

**TIBET IN
SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS
1899-1914**

SUCHITA GHOSH



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To
My Teachers
at the Department of International Relations,
Jadavpur University

PREFACE

As is well known China's claim to Indian territory on the Eastern Sector is premised on a negation of the validity of the McMahon line as a settled international boundary on the ground that India has no persuasive evidence of possession and administration of the disputed territory, and that the Simla Convention of 1914 on the basis of which the McMahon line was drawn is not valid because it was never ratified by China, and because Tibet, not being a sovereign state at the time of the Simla Convention had no *locus standi* in the determination of her frontiers by agreement, convention, treaty or otherwise.

Situated between India and China, Tibet has been and will continue to be an inevitable factor in Sino-Indian relations throughout history, and will acquire a prominent position in the frontier policies of these two countries regardless of the nature of Government in control in these areas.

In this book I have studied the role of Tibet in Sino-Indian relations prior to 1914, with an effort to define the kind of suzerainty which China exercised over Tibet, how it came into existence and how long it lasted. I have attempted an objective analysis of the status of Tibet and have studied her relation with China and India prior to 1898, and have carefully examined the short period of Manchu protectorate over Tibet in the 18th century.

In the spelling of proper names I have used the forms commonly used in modern books, or have adopted the spelling most frequently employed by the British officials during the period under review.

In the pages that follow I have focussed attention on the principal events in Tibet during this period affecting Sino-Indian relations. In this context it must be noted that by Sino-Indian relations is implied the relations between China and British India, as the British were the ruling power in India during the period under study. I have examined the policy of

China and India towards Tibet to the extent it is needed to understand and estimate their relation and attitude to one another.

As I have dealt mainly with inter-governmental relations and local matters affecting such relations, my emphasis has not been on personalities; I have discussed them only to the extent that their background is necessary to enable an understanding of the policy conducted by them on behalf of their governments. In this process I have deciphered and analysed at length matters pertaining to policy and diplomatic behaviour.

I have chosen the year 1899 as the starting point of my study because this was the end of an old and the beginning of a new epoch in Sino-Indian relations. Elgin believed in non-involvement in Tibet. In 1897 when Curzon came to India as Viceroy he pursued an active policy in Tibet with the intention of securing a buffer between India and China from which Russia should be excluded.

This period (1899-1914) was crucial to Sino-Indian relations. Chinese activities in Tibet at this time alarmed the British. In 1910-1911 British India became conscious of the security of India's North-East frontier, and made every effort to stabilise this border region by exploration, survey and direct administration of the area. Indian security depended to a large extent on the status of Tibet and she became alarmed at Chinese efforts to bring Tibet within her jurisdiction.

On the outbreak of the revolution in China in 1911 the Chinese yoke was thrown off and Tibet declared her independence in 1912. The historical drama of Sino-Indian relations enacted on the stage of Tibet reached its climax at this period, and for a reappraisal of the whole situation Britain convened the Simla Conference of 1913-1914, with India, China, and Tibet as participants.

This study is neither hypothetical, theoretical or abstract, but an objective analysis of a real historical situation to enable a better understanding of the present relation between India and China.

In discussing a controversial relationship in which ones motherland is involved it is, perhaps, not human to be to vouch for hundred per cent objectivity and scientific detachment.

Nevertheless, a conscious effort has been made to let facts and circumstances speak for themselves to the exclusion of any personal or national bias.

*Department of
International Relations,
Jadavpur University,
Calcutta—700032.*

Suchita Ghosh

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The librarians and members of the staff of all the libraries I have worked at have always been helpful to me. I wish to place on record my sincere thanks to them. They are of the Jadavpur University, Calcutta, The National Library, Calcutta, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi, The National Archives of India Library, New Delhi, and the Ministry of External Affairs Library, New Delhi.

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S. G.

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1

Historical Background

Tibet geographically is a high plateau in the centre of Asia. It lies roughly within the 28th and 36th parallels of north latitude and 79th and 99th of east longitude and has common frontiers with both China and India. It marches with "China Proper" (i.e. the 18 provinces) for some 1,400 miles along the borders of Yunnan, Szechuan, and Kansu provinces and for some 1,300 miles more with Sinkiang. With India and the states of Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Kashmir it has some 2,000 miles of common borders. The frontiers of Russia do not touch Tibet at any point. Chinese Turkestan separates the two countries. History and tradition show that Tibet lies within the scope of Russian expansion in Central Asia. Hence her geographical position has made her the political junction of Asia's three largest land powers, China, India and Russia. Consequently she has played a significant role in the development of Sino-Indian relations during the period under review.

Independent Tibet

Tibet emerged out of "barbaric darkness" with the dawn of Buddhism in the seventh century A.D., and it was during the reign of Emperor Srong-batsan Sagan Po, (Song sten Gampo ?) 633-698 A.D., who is believed to have come from Ladakh¹ in the far western corner of Tibet where Indian

1. See Rev. A. H. Francke : "*The kingdom of Nya-khi-btsanpo, the first king, of Tibet*", *Journal and proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, VI, Calcutta, 1910, pp. 93-99.

Authoritative writers like H. E. Richardson : *Tibet and its History*, Oxford, 1962, pp. 28-29 and Charles Bell : *Tibet, Past and Present*, Oxford, 1924, p. 23 do not throw light on this point.

civilisation could have penetrated by way of the Indus Valley, that the real history of Tibet begins.¹ Emperor Gampo unified the whole of Tibet by bringing numerous warring chiefs under his sway. In 635 A.D. Gampo with his Tibetan legion conquered western China² and forced the Emperor of China to sue for peace and demanded and eventually received a Chinese princess as his bride. Buddhism drew priests and preachers from both China and India to Tibet.³ The Tibetan script which was invented during his reign was based on the Sanskrit script.⁴

It is striking to note that from the seventh to the ninth centuries the Tibetans were able to keep up their widespread military activity under the long line of the Gampo Kings. Bell writes⁵ that neither China nor India escaped invasion by the Tibetans. This period was characterised by relations on a footing of equality and reciprocity between Tibet, China, and India.

During the next few centuries there was hardly any kind of political intercourse between Tibet and China except 'courtesies and skirmishes' with border tribesmen of Szechuan and Yunnan.⁶

In 1200 when the Mongols launched their world conquests from the Altai Karakorum the Tibetan chiefs brought peace with Chenghiz Khan by an offer of submission (1207). His grandson Kublai Khan recognised the political advantages of a religious link with Tibet and became a convert to Lamaism in 1270.⁷

Kublai Khan in return made Pak-pa his chaplain and as a mark of respect gave him authority over (1) Tibet Proper,

1. According to Sarat Chandra Das : *Early History of Tibet, Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 50, 1881, p. 216, there were 32 legendary kings before him.
2. S. W. Bushnell : *The Early History of Tibet: From Chinese sources, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XIII, 1880, p. 444.
3. Charles Bell : *op. cit.*, p. 210.
4. Sarat Chandra Das : *op. cit.*, p. 219.
5. Charles Bell : *op. cit.*, p. 210. For details regarding the siege of the capital of China, see C. P. Fitzgerald : *China, a short Cultural History*, New York and London, 1938, p. 299.
6. Richardson : *op. cit.*, p. 33.
7. L. A. Waddell : *Lhasa and its Mysteries*, London, 1905, p. 26.

comprising the 13 districts of U and Tsang (2) South-eastern Tibet (Kham) and (3) Amdo, a province in north eastern Tibet.¹

The relations which were thus established between Tibet and the Mongol Emperors were essentially like those between a layman and his priest. As a result of the arrangements made in the time of Kublai Khan, the grand lamas of the Sakya monastery became the spiritual mentors and consecrators of the Yuan Emperors.² In return the emperors were expected to guarantee Tibet's protection.

These relations, however, did not survive the fall of the Yuan dynasty (1368), and during the next three centuries when the Ming Emperors ruled over China (1368-1646) there is no evidence of any kind of spiritual or political relation being maintained between China and Tibet.³

These were the centuries which witnessed the rise of the Yellow Hat sect under the religious reformer Tsangkhapa,⁴ and the emergence of the institution of the Dalai Lama⁵ by Altan Khan.

When the fifth Dalai Lama (usually called the Great Fifth) went on a visit to Peking, at the invitation of the then Manchu Emperor of China, Shun Chih Le, he was received with all the formal ceremony usually accorded to an independent sovereign, for the Emperor wished to secure his alliance in order to establish Manchu rule among the people of Mongolia.⁶

1. L. A. Waddell: *Lamaism, the Buddhism of Tibet*, Cambridge, pp. 37-38. See also W.W. Rockhill: *The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa, and their relations with the Manchu Emperors of China*, Leyden, 1910, p. 2.
2. Z. Ahmed: *China and Tibet, (708-1959)*, London, 1966, p. 2.
3. Richardson: *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.
4. *ibid.*, p. 40.
5. Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa: *Tibet a Political History*, London, 1967, pp. 90-99.
6. Bell: *op. cit.*, p. 36.
Rockhill: *op. cit.*, p. 18 writes ".....nothing can be found in any Chinese works to indicate that he (the fifth Dalai Lama) was looked upon on any other light". The Chinese have since twisted this to allege China's domination over Tibet. T. T. Li: *The Historical status of Tibet*, New York, 1956, pp. 35-37, gives the Chinese interpretation of the incident.

Thus Tibet continued to be an independent country outside the pale of the Manchu Empire, until the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

Tibet's Relations with China

In 1717 an army of Oelot Jungars (Dzungars) from Turkestan invaded Tibet with the avowed intention of replacing the puppet Dalai Lama with the "true" incarnation.¹ The Tibetans in desperation appealed to the Chinese Emperor K'ang-hsi for help against the interlopers. The first army sent from China was badly defeated in the Tibetan Highlands by a combined array of Mongols and Tibetans,² but the Emperor persisted, and sending two more armies in 1720 succeeded in capturing Lhasa, conquering Tibet and driving out the jungars.³ This was the first time that an army from China conquered the country and the victory assured the Manchus suzerainty over Tibet.

In 1728 the suppression of a civil war in Tibet was followed by the stationing of a Chinese expeditionary force at Lhasa, in aid of the Dalai Lama's Government.⁴ The Tibetan council was reconstituted under the leadership of Phola Teja who was the victor in the civil war and had previously been a supporter of Lhabzang Khan, and to represent the Emperor two civil officers were appointed, they came to be known as the Ambans⁵ in Tibet. Thus the foundation was laid for nearly two consecutive centuries of Manchu overlordship over Tibet.

1. For details of the Jungar invasion of 1717, see L. Petech : *China and Tibet in the early 18th Century*, Leiden, 1950, pp. 24-41. His work is considered the *locus classicus* for the period.
2. Without going into details Richardson gives a vivid picture of Manchu relations with Tibet, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-60.
3. Fillippo De Fillippi (ed.) 1. Desideri : *An Account of Tibet*, London, 1937, pp. 165-170. Father Desideri was an eye witness of these events. His account is therefore considered valuable.
4. Petech : *op. cit.*, pp. 108-125.
5. It is to be noted that the Ambans were traditionally Manchus or Mongols and not Chinese. They had no power of intervention in the affairs of the Government of Tibet. Their task was to keep the Emperor informed of the happenings there. Richardson : *op. cit.*, p. 52.

But it is to be noted that Manchu influence over Tibet (except for short periods) was never based on the willing consent of the rulers and the ruled of Tibet. Manchu supervision of Tibet through the Ambans was neither rigid nor regular. In 1750 when Ghurme Namgyal organised an anti-Chinese rising he was decoyed at the hands of the Ambans, who killed him and they in turn were murdered by a Tibetan mob.¹ Like the previous occasions this incident also brought a punitive expedition from China which once more conquered Lhasa. This was followed by reforms leading to the reorganisation of the administration of Tibet.² Petech is inclined to decry this as a mere outburst of town violence and rowdyism, a purely local outburst, but the fact that such an uprising did take place, and that it was directed against the Chinese show perhaps that anti Chinese feeling was seething under the surface and needed only to be brought above it.

It is to be noted that Chinese influence in Tibet between 1720 and 1912 ebbed and flowed with the changing fortunes of the Manchu dynasty in China proper, and what is more interesting is the fact that the Chinese Ambans were able to exert some amount of influence in Tibet only during the minority of the Dalai Lama's or during the interregnum periods between the two Dalai Lamas.³

Tibet's Relations with British India

Before the signing of the treaty of Nanking in 1842 British dealings with China were confined to trade at Canton. Hence not surprisingly in the 18th and 19th century attempts were made to develop Anglo-Chinese relations across

1. Petech : *op. cit.*, pp. 199-216.

2. For details regarding these reforms, see Petech : *op. cit.*, pp. 211-212 : He writes, "In all these proceedings the sovereignty of the Dalai Lama is always understood, but nowhere expressly affirmed in the Chinese documents".

In the final analysis Richardson writes, "The reforms of 1750 put the temporal supremacy of the religious hierarchy on a lasting basis which was never afterwards challenged".

Richardson : *op. cit.*, p. 58.

3. See George Bogle's statement in Clements R. Markham : *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, London, 1879, p. 195.

the Himalayan mountain.¹

In 1772 the Bhutanese attack on Cooch Behar² gave Hastings an opportunity to open correspondence with the Panchen Lama. In 1774 Hastings sent a mission, ostensibly a commercial one to the Court of the Panchen Lama under Bogle.³ He was instructed to enquire carefully into the relations between China and Tibet, and the nature of the roads that linked the two countries together. Besides establishing a firm and mutual friendship between the sixth Panchen Lama and Bogle this mission from the political point of view was only a partial success.⁴ Bogle's readings on the nature of the relationship between China and Tibet gave to the establishment of Anglo-Tibetan relations a new significance.⁵ He concluded that the relationship of the Lama and the Chinese Emperor could be compared to that of the Pope and Medieval German Emperor. The Panchen Lama held out the hope that it might eventually be possible for an envoy of the Company to make his way through Tibet to the Chinese capital and finally Bogle hoped "...one day or other getting a sight of Peking".⁶

On the installation of the seventh Panchen Lama, Hastings sent another mission to Tashilhunpo, to bring the good wishes of the Government of India on this happy occasion, under Samuel Turner in 1783.⁷ The second mission could do no more than reinforce the good will established by the first mission.

1. The possibility of a route across the Himalayas for the introduction of British manufactures especially British woollen textiles into the Chinese Empire received serious consideration in the 18th and 19th century. Attempts to sell such goods at Canton had been disappointing. Hence the British efforts to use Tibet as a backdoor to China.
2. Francis Younghusband : *India and Tibet*, London, 1910, pp. 7-8.
3. Schuyler Cammann : *Trade through the Himalayas*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1951, pp. 54-81.
4. Markham : *op. cit.*, pp. 5-8.
5. Alastair Lamb : *Tibet in Anglo-Chinese Relations, 1767-1842, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1957-1958, p. 164.
6. Markham : *op. cit.*, p. 134.
7. For a detailed account of this mission, see Samuel Turner : *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet*, London, 1880.
For a complete and comprehensive account read Cammann : *op. cit.*, pp. 82-100.

Neither of the missions succeeded in concluding any sort of written agreement, political or commercial between the British authorities in India and the Panchen Lama and the British had to be satisfied with mere verbal promises. Hasting's scheme to open direct relations with the Chinese Emperor through Tibet lost its impetus with his departure from India.¹

The last efforts to strengthen Manchu influence over Tibet were made after the Gurkha invasion of 1791-1792.² This invasion for the fourth time in 75 years brought an imperial army into the country. British diplomacy during the Gurkha war was to play off one side against the other.

It must be mentioned here that towards the latter part of the 19th century Manchu authority over Tibet began to dwindle fast into decrepitude. The tottering edifice of Manchu imperialism could no longer maintain its existence in the feverish competition with the rival imperialism of Britain and Russia. This sharp decline in China's power and authority gave great opportunities to Great Britain to advance her interests in the "Roof of the World".

After the Gurkha invasion and the strengthening of Chinese control over Tibet (though only in paper) British realisation of Sikkim as the effective route for correspondence between Calcutta and Lhasa was visibly demonstrated.³ Henceforth Sikkim played a dominant part in the history of Anglo-Tibetan relations up to the opening of Tibet by Lord Curzon in 1903-1904.

A treaty with the Raja of Sikkim in 1817 placed Sikkim under British protection and the acquisition of Darjeeling in

1. In 1787 Lt. Col. Cathart was deputed to the task of a British Mission to Peking, see Lamb : *op. cit.*, p. 168. In 1793 the Macartney Embassy reached Peking. Lamb : *op. cit.*, p. 174. For different reasons neither of these missions was successful.
2. Richardson : *op. cit.*, pp. 68-72.
3. After the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, 1842, Anglo-Chinese relations were placed on a new footing. No longer did it seem necessary to look for channels of communication with Peking other than those through China proper. There was in fact a complete reversal of policy. Previously it had been hoped to a varying degree that through Tibet China might be opened. After 1842 it was hoped that through Chinese mediation Tibet might be opened to Indian commerce.

1835 brought the British into close contact with the day to day politics of Sikkim.¹

In 1876 for the first time Tibet came to be the subject of diplomatic negotiations between Great Britain and China. By a special provision of the Chefoo Convention it was agreed *inter alia*, that the Chinese Government would make necessary arrangements for a British mission of exploration to visit Tibet.²

In 1885 the Macaulay Mission sent from India was intercepted by the Tibetan Government, because the Tibetans refused to recognise the treaty or to allow the Mission to enter into Tibet.³ The withdrawal of the Mission was a concession to the Chinese with whom Britain was then engaged in the delimitation of the Burmese frontier. The Macaulay Mission incident was the beginning of the weak and abortive policy which lost the British the respect of the Tibetans, and led to the succession of affronts and indignities, and which made the expedition to Lhasa (Younghusband expedition) inevitable.

Constant disputes and difficulties arose in consequence, which culminated in 1886 in the despatch by the Tibetans of an armed force which crossed the Chumbi frontier by the Jelap La and occupied Lingtu, a place some ten miles from the pass and well within recognised Sikkim territory.⁴ As an armed clash between the British and the Tibetan troops seemed imminent, the Chinese Government immediately opened negotiations with the British Government, and after two years of fruitless discussion the Anglo-Chinese Convention was eventually signed at Calcutta on March 17, 1890. Article I of the Convention determined the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet, and by Article III both the Governments "engaged reciprocally to respect the boundaries and to prevent acts of aggression from their respective sides of the frontier".⁵ It has been argued

1. Lamb : *op. cit.*, Part II, pp. 37-38.

2. Richardson : *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

3. China was not able to compel Tibet to receive the Mission. *ibid.*, p. 76.

4. Fredrick O'Connor : *On the Frontier and Beyond*, London, 1931, p. 24.

5. For the text of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, see *Foreign Department, Secret External Proceedings*, Nos. 218-247 March 1890, No. 241. Cited hereinafter as *For. Sec. E.*

Convention between Great Britain and China relating to Sikkim and Tibet signed at Calcutta on 17 March 1890.

that this agreement constituted an acknowledgement on the part of Great Britain of China's sovereign rights over Tibet, but this interpretation of the Convention has no legal or logical foundation as the wording of the articles clearly imply. The most remarkable provision of the Convention is to be found in Article II which provided, "It is admitted that the British Government whose protectorate over the Sikkim state is hereby recognised has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of the state, and except through and with the permission of the British Government neither the Ruler of the state nor any of its officers shall have any official relations of any kind formal or informal with any country." There was, however, no acknowledgement on the part of the British Government of China's authority over Tibet. Therefore the utmost that can be deduced from the Convention in favour of China is that it recognised the right of China to enter into an international agreement in respect of Tibet without the intervention of the Tibetan authorities. This does not, however, imply that this was the sole and exclusive right of the Chinese Government and as such it could not be exercised by the Government of Tibet.

Two other points should be noted in this connection. First, the preamble to the convention makes it quite clear that it was intended to clearly define and permanently settle certain matters connected with the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet. It is therefore clear that the Convention did not purport to settle any dispute relating to the boundary between China and British India. Sikkim was not a part of British India although it was a protectorate of Great Britain. Similarly Tibet was not accepted as a part of China. Therefore the Convention dealt with the settlement of the boundary between the two states of Sikkim and Tibet. If on the other hand had the Chinese claim of sovereignty over Tibet been recognised then it would have been a question of the boundary settlement between China and Sikkim.

Secondly, the Trade Regulations of 1893¹ which followed

1. For the text of the Trade Regulations of 1893, see *For. Sec. E, Nos. 46-62, August 1893*, No. 61. Regulations regarding Trade, Communication and Pasturage to be appended to the Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890.

the conclusion of the Convention made a clear distinction between Chinese and Tibetan subjects. For instance Clause 6 says; "In the event of trade disputes arising between British and Chinese or Tibetan subjects in Tibet, they shall be inquired into and settled in personal conference by the Political Officer". Such a distinction would have been unnecessary if Tibet had been a part of China and sovereign rights over Tibet were vested in the Chinese Government.

The provisions, therefore, make it abundantly clear that at the time of the conclusion of the Convention Tibet was a separate and sovereign state, although under the international guardianship of China.

In the years following the conclusion of the Convention (1890) and Trade Regulations of 1893 the terms were not implemented by China which did not have the power to implement them in Tibet, and by Tibet herself which did not care to recognise the validity of the Convention and the Trade Regulations, since she was not a signatory.¹ Subsequent events indicate that the Convention remained a dead letter, *ab initio*, and China's capacity to conclude binding treaties on behalf of Tibet was at best a farce. Similarly the 1893 Trade Regulations were still-born, and the Tibetans went to the length of informing the British Government that "as the convention had been signed by the Chinese only, the Tibetan Government refused to recognise it as effective in Tibet".²

The situation on the eve of Curzon's arrival in India as Viceroy was that the Tibetans refused the right of China to

1. For instance of violation by Tibet of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and the Trade Regulations of 1893, and China's inability to enforce them the following records may be read. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-45, August 1893*. Entire file to be read in general. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 103-174, July 1895*, No. 129 White to Commissioner, Rajshahi, 11 May 1893. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 244-253, January 1895*, No. 245. Nolan to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 18 October 1894. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 456-461, October 1895.*, No. 456. O'Connor to Elgin, 21 August 1895. *For Sec. E, Nos. 252-271, March 1896*, No. 252. Cotton to Secretary to the Government of India, 7 December 1895.
2. International Commission of Jurists : *The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law*, Geneva, 1959, p. 78.

conclude binding treaties on their behalf, they refused at the same time to have any direct dealings with the British, pointing out that Tibet's foreign relations was China's concern. The Chinese on their part admitted their inability to enforce Tibetan compliance with the Convention concluded by them on their behalf.¹

1. It must be remembered that the faint spell of Chinese ascendancy over Tibet reached its vanishing point in 1894 when the 13th Dalai Lama seized the reins of Government and deprived the Chinese Amban of all authority in the state of affairs. In 1895 China was disastrously defeated by Japan, the news of the defeat had reached Tibet.

2

Penetration of the Intransigence of Tibet

With the consolidation of British power in India the attention of the administrators in the country was drawn to the Himalayan states.

Relations with Nepal were settled in March 1816 by the Treaty of Segauli, and the North-West frontier of the Company's possessions was carried right upto the mountains.¹ In March 1846 Kashmir was made over to Maharaja Gulab Singh, Spiti and Lahul were detached from Ladakh and administered in the district of Kangra. Ladakh being a dependency of Kashmir thus came indirectly under British control.² Darjeeling district was acquired from the Raja of Sikkim in 1836, and after several vicissitudes satisfactory settlements were reached with Sikkim in 1861 and Bhutan in 1865.³ As part of the latter the Kalimpong area was attached to British India. A series of agreements made with the chiefs of the hill states, lying between the plains of Assam and the

1. The provinces of Kumaon and Garhwal were surrendered, and a group of hill states from Tehri to the borders of Ladakh was taken under British protection.
2. P.L. Lakhanpal : *Essential Documents and Notes on Kashmir Dispute*, New Delhi, 1958, p. 21.
3. For the full text of the Agreements a reference may be made to C.U. Aitchison (compilers) : *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and the neighbouring Countries*, Calcutta, 1929, 30-31, 14 vols. vol. XII.

crest of the Himalayas, assured the security of the Brahmaputra Valley.¹

The Himalayan frontier of India was, therefore, secured and Tibet was separated from India by a row of states and peoples in varying degrees of dependency on the Indian Government. Tibet's relation with these states was in general customary and undefined, depending either on the bond of religious allegiance to the Dalai Lama, or on long established local trade or grazing rights. The Government of the Dalai Lama did not exercise any direct control over the states or have any political relations with them.

Curzon's Early Career

In January 1899 when Lord Curzon succeeded Lord Elgin as Viceroy of India there was a distinct change in British India's foreign policy. This was clearly visible in the new Viceroy's handling of the Tibet problem. Elgin's attitude of hesitation and undecidedness was substituted by Curzon's preconceived ideas and impatience. No examination, understanding, or analysis of Curzon's policy is possible without his background in view.

George Nathaniel Curzon before going on to Kedleston was a sickly child, prone to spots, boils, and colds. He was knowledgeable and well informed as his two tutors Miss Parman and James Campbell Dunbar had taught him to read and learn.²

He passed through a brilliant career at Eton and Balliol.³ In his last year at Eton he became the Secretary of the Literary

1. For a brief discussion of British India's relations with the Hill tribes in the Assam border since 1228, and the various agreements concluded with the chiefs of the hill tribes till 1905 reference may be made to Aitchison : *ibid.*, vol. XII, pp. 71-82.
2. Lord Ronaldshay (later Marquess of Zeiland) : *Life of Lord Curzon*, 3 vols., London, 1928, cited hereinafter as *Life*. Vol. 1, pp. 18-20. The author gives a vivid description of Curzon's influence and training under his two tutors.
3. Life of George Nathaniel Curzon before he became the Viceroy of India may be divided into four parts : (1) 1859-1878, childhood and schooldays (2) 1878-1882, Balliol College, Oxford, (3) 1882-1894, Travels in Asia, (4) 1895-1898. Under Secretary at Foreign Office.

Society.¹ He displayed his self-confidence in inviting the more eminent of his contemporaries to deliver an address. In this meeting the speech of Sir James Stephen, author of 'The story of Newcomer' made a profound and permanent impression on his mind. "There is", he said "in the Asian continent an Empire more populous, more amazing and more beneficent than that of Rome. The rulers of that Great domain are drawn from the men of our own people". The actual words used in this sentence made a tremendous impact on Curzon, and his fascination for India and the East was born.²

In this context it must be noted that in the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth century the British did not have any clear conception of their aims and policy in the Far East. It is likely that most Foreign Ministers like their colleagues in London knew next to nothing about the Far East. It seems strange that a Government with decades of thinking should have no Far Eastern policy. Actually the British were too busy to think and would not let others think for them ; Kiernan has explained the situation this way, "The immense complexity of Imperial interests made it impossible to take a step anywhere without laborious consultation. It was simpler not to take any step until circumstances pushed the Foreign office into a particular line".³

From his early years Curzon's characteristic traits began to find their fruition. Leonard Mosley testified that emotionally he was unstable and unpredictable.⁴ This was what many statesmen and politicians found in him in later life. His relations with his masters at Eton were not harmonious,⁵ as he himself

1. Ronaldshay : *Life*, Vol. 1, p. 24. The author writes that Curzon was elected Secretary of the Debating Society in 1876 and also in 1877.
2. Harold Nicholson : *Curzon the Last Phase*, London, 1934, p. 10. The author attributes the imperialism of Curzon to two curious influences of his childhood and adolescence. 'The first influence' he says 'is that of the self-righteous materialism of the Victorian bourgeoisie. The second is the intellectual rigidity induced early in his life owing to his spinal illness.
3. See E. Victor Gordan Kiernan : *British Diplomacy in China*, Cambridge. 1959. Chap. 18, pp. 300-315.
4. Leonard Mosley : *Curzon, The End of an Epoch*, London, 1960 p. 12.
5. Ronaldshay ; *Life*, Vol. 1, p. 22.
Mosley ; *op. cit.*, p. 12, writes "with one exception his masters found him insufferable."

testified. "Looking back at it today (he wrote in his notes later on) I recall distinctly how little I was in harmony with many of the masters and how completely they misunderstood me or was it that I misunderstood them".¹

In 1878 Curzon at the age of 19 arrived at Balliol with a harness round his waist to keep his spine supported, and continued to wear this for the rest of his life.² This weakness had a marked effect upon his character and mind. It was a constant challenge for him which made him irritable, self assertive and rigid. Harold Nicholson concluded:

most of Curzon's basic convictions and articles of his faith were absorbed before he left Eton in 1878; very few of the convictions which he acquired in later life became basic or have been central to his personality.³

There was no change in his attitude to life at Oxford from that which it had been at Eton. He was self-willed and confident of himself. Whilst at Oxford he wrote about his masters, "They never realised that I was bent at being first in whatever I undertook, but that I meant to do it in my own way and not theirs".⁴

It was apparent that he was highly ambitious and interested in his own advancement, and he made no secret of it. He spoke at every debate likely to bring him to the attention of the political leaders of the Tory Party, knowing fully well that they regularly visited the universities in those days in search of promising material. In 1880 when after the general election the liberals came to power he gave a speech in the union, "that this House viewed with sincere regret the results of the general election".⁵ In 1878 he was talking of female suffrage.⁶

1. Ronaldshay : *Life, op. cit.*, p. 14.
2. In 1874 he tumbled from his horse and hurt his back, and in 1878 it was discovered that he had curvature of the spine. In 1875 his mother died. These were the first two of a long series of disasters in his life.
3. Nicholson : *op. cit.*, p. 10.
4. Mosley : *op. cit.*, p. 22.
5. Ronaldshay : *Life*, Vol. 1, p. 45.
6. *ibid.* p. 49.

His political philosophy was that of a Tory. By birth and upbringing he was an aristocrat.¹ He was quick to take action.

After leaving the University he commenced on a long series of travels (1882-1894). In 1882 he visited Constantinople, Palestine and Egypt. In 1885 he was in Tunis. In 1887-1888 he explored America, China and India. In the autumn of 1888 he undertook the arduous voyage of Samarkand and Central Asia. He acquired a knowledge of Eastern countries and people which had been possessed by no previous Viceroy. The book *Russia in Central Asia*, published three years later which has now become a classic was the result of his journey. This book met with such success that the *London Times* sent him in the same year as its correspondent to Persia. It was at this time that he studied the conditions of the Persian Gulf and of the various questions which were so intimately connected with India. And which so vitally affected her future. He became personally acquainted with the Shah of Persia, and afterwards with the late Amir of Afghanistan, Abdul Rahman Khan. From his prolonged and intensive visit emerged in 1872 his famous two volumes, *Persia and Persian Question*, which Curzon afterwards regarded as his literary Chef d'oeuvre.

In 1892 he toured Japan, China, Cochin China and Siam. In 1894 he again visited Asia. It was during this period that he acquired that expert knowledge which was to prove both useful and a destructive element in his subsequent career. His writings reveal that he was a keen observer of Asian affairs and his distinct Curzonian approach to Asian problems was marked. His ideas on Russian expansion and Asia acquired a distinct shape even then.

His *Problems of the Far East* published in 1896 was the outcome of the journeys around the world in 1887-1888 and 1892-1896. It is, however, not a book of travel. It is an attempt to examine in a comparative light the political, social and economic conditions of the kingdoms and principalities of the Far East. In fact, it is his published views on the Far East.²

1. Mosley : *op. cit.*, pp. 41-43.

2. Ronaldshay : *Life*, Vol. I, pp. 275-294 gives a brief description of these views.

Curzon's basic approach to Asia was based on his view of Russia's position in the east. The main purpose of his book *Russia in Central Asia* was to warn his countrymen of the menace which Russian ambitions constituted to the Imperial position of Great Britain in the East, and the appeal to her statesmen not to drift before the oncoming tide, but to meet every fresh move made by Russia by a counter move of her own.

He concluded that Russia's advance in Central Asia was of a compulsory nature "...in the absence of any physical obstacle and in the presence of an enemy whose rule of life was deprecation and who understood no diplomatic logic but defeat, Russia was as much compelled to go forward as the earth is to go around the sun".¹ He believed that the sum and substance of Russian policy in Central Asia was to keep England quiet in Europe by keeping her employed in Asia.² He never proclaimed that there was a possibility of Russian conquest of India, but he was apprehensive of a Russian invasion of her frontiers to disable the British from checking her own ambitions in Europe.³ Moreover, Russia was a firm believer in her destiny, being the heaven sent emancipator of disabled nationalities, and of peoples groaning under British misrule.⁴

He stated emphatically the policy which he wanted Great Britain to adopt:

Instead of nervous anticipation of an advance which we do not mean to prevent and petulant protests when it is accomplished, let our statesmen make up their minds what they mean to hold and what they are prepared to abandon... Let a responsible Government declare thus far and no farther short of that point, let England and Russia so far as it is possible co-operate...⁵

1. Curzon : *Russia in Central Asia*, London, 1899, pp. 318-320.
2. *ibid.*, p. 321.
3. *ibid.*, pp. 323-327. Curzon did not base his arguments on imagination. There had been schemes of Russian invasion of India. For exhaustive analysis of Russian lines of invasion, see *ibid.*, p. 341.
4. *ibid.*, p. 328.
5. Ronaldshay : *Life*, Vol. 1, p. 147.

He concluded that ultimately for the security of the Indian Empire, Russia ought to be checked.¹

It was not only his greed for personal eminence which haunted him. He also had a sense of mission. Since leaving Eton he had become an ardent imperialist with a sense of responsibility for the future happiness of the Empire.² His dream of Empire building satisfied the emotional side of his nature.³ Being a man of action he believed that the British Empire had a divine purpose to fulfil.

Before coming to India as Viceroy, Curzon had spent nearly one year at the India Office and three years at the Foreign Office. He thus gained experience not only of Indian questions, but of the complicated politics of Europe and of the world generally. His views on Asian problems in general and Russia's role in particular underwent little change during his tenure of Viceroyalty of India. The imagination of his youth remained throughout his days in India. His goal was fixed, and he strove to achieve that goal.

Generally the views formed during his early years dominated his outlook when circumstances placed him in a position of power and responsibility. This was one of the causes of the disagreement which grew up between him and the cabinet ending in his resignation of the Indian Viceroyalty. The opinions expressed in his speeches and in his books remained unaltered when he came to India as Viceroy. He wrote to Hamilton on May 3, 1899 :

In 1899 I wrote a chapter in my book on Russia in Central Asia upon Anglo-Russian relations and the future that lay before them in Asia and although that chapter is eleven years old, I do not think there is a statement of opinion in it I would withdraw or a prediction that has so far been falsified.⁴

1. *Salisbury Papers* (Christ Church, Oxford) letter from Lord Curzon to Lord Salisbury, July 12, 1900, sent on the eve of the Shah's visit to England. Quoted by P. Mehra : *The Younghusband Expedition. An Interpretation*, New York, 1968, p. 87.
2. Mosley : *op. cit.*, p. 31.
3. Nicholson : *op. cit.*, p. 13.
4. *Hamilton Papers*, Curzon to Hamilton, letter, 3 May 1899 quoted by P. Mehra : *The Younghusband Expedition, An Interpretation*, New York, 1968, p. 90, footnote 47.

On the vital question of Russia he had given his considered opinion, one from which he never departed until the situation underwent radical alteration eight years later as a result of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907.

His experience and training had its limitations. He could not and did not care to think beyond his fixed ideas. His sense of superiority made him many enemies, and his egoism and rigidity was a hindrance to his success. His mind did not show any signs of further maturity after he left Eton in 1878.

He was inclined to act on his own initiative and independently, and therein lay the germs of his quarrels with Whitehall. On assuming the Office of Viceroy of India his differences with the India Office were seen early, the same attitude being maintained throughout his career.

Russian Expansion in Asia

Lord Curzon's Tibet policy was a direct offshoot of the fear of Russian expansion in Asia.

18th century Russian expansion towards Central Asia, and her southward move towards the British Empire in the 19th century threatened to upset the power equilibrium in the East. Hence it became of vital concern to the British authorities in India.

The Mongols who were originally a nomadic people emerged towards the end of the 12th century from complete obscurity to a permanent place in history, and under Chengiz Khan they were at the height of their power. The great warrior at the time of his death had built an Empire extending from the Pacific to Dneiper and from the middle of Siberia to the borders of Tibet and India.¹ Under Kublai Khan, Mongol rule extended not only over the main Empire but also over the four Khanates. It was the Khanate of the Golden Horde which ruled Russia and a part of Central Asia from 1237-1480.²

1. T.F. Chen : *A History of Sino-Russian Relations*, Washington, D.C. 1959, p. 3.
2. By 1380 the rule of the Golden Horde over Russia began to shake as the Mongols of the Horde had by then become Muhammadans, and there were two rival Khans.

Towards the end of the 14th century after the Mongol tribes had begun to recede from their high water-mark of conquest, Russia began to throw off the Mongols and to extend her boundaries. This was a natural development, as she was "heir by reversion to the dominions of her former Mongol conquerors..."¹

By the middle of the sixteenth century the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan had fallen to the Russians, and in the 17th century they expanded into Siberia. The Treaty of Norchinsk in 1689 demarcated the frontiers of Russia and China awarding the entire Amur Basin to the Manchu Emperor K'ang Hsi. But her eastward expansion continued.²

In 1718 the three Kozan Khans offered their submission to the Russians in Siberia, and in 1760 the Kalmuks submitted to Russian sovereignty.

In the 19th century Russia accelerated her speed in conquering Central Asia. In 1803 Turkomans came under Russian protection. By the treaty of Argun in 1858 she was able to extract from China the left bank of the Argun and Amur rivers in Siberia. In 1860 by the Treaty of Peking, the Manchus relinquished to her the land between the right banks of the Ussuri and lower Amur rivers and the Pacific Ocean. This permitted Russia to build Vladivostok and from this base extend her influence along the northern Pacific coast. By the subsequent protocol of Tarbagatai signed in 1864 Russia took advantage of declining Manchu power to realign China's western boundary in her favour.³ Due to Russian pressure by the Ili Trade Agreement concluded in 1854 China lost the rich and strategic Ili Valley leading into Western Sinkiang (this was, however, later returned to China). Taskhent was captured in 1865, Samarkand fell into Russian hands in 1868; Bokhara in 1869; Khiva in 1873; Khokand in 1876; Turkmenistan in 1881; Merv in 1884; Penjdeh in 1895. In 1895 in spite of the protests of the Manchu Government Britain and Russia

1. Richardson : *op. cit.*, p. 78.

2. Tan Gray : *Peter the Great Emperor of All Russia*, Great Britain, 1962, p. 58.

3. For the negotiations leading to this agreement, see T.F. Chen ; *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

compromised and concluded the Pamir treaty to divide the plateau between them.¹ In 1881 by the terms of the Treaty of St. Petersburg, China had regained part of the Valley. In accordance with the provisions of this, boundary agreements were subsequently concluded between China and Russia. One concerning the southern boundary of Ili in August 1882, another concerning Kashgeria in November 1882, and a third concerning Kabdo and Tarbagatai in July 1883, and a fourth concerning Kashgeria in May 1885 were concluded.²

Russia's policy of expansion in Asia may be attributed to four factors' :

It was a natural urge for them to try to reconquer her dominions over which the Mongols had extended their rule ; a sense of Great Russian nationalism and to fulfil its version of manifest destiny prevailed; exploration and conquest were the general trend of the 19th century western world; the cult of the "Easterners" who believed in Russia's mission to conquer continental Asia had developed at the end of the nineteenth century in Russia.³

Tibet's Links with Russia

From remote times there had been indirect dealings between Russia and Tibet through the Mongols. The latter who gradually came within the Russian sphere, were originally converts to the reformed sect of Tibetan Buddhism during its great diffusion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

There was also a connection through the Targot Kalmuks who were driven out of their native homes in the sixteenth century, and who gradually migrated to the Volga basin, where in the mid-seventeenth century they were eventually accepted as vassals of the Tsar.

The Dalai Lama was the spiritual guide of both the Bruiat Mongols and the Targot Kalmuks. Many Bruiat lived in Lhasa for years together studying in the large monasteries.⁴

1. See Curzon : *Russia in Central Asia*, London, 1889, pp. 343-378.

2. T.F. Chen ; *op. cit.*, pp. 48-50.

3. George Alexander Lensen (ed.) : *Russia's Eastward Expansion*, Englewood Cliffs ; N.J.P. Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964, Chap. 22, Andrew Malozemoff : *The Ideology of Russian Expansion*, p. 92.

4. Charles Bell : *Tibet Past and Present*, Oxford, 1924, p. 223.

For the Lama Buddhist, Lhasa has always been the Mecca where his education and training reach their final perfection.¹

In 1720 the Kalmuks are said to have sent contributions for the repair of the Ju-Khang, after it had been damaged by the Jungar invasion. Ten years later they are known to have sent another mission to Lhasa.²

Bogle and Turner saw evidence of trade with Mongolia in Tibet. This contact must have served the dual purpose of trade and pilgrimage.³ In 1783 Turner saw at Tashillinpo, a Russian orthodox Bible given to the Panchen Lama by Jebtson Dampa Hukhtu, the Mongolian Grand Lama, he had received it originally from the Russian Emperor. Turner noticed that the Tibetans were well informed about Russia. They knew of Tsarina Catherina and the extent of her dominions.⁴

The Mongol concept of Tsagan Khan has a parallel in Tibetan mythology. There is a prophecy that Song-tsen Gampo, founder of Tibet's religion, would one day be reincarnated as a mighty prince, and would conquer the world in the name of Buddhism. The name of the new Empire would be Chang Shambala, located three thousand miles north-west of lord Buddha's birth place in Northern India. There were also other clues which suggest Russia as the seat of the new Empire.⁵

Dorjief made good use of this legend and spread the idea that North Shambala (or Chang Shambala) was Russia, and the Tsar was the king who would restore Buddhism.⁶

1. P. Mehra : *op. cit.*, p. 134.
2. Richardson : *op. cit.*, p. 80. Mehra : *op. cit.*, p. 134. Mehra does not mention the source of this information.
3. Bell : *op. cit.*, writes, "another bond between Russia and Tibet is to be found in the trade", p. 223.
4. Samuel Turner : *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet*, London, 1880, pp. 272-273.
5. Ekai Kawaguchi : *3 Years in Tibet*, Benares, 1909, pp. 497-499. The same version of the legend is given by John Rowland : *A History of Sino-Indian Relation, Hostile Co-existence*, New York, 1967, p. 28. Bell also narrates this legend but with a slight variation. According to him the Buddhist Prince will rise in a country to the north of Kashmir known as North Shambala. Bell : *op. cit.*, p. 62.
Richardson and Mehra do not mention this legend.
6. Kawaguchi : *op. cit.*, p. 499, Rowland : *op. cit.*, p. 28.

The late 19th century position of Russia in Central Asia, overlooking the north eastern frontier of Tibet was far removed from the possibility of active aggression against India. But there was no doubt that she occupied a very central position in the Buddhist world, and would enormously increase the weight of her political influence in Asia, extend her domination in Tibet, and endanger India's Himalayan borders.

During the closing years of the 19th century, Russia's position in Central Asia conferred on her vis-a-vis England advantages of a peculiarly disturbing kind. Skobelev the victor of Geok Tape had said,

*The stronger Russia is in Central Asia, the weaker England is in India and the more conciliatory she will be in Europe.*¹

Tibet was separated from her nearest European power Russia by Chinese Turkestan. From India's point of view, the greatest danger that seemed to arise as a consequence of the Sino-Japanese war was that the territory might fall into eager Russian hands. In the years following the war, distinguished jurists and military officers expressed their apprehension of Russian expansion in Chinese Turkestan.²

Sir John Ardagh who had been Director of British Military Intelligence in 1896 argued at length for fixing a definite boundary in the Pamir, to prevent Russian expansion into Turkestan and Hunsa. He feared an eventual Russian annexation of Kashgeria,³ more so due to the progress of the Siberian Railway in strengthening Russian position in North China. Bower observed that Lhasa was the Mecca of the Buddhist world, and its possession by Russia would give her great prestige in the eyes of the Mongol world.⁴

1. Quoted by Peter Fleming : *Bayonets to Lhasa*, London, 1961, p. 22.
2. In March 1895 the distinguished Colonial Judge Sir E. Hornby warned Lords Kemberly and Rosebery that Chinese Turkestan would soon fall into the hands of the Russians. In 1896 Sir John Ardagh, Director of Military Intelligence, had come to the same conclusion, see Alastair Lamb : *Some Notes on Russian Intrigue in Tibet*, *Journal of Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 116, 1954, p. 54.
3. Alastair Lamb : *Some Notes on Russian Intrigue in Tibet*, *Journal of Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 116, 1954, pp. 48-49.
4. *ibid.*, p. 49.

Thus the theoretical reasons why the British should do something about Tibet, should Russia establish itself in Chinese Turkestan, were clear enough.

From about 1899 a few signs of Russian activity in Tibet began to be known. Her plea for scientific research was a disguise under which she had been caught spying India.¹ During 1898 rumours were circulating on the frontier of Russian activity in Tibet, and White remarked in November 1898, "The Russians are making progress in the North".² By April 1899 the Amban had the courage to declare openly that Russia had offered assistance to Tibet, and in case of necessity would fall back on her. Captain Le Mesurier's demi-official letter dated 29th April 1899 contained the following passage :

In the course of conversation the Chinese Amban remarked that if we insisted on maintaining the Convention boundary as against Tibetan claims, the Tibetans would fall back on the support of Russia who had for sometime been in negotiation with them.

The day before I left Yatung I received a friendly visit from four Tibetan Officials, of whom the Chief and spokesman was a Lhasa Lama, an intelligent and most pleasant man to meet. They professed every desire for friendly relations with the Indian Government and said that the other people (meaning the Russians) constantly offered them help and support, but that they always declined such overtures.³

In May 1899 there were rumours of a visit to Lhasa by a Russian Mission. Paul Mowis of Darjeeling in the *Simla News* stated that in January 1899 Lhasa was visited by a party of

1. For rumours of Russian activity in Tibet the following records may be read in general. *Foreign Department, Secret External Proceedings, Nos. 91-159, October 1894. Cited hereinafter as For Sec. E. Nos. 531-533, January 1899.*
2. Alastair Lamb : *Britain and Chinese Central Asia. The Road to Lhasa*, London, 1960, p. 240.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 56-67, August 1899, Notes, pp. 1-2 Le Mesurier to Barnes (Demi-official) 24 April 1899.*

Russians under an officer named Baranoff.¹ On being questioned as to the source of this report he replied that he had heard repeated rumours at Darjeeling of the presence of Europeans in Lhasa.

Curzon was not the man to ignore such indications of Russia establishing her influence in Lhasa. On May 12, 1899 he wrote to Hamilton.

I have very little doubt that Russians have been in communication with Lhasa and that our policy upto date has been a mistake and must be reversed.²

Herein lay the germs of his advocacy of a forward policy.

His wide experience of Asian politics, (both theoretical and practical) was responsible for the formulation of his theory of the role which Russia meant to play upon that continent.

Failure of the British to open Direct Relations with the Dalai Lama

Without thoroughly investigating into the various reports of Russian activities in Tibet; Curzon wrote privately to Hamilton, on May 24, 1899 :

The Lamas there (Tibet) have found out the weakness of China, at the same time they are being approached by Russia. There seems little doubt that Russian Agents and possibly someone of Russian origin have been at Lhasa, and I believe that the Tibetan Government is coming to the conclusion that it will have to make friends with one or other of the two great powers. That our case should not be stated in these circumstances and that judgement should go against us, by default, would be a great pity. Inasmuch as we have no hostile designs against Tibet, as we are in a position to give them something on the frontier to

1. Paul Mowis was a self-styled Tibetan Expert. Mowis says he remembered that a Private Secretary of M. Prejavalsky, the explorer was called Baranoff and he inferred that possibly this was the officer who was at Lhasa. Sbaranuff was the Tibetan spelling of his name.
2. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 1 (MSS, Eur. F. 111/158) letter no, 21, Curzon to Hamilton, 12 May 1899.

which they attach great importance and we none, and as the relations that we desire to establish with them are almost exclusively those of trade, I do not think it ought to be impossible, I could get into communication with the Tibetan Government to come to terms.¹

Nebulous reports of Russian activity stimulated greatly the policy of opening direct communication with the Dalai Lama, which Curzon tried to carry out right up to the end of 1901.

Lord Curzon commenced in the autumn of 1899 on a series of attempts to open direct communication with Tibet. His despatch sent to the India Office, London on March 30, 1899 outlining the policy of direct negotiations with Tibet and disregarding Chinese sovereignty, shows the impatience of the British authorities in India.

The despatch in part reads :

We do not desire to conceal from Your Lordship our opinion that negotiation with the Chinese resident (regarding the access of Indian traders in Phari and the question of boundary making)...and although that attempts have so far been made to open direct communications with the Tibetan authorities have resulted in failure are not likely to be productive of any serious result. We seem, in fact, in respect of our policy towards Tibet to be moving in a vicious circle. If we apply to Tibet, we either receive no reply or are referred to the Chinese Resident. If we apply to the latter, he excuses his failure by his inability to put any pressure on Tibet. As a policy this appears to us to be unproductive and inglorious. We shall be grateful for Your Lordship's opinion as to the advisability of any modification of it in the near future.²

1. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 1 (Mss. Eur. F. 111/158) letter no. 23. Curzon to Hamilton, 24 May 1899,
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 93-139, April 1899*, No. 137. Curzon to Hamilton, 30 March 1899. See also *Papers relating to Tibet, 1889-1904. Presented to both House of Parliament by Command of His Majesty, C. 1920*, No. 26, pp. 74-75. Cited hereinafter as *Papers Relating to Tibet*.

The instructions of the British Foreign Office to the India Office sent on May 15, reads in part as follows :

It would certainly be preferable to open direct communication with the Government of India and the Tibetan authorities, although the Viceroy states in his despatch that the attempts which have so far been made in the direction have resulted in failure. As, however, the Tibetans have attempted to repudiate the Convention as regards the frontier on the ground that the Chinese have no authority to act for them, it is reasonable to suppose that they might be induced to enter into negotiations especially as the Government of India are prepared to allow them to remain in possession of the territory surrendered under the boundary agreement.¹

The Secretary of State for India, in conforming with the policy of the British Foreign Office, authorised Curzon on December 8, 1899 to carry on direct negotiations with Tibet. He wrote :

Her Majesty's Government approves the course of action adopted by Your Government. In regard to the establishment of direct correspondence with the Tibetans, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has instructed Her Majesty's Minister at Peking by telegram to endeavour to obtain assistance of the Chinese Government in securing for native traders from India access to and freedom of trade with Phari.²

This marked the beginning of the elimination of the Chinese factor in the Tibetan controversy.³

The Bhutanese Vakil wrote a letter to the Dalai Lama suggesting in general terms the despatch of a high Tibetan Official to discuss frontier and trade matters. But the Dalai Lama whilst replying to this letter made no reference to the

1. *Papers relating to Tibet, op. cit.*, Enclosure 2, No 27. pp. 100-101.

2. *For. Sec, Nos. 78-108, September 1900*, No. 85 Hamilton to Curzon, 8 December 1899.

3. From now on the Russian attitude in Tibet began to play a determining role.

suggestion.¹ It was not found possible to enter into communication by way of Burma and Yunnan, nor through Nepal. Hamilton was informed by the Government of India in the Foreign Department:

Enquiries were accordingly instituted as to the possibility of despatching a suitable emissary to the Tibetan capital either through Yunnan or through Nepal or by way of Ladakh. Our Resident in Nepal, who was verbally consulted advised against any attempt being made to reach Lhasa *via* Nepal, except with the knowledge and consent of the Nepalese Durbar, to whom we were not prepared to refer. The agent whom we suggested to the Government of Burma as a possible emissary for the Mission through Yunnan was reported to be unsuitable. The proposal to communicate through Ladakh, however, seemed to offer some prospect of success...This prospect having failed, we determined to make one more effort to deliver a letter...through Ugyan Kazi...As to the exact form which our altered policy should assume, we shall if necessary address Your Lordship at a later date. But we may add that before long, steps may be required to be taken for the adequate safeguarding of British interests upon a part of the frontier where they have never hitherto been impugned.²

After his failure to enter into negotiation with the Tibetan authorities through less exalted channels, Curzon decided to communicate directly with the Dalai Lama. The Political Officer at Leh thought it might be feasible to despatch a letter

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 18-28, August 1901, No. 28*

Curzon to Hamilton, 25 July 1901. See also *For. Sec. E, Nos. 118-158, November 1903*. Memorandum by Younghusband, dated 17 August 1903 under the heading *Our Relations with Tibet both Past and Present. Together with a Forecast of the Future Developments of Our policy in that Region*, pp. 3-49, see para 29. Cited herein-after as Memorandum by Younghusband.

2. This expression of altered policy and intimation of taking steps to protect British interests later on developed into the Younghusband Expedition to Lhasa. See *Papers Relating to Tibet, C 1920. No. 37*, pp. 118-119.

from the Viceroy to the Dalai Lama through Gartok. A letter was accordingly sent in July 1900. But the Jongpens at Gartok had not dared to send it to Lhasa, as it might have endangered their lives. They added that in future the Sahib should refrain from acts contrary to regulations, such as coming to this side of the frontier and sending letters, which are practices he should consider forbidden. The letter had, however, evidently been opened and read.¹

Curzon was, however, determined in his object, and he, therefore, embarked on a second letter. In June 1901 a letter was entrusted to a Bhutanese official called Ugyen Kazi, who had already made one unsuccessful attempt to act as an intermediary with the Dalai Lama and who was about to return to Lhasa with a consignment of two elephants, two peacocks and a leopard which that dignitary had ordered for his private zoo.² In the second letter stress was laid upon the long forbearance shown by the British Government in their relations with Tibet, and a warning was conveyed that, if the overtures which they had made with a view to establishing friendly relations were still treated with indifference, they reserved the right to take such steps as might seem necessary and proper to enforce the terms of the treaty of 1890, and to ensure that the trade regulations of 1893 are observed.

Ugyen Kazi returned in October and brought back the Viceroy's letter unopened with the seals intact. There were varied rumours as to whether he actually delivered the epistle, it being widely believed that he never even mentioned to the Lama the fact of its existence.³

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 55-57, November 1900.* Encl. No. 55.
Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir for Leh to the Resident in Kashmir, 7 October 1900.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-177, March 1902, No. 57.*
Chief Secretary to Government of Bengal to Foreign Secretary, 31 October 1901.
3. Ekai Kawaguchi who was in Lhasa at this time says that he never heard any such report, if any letter had been delivered he must have heard of it, as he was constantly about Lhasa on his medical duties.
For. Sec. E, Nos. 22-62, September 1902, Encl. No. 50.
Walsh to Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 10 July 1902.

Curzon was prepared for his second disappointment. On July 25, 1901 he telegraphed to the Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton :

Should this letter meet with the fate of its predecessor, we contemplate subject to the approval of His Majesty's Government the adoption of more practical measures with a view to securing the commercial and political facilities which our friendly representations will have failed to procure. As to the exact form which our altered policy should assume, we shall if necessary address Your Lordship at a later date. But we may add that before long steps may require to be taken for the adequate safeguarding of British interests upon a part of the frontier where they have never hitherto been impugned.¹

As one goes through the official correspondence it becomes clear that the two letters which were returned to Curzon were regarded by him as a personal affront.

A factor of determining importance now suddenly thrust itself into the situation. At the very time when the Viceroy was making these fruitless efforts to enter into direct communication with the Dalai Lama, information was received that the latter had been sending an envoy to the Tsar.

Curzon was at first inclined not to take the Bruiat Lama seriously and was actually in two minds. Perhaps his pride was hurt by the fact that whilst he had been unable to get in direct contact with the Dalai Lama, the latter was communicating with the Tsar, hence he was unwilling to recognise this fact. He wrote privately to Hamilton on 18 November 1900.

Tibet Mission to Russia is a fraud. The Russians have for a long time been trying to penetrate to Tibet, and a Russian, Tibetan or Mongolian Envoy may conceivably have been there...but that the Tibetan Lamas of Lhasa

1. Curzon branded Ugyen Kazi as a paid Tibetan and confided to Hamilton privately on 5 November 1901, "I do not believe that he saw the Dalai Lama or handed the letter."
Curzon Papers, Roll No. 2 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/159) letter no. 75, Curzon to Hamilton, 5 November 1901.

have so far overcome all their incurable suspicion of all things. European to send an open Mission to Europe seems to me most unlikely...I am not disturbed by rumours.¹

London became suspicious of Dorjjeff only when Hardinge, the then British Charge d'Affaires in St. Petersburg clipped and sent to the Foreign Office an article in the 2nd October 1900 issue of the *Journal de Saint Petersburg* which described this mystery-monks audience with the Tsar at Livadia Palace in Yalta.²

Hardinge's report added, "I have not been able so far to procure any precise information with regard to this person or to the Missions on which he is supposed to have come to Russia.³ Since Dorjjeff had been described as representative of the Dalai Lama and was rumoured to have brought a letter to the Tsar from His Holiness, Hardinge's report aroused deep suspicion both in London and Calcutta.⁴ It altered the perspective through which the British viewed the North East frontier of India.

This was Dorjjeff's first appearance on the international stage.⁵ For the next four years his manoeuvres acted as a formative influence on British policy towards Tibet.

Confidential enquiries about Dorjjeff's activities were instituted by the Government. Sarat Chandra Das Bahadur

1. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 2 (Mss. Eur. F. 111/159) letter no. 72. Curzon to Hamilton, 18 November 1900.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 35-95, July 1903*, Encl. No. 66. Younghusband to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 3 June 1903. See also *For. Sec. E, Nos. 118-158, November 1903. Memorandum by Younghusband*, para 107.
3. See *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 6 November 1900.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 56-58, June 1902*.
5. It is generally believed that Dorjjeff was a Bruiat Mongol from Baikal who went to Lhasa on a religious visit in 1880, and settled there in the Drepung Monastery and acquired exceptional learning in Tibetan philosophy and history. He acquired scholarship and became one of the instructors of the Young Dalai Lama, with whom, it is generally agreed in Tibet, he acquired considerable personal influence. There is no evidence that Dorjjeff had at first any official backing from, or any communication with the Russian Government.

thought it highly improbable that a mission could have gone from Lhasa to Livadia, because it would take several months to accomplish such a journey, and he would have heard of it. The Rai Bahadur suggested that the Mission might have been from the Taranath Lama Urga in Mongolia.¹

Sandberg (whose note displays a remarkable acquaintance with Tibetan Affairs) points out that there was nothing new in a close connection between Lhasa and Russia through Urga, and further that all the parties concerned were Mongolians, who passed freely either to Moscow or to Lhasa, and therefore there was no political significance whatever in the visit of Badmaeff to Lhasa and of Dorjjeff to Livadia. He next analysed the title Agwan Dorjjeff, Senior Tsanite Khamba, and showed that he was a Mongolian priest professor of Metaphysics at a Monastery in Tibet. He asserted that this man Dorjjeff was at Darjeeling in 1900.² The periodical Mission from Lhasa to European Russia may be no new thing to Sandberg, but it is not alluded to in any report or book connected with Tibet.

At this stage it appears that Hamilton at the India Office was more apprehensive of Russian designs on Tibet than Curzon. He imagined that there could be substantial truth in these reports and noted that these "had set a good many tongues wagging there, and letters are already being written to the press, as to the intrusion of Russian influence into Tibet".³ The object of the Mission was till then uncertain and enquiries continued.⁴ Curzon was not certain whether the Mission had actually gone from Lhasa. He was presuming that the Tibetan delegates may have come from Urga in Mongolia. A little later he dismissed Dorjjeff as a "perfect imposter" who

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 81-86, July 1901, No. 83.*

Buckland to Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department, 24 May 1901.

2. *ibid.*, Encl. 1, No. 81

Note on the Alleged Tibet Mission to Russia by the Revd. Graham Sandberg.

See also *For. Sec. E, Nos. 56-58, June 1902, No. 56.*

Sandberg's note on the Alleged Tibet Mission to Russia, para 3.

3. *Curzon Papers* Roll No. 1 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/159) letter no. 74. Hamilton to Curzon, 24 October 1900.

4. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 2 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/159) letter no. 72. Curzon to Hamilton, 18 November 1900.

“has nothing to do with Tibet” and “apparently hails from Siberia.”¹

In June 1900 Dorjjeff was back in Russia, and on July 6, 1900 was received by the Tsar in St. Petersburg, and described in the official messages as the Envoy Extraordinary of the Dalai Lama of Tibet.² He and his companions³ were also received by the Empress⁴ on the same day. They paid visits to Count Lamsdorff and M. Wittee.⁵ To all these personages except Wittee they are said to have presented letters, from the Dalai Lama. This Mission was believed to have as its object the ‘strengthening of good relations between Russia and Tibet’ and the ‘establishment in St. Petersburg of a permanent Tibet Mission for this purpose’. The Mission received a great deal of publicity in the Russian press, which certainly considered that it had a political character. An Odessa Paper spoke of it as an extraordinary mission from the Dalai Lama of Tibet,⁶ which was proceeding to St. Petersburg, with diplomatic instructions of importance, and described its chief object as being “a good rapprochement and the strengthening of good relations with Russia.... The Extraordinary Mission will, among other things raise the question of the establishment in St. Petersburg of a permanent Tibet Mission for the maintenance of good relations with Russia.” In an interview with Badmayeff published in the St. Petersburg Gazette he said that “Tibet is really quite accessible to the Russians but that the object of the Mission is

1. *Curzon Papers* Roll No. 2 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/159 letter no. 13. Curzon to Hamilton, 21 February 1901.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 118-158, November 1903.* Memorandum by Younghusband, para 108.
3. Dorjjeff’s second Mission comprised eight Tibetans with the Bruiat himself as their head.
4. Account of the Empress’s reception of Dorjjeff and his party was published in the *Messenger Official* of December 1, 1901. Quoted in L.A. Waddell : *Lhasa and its Mysteries*, London, 1905, p. 53.
5. Count S. Wittee : *Memoirs*. Trans. by A. Yarmolensky. New York, 1921. There is no mention of either Dorjjeff or his visits to Russia or even of Tibet.
6. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 56-58, June 1902, No. 56.* *Precis of information regarding Russian Mission to Lhasa and Tibetan Mission to Russia.*

to make it more so".¹ The *Novoe Uremya* wrote that the reappearance of the Tibet Mission in Russia and the favourable impressions carried back by Dorjjeff about the Tsar from his previous mission had confirmed the Dalai Lama of his intention of establishing friendly relations with Russia.

A rapprochement with Russia must seem to him the most natural step, as Russia is the only power able to counteract the intrigues of Great Britain, who have so long been endeavouring to gain admission, and only awaits an opportunity to force an entrance.²

Count Lamsdorff characterised as ridiculous and utterly unfounded, the conclusions drawn in the Russian press that the Mission had any diplomatic or political character. He remarked that Dorjjeff was a Mongolian Bruiat of Russian origin, who came occasionally to Russia, and at present held some post of confidence in the Dalai Lama's service, though it was believed that he still retained his original nationality. His object in visiting Russia was, Count Lamsdorff stated "probably to collect money for his order".³

The background of this Extraordinary Mission was far from reassuring. Dorjjeff was on the scene two months after the despatch of Curzon's first letter to the Dalai Lama. Therefore it was inevitable that this mysterious Bruiat should have established a profound impression on the British authorities in India.

The fact that Dorjjeff had twice travelled in secret through British India, and the mysterious behaviour of some of his associates, one of whom from March to August 1900 travelled from Calcutta to Darjeeling, under a variety of aliases, and told

1. *For. Sec. E*, Nos. 1-77, March 1902, Encl. 1, No. 18.
Summaries of Articles in the Russian Press.
2. *ibid.*, Encl. 3, No. 18.
Extract from the *Novoe Uremya*, dated 18 June 1901.
3. *ibid.*, No. 19
Scott to Lansdowne, 4 July 1901.

a number of conflicting stories about himself,¹ does not prove that Dorjjeff was actually negotiating between the Tsar and the Dalai Lama. Study of the relevant documents do not, however, lead to the conclusion that Dorjjeff was a political agent. From the practical point of view his importance lies not on what he actually was, but in what he appeared to be. The rumours of his activities further prove that British intelligence in regard to the situation in Tibet was quite inadequate for that period, when Anglo-Russian competition had reached a new intensity within the borders of the Chinese Empire following the Boxer troubles.

The news of the activities of Dorjjeff was exactly in accordance with Curzon's conviction, that "Russia's ultimate ambition is the dominion of Asia." Hence he made use of every bit of information to prove that Russian protectorate over Tibet was no longer a figment of the imagination but on the way to becoming an accomplished fact. He wrote to Hamilton on June 11, 1901 :

If we do nothing before ten years have elapsed Russia will establish a protectorate over Tibet. This may not constitute a military danger, for many years to come but it will certainly constitute a political danger, the effect on Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim will be unsettling and might be dangerous positively. We cannot prevent Russia from acquiring the whole of Mongolia and of Chinese Turkestan. The utmost that we can do is by a little to impel and delay the latter development. But I think a Russian protectorate over Tibet is to be stopped, and the only way to stop is by being in advance ourselves.²

1. A man named Norzanoff arrived in Calcutta in March 1900. The Government of India became suspicious and did not allow him to cross the Tibetan border, and he was detained at Ghoom. Enquiry by Darjeeling police disclosed that Norzanoff was an Asiatic Russian, whose real name was Abishak. He had written his name as Myanoheid Hopityant in the books of the Continental Hotel, Calcutta. See *For. Sec. E*, Nos. 56-58, June 1902. Appendix 1. Detailed description of Norzanoff is given.
2. *Curzon Papers*, Roll no. 2 (MSS. Eur. 111/159) letter no. 38. Curzon to Hamilton, 11 June 1901.

Russian players in the Great Game seemed to be outscoring British players "who would believe it possible that negotiations could have been passing between Lhasa and St. Petersburg, not through Siberia or Mongolia or China, but through British India itself...". Curzon painfully confided to Hamilton on July 10, 1901.¹ And if Russia had no thoughts in the direction of Tibet as she professed, then Curzon argued, "...how comes it that the Monastic Lama from Lhasa (Dorjjeff)...was received with almost Royal honours by the Tsar?"²

By the end of 1902 there had emerged a considerable body of evidence very little of which has been published in the Blue Books that the Chinese had given to Russia by secret treaty some sort of protectorate over Tibet.³ In May 1902 the Chinese refugee Kang Yu-wai, then touring in Darjeeling, told the Bengal Government, that the Chinese, by which he meant Jung Lee had just signed a treaty with Russia which gave that power a protectorate over Tibet.⁴ By August 1902, the supposed drafts of this treaty were in circulation. White sent Barnes a draft of the supposed secret agreement, and said that the draft was sent to him by Kang Yu-wai, the Chinese refugee in Darjeeling, who said he obtained it from friends in China. Sir Ernest Satow in Peking was talking of similiar rumours, which he said had been reported in the Chinese press. It

1. *Curzon Papers* Roll No. 2 (MSS. Eur. 111/159) letter no. 45.
2. Curzon to Hamilton, 10 July 1901, *ibid.*, letter no. 52.
Curzon to Hamilton, 31 July 1901.
3. Curzon's report to Hamilton of this treaty is interesting. He took the reports of this treaty seriously and telegraphed to the Secretary of State, see *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 5. (MSS. Eur. F. 111/172), telegram no. 67. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 20 August 1902. Curzon stated to Hamilton: "I think that the Chinese Government should be informed plainly that while we have no designs on Tibet ourselves we cannot tolerate the presence thereof another European power, and that any attempt to transfer Chinese interests there to Russia will be followed by immediate occupation of Lhasa by British Indian troops..."
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 95-115, October 1902*, No. 115.
Lansdowne to Satow, 1 September 1902.

seemed first to have appeared in a Chinese paper written in Suchaw.¹ Satow, however, dismissed this document as a *ballon d'essai*, put forth by the Russo-Chinese Bank, and had not been communicated to the Chinese Government. The treaty corroborated by vague rumours, no doubt, proved interesting reading, as Hamilton remarked to Curzon on June 19, 1902.²

By October 1902 further information regarding the secret agreement, impressive in its quantity, but doubtful in its authenticity, was being circulated in the official circles.³ Prince Ching declared that there was no truth in such reports which were nothing more than newspaper gossip.⁴ The Foreign Board strongly denied that there was any agreement.⁵ China and Russia vigorously denied this treaty, but in London it was taken seriously.

Studied objectively, these rumours lacked confirmation. It is possible that Russian agents were endeavouring to extend Russian influence in Tibet, but matters had not gone so far as was imagined. Hardinge had "reason to believe that the rumours in question are not without foundation, it is not a treaty, but an agreement that exists between Russia and Dalai Lama".⁶ He wrote to Lansdowne on 10 November 1902. This version is more near the truth.

Lansdowne informed on October 1, 1902 : "The rumour of

1. Suchaw had no foreign settlements or consulates, hence it seemed an unlikely launching ground for such a treaty.
2. *Hamilton Papers*, Roll No. 3 (D 510/1-14), letter no. 25. Hamilton to Curzon, 19 June 1902.
3. White expressed doubts regarding the authenticity of the treaty. See *For. Sec. E*, Nos. 1-88, February 1903, No. 46. White to Commissioner of Rajshahi, 20 October 1902. Translations from extracts from a Chinese newspaper says that conclusion of treaty was a fact. See *ibid.*, Encl. No. 65. White to Commissioner of Rajshahi, 20 November 1902. See also *For. Sec. E*, Nos. 38-95, July 1903, No. 38. Extract from the *North China Herald* dated 26 March 1903.
4. *For. Sec. E*, Nos. 1-88, February 1903, Encl. 1, No. 37. Satow to Lansdowne, 8 September 1902.
5. *For. Sec. E*, Nos. 118-158, November 1903. Memorandum by Younghusband, para 117.
6. *For. Sec. E*, Nos. 1-88, February 1903, No. 76. Hardinge to Lansdowne, 10 November 1902.

the treaty is supported by a good deal of evidence.”¹ “I am myself” Curzon wrote privately to Hamilton six weeks later, “a firm believer in the existence of a secret understanding if not a secret treaty between Tibet and Russia, as I have said before, I regard it as a duty to frustrate their little game while there is yet time.”²

These quasi-missions actual or pretended prove that intrigue was at work. The rumours regarding the treaty cannot be rejected altogether. It is improbable that a treaty was concluded at the diplomatic level between China and Tibet. In every probability an understanding was reached between China and Russia.

There was, therefore, good ground for the belief firmly held in responsible British quarters in China, India, and Whitehall, that Russia was on the verge of obtaining a position of influence at Lhasa which could only be inimical to British interests.

Regeneration of British Policy

The general trend of British policy after the Napoleonic wars was to stay aloof from continental affairs. Being busy with colonial and imperial questions she maintained a policy of splendid isolation.

Bismarck considered Germany to be a “satiated country”, but Kaiser William II thought it was “a nation capable of infinite expansion”. World politics, expansion and the navy were the three dominant notes of the Kaiser’s foreign policy.

The cordial Anglo-German relations of the time of Kaiser William II was strained by British policy in South Africa. In England it was viewed that Germany was leading encouragement to Boers, and for her own reasons.

At that time on all sides England was in conflict. China’s defeat at the hands of Japan in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895 revealed her weakness, which gave birth to the idea of its partition. The European nations began to scramble for spoils and there followed the struggle for concession, leased territories and spheres of influence. When the partition of the Empire was imminent John Hay, Secretary of State of

1. *For, Sec. E, Nos. 1-88, February 1903* No. 72.
Lansdowne to Rodd, 8 October 1902.

2. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 5 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/172), telegram no. 491.
Curzon to Hamilton, 13 November 1902.

America circulated his Open Door notes.¹ The Boxer Movement of 1900² was primarily a revolt against the foreigner, and partly an Imperial device to preserve the Manchu Dynasty. The seizure of Kiaochow by Germany, and Port Arthur by Russia had set England against these two powers, the Fashoda incident nearly brought her to war with France, and her South African policy was generally criticised as demonstration of aggressive imperialism.

At the Hague Peace Conference of 1899 the chance of a war between England and any one of the three chief powers of Europe or even all three together was averted because of the German distrust of France, and partly because the new German naval policy was not sufficiently advanced to give to Germany that power at sea without which, the ex-Chancellor had stated, no real victory could ever be obtