyes at least, plenty of temptation to raid, if only for sheer devilment: nothing was easier than to reconnoitre and plan an attack on some unsuspecting village, swoop down, and skip back across the border the richer by a couple of Hindus for ransom, a bag of rupees and forty or fifty head of cattle.

The chief of all the Mohmands was the Khan of Lalpura and of the other two main divisions, the Baizais and Khawezais, a number lived in Afghan territory almost up to Jalalabad. The line envisaged in the negotiations between Durand and the Amir in 1893 was to follow the watershed between the Bajaur and Kunar rivers and then run south to the big U-bend in the Kabul river immediately north of Landi Kotal.

The boundary commission which was set up to agree the line on the ground completely failed to come to terms with the problem and was dissolved in 1895. Two years later the British made a considerable concession to the Amir by offering to cede to him some of the Baizais and Khawezais living in the Jarobi and adjacent valleys, but the difficulties raised by the Afghans when the commission assembled at Landi Khana in March 1897 were so formidable that the party broke up without even visiting the area under dispute. A 'presumptive border' was drawn on British maps but no further attempt to define it on the ground was ever made and in 1947 the line was still unsettled.

Quite apart, then, from those who were Afghan subjects considerable sections of the tribe, sections against whom it was difficult if not impossible to take retaliatory action, lived in a sort of political no-man's-land where they were extremely susceptible to Afghan influence from Jalalabad: they might therefore attack the British direct, for they lived only a few miles north of the western end of the Khaibar Pass, or harass them directly by creating trouble in the areas belonging to the Tarakzais and Halimzais, of whose prosperity they were not a little envious.

The Mohmands gave trouble on the lines of communication at the very start of the First Afghan War, and after the disasters in Kabul in 1842 the whole country rose against the British under Saadat Khan of Lalpura. Raids were frequent during the early years and in April 1852 there took place one of the most remarkable small actions on record, fought entirely by two guns of horse artillery. As a result of reports of the advance of a large number of Mohmands Brigadier Sir Colin Campbell had reinforced the garrison of Shabqadr fort. About 3 p.m. on 15 April about six thousand matchlock men emerged from the hills. The total force available in the fort amounted to six hundred. The brigadier allowed them to come well out into the plain then took out his artillery, covered only by the cavalry who charged and routed a few enemy horsemen. This enabled the guns to come into action on the edge of the slope rising to the hills, where they made such excellent practice that the lashkar was not only broken up but even driven back for about one and a half miles. When it began to get dark, and it was deemed prudent for the force to retire, the enemy began to follow up with great boldness. The guns were hardly limbered up, the gunners had actually not mounted, when a shout ran down their whole line

and the tribesmen rushed forward, evidently thinking their turn had now come. The guns were instantly unlimbered and double charges of grape checked the wild but gallant attack. The force then retreated across the tableland at a foot's pace, the guns taking up successive positions at every three hundred yards, and keeping up a fire of grape; the most perfect order was preserved, and the casualties suffered by the enemy were considerable.

There was continual raiding over the next two years and, as retaliatory action failed to get to the root of the trouble, Edwardes recommended to the Government of India that Dost Mohammad should be called on either to punish his unruly subjects, for the raids were being instigated from Afghanistan, and restrain them in future, or to renounce the right to do so and give the British a free hand. But nothing happened, and discussions had just began as to the composition of yet one more punitive expedition when the Mutiny broke. It is remarkable that the Mohmands failed to take full advantage of the situation; it was a tribute to the personal influence exerted by Edwardes, and it could be that the crucial factor was the determination with which he dealt with the disloyal regiments, for there can be no doubt at all as to what would have happened if matters in Peshawar cantonment had been allowed to get out of hand.

The Mohmands were in arms in 1863, at the time of Ambela, and in 1873 there was the dastardly murder of two unarmed British officers near Michin fort.

In 1878, as might be expected, there was trouble from across the river while British forces were halted at Jalalabad for some months during the first phase of the Second Afghan War. There was an expedition that almost ended in disaster when on the advice of a political officer a small force under Captain Creagh* was sent to Kam Dakka, a village close to the frontier on the right bank of the Kabul river. The object was to show the flag and reassure the inhabitants, alleged to be friendly. However, on his arrival Captain Creagh was told that the villagers were averse to the troops entering their village, they had neither asked for nor did they require any help as they were quite able to protect themselves. They further expressed the opinion that the detachment would be defeated by the enemy; they therefore had no wish to compromise themselves with their tribe on account of the

* General Sir O'Moore Creagh, v.c.

troops. Their attitude was anything but friendly. In the event a battalion from Dakka and another from Landi Kotal, both with a battery of artillery, had to be sent to extricate the detachment from the enemy who attacked from across the river, being joined by numbers of men from the village. Creagh was awarded the Victoria Cross, it being recorded that 'but for coolness, determination and gallantry of the highest order, the detachment under his command would in all probability have been cut off and destroyed'.

The political officer, on being brought to task for his miscalculation, recorded his opinion that in their difficult position the villagers of Kam Dakka could not have behaved otherwise than as they did. General Maude, however, expressed the view that if he had known the true state of affairs he would not have sent any of Her Majesty's troops on such an errand, or would have taken care that their supports were nearer than Dakka and Landi Kotal.

In 1896 immediately after the dispersal of the boundary commission, fighting broke out between two sections of the Baizais. One side was supported by the Khan of Nawagai, who was not a Mohmand, the other by the Afghan Army Commander, General Ghulam Haidar, who went so far as to send four hundred khassadars to support his faction when they seemed to be losing ground. In despair at the failure to come to terms with the Amir over control of the upper Mohmands the Government of India decided to take matters into its own hands and bring the Halimzais, Tarakzais and some other smaller sections of the lower Mohmands under British suzerainty. They became known as the 'assured' tribes. As may be supposed, for the Mohmand had a fine turn of eloquence in jirga, there were protracted negotiations before the allowances to be paid, and the conditions attached to them, were agreed by both parties, but at length on 26 November, despite the most strenuous efforts by Ghulam Haidar to discredit British motives, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab held a full jirga in Peshawar at which the terms were ratified.

Less than a year later as a direct result of the fighting in the Malakand the British became involved in full-scale operations against the Mohmands. The November settlement might possibly have been used to avert the trouble; it was a slender hope, but in fact no attempt was made to turn it to advantage.

True to form, a mulla is to be found taking the leading part. Najm-ud-Din, more generally known as the Hadda Mulla, was a native of a

village of that name in the Jalalabad district. In 1883 he incurred the displeasure of the Amir to an extent that he found it prudent to refuse all invitations to present himself in Kabul, and was forced to cross the border and take refuge with the Baizais, in the wildest and most inaccessible spot in their whole country, the Jarobi glen. From then on, though for no particular reason, he became the implacable enemy of the British. He enhanced his standing with the Mohmands by raising a lashkar to fight against the Chitral relief column in 1895 and, most significant of all, he was a great friend of General Ghulam Haidar. As early as January 1897 the assistant political officer in Dir was reporting that the old man—he was then over eighty—was showing most remarkable activity in trying to raise the Mohmands and to persuade the Khan of Nawagai to go back on his agreements with the British Government. His opportunity came when the Swatis attacked the Malakand. He at once wrote to the Shinwaris and Ut Khels, tribes living on both sides of the Kabul river across the Afghan border, urging them to join a jihad to drive the unbelievers out. He assured them that the garrisons in the Malakand had been annihilated and plundered, and that the Mohmands were ready to join him in an attack on Shabqadr, and there is all the force of a Churchillian minute in the directness of his appeal, bidding them to 'rise up if sitting and start at once if standing. Taking the necessary supplies with you, come without fail as soon as possible.'

On 28 July, the day after the attack on the Malakand, thirty leading men of the Tarakzais and Halimzais saw Sir Richard Udney, the Commissioner of Peshawar, and offered their services. So far as was known the Mulla was still in Jarobi, and the deputation was advised to remain calm and to arrest any of his emissaries who might approach them. On 3 August the news was that the Mulla with a few hundred men, including some tribesmen from Afghanistan, had left for Swat. On the same day the Hindu community in Shankargarh, the village that lies below the walls of Shabqadr fort, began to panic, having heard, no doubt from their co-religionists from across the administrative border, that the Mohmands were planning to attack them. The Commissioner regarded this as an extravagant rumour, and took no action other than to send Abdur Rauf Khan, Subedar-Major of the Border Military Police, to Shabqadr with orders to take such action as he thought necessary to guard against looting or other minor disturbances by local bad characters. On 5 August he reported that the

Mulla was said to be at a village five miles the other side of the Nahakki Pass, but was moving into the Gandab valley where he had summoned a Halimzai jirga to meet him. He added that the Hindus were completely panic-stricken and that they had no confidence in any sort of protection except that of regular troops. He therefore asked for military reinforcements. Next day the news was even more significant. The Mulla had reached the territory of the assured clans who were refusing him passage, but a lashkar of upper Mohmands was reported to be on the move, and Shabqadr could expect to be attacked the following evening, after the arrival of the reinforcements to whom the appeal had gone across the border. The general officer commanding in Peshawar, Brigadier-General Elles, offered to reinforce the Border Military Police, but the offer was refused. The situation was indeed serious, but the Commissioner thought that it was inconceivable that the Halimzais, who hold a large tract of revenue-free land in British territory, would run the risk of losing this, as well as their allowances, by permitting a gathering of a few hundred men to force their way through the Gandab. He wrote the whole thing off as a bluff by the Mulla to convince his friend the Mad Mulla that he had tried and failed to raise a jihad. There seem to be two bad miscalculations in the Commissioner's attitude. In the first place the issue at stake, for the assured clans, was not the loss of their land, or even of their allowances; whatever happened there could be no question of putting the clock back and evicting them. The Commissioner must have known this, the Mohmands certainly did, and in fact their allowances were resumed six months after the end of operations. In the second place, if events followed the pattern of those in the Malakand, how could the lower Mohmands, lacking any leadership or support other than a few encouraging words, offer more than verbal resistance to bar the way of the Mulla and a fanatical following? A combined Baizai-Khawezai lashkar was vastly more powerful than anything they could put in the field.

On 7 August the Commissioner sent to the overworked and overburdened Subedar-Major express orders, though there can have been little force in the adjective, that he must warn all the villages concerned that they would be held directly responsible for repelling any raiders that might cross into British territory. About 8 p.m., only a few hours after the messenger had left for Shabqadr, a report arrived in Peshawar that the Mulla's lashkar was on the frontier three miles from the fort.

The Commissioner at once requested Brigadier-General Elles to move out troops.

Soon after midnight a column was on the road under Lieutenant-Colonel Woon of 20th Punjab Infantry who had under his command, as well as his own battalion, a battery of artillery, two squadrons of 13th Bengal Cavalry and one company of the Somerset Light Infantry. It was an intensely hot night—the damp enervating heat of Peshawar towards the end of the hot-weather season.

Shabqadr fort is an imposing stronghold, originally built by the Sikhs, to be held by fifty cavalry and a hundred infantry. On 7 August it was manned by a jemadar and fifty-nine men of the Border Military Police under the stout-hearted and resourceful Subedar-Major; they were armed with sniders. About 4 p.m. on the 7th the garrison saw a lashkar of four to five thousand men emerge from the hills and start to cross the plain, encouraged by martial music from gongs and bugles. The enemy reached Shabqadr as it was getting dark and split into two parts: half attacked the fort, the others set to work to loot and burn the village, an operation which lasted until about five o'clock the next morning.

The defenders suffered no casualties and inflicted a loss of some forty killed and wounded on the Mohmands who by daylight had withdrawn to the foothills out of rifle shot taking their dead and wounded with them. The Subedar-Major was not, of course, at first able to send any report of what was happening but about midnight he managed to drop a letter over the wall which was carried by a trusted messenger who handed it over to the cavalry advance guard as they reached the Kabul river.

The stream was in flood, two hundred yards wide with a current only the strongest swimmers could tackle, and the task of swimming over the horses was done by about fifteen men. There was a great shortage of boats at the ferry and it was not until six o'clock that the leading squadron of cavalry left to reconnoitre the Shabqadr area, and it was two hours later before Colonel Woon with about half the rest of his column resumed his march. He reached Shabqadr about 10 a.m. Reconnaissance showed the enemy to be occupying the low hills to the west, covering the entrance to the Gandab valley, and an attempt by the cavalry to cut in between the forward enemy positions and the foothills failed as they were obviously held in great strength. Since leaving Peshawar the troops had marched nineteen miles through the

night under very trying conditions, and with only half his force available Colonel Woon decided that he was not justified in committing them to an attack through difficult, broken country. He accordingly withdrew to the fort and was joined by the rest of the column in the evening. His plan for attack next morning was for the infantry to advance frontally and for the cavalry to move round the enemy left, the artillery moving out to support them. The enemy was also on the move and was trying to work round the British left, and when Brigadier-General Elles arrived at 9 a.m. the battle was not going too well. He had started a half battalion 30th Punjab Infantry off from Peshawar the night before but they were delayed by torrential rain and did not arrive in time to take part in the battle. He promptly reorganized the attack, forming a strong defensive left flank with the infantry covering the guns, and sent the cavalry wide to the north, telling them to be prepared to charge: 'to get on the enemy's left flank and roll them up'. Two troops had remained to guard the left flank, but one and a half squadrons moved off at the trot concealed in the bed of a rough, stony nala. The going was so bad that it took some time to form line on arrival, but as soon as the leading squadron was ready the order to 'charge' was given. There was little of the picture book about the action that followed—no serried ranks and thundering hooves—but it was decisive. The plain ahead was seamed with deep stony nalas, and the line soon scattered, but the very threat was enough for the enemy, who broke into small groups and made for the hills. There was desultory firing at the squadrons after they had passed, and both British officers had their horses shot under them. In the words of the official history 'Covered by the fire of the guns they had charged for $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles over stony ground, completely clearing the enemy from the front, and they had carried out the task entrusted to them in the most brilliant manner and with but few casualties'. The infantry then advanced to the edge of the plateau, but the enemy had disappeared into the hills and as it was not possible to follow them the troops were ordered to withdraw to the fort. British losses were ten killed and sixty wounded. The enemy were thought to have lost between two and three hundred killed, including a number of Baizai maliks.

There was great difficulty in obtaining reliable information about the composition of the lashkar but it seemed likely that, besides the Mohmands, pretty well every tribe between the Swat and Panjkora rivers on the east, and the Kunar on the west, was implicated. Of the

assured clans the Tarakzais mostly remained aloof, the others were not able to resist the temptation to join in the looting of Shabqadr bazaar. There is no doubt that what added most to the determination and impetuosity of the gathering was the arrival of large reinforcements from tribes who were subjects of the Amir.

The latter received a stiff note from the Viceroy complaining in particular of the obvious complicity of General Ghulam Haidar. This letter was read out in open darbar in Kabul with a fine show of indignation, and a proclamation was sent to Jalalabad denouncing the conduct of the tribes in no uncertain terms, but the reply received by the Viceroy, long and circumstantial though it was, evaded any denial of the substance of the complaint.

The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab asked the Government of India to reinforce Peshawar, sufficient troops being sent to provide garrisons for frontier posts held by police and militia, but his first thought was against any immediate action. In the best high court tradition he felt that 'it would be advisable to work out at leisure the mode in which punishment should be inflicted; and the occupation of the country postponed until full enquiry had been made regarding the composition of the gathering, and the responsibility of the different sections'.

About the middle of August the news of the Mulla was that his army was dwindling, disheartened no doubt by the news filtering through of the very heavy losses suffered by the Swatis in the Malakand. But a fortnight later it was clear that he was busy with preparations for another advance and he was reported to have an army of four thousand men ready. This fresh report, coupled with the news of the outbreak in the Khaibar where, on the 25th, the Afridis had attacked and looted Landi Kotal, caused the Lieutenant-Governor to change his views and to recommend immediate action. It is curious that although there was in existence a Punjab Command, with Sir William Lockhart—away on leave in England—as its Commander, all operational matters seem to have been dealt with direct by army headquarters in Simla, and their remoteness from the scene of operations can hardly have helped the Commander-in-Chief to arrive at the right decisions. He, also, was at first inclined to defer action against the Mohmands until he could decide what to do about the Afridis, but when Sir Bindon Blood reported the very unsettled state of the tribes around Nawagai and south of Dir, he decided that a concerted advance on that area, with a

column coming up from Shabqadr, could not be postponed any longer. He hoped in fact to complete the operation by the end of September, after which some of the troops could be released to deal with the Afridis.

It was accordingly decided to constitute a Mohmand Field Force of two infantry brigades, plus a regiment of cavalry and two mountain batteries, to move north through the Mohmand country from Shabqadr in co-operation with the Malakand Force moving west via Nawagai. The objects to be achieved were: the protection of Dir and the Chitral road; the destruction of the lashkar under the Hadda Mulla; and the punishment of the Mohmands.

Considering that the converging columns were moving through unknown country, imperfectly mapped at that, the co-operation between them was remarkably good, and it owed a lot to the unselfish common sense of the two commanders, a quality that is sometimes lacking at that level.

The physical difficulties of the country were great and, together with the September heat, severely tested the endurance of the troops. The force left Shabqadr on 15 September and advanced over the Karappa and Nahakki Passes virtually without a shot being fired. The tribes were possibly surprised by the speed of the move as all villages were found deserted, and by the 20th the leading brigade was concentrated north of the Nahakki. The dispatch pays tribute to the excellent work done on the roads by 5th Company Bengal Sappers and Miners and 28th Pioneers.

On the 17th news had been received from General Blood that the Mulla was established in force on the Bedmanai Pass, and the next day came the report of the fighting near Inayat Kilai. This was followed by a somewhat premature telegram from army headquarters assuming that Blood would withdraw his leading brigade to concentrate at Inayat Kilai and on that account Elles, who had up till then been under Blood's orders, must now move against the Bedmanai with his own resources. Fortunately this essay in command by remote control and on imperfect information was thwarted by the good sense of two force commanders. Elles pressed northwards in accordance with the orders he had received, and on the 21st he moved his leading brigade to Lakarai, about six miles from the 3rd Brigade camp. The column commanders met and the 3rd (Malakand) Brigade was placed under Elles's orders for a joint attack on the Bedmanai. It will be remembered

from the previous chapter that following on the attack on the (Malakand) 2nd Brigade camp on the 14th General Blood, who had reached Nawagai with his leading Brigade the 3rd, had found himself most awkwardly placed. He was not strong enough to take on the opposition ahead of him, while if he went back to help deal with the situation around Inayat Kilai it would be interpreted as weakness and would be inviting a heavy rearguard action. He accordingly stood fast, and it was fortunate that he did so. On the night of the 19th there was an attack on his camp by two thousand men. The following night there was another far more serious onslaught lasting from nine o'clock till two in the morning. Swordsmen, covered by heavy rifle fire, attempted to rush the camp and at times there was fighting on three sides of the camp simultaneously. The determination of the enemy was such that a number of the attackers were shot down almost on the perimeter, but the defence remained steady and the safety of the camp was never in any doubt. The tribesmen lost over three hundred men killed and this heavy loss was undoubtedly responsible for the comparatively light opposition put up in the fighting on the Bedmanai three days later.

The pass carries the main track running from Nawagai south-west to the Kabul river. The idea of a converging attack was discarded as the advance of 1st Brigade from the south was already causing the enemy to look over his shoulder and a too obvious threat to his line of withdrawal might have discouraged him from fighting at all. The two brigades were accordingly first concentrated at a point about five miles north-north-east of the pass. They left camp at 7.15 a.m. on 23 September to attack a position the physical difficulties of which were as formidable as any on the frontier. Entering the gap the eye is struck by the stupendous precipices and beetling crags dropping sharply down from Yari Sar, which commands the pass to the east and hides the actual kotal from view from below. To the right are inaccessible cliffs, dropping sheer down for several hundred feet and completely commanding the route. The plan was for 1st Brigade with 20th Punjab Infantry in the lead to attack up the long spur to the left, while 3rd Brigade piqueted the right flank to cover the advance up the nala, and protected the positions taken up by the artillery. There was not a great deal of opposition and by 10.30 a.m. 20th Punjabis had reached enemy sangars some two thousand feet above the pass to the east, being most ably supported by 3rd Mountain Battery which, after a long climb over

very difficult country, were in action on a spur, also higher than the pass, and about two thousand yards short of it. The brigade now closed up for the final assault on Yari Sar, which was in the hands of the 20th by 11 a.m. Had the enemy put up a determined defence, occupying the heights to the west as well, casualties in the attack must have been very heavy; as it was the British losses were one man killed and three wounded. No estimate of what the enemy suffered was possible as all the killed and wounded were carried away. The Hadda Mulla was present but decamped at the first shot. He fell and hurt himself, and was carried on a bed through the pass where the women turned out to curse him for the trouble he had brought on their country. He was taken on, past his fastness in the Jarobi glen, to a village across the Durand Line.

The next objective was the glen, described by the Force Commander as the worst trap he had ever seen. It is four to five hundred yards wide at the mouth but narrows as it enters the hills, with steep rocky ridges and cliffs on both sides, and after about three-quarters of a mile there is a sharp turn to the right. About a thousand yards farther on there were found a few wretched huts and a small mosque, described as little better than a cowshed. It was the home of the Hadda Mulla. As it was impossible to take the whole force up the valley it was decided to form camp at the entrance, move up and deal with any villages found, returning to camp before dark. The enemy opposing the advance were thought to number only about a hundred and fifty but they were in a secure and commanding position behind rocks and sangars, and caused casualties amounting to one man killed and eighteen wounded. There was a determined rush by a dozen ghazis when the troops reached the mosque. Six were shot down and the rest bolted. The withdrawal began at 3.30 p.m. and was closely followed up at first. The 28th Bombay Pioneers, who had already been commended for their work on road construction on the way up, gained a mention from the commander for their steadiness during the retirement when they were employed in an ordinary infantry role.

At the same time 3rd (Malakand) Brigade had been busy in the valleys to the north dealing with one of the most recalcitrant sections of the Baizai, and it was now ordered to return to Peshawar to join the Tirah expeditionary force which was starting to concentrate. Army headquarters was anxious that both brigades of the Mohmand force should return also, but on the representation of the force commander

that there were still certain areas to be visited and punished the withdrawal was postponed for a few days. In most cases it was found that the jirgas came in, agreed to and complied with the terms imposed on them, but a few villages held out and suffered the destruction of their forts and towers for their obstinacy. The last of the troops were back in Peshawar by 7 October.

Except for the attacks on 3rd Brigade camp at Nawagai there had not been any severe fighting but the objects of the expedition had been achieved. The country of the hill Mohmands, never before visited by any troops, had been traversed from north to south and east to west, and their pet fastnesses of Bedmanai and Jarobi had surrendered after little more than token resistance. The Mulla's stronghold, though not, of course, his mosque, had been blown up and he himself discredited and forced to fly across the border.

The strategy employed of turning the Mohmand flank by an advance through Nawagai offered the only chance of a permanent settlement with the upper tribes, but as no road was ever built through Bajaur it was not possible to repeat the operation either in 1908 or 1935.

A decision as to the punishment of the assured clans was held over until the New Year when it was decided that the Tarakzai, in recognition of their good conduct, should suffer no penalty. The allowances of the remainder were resumed from 1 April 1898.

BETWEEN 1903 and 1907 the Mohmands gave sporadic trouble directed mainly against railway construction on an alignment, subsequently abandoned, that for a few miles ran along the right bank of the Kabul river. In the spring of 1908 they received an appeal for help from those inveterate troublemakers, the Zakha Khel Afridis, who saw that retribution was about to overtake them in the form of a punitive expedition against their villages in the Bazaar valley south of the Khaibar. The mullas responded with their usual enthusiasm and raised and sent off a small lashkar which arrived too late to take part in the fighting, thanks to the remarkable dispatch with which Sir James Willcocks, who was commanding at Peshawar, conducted his 'week-end war' against the Afridis. However, it was one thing to raise the clans, and quite another to expect them to return tamely home without a fight, so by way of letting off steam they made a series of raids along the Shabqadr border at the end of March, and it became apparent that the relatively small expedition against the Zakha Khels had sparked off something very much more serious among the Mohmands.

Military detachments at Shabqadr and Abazai were strengthened and two brigades, substantially those who had just been engaged in the operations in the Bazaar valley, were sent to the Mohmand border, while a third was held in reserve in Peshawar. On 19 April a lashkar of ten thousand men was threatening Shabqadr, and it was reported that reinforcements were arriving from all quarters, including parties from across the Durand Line. There was long-range skirmishing for two or three days, during which the new eighteen-pounder field gun came into action against the tribesmen for the first time, then during the night 23/24 April the Mohmands made a determined assault on two constabulary posts that had been taken over by the army. They were driven off without much difficulty and the following morning General Willcocks ordered an attack which routed them with heavy loss. Locally this had a steadying effect, but it was now reported that large bodies of men were assembling on the Afghan border, nominally forbidden to advance but in practice not restrained in any way. On 1 May they were said to be moving on Landi Kotal, which was held by six hundred men of the Khyber Rifles. The reserve brigade from Peshawar was ordered up the pass and it was joined by 2nd Infantry Brigade from Shabqadr which made a remarkable march of thirty-six miles in twenty-four hours. Between 2-4 May there were determined

attacks on the defences at the west end of the pass but the Khyber Rifles stood firm—one post, garrisoned by a subedar and fifty men, sustained an attack by four thousand enemy which went on for seventeen hours, being left in possession, as a trophy of war, of a scaling-ladder that had been placed against their wall.

On 4 May, 2nd and 3rd Brigades attacked along the heights on either side of the pass and routed the enemy, halting only when they reached the frontier. It was an explosive situation and all officers on leave from Northern Army were recalled. The trouble died down, but if the defence of the Mohmand border or the attack in the Khaibar had been anything less than completely successful matters could have got out of hand to an extent that might have involved international complications.

Next day both brigades marched back to Peshawar and preparations were put in hand for a punitive expedition against the upper Mohmands who were still uncompromisingly hostile. The leading troops advanced up the Gandab on 13 May and for twenty days three brigades ranged the country of the upper Mohmands, collecting fines and destroying the villages of those who would not pay them. They operated as far north as Lakarai, and fought the most determined action of the whole campaign against the Utman Khel who lost over a hundred and fifty men killed. Once again the Mohmands had shown their readiness, on little or no provocation, to interfere in British affairs, attracting as they did so a degree of active support from Afghanistan that was seldom given to any of the other tribes.

The lessons of 1897 had lasted for eleven years; the memory of what happened in 1908 had faded by the beginning of the First World War. In 1915, again stirred up by their mullas, a large lashkar invaded Peshawar district and was defeated with the most grievous loss, four hundred killed and one thousand wounded. Nothing daunted, in October of the same year another army of nine thousand came down from the hills. After that the Mohmand blockade was instituted—fortified blockhouses from Michni to Abazai, connected by a wired line which was electrified by night. The blockade was raised in April 1916, but it had to be reimposed six months later and it was not until July 1917 that the Mohmands made their final submission.

There was then peace until early in 1927 when a religious leader, the Haji of Turangzai, succeeded in stirring up trouble, and led a lashkar of upper Mohmands into lower Mohmand territory to discipline the maliks who had maintained a loyal and friendly attitude

towards the government. The Haji was a native of a village in British territory, and up to 1915 had commanded considerable respect and influence through the legitimate pursuit of his calling, but his sermons became more and more inflammatory and he moved first to Buner and finally to Lakarai where he was established in a vacant mosque, once the property of the Lame Mulla, and soon held undisputed sway over the tribes in the neighbourhood. He was then nearly seventy years old. He was joined in his activities in 1927 by another firebrand, the Fakir of Alingar, a man of great influence among the tribes of Bajaur. It was at first hoped that friction between the two leaders would break up the proceedings but early in June a small lashkar of fifteen hundred was reported to be advancing on the line of the old blockade. A small motorized column moved from Peshawar to Shabqadr and on the night of 5 June blockhouses held by khassadars were fired on. The plan was to wait until the enemy moved out into the plain and for the column then to attack them, supported by the R.A.F., but things did not work out that way as the enemy elected to remain in their hills. However, as they had committed an act of war by crossing the border and firing on the khassadars, the necessary warnings were given and on the evening of 6 June nineteen aircraft from 5th, 20th, 27th and 60th Squadron R.A.F. carried out bombing operations. Despite unfavourable conditions—a dust storm was blowing—a gathering of two hundred men was seen and dispersed. The attack was repeated next day, and again the following night with the aid of parachute flares, whereupon the lashkar dispersed. From information subsequently collected casualties were estimated at fifteen men killed and a few wounded. This very rapid success was attributed to their failure to take cover, as they had been assured by their leaders that the bombs would not explode and that bombing by night was not even possible. The mullas were thus thoroughly discredited for misleading their followers, and they dispersed to their homes.

Oddly enough the Mohmands at first made no attempt to take advantage of the internal security troubles that were rife in the Peshawar district in the years 1930-31, and it was not until March 1932 that the Haji of Turangzai, by way of demonstrating his sympathy with the Red Shirts, who were then on their last legs, threatened to attack the lower Mohmands. The threat did not materialize, but there were rumours of war for the next few months. The possibility of using the R.A.F. to bring pressure to bear against the would-be

aggressors had to be discarded because of the risk of transgressing the presumptive border.

In July 1933 the upper Mohmands invaded the Halimzai country and before they were beaten off they inflicted damage on several villages. On the 25th of the month orders were accordingly given for a force to enter the Gandab valley to restore order and, by way of facilitating any further operations that might be necessary to protect the assured clans, to build a motorable track up the valley.

The plan was for a mobile force to hold the blockade line while Peshawar Brigade, commanded by Brigadier C. J. E. Auchinleck,* moved over the Karappa Pass to cover the road building. Nowshera Brigade moved out in support and took over the protection of the lines of communication. By 10 August there were reported to be enemy lashkars in the hills around the Khapak and Nahakki Passes, there had been some slight opposition, and there was constant sniping of camps by night. Air action had been restricted as no agreement had been reached with the Afghan Government to permit attacks on gatherings and villages beyond the presumptive border, and the necessary warning notices were not dropped north of the Nahakki until 17 August. On the 20th as there was no sign of the upper Mohmands coming to terms it was decided to extend the road to the foot of the Nahakki. On 3 September a jirga was held at Ghalanai which was attended only by the assured clans. The terms announced, which were in due course notified to be absentees, were that failing assurances against further aggression the road would, if necessary, be taken over the Nahakki and a blockade imposed. At this juncture the Afghan Government notified their agreement to ground and air action being taken against tribes living on their side of the Frontier, provided that it was restricted to what was necessary for the protection of tribes living under British control. Warning notices were at once dropped but before any bombing took place jirgas came in from the upper Mohmands and accepted the terms imposed. In return they were told that they would be allowed to use the road for their lawful occasions and, on the representation of both the upper and lower Mohmands, the government agreed to act as mediator in inter-tribal disputes. It turned out to be no more than a pious resolution and no good came from it.

So ended the Mohmand operations of 1933, without any major

* Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck.

engagement, or any opportunity for either army or air forces to strike a blow calculated to discredit the instigators of the trouble, the Fakir of Alingar, the Haji of Turangzai, and his sons Badshah Gul I, II, and III.

While the Mohmand operations were in progress trouble broke out in Bajaur, a territory over which, because of its remoteness, it had always been difficult to exercise any sort of control. In May an individual, said to be a relation of ex-King Amanulla of Afghanistan, and claiming to be a pretender to the throne, started making trouble. He had an accomplice, and between them they attempted to raise the tribes against the king, Nadir Khan, who had only recently established himself in Kabul. They were given shelter by the Khan of Kotkai, a village south of the Mamund territory. As political pressure failed to persuade him to evict the strangers air operations were decided on, to be under the control of the A.O.C. in India. On 24 July leaflets were dropped, giving the Khan till the 29th to surrender his troublesome guests, for whom a guarantee of safe conduct was given. He was warned that, failing compliance, his village would be bombed for a period of ten days from 1 August. In the first four days a total of twenty-four sorties were flown, after which photographs showed that so much damage had been done that further attacks would be a waste of effort. Daily demonstration flights were carried out until the 10th, when the tribes were warned that preparations were in hand to send a brigade into their country. On the 13th the terms were accepted and both the troublemakers were handed over.

As at the time of the threatened incursion by the Mohmands in 1927 air attacks on quite a small scale succeeded at little cost and without casualties in bringing the tribes to terms. On both occasions there was in the background the threat of action by the army and it is a matter for conjecture as to how far the one was complementary to the other.

During the year 1935, thanks to the machinations of the Haji and his sons and of the Fakir of Alingar, the troops in the so-called 'peace' stations of Peshawar and Nowshera were more continuously engaged on operations than at any time in the chequered history of that part of the frontier. The fighting was divided into two quite distinct parts.

On and off, Nowshera Brigade was engaged in the Loe Agra area from February till June. As the crow flies Loe Agra is only twelve miles

west of the Malakand, but it lies in the heart of a tangled mass of mountains, rugged and precipitous, cut by steep valleys, and densely wooded to within a couple of hundred yards of their summits. By agreements made in 1900 and 1907 the area was included in the Malakand protected area, but in fact the agreements were never enforced and control was nominal. The importance of this pocket of tribal territory, apart from its proximity to the Swat river canal on which the fertility of much of the Peshawar valley depended, lay in its suitability as a jumping-off ground where gangs from Bajaur, just across the Swat river, could lie up before raiding into the settled districts.

Sometime in 1934 the Fakir of Alingar, although forbidden to do so by the political agent, entered the Agra area, supposedly on a religious mission, but actually to stir up trouble. The tribes made no attempt to stop him, and a party of Swat levies sent to bar his way was attacked and driven out with some loss. The government accordingly decided to impose a fine on the tribes and to put teeth into the agreement of 1907 by establishing a levy post at Loe Agra.

This decision resulted in a fierce outcry from the Fakir who proclaimed that it was the first step to the absorption of the whole of Bajaur, and called on all the tribes across the river, as well as those in Loe Agra, to unite to oppose the invader and free their kinsmen in Agra from bondage. These would-be slaves then found themselves in an awkward position: left alone they would have been happy enough to accept the agreement of 1907, but they were too frightened of the Fakir to take the initiative.

Loe Agra can be entered either from Dargai or, at the north-east corner, from the Malakand-Chakdara road. During the month of February Nowshera Brigade traversed the whole area, going in at the north-east and returning to the main road at Dargai. They fought one stiff battle and succeeded in establishing the levy post. They were back in Nowshera by 3 March, but only two days later a lashkar of five hundred men crossed the Swat river and the post was surrendered without a fight; the garrison had in fact been told to make themselves scarce.

The area was proscribed to enable immediate air action to be taken but owing to the very close nature of the country and the skill of the enemy in concealing themselves the R.A.F. found very few targets. Early in April the brigade returned to the area in full force and on the

11th once more fought a battle for Loe Agra, this time from the south. Mr Best, the political agent, who was moving up in rear of one of the battalions with a small levy escort, was killed, being shot at short range by some enemy concealed in a patch of standing crops.

A sweep of the whole area was carried out next day but it appeared that the enemy, who had been very roughly handled, had retired across the river; and that was, in effect, the end of the Loe Agra fighting. At a jirga held early in May it was evident that the Fakir's influence was still very strong but, with the very clear expression of the government's determination to enforce the terms of the 1907 settlement and to deal with any incursion into the area, the situation slowly improved.

The 1935 operations against the Mohmands were a direct legacy of events in 1933—the upper Mohmands very much resented the Gandab road as a threat to their isolation and independence—and they were spoiling for a fight. The Haji and his sons were in no way discouraged by their various setbacks and lost no opportunity of stirring up trouble, being prominent in persuading the upper Mohmands to refuse to surrender certain outlaws who were active in harassing the settled districts. Retaliatory action in the form of a round-up of upper Mohmands arrested in Peshawar district temporarily discredited them, but the Fakir's chance came when a quarrel broke out between two of the lower Mohmand sections over the distribution of money paid for contracts on the Gandab road.

The major act of aggression, the point of no return, which set in train the Mohmand operations of 1935 was a jirga held on 14 August when Badshah Gul I, eldest son of the Haji, persuaded the lower Mohmands of the Pindiali, the next valley north from the Gandab, to set about the destruction of the Gandab road on the sector south from the Karappa Pass. The lashkar numbered about fourteen hundred men, half from the Pindialis, and half Safis from the north and, as the khassadars could not be expected to withstand such an attack unsupported, they were withdrawn, and Peshawar Brigade column moved to Michni the following afternoon.

At the same time it was decided to try to bring the offenders to terms by air action which was to be under the control of the A.O.C. in India. Warning notices went out on the 17th and bombing began two days later. At first movement continued in the areas attacked, and even

in villages that had been bombed many hamlets were still occupied, but after four days it became apparent that evacuation was virtually complete. Families were feeling the strain of enforced absence from their homes, and the care of flocks was causing concern owing to difficulties of watering and feeding. There was, however, no sign of submission by the actively hostile elements. The numbers of lower Mohmands with the lashkar decreased but the Safis who, urged on by the Haji and his sons, were the hard core of the resistance, seemed to be unaffected, and reinforcements lead by the Fakir of Alingar arrived from the Baizais and Khawezais.

As it seemed unlikely, at any rate with the squadrons available, that air action alone would secure all the objects desired by the government preparations went on for simultaneous action by the army. Nowshera Brigade was concentrated near Shabqadr by 21 August and the brigadier, the Hon. H. R. L. G. Alexander* handed over command of Mohforce to Brigadier Auchinleck, who had returned from leave. The immediate objects set were to clear the enemy from the Gandab road and enforce the terms to be imposed on the lower Mohmands for their misbehaviour, while steps to deal with the upper Mohmands were reserved for further consideration.

On the morning of the 23rd the Governor of the N.W.F.P. formally warned the Mohmands that the government intended to reopen the Gandab valley and repair the road. That done, any further extension of the area of operations depended on the attitude taken by the tribes. The warning fell on deaf ears, for that very morning they were fiercely opposing the advancing troops. The approach to the Karappa Pass, which is a side entrance into the Gandab, is through country quite different from what elsewhere on the frontier was almost a familiar pattern. There were no beetling cliffs to be reached only by climbing precipitous hillsides strewn with gigantic boulders and there were, equally, no commanding features, the capture of which would secure the safety of the column in the valley below. But the country was none the less difficult, for it consisted of a mass of small hills intersected by deep, twisting, scrub-covered nalas, and lacking any well-defined features. Every hilltop was enfiladed by others five hundred to a thousand yards away. In 1897, admittedly imposing a severe strain on the troops, the advance on the first day reached Ghalanai to the north

* Field-Marshal Viscount Alexander.

of the pass; in 1908 the first camp was short of the pass, the advance being unopposed; in 1935, in the face of quite considerable opposition, the force commander used both brigades for the operation. Peshawar Brigade led and established itself at the halfway mark, and such were the demands on the infantry to protect the area gained that on reaching camp short of the pass the leading troops of Nowshera Brigade remained deployed on the hills for the night, protecting a perimeter occupied only by brigade headquarters and the camp colour parties. Losses had been five killed and twenty wounded, and the enemy, whose strength had been put at fourteen hundred, had over forty men killed. The advance continued the next day over the pass to Ghalanai where Peshawar Brigade was to remain encamped for over three weeks, during which time the enemy held both the Khapak and Nahakki Passes. During this period both Peshawar and Nowshera Brigades carried out a number of limited reconnaissances on both sides of the main Gandab valley, a feature being the almost general choice of the very early hours of the morning for the initial advance from camp, thereby surprising the enemy and ensuring that the main features covering the advance were secured by daylight.

Air operations on a considerable scale had been going on the whole time and their effectiveness was demonstrated by the approaches made by several clans tendering submission if the attacks were called off. The fact remained, however, that the jirgas were not fully representative and the crux of the matter was that, as always, the Haji had recruited his followers from the young bloods among the tribes and from tribes further afield who were less affected by the discomforts and inconveniences that resulted from the bombing. Consideration had therefore to be given to further action by the army that would finally discredit the Haji and his satellites. To remain indefinitely in the Gandab valley would in the long run exhaust the enemy's patience, and the lashkar would probably disperse, but it would take time and at best be an inconclusive victory. It was accordingly decided to advance and extend the road north of the Nahakki, and to establish in this forward area a camp from which further punitive operations could be carried out. The 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades, from Rawalpindi and Jhelum, were ordered to join Mohforce, and were used for the protection of the lines of communication, and of the roadhead camp at Ghalanai, respectively. Nowshera Brigade moved to a camp three miles north of Ghalanai, and the stage was set for the advance.

The Nahakki Pass crossed, at a height of 3,124 feet, a very well-defined ridge running east and west. To the right the ground rose quite steeply for about two and a half miles to a point eighteen hundred feet above the col; on the west the slope was more gradual and after two miles the ridge had only risen five hundred feet. From that point, where it swings south-west, it climbed more steeply to pt 4080, approached along a narrow, rugged ridge, falling steeply away on both sides. To the south of pt 4080 were clumps of rock allowing the enemy to approach unseen, and on the western face there were a number of caves.

The plan for the capture of the Nahakki Pass on 17/18 September left little to chance. When Peshawar Brigade moved out of camp half an hour before midnight the first two miles of its route were covered by piquets already established by the Nowshera Brigade. Three and a half hours later 5/1st Punjab Regiment and 5/10th Baluch Regiment had reached the point where they had to unload their mules to begin the long and difficult climb to the heights to the east. They reached their objective about 6 a.m. just as it was getting light, meeting no opposition, though they came across shellproof shelters and other signs that showed the enemy had been occupying these heights in considerable strength for some time. Nowshera Brigade left camp at 1 a.m., captured the heights and secured the ridge to a point about two miles west of the pass. They were in position by 4.45 a.m. Behind these two brigades 3rd Infantry Brigade formed a defensive flank to the west astride the large nala that runs down from the Khapak Pass. At 6.30 the Highland Light Infantry advanced to capture the Nahakki, and an hour later 1st Bn Bombay Grenadiers went through down to the site chosen for the brigade camp. At 9.30, 18th Cavalry passed through the brigade to cover the whole front. At 11 a.m. a convoy of two thousand mules began to cross the pass, and five hours later its tail was clear on the return journey. By 6 p.m. both brigades were safely established in their respective camps: Peshawar Brigade east of Nahakki village, fifteen hundred yards north of the pass; Nowshera Brigade near Wucha Jawar, about the same distance to the south.

The strength of the lashkar fell immediately after this successful operation, and it appeared to break up into small parties, but both brigade camps and their protecting piquets were sniped every night. A week later an increase of up to a thousand men was reported, the main strength being in the area north-west of the Khapak Pass, while

during that time Peshawar Brigade and 18th Cavalry had engaged small parties of enemy in the plain to the north.

On the 21st Badshah Gul attended a jirga in the Khawezai country at which the more responsible elements made it clear that they wanted peace, but he succeeded in influencing the younger men to continue the struggle and no decision was reached. That same day he left for Dakka with a few followers, and, having failed to get any satisfaction from a local Afghan official, who told them plainly that they would be well advised to calm down and provoke the British Government no further, his party went on to Kabul.

On the 24th Major-General Muspratt* on return from leave assumed command of Mohforce and Brigadier Auchinleck returned to command Peshawar Brigade. About this date Brigadier Alexander was evacuated to hospital.

It was now known that the elders were anxious for peace, but the hard fact remained that a large lashkar was still in the field, and was becoming increasingly aggressive, and it was accordingly decided that all three brigades should take part in an operation on the 29th with the object of striking what was hoped would be the decisive blow.

As a preliminary to the main plan 3rd Infantry Brigade carried out a very successful ambush. It was laid in the area where the nala running down from the Khapak Pass debouched into the plain and it was designed to intercept the snipers as they returned from their nightly target practice against Wucha Jawar camp. It was most successful and enemy losses were known to have been eight killed and fourteen wounded, at no cost to the ambushing troops.

The object set for the main operation was to inflict the maximum loss on the enemy in two areas: north of the Nahakki in a locality two miles north-west of Peshawar Brigade camp and, south of the pass, in the Wucha Jawar valley. Peshawar Brigade had, therefore, a straightforward and not very difficult task which consisted mainly of destroying a small hamlet whose malik had remained consistently hostile. Nowshera Brigade were ordered to capture pt 4080 at the head of the Wucha Jawar valley and the high ground on either side, protecting as they did so the left flank of Peshawar Brigade. The 3rd Infantry Brigade, as on the 17th, were to cover the valley that secured the left flank.

Peshawar Brigade met with some slight opposition, mainly on their

* General Sir Sydney Muspratt.

left but, with the cover given by Nowshera Brigade on the hills above them, they were never in any difficulties and duly destroyed the hamlet. The 3rd Brigade, after their successful ambush of the previous night, met no opposition, but the artillery supporting them made good practice against considerable numbers of the enemy who could be seen moving north on the hills at the head of the valley, no doubt hastening to join the battle against The Guides.

The operations of Nowshera Brigade were more eventful. The role of protecting Peshawar Brigade was simple enough and involved moving over almost exactly the same ground covered on the 17th. The capture of pt 4080, a real hornet's nest where the enemy were known to be in strength and could be expected to fight with great determination, was an operation that called for most careful planning. Not only was the brigade's area of operation extended by a good two thousand yards further to the west, but the final objective positively bristled with tactical difficulties. It could be approached only in single file along a knife-edge ridge enfiladed on both flanks, it was extremely difficult to bring covering fire to bear onto the enemy's positions, and the far side of pt 4080 was completely blind, so that the enemy were able to bring up reinforcements unseen.

One battalion was allotted to the hill south of the valley, one, 2/15th Punjab Regiment, to look after Peshawar Brigade, and one battalion was ordered to attack pt 4080. Thus, out of eleven infantry battalions available in the force that morning only one, The Guides, who for various reasons were very much below strength, was concentrated, if that be the word, at the point of decision. The three battalions of the brigade moved off on diverging routes from the very start, and The Guides were ordered to approach their objectives up the precipitous spur from the valley below instead of along the ridge. They reached high ground fifteen hundred yards from their objective without opposition by 5.20 a.m. and had advanced another four hundred yards by 5.45, capturing a single tribesman who managed to fire a warning shot. When the advance continued it ran into enfilade fire from both flanks, though there was not yet any indication of how strong the enemy were. After occupying successive ridges to give such covering fire as was possible, there remained two weak platoons for the final assault on this formidable position. Somehow they managed to reach the eastern slopes of pt 4080 and were reinforced after three quarters of an hour by Major Good, who was commanding the

battalion, with the other two platoons of the leading company. This party made for a position further to the left where they tried to keep down enemy fire from that flank. The adjutant, Captain Meynell, went up to the original leading platoons, as the company commander had been killed, and shortly after that the position was completely surrounded by enemy who had been creeping up unobserved from cover on the far side of the hill. Before himself advancing the battalion commander had ordered forward one of the companies who had been supporting the advance and two more platoons joined him. He tried to get in touch with the forward observing officer from 3rd Mountain Battery, but he and several of his party had been wounded, and there was no communication back to the guns. The observer from 15th Medium Battery had also been wounded. Intervening high ground prevented visual communication with brigade headquarters which was some distance back along the ridge. A message to 2/15th Punjab Regiment asking for help was interrupted when the signaller was hit, but the battalion did send a small reinforcement. At 8 a.m. the enemy finally overran Captain Meynell and his party, and only a few wounded managed to reach the position held by battalion headquarters. As the enemy was now directly overlooking him, Major Good, who had himself been wounded, realizing that his position was hopeless, collected everyone he could and ordered a withdrawal down a ravine leading to the Wucha Jawar valley, covered by fire from the battalion machine guns. At 9.15 a second artillery observer arrived and an hour later the shelling and air bombing of pt 4080 began. An earlier duplicate message to brigade headquarters, sent by both signal and runner, failed to arrive and they first learnt what had been happening from a message timed 9.39. Heavy artillery fire was now brought down on the whole ridge, and support was also given by light tanks firing from the slopes at the head of the valley, but in the main it was the losses they suffered at the hands of The Guides that prevented the enemy from following up the advantage he gained at the critical moment when he overran pt 4080. Captain Meynell was killed and the citation for the Victoria Cross that was awarded to him posthumously recorded that 'his determined leadership resulted in the infliction of such casualties on the enemy that they were unable to exploit their success'. The total strength of the six platoons who reached pt 4080 was four British officers, five Viceroy commissioned officers, a hundred and thirty Indian other ranks. Of these only one V.C.O. and thirty men came

unscathed out of the battle. Thirty-eight had been injured by falls from the precipitous rocks.

It was clear that the whole difficulty of the operation had been seriously underestimated. There were only two courses open that offered any chance of success. If it was decided to capture pt 4080 there should have been a properly co-ordinated brigade plan with battalions leap-frogging along the ridge. Alternatively the brigade could have formed a really strong defensive flank then, if the enemy who were at pt 4080 in such strength decided to enter the fray, it was they who would have had to do the attacking.

There is no doubt that this action, whatever the cost, finally broke the back of the resistance and on 1 October a fully representative jirga came in to meet the force commander and the political agent. The terms were announced: the dispersal of the lashkar, and a solemn undertaking to maintain friendly relations with the government and with those who acknowledged its protection; at the same time the road would be completed to the northern foot of the pass. At the final jirga held on the 15th the Governor of the N.W.F.P. reiterated these terms, making it clear that the government had abandoned its old policy of inflicting petty fines on those who had shown themselves unable to appreciate forbearance. The extension of the road was a symbol of the new policy, and it was in the power of the tribes themselves to regulate that policy.

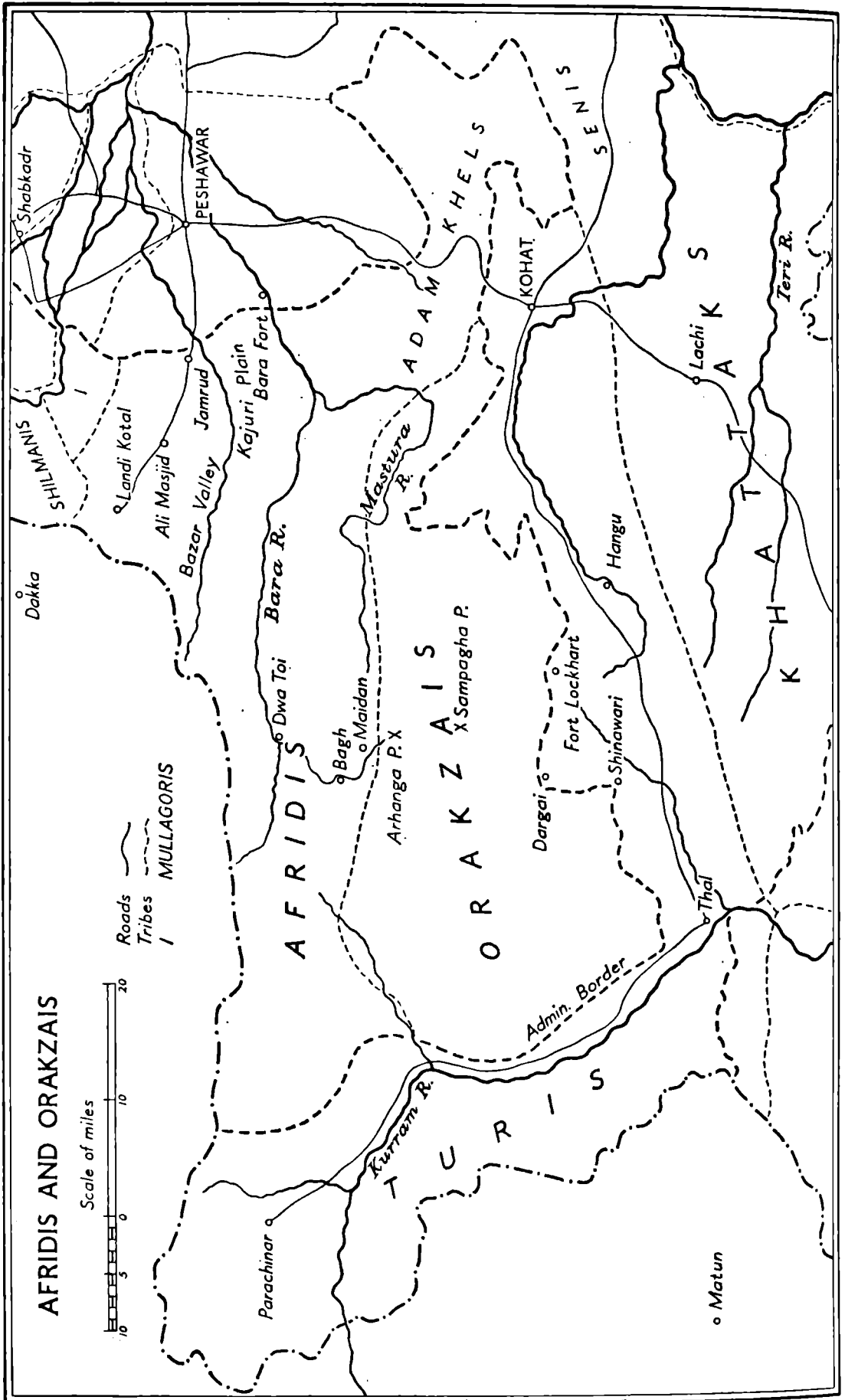
By 1935 the Indian Army had been fighting the Mohmands on and off for eighty-five years, and in this last campaign they had been supported by aircraft, light tanks and medium artillery. Properly used these weapons gave an overwhelming advantage, and the tribesman was powerless to resist. Nonetheless, and in spite of air attacks deep into his country, the Mohmand fought on far longer than he had done in any earlier campaign and, at the bitter end, he was able to turn the tables and exploit, in a flash, a tactical blunder made by his opponent, caught for a fleeting moment on almost even terms.

THE Indian Army's most formidable opponents were the Afridis and the Mahsuds: for sustained, bitter and skilful fighting there is nothing to compare with the attacks on the columns withdrawing from the Tirah in 1897 and the operations in south Waziristan in 1919. Geography being what it is, the Afridis were set on a collision course with the British from the very beginning. Two vitally important roads, up the Khaibar to Kabul, and from Peshawar to Kohat, ran through Afridi territory, and Peshawar, capital of the province, was their market and their shopping place.

The Indian Army came into contact with the Afridis during the First Afghan War when they harried reinforcements and reliefs on their way to Kabul, and in 1842 signally defeated the first attempt to send a brigade to the relief of Jalalabad. After the war the allowances they had been drawing for keeping open the Khaibar, to compensate them for the tolls they had been in the habit of levying, were continued but they were so little to be trusted that between 1848 and 1878 the pass was scarcely used, an alternative route being established which, after leaving Dakka, followed the river and then climbed some miles north of Landi Kotal to pass through the Mallagori country to the plain.

There was throughout this period sporadic raiding into British territory of the most audacious nature and even in Peshawar cantonment itself neither life nor property could be considered safe. One most sensational exploit in 1874 was the kidnapping of the bandmaster of the 72nd Highlanders. A party of Zakha Khel, seeking whom they might despoil, found him asleep outside the walls of the cemetery, a lantern by his side. They at first suspected a trap laid by the police but, overcoming their suspicions, they lifted him and carried him bodily halfway to Jamrud, where he was set down and, supported by his captors, walked a further four miles before the fresh morning air brought him to his senses. One version of the story suggests that he must have been under the influence of a powerful narcotic: today it would cost him over fifty shillings a bottle. He was well fed and kindly treated and after about ten days returned to his regiment. Probably because any form of retribution would have involved the hazardous operation of forcing a way into their mountain fastnesses no military action was taken against the Afridis for this or for a hundred other minor offences.

The *casus belli* of the Second Afghan War was the refusal by the



MAP 7. Afridis and Orakzais

Afghan commander to allow Chamberlain's mission free passage through the Khaibar. The Afghans occupied the naturally very strong position astride the gorge at Ali Masjid, with some help from the Afridis watching their flanks. Profiting by Pollock's experience General Maude made a wide detour to the north and came down in rear of the enemy, who then abandoned the position without further fighting. It is said that they retired by a little known route shown them by the Zakha Khel, who relieved them of some eight hundred rifles as a consideration for services rendered.

The British force reached Dakka without further trouble and there halted and at once there was trouble on the lines of communication from Afridis as well as Mohmands. In December a punitive expedition entered the Bazaar valley, but the result was inconclusive, and a second expedition had to be sent the following month. It ran into determined opposition, so much so that to deal with it would have involved crossing over into the Bara valley, which in turn might have led to a full-scale war with the whole tribe. As General Maude found himself with a possible attack from the Mohmands on his other flank, he cut short the operation and withdrew.

In 1879 Captain Robert Warburton had been posted as political agent to the Khaibar but he spent the next year attached to divisional headquarters at Jalalabad, and a further two years on sick leave, so that it was not until early 1882 that he settled down to his new responsibilities and there began what was, at its own level, one of the most remarkable tours of duty that the history of the frontier has to record. It was the first time that a political agent, unencumbered with the administration of a settled district, had been placed in charge of a trans-frontier tribe, and a most remarkable man was chosen for the task. His father was an artillery officer who took part in the First Afghan War. In November 1840 he fell in love with and married a noble Afghan lady, the niece of Amir Dost Mohammad, the witnesses to the ceremony being Sir A. Burnes, Colonels Sturt and Jenkins. After the final collapse in Kabul the elder Warburton was one of the six hostages handed over to the Afghan sardars; his wife took refuge with her relations and was for months relentlessly harried by Sardar Mohammad Akbar Khan. After a series of miraculous escapes her son, Robert, was born in a Ghilzai fort near Gandamak on 11 July 1842. In due course his father took him to England and he completed his education at Addiscombe and Woolwich, and was commissioned into his father's regiment on 18 December 1861.

Nine years later he was transferred to the Punjab commission and posted to the Peshawar division as assistant commissioner.

His formula for dealing with Pathans was simple enough: officers so employed must have a knowledge of their language, customs and ways. He tells his own story in his book. His headquarters were in Peshawar but the secret of his success was that after the first year or so he spent the hot-weather months in camp on Tor Tsappar, the mountain over-looking Landi Kotal from the north. 'It was understood by the tribesmen that wherever my camp was in their hills the greatest enemies might resort to it with perfect safety. Hence for six or seven weeks my camp was full of men having deadly blood feuds with one another, armed to the teeth, yet no outrage was ever committed; and I may say this rule was implicitly carried out by me for more than fifteen years. During all that time there never was an attempt made to steal a farthing's worth of property from our tents or camp.'*

He pays a tribute to Mackeson. 'I go by native evidence and opinion, which is always a good standard to judge by, and the name and character of Mackeson are as fresh on the Peshawar border and the Khaibar Range as if he had passed away but yesterday. Yet Frederick Mackeson died over forty five years ago.† In all modesty he would never have agreed that in like fashion his own name would be one to conjure with. In 1933, thirty-five years after he left, a battalion of the Cheshire Regiment moving in relief was due to arrive by train at Landi Kotal station. The brigade staff went down to meet them and were surprised to find the platform crowded with Afridi maliks. On inquiring as to the reason for their presence, they were told that Warburton's grandson (the son of a daughter) was an officer in the regiment and that they had come to welcome him to the Khaibar.

Warburton was most ably assisted by Sardar Aslam Khan,‡ who was in command of the Khyber Jezailchis, as the irregular levies were called who had been raised in 1878 for the protection of the caravans travelling through the pass. Aslam Khan was a Saddozai whose father had been Wazir to the Amir Shah Shuja, a connection that was a great factor in commanding Afridi loyalties. His youngest son, Hissamuddin, rose to

* *Eighteen Years in the Khyber*—Murray 1900.

† *Ibid.*

‡ The Hon. Colonel Mohammad Aslam Khan.

the rank of brigadier and was knighted; and the youngest of his three grandsons, Lieutenant-Colonel Iftikharuddin, commanded the Khyber Rifles from 1949 to 1951. The Jezailchis were an untidy, unkempt band of excellent men, but without any discipline or *esprit-de-corps*. In the teeth of contrary advice they became properly turned out and drilled and 'we were rewarded in the end, when the Khyber Rifles behaved splendidly in the Black Mountain expeditions of 1888 and 1891, and when they fought against their own kith and kin, brother against brother in that fatal month of August 1897 until, having no head to look to or guide them, treachery and discord ensued'. They were the only one of the frontier corps ever to serve outside their own area.

Nothing that has been said must give the impression that the life of the political agent in the Khaibar was any sinecure: on the contrary, it was one long, nerve-racking struggle to expose and outwit the endless tribal intrigues that might have brought them into armed conflict with the government. The measure of Warburton's success is that for fifteen years there was no serious trouble, though in 1892 it was a very close thing.

The leading roles on the Afridi side were then played by a Kuki Khel malik, Amin Khan, who had inherited from his father a dislike of the British and, of course, a mulla—Sayed Akbar, young, avaricious and energetic and, of the three holy men who were permitted to preach and give advice at the great gatherings at the mosque of Bagh every Friday, in every way the least respected. In June 1892 reports began to come in that trouble was brewing. Amin Khan had been spending money freely and there were minor incidents, such as an attack on the postal orderlies. The Commissioner in Peshawar was informed and a request made for troops to be moved to stiffen the resistance of the Khyber Rifles. For ten days nothing was done and it was not until a lashkar of eight to ten thousand men reached a point only five miles from Jamrud that two companies of 14th Sikhs were sent out, followed next day by two companies of Royal Scots Fusiliers, with a half section of artillery. That night there was an attack and an attempt to burn down one of the forts in the entrance to the pass, and from Jamrud a reddish glare could be seen which increased in intensity as the night grew darker. The political agent was worn out with anxiety after an eighteen-hour day, and was trying to snatch some sleep in Jamrud fort before leading a party out to the rescue, when the story came in that Amin

Khan had fled. It turned out to be true. Just after the attack on the fort had been repulsed Amin Khan heard that Hindus bringing down supplies for his men had been captured by Zakha Khel posted by Warburton to block certain tracks and this, together with the news that the British were advancing in the morning, effectively damped the fires of enthusiasm. His following turned about and did not stop till they reached their homes in Tirah. 'It was a Providential escape. At the same time I firmly believe that the Afridi lashkar, as in 1897, only wanted a good excuse to get back to their country, and had no desire or wish to fight the government.'*

By the time he came to retire in 1897 Warburton could show an imposing array of material improvements up and down the pass, but above all, in a final commendation of his services, the Punjab Government recorded that 'the Khaibar on Kafila day is as safe as a high road in India'. In assessing the possibility that the Tirah campaign might have been averted, the first stage at which matters began to go wrong was when higher authority consistently and repeatedly turned a deaf ear to Warburton's recommendations that they should look ahead to the day when he and Aslam Khan would in the ordinary course of events have to retire. He had very early on got rid of his Orakzai assistant as he found that he could not be relied on to deal impartially in matters of tribal intrigue, but he failed to get a British officer as a replacement. At the end of 1896 Captain Barton of The Guides joined him as assistant with the idea that he should succeed to command of the Khyber Rifles when Aslam Khan went on pension. Then when the day came for Warburton to leave, what he had always feared came to pass. Barton, after less than six months' experience, took over the Khyber Rifles, and Aslam Khan, old and in failing health, his pension papers already before the Punjab Government, became political agent in the Khaibar.

'On that afternoon of 10 May 1897 there were hundreds of Afridis crowding the railway platform to take a last look at one who had been associated with them for nigh eighteen years.'† And he records that when he left there was no single question of any importance troubling them. The causes of the 1892 trouble, whatever significance they may have had at that time, had long been forgotten.

* *Eighteen Years in the Khyber.*

† *Ibid.*

In the absence of written records Warburton's version of the chain of events leading up to the troubles in August 1897 is likely to be as good as any, for he had an unequalled opportunity of interrogating the Afridis before, during, and after the campaign that followed. The Mulla Sayed Akbar, the ringleader in 1892, seems to have visited Ghulam Haidar the Afghan Commander-in-Chief in Jalalabad in May. He was received with signal honours and when he returned home must have begun to prepare the ground at the weekly prayer meetings. Still, it was not until after the defeat of the Mohmands at Shabqadr that reports filtered through from Tirah that the mullas were urging both Afridis and Orakzais to take arms against the government. The Hadda Mulla, having failed in his attempt to go to the help of the Mad Mulla in the Malakand, had passed the torch along the border. On the evening of 13 August Warburton, who was still on leave, received a telegram asking him if he would be willing to accept re-employment 'with reference to Afridi affairs'. His reply accepting the offer was sent off that same night. Nothing came of it, which was a pity, for there was probably still time: but only just. As it was, he was not employed till the very end of September when he was invited to join the political staff of the force commander.

On 4 August the deputy commissioner in Kohat passed to Peshawar the report that the Mulla Sayed Akbar had persuaded the Orakzais to rise against the government and was busy inciting the Afridis to do the same. Unfortunately the Commissioner rejected the story as it conflicted with information reaching him from his own sources. The warning was repeated on the 15th and again disregarded. Udney actually wired to Simla that reliable information indicated that there was no serious or general movement among either Orakzais or Afridis. On the 17th Aslam Khan brought in the malik Amin Khan with the news that a lashkar ten thousand strong, pricked on by a posse of fifteen hundred holy men from across the Afghan border, had left Bagh the day before and was advancing with the intention of attacking the posts of the Khyber Rifles. The possibility of reinforcing Landi Kotal and other key posts with some regular troops was turned down, partly on the not very convincing plea of supply difficulties, although indeed operations were in progress both against the Mohmands and in the Malakand, and partly as such a course would imply distrust in the intention of the tribesmen to keep to their treaty obligations, and in the loyalty of the Khyber Rifles. Barton also wrote from Landi Kotal

asking to be reinforced. His request was refused, and he was ordered to abandon his men to their own devices and withdraw to Jamrud. The maliks of the pass were ordered to reinforce Landi Kotal, a brigade of all arms was sent to Jamrud and a small detachment to Fort Bara. On the 23rd the Afridis attacked and by evening all posts up to Ali Masjid had fallen, though up to two-thirds of the garrisons withdrew with their rifles to Jamrud. Next day the attack on Landi Kotal began and for twenty-four hours was repulsed with great loss to the enemy. Early next day the Shinawaris of the garrison, the tribe who own the land at the west of the pass, jumped over the wall and deserted. The rot had set in. A malik waving a white flag was admitted. He said he was authorized to make terms, and stated that Jamrud had fallen and it was even doubtful if the British could hold Peshawar. 'The officers, knowing that Fort Maude and Ali Masjid had fallen without any attempt to relieve them, and believing themselves abandoned to their fate, decided to make terms.' While negotiations were in progress the lashkar stormed the north-east corner of the fort and Subedar Mursil Khan who was commanding the garrison was killed in the fighting that followed. About 11 o'clock the fort gate was opened from the inside and after much confused fighting the post was looted and burnt. In spite of all the mullas could do to keep them together the tribesmen then began to disperse to their homes, carrying their dead and wounded, while piquets of the Zakha Khels guarded the approaches from Jamrud. During September nearly half the Landi Kotal garrison rejoined at Jamrud. Out of the total strength of the corps only 274 out of 836 rifles were unaccounted for.

On 3 September orders were issued for the concentration of a force to enter the Tirah and punish the Afridis.

Warburton records in his book some of the questions he put to Afridis during the course of the campaign. 'What made you come down?' '*The mullas brought us.*' 'Why did you obey them? Why did you not turn them out?' '*They were too powerful for us.*' 'Had you any real grievance against the government?' '*No.*' 'Then why did you attack the posts?' '*The mullas forced us.*'

In a letter he wrote to a friend at this time he said: 'My mind is very heavy over this hideous disaster which I feel could have been staved off even up to the day of mischief. It makes me quite sad to think how easily the labour of years—of a lifetime—can be ruined and destroyed in a few days.'

The introduction to his book, written by a relative, concludes with this paragraph:

The hard work of the Tirah campaign which followed, with exposure and fatigue, coupled with unceasing attacks of Dysentery, may be said to have undermined his bodily strength and finally to have caused his death—but the loss of the Khaibar, after his faithful guardianship of so many years, preyed most heavily on his mind. It is no exaggeration to say it broke his heart.*

* *Eighteen Years in the Khyber.*

WARBURTON'S outlook was personal and parochial to an extent that it is difficult at this interval of time to assess what chances he had of restoring the situation if he had been allowed to return to his beloved Khaibar in the middle of August; but after the scenes at Peshawar railway station on the day he left it does seem that he might have been given a chance. Admittedly the actions of the Afridis were inspired by an appeal to their religious feelings, but there was in the opening moves nothing of the tidal wave of fanaticism that swept over Chakdara and the Malakand in a matter of hours. It was all done much more deliberately. Leaving Warburton out of it, the reasons given for the failure to reinforce the Khyber Rifles do not stand up to objective scrutiny. Indian soldiers eat very much the same food as Pathans, so the supply difficulties were not as great as all that; and the anxiety expressed that no aspersions must be cast on the loyalty of the maliks and the Khyber Rifles would ring more true if it did not run directly counter to the advice given by both Barton and Aslam Khan, who were after all the men best qualified to judge.

The Orakzais had taken a beating on the Samana ridge six years earlier in the fighting that ended with the establishment in 1891 of Fort Lockhart and the connected posts, and the memory no doubt still rankled, but although they had agreed to act in concert with the Afridis it is typical of the trust they placed in the promises given them that they did not commit themselves until their allies had burned their boats in the Khaibar. It was, in fact, the action of the Orakzais that made the Tirah campaign inevitable. Had they stood aloof there would have been much to be said for restoring the position in the Khaibar with regular troops, a punitive operation in the Bazaar valley, and a strict blockade on the Kajuri which at that time of the year would have hit the tribes of the Bara and Mastura valleys very hard indeed. Again the fact that during September fighting was in progress against the Orakzais on the Samana was probably the deciding factor that shaped the plan of the campaign. As the army was to discover to its cost during the withdrawal, the alternative line of advance up the Bara valley was fraught with difficulty.

The object of the expedition was set forth in a proclamation made at the outset by Sir William Lockhart, who had been recalled from leave in England to take command. Recapitulating the enormity of the offences committed by both Afridis and Orakzais in contravention of their solemn agreements, the notice went on, 'The British government

has determined to despatch a force to march through the country of the Afridis and Orakzais and to announce from the heart of the country the final terms which will be imposed. This advance is made to mark the power of the British government to advance if and when they choose.' The starkness of the intention was not really softened by the usual proviso that no damage would be done to those who made submission and reparation, or by the implication that, the object once achieved, the British intended to withdraw; after all they had sold that story to the Yusufzais only two years earlier. It was a demand for unconditional surrender and could have had but one effect on a tribe of the calibre of the Afridis.

The plan, then, was to cross the Samana range by the Chagru Kotal, just west of Gulistan, cut across the Khanki valley, force the Sampagha and Arhanga Passes, enter Maidan and from Bagh, in the presence of their household gods, dictate terms of peace to the Afridis. It was confidently expected that on one or other of these passes the enemy might be provoked into making a stand and would give the opportunity of inflicting a decisive defeat which would make him the more likely to listen to terms.

The force concentrated for the main advance consisted of 1st and 2nd Divisions, each of two brigades of four battalions, two squadrons of cavalry, four mountain batteries, three companies of sappers and miners and a pioneer battalion. Four more battalions were available for the protection of the lines of communication, there were self-contained columns in the Kurram and in Peshawar ready to co-operate if needed, and one more infantry brigade was mobilized in reserve at Rawalpindi: a total of forty-four thousand combatants. Everything was now ready but the transport, which was a question of paramount difficulty. The very greatest exertions had to be made to improvise what was required, and officers were dispatched to scour the Punjab in quest of camels, mules, bullock carts, ponies, pack bullocks and even donkeys. The number needed for the main expedition alone amounted to nearly sixty thousand.

Work began at once on what was little better than a goat track up to the Chagru Kotal and by 15 October it was complete as far as the summit. On the 18th 2nd Division, which had completed concentration at Shinawari, undertook an operation with the object of 'dislodging the enemy from the village of Dargai and the ridges in the vicinity, from which they could open effective fire on our working parties as

soon as the latter crossed the summit'. Two battalions supported by a mountain battery advanced up the track already made, and with some artillery support from Gulistan, captured the kotal without much difficulty; at the same time a whole brigade made a detour wide to the left over an unreconnoitred path.

The village of Dargai stands on beetling cliffs, scaled only by a single precipitous footpath, which commanded at a range of less than five hundred yards a glaxis slope some three hundred yards long which the attacker coming from the kotal must cross to reach the foot of the path. The attack was made by 3rd Gurkhas supported by the Kings Own Scottish Borderers, and they took the village, though the comparative ease with which they did so was due partly to the fact that the position was then held only by the Orakzais, and partly to the threat to the enemy's line of retreat by the brigade advancing from the west. The latter had run into trouble as their track turned out to be so much worse than had been reported that three miles from the objective they had had to send all transport, including the mountain battery, back to camp. They did not join hands with the battalions in the village until after 3 p.m. By that time several thousand Afridis were coming up from the Khanki valley and lining the heights to the west. It was then decided to withdraw the whole force by the direct road back to camp, the brigade that had made the flanking move providing the rearguard. There was some difficulty in getting away from the village itself, but otherwise the operation was conducted with great skill and steadiness.

In view of the casualties suffered two days later when the position had to be recaptured there was some criticism of this decision to withdraw. The reasons advanced in justification were: the difficulties of making adequate arrangements to organize the defence at the late hour when junction was effected appeared insurmountable; there was no water nearer than three miles away across a track unfit for mules; the height was six thousand feet and the troops had no firewood, supplies or warm clothing—and they would have been exposed during the night to attack from vast numbers of Afridis. However valid these reasons the fact remains that two days later after Dargai had been taken a second time the whole of two brigades did spend the night on the position. Moreover, the plateau on which Dargai village stands commands the surrounding countryside. In view of the Pathan's known dislike of attacking uphill and without reconnaissance it does

not really seem that there would have been much risk if the declared object of the operation, from the very outset, had been to establish two battalions in the village, the rest of the force withdrawing to camp for the night. What really went wrong was the decision to commit a complete brigade, with a mountain battery to boot, to a long advance by a road of which little or nothing was known, and with no very clear idea of what they would do when they reached their objective.

On the 20th the whole of 2nd Division returned to the charge, the advanced guard, of a complete brigade, leaving camp at 4.30 a.m. As before, they reached the Chagru Kotal unopposed. As a measure of deception the political officer had revealed to certain of his agents, in strict secrecy, the fact that the main attack would follow the line of the outflanking advance on the 18th. Up to a point the ruse worked, as numbers of the enemy were drawn away from the main battle to watch their right flank but, for all that, there were reckoned to be twelve thousand Afridis in position on the Dargai heights, and twenty-nine tribal standards were counted flaunting in the morning breeze. What was a position of great natural strength had been considerably improved by the construction of sangars complete with overhead cover reinforced by timber supports. The minute the 2nd Gurkhas started to cross the glacis they were raked and halted by rapid and accurate fire. The guns, firing a nine-pound shell, had little effect among the rocks and shrapnel was ineffective against the defence works. For five hours the Gurkhas, supported first by the Dorsets and then by the Derbyshires, tried and failed to reach the foot of the cliffs. The Gordons and 3rd Sikhs were then ordered up and after rapid and concentrated fire, lasting three minutes, by the whole of the artillery, there was launched the most spectacular attack in the whole of frontier history. The Gordons leading, their pipes playing 'Cock o' the North', the five battalions swarmed forward. The sight was too much for the enemy who did not wait for the final assault. For his gallant leadership and splendid example Lieutenant-Colonel Mathias of the Gordons received the Victoria Cross, as did Piper Findlater who continued to play though shot through the feet and unable to stand.

British casualties amounted to thirty-six killed and a hundred and fifty-nine wounded. The troops passed a cold and cheerless night, bivouacking where they stood, and the next morning dropped down into the Khanki valley without opposition. A week passed in

reconnoitring the Sampagha Pass, surveying, road improvements, and forays to collect supplies; a delay imposed by administrative necessity that no doubt afforded much tactical encouragement to the enemy.

The advanced guard camped in Maidan on 1 November. They had had to fight for both the Sampagha and Arhanga Passes but the opposition had been trifling and they had not succeeded in inflicting any serious loss on the enemy. Notices were then sent to all the tribes bidding them to send jirgas to hear the terms on which the British were prepared to quit their country. The Orakzais, on the whole, had had enough and by the end of the month had paid the fine imposed in full—in both rifles and cash. The Afridis were very much less amenable: the Zakha Khels numbering four and a half thousand fighting men remained implacably hostile and were successful in coercing the Aka Khel, a small tribe who might otherwise have given in.

On the 9th and again on the 16th rearguard actions were fought which demonstrated only too clearly that, however gallant and well disciplined troops may be—and there was never any question of shortcomings in either direction—they are vulnerable in the extreme if they have not been trained in the specialized tactics called for in frontier warfare.

The action on the 9th followed a reconnaissance in force of a pass leading into the Bara valley, opportunity being taken to chastise some Zakha Khel villages on the way. At the time the withdrawal began not an Afridi was visible, nor did any appear until the Northhamptons, who were covering the retirement, had left the crest and were well on their way down. But the enemy, following their usual practice, had meantime been creeping up from every side unseen; and a close and heavy fire was suddenly opened, one man being killed and half a dozen wounded. As the ground was too steep and difficult for stretchers, each man who was hit required four men to carry him down; a process which was not only exceedingly slow and tiring, but exposed the carriers to further casualties. At 4 p.m. 36th Sikhs were ordered back to take over the duties of rearguard. The gallantry of the Northhamptons in defending their wounded, and later in the desperate position in which they soon found themselves, was commended by the brigadier, but they now committed a bad tactical blunder. Taking what seemed to be the quickest and easiest way back to camp they dropped into a deep nala, where they lost touch with the troops covering their with-

drawal and they did not themselves throw out any flank protection. Darkness was falling, and the Afridis who had been following up on the lookout for just such a chance as this, now poured in a heavy fire from the edges of the nala. The battalion's casualties during the day amounted to two officers and seventeen men killed, and two officers and thirty-five men wounded.

On the 13th a strong brigade, of five battalions, crossed another low pass to visit the Aka Khel country in an attempt to sway the waverers. Again, there was little or no trouble until on the 16th the rearguard was within a few miles of camp. A perfectly sound plan for the withdrawal had been made, battalions in succession taking over the duties of rearguard, but there came a sudden attack from thickly wooded slopes above the pass, casualties resulted, and the pace was slowed up. The 36th Sikhs, who had borne the brunt of the fighting on the Samana before the advance into the Tirah even began, were once again sent back to help the rearguard, and two weak companies of the Dorsets went with them. A detachment of the latter were placed to command the road, and what actually happened to them is never likely to be known. It seems that, hearing men on the road below, and thinking them to be Sikhs, they left the house in which they had taken up a position, and were instantly overwhelmed by the enemy. The two officers, and nine men, were killed and many more wounded, but the remainder were rallied and brought back into camp by the senior sergeant.

The next day Sir William Lockhart addressed some of the troops in camp, in particular stressing the importance of care in planning and speed in execution when fighting a rearguard action. The substance of his remarks were published for general information and guidance.

The force now moved to Bagh where another attempt was made to come to terms but only about half the Afridi sections sent in jirgas. This was not altogether surprising as whilst in the Aka Khel country the commodious and well-built house of the Mulla Sayed Akbar had been destroyed and among a file of incriminating correspondence was found a letter dated the end of October from a deputation sent to enlist the sympathy and help of the Afghan Government. After recording the disheartening news that the Amir advised them not to fight the British Government and that he was not prepared to do more than forward their grievances to the Viceroy the letter ended by retailing some of the wild rumours current in the bazaars of Kabul.

On the international front the British were in sore straits. They were on the brink of war with Germany, they had been evicted from Aden and the Suez Canal by the Turks, and reinforcements were taking six months to reach India. They had lost ten thousand killed in the recent fighting against the Mohmands. There was every encouragement therefore to continue the struggle.

On the 26th the crucial decision was taken to evacuate the Tirah, and while the necessary backloading of heavy baggage was in progress the opportunity was taken to punish the Chamkannis, a small tribe living in the hills overlooking the Kurram valley. On 7 and 8 December one brigade went back over the Arhanga Pass to join 1st Division which was to withdraw on Fort Bara via the Mastura, while 3rd and 4th Brigades of 2nd Division concentrated at the river junction at Dwa Toi.

Before following the fortunes of these two brigades as they fought one of the bitterest rearguard actions in British military history it is worth taking a look at what Reuter's correspondent* had to record of what had been achieved so far. Describing the punishment meted out to a fertile and well-populated corner of the Maidan valley he writes, 'One of the most magnificent sights one could wish to see was the destruction of that valley by "fire and sword" as the evening waned into night. The camp was ringed by a wall of fire—byres, outhouses, homesteads, and fortresses one mass of rolling flame, until the very camp was almost as light as day. The actual fury of the fire subsided, and the wooden structure of the houses and the uprights of the towers stood in outline glowing in the pitchy darkness.' And a few pages later he summarizes the achievement of the force while in Maidan as 'having practically laid it waste with fire and sword from end to end, having unearthed and consumed the grain and fodder supply of the country, uprooted and ringed the walnut groves, prevented the autumn tillage of the soil, and having caused the inhabitants to live the life of fugitives, upon the exposed, bleak and bitterly cold hill tops'. So much for the military occupation of the Tirah; now for the evacuation.

The march down to Dwa Toi had been made in appalling conditions, it was bitterly cold and it had started to rain and snow. The withdrawal proper began on the 10th and James records that 'from the moment the outlying piquets fell in from Datoi on the 10th till Barkai was reached on the 14th, it may be said that it was a general engage-

* Lionel James, *The Indian Frontier War, 1897*—Heinemann 1898.

ment not only of the rearguard, but all down the line of advance of both brigades from front to rear'.* There was not a great deal of trouble from the enemy on the first day but the adverse weather conditions laid the seeds of trouble by delaying the rear brigade so that there was an interval of three miles between the two at nightfall. The gap was not closed up next morning, and due to bad visibility the news was not signalled to the leading brigade. The enemy was quick to seize his advantage—aided by the thick mist and abundant cover he poured heavy and telling fire on the crowded transport. The leading brigadier, seeing no signs of the troops behind him, withdrew his piquets as soon as his own rearguard had passed, and the unfortunate 3rd Brigade had to re-piquet the route. The delay intensified the casualties being inflicted on the transport and as the escorts had been withdrawn to find piqueting troops both drivers and animals stampeded. The greater part of the brigade did that night join 4th Brigade in camp but the rearguard commander, Major Downman of the Gordons, found himself forced to take up a defensive position in a partially destroyed homestead. Hampered with twenty-two wounded, the stretcher-bearers having fled, they passed a wretched night, soaked to the skin and unable to light a fire because of the nearness of the enemy. A relief force returned to bring them in next morning and the whole force rested for the day.

When the march was resumed on the 13th, 4th Brigade took over the duties of rearguard. Long before the transport of 3rd Brigade was clear of the first defile the camp piquets were hotly engaged, and the break-up of camp was surrounded by a general action. Whether goaded by hatred, or flushed with success after the treatment of the rearguard on the 11th, it cannot be said, but on this day the Afridis gathered in strength, and showed that recklessness and enterprise for which they were famed. They crept to within a few yards of the piquets and as the troops withdrew into camp occupied their positions almost as soon as they had been evacuated. Followers and baggage animals were hit as they loaded up, and the rearguard cleared camp under cover of artillery fire. Casualties were heavy and as the doolie-bearers had decamped troops had to be spared for carrying the wounded. At a point where the track struggled up a steep slope out of the river bed there was a long halt and the enemy swarmed across the stream to the attack, but coming

* *Ibid.*

under a cross-fire of artillery, machine guns and rifles they were beaten off with great slaughter. Nothing daunted they still pressed the rearguard as fiercely as ever, and the brigade was forced to halt and spend the night out on a ridge running across the line of march. It was the first time the enemy had fought with that touch of fanaticism that had inspired the attack on the Malakand, and James records that if it had not been for the staunch coolness of the troops and the unflustered direction of General Westmacott, the brigade commander, the enemy might have annihilated the entire rearguard. There was slight opposition at the start of the following day, but after meeting the piquets sent out by the Peshawar brigade from Fort Bara the enemy withdrew and both brigades marched into camp unmolested.

The 1st Division in the Mastura valley had on the 9th taken the opportunity of punishing certain of the Aka Khel villages that had thrown their lot in with the enemy, but after that date, apart from slight attacks of their rearguards, they had no further trouble, and it is on record that of the 8,533 transport animals with the column not a mule or a load was lost, except for three that fell over a precipice.

The first phase of the Tirah campaign was over: it had cost the British thirteen hundred casualties among the fighting troops.

On reaching Fort Bara 2nd Division took over the task of watching the mouth of the Bara valley. The 1st Division and the Peshawar column concentrated at Jamrud, and on 23 December the latter re-occupied Ali Masjid, there being no signs of the enemy. They remained there two days to cover the advance into the Bazaar valley of 1st Division, and then went on up the pass to Landi Kotal, again meeting no opposition. They found the place looted and much damage done but with the co-operation of the Shinawaris, who had paid up the fine imposed on them, order was restored and the water supply repaired. Operations in the Bazaar valley lasted five days and although, as always, the rearguards were pressed at the close of each day the fighting was never anything like so severe as in the Tirah.

Punitive measures, accompanied by desultory and indecisive fighting, went on into the New Year, and there were attacks on convoys in the pass, but the only remaining encounter of any note took place on 29 January in the course of an operation that was designed to sweep the Kajuri plain, as it was reported that numbers of Afridis had brought their flocks down to graze. In point of fact no trace of them was found and only 4th Brigade, which was to block the western exits from the

plain, ran into the enemy. By a trick of fate the battle that followed began with a trifling mistake made by 36th Sikhs, the battalion that had time and again come to the rescue of others and by their steadiness, and the inspired leadership of their colonel, Haughton, restored the situation. On this day a runner delivered a message to the wrong commander, a vital piquet was prematurely withdrawn, and by the time the Yorkshire Light Infantry were brought up to recapture the hill the enemy had occupied it in force and in spite of heavy casualties they failed to retake it. Haughton once again was in the van of a bayonet charge made to cover the removal of the wounded. Carrying the rifle of a man who had just been killed at his side he was shot through the head. His adjutant was killed almost immediately afterwards.

It took some weeks to bring the Afridis to terms. At the turn of the year no more than a token amount of the fines had been paid and only eighty-nine rifles surrendered out of a total of one thousand and ninety-seven demanded; the Zakha Khel contribution amounted to five. However, by mid-February the blockade was beginning to bite, and a further blow to the Zakha Khel was the re-opening of the Khaibar to caravan traffic on 7 March, as they had supposed this could not be done without their co-operation. There was, also, intensive political activity behind the scenes and Warburton records that he worked from 6 a.m. to midnight daily in his office in Jamrud fort, cajoling, persuading, employing every line of contact open to him. Even so it was a very near thing. At a final jirga on 13 March General Lockhart fixed the 17th as the date on which he would restart operations if all fines had not been paid in full, and on that date he duly returned to Jamrud in person, while a large number of transport animals marched out from Peshawar. On the same day a brigade moved a few miles up the Bara valley. That ended it. Hostages were given, hostilities ceased on 3 April and on the 6th Sir William Lockhart left to resume his interrupted leave in England.

It is a remarkable tribute to his personality that at his departure some hundreds of Afridis, including large numbers of Zakha Khel, surrounded his house and begged to be allowed to draw his carriage to the railway station.

To review the campaign as a whole it is clear that the British very much underestimated the difficulties of their task. Politically, as witness the opening proclamation, it was assumed that the actual invasion of Tirah would be lesson enough and that once they reached Bagh they

would be in a position to dictate terms. Dictate them they did, but few came to listen to what was said. There followed a holocaust of destruction that has no equal in frontier history and surely stiffened the Afridis' will to resist. Militarily they may have been misled by the comparative ease with which Orakzai and Yusufzai had been brought to see reason, but they found themselves opposed by an enemy tougher, more skilful, and with greater staying power than either of them. The army at the outset, commanders, troops and staff, were untrained and inexperienced and more than once were saved from tactical disaster by the courage and discipline of the troops, and their willingness to fight on under adverse conditions when there was little done for them by way of material comforts.

In the matter of long-range advantages the army certainly learnt the lesson that it is not enough to assemble the component parts of a force from the four corners of the Punjab and expect it to march triumphantly into, and out of, battle. The next time they had to deal with the Zakha Khel there was a different story to tell. On the political side, the terms on which a settlement was reached did not differ very much from the agreement made with the Afridis in 1881 except that the British secured a rather closer control over the Khaibar, and reserved the right to garrison it with regulars if ever they wished to do so. It can also be argued that each tribe had in their turn to learn, the hard way, the lesson that the government could, if they would, send troops into the innermost corners of their territory; and the fact that this had been done may, in the years that followed, have had a restraining influence. But, with a good deal of hindsight, there would have been much to be said for a more restricted operation: an advance into the Aka Khel territory, which lay at the entrance to the Tirah, with the object of discrediting the Mulla Sayed Akbar by the absolute destruction of his house and property. He, after all, was the real cause of the trouble.

FOR the next ten years the Zakha Khel remained the determined enemies of tranquillity and progress. Numerous raids into British territory were traced to their villages in the Bazaar valley, and by March 1907 it was clear that something more than remonstrances or even stoppage of allowances was necessary to deal with what was fast becoming a menace to the peace of the whole frontier. In April it was decided to postpone the dispatch of a punitive expedition till the autumn, and when autumn came raids were renewed with such daring that even Peshawar city became the scene of wholesale robbery under arms. In February 1908 the Secretary of State sanctioned an expedition 'limited strictly to the punishment of the Zakha Khel, and not occupation or annexation of tribal territory'.

The mobilization of two brigades from the Peshawar Division with divisional troops and administrative services was put in hand, and twenty-four hours after the actual order to move advance troops were in Jamrud and reinforcing the Khyber Rifles at all key points up to Landi Kotal. It had been reliably reported that the remaining Afridis were not in sympathy with the offenders and were unlikely to intervene. Major-General Sir James Willcocks, the Divisional Commander, led the expedition and for the first time in frontier warfare a force took the field under the commanders and staff who had trained it in peace. The advance began on 15 February when two brigades entered the Bazaar valley by an unexpected route, completely deceiving the enemy. The leading brigade went straight through without its baggage, a total of sixteen miles over a very poor track, and by nightfall was established at a key point from which it proceeded to carry out the destruction of the surrounding villages. On the 15th also, a column from Landi Kotal consisting of 5th Gurkhas and Khyber Rifles, under Lieutenant-Colonel Roos-Keppel, entered the Bazaar valley from the north. This again was a surprise and the column joined up with the main force without meeting much opposition.

The inevitable skirmishes occurred each evening as rearguards returned to camp but the lessons of 1897 had been learnt and the enemy were so roughly handled when they first ventured to follow up to within close range that they soon realized the futility of further resistance. This was the first occasion on which tribesmen had to face the fire of breech-loading artillery using smokeless powder, and the new ten-pounder mountain gun won for itself the general approval of the infantry and the unqualified respect of the enemy.

On 27 February the Zakha Khel tendered their submission and on 1 March the whole force returned to Jamrud. There was no fighting during the withdrawal. Casualties, officers and men, totalled three killed and thirty-seven wounded, while the enemy were thought to have lost at least seventy men killed and a proportionately higher number wounded.

Apart from the leadership of the commander the success of the expedition was attributed to the rapidity with which the plan was prepared and put into execution; to a much higher standard of infantry training; and to the efficiency of the transport. The dispatch pays tribute to the conduct of the Khyber Rifles, many of whom were serving against their own kith and kin; a remarkable testimony to their efficiency and loyalty. Not a rifle was lost, nor was there a single desertion.

As an aftermath of the Third Afghan War in 1919 the Khyber Rifles were disbanded. There were many who regretted the passing of a corps which for nearly forty years had remained staunch at times when their loyalty was severely tested; and when they failed, they were no worse than others to the south who rose to serve again. It was their misfortune that relations with Afghanistan were so unsettled that it was never possible to withdraw the regular garrison from the pass, and in such a restricted area there was not room for both. In 1939 enlistment in the army was re-opened to Afridis and a battalion was raised which served in Iraq and Syria. In the autumn of 1945 they were flown back to India to be reconstituted as the Khyber Rifles. Their commanding officer records: 'I, who hoped to become the first commandant, was admitted to hospital with a haemorrhage. I forgive them the haemorrhage because when blood donors ran out about forty men volunteered and I became about 90% Afridi by blood. But I lost the Khyber Rifles.'

The operations against the Afridis in 1930-31 were remarkable for the fact that the opening battles were fought on British territory. The general political situation in the North-West Frontier Province at this time was that, by way of protest against British reluctance to grant the Frontier a measure of responsible government in line with that accorded to the other provinces of India, a new political party arose in the villages. It allied itself, rather improbably, with the Indian Congress

Party. Its executive was known as the 'Afghan Jirga', its shock troops, uniformed but unarmed, as the Red Shirts. On 20 April 1930 the Red Shirt leader, Abdul Ghafar Khan, summoned a large meeting in his own village, at which the boys of his Azad (Freedom) school staged a lurid melodrama calculated to bring the government into hatred and contempt. It was accordingly decided to arrest him and eleven other Red Shirt and Congress leaders who were congregated in Peshawar city. The explosive possibilities of such action in the very nerve centre of all the agitation that had been going on—and in Peshawar of all places, with its reputation for excitability even among oriental cities—were incalculable. For all that, beyond placing the city disturbance column at half an hour's notice from 6 a.m. on the 23rd, the day of the arrests, no further military precautions were taken, as it was considered that the police would be able to handle the situation with their own resources. By 10.30 a.m. the situation in the city following the arrests was rapidly getting out of hand. Suffice it to say that the steps then taken and the handling of the city column when it was called on were inept in the extreme. Although by nightfall order was restored, a further mistake was made twenty-four hours later when on the representations of the City Fathers the troops were all withdrawn. For the next ten days control of the city remained in the hands of Congress volunteers. As always at this time of year Peshawar was crowded with Afridis and although the political agent, Khaibar, succeeded in persuading most of them to return to their homes, there can have been no lack of eye witnesses to speak up at the jirga that was held in Bagh on 2 May to consider an appeal for help received from the Congress and Khilafat committees. The proceedings followed the familiar pattern: the maliks reluctant to commit themselves against the government, the younger men only too ready to listen to mullas and malcontents who welcomed the opportunity to create mischief in the hope of gaining some advantage, pecuniary or otherwise, for themselves. And they must have drawn much encouragement from the apparent inability of the government to keep order in its own house.

There was intense political activity among the Afridis throughout May, and a small party came down and established themselves in the caves on the fringe of the Kajuri plain, proclaiming with remarkable altruism that having heard of the atrocious oppression reigning in Peshawar over Hindu and Moslem alike, they were determined to hold

a jirga with all the people of Peshawar district. The maliks tried to exercise some restraint, the Khilafatists were equally determined to stop them doing so. By 4 June a lashkar of seven thousand men was only seven miles west of Bara fort. The approaches to Peshawar from this side are through enclosed country, studded with villages and standing crops, and intersected by a number of deep and broad watercourses, so it was never known just how many Afridis took part in the fighting on the 5th—but there were reports that the villages were full of them, and they received considerable co-operation from the inhabitants. Despite the close and difficult nature of the battlefield vigorous action was taken by columns from Risalpur and Nowshera and heavy losses were inflicted on any parties of enemy that could be brought to action. The troops withdrew to Peshawar cantonment for the night, and when they went out again next morning the enemy had gone. The R.A.F. bombed them as they crossed the plain and by the 8th they were back in their mountain homes.

There must have been much bitter recrimination at the jirgas held to conduct a post-mortem on the fighting but, although the position of the maliks had been strengthened, the war party still held the upper hand and by early August the plain was again invaded. On the 9th, following a day of small engagements over a wide area, there was a most audacious attack on 'K' reserve supply depot sited three miles east of the cantonment on the Nowshera road. The attack failed for two reasons: the telephone line had not been cut, and the local commander was able to summon help; and the n.c.o. in charge of the guard on the petrol depot took the view that his first responsibility was to discharge the duty for which his guard had been posted. He staunchly held off the opening attack and gained valuable time that probably saved the whole depot. A stream of hastily collected reinforcements led by a section of armoured cars, reached the scene by nightfall and after the clearance of some near-by villages the situation was restored. For the rest of the month there was widespread sabotage, cutting of wires and an attack on a train, but the enthusiasm of the tribesmen waned and they drifted back to their homes.

It was decided that the Afridis must be punished, and by action that would not only bring them to terms but would safeguard against similar incursions in the future. The course decided on was to bring under effective control, as a permanent measure, the area to the west of Peshawar, including the Kajuri plain to the north of the Bara river and

the Aka Khel plains to the south of it. A full-scale military operation was involved to establish permanent posts at tactical localities, connected by tracks that would enable troops to move in lorries to deal with any concentrations of tribesmen, particularly in the cave areas at the foot of the hills. The troops allotted were the Nowshera Brigade, 2nd, 3rd and 9th Infantry Brigades of the field army, a regiment of cavalry and three batteries of artillery, four companies of sappers and miners, and two pioneer battalions. The Royal Air Force provided two army co-operation squadrons from Peshawar and Kohat under a wing commander in Peshawar, and the bomber squadrons in Risalpur were also made available for offensive action in Tirah if that proved necessary. To start with aircraft were not allowed to carry any offensive weapons, but as it was necessary to fly low in order to search effectively the broken, scrub-covered valleys aircraft were constantly fired at and hit by rifle fire. They were then allowed to carry four 20-lb bombs and pilots were authorized to take immediate action if fired on. The effect of this was most marked, and firing at aircraft became progressively a less agreeable pastime.

Operations began on 11 October when the Nowshera Brigade with twelve platoons of Frontier Constabulary marched out to occupy the line from Jamrud to Bara fort and through to Matanni on the Kohat road. A jirga had been summoned at Jamrud on the 7th to try to come to some arrangement with the maliks, but they were more or less forcibly prevented from attending by the Khilafatist party, whose star was still in the ascendant, unless they agreed to put forward for discussion such unlikely proposals as the restoration of the Khaibar to Afridi control, the release of Abdul Ghafar, and the payment by government of a fine of Rs 50,000. The jirga did in fact assemble at Jamrud on the 18th but as was to be expected the discussions achieved no useful purpose. Four sites were chosen for permanent camps: at a point where the road crossed low hills jutting out into the plain three miles south of Jamrud; in the middle of the Kajuri known as Fort Salop, pushed close up to the cave area; Jhansi post six miles upstream from Bara; and Fort Milward on the road halfway down to Matanni.

There had been minor opposition from the Afridis, and some attempts to mine roads, but although they were beginning to feel the pinch of being deprived of their grazing areas, and had made overtures to the Orakzais and to Afghanistan for accommodation for their families, there was no sign of their coming to terms with the

government. By March such good progress had been made with construction work that some thinning out of troops began, and before the Nowshera Brigade left they carried out two small operations, the first against a village, Spintigga, just over twelve miles from Jhansi camp which was the home of the intransigent mulla, Abul Quddus. The village, consisting of several huts and many caves, was situated a mile and a half up a deep narrow valley, and was built at the junction of two nalas, nestling under a high precipitous crag from which it took its name. The timetable of the operation is impressive. The advance column left Fort Milward at 2 a.m., reached the foothills an hour later, encountered some Afridi outposts at 4.30 and by 6.30 had surrounded the village. Destruction, which took an hour, began at 8.30, and the withdrawal began at 10. The evacuation of the gorge was accomplished at great speed without interference from the enemy, the last troops being clear by 12.35. Fort Milward was reached at 1 p.m. and after a two hours' halt and a hot meal the march was resumed to Jhansi post which was reached by the tail of the column at 5.15 p.m. During the operation, in which a maximum distance of twenty-six miles had been covered in eighteen hours, the brigade had suffered no casualties. No estimate could be formed of the losses of the Afridis.

The Ramadan fast was now over and although there was no sign of the general offensive threatened by the enemy it was decided to visit a cave area where a concentration of tribesmen had been reported. The operation was designed to demonstrate to the tribes that troops could move freely throughout the area, and to exercise battalions newly arrived in relief, who would be providing the permanent garrison of the plain. Once again a small operation was carefully planned and carried out, and in spite of brisk opposition there were few casualties.

The hold of the Khilafatist party in Tirah was known to be weakening but as late as June a jirga was held without reaching any useful conclusions; it was in fact not until 3 October that the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province met a fully representative Afridi jirga at Jamrud. They were informed that the government was prepared to resume friendly relations on the condition that they reserved the right to maintain roads and garrisons on the plains as circumstances might dictate, with the proviso that there would be no permanent alteration in the administrative boundary and that the tribes would be free to use the area for peaceful purposes as they had done from time immemorial. As an act of grace no fine was imposed

and tribal allowances were restored. Two requests made by the jirga were refused: no restrictions were accepted in the matter of aircraft flying over the Tirah, and they were told that there was no immediate prospect of the government reopening enlistment in the army.

Although their resistance had been very much stiffened by the machinations of the Khilafatist party it had taken exactly a year to bring the Afridis to terms by means of a blockade in which the army had been able to exploit the range of artillery and the mobility conferred by mechanical transport. For the government peace was more than welcome as it was then possible to proceed to deal with the Red Shirts. A settlement with the Afridis was an essential preliminary to restoring law and order internally.

THE two main roads from India to Afghanistan, in peace and war alike, have always been from Peshawar through the Khaibar to Kabul, and from Quetta over the Khojak to Kandahar; of the lesser roads the only one ever used by the army, at the time of the Second Afghan War, ran forward from Kohat over the Peiwar Kotal. Of the old stations of the Punjab Frontier Force—Abbottabad, Mardan, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan—Kohat was ever the favourite: its gardens surely inspired the green in the Piffer colours, the green of the deep banks of violets that still line and scent The Mall.

The broad gauge railway from Rawalpindi crossed the Indus at Khushalgarh; it ran forward from Kohat as a narrow gauge line up the Miranzai valley to railhead at Thal. There, less than fifteen miles from the Afghan border, the road turned north-west up the Kurram valley to Parachinar, and twenty miles to the west again lay the Peiwar Kotal. From the south-west the road from Bannu to Kohat lay through Khatak country; from the north-east, the road from Peshawar crossed the Kohat Pass after running for about ten miles through the tongue of tribal territory that ran down almost to the Indus—the home of the Adam Khel Afridis. The Samana ridge overlooking the road to Thal was the southern boundary of the territory of the Orakzais; while in the angle north of Thal was the small pocket of Zaimukhts. Up the Kurram valley, to the west of both Orakzais and Afridis, lived the Turis.

The British connection with the Kohat Pass Afridis began immediately after the annexation of the Peshawar and Kohat districts when, following the example of their predecessors, they entered into agreement with the tribes to pay them Rs 5,700 a year to protect the road through the pass. The Adam Khel lived in the hills between Kohat and Peshawar, they were one of the most powerful and numerous of the Afridi clans, with a great reputation for bravery, and naturally derived much of their influence from their control of the road which was used for the carriage of salt from the mines in Khatak country to the rest of the frontier. It was from this carrying trade that they earned their living, over and above the meagre return from their crops which provided no more than their daily bread. They were thus very dependent on trade with British territory and vulnerable to a protracted blockade.

On 2 February 1850 a party of sappers working on the road from Kohat to the pass were attacked by a body of one thousand Afridis. Basically the raid was a protest against the making of the road which constituted a threat to the independence of the tribes. The 1st Punjab Cavalry and 1st Punjab Infantry were in Peshawar and on the point of marching for Kohat to reinforce the garrison, but they were halted for a few days to allow for the concentration of a small force to accompany them. This consisted of a troop of Royal Horse Artillery with elephant transport, two 5½-inch mortars carried on one elephant, a composite battalion of British infantry, and two additional battalions of Indian infantry, one of them acting as personal escort to General Sir Charles Napier, who chanced to be in Peshawar at the time and is probably the only Commander-in-Chief who has ever accompanied a frontier expedition. There was a little opposition and a week later, leaving the reinforcements in Kohat, the column marched back to Peshawar.

In the middle of 1853 action had to be taken against the Jawakis, who lived between the pass and the Indus. They had been active in raids and murders in both Kohat and Peshawar districts, and in robbing boats on the river. In particular the villages of the Bori valley had offered asylum to every bandit in the neighbourhood. It was decided to punish the offenders and a column left Fort Mackeson, which is ten miles east of where the road enters tribal territory, on its way from Peshawar, at 4 a.m. on 29 November. It consisted of 22nd Foot, three Indian infantry battalions and a battery of mountain artillery. General Sir Sydney Cotton, commanding the 22nd Foot, was to have commanded the whole expedition but he was, to his disgust, superseded by an officer just senior to him who arrived at the last moment. He has, as usual, some pungent comments to make on the division of responsibility between political and military: he was not consulted in the framing of the plan, and on several occasions found that political officers were issuing contradictory orders direct to the troops.

The column passed through the valley from end to end, and there was some hard fighting. One remarkable feature was that a large number of Afridis of other sections of the tribe were present on the surrounding hills but, by virtue of their treaty agreements, they kept their faith and refrained from joining in at the most critical moment when, had they intervened, the column would have had to fight its way out over a steep pass after darkness had fallen. Edwardes, who was

Commissioner in Peshawar at the time, recorded his opinion that the real loss suffered by the Boris was not to be found in the killed and wounded, or even in the destruction of their homes and stocks of winter fodder for their cattle, but in the loss of prestige, in the violation of their hills as a refuge of proclaimed criminals, in seeing that even the heavy British army contained, and could produce when need required, troops who could take to the hillsides as lightly as themselves, and drive them off the roughest crags with weapons of superior range.

There was little trouble in this area for nearly twenty years when the proposal to construct a road to take wheeled traffic once more inflamed tribal opinion. In consequence during the cold weather 1877-8 two brigades, operating from Peshawar and Kohat, were in the field from November to March. The tribes had sent unsuccessful appeals for help to both the Amir and the Akhund of Swat, the latter in his reply strongly condemning them as thieves and rascals for plundering and murdering their co-religionists. The operations were completely successful and throughout the Afghan war which began six months later the pass was not closed for a single hour; treasure, stores, troops and English travellers passed through without molestation. Equally in 1897, in spite of the attempts made by the other clans to persuade them to join in the general rising, the Adam Khel remained quiet, and troops moved freely between Peshawar and Kohat throughout the campaign.

Under the tripartite treaty which heralded the start of the First Afghan War Shah Shuja had ceded to Ranjit Singh the districts of Kohat and Hangu. The latter, lying off the main beat to the west, received little attention, and when the British arrived it was at first overlooked, whereupon the Afghan Governor of the Kurram, taking advantage of the lapse, sent cavalry to occupy some villages around Thal.

The Miranzai valley is bounded by the Orakzais and Zaimukhts on the north and, at its western end, by the Wazirs to the south, all of them hill tribes and more aggressive than the Bangash who live in the valley itself; and the expeditions that went up the valley in the early days were more often than not to prevent these more turbulent neighbours from establishing themselves in territory from which they would be the better placed to harry the settled districts.

At the threat of Afghan aggression the Bangash petitioned the

government that their country might be included in British territory, and offered to pay Rs 7,500 a year as revenue. A proclamation to that effect was issued and Captain Coke, who was combining with remarkable success the duties of deputy commissioner, Kohat, and command of his own battalion, 1st Punjab Infantry, addressed a letter to the Afghan Governor requesting him to withdraw his troops. He received a rather dusty answer and obtained permission to take a small force out to Thal to restore order before Afghan intrigue among the Zaimukhts and Wazirs led to serious trouble.

It is likely that the approach made by the Bangash was prompted more by fear of the Afghans than any liking for the British and there was sporadic trouble at the western end of the valley necessitating expeditions in both 1855 and 1856, but as the policy was always to strengthen them as a barrier against the trans-frontier tribes they were always treated as leniently as was consistent with exacting some sort of retribution for their offences.

The Turis, who are Shias, and comparatively late arrivals on the frontier, probably came over the Peiwar Kotal and drove the Bangashes from the Kurram valley somewhere about A.D. 1700. It is not clear when the Afghans in turn conquered the Turis but they had been making periodic expeditions every five or six years to collect revenue for some time before, in 1850, they took formal possession, appointing a governor for Khost and Kurram, and stationing a strong garrison in the valley. The Turis are intensely democratic and, eroded by private, family, village and clan feuds and factions, always more ready to fight among themselves than with their neighbours. The Afghans exploited to the full this lack of unity till the whole valley was a seething hotbed of intrigue. Realizing, no doubt, where the origin of so much of this discord lay, the Turis had little love for rulers, the advance of the British forces in 1878 was hailed with general acclaim, and throughout the campaign their attitude remained consistently friendly. In 1880 they prayed to be recognized as independent of Kabul. The British Government accepted the request and agreed to recognize a form of administration which the tribe proposed to set up to govern themselves. It was not long, however, before faction fighting broke out again and, when anarchy prevailed, there were signs that the Afghans, the Zaimukhts and others might take advantage of this tribal weakness to move in and appropriate this rich and smiling valley. At this juncture the British Government decided to go to their

assistance, the invaders were repelled, and in 1892 the Kurram was formally incorporated as a political agency. In the verdict of the official history 'we appeared on the scene as impartial and irresistible peace-makers, restoring to each man his ancestral possessions and status, which he enjoyed before the struggle began'.

The Zaimukhts were implicated in a small way in the fighting against the columns operating round Thal in 1856 but they gave no real trouble until 1879, during the Second Afghan War, when they were stirred up by a mulla to commit a string of outrages against troops using the lines of communication up the Kurram. Early in December a force, which consisted of two mountain batteries and five battalions of infantry, entered their country and in a short campaign lasting fifteen days reduced them to submission. Since then the tribe has lived at peace with its neighbours.

With the Orakzais there was a very different story to tell for, trading on the inaccessibility of their country, they gave continuous trouble and no lasting settlement was reached with them until after the operations in 1897. A complicating factor was the position of the Khan of Hangu, perhaps the most notorious of the arbabs, or middlemen, through whom in early days the government conducted negotiations with the trans-frontier tribes. The family had been employed by the Durrani governors of Kohat in this capacity but after the British took over the ruling Khan was apt to consider himself too powerful to be subordinate to a deputy commissioner. In 1855 he was murdered and Coke, not liking the arrangement, was in favour of appointing a man from another family. The dispute was referred to Edwardes, the Commissioner of Peshawar, the family won their case and Coke resigned. Thirty-five years later the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, reviewing the turmoil on the Orakzai border which necessitated the Miranzai campaign of 1891, recorded his view that one of the essentials for any improvement was the removal from the district of the Khan's son, one Baz Gul, who had been continuously guilty of treasonable intrigue with the tribes his family was supposed to be controlling.

The long list of offences and punitive expeditions against the Orakzais dated back to 1855, but the culminating event which led to the campaign of 1891 occurred when a section of the tribe which had lands in the Miranzai valley claimed that these should be regarded as tribal territory. When this demand was refused trouble increased in





D.H. 9A over Frontier

Sergeant R. Bowyer

Pt 4080

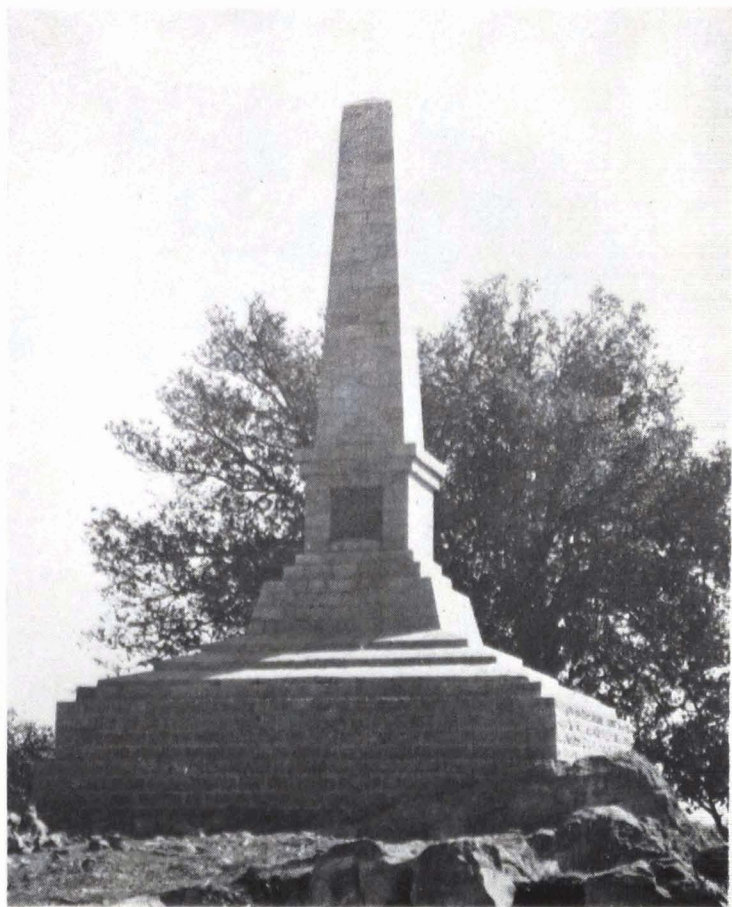
Colonel S. B. Good (British Crown Copyright reserved)





Ghazni Memorial, Roorkee

Saragarhi Memorial





The President's bodyguard

Director of Public Relations, Pakistan

Morning run

Colonel Harwant Singh



every direction, and it became clear that there could be no hope of a permanent improvement without a fight. At the end of January 1891 a force of five infantry battalions, two pioneer battalions, and two mountain batteries, operating in three columns, advanced up the Khanki valley, and over the Samana. From the enemy the opposition was negligible but the physical hardships were great. At night there were twenty degrees of frost, and thirty-three cases of frostbite were admitted to hospital. The Afridis remained aloof and indeed the Khyber Rifles volunteered to send a contingent to take part.

On the conclusion of the campaign Sir William Lockhart, who had commanded the operations, recommended the establishment of three police posts along the ridge, and when the force returned to Kohat one battalion was left to protect parties working on the road and the construction of the posts. Almost at once reports filtered in that certain sections of the tribe who had not been concerned in the recent fighting were being taunted with cowardice by the mullas, and that trouble must be expected. On 4 April there were widespread attacks all along the ridge. With characteristic treachery small parties of Orakzais had engaged as labourers on the road and, when they turned on the unsuspecting guards who were supposed to be protecting them, large numbers of their kinsmen swarmed over the ridge from the north. There was nothing to be gained by an attempt to hold the ridge in the face of such superior numbers and all troops were withdrawn. There is no doubt that the establishment of these posts was read by the tribes as a first step towards the assumption of complete control of their country, and the unrest was so widespread that Warburton in the Khaibar had to reassure the Afridis that British intentions went no more than to establish a cordon to prevent raiding.

A second operation was now necessary and nearly double the number of troops were engaged. Punishment was more severe and one column penetrated to the very head of the Khanki valley, inflicting bitter humiliation on that section of the tribe who had always prided themselves on their inaccessibility.

The official account of the operations concludes with the forecast that the political results could not fail to be far reaching. The Orakzais had been thoroughly overawed, and it could be hoped that there would be an end to the scandalous condition of border crime which had prevailed for so many years. The effect on the Afridis could also be expected to be salutary. Only at the very end was there the saving

clause that it would be necessary for some time to keep a very careful watch as the tribes would probably try 'to turn us off the Samana if they saw any chance of success'. And, although the strength of the posts had been increased, and although they were held by regular troops, that was what they very nearly succeeded in doing when they attacked the ridge just six years later.

The events in the late summer of 1897 on the Samana were of course part and parcel of the general rising over the whole northern part of the frontier, and the Orakzais were incited to act at the meetings at Bagh referred to in Chapter 17. As early as May there were reports of Afridi and Orakzai deputations having approached the Amir, but a few shots fired into Fort Lockhart on the night of 15 August were the first overt acts of hostility which led to the dispatch of reinforcements to Hangu, to support 36th Sikhs who were garrisoning the posts on the ridge. Considerable reinforcements were also brought into Kohat from outside. By the 25th the outbreak had spread widely, extending from the Kohat Pass to Parachinar, but it was clear that the main threat was to the Samana, where perhaps the major difficulty was shortage of water which limited the number of troops that could be kept up there permanently. By early September a strong mobile column had restored the position in the Kurram but then came a very heavy attack on Gulistan, the westernmost post on the Samana. Determined action by 36th Sikhs beat the enemy off with heavy casualties and the lashkar withdrew. On the 9th a strong column escorted a convoy up to Fort Lockhart, the headquarters of the battalion garrisoning the posts, carrying one month's reserve rations, but the next day large numbers of enemy, including many Afridis, were seen down in the Khanki valley moving eastwards. Fearing an attack on Hangu the column commander moved east along the ridge above them and then dropped back into the plain. This was interpreted as a withdrawal and encouraged a renewed assault in overwhelming numbers on all three posts along the ridge. Battalion headquarters in Fort Lockhart was well able to look after itself but had no reserve large enough to go to the help of the other two; Gulistan also was in no real danger but, in a small intermediate post at Saragarhi, established to maintain visual signal communication, there were only twenty-one men. There all might have been well, but for the fact that there was a small patch of dead ground at the base of one of the towers. Establishing themselves in this corner the enemy succeeded in making a breach

through which they swarmed and, after a long and bitter struggle, killed every man of the garrison. In the doorway, covered by the rifle of Havildar Ishar Singh, who commanded the little post, the bodies of twenty tribesmen were found when the relieving column arrived next day. As many as six thousand tribesmen could then still be seen attacking Gulistan but when the column advanced, covered by artillery fire, they disappeared with all speed into the Khanki valley. It was later ascertained that the enemy lost about four hundred men killed and six hundred seriously wounded in the course of their attacks, and there is no doubt that their subsequent half-hearted resistance and rapid submission to the terms imposed was due largely to the moral effect of the tenacity of the defence and their own crippling losses.

Just above Fort Lockhart there still stands today a small obelisk which is inscribed with the words 'The Government of India has caused this memorial to be erected . . .' and after a suitable recital of their heroism there follow the names of the twenty-one men who formed the garrison of Saragarhi. The story goes that after Pakistan took over the Orakzais suggested to the political agent that the stone should be removed, on the grounds that the Sikhs were no braver or more worthy of being remembered than the Pathans who had attacked them. 'Let it stand' they were told. 'For if those Sikhs had not been there you would probably today be part of Afghanistan.' And that apparently clinched the matter.

AND so to Waziristan. Up to perhaps 1880 the record of punitive expeditions in the four main sectors of the frontier was pretty even, but when others began to settle down Wazirs and Mahsuds continued to give trouble. After the outbreak of war in 1914 the Mahsuds really took the bit between their teeth, and in 1916, with a tally of one hundred and eighty major offences, seventeen in the month of April, they rapidly drew ahead. From then on, with the exception of the Afridis in 1930 and the Mohmands in 1935, Waziristan dominated the frontier, politically and militarily.

In general terms, as the army saw it, the eastern boundary of Waziristan ran south from Bannu to Tank. West from Bannu was the Tochi valley, west from Tank the Gumal; linking them to the west was the Afghan frontier.

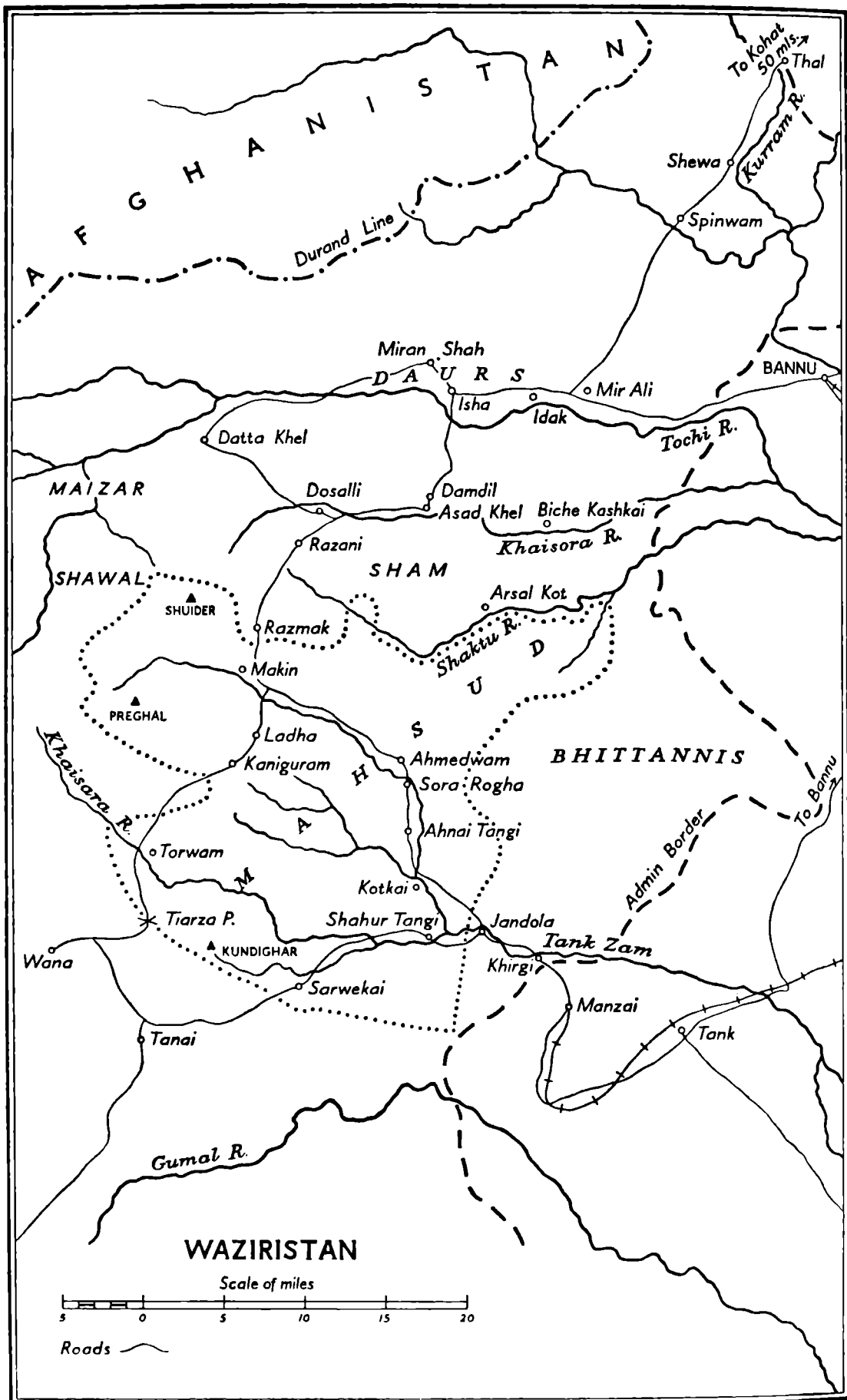
The roads shown in Map 8 are those that had been completed up to the outbreak of hostilities in 1936. Starting from Bannu, where there was generally a brigade headquarters, the road ran west to Mir Ali whence there was a road north-east through Spinwam to Thal at the southern end of the Kurram valley. The next important place along the valley was Miranshah, the headquarters of the North Waziristan Militia, later the Tochi Scouts, who had posts up the valley as far as Datta Khel. Short of Miranshah the road built in 1922 turned south-west to run through Razani to Razmak. There was also a link south-east from Datta Khel to Razmak. From Razmak the road ran south to Dwa Toi then followed the line of the Takki Zam through Sorarogha to Jandola, and so out through Manzai to Tank. From Jandola there was a road west through the Shahur Tangi and Sarwekai to Wana, and from 1919 onwards this was the approach in general use; in the early days Wana was reached by a track running up the Gumal as far as Haidari Kach. There was also a linking road from Wana through Ladha and Dwa Toi to Razmak through the very heart of the Mahsud country.

The Gumal in the south divides Waziristan from the Zhob. It was an area of great importance from the very earliest days as it was one of the traditional routes used by the nomad Ghilzais, more generally known as powindahs, engaged in the carriage of goods between India, Afghanistan and Central Asia. They used to assemble every autumn in the plains east of Ghazni and with their families, flocks, and long strings of camels travel in enormous caravans, thousands strong; in the spring they would return by the way they had come. As many as

fifty thousand might use the Gumal route each year and it was always war to the knife as they skirted Mahsud and Wazir territory. They had more than once tried to come to terms with their enemies and settle for payment of fixed blackmail in return for an unmolested passage, but the Mahsuds would have none of it and it was to punish them for attacks on these convoys over a period of years that the first expedition in 1860 was undertaken.

Waziristan is a formless network of hills and ravines, running low in one direction, now in another; in many places thick scrub covered the rugged hillsides, particularly in the higher parts to the west. The Khaisora and the Shaktu valleys, the latter the northern boundary of the Mahsuds, ran eastwards to the plain parallel with the Tochi. The Takki Zam at first ran south and south-east but turned east about Jandola. In places these valleys were wide but there were others where the water had cut its way through a ridge at right angles to its course; and there were tactical positions ideally suited for defence or ambush—on the Takki Zam the Hinnis Tangi below Jandola, and the Ahnai and Barari short of Makin, and, most formidable of them all, the Shahur Tangi just before the Shahur ran into the Takki Zam west of Jandola. West of the Razmak-Jandola road the slope of the country rose sharply to the watershed between the Indus and the Helmand, and the two highest mountains, Pre Ghal (11,500 feet) and Shue Dar (11,000 feet) were capped with snow for much of the year.

The formative period in Waziristan was up to 1914 and a clearer picture will emerge by anticipating the narrative of military expeditions and taking the story of political affairs right up to the outbreak of the First World War. Starting about 1854 a string of outrages, mostly against powindahs, culminated in 1860 in the first attack on Tank. This was an offence altogether too blatant to be overlooked and an expedition under Neville Chamberlain for the first time penetrated into Mahsud territory, but although much damage was done to their property in Makin the tribe made no formal surrender. There was, however, some improvement in their behaviour and in 1865 an attempt was made by Macaulay, perhaps the greatest of all the political officers who wrestled with Mahsud affairs, to establish them in settlements in British India; but the experiment was regrettably not successful in achieving its real purpose in giving the tribe a stake outside their own country. In 1875 allowances were first paid to the Mahsuds as guardians of the Gumal Pass, in return for allowing free passage to the powindahs,



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MAP 8. Waziristan

and two years later the first tribal allowances were paid. In both cases there was the intention that they should be paid for services rendered, but the policy was never enforced, and so the first steps were taken down the long road, trodden by successive political officers, in pursuit of the will-o'-the-wisp of a scale of allowances that would satisfy all personal and tribal jealousies, for each was convinced that if just a little more money could be granted the perfect distribution list would be achieved and all future troubles disappear.

In 1879 Macaulay had assembled a large Mahsud jirga in Tank, and there then occurred the second attack on the town, the work of disgruntled factions who had not been asked to the party or who for one reason or another had seen fit to refuse the invitation. Macaulay was nearing the end of his sixteen years' period of office, a record never again to be equalled, and was at the height of his power and influence. Given the necessary quota of military backing he might well have established a degree of control that would have had lasting effects; but the Government of India had their hands full with the Second Afghan War, no troops were available, and the attack on Tank was punished by a blockade which although quickly effective contributed nothing towards a permanent settlement. A great opportunity was missed. It was the first great landmark in Mahsud affairs.

The year 1888 saw two significant events: an attempt to survey the Gumal Pass, which was resisted by the Mahsuds; and the return of Mr Bruce as commissioner. He had served in Dera Ismail Khan in his early days and came now from Baluchistan, not surprisingly with the firm determination to apply to the Mahsuds and Wazirs the methods that Sandeman had made so successful in the Zhob. The first essential of the policy was the selection of representative maliks through whom all dealings would be conducted, and who could be held responsible for honouring agreements. Before long Bruce was holding a jirga which was, he claimed, fully representative for his purpose. Early in 1890 Sandeman passed through the Gwaleri Kotal and held the jirga at Tank that has been mentioned in Chapter 5. The reaction of the Amir to this extension of British influence in an area so close to his frontier was to foment intrigue among the Mahsuds, and there followed the inevitable increase in raids and attacks on the settled districts. In 1892 a public works officer was murdered in the Zhob, the crime being traced to three Mahsuds, and it is a tribute to Bruce's personal influence that he was able to procure the surrender of the guilty men. But it was

a short-lived triumph as three of the maliks who had assisted him were murdered, and two others had to fly their country. The influence of the Mulla Powindah, who appears on the scene for the first time, was largely responsible for the setback. This was the next landmark. The second essential of the Sandeman policy was immediate and effective intervention by the army in support of the maliks when their influence was challenged by the unruly. At this critical moment Durand's very delicate negotiations in Kabul were in progress, and the Government of India decided that their success must not be jeopardized by action in an area about which the Amir had quite recently shown himself to be particularly sensitive.

In 1894 Bruce was appointed the British representative on the commission set up to demarcate the Durand agreement on the ground. The party assembled at Wana with a brigade of all arms as escort, but before it even began its work the camp was attacked at night by a Mahsud lashkar—the most determined operation of its kind ever to be carried out. Retribution followed and columns converged on Kaniguram from Wana, Jandola and Bannu, and it is likely that the lesson then learnt was to some extent responsible for the fact that Waziristan held aloof from the general rising that swept the rest of the frontier in 1897.

Although at variance with the earlier policy of non-intervention it had been decided, even before the boundary commission set out, to occupy and maintain a force in Wana. The decision was welcomed by the Wazirs in whose territory it lay as it afforded them protection against encroachment by the Mahsuds, the back door to whose country was not very far away; in fact the move was directed against the latter, and they resented it bitterly. The move had also long-term repercussions, as Wana became just one more ball to be kept in the air during the acrobatic changes of policy that took place over the ensuing years.

As part of the settlement in 1895, encouraged no doubt by Warburton's success in the Khaibar, political agents were appointed for both north and south Waziristan and tribal allowances were again increased, though in sanctioning them government solemnly forbade Bruce 'ever without their express sanction to act on the offer of the tribe to provide escorts' and declared that 'interference of this kind with the interior of the Waziri country and the establishment of military posts to be contrary to the existing orders of Her Majesty's Govern-

ment'. The last nail had been hammered into the coffin of the Sandeman policy in Waziristan.

The next few years witnessed the most remarkable vacillation of policy as successive political officers, the Punjab Government, the Viceroy and Whitehall all intervened. To take first relations with the Mulla Powindah. He was at first studiously ignored, even when in pique he began addressing the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab in person; then it occurred to someone in the secretariat, gifted with insight above his fellows, that it was unwise to turn the cold shoulder on a man who was potentially a powerful ally. Orders went out that he should be offered an allowance. He was approached, he was coy; but eventually he accepted a monthly grant of Rs 100, a sum ten times that being given to any malik. Later he was even given a grant of land in India, but when his complicity in the murders of British officers was established beyond all reasonable doubt his honours were taken from him, and he was cast forth to become once more a rankling thorn in the flesh.

The policy towards the Mahsuds as a tribe over this period was equally inconstant. On his arrival as Viceroy one of the first matters to which Lord Curzon turned his attention was the North-West Frontier. By a coincidence a new commissioner had recently been appointed at Dera Ismail Khan who decided that the system of control through the maliks was not working, and that it should be abolished in favour of direct dealings with the tribe as a whole, the payment of allowances being adjusted accordingly. The change was duly made, but two years later a new commissioner was reporting, and with more justification, that the new scheme did not work either; in consequence maliks were reappointed. The revised scheme involved an overall increase of Rs 39,000 and Curzon in sanctioning it noted that: 'No patchwork scheme, and all our recent schemes, blockade, allowances etc. are mere patchwork, will settle the Waziristan problem. Not until the military steam-roller has passed over the country from end to end will there be peace. But I do not want to be the person to start the machine.'

In 1899, in both north and south Waziristan, militias on the lines of the Khyber Rifles had been raised and a carefully regulated number of Mahsuds were enlisted. In the south, under the superlative leadership of Colonel Richard Harman, great progress was made but the years 1903-4 were marred by the unprovoked murders of two British

officers. In November the political agent, Bowring, was murdered by a sentry as he lay asleep. The following February, as part of a plot hatched by the Mahsud company to kill all the British officers and hand the fort at Wana over to the Mulla Powindah, Harman himself was bayoneted in the mess at dinner time. Sir Evelyn Howell, then a young political officer, had arrived there five weeks earlier in temporary charge of the agency and he had the dangerous task of disarming forthwith the Mahsuds who were standing by in readiness for the signal to join in the plot; and on the next day of summarily trying and executing the murderer. His story, told with a matter-of-fact simplicity, is printed as an appendix to *The Pathans* and, in these days of government by memorandum to the man above, it should be read by everyone as an example of the readiness of a junior officer to accept a vast and terrifying responsibility without waiting for orders, and without knowing even if his action would be supported.

With the fall from grace of the Mulla Powindah it is hardly surprising that there was little peace in Waziristan right up to his death at the end of 1913, and when he died the evil he had done lived after him for there is no doubt that he had given every encouragement to the man who murdered Major Dodd and two other officers early in 1914. Dodd had been commandant of the South Waziristan Militia and had then been appointed political agent. He was shot by his own orderly, a man on whom for several years he had lavished every favour. The weapon was a magazine carbine that Dodd had given him.

The only possible pretext for this act of black ingratitude was that Dodd had refused to intervene on behalf of a relative who was serving a well-merited sentence of imprisonment. The circumstances of the affair are typical of the dangers that were part of the day's work of those who served on the frontier. Dodd, with Captains Brown and Mackenzie of the South Waziristan Militia, and Hickie, a mountain gunner, had been playing tennis. It was shortly after sunset and Dodd and Brown were still outside the bungalow enjoying an evening drink, while the other two were inside having their baths and changing. The assassin was concealed in a ditch about forty yards away. His first and second shots mortally wounded Brown and Dodd, the third and fourth shots killed a constable and a watchman who came to their rescue. Mackenzie ran out of the bungalow and when the fifth shot, which did not hit anyone, was fired, he tried to direct two other constables to the point where the murderer was concealed. They in

their turn were both killed. Brown was helped inside and Mackenzie then returned for Dodd. At that moment an eighth shot wounded another watchman who was trying to help. Dodd said that he thought he could walk. He rose painfully to his feet and leaning on Mackenzie's shoulder the two men went slowly towards the house expecting every moment to be shot in the back. But no shots came for by then the murderer himself had been killed by men who had arrived from the constabulary lines near by. Hickie had apparently tried to go for reinforcements but he too was shot down, though his body was not found until next morning.

When he died on 2 November 1913 the Mulla Powindah had for over twenty years dominated Mahsud affairs and frustrated every attempt by the Government of India to come to terms with his people. By British standards he must be assessed, in the words of Curzon, as 'a first-class scoundrel' who had no compunction in using assassination as a political weapon. But, says Howell, his character cannot be so judged. 'By the standards by which he lived he cannot be denied some tribute of admiration as a determined and astute, though not altogether single-minded, patriot and champion of his tribe's independence. A man who with no inherited advantages and without education could make so large an instalment of frontier history in effect a series of chapters in his own biography can have been no little man.' And Caroe suggests that, if the Mahsuds had been possessed of the manners and decorum of the Yusufzais, under such a leader they might have laid the foundations of a state as stable as the Swat of the Miangul.

So much for the political background. For the first ten years after the departure of the Sikhs punitive operations were mostly in the Bannu area. Late in 1850 a section of the Ahmedzais who were in arrears of revenue due on lands in British territory which they had filched from the Bannuchis began molesting villages and on one occasion, given the opportunity, they would have attacked Bannu itself. They thereby incurred the wrath of the redoubtable John Nicholson. North of Bannu the Utmanzai had been troublesome, attacking the salt mines on the Kohat road, and joining in on the fringe of the Miranzai operations in 1851, but no action was taken against them till 1859 when they murdered a British officer on his way to Kohat. Chamberlain then went into action against them, but it was not until he insisted on the Wazirs themselves taking a lashkar into the

hills that he effected the capture of one of the miscreants. A gallows was erected on the very spot where the murder had been committed and there he was duly hanged.

In the south the tally of Mahsud offences against the powindahs passing up and down the Gumal had been steadily mounting and in 1859, after touring in the area, Chamberlain had reported: 'nowhere do I hear the cry for justice until I come within reach of the Wazirs (Mahsuds). Then commences a train of injuries received and unredressed; and I know of no more pitiable sight than the tears and entreaties of a family that have lost their only means of accompanying their tribe on its return to summer quarters.'

Chamberlain was due to resign his command of the Punjab Irregular Force and go on leave in the winter of 1860-61 and, realizing that it was quite hopeless to expect the Mahsuds to mend their ways until they had been effectively punished, he was anxious to lead an expedition against them rather than leave the task to his successor. However, the Governor-General, who was on tour in the Punjab, ruled otherwise on the grounds that their case was cumulative and no more urgent than it had been for some years past; but Taylor the Commissioner was still on his way back to Dera Ismail Khan with this decision when news reached him of the attack on Tank which took place on 13 March 1860.

Emboldened by years of immunity, and confident that they could successfully oppose any attempt to enter their country, some three thousand Mahsuds, headed by their maliks and without provocation or pretext of any kind, came out into the plain with the intention of sacking Tank which lay about five miles away from the hills. Fortunately spies had given warning of the move, and Risaldar Saadat Khan, commanding the troop of 5th Punjab Cavalry stationed in the town, had time to collect reinforcements from near-by posts. With a few mounted levies—a hundred and fifty-eight sabres of his own regiment and thirty-seven irregulars—he moved out to the mouth of the Takki Zam and found the Mahsuds drawn up in the plain. When fired on he ordered his detachment to retire with the intention of drawing the enemy after him. The time-honoured ruse was completely successful, the enemy followed with shouts of derision, but after about a mile the cavalry turned and, wheeling to cut the line of retreat into the hills, charged in the most dashing manner. The Mahsuds, though personally brave, lacked the collective discipline to resist the charge;

cut down and ridden over they fled in confusion, concerned only to reach the safety of the Hinnis Tangi. About three hundred were killed, including six maliks, while the cavalry lost one jemadar of levies killed and sixteen wounded.

At long last government patience was exhausted and Chamberlain was ordered to assemble a force with the intention of penetrating to Kaniguram and Makin to exact punishment for past misdeeds and, if possible, some security for the future. He decided to advance by way of Jandola and the Takki Zam and return down the Khaisora to Bannu. His force consisted of three squadrons of cavalry, thirteen mountain guns and nine infantry battalions; there were also some sixteen hundred tribal levies under their own khans and maliks. The advance began on 17 April.

The passage of the Hinnis Tangi was not contested and at the end of the second day the force camped at Palosina, the plain six miles north-west of Jandola. Leaving a small force there to collect supplies and cover his rear, Chamberlain advanced through the Shahur Tangi both to reconnoitre the country and to punish certain sections of the tribe who had been most active in raiding the Tank border. Surprisingly, the advance was not opposed and was continued two marches west of the gorge, then, after destroying two villages, the column returned to its base. Taking advantage of its absence some three thousand Mahsuds had delivered a surprise attack at dawn on the camp at Palosina. Leaving their main body on a ridge to cover the assault by fire, about five hundred, sword in hand, dashed into the camp. By accident or design the weight of the blow fell on a part of the perimeter held by mounted levies and for some time considerable confusion prevailed. However, the Guides and 5th Gurkhas soon rallied and driving the enemy out pursued them for over three miles into the hills. Casualties in the camp had been heavy, sixty-three killed and a hundred and sixty-six wounded, for it had been a hand-to-hand conflict in a confined space, and the unarmed followers had suffered heavily.

On 1 May, before the advance was resumed, a deputation of Mahsud maliks arrived to try to make terms, but as they were told they must pay a fine for cattle stolen over the past eight years and give hostages for future good conduct, or alternatively allow the force to advance unmolested to Kaniguram, no settlement was reached. Cupidity on the one hand, and honour on the other, warred against acceptance.

'Kings have come and gone for many years,' they said, 'but hostile eyes have never seen Kaniguram.'

The Ahnai Tangi, the scene of the most bitter fighting of the whole campaign in 1919, was not held, but at the Barari Tangi, some four miles further upstream, a very strong defensive position had been prepared. There was found to be an abattis, composed of large stones and felled poplar trees, completely closing up the pass, against which the guns would have but little effect. The enemy right was well nigh impregnable, overlooked by a steep craggy hill, crowned by a tower; then, on the far side of a small plateau, a steep spur that could not be scaled. Lines of sangars had been built, terraced one above the other. The ground on the enemy left was easier, and Chamberlain decided to make his main attack on that side, the Guides and 6th Punjab Infantry being sent to keep down enemy fire from across the gorge. The main attack reached to within a few feet of the sangars on the crest, but when it was checked and the leading troops faltered the enemy gave a yell of triumph, leapt from their breastworks, and rushing down with sword and shield drove back their foes. The counter-attack almost reached the gun positions but 1st Punjab Infantry, who were in reserve, charged and cut down the leaders already on the flank of the guns. The story goes that their commander, Captain C. P. Keyes,* moving, sword in hand, ahead of his men engaged the leading Mahsud. As they closed in single-handed combat the sound of battle died away on both sides. When at last the Mahsud fell his followers broke and were so hotly pursued that 1st Punjab Infantry captured the main breastwork, and the right of the position was won. When the enemy on the other flank saw what had happened they also began to retire and in less than two hours they had been forced from every strong point, a gap had been made in the abattis, and the column went into camp three miles above the defile.

Next morning the column, encumbered by a long train of sick and wounded, pushed on and after a march of fifteen miles reached Kaniguram. In front of it ran a bright stream, bordered with willows and poplars and on each side gardens full of walnut and apple trees, pomegranates and oranges. Above the gardens were terraces, green with corn, and the slopes of the mighty hills were dotted with olives and oaks. Attempts were made to renew negotiations. It was pointed

* Father of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Keyes.

out to the maliks that, having demonstrated their ability to force a way into their country, the government would accept that fact in satisfaction for past offences: all that was now needed was security for the future. But while talks were in progress it was found that the Mahsuds had sent a deputation to Kabul appealing for help on the grounds that it was the intention of the British to annexe their country. Delaying tactics were clearly the order of the day, the supply situation was becoming serious, and there seemed to be no alternative but to destroy Makin. The force accordingly moved down stream to Dwa Toi and then up to Makin, destroying villages on their way. Before Makin one last appeal to reason was made but, in spite of their losses, and although it was clear that they were powerless to halt the destruction, the Mahsuds would have none of it. The next day the town was burnt and the towers of the maliks blown up amid shouts and yells from the enemy on the mountains above. A week later the troops were safely back in Bannu. A force composed entirely of Indian troops, with contingents of tribesmen commanded by their hereditary chiefs, led by Neville Chamberlain with a few British officers, had marched, taking with them their own supplies for sixteen days, through a mountainous country no foreigner had ever dared to enter. Their way was barred by a determined and skilful enemy, yet such was the force of discipline and system that three camp-followers and as many camels were the only losses *en route*. The casualties in action were four hundred and fifty. Though the cost of the material damage inflicted was estimated at Rs 140,000 the Mahsuds had still not complied with the terms imposed. A blockade was ordered and it was not until two years later, during which time they lost no opportunity of raiding, that they finally gave in.

When an imperfect report of the operations reached the Government of India Sir Bartle Frere, a member of Council, wrote expressing his doubts 'whether any permanent good is likely to result from a system of laying waste the country and destroying crops in the fashion described in this report'.

Frere, whose frontier experience was confined to Sind, had always been opposed to the policy of such expeditions, but it seems that his discordant minute resulted in no awards being made to the officers and men who had distinguished themselves. Three years later, when Chamberlain was created Knight Commander of the Bath, he strongly resented that the services of those who had served under him had not

been recognized and he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief that he felt disgraced at being singled out.

As has been mentioned, after Sandeman's jirga in Tank in 1890 affairs in the south-west corner of Waziristan deteriorated as the result of Afghan intrigue. In September 1892 the Viceroy addressed a note to the Amir asking him to withdraw his troops from Wana, and early in 1893 the position improved; but raiding offences by Mahsuds went on throughout the hot weather, although the Ahmedzai Wazirs, who owned the land round Wana, had asked the government to take over their country. Early in 1894, preparations were put in hand for demarcating the new Durand Line which by agreement with the Amir left nearly all Waziristan, including Wana, to India. The commission was escorted by a force consisting of a squadron of cavalry, one mountain battery, one company of sappers and miners, and three battalions of infantry.

On 13 September word was sent to the Amir that the commission would be ready to start work in five weeks' time and on 1 October the escort was concentrated in Dera Ismail Khan. On the 10th an Ahmedzai Wazir jirga came in and presented a unanimous petition that the British Government should occupy Wana, and take them under its wing as had been done in the Kurram.

For political reasons the camp at Wana was located at the east end of the large plain, in an area much cut up by ravines. Although it was a source of some anxiety to the escort commander the huge pavilions of the commission were located outside the perimeter in order that those attending the jirgas, which seemed to go on all day and every day, should have free access to the Commissioner; they also had an unfettered opportunity of reconnoitring at their leisure details of the defences. Up to the 28th intelligence from political sources indicated that no large-scale attack on the camp was likely, then on the 30th it was reported that an attack would be made at a stated hour early the next morning. The force stood to arms throughout the night and went to bed very cold just after dawn. The same thing happened on the next two nights, and they went to bed not only cold but cursing political officers and tribesmen—but chiefly political officers. On the fourth night the attack was timed to be delivered on the stroke of midnight. Midnight came and went, followed in slow and chilly procession by the small hours of the morning, till at last at 5.30, half an hour before

dawn, the force commander gave orders that apart from the usual guards and sentries the men might turn into their tents, armed and ready to turn out at a moment's notice. At 5.45 a.m. there came a fearful jackal yell and in the camp all hell broke loose. The enemy plan seems to have been for the largest body to attack in waves on the western face where the perimeter wall was low and there was no protecting ditch, a second party demonstrated round the northern and eastern faces, while a third was to come in from the south with the task of cutting loose the cavalry horses and the transport animals. It was not until the guns were able to fire a few rounds of star shell that it was possible for the commander to form some idea of what was happening. He then ordered the battalion at the east end to form line across the camp and clear it with the bayonet. It was now getting light and the enemy were in no mood to wait any longer. They broke and made for the hills hotly pursued by the cavalry and a hastily formed column consisting of the battery, the sappers, and a composite battalion of infantry.

Losses in the camp amounted to forty-five killed and seventy-five wounded, and over a hundred transport animals killed or wounded. The enemy, whose strength was estimated at three thousand men, also made off with a number of rifles and nearly Rs 3,000 in cash. His losses were put at over three hundred, fifty of whom were killed during the pursuit by the cavalry.

The attack was the work of the Mahsuds who were, of course, operating outside their own territory. The story of the defence is perhaps the copy book example of a force which, for political reasons that were doubtless perfectly valid in their own right, made dispositions that were quite inadequate. Although in enemy territory that had never before been visited the camp was located in a most unsuitable area and, lulled into a false sense of security, the defences on the west face of the camp, where no attack was expected, were very much below standard.

Despite the enormity of the offence an attempt was made to persuade the Mahsuds to accept terms without further fighting. The date for compliance was to have been 1 December but this was subsequently extended to the 15th. In the meantime orders went out for the concentration of three columns, and in the course of the necessary moves 3rd Punjab Cavalry covered the eighty miles from Kohat to Bannu in seventeen hours of marching time. When no satisfactory reply was

received the columns, under the overall command of General Lockhart, all marched on 18 December: the Wana brigade on Kaniguram from the south-west, a brigade from Jandola up the Takki Zam to Makin, and a brigade from Bannu to Razmak. Parties were sent to destroy villages and, on Christmas Day, six lightly equipped columns, carrying food for three days but without tents, set out to penetrate the fastnesses of the valleys under Pre Ghal where the mulla's party was said to be lying up. Kaniguram stands at nine thousand feet above sea level, snow had fallen and the cold was intense, as much as sixteen degrees of frost being registered. Punitive operations went on for another fortnight, and at a jirga held on 19 January the tribe accepted the terms imposed.

The work of the boundary commission had been suspended while operations were in progress but, with the agreement of the Amir, work began again on 24 January and the first stage, under an escort provided by the Wana Brigade, was completed by 14 February up to a point west of Kaniguram. Towards the end of the month a second escorting force moved to the head of the Tochi and completed the task up to a point due north of Miranshah. The overall objects of the expedition were thus achieved: all sections of the Mahsuds implicated in the attack on Wana had been punished, and the Durand Line had been successfully demarcated in so far as it affected Waziristan.

Perhaps an equally far-reaching consequence of the whole affair was that a senior military officer, General Lockhart, had for the first time an opportunity of expressing an opinion, based on personal reconnaissance, on the location of troops in Waziristan. He reported that Wana did not justify the strategic importance that had been attributed to it; on the other hand he considered that a post could with advantage be sited in the Tochi. It would be accessible from Bannu, supplies were plentiful, it would look after the Utmanzai country, and the valley had strategic importance as it gave direct access to Ghazni. In August Her Majesty's Government sanctioned the permanent location of regular troops in the Tochi and by the spring of 1896 civil and military headquarters had been moved forward to Datta Khel, with a total garrison of a squadron of cavalry, a mountain battery and two battalions of infantry.

Successful though the operations had been the tale of crime went on, particularly in north Waziristan, and in June 1896 a murder was committed that a year later led to a small force being attacked in somewhat

unusual circumstances. The victim was a Hindu clerk at a levy post. The murderer escaped into Afghan territory but a collective fine was imposed on those suspected of complicity, it being left to the maliks to decide among themselves where the money should come from. The wrangle went on until, at the beginning of the following June Mr Gee, the political agent, announced his intention of visiting Maizar whose inhabitants had objected to the share imposed on them. The village lay up a side valley and his idea was to sort out the dispute and select a site for a new levy post.

At 9.30 a.m. on 10 June, accompanied by a small escort consisting of twelve sabres 1st Punjab Cavalry, two hundred rifles 1st Sikhs, one hundred rifles 1st Punjab Infantry and two guns of the 6th Bombay Mountain Battery, he arrived in Maizar where all seemed normal. Women and children were moving about in the fields, and as a friendly gesture the maliks offered to provide a meal for the Mohammedan sepoy of the escort. They chose a site under some trees, the guns were unlimbered close to a wall while the infantry, who retained their rifles, were on the outer flank. Gee with his cavalry escort rode off to visit a neighbouring village, and when they returned about noon the whole escort had breakfast. The 1st Sikhs pipes had just begun to play when there was a sudden commotion in the village and two shots were fired, one of them wounding an officer. A hot fire now broke out from all sides and Colonel Bunny, 1st Sikhs, commanding the escort, was badly wounded in the stomach. The guns opened with case shot at point-blank range at a party of men who were about to charge. In a few moments all British officers had been wounded, two of them mortally. The baggage mules had stampeded so that when the withdrawal began the reserve ammunition and other equipment had to be abandoned. The guns soon ran out of ammunition and fired the few rounds of blank they had brought with them. There were all the makings of disaster. The staunchness of the troops under such trying circumstances was beyond praise and in particular the three Indian officers of the infantry behaved with the greatest gallantry. Fighting every inch of the way the withdrawal over the first three miles took three and a half hours. At last, about 5.30 p.m., a position was found on which a stand could be made and it was here that reinforcements from Datta Khel arrived, but it was an hour after midnight before the rearguard was back in camp.

Orders were given to put into the field a force of two brigades, and a

month later it was in action up the valley. The Wazirs tried but failed to enlist help from Kabul, and the Mulla Powindah was equally unsuccessful in persuading the Mahsuds to take part in a general rising. The Tochi Field Force ranged the country west of Datta Khel without meeting much opposition but after two months the maliks were still refusing to comply with government terms which included the surrender of the leaders of the attack and a payment of a fine of Rs 10,000.

The news of the fighting elsewhere along the frontier had encouraged the Wazirs to hold out but with the approach of winter and the prospect of losing their spring crops they saw the light of reason and by the end of October a settlement was reached.

The unusual feature of the Maizar incident was that the Wazirs broke what is generally regarded as an inflexible rule among Pathans, namely that a guest, whatever his standing, is immune from attack. For all that, there was the failure to realize that the object of the expedition was to exact a fine from a recalcitrant village. Failure to carry the proper complement of gun ammunition, and the dispositions taken up in the village while the meal was being eaten, are but two examples of carelessness engendered by a false sense of security. It was the story of Wana camp in a different setting and again it was the training and discipline of the troops that saved the day.

It was now the turn of the Mahsuds to make trouble, which assumed serious proportions during the summer of 1898 and increased in volume until in February 1900, at a jirga held in Tank, a formal demand was made for all outstanding fines. No settlement was reached, raids and offences continued, and at length on 1 December the whole tribe was put under blockade. One cavalry regiment and three infantry battalions were distributed in posts forming a cordon round the offenders but, although part of the fine demanded was paid, raiding went on, culminating in two daring attacks on border police posts. After nearly a year it was clear that the blockade, which was probably causing as much inconvenience to the government and the troops as to the tribesmen, was not on its own going to achieve the desired result and it was decided to supplement it with operations by small punitive forces. Operations began on 23 November 1901, each lasting only three or four days. There were four columns, each averaging a thousand rifles. No. 1 went south from Datta Khel, No. 2 up the Takki Zam from Jandola, No. 3 east from Sarwekai and No. 4 north-east from

Wana. No. 2 was the only one to meet with opposition, the others all did much damage to villages and rounded up large numbers of cattle. The whole operation had been planned with great secrecy and the official history records, perhaps a little naïvely, that success was due to the fact that it took the Mahsuds completely by surprise. They did not expect that any but the usual methods of coercion would be employed, and hoped that they would receive due warning before an advance was made into their country. A second cause of their discomfiture was that they found themselves assailed from every point of the compass and were unable to combine effectively.

With the precaution of increasing the strength of the columns these small operations continued. On 4 December a column went north from Jandola; on the 19th two columns converged from Jandola and Sarwekai; and on 2 January three columns were out, one from Jandola against the Shaktu, and two in the north. They were back in their permanent camps by the 7th. By then most of the troops in Waziristan had been marching continuously since the end of November and were badly in need of a rest, but they had inflicted heavy losses in men and cattle on the enemy who had now come to realize that the government troops could at will penetrate the remotest corners of their territory. Above all their success was largely due to their having fought the Mahsuds with their own favourite weapons: surprise and mobility. They set an example but regrettably few who came after them chose to profit by it.

On 16 January a deputation came in asking for peace and by mid-March all fines had been paid and other arrears cleared up, and the blockade was lifted.

THE severity of the punishment inflicted on the Mahsuds failed to impress the Wazirs living north of the Tochi and later in 1902 in retaliation for a number of outrages a force of two brigades, one operating from Thal in the north, entered their territory and inflicted heavy losses. During the course of these operations a company of 56th Rifles marched forty-nine miles from Datta Khel to Idak in twenty-four hours; only one man, a bugler, fell out.

The situation after the outbreak of war in 1914 was fraught with explosive possibilities. The tribes were naturally excited by the decision of Turkey to join the enemy, and they were encouraged by a few prominent mullas to look to Kabul and make ready for the jihad which had been proclaimed by the Sultan in his capacity as Caliph. As the war went on pro-Turkish agents worked incessantly among them to foment a general rising. However, the Amir Habibullah refused to depart from his declared policy of neutrality and discountenanced the activities of his more bigoted subjects. The reverses suffered by the British in Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the early part of the war led to the wildest rumours about the state of affairs in India and abroad, and with the dispatch of the cream of the Indian Army overseas the government were naturally anxious to avoid any trial of strength on the Frontier. Encouraged by such forbearance, and a rumour that the frontier posts were to be abandoned, the Mahsuds began to raid on a large scale, and a brigade in the Tochi had to take the field to repel a small invasion from Khost, across the Afghan border. This success had a salutary effect and, although the Mahsuds were smarting under restrictions imposed for their failure to surrender men wanted in connection with the murder of Major Dodd, the maliks, at any rate, were in a conciliatory mood. Unfortunately Fazl Din, the son of the Mulla Powindah, thought otherwise and persuaded his own section of the tribe to commit a series of raids, aimed as much as anything at implicating the others.

With intention of finding work for idle hands to do it was decided to offer labour contracts for work on the improvement of a road linking the Gumal with the Shahur. The work lay well outside Mahsud limits and the maliks would have been glad to accept but the scheme was bitterly opposed by the mulla on the traditional grounds that better roads lead to bigger invasions. His arguments won the day and on 27 February 1917 he led a lashkar south with the proclaimed intention of attacking British territory for their breach of faith in deciding to

improve this road. The South Waziristan Militia post at Sarwekai was attacked and the Militia lost twenty-one men killed. The Derajat Brigade was reinforced and at the end of April restored the situation by visiting Wana. There was trouble again early in May and it became clear that the Mahsuds were now openly hostile, that a defensive policy was no longer acceptable, and that a punitive expedition must be undertaken. Resources were not available for any attempt to occupy their country for a prolonged period, or for a blockade, and the plan adopted was to punish the inhabitants of the rich Khaisara valley (not to be confused with the Khaisora), which lies between Wana and Kaniguram.

The line of communication was transferred from the Gumal to the Shahur, which offered a shorter approach and a more rapid concentration. While the necessary reserves of stores were being built up there were minor encounters between Mahsuds and troops on escort duty that gave ominous warning that the level of training and experience had fallen very much below pre-war standards. There occurred also in the Tochi a most audacious raid perpetrated against a small militia post at Tut Narai, five miles south-east of Datta Khel. A party of seven Mahsuds, apparently unarmed and two of them disguised as girls, engaged in conversation some of the garrison who were standing outside the wire. Having disarmed suspicion one of the raiders produced a revolver and shot and killed the nearest militia man and also the guard commander before he could close the wicket gate. The sentry on the wall was shot, and although the subedar in command of the post went on firing until he was himself wounded a party of thirty Mahsuds who had been concealed in the holly oak scrub near by rushed the post and got inside. The telegraph clerk was chased from his signal office and murdered but not before he had sent a warning message to Datta Khel. The men in two small towers commanding the post were able to go on firing and with the arrival of local village pursuit parties the looters were driven off, but they decamped with forty-nine rifles and a hundred and twenty boxes of ammunition. Success was due to their knowledge of the habits of the garrison, and to the most meticulous and imaginative planning, as they had chosen not only the day but the very hour at which conditions were most likely to favour them. This regrettable diversion caused the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province to recommend the withdrawal of the Militia from Datta Khel or, alternatively, the dispatch of a brigade into Mahsud country

from the upper Tochi. Neither of these proposals was accepted and it was decided to strengthen the garrison at Miranshah and maintain the declared objective of entering the Khaisara valley.

The column, commanded by Major-General Sir William Beynon, advanced from Jandola on 13 June and passed through the formidable Shahur Tangi without meeting opposition, due largely to the fact that the enemy had been expecting a move up the Takki Zam directed on Makin. However, as soon as they realized where the threat lay they began to assemble in considerable numbers to contest any further move. The advance was resumed on 19 June and after covering about ten miles ran into stiff opposition about five miles from where the Shahur emerges from the gorges to the north of Kundighar. The decision to go into camp was not taken till as late as 4 p.m. with the result that one of the camp piquets held by 54th Sikhs had not had time to complete its defences. After dusk the enemy numbering several hundred made repeated efforts to rush the position and called on their co-religionists—the post was held by a platoon of Punjabi Mohammedans—to lay down their arms. Support was given by guns firing from camp but the attacks went on through the night and when dawn came ammunition had been reduced to one bomb and three rounds a rifle. This gallant defence did much to restore the enemy's respect for the fighting value of the Indian soldier, whose reputation had been harmed as a result of the losses suffered by troops on convoy duty in the Gumal.

The force now moved to the entrance to the gorge and next day in a pitched battle inflicted a severe defeat on the enemy who had occupied a prepared position covering a village to the north that had been used as a base by raiding parties. On 23 June they forced the passage of the defile by sending troops wide over the hills on either flank. The following day was spent in destroying villages in the Khaisara. It had been intended to devote a second day to the task but that evening a jirga came in from Kaniguram to ask for an armistice and to be told the terms of peace. The force commander was assured that the damage done was sufficient for political purposes and the operation was cancelled. While negotiations were in progress the force moved progressively back towards Jandola and on 10 August there was a full ceremonial jirga at Sarwekai attended by some three thousand Mahsuds. Prisoners, kidnapped Hindus, and large numbers of rifles had been handed in and now, as a guarantee of future good behaviour, the formal written agreement with the tribe was carefully explained and attested

and a duplicate copy handed to the leading maliks. The jirga, led by the maliks, having repeated the solemn prayer on enduring peace was dismissed by the force commander.

The campaign had been brief and so far as success lay within the province of the army they had succeeded. It had been carried out during the hottest season of the year in an area where dysentery, diarrhoea, malaria and sandfly fever were rife. During operations the troops were on the move from early dawn through days of broiling sun until late in the evening, and variation of temperature was often as great as forty-five degrees.

It was the first occasion on which the Royal Flying Corps was engaged in operations against the tribesmen. Co-operation with the army took the form of reconnaissance ahead of the column, support by bomb and automatic fire, particularly at critical moments during the withdrawal of a rearguard, and raids on areas further afield. On 22 and 26 June aircraft carried out successful attacks on Kaniguram, Makin and a small village which was the home of the Mulla Fazl Din.

It was also the first and only occasion on which British Territorial battalions—1/25th Londons and 2/6th Sussex—fought on the North-West Frontier.

There followed a period of comparative peace until the outbreak of the Third Afghan War on 6 May 1919. The distribution of regular troops at that time was a brigade headquarters in Bannu, and in the south Derajat Brigade headquarters in Dera Ismail Khan. It had been decided that in the event of an Afghan advance from Khost against Wana or the upper Tochi the militia would temporarily be withdrawn from their posts as there were not the troops available to go to their help if they were attacked. When the critical order had to be given the unfortunate example set by the Khyber Rifles cast doubt on the staunchness of the militias, both of which had large numbers of Afridis in their ranks.

On 24 May the commander of the Bannu Brigade decided to take the Dardoni movable column up the valley to reassure the post garrisons and tribes of the upper Tochi. That same day came news of the advance of the Afghan General, Nadir Khan, directed possibly against Miranshah. The move of the column was unfortunate as it had to be countermanded, and the last part of the march back was completed under tribal attack during the night 25/26 May. The evacuation of the

militia posts had been ordered and carried out, but on arrival it was found that a hundred and fifty men of the garrisons had been brought back and had taken advantage of the darkness to desert. To complete the story of events on the northern line, by a most skilful operation the garrisons of two posts on the Spinwam road were brought in with the assistance of 31st Lancers from Bannu, and it remained only to sort out the confusion reigning in the fort at Miranshah, held solely by the militia. Two companies of 41st Dogras were moved in from Dardoni, but it was quite impossible to segregate either the hostile Wazirs, or the doubtful and much excited Afridis, and during the night the former dug holes in the walls and made good their escape, taking their rifles with them. The situation then improved, although there were further desertions from smaller posts in the lower Tochi. All the Khattaks and some of the Mohmands remained loyal and later rejoined at Miranshah with their rifles and equipment.

Communication with Bannu was now by wireless only and the whole of the lower Tochi was virtually in a state of siege as the Wazirs confidently expected a further withdrawal to Bannu. The possibility of Mahsud incursion into the plains down the Khaisara and Shaktu valleys had to be taken into account and made it necessary to keep the bulk of the brigade in Bannu. The relief of Miranshah was postponed until the arrival of 43rd Infantry Brigade whose task, when they arrived on 1 June, was made easier as the result of a spirited local action fought by the Dardoni movable column, supported by two hundred and fifty rifles of the militia which convinced the tribesmen that the army could and would operate against them and had no intention of leaving Miranshah. The North Waziristan Militia remained in being as an effective force and although it would be an exaggeration to say that peace reigned in the Tochi the situation there was never anything like as bad as it was in the south.

The news of the evacuation of the upper Tochi posts arrived at Wana on 25 May like a bolt from the blue. The threat from the Afghan army was remote and it had been provisionally decided that the militia should be reinforced by a battalion from Dera Ismail Khan which the officers felt would have the necessary steadying effect. However, when orders were received for the evacuation the commandant, Major G. H. Russell, decided that the sooner it was carried out the better, before the situation in the north became generally known and the Mahsuds could collect themselves to speed their departure. Three

officers were sent off at once to withdraw the posts to the south-east down to the Gumal, but in Wana the Wazirs and Afridis, some six hundred men in all, and the bulk of the garrison, seized the keep, which contained the treasury and over half a million rounds of ammunition, and resisted all attempts to restore order.

Just before 10 p.m. five officers and three hundred men who remained loyal set out on their journey to the Zhob. By daylight next morning they had covered the twenty miles south to the Gumal, only to find that the post there was already in the hands of the Wazirs. Russell decided to continue the march a further fourteen miles to Moghal Kot on the Zhob river. It must have been a nightmare journey in the intense heat, with no drop of water by the way, across what is perhaps the most utterly depressing stretch of country on the whole frontier where for mile after mile no blade of grass, not even the hardiest shrub, relieves the stark black monotony of the hillsides. The tribesmen on their heels were becoming bolder and they counted themselves lucky that the Zhob Militia appeared to piquet the last two miles of the road. At Moghal Kot the three officers rejoined with the loyal remnants from the outlying posts. The small column, utterly exhausted, rested for two days. When they resumed their march, for the first five miles, until they met a relief column sent out by the Zhob Militia, they were under heavy attack from the pursuing Wazirs. The men who had travelled so far included trans-border Pathans and a number of recruits, and at once all semblance of discipline and order vanished. Five British officers were killed and two wounded, all within one mile of the start. Whatever may be thought of the loyalty of those who defected it must at least go on record that at no time did they ever turn on their officers.

Taking into account the natural difficulties of the road and the dangers that beset them the exploit stands out as one of the finest in the history of the frontier, due very largely to the personality of Major Russell, whose skill, courage and endurance set the example to those under him. When, two years later, the South Waziristan Militia were reconstituted he was chosen for the task.

Lashkars of Mahsuds, Wazirs, and even Sheranis from across the Zhob were soon roaming the whole valley of the Gumal, and lawlessness was the order of the day. A company was besieged in Jandola and held out gallantly for twelve days after its water supply had been cut until it was relieved on 9 June. The ration had been cut to five

pints a day at a time when the thermometer was registering 115 degrees.

During the next four and a half months some attempt was made to assert authority over the plains to the west and south-west of Tank, but the troops by no means had it their own way and there were several regrettable instances, again attributable to inexperience and a low standard of training.

The Pathan is ever ready to exploit the smallest indication of weakness in his opponent and there is no doubt that the withdrawal of the Waziristan Militias, by encouraging a mistaken view of the strength and intentions of the government, kindled the fire of revolt that was to blaze so fiercely in the valley of the Takki Zam six months later. What is far less easy to assess is whether the withdrawal was necessary and whether it could have been avoided. The official historian hedges his bets. On one page he is quite clear that the timely decision to evacuate the upper Tochi posts was more than justified by events. But two pages later he remarks that a grave situation had arisen as the result of hurried retrograde movements without a single shot being fired, thus violating with lamentable results a well-known principle in warfare against an uncivilized enemy.

For what it is worth officers who were serving in the militias at that time felt that given the necessary military support they could have stayed where they were. The provision of such support was a joint responsibility between civil and military. It was for the civil to say what could be expected to be the consequences of withdrawal. Army headquarters were admittedly facing a host of difficult problems at that moment, but there can have been little dust on their file marked 'Waziristan'. Events of the past two years had given clear enough warning that sooner or later, and probably sooner, troops would have to be found to deal with the Mahsuds and a request from the Chief Commissioner should not have caught them unprepared.

Offences committed by Mahsuds and Wazirs from the beginning of the Third Afghan War up to early November totalled a hundred and eighty-two raids in which two hundred and twenty people were killed; from the Tochi to Wana every tribal section was implicated, from north to south the situation was completely out of hand.

Peace negotiations with the Afghans ended on 8 August but they were followed by little if any improvement in Waziristan where there was a rumour going round, inspired by General Nadir Khan's oft-

repeated promises, that the peace terms would include a general amnesty for all tribesmen who had supported the Afghan cause. Early in October most of the influential maliks, Mahsuds and Wazirs, accompanied Nadir Khan to Kabul to clear up the position. They were made much of, given medals, and, in the case of deserters from the militias, grants of cash. They were advised to come to terms but, for all that, seem to have returned home with the impression that hostilities between the Amir and the British would soon be resumed and, although lacking any definite hope of direct assistance, they maintained their contumacious attitude and the total of outrages continued to mount.

Never in all the long history of the frontier have the dice been so heavily loaded in favour of the tribesmen as they were in November 1919. The country was in a ferment; Mahsud and Wazir were united as they had never been before; the ranks of the lashkars were reinforced by large numbers of militia deserters whose military training and knowledge of our tactics was an asset of very great consequence and, on the material side, they had from one source and another acquired something like two thousand government rifles and about a million rounds of ammunition. On the other side the Indian Government could find very little to put on the right side of the ledger. They had, admittedly, beaten the Afghans without any difficulty, but they got little credit for that as their late enemy was loudly proclaiming that he too had won the war; the internal security situation, especially in the Punjab, was causing grave anxiety, and there is no doubt that this particular aspect of the situation was well understood by every mulla and malik on the frontier. Among the troops available to fight the campaign that had now become inevitable were war-raised battalions which, to be candid, were not fitted for the tasks that were set them. The few regular battalions carried a disproportionately large number of young soldiers and very few experienced officers, and there were no British infantry battalions available; indeed if there had been they would have been an embarrassment as those in India were decimated by demobilization and had not had time to absorb and train such reinforcements as were coming out from England. Major-General Skeen,* who was to be in immediate command of the operations, had told army headquarters what the consequences were likely to be, but

* General Sir Andrew Skeen.

until events confirmed the accuracy of his forecast it does not seem that much notice was taken of his warning.

The immediate problem was to stabilize matters on terms that would compel the tribes to realize that the government was still master in its own house. Both Mahsuds and Wazirs were accordingly told that any rumours circulating about Afghanistan were groundless; that reparation and compensation for their many offences was required from them; and that the government proposed to locate troops in both north and south to cover the construction of such roads as were considered necessary. It was war to the knife, for there was little prospect that the jirgas summoned to hear the terms at Jandola and Miranshah would find them acceptable.

The intention was to deal first with the Tochi Wazirs and then with Mahsuds, leaving the Wana Wazirs to some future date. The Tochi Column was concentrated at Miranshah by 8 November and on the 14th the leading troops reached Datta Khel. Notices had been dropped threatening air attacks if the stated terms were not accepted and warning the tribes, in that event, to remove their women and children to places of safety. On the 17th, the date of the expiry of the ultimatum, a jirga of Utmanzai Wazirs met the force commander and, contrary to all expectation, made formal acceptance of the terms. One sub-section, trading on the remoteness of its valley, failed to appear and was duly bombed next day. The attack had the desired result, formal submission was complete and the column was back in Miranshah by the 26th. Next morning the force was formally broken up, renamed the Derajat Column, and began its long march of a hundred and forty miles to the southern area of operations. The Mahsuds had, as was expected, rejected the terms imposed.

Since 11 November, the date when the ultimatum to the Mahsuds expired, intermittent air attacks by night and day had been made on their villages. Damage was done, there were casualties, and throughout the country most of the inhabitants took to caves and to the hills, but their spirit remained unbroken.

General Skeen's striking force consisted of two squadrons of cavalry, one British and two Indian mountain batteries, with a section of 4.5 howitzers (British), two field companies of sappers and miners, two infantry brigades each of four Indian infantry battalions, and two Indian pioneer battalions.

Intelligence reports placed the total strength of the enemy at sixteen

thousand Mahsuds and seven thousand Wazirs, the latter mostly from the Wana area but with a sprinkling of hotheads from the Tochi. Only half were armed with modern rifles and because of supply difficulties it was thought unlikely that the numbers in the field at any one time would exceed three and a half thousand.

There were at that time no roads and all non-tactical movement was along the beds of the nalas, and an essential preliminary to each stage of the advance was to establish a camp forward and improve the tracks to enable the supply column to complete a stage during the hours of daylight.

On 11 December a small force of two battalions and a section of mountain artillery established itself in camp one and a half miles north of Jandola. On the 17th column headquarters with 67th Infantry Brigade and attached troops joined them. That same day a few maliks presented themselves in camp, wishing to interview General Skeen. It transpired that their purpose was no more than to secure immunity for their own villages which were threatened by the immediate advance, but it does seem that their presence in camp lulled the force into a false sense of security, and about 3.30 p.m. one of the piquets being built at the north end of the camp was rushed and overwhelmed by a party of Mahsuds who pressed home their attack in the face of artillery and machine-gun fire. That night reports were received of the presence of two thousand Mahsuds about three miles away to the north and of the approach of one thousand Wana Wazirs down the Shahur. The official history records that the presence of these lashkars encouraged the hope that a decision might be forced 'at our very doors, if the tribesmen stood their ground'. Regrettably, it would have been more realistic to question the constancy of the troops themselves. The day after arrival a reserve brigade was sent to the junction of the Takki Zam and the Shahur and this move misled the enemy into supposing that the main attack would be up the Shahur rather than the Takki Zam. In consequence the force advanced almost unopposed and went into camp on the Palosina plateau, the scene of the attack in 1860. The ground across the stream was high and precipitous and as it was clear that a pause of several days would be necessary to build up supplies it was decided on the 19th to establish a strong piquet to protect the camp and eventually cover the move forward. The force detailed for the task consisted of two battalions, and in view of the difficulty of the terrain it was too small. On both battalion fronts the remaining strength

available for the final attack was insufficient, troops in reserve and support were short and badly disposed, and when the Mahsuds delivered a heavy counter-attack both battalions returned to camp rather more rapidly than they left it. Indeed, to quote from an eye-witness account, 'December 19 earned for itself the title of Derby Day'.

To re-establish confidence it was decided to repeat the operation on the next day when two extra battalions were included, one of them having a party of a hundred rifles under a British officer in readiness to be installed as garrison of the piquet. Two companies 3/34th Sikh Pioneers and half a company of sappers went out to carry out the construction work. The operation was successful, and it owed a great deal to the precision and thoroughness of the support given by the Royal Air Force against enemy on reverse slopes and nalas who could not be reached by artillery fire. By mid-afternoon it was considered that the defences of the piquet, although not complete, were sufficiently far advanced to protect the garrison during the night, the covering troops were withdrawn, and were safely back in camp by 4.30 p.m. Hardly had they arrived when the piquet garrison was seen to be in trouble. Leaving their rifles and equipment they had begun carrying up blankets, water and reserve ammunition when there was a burst of fire from a group of rocks about four hundred yards away followed by an attack from both north and west. The officer and those men who had remained in the piquet to give covering fire fought on until they were all killed but the rest were chased back almost into camp.

It was now more than ever necessary that the confidence of the troops should be restored. It was decided to give the ill-starred area west of the stream a rest and to establish a piquet on Black Hill, a tumbled mass of ridges to the north which commanded the camp at a range of seventeen hundred yards. Once again the attack on the position was carried out by two battalions without much trouble. They then moved forward to take up covering positions and two companies of 34th Pioneers piled their arms short of the piquet site and began to build a sangar wall. The work was well in hand when enemy were seen to the north-east. In addition to this numbers had been seen crossing the river, and also concentrating on the far side in the area of the fighting of the previous two days. Shortly after 1.30 p.m. the most intense fire was brought to bear on the piquet and a mass of enemy, afterwards estimated at close on a thousand men, rushed the site having crept up to within two hundred yards in dead ground on the

further side. The attack struck the covering troops on the right and when they gave way the remainder followed suit; a subsequent attempt at a counter-attack did not succeed. The redeeming feature of the engagement was the behaviour of the working party of the Sikh pioneers and the few sappers who were with them, and the devotion of the stretcher-bearers in bringing in the wounded. This tribute can be amplified from the diary kept by an officer who was present with the battalion.* When they saw that they had been abandoned by those responsible for protecting them the pioneers withdrew, snatched up their arms and returned to the wall they had been building, which was two feet high and covered by a single strand of barbed wire. This wire proved to be a deciding factor, as the four attacks which followed all broke when they reached it. The four British officers with the two companies had all fought in France, were all trained Lewis gunners, and it was the fire they brought to bear that really won the day. They fought on until, when ammunition was running short, a fifth attack by the enemy penetrated the piquet. They were driven out with the bayonet. Then in one final attack all four British officers were wounded. By that time a battalion from camp had moved out and occupied a covering position on an intermediate ridge, and the withdrawal began. The diary runs, 'The route back for nearly half a mile was by way of a very narrow goat track along which only single file movement was possible. In view of the fact that the tribesmen were in the piquet almost before the Pioneers left it was little short of a miracle that every one of the four officers was brought back to camp without suffering further casualty. It had only been possible by an exhibition of great gallantry and faithfulness on the part of all Indian ranks who, ignoring personal safety, had carried their officers down to safety. Not one of the four was capable of walking.'

Equally gallant had been the conduct of stretcher-bearers and of the battalion medical officer who more than once went out under fire to help the wounded. Of the two hundred and fifty men in the two companies a hundred and eighty-six were either killed or wounded. All the officers including the doctor, were decorated for gallantry as well as twelve of the Indian officers and men. Late that evening a brigade order was published congratulating the 3/34th Sikh Pioneers on their fine performance and the shining example they had set. It

* Captain D. L. Rees, 34th Royal Sikh Pioneers.

concluded by saying that Black Hill Piquet would in future be known as Pioneer Piquet in honour of the regiment. Later, to commemorate the occasion a centre-piece for the mess table was made consisting of a piece of rock taken from the hill, on which stood a silver sangar. The trophy was recently presented to the National Army Museum.

The account also records that when the battle was over the political officer managed to collect, from his flock of spies, a reasonable picture of the day as seen from the enemy's side. It appeared that, encouraged by the lack of determination shown by the troops on the two previous days, they had decided that on the 21st they would take the initiative and mount a large-scale attack on the camp itself, coming in from both west and north. Forming-up areas were allotted and it remained only to agree a signal for the general assault. It must be remembered that tribal jealousies were a potent factor, particularly when both Mahsuds and Wazirs were in the field, and no section was willing to commit itself except on visual evidence that the others were doing the same. The agreed signal was to be the wave of victorious attackers breaking over the crest of Black Hill. But, as has been described, the wave never broke, and the grand assault was never made. Had it happened as planned two battalions of the garrison would have been scattered in disorder on the slopes to the north, and it is possible that the stand made by the Sikh Pioneers, quite apart from its intrinsic merit, was a turning-point in the fortunes of the expedition.

The following day Pioneer Piquet was reoccupied without much opposition. Fifty dead Mahsuds and many rifles were found, and funeral parties could be seen to be busy at Kotkai four miles away. The enemy now made their customary expression of readiness to discuss terms, a device that was, as usual, no more than an attempt to gain a breathing space in which to reorganize and collect supplies while the area next in line for attack was cleared of cattle and non-combatants. It was probably men from these villages that made up the jirga that came into Jandola on 29 December when, in spite of the very much stiffer terms that were now demanded, complete submission was made and sealed by all those present. It was a formality that was not worth the ink marks those horny thumbprints made upon the paper.

On 2 January 1920 the first advance to Kotkai was made to establish a camp in readiness for the main column. The 4/39th Garhwal Rifles, who had recently joined the column to replace one of the battalions

who had failed in the fighting around Palosina, were covering the operation and during the afternoon repeated attacks were made against their right company. Under heavy fire from the north a large body of Mahsuds established themselves below the crest and when the withdrawal to camp began they rushed forward. It was at this juncture that Lieutenant W. D. Kenny led about ten men in a counter-attack to gain time for the retirement of the rest of the covering troops. The party were killed to a man but by their gallantry made it possible for the remainder to reach camp in good order, and for the wounded to be got away. Kenny received the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross.

On 6 January 67th Brigade reached Kotkai camp and the next day advanced to capture the Ahnai Tangi and so began a battle which was not won until eight days later. The fighting on the final day, the 14th, was of an intensity that was never matched on the frontier. At the actual point of attack the troops were always heavily outnumbered and the determination with which they fought would have won them the admiration of any army in the world.

The tangi itself, where the bed of the stream narrows to a width of about fifty yards to run between towering cliffs, is about three hundred yards long, but it is flanked on both sides by a tangled mass of hills, cliffs and nalas forming a defensive position with a depth of close on three miles; and there was no way round it. Reconnaissance was difficult but as on the right, or western bank, there was a plateau between hills and river it was decided that 67th Brigade should make the main attack on that side. On the first day they made some progress but 43rd Brigade on the other bank ran into so much opposition, and the ground was so difficult, that they were unable to reach a position that would effectively cover the main attack. The whole force withdrew to camp. On the morning of the 9th, 67th Brigade advanced to a temporary camp from which it would be easier to renew their attack but 43rd Brigade again failed in their object. They tried again the next day, and again they were unsuccessful, although it was known that the enemy had also lost heavily. General Skeen now decided that he could delay no longer, and gave orders for both brigades to advance at dawn on the morning of the 11th. The operation succeeded in spite of the very great difficulties of the terrain, small parties of the enemy were surprised and made off, and piquets were established on the heights astride the actual tangi. 67th Brigade moved camp again, and the 12th

was spent in consolidation and the improvement of tracks in readiness for the final assault.

Reconnaissance now showed that the real key to the position was a hill on the east bank that became known as Flathead Left, on the far side of some very broken country about a mile above the foremost piquet that had been established. On the morning of the 14th a strong advance guard consisting of Coke's Rifles and two companies 2/5th Gurkhas moved through the tangi while the rest of the Gurkhas were ordered to advance along the crest and capture Flathead Left. The advance guard got through the tangi but at once ran into heavy opposition, and it became clear that a further feature, Flathead Right, would have to be taken before the road along the bed of the stream could be used. Before orders could be sent to 5th Gurkhas to capture this second objective a message was received from them calling for reinforcements and ammunition as they were heavily engaged in holding Flathead Left and could advance no further. A company of 2/76th Punjabis was sent to help them but before it arrived ammunition had run out and in an attack to repel the enemy with the bayonet the Gurkhas' commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Crowdy, was killed.

The remainder of 2/76th Punjabis reached the top about mid-day, and soon afterwards moved down towards the dip that lay between them and Flathead Right. This attack had to be launched without any help from supporting weapons as Flathead Left, rising sheer above the river bed, preventing covering artillery fire from being brought to bear. The nala ahead swarmed with Mahsuds, the objective was strongly held, and there was heavy enfilade fire from caves at the base of Marble Arch, a hill further over to the left. The attackers had advanced no more than a hundred and fifty yards out of the twelve hundred they had to cover when the battle developed into a desperate hand-to-hand struggle for this vital piece of ground, a battle that went on all through the afternoon. The commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Chamberlayne, had committed all his reserves and then, in a last desperate attempt to gain the mastery, he too led a bayonet charge in which he was killed. He was the third British officer in the battalion to fall, and three others had been wounded. At this critical moment one and a half companies of 2/9th Gurkhas arrived and with their help the hold on Flathead Left was finally established, although the enemy made three more determined attacks before nightfall.

There was an eye-witness account of the battle, written by 'Ganpat', in *Blackwood's Magazine* in November 1920. 'It is a little epic, that day of the 2/76th Punjabis on Flathead. They were a very, very young second line battalion, and they bumped into a fight such as the oldest of veteran Frontier Force battalions had never even dreamt of. Nevertheless, they attacked with go, when bidden, and when told to hang on hung on to what they had got, exposed hour after hour to incessant torment of snipers' bullets, while from time to time the prone line of men huddled behind rocks and stones would swirl into sudden movement, as a rush of Mahsuds came up one or other of the nalas and folds leading unseen to the very crest line. But they stuck grimly to their ground, doing all that man could do—just sticking it and dying in the process. As the column commander wired that day, "the safety of the column depends on the staunchness of the troops". Staunch indeed they proved, but none more so than those children of the 2/76th.'

The action was beyond all question the most stubbornly fought in the campaign and it was the losses they suffered there that broke the Mahsud will to fight.

The greater part of the column had passed through the tangi but was unable to advance further until Marble Arch was captured. General Skeen decided to camp where the force was halted although it was a most hazardous and unsuitable site. A threat to camp from the west developed during the afternoon but it was held off and next morning it was found that the enemy had gone. On 18 January the advance was resumed to an excellent camp site on the plateau at Sorarogha four miles away.

The Mahsuds had fought with reckless gallantry and great skill but when their assaults were pushed home the troops proved superior to them. The co-operation of the Royal Air Force was most effective. The offensive spirit of the air crews had a remarkable effect as on the occasion when two pilots had finished their bombs and ammunition before their sortie was over. Realizing that if they left the Mahsuds would at once renew their assault, they continued diving low at the enemy thereby preventing the development of a fresh attack. The whole action is an excellent example of the desperate nature of the fighting, and of the change in the nature of frontier tactics due to the improvement in the enemy's armament, an improvement to which there is only one counter, a very high standard of individual training for the infantryman.

About a mile and a quarter north of Sorarogha the Takki Zam cuts through another ridge to form the Barari Tangi where Chamberlain fought his decisive battle in 1860. The advance began on 23 January and the main attack was preceded by two dawn operations to establish supporting positions on features commanding the entrance to the gorge. General Skeen foresaw that the most formidable task of all was likely to be the capture of a rocky hill known as The Barrier, some two thousand yards beyond the tangi. The crest of The Barrier was no more than a few feet wide and could be reached only by a precipitous climb. After yet another dawn advance on the 28th the passage of the tangi was secured and the troops detailed for the final phase moved forward; but the tribesmen had gone and by 10 a.m. the objective had been captured.

Nearly twenty years later Pettigrew, the author of *Frontier Scouts*, found himself on The Barrier in the course of a patrol to cover an engineer road reconnaissance. He records that he had always been puzzled by the verdict in the official history that success had been due to surprise and, meeting an ancient Mahsud on the top of the hill, he asked him if he had been in the fighting. ‘“Of course, that is my house over there.” “Then tell me, why didn’t you fight hard to hold the ridge?” He shrugged his shoulders, hands palm upwards, a smile showing through his thick, untidy beard. “It was freezing. There had been snow, and we were hungry and cold, so we went away.”’

As a result of the losses they had suffered the Mahsuds had sent several messengers to Khost to report their plight and find out what hope there was of help from across the border. They got little but messages of sympathy and goodwill, though a couple of mullas with strong anti-British leanings did arrive to stiffen their morale, bringing large quantities of rifle ammunition with them. Hoping that perhaps the presence of these emissaries might induce the government to modify its terms the maliks had tried, while the force was still at Sorarogha, to reopen negotiations, but as it was clear they were powerless to enforce any agreement that might be reached they were sent away. They had for some time been trying to persuade the Afghan commander at Wana to lend his two pieces of artillery to support them in their struggle against the Derajat Column. He had been most unwilling to do so and his reluctance was justified as, when at length they arrived, they proved completely ineffective and the second time they

came into action, they were silenced by two rounds from a section of 2·75 guns.

The weather now was appalling—sleet, snow and a biting wind, and a temperature of twenty-five degrees below freezing. In an advance on 5 February the forward troops left camp at 1 a.m., the main column four hours later. The Takki Zam had to be forded many times, and each time the men emerged from the river their boots and putties were encased immediately in ice. By the 16th column headquarters with two mountain batteries and 67th Infantry Brigade, having five battalions under command, was established about two miles short of the wide open valley with its clusters of villages that was known as Makin. What Maidan was to the Afridis, Makin was to the Mahsuds. As the inhabitants had made no attempt to hand in the rifles that were due to be surrendered punitive measures began on the 19th. There was much opposition to start with and on the second day, when the tale of destruction included seventeen towers and a hundred and sixty houses, the losses suffered by the troops were considerable. The force remained in the Makin area until the end of the month then on 1 March, to facilitate the withdrawal, the forward piquets began to move at 2 a.m. The enemy were surprised and there were few casualties.

The column now moved to Kaniguram. A few rifles were handed in but although the numbers demanded were by no means excessive, it was clear that the Mahsuds, as was their custom, regarded the terms imposed as a basis for hard and prolonged bargaining from which they could expect to win considerable remission. They just could not realize that on this occasion the terms meant what they said. They had suffered heavy casualties and much destruction of property, but there was no real sign of contrition and the view was now gaining ground that only a prolonged occupation of the country would produce any lasting results.

So ended the main operations of the Derajat Column, and after a graded road to take mechanical transport had been built forward from Ladha the force withdrew there and began the construction of a permanent camp.

The fighting in Waziristan was a direct consequence of the Third Afghan War. In that war, as in the other two, the British won an initial victory without conclusively defeating their enemy in the field. The decision to withdraw the militias was to the Mahsuds and Wazirs a confession of weakness far more significant than success against the

Afghan army. Once the militias had gone a major campaign in Waziristan became inevitable, and it was in the troubled aftermath of that fighting that far-reaching decisions as to the future of the country were taken that might have gone otherwise if a more detached and comprehensive survey of all the factors had been possible.

THE Derajat Column ceased to exist on paper on 7 May 1920 but that did not imply that there was any withdrawal of troops, or any relaxation in conditions of active service; indeed, very much the reverse. The 67th Infantry Brigade remained at Ladha as the striking force, and there were three other brigades protecting the lines of communication back to railhead at Tank. The need for so many troops is indication enough of the unsettled state of affairs.

The Wana Wazirs had not yet been punished and in the autumn of 1920 they perpetrated a number of outrages that made it clear that their turn had now come. Their most notable exploit was a raid on a post halfway between Manzai and Tank garrisoned by a detachment of a war-raised battalion that was weak not only in numbers: the men were riddled with malaria, ill-trained and lacking in experience. It took the Wazirs just two weeks to sum them up: neither stratagem nor ruse was necessary. Choosing the night of a Hindu festival, and with the help of a confederate among the Pathans employed in the camp, a gang of a hundred and twenty men rushed the gate, cut the telephone wires, attacked the officers' mess, and finally made off with twenty-six rifles, a quantity of ammunition and numbers of horses and mules.

The small Afghan contingent that had been at Wana for nearly a year was growing more active, so in October the Ahmedzai Wazirs were given an ultimatum demanding payment of a fine of Rs 40,000, the surrender of two hundred and fifty tribal rifles, and the return of all government rifles taken since May 1920. Failing compliance with a substantial part of the demand selected villages would be bombed and Wana would be re-occupied. There was a peace party among the Wazirs but it was powerless in the presence of a virulent anti-British agent who had arrived from Kabul, and it was clear that there would be no settlement until he had been driven out. A force of two infantry brigades advanced from Jandola through the Shahur Tangi on 12 November 1920. The Wazirs made a last-minute appeal to the Mahsuds for help in return for the support given them in 1919 but they met with a cold refusal—but for the encouragement given them by the Wazirs, came the answer, they would have given in much earlier and so saved themselves the losses and suffering consequent on the severe fighting at the Ahnai Tangi. The column reached Wana with little opposition on 22 December. The fines continued to come in slowly but something of a stalemate was reached when the shares due from those with settled

property had been paid, while others, whose only assets were their flocks and herds, escaped across the Afghan border.

In March it was decided to occupy Wana permanently, as well as the approach road through the Shahur and Sarwekai; the record adds that documents of the time show that although occupation was designed to be permanent it did not mean that it was to be permanently occupied by regulars or even by militia. No further elucidation is offered.

The year 1921 was one of forays and raids, and the wearing down of the stubborn resistance of the remaining sections of both Wazirs and Mahsuds.

The official history records that during the spring of 1922 it was decided to locate the main garrison of Waziristan at Razmak rather than at Ladha and gives reasons for the decision, but it does not examine the pros and cons of this revolutionary change of policy: the decision to maintain a permanent garrison in the heart of Waziristan, which was at the time administered directly by army headquarters. It was a question that was hotly debated at the time. Up to 31 March 1924 it was considered to be an active service area and political authority was vested in the force commander, advised, of course, by his political officers. The officer holding the dual appointment was a British service officer who had come straight out from England to take up the appointment; at army headquarters the deputy chief of the general staff was also a British service officer, and the Commander-in-Chief was Lord Rawlinson. It seems, therefore, that the advice given to the Viceroy, Lord Reading, came largely from three officers who for all their reputations and military ability had little practical experience of the frontier; and it is not necessary to look very far for the reason why the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier, Sir John Maffey,* was not only not consulted but did not even hear of the decision until it was virtually irrevocable. As might be expected, he reacted very sharply.

It should be clear by now that military intervention in tribal affairs was almost always to exact retribution for an accumulation of minor offences carried out in British India. If the army was called on it argued a breakdown in the other two lines of defence against such outrages, the militias under the political officers, and the Frontier Constabulary

* Lord Rugby.

under the deputy commissioners in the settled districts. There is no doubt that during the war years the situation had got completely out of hand, with the inevitable result that standards were lowered, and raids came to be accepted as one of those things that had to be put up with. During 1921 Maffey had written a pungent letter inviting his administration to agree with him in condemning such a flabby, lukewarm policy in the face of such flagrant outrages.

Apart from the implied slur on his authority of settling a regular army garrison in Waziristan he advanced two cogent reasons against it. The first, that the presence of small detachments and of British officers in the tribal hinterland would constitute a constant anxiety—an ever-present irritation to the fanatically independent tribesman, and a permanent military entanglement. The second that it would not dominate the country. He ridiculed the illusion that the army was occupying Waziristan at that moment. They were holding a communication trench called the Ladha Line—enormously long, expensive to maintain, littered with bones and the skeletons of camels and motor cars. And away from the road the British writ did not, and would not, run.

Maffey put his finger here on a problem that the army had to tackle, with varying degrees of success, over the next twenty-five years: how to protect very long lines of communication running through country which might be openly hostile but which, even in days of peace, might harbour the occasional marauding gang. The problem was so great that it warrants a diversion to consider it at some length.

Slow-moving convoys of animals, labouring for miles along the valley bottoms of the Shahur, Takki Zam and Tochi were a constant temptation to the tribesmen and an anxiety to commanders and troops. That was the picture in 1921, but the developments of the next fifteen years, lorry convoys moving along metalled roads, with tanks, armoured cars, aircraft and wireless to protect them, did little to solve the basic problem. In times of peace road protection could be entrusted to khassadars, backed by patrols from the Scouts, but when operations were in progress the task could only be done effectively by the army itself. If the road was opened daily by piqueting afresh every morning the enemy was presented with endless opportunities of attacking at the exact time and place of his choosing the weak link in what inevitably became something of a routine task. A method less extravagant in the number of infantry required was to establish permanent piquets, large enough to be self-contained in the matter of defence, which held

also a striking force strong enough to dominate the high ground along the road. Even this system was expensive and in 1936/7, when there were four extra brigades in Waziristan, no troops could be spared for permanent road protection, and Razmak and Wana were cut off for weeks on end.

The permanent piquet system was used in Waziristan in 1919/20 and again in the Mohmand campaign in 1935. It was brought to a high pitch of efficiency by 1/2nd Gurkhas based in Razani in 1937, when they took over a sector which up to that time, though open to military traffic by day, was just as regularly used by the tribesmen during the hours of darkness to pass supplies and reinforcements from the Shaktu area to the Fakir of Ipi, who was then established somewhere north-west of Razmak.

The battalion set themselves the object of preventing a single tribesman from using the road by day or night without their knowledge, and at the peril of his life if he were armed. They built four strong piquets, heavily wired, each to hold a strong platoon as striking force, and a garrison of a machine-gun section or even a single gun. In battalion reserve was a rifle company carried in lorries, and a mechanized field battery, and in addition a section of armoured cars came down from Razmak daily. As the piquets occupied the ground from which the enemy could snipe the road, traffic was secure at all times. The layout was supplemented by searching the wooded slopes below by day and quite often by night also. A patrol would evacuate its piquets and lie up in dead ground to catch enemy who might try to attack it, or be down by the road at dawn to deal with tribesmen who might have crept in during the night. Snipers were drastically dealt with, and after a patrol had followed a party to a village and shot up the stragglers there was no further trouble. On one occasion a patrol left by the road on chance intercepted a messenger carrying a letter from the Fakir; and on another a strong fighting patrol of two platoons under their two Gurkha officers ambushed and broke up an enemy lashkar over two hundred strong, and inflicted heavy casualties at a cost of one man wounded.

The outstanding example of how long months of immunity from attack can lull those responsible for road protection into a dream of imagined security occurred at the Shahur Tangi. It is a winding gorge three miles long with rough precipitous sides climbing to fifteen hundred feet on either side. The actual river bed is not much more than

fifty yards across. The whole length of the defile is broken up by small re-entrants and, even when the heights above are piqueted, it is impossible for the protective troops to command or search the ground down at stream level, which is scarred with crevices and crags that offer hiding places for a regiment of snipers. The defile had never been held against any of the advances made through it by previous expeditions; indeed, the heights on either side offered no great obstacle to a properly mounted attacking force, but it was quite ideally suited for an ambush.

The first one took place on 10 April 1921 when a small down convoy escorted by a single company of 28th Punjabis was attacked by three hundred Mahsuds and Wazirs. Then only the steadiness and gallantry of the troops averted disaster and Sepoy Ishar Singh won the Victoria Cross.

The second attack came three months later on 16 July and was a far more carefully planned affair as the enemy had occupied their positions during the hours of darkness. They waited till the convoy had reached the narrowest part then dropped bombs from the cliffs above and opened a heavy fire from both sides directed at the men of the escort and the drivers rather than at the animals. It was difficult to locate and attack the enemy but with the arrival of reinforcements with Stokes mortars it was at last possible to evict them and the convoys proceeded on their way. Hardly had this happened when a 'spate warning' was received. It is hard to picture the force and savagery of the flood on these occasions when in a couple of hours the stream swells from a breadth of six or eight feet flowing gently in the bed of the nala to a torrent of raging foam as much as sixty feet in depth, sweeping great boulders along like pebbles in its path. In October that year, because a Verey pistol in a piquet failed, a small party down below received no warning signal, and twenty-one men were swept away and drowned.

The road from Jandola to Wana, completed in 1924, runs along the north bank. Crossing by an Irish bridge at the entrance it climbs for a mile and a half to a height of about fifty feet above the stream and drops again to stream level at the western end. The crest is at about the narrowest point of the gorge. On 3 April 1937 the senior R.I.A.S.C. officer travelling with a convoy from Wana reported that he had seen small parties of men in the gorge in the broken ground above the road apparently engaged in a tactical exercise. At the same time political sources reported that the locals were saying that the Wana convoy

would be attacked. Traffic was stopped for a few days, but running was resumed on the 8th when a convoy made the round trip without incident. Next morning it left Manzai at 6 a.m., consisting of forty-nine load-carrying lorries and two private cars, escorted by four armoured cars spaced evenly down the column. The escorting infantry were in two small parties near the head and tail, with about a platoon in the centre. At 7.45 a.m., just as the leading lorry reached the crest at mile $8\frac{1}{2}$ and the tail was well inside the gorge at mile 7, heavy and accurate fire that lasted fifteen minutes was opened along the whole length of the convoy, being most intense against the leading half. The tribesmen were in concealed positions on both sides of the road and in some places, from spurs on the northern side, they were firing from a range of as little as fifteen yards. They inflicted heavy casualties in the first few minutes: drivers were hit, lorries slewed across the road; the escorting infantry were shot as they left their vehicles and tried to scale the heights; the armoured cars, unable to move from their places in the convoy, could fire only where they were halted, and to the north side not at all. An attempt by the leading armoured car to clear lorries from the head of the column was thwarted when a petrol tank caught fire and the blazing lorry blocked all movement. Troops and Scouts arrived at both ends of the defile and attacked the heights on either side but the enemy could not be cleared from their positions down in the gorge, and it was not until after a night of looting that by dawn the next morning it was possible to tackle the clearance of the various obstacles and reopen the road. In the convoy fifty-two were killed, including the convoy commander and six other officers, and forty-seven were wounded.

The enemy were reported to have had sixteen killed and twenty-six wounded. The gang which carried out this attack came from the Shaktu at the instigation of the Fakir of Ipi. They numbered between sixty and eighty men but after their initial success the numbers were swelled to about three hundred by Mahsuds from the near-by villages. Scouts patrolling from Jandola and Sarwekai were working that day in areas away from the tangi and protection of that part of the road devolved on the khassadars who were absent from duty, if they were not in fact helping to reinforce the attackers. The disposition of the escort accompanying the column was said to be the result of experience, and was probably reasonably effective along open stretches of road, but not effective at all in the tangi.

The speed of a motor convoy fosters an entirely false impression of security, which overlooks the fundamental fact that its escort is far less effective than infantry moving on foot. Bunched together in lorries the men are, at the paralysing moment of the first attack, an easy target for the enemy's fire, while the value of the armoured car is reduced by its limited field of fire and restricted freedom of movement if lorries block the road. There is only one answer to the protection of a stretch of road like the Shahur Tangi and that is effective patrolling to prevent an ambush ever being set up.

To return to Maffey and his protests. As might be expected his criticisms were not entirely destructive. He proposed as an alternative that the tribes must be convinced that raiding did not pay, and that there were two ways of doing so. The first was the implacable enforcement of a policy of retaliation in kind by seizing and imprisoning tribal hostages, and there was never any lack of them, arrested in Peshawar, Kohat or Bannu as the case might be, and held prisoner until their kinsmen had expiated their offence. In short, a policy of controlling them through their interests in India rather than by British interests in their country. The other was to promote the efficiency of the forces responsible for dealing with raids to the point where the risks run by the raider would be so great that the game would no longer be worth the candle. He advocated the construction of a network of lateral roads in the settled districts to promote mobility. He considered that the army should be stationed in the cantonments used in pre-war days outside tribal territory, and that they should concentrate on improving, by the use of modern developments and equipment, their ability to move rapidly to the scene of trouble. He attached immense importance to a compact, efficient air force. He contended that these measures would solve the problem just as efficiently, on a more lasting basis, and at a mere fraction of the cost of establishing a large garrison in Razmak. But his was a voice crying in the wilderness: he was not prepared to stay to carry out a policy to which he was opposed, and India lost a great public servant.

It is only fair to add that under the army headquarters' scheme the authority of the political agents was to be strengthened by the re-organization of the militias, and by the raising of khassadar companies to be used on routine road protection and to decentralize responsibility for security generally among local sections of tribes.

In the autumn of 1922 the Mahsuds were again giving trouble in the

shape of attacks on posts and convoys but arrangements went ahead for the establishment of a large regular garrison in Razmak which was to be supplied along a metalled road from Bannu, up the Tochi, and over the Razmak Narai. The force allotted for the task consisted of three infantry brigades with attached troops under the command of Major-General A. le G. Jacob who was the commander of Kohat district. By 4 January 1923 the leading brigade was established at Razani ready to tackle the passage of the Razmak Narai. It was a formidable undertaking. There were many natural difficulties, the track was dominated by high ridges densely covered with thick ilex bushes, and although the enemy had offered no opposition to the advance so far, trouble could now be expected, and any setback would be aggravated by the presence with the column of fifteen hundred camels and eleven hundred mules. The road through the narai was secured and piqueted and the advance to Razmak took place on 23 January in a blinding snowstorm which cut visibility to about twenty yards. There was virtually no opposition. The march began at 8 a.m. but it was long after nightfall, and the snow was still falling, when the last of the two thousand six hundred pack animals arrived in camp. Only three camels had fallen by the wayside.

In February a force of two brigades, one from Ladha the other from Razmak, moved down to destroy Makin in retaliation for the many offences committed by the Mahsuds during the past six months. The operation was supported by heavy bombers of 27th Squadron R.A.F. and resulted in a degree of destruction far greater than anything ever known in the chequered history of the valley. The effect of the punishment was soon apparent and in the middle of March a representative jirga of fifteen hundred Mahsuds assembled to hear the terms of peace and an explanation of government policy for the future.

It was now necessary as a matter of urgency to relieve the garrison of five hundred men of the South Waziristan Scouts who had been in Wana since the previous May. There had been another kaleidoscopic change of policy and it had been decided to hand the post over once more to khassadars, establishing a strong Scout detachment at Sarwekai, thirty-two miles away. A force of six battalions of infantry was concentrated at Jandola for the relief which was completed by 17 April.

The remainder of 1923 was a time of consolidation. A number of new scout posts were built and the circular road Bannu-Razmak-

Jandola was finished by the completion of the final link north from Sorarogha. The road through the formidable Shahur Tangi was begun in December and finished nine months later. There had been some unrest aimed chiefly at discrediting the khassadars, but by 31 March 1924 the situation had improved sufficiently for the Waziristan Field Force to be disbanded. In its place there was created Waziristan District with headquarters at Dera Ismail Khan (at Razmak in the summer) and political control was returned to the newly appointed Resident. In Razmak there was a brigade headquarters, a mountain artillery brigade (less a battery at Manzai) and six infantry battalions. On the line back down the Tochi there were two brigade headquarters and a total of seven battalions, including two in Bannu. In the south between Tank and Jandola was a brigade of four battalions, with its headquarters at Manzai; a grand total of seventeen battalions. The strength of the reorganized Tochi Scouts was 1,846 plus about sixty mounted infantry, the South Waziristan Scouts totalled 2,006, also with a small mounted detachment.

It is recorded that between 1 and 14 June 1924 the Razmak Movable Column, consisting of a strong brigade of all arms, with all pack transport, made its first promenade. It is perhaps a curious word to use for what was after all an operation of war, since the brigade was sniped while in camp and suffered casualties, but it is not so inapt as it might appear to be for it conveys something of the formal majesty of these occasions, when any tribesman on mischief bent knew to a mile where he might find the column at any time while it was away from Razmak. Surprise, as a weapon of war, was surrendered to the enemy.

Although the Mahsuds as a whole had come to terms with the government—raids in 1924/5 had dropped to twenty-five, compared with a hundred and twenty-nine in 1921/2—there was a small pocket of resistance, some eight miles square, lying north of the Shahur Tangi, the inhabitants of which continued to commit outrages in British territory. It was a particularly difficult area for the army to reach and at the end of February 1925 it was decided to attempt to bring them to heel by air action alone.

Operations began on 9 March after the tribes had failed to comply with the terms announced, and were carried out by one squadron of Bristol Fighters and two of D.H. 9A aircraft, flying from airfields at Miranshah and Tank. Every variation of attack was made, both in timing and intensity, so as to keep the enemy in a state of uncertainty

as to how and when they would next feel the blow. After a week there were signs of compliance with the terms and it was clear that the normal life of the tribesmen had been very much upset. They had been forced to take refuge in their caves, and had been driven out again by the fleas which, quite unexpectedly, turned out to be strongly pro-British. Towards the end of the month it appeared that operations against sections remaining hostile might be indefinitely protracted and the weight of attacks was cut down to the point that the operation became an air blockade. However, the flexibility and mobility of the air arm made it possible to attack at short notice if a routine patrol reported a target. By the end of April, under pressure from friendly sections who were also suffering some inconvenience from the blockade, the hostilities gave in and peace was signed. To summarize the results: something over three squadrons had been employed for fifty-six days; one aircraft had been lost with its crew; enemy losses were put at eleven killed, with considerable damage to flocks and slight damage to villages and towers; there was also considerable moral effect on both hostile and friendly sections, and some of the former made payment forthwith of long outstanding fines in money and rifles.

During the next eleven years there was beyond all doubt a great improvement in Waziristan. The British rule of law did not admittedly extend beyond a narrow strip flanking the roads and the immediate vicinity of their camps, but columns from Wana, Razmak, Mir Ali and Bannu moved regularly about the country, and there was a marked decrease in raiding. This latter improvement can be attributed to the success of the Scouts in intercepting raiders, and they moved with greater certainty and confidence in the knowledge that the army was there to support them.

In February 1936 the Bannu and Razmak Brigades spent two nights together in camp at a small village called Bichhe Kashkai which is in the Khaisora valley due south of Mir Ali. The march was to mark the successful conclusion of negotiations with the Tori Khel, the section of the Wazirs inhabiting the lower Tochi, whereby in return for increased allowances they agreed to allow access to their territory.

There now occurred the notorious Islam Bibi incident. A Hindu girl, a minor, eloped with a young Mohammedan student and the girl's relations brought a charge of abduction, but as she was alleged to have

been converted to Islam there arose the question as to which community should have custody of her. On 7 April 1936, the day fixed for the trial of the student, a crowd of two thousand Mohammedans thronged the approaches to the court in Bannu and the trial was postponed till the 16th. Agitators had been busy among the Dauris who now threatened to march on Bannu. Prominent among the leaders was a Tori Khel, by name Mirza Ali Khan, soon to become famous as the Fakir of Ipi; and when action was taken against the lashkar and it dispersed he departed after laying a curse upon them and on his own people for their faint-heartedness. He had up to that date led a purely religious life and acquired a reputation for saintliness, but he now became implacably anti-British. In the early autumn he openly adopted the role of Champion of Islam, receiving much encouragement to do so as a result of a renewal of public interest in the Islam Bibi case. The decision in April had gone against the Hindus, but on appeal the finding was reversed. On a further appeal in the spring of 1937 the original judgment was restored. Justice must not only be done . . .

There were two main reasons to account for the rapid spread of unrest. The Fakir did not confine his appeal to a demand for the return of the girl: he made wholesale allegations of government interference in religious matters and found ready and credulous listeners among the hotheads who were too young to remember the lessons of sixteen years before. Apart from that there was a widespread feeling among the tribesmen that recent constitutional changes in India were a sign of the growing weakness of the British Government, an impression that was encouraged by propaganda put about by the Congress Party.

Pressure was brought to bear on the Tori Khel either to control their kinsman or if they were unable to do so to expel him. The maliks professed themselves unable to take action unless the government supported them by availing itself of recently acquired rights to enter their country, though they admitted that they could not guarantee that a visit by a column would not be opposed.

There was the risk that the entry of troops into the Khaisora would provoke a general rising, but this seemed to be a lesser evil than inaction and the government accordingly sanctioned the operation. Once again the Bannu and Razmak columns were to rendezvous at Bichhe Kashkai. The troops were to carry out what was purely a

peaceful demonstration on a timed programme, and were to take no offensive action unless forced to retaliate in their own defence.

Razcol, accompanied by the district commander and consisting of one British and three Indian battalions and three mountain batteries, was to advance down the Khaisora, covering a distance of twelve miles; Tocol, consisting of two Indian battalions, one only recently arrived on the frontier, and with no artillery, was to move a similar distance across the grain of the country, due south from Mir Ali. Both columns were to be assisted by strong detachments of the Tochi Scouts who carried out light protective duties wide to the flanks.

On 25 November the advanced guard of Razcol had covered about four miles when khassadars reported opposition at a tangi ahead of them. This was brushed aside but increased further on and four hours later, at 2.30 p.m., the column was still only halfway to camp. At 6.30 p.m. the head of the column eventually reached Bichhe Kashkai although the rearguard did not arrive till 9.30.

Information had reached Tocol headquarters the previous evening that their advance was likely to be opposed, but that the Fakir had given orders that they were to be allowed to advance well into the hills before being attacked. Some Tori Khel maliks who had joined the column confirmed that about a hundred of the enemy had spent the night in the foothills, by 10 a.m. opposition was increasing, and by 2.30 p.m. the enemy were putting up a determined resistance. Casualties had been heavy. What little news that had come in from Razcol showed that they also had been held up. The brigade commander decided to press on as he felt that it was important to get some troops to the rendezvous. He halted for a short while about five o'clock but when the advance was continued the column was at once heavily fired on at short range. The transport suffered heavily, and a second attempt to move on, after a malik had brought in news that Razcol had reached Bichhe Kashkai, suffered the same fate. The column commander now realized that it was hopeless to try to go further and by midnight the column had established itself in camp. Razcol sent two battalions and a mountain battery to their help next morning and by noon the two columns had joined up.

The situation at Bichhe Kashkai was very far from satisfactory. The force was rationed only up to the following evening, ammunition was short and there were many casualties to be evacuated to hospital as early as possible. The district commander decided that both columns

would return to Mir Ali on the 27th. The enemy attacked the rearguard with great vigour in the early stages of the withdrawal, but the move went through without further interruption.

The extent of the opposition was a surprise that exceeded all estimates. There were thought to have been about five hundred enemy in the field on the 25th, but when exaggerated reports of success spread the numbers increased very greatly to about two thousand on the 27th, although not all were actively engaged. Two battalions, 6th Frontier Force Rifles with Razcol, and 3rd Rajput Regiment with Tocol, had suffered the greater number of casualties, which totalled just over a hundred in both columns in the three days. The moral effect was considerable and the prestige of the Fakir increased enormously.

There are grounds for supposing that better intelligence of the enemy's strength was indeed available if it had been acted upon but, on the inescapable assumption that they might be opposed, the distances that the two columns were ordered to cover were quite unrealistic and much in excess of the warning figure given in the text books. The days of promenading were over.

To all intents and purposes the troops in Waziristan were on active service continuously for the next twelve months. It was, in effect, a war against one man, the Fakir of Ipi. But for him it might never have started, and the fatal mistake was made of under-estimating his influence. If he had been hit by one of the many bombs the R.A.F. aimed at him, or if he had been captured, and the attempt was made, the ribs and backbone of the opposition would have been removed. He was the Scarlet Pimpernel of the mountains:

They sought him here, they sought him there,
Those columns sought him everywhere.

Wazirs, Mahsuds, Bhitannis, Afghans from across the border, they were all one to him, all Waziristan from Spinwam to Wana was his stamping ground, and as soon as trouble in one quarter had been put down there would be a fresh outbreak somewhere else. One of the difficulties which confronted political and military alike was to determine tribal and territorial responsibility. Much of the fighting in the Sham plain area, which lay in Tori Khel country, was done by Mahsuds from across the Shaktu or Afghan tribesmen from Khost. It is equally impossible to establish a coherent pattern to show that operations progressed to a predicted plan. The initiative was with the Fakir, his

tactics always entirely opportunist, pursuing with single-minded determination his one aim and purpose of stirring up the maximum of trouble for the British Government. There was no major concentration or intense fighting such as had occurred in 1919, but columns of brigade strength, acting singly or in co-operation, and for periods up to a week and longer, were engaged at a modest estimate in some eighteen separate operations. There was no regrettable incident of the order of Mandana Hill, but there were occasions where a battalion was caught at a tactical disadvantage, and needed all its resources of discipline and training to fight its way clear.

A good example on a small scale was the attack on a piquet held by a battalion of 5th Gurkhas on the night 20/21 March 1937. The sangar which was only four hundred yards from camp was not protected by a wire fence and was held by one section, a naik and six riflemen and one signaller. The attack was made at 3.30 a.m. and fighting went on for nearly an hour. Four of the little garrison were killed, the other three seriously wounded. It was thought that there were thirty to forty attackers and they left inside the piquet two men killed, two badly wounded, four rifles and three knives.

The signaller was killed at once so there was no exact information in camp as to what exactly was happening. In such circumstances a battalion commander has a difficult problem for the attack could have been no more than the bait to lure any relieving party sent out into a carefully laid ambush. The 5th Gurkhas had only just arrived in Waziristan as part of the Abbottabad Brigade but they were an experienced and highly trained battalion and well able to give as good as they got.

With the degree of compression imposed by the scope of this book it is possible to follow the course of events only in the most general outline.

Immediate action was taken to restore government prestige after the fighting in the Khaisora on 25-27 November. The Tori Khel were to be punished and a fair-weather motor-road built from Mir Ali to Bichhe Kashkai. The 2nd (Rawalpindi) Infantry Brigade was brought in, and General Coleridge,* the G.O.C.-in-C., Northern Command, assumed overall control of the operations and at the same time political control of the whole of Waziristan, the Resident acting as his chief

* General Sir John Coleridge.

political officer. Four flights from two different army co-operation squadrons of the Royal Air Force, and two bomber squadrons, were available in support of the army, under command of Wing-Commander J. Slessor. A number of restrictions were placed on air attack which was linked rather too closely to the fighting on the ground. It is unfortunate that the R.A.F. were not given greater freedom of action as any success gained would have reinforced requests that were later made for delegation of authority to the army commander.

Operations began on 5 December and by the 24th the road had been made and the villages of the guilty tribesmen destroyed. There were further operations in the lower Khaisora early in the New Year, an extension of the road was built to complete a loop rejoining the main road closer to Bannu, and the situation had stabilized sufficiently for control to be handed back to the political authorities on 2 February 1937.

The brigades brought into Waziristan had barely returned to their peace stations when two incidents occurred which showed that the Fakir's propaganda had taken widespread effect. On successive days two British officers, one of the South Waziristan Scouts, the other of the Tochi Scouts, were ambushed and killed while travelling along the road. Ten days later, on 17 February, the Wana Brigade was attacked while out on column close to the Afghan border. On the 24th, 1st (Abbottabad) Brigade with two mountain batteries and a light tank company were moved in to Waziristan as reinforcements. A request had been made to the Government of India that the army commander should be granted discretionary powers to authorize air action without delay, as offering a hope of checking the spread of trouble, but these powers were not granted.

On 26 February the Fakir made a most inflammatory speech at Friday prayers, calling on all maliks and khassadars to desert government service on pain of being denied Muslim funeral ceremonies. The threat had effect and there were numerous desertions. On 4 March H.Q. 1st Indian Division with a field brigade R.A. and 3rd (Jhelum) Infantry Brigade began to arrive as reinforcements. Enemy activity now increased—wires were cut, a bridge was damaged, and besides much sniping there was a determined attack on a camp piquet at Damdil. On 29 March, 1st Infantry Brigade fought a stiff action while engaged on road protection. It was now clear that widespread trouble lay ahead. All efforts to compel the Tori Khel to evict the Fakir had

failed, and there were signs of unrest spreading to the Mahsuds. On the 22nd the Army Commander had once more assumed political control, and control of air operations, and was instructed to bring about the pacification of the area. On 15 April, 2nd Infantry Brigade returned and at the end of the month a fourth Infantry Brigade, 9th (Jhansi), also arrived.

General Coleridge considered that the best chance of success lay in persuading the enemy wherever possible to stand and fight to give the opportunity of inflicting a decisive defeat, and to that end the whole of 1st Division was engaged during the last week in April on operations in the Khaisora valley. Tactically they succeeded but the situation did not improve and there was the marked risk of trouble spreading south where the Mahsuds were watching events with increasing interest. It was accordingly decided to build a road to the Sham plain, ten miles north-east of Razmak, on the watershed between the Khaisora and Shaktu valleys, with the idea of using it as a base for a subsequent attack on Aرسال Kot, the village stronghold on the left bank of the Shaktu where the Fakir had long been established. Air attack had failed to evict him and it had become imperative to expose the hollowness of his claim that his sanctuary was inviolable.

The quickest route was to advance due south from Dosalli. The troops allotted were 1st Infantry Brigade and Bannu Brigade, with others standing by in case trouble spread beyond the actual area involved. Both brigades concentrated at Dosalli and as this placed some strain on the water supply 1st Brigade moved to a camp two miles south of the road where water was available at a village. There was considerable opposition to the move, which took place on 8 May, and for two nights following the enemy attacked the camp, but by the 11th, the date set for the advance, all was quiet.

There were estimated to be four thousand enemy, Wazirs, Mahsuds, and Afghans, likely to oppose the move and as the deep valley running south from the plain became very narrow towards the top Brigadier Maynard, commanding Bannu Brigade, decided to out-manœuvre and surprise his enemy by advancing up the spur that formed the eastern side of the nala. Strict secrecy was observed, which made reconnaissance difficult. The commander decided that he must be established on the edge of the plateau by daybreak, and most careful arrangements were necessary to ensure the success of an advance of five miles on a pitch-dark night over country about which little was known except

that it was certain to be extremely difficult. Even by cutting all transport requirements to the bone there were seven hundred and twenty-five mules with the column, each one separately led. Eight platoons of the Tochi Scouts led the advance, which began at 9 p.m., as soon as the moon had set. The physical difficulties proved to be even greater than had been feared. Climbing a steep trackless slope covered with bushes and loose rocks the route followed a knife-edged crest and mules fell down the precipitous slopes, tumbling a hundred feet before being brought up short by a bush or tree. The rate of progress was even slower than the half-mile an hour that had been hoped for, and at 3.30 a.m. the advance guard reported that the route was becoming worse, Brigadier Maynard, who was determined that no difficulties should stop him, went forward himself to give force to his order to press on. He reached battalion headquarters at 5 a.m. and half an hour later the head of the main body was five hundred yards short of the approach to the plain. Enemy fire broke out from ahead and to the flanks, 7th Mountain Battery came into action and by 6.30 p.m. the Tochi Scouts were established on the approaches to the plain. The 2/11th Sikh Regiment then took over and continued the advance, extending the ground gained to east and west, when the R.A.F. reported that the enemy, who suffered considerably from air attacks, were in general retreat. By noon the brigadier was laying out his camp. The 1st Infantry Brigade started at 6.30 a.m. and, moving up the nala and on the slopes to the west of it, reached the top with little opposition and were established in camp by 1.30 p.m. The operation had been most successful. The enemy had been prepared to resist strongly but the brilliant advance by Bannu Brigade up the Iblanke spur, by attacking their right flank and rear, surprised and demoralized them to such an extent that serious opposition practically vanished.

In the third week in May a gang of seventy Mahsuds carried out a daring raid on a village twenty miles inside British territory. They kidnapped four Hindu girls, then, leaving these in safe custody in a Bhitanni village, they returned four nights later to ambush the daily train on the railway about forty miles south of Bannu. The attack was repelled by the escort travelling in an armoured truck.

In the last week of May the destruction of Aarsal Kot was carried out by 2nd Infantry Brigade. The main part of the village had been almost completely destroyed by air attack, but several towers and buildings in the vicinity were found to be intact. There were eight caves, grouped

on both sides of a deep nala, that had afforded complete immunity to the Fakir and his numerous visitors and nearly a ton of gun-cotton was needed to destroy them.

After this operation there was some regrouping of brigades for the next tasks which were to repair and re-open the road to Razmak, and to send a column through from the Sham plain to about Sorarogha; the latter was to be followed by the construction of a road to open up the Shaktu. The Fakir was very active and there were signs that there might be an influx of Afghan tribesmen into the Shawal, between Razmak and the Durand Line. These operations were carried out early in June, but as soon as they were over a lashkar collected between Razmak and the Sham plain and it was decided to combine an advance against them with an attempt by the combined scouts to capture the Fakir, who was known to be somewhere in the locality protected by a strong personal bodyguard. Two infantry brigades carried out the first part of operation and were strongly opposed. The raid succeeded in surprising the area at which it was directed, but it failed in its main object as the Fakir had left the night before for a near-by village and on the approach of the Scouts was believed to have gone away eastwards, his head muffled in a sheet. It had been a close thing but as some small consolation among the prisoners taken was one Arsal Khan, a Tori Khel malik who had been implacably hostile.

The success of these operations had a salutary effect and 1st Division was able to concentrate on pushing through the road programme, but there remained the other major task of reopening the road to Wana and punishing the south-western sections of the Mahsuds. The plan involved Bannu Brigade, with Razmak Brigade in support, pushing down the Khaisora from Ladha to Torwam, about twenty miles north-east of Wana, while Wana Brigade moved to Sarwekai to open the road to Jandola and then, travelling the route used in 1917 up the Shahur, uniting with Bannu Brigade at Torwam. When operations began on 19 June the leading brigade ran into some very heavy fighting, but by 6 July the plan had been carried through and all brigades had returned to their starting-points.

About this time the Army Commander again asked for delegation of authority to order immediate air attacks to visit swift and condign punishment on villages suspected of harbouring the Fakir and half a dozen other leading spirits of discontent who were now constantly on the move in their attempts to recruit fresh supporters. It should have

been clear that such attacks would lose much of their point if sanction had to make its laborious way through the usual channels—but his request was not granted.

After the conclusion of operations in the Wana direction, which were the last to be carried out on such a scale, the Resident interviewed a number of leading Mahsud maliks to impress on them the seriousness of the situation, with particular reference to their complicity in harbouring the various ringleaders. They accepted their responsibilities in this matter, and promised to do what they could, but they were completely unsuccessful. Throughout August raiding into British territory actually increased, culminating in an audacious foray by over a hundred Mahsuds, from a valley above Kaniguram, directed at a village only thirty miles from Dera Ismail Khan. The cordon put out by the Frontier Constabulary was reinforced by two infantry battalions and some armoured cars, but the raiders eluded capture. Bannu Brigade immediately carried out a punitive expedition against the offending villages.

The Fakir now changed his tactics and began using comparatively small gangs to attack limited objectives over a wide area. In October he had some success in the Spinwam area, and about the middle of that month 9th Infantry Brigade had to be ordered out to restore the situation, while at the same time 2nd Infantry Brigade was operating in the Bhitanni country.

Early in November two brigades of 1st Division visited the Khaisora and Shaktu areas and 1st Infantry Brigade had a very sharp encounter with a lashkar of about two hundred Mahsuds. It was, however, becoming apparent that although the Fakir was still the focus of all trouble his influence was on the wane and he was finding it increasingly difficult to rally supporters to his standard.

It was clear that so long as work was still in progress on the various new roads troops would be needed to protect them; on the other hand their presence was unquestionably an irritating factor and withdrawal, far from inviting a setback, would have a pacifying effect. Accordingly a gradual withdrawal of the extra troops was begun and by the middle of December, when command reverted to Waziristan District, they had gone, leaving behind a strong infantry brigade, plus a mountain battery and a light tank company, which were retained to reinforce the original peace-time garrison.

Although for the army it had been an untidy and unsatisfactory

campaign it yielded definite results. The tribes were sick and tired of fighting, of being bombed, and probably of being bullied by the Fakir. The greatest dividend, deferred but none the less welcome, was that it contributed materially to the peace of Waziristan during the years 1939-45.

A few small operations in 1938-9 earned a second clasp to the new Frontier medal, but generally there was no serious trouble right up to the time that the British handed over. Much of the credit for this during the war years must go also to the steadying influence of the Governor, Sir George Cunningham, and his political officers, notably a young entry recruited during the war from emergency commissioned officers.

It remains to assess the relative merits of what may be called the Rawlinson and Maffey policies. In 1936 although close on a dozen battalions had been located in tribal territory for over twelve years, an extra four infantry brigades had to be brought in to deal with the trouble stirred up by the Fakir of Ipi, and it took them a year to complete the task. The avowed object of the combined march of the Razmak and Bannu Brigades on Bichhe Kashkai in November 1936 was to strengthen the hands of the Tori Khel maliks and enable them to evict the Fakir from their territory. Even if the move had been a military success it is questionable whether it would have had the desired result, and, if the political authorities had thought it worth while to sacrifice their recently concluded agreement with the Tori Khel, there was at least a case for an air blockade, backed by brigades at Bannu and Mir Ali ready to contain any attempt to break out into the settled districts. In the event the operation, which was badly planned, failed, and once again success in the opening stages of a campaign encouraged the tribesmen and prolonged the struggle. Once troops were brought in from outside, in an area as large as Waziristan, a variation of Parkinson's Law seemed to operate: the more troops there were the easier it was for the Fakir and his henchmen to recruit followers to fight them. Towards the end the presence of so many troops was unquestionably an irritating factor.

On the other hand, accepting that much of the trouble stemmed from this initial mistake, it cannot be denied that the presence of troops over the years, with the connected financial benefits to the tribesmen of khassadar service and road and transport contracts, had had a stabilizing effect. The outbreak was nothing like as serious as it

would have been if the Islam Bibi case had happened ten years earlier. As a tribe the Mahsuds remained quiet, though this may partly have been due to the fact that the Fakir was a Wazir, and not one of themselves.

If the Maffey policy had been accepted there would have been three things to do: devise an immediate settlement to get the army back down the Ladha Line in 1922; a determined onslaught on trans-border raiding on the lines he advocated; and long-term measures to improve the financial standing of the tribes, which was probably the only effective civilizing influence.

Solomon himself might pray to be excused from giving judgement. Pursued to its logical conclusion Maffey's solution was the more statesmanlike of the two. The only query that stands against it is on the score of time. Would it have reached a stage sufficiently advanced to be effective in the short period of fifteen years before 1939? It was perhaps the memories of 1937 and the physical presence of the army in support of the political authorities that kept the King's peace in Waziristan in 1943-4 when the Japanese were striking at India's eastern frontier.

THE Syrians and the Jews, the Lowland Scots and the English: border raiding has for hundreds of years been one of the world's crude, traditional methods of redressing the unequal distribution of wealth. For the Pathan it was covered by a cloak of righteousness when his victim was a Hindu, the subject of an alien and infidel government. That, basically, was why the tribesman was such an uneasy neighbour, but there were other factors which complicated the problem of coming to terms with him. His territory lay within the international boundaries of India and he was entitled to British protection, so that the long-term object was not just to punish but to reform. Again, on the further side of him lived powers and rulers who were in a position to stir up tribal unrest and did not hesitate to exploit the opportunity of embarrassing the British. There was another factor that was less obvious; it was imperfectly understood in high places but it was the root of much of the trouble. It was the Pathan's fanatical determination to preserve his independence, to live his life according to his own simple code, to keep his homeland free from outside interference. Mullas might preach and play upon the religious superstitions of the ignorant but what always struck a chord in those primitive hearts was the warning cry that the troops that came to punish would stay to rule, and as expeditions grew larger and penetrated deeper into tribal territory they generated a more determined will to resist.

Admittedly the big stick, the use of military force, was in the last resort what the Pathan really understood, but military success was short-lived and made no constructive contribution to the problem; yet for nearly fifty years there was little concerted attempt to find a better answer. After the turn of the century successive generations of political officers gave years of devoted service to attempts to get to the root of the trouble, but there can be few so complacent as to be satisfied with what they achieved.

The author of *Mizh*, and few are better qualified to speak, suggests three reasons for the failure to make better progress. The first, which has been touched on, was the lack of first-hand knowledge of the Pathan and his ways in the secretariats, in Lahore, Delhi, and London: a failure to appreciate also that the Frontier was not one big problem, but several separate ones. The second, a lack of leisure—too much preoccupation with urgent everyday affairs to have time to evolve a long-term policy. The third, imperfect liaison between those in the

secretariat and the men grappling with the problem on the ground. It was hardly surprising that there was a lack of government policy, and in the absence of any clear guidance a new arrival on the frontier was free to evolve and pursue theories of his own. Fluctuations of policy swayed to and fro across the administrative border. The early administrators were forbidden to cross it; later came the agencies—in 1922 Maffey was complaining that the agencies had grown too powerful. The object should have been not to perpetuate the line of the border but by stages to abolish it.

The overall lack of policy equally resulted in failure to combine effectively the action of the civil authorities and the army, a failure perfectly illustrated by the events of 1897. The lessons of that year are apt to be obscured by a verdict that a wave of fanaticism swept over the frontier—as though it were some epidemic of religious fever, akin to plague or cholera, a scourge spread by no human hand. In fact the outbreak was largely the work of one man, the Afghan commander in Jalalabad, Ghulam Haidar, but although the agents he used to inflame tribal feelings were the mullas, preaching the traditional jihad, the appeal they made went deeper than religion. The Mad Mulla, who was first in the field, was an outsider who had tried and failed to stir up trouble in Buner before turning his attention to Swat, and the opening ten days of the Malakand campaign must be accepted as a *bona fide* outburst of religious frenzy, the only one of any magnitude in the whole record. On the other hand, the support coming from Bajaur, the Utman Khel and later the Mohmands was an expression of resentment and suspicion at the penetration of their territory by the Chitral reliefs and the settlement reached by the government with the lower Mohmands. They all received active support from Ghulam Haidar. He certainly encouraged the Afridis in the early stages, but on all the evidence they were only reluctantly persuaded by a posse of mullas from across the border to attack on the posts in the Khaibar. They were not really roused to fury until three months later when the army had penetrated and ravaged Maidan. The spur that drove on the Orakzais was again indignation at the establishment of posts on the Samana ridge, but even so they fought in deadly earnest only for the few days when they thought they had 36th Sikhs at their mercy. The Maizar incident and the consequent punishment of the Utmanzai Wazirs may well have sprung from resentment at the recent establishment of a regular garrison in the upper Tochi; if the true cause had been

religion, they would hardly have failed in their attempt to attract the support of the Mulla Powindah.

On the British side the Commissioner in Peshawar, either through bad intelligence or through failure to assess the reports reaching him, repeatedly under-estimated the extent of the danger and, ignoring the advice given him, did not take the most elementary military precautions which might have nipped trouble in the bud. And when the Tirah campaign became inevitable the plan evolved was a bad miscalculation. It is not too fanciful to suggest that if the two men, the Afghan Commander-in-Chief and the Commissioner in Peshawar, had swapped appointments there would have been little trouble on the frontier in 1897.

The original Punjab Irregular Force—five regiments of cavalry and five of infantry—was raised by Sir Henry Lawrence to deal with tribal raiding which in 1849 had reached formidable proportions as the Sikh Army had been quite incapable of dealing with it. His idea was for a special force for a special task. They were akin to the Scouts and Militias of the twentieth century, directly under the civil government of the Punjab, at call without reference to the Commander-in-Chief. It was an excellent idea and under men like Coke and Lumsden, who combined civil and military authority, it worked admirably. Then two things happened. The Irregular Force began to regularize itself, and the civil administration found itself increasingly shackled by the secretariat in Lahore. This is what the Secretary to the Punjab Government wrote in 1864 about the employment of military force to deal with raiding. 'Whilst any hasty exertion of physical pressure to the exclusion of other methods of adjustment is confessedly impolitic, there is a point beyond which the practice of forbearance may not be carried. As without physical force in reserve there can be no governing power, so under extreme and repeated provocation its non-employment is not distinguishable from weakness. The dispatch of an expedition into the hills is always in the nature of a judicial act.' Impeccable sentiments, but not easy to translate into Pushtu and put across at a Mahsud jirga.

As the P.I.F. merged into the army its place as the strong right hand of government which could deal summarily and effectively with tribal raiding came to be taken by the Border Military Police under deputy commissioners, who were fully occupied by the ordinary administra-

tive cares of office. It was a poor substitute. A government report on Mahsud affairs in 1899–1900 said: ‘The border Military Police were useless from fear. During these two years not one Mahsud was ever killed or even wounded by them. It was well known that no sepoy would ever shoot a Mahsud. He would fire, but he would be careful to miss.’ Further handicaps on their operations were the restrictions imposed by district boundaries and by the administrative border. With the reorganization of the military police and the creation of the Frontier Constabulary there was an immense improvement, but the boundaries remained and, to the end, over much of the frontier there would be the constabulary on one side of the administrative border, and the scouts on the other, each with its own sources of information and serving its own master, trying to deal with one and the same raid. The need from the very beginning was for a Frontier Corps to deal with tribal raiding, and such bounds as were imposed should have been drawn to include the raiding tribes and the areas they raided under a single authority.

Although in their heyday, before the Kitchener reforms brought all and sundry to the frontier, individual regiments of the P.F.F. reached a standard of efficiency in frontier fighting that has never been equalled, the existence of a separate P.F.F. headquarters under the Punjab Government soon became the fifth wheel to the coach. Up to the first expedition against the Orakzais in 1891 they dealt singlehanded with the stretch south of the Kohat Pass, but after that, and in all expeditions based on the vale of Peshawar, ordinary units of the army under the Commander-in-Chief were in a majority. Too small to shoulder the responsibilities implicit in their title, but a vested interest too large to be ignored, they may well have been partially responsible for the still-birth of the project to create an army of the Indus. The headquarters of such a force, stationed well forward of Lahore, could with advantage have acted as the authority and clearing-house for all matters relating to the army on the frontier. They might have been concerned to keep in existence as a permanency the School of Mountain Warfare. There was at different times and for short periods such a school located in Abbottabad, but there was a real need for a permanent establishment of this kind charged not only with instruction but with keeping equipment and tactics under constant review.

Had there also been one single authority for the immediate suppression of raiding there would have been a more satisfactory link with

action by the army which was seldom called in until, emboldened by long immunity, tribal misbehaviour was completely out of hand. The political authorities after interminable jirgas had exhausted every possibility of enforcing terms that would assert government authority, the rebellious malik or mulla had ample time to muster his forces and send out appeals for help, and all hope of surprise was gone. Apart from the loss of surprise due to these inevitable preliminaries to any campaign the army was itself further handicapped, whenever moving away from roads, by its dependence on long supply columns, and on its own first-line transport which multiplied as each piece of modern equipment required extra mules to carry it. For long-term operations this was unavoidable but there is little evidence that much was done to encourage surprise in the realm of minor tactics. The necessity for round-the-clock protection of the administrative tail virtually encouraged routine, set-piece methods.

It was not easy to surprise the tribesman but there is plenty of evidence that such treatment shook him to the core, and far more effort should have been made to exploit it; on occasion it might well have cut short the traditional methods of burning and destroying villages. The Mahsud operations of 1901/2 which summarily brought to an end a year's blockade are a case in point. In the official history for the year 1935 there are two accounts of ambushes laid by night to deal with tribesmen sniping the camp. A couple of platoons were involved and both were completely successful without a single casualty to the troops. What is significant is that such trifling engagements should be considered so remarkable as to be recorded at a length usually reserved for action by a whole brigade.

In 1898 when a brigade went to punish the Bunerwals the track over the pass giving entry to their country was so bad that five hundred coolies were provided to carry essential loads until it could be improved to take animal transport. There is no trace of any subsequent attempt being made to use porters for the carriage of first-line loads, to make possible operations by small, highly mobile forces, self-contained for forty-eight hours.

In conclusion two things must be said. Although there were occasions—and not too many of them—when the Pathan secured some spectacular local victory over the army, he succeeded because he was a brilliant opportunist who snatched a fleeting opportunity when conditions were all in his favour. It does not imply that he was a better

fighting man than the British or Indian soldier. If anything the boot was on the other foot.

It remains only to assess the long-term results of Kitchener's policy that all battalions should in turn serve on the frontier. Fighting there was a specialized business, and a system of regular reliefs meant that a newly arrived unit was for the first few months—perhaps as much as a quarter of its tour of duty—at something below full operational efficiency. But the Frontier was only one small corner of the world, and it afforded every battalion in India at least one chance of training for two years under conditions approximating to active service. Judging by the record of the Indian Army during the years 1939–45 they made good use of their opportunities. The battles of Keren, Wadi Akarit and the Gustav Line speak with a voice that will never be silent.

23 THE SEQUEL

IN 1944 the Commander-in-Chief India appointed a committee to review defence policy over the whole of the frontier and to make recommendations for changes to be made after the war was over which would take into account the improved methods, weapons and equipment which would be available. The chairman of the committee was General Toker,* and the members represented the various interests involved. Their recommendations were accepted in principle but events moved too fast for them to be put into effect, and it suffices here to say that the essence of their proposals was the withdrawal of the army from tribal territory to cantonments along the administrative border. From there they would be available to reinforce the Scouts whose equipment was to be stepped up to enable them to deal with more serious opposition without having to call on the army. Air support would be available to them independently of anything the army might be asked to do.

In September 1947, one month after Partition, the Pakistan Government decided to put the policy into effect and ordered the evacuation of all regular military forces from Waziristan. The operation was given the code name 'Curzon' as it signified the return to Lord Curzon's policy of 1899. The decision was promulgated by Sir George Cunningham at three representative jirgas on 6 November and everyone waited to see what the reaction of the tribesmen would be. The tribesmen had always resented the presence of troops but they had now to face the loss of income from employment of various kinds and the loss also of engineering and supply contracts. The withdrawal of the army would present them with a last chance to steal a few rifles and it seemed too much to hope that they would let it slip.

There were still Sikhs and Hindus in the country both among the troops and in the Military Engineer Service. Owing to the acute shortage of machinery in Pakistan the latter were charged with bringing out all electrical and pumping equipment that could be salvaged. The Mahsuds had reacted favourably to the creation of Pakistan but in the north the Fakir of Ipi, who had allied himself to Abdul Ghaffar Khan, was uncompromisingly hostile. The decision was made to withdraw from the more remote posts. The South Waziristan Scouts were to take over Wana but Ladha, Sorarogha and

* Lieutenant-General Sir Francis Toker.

Kotkai were to be abandoned. The operation was completed as planned between 1 and 7 December.

In north Waziristan, where the Fakir's influence was stronger, there was more trouble and there were several minor attacks on piquets and attempts to lay mines and booby traps on roads, but the final withdrawal from Razmak also went according to plan and there was little opposition. This was attributable partly to the excellent work of the political agent of north Waziristan, Ataullah Jan, who through his maliks kept the situation well in hand, and partly to the strength of the withdrawing columns which were fully supported by tanks and aircraft and by the Tochi Scouts. The operation was conducted by Major-General Roger Le Fleming who was commanding Waziristan district.

There was a considerable element of risk in the decision and reinforcements were ready in Bannu to make good casualties in units if there was heavy fighting; but they were not needed, and from that day the tribesmen of Waziristan have ceased to raid the settled districts.

An article by Colonel Cotton in *The Royal Engineers Journal* records that in the club at Bannu alongside the shields bearing the crests of every regiment that has ever served in the station hangs one carrying the crest of the Royal Engineers. It was placed there as late as the end of October 1948 'as a small memorial to the work of the Corps. The real memorial is, however, the network of roads with the bridges, posts and piquets which remain firmly imprinted on the hills and valleys of Waziristan'.

The Scouts are now equipped with guns and mortars but in the south they do not patrol north of the Jandola-Wana road and in the north they patrol only a few miles forward of the Tochi Scouts headquarters at Miranshah. At Ladha, Kaniguram and Makin there are schools and a hospital, but the weeds grow wild in Razmak, and the only outward and visible sign of Pakistani authority in central Waziristan is a political tehsildar and his khassadar escort. The camel driver taking wood down from the forests above Kaniguram strides unarmed across the bridge over the Takki Zam at Jandola, and from a transistor set lashed along the baulks of timber comes a lilting melody to speed him on his way. In Tank bazaar the Mahsuds own and trade from the shops their forbears used to loot, and along the road from Tank the lorries that carry the sugar cane to the factory near Bannu carry such names as Shabi Khel that proclaim unmistakably their Mahsud ownership. On the plain west of Peshawar Roos-Keppel and Abdul Qayyum founded Islamia

College which has now grown into a large university; in the hostel set apart from trans-border students half the inmates are Mahsuds.

All round the frontier it is the same story. There are scouts at Thal, but Fort Lockhart on the Samana ridge is held only by frontier constabulary and they do not venture down into the Khanki valley, still less into the Tirah. The Afridis own many of the lorries that take the cane to the big sugar factory at Mardan. The Khyber Rifles are back in the pass, with a guard of impeccable smartness at Torkham to greet the traveller coming from Afghanistan. They guard also the great dam at Warsak where the Kabul river breaks out of the hills. The silence of the Gandab valley is broken by the clatter of oil engines pumping from new tube wells, and at Yusuf Khel, the village at the head of the valley, looking west up the Wucha Jawar towards pt 4080, there is a smart new school and a rest-house for the political agent and his subordinates. Over the Nahakki Pass the upper Mohmands are left to their own devices.

It may be argued that the trans-border Pathan has still a lot to learn and cannot expect to enjoy in perpetuity the pensions awarded by the British to keep his ancestors quiet, but at least an impressive start has been made. Pakistan is only just coming of age and the government is perhaps wise for the time being to let their more troublesome dogs sleep in peace. It is more relevant to inquire how they have achieved so much in so short a time. It was Maffey's contention that the most effective way to control the tribesmen was by their stake in the settled districts, and that is what has been done. Money has been lavished on the frontier districts, irrigation, schools, hospitals have all played their part, but the government has been fortunate in two things. Before Partition the Hindus and Sikhs in the border towns held the monopoly of trade in such things as transport and light engineering. They have now returned to India and it is the trans-border Pathan, with the Mahsud and Afridi very much in evidence, who have stepped into the gap. The other point is that for all the talk of Pakhtunistan, the tribesmen have identified themselves, sometimes with embarrassing fervour, with the fortunes of Pakistan in her international affairs.

The cry of jihad rallied the tribes against the British, but they must in all fairness be given no small share of the credit for what their successors have done. Their own start in 1849 could hardly have been less auspicious for the border they took over from the Sikhs was aflame with unrest and suspicion. By the time they handed over the scene had

been transformed. The Indian taxpayer also contributed for it was his money that paid for the material benefits, but a hundred years of association with the British officer, political and military, and the affection he had for the Pathan, left a mark upon that rugged character as significant as the landmarks the sappers left upon his hills.

The order of battle of expeditions up to 1914 show that service on the frontier was in those days restricted to well under half the total number of battalions in the Indian Army List. Apart from the Punjab Frontier Force, the names that recur over and over again are the Punjab battalions numbered 19-40, the Dogra, Garhwali and Sikh battalions, and seven regiments of Gurkhas, units that now are part of India's army. The other three Gurkhas and the Baluch battalions were in a chain of reliefs that covered Baluchistan; but for the rest of the army there was little to look forward to beyond a monotonous shuttle round the stations of the Bombay Presidency and the United and Central Provinces.

... No officer with a spark of fire or ambition was content to serve out his days in single battalion stations in the enervating climate of the Madras presidency. Only the dead wood remained there, with disastrous effects on the morale and efficiency of their men.

That sentence from *A Roll of Honour** recorded the downfall of the old Madras Army, and but for Lord Kitchener the fate of many others would not have been very different. Service for all on the frontier revolutionized the picture. Quite apart from the tonic effect of two years spent under conditions resembling if not amounting to active service, there grew from sharing a common experience a common sense of purpose that united the old Indian Army and laid the foundation, as nothing else could have done, for its magnificent record in the Second World War and its emergence, divided but unscathed by the fires of Partition, as the armies of India and Pakistan. Leaders of both countries have placed at the head of the list of benefits conferred by the British on the emergent nations the strong framework of the civil service and the strength and discipline of the army. It is not for the writer to say how far a district magistrate returning to his former charge would find things changed, but for the soldier who goes back the resemblance is

* Published by Cassell, 1965.

uncanny. Any officer could return today, step into the shoes he was wearing when he left twenty years ago, and pick up the threads with not much greater loss of continuity than if he had come back from eight months' leave in England—and if he put a foot wrong there would be the subedar-major at his elbow to put him firmly but tactfully right again.

Regimental titles linked with the Royal Family of Great Britain lapsed when the two countries became republics, but that has been about the only break with the traditions of the past; otherwise there is a determination perhaps even stronger than ever for regiments and battalions to identify themselves with the origins from which they sprang. A dozen examples could be quoted: one must suffice, for it speaks for them all. Inside the cover of a brief regimental history, published in 1958 to mark the centenary of the 5th Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force)*, appears this extract from the introduction to the first full volume published in 1928. It was written by General Sir Ian Hamilton '... and if any politician of the hereafter dreams of disbanding their cadre, or changing their number, or any other like atrocity, may the perusal of this volume paralyse his sacrilegious hand'.

If only to convince the sceptic the last two pages of illustrations are devoted to photographs that give evidence of the continuation of these links with the past. The Ghazni Tower stands on the parade ground at Roorkee, part of the corps war memorial, of the Bengal Sappers and Miners, to commemorate their part in the destruction of the Kabul gate of the city on the morning of 22 July 1840. Just outside the walls of Fort Lockhart the Saragarhi memorial still stands, a remarkable act of tolerance, in memory of the Sikh garrison of the post who died to a man on the Samana ridge in September 1897. The other two photos deal with the living rather than the dead. The Pakistan bodyguard photo might well be mistaken for one taken thirty years ago showing the Viceroy's bodyguard, from which of course they were formed at Partition. The significance of 'morning run' is perhaps less obvious, but such a Spartan practice must surely date back to the days of Razmak when nothing would satisfy some hardy Scot but that he must take his company for a run in the snow before breakfast.

To those, civilians or soldiers, who have had the good fortune to

* This title is jealously maintained although the regiment is now part of the Indian Army.

contribute in some way to such a state of affairs, even more heart-warming than evidence of the permanence of what they tried to do is the spontaneous expression of regard and affection that comes today from those for whom they did it. Halting to refresh memories of forty years before as I motored through the old Frontier station of Manzai, I was briefly the guest of the young Pathan superintendent of police commanding the Frontier Constabulary who now garrison the post. As I shook hands on leaving I was assured by my host that it had been 'a very great pleasure to have the chance of talking to an English general'. A sentiment that expresses in a dozen words a theme that recurs throughout this book.

MEDALS

AWARDED FOR CAMPAIGNS IN AFGHANISTAN AND ON THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

AFGHANISTAN

1. The only medal awarded for the first part of the First Afghan War, up to and including the disaster at Kabul, was for the capture of Ghazni in 1839. The ribbon was half red, half green.
2. For the second half of the war there were medals for the fighting at Kandahar, Ghazni and Kabul, and for the sieges of Jalalabad and Kelat-i-Ghilzai. They mostly bore the Queen's head, with the legend 'Victoria Vindex', and appropriate inscriptions on the reverse. The ribbon for all was watered blue, white, yellow, white, red.
3. The medal for the Second Afghan War had clasps for Ali Masjid and the Peiwar Kotal in the first phase, and for Charasia and Kabul in the second. There was also a clasp for Sir Donald Stewart's battle at Ahmed Khel on his way to Kabul in May 1880, and for Kandahar at the close of the war. The ribbon was green with red edges.
4. There was a separate star for the march from Kabul to Kandahar, worn on the rainbow ribbon of the First Afghan War medals.

THE FRONTIER

Economical in all things the Indian Government struck only four General Service Medals for the period covered by this book, and the first and third between them spanned nearly seventy years.

5. The first Indian medal to carry clasps for the North-West Frontier was originally issued in 1854 for a campaign in Burma. Those who fought in the early days on the north-west had to wait until 1869 for some recognition of their services. A single clasp was then issued, retrospectively, for no fewer than sixteen small expeditions dating back to 1849. The most important clasps, awarded later, were for Ambela, 1863; Adam Khel Afridis, 1877; the Samana, 1891; and Wana, 1895-6. Lesser campaigns were two Black Mountain expeditions in 1888 and 1891, and Hunza-Nagir in the same year. The ribbon was striped red, blue, red, blue, red.
6. The next medal had a comparatively short life. It carried clasps for the defence and relief of Chitral in 1895; and for the Malakand, Mohmand, Samana, and Tirah expeditions in 1897. The last clasp was for the Mahsud blockade in 1901-2. The ribbon was red, green, red, green, red.
7. The first clasp for the new 1908 medal was for the Afridi-Mohmand operations in that year. The Third Afghan War, in 1919, was covered by a clasp to this medal, and indeed did not merit anything more. There were two clasps for the fighting in Waziristan in 1919-21, one being reserved for the bitter battles up the Takki Zam against the Mahsuds. There were two more Waziristan clasps dated 1921-4 and 1925, the latter awarded only to the Royal Air Force for blockade operations against the Bahlolzai Mahsuds. There was a clasp for 1930-1 for the frontier generally, which covered the Afridi disturbances round Peshawar. There

were clasps for the Mohmand expeditions in 1933 and 1935, the latter covering also the fighting round Loe Agra.

8. The story goes that the Government of India was shamed into striking the fourth and last General Service Medal when the Secretary to the Defence Department was introduced at a garden party to a much-decorated officer wearing no fewer than seven clasps to the 1908 medal. The sight of the corresponding lengths of ribbon, unsightly and unadorned, carrying the medals of the First World War, melted the flinty heart of the Finance Department and a new medal was struck. It bore clasps for the fighting in Waziristan in 1936-7 and 1937-9. The colouring of the ribbon was symbolic: a broad stone-coloured centre for the hills of the frontier, thin scarlet stripes for the two roads through tribal territory, and at the outside two green stripes for the forests of Waziristan.

GLOSSARY

- Akhund—a religious teacher
Arbab—a chief
Darband—a defile
Darbar—a court of audience
Fakir—a holy man
Gasht—a patrol
Ghazi—a fighter for the Faith
Haji—a pilgrim to Mecca
Jehad—a holy war
Jirga—an assembly of tribal elders or representatives
Khassadar—a tribal policeman
Lashkar—a tribal army
Malik—a headman
Masjid—a mosque
Maulvi—a priest
Mulla—a religious teacher or leader
Nala—a small valley
Narai or kotal—a pass
Powindah—a nomad
Sangar—a stone breastwork
Tangi—a defile
Tumandar—a headman (Baluch)

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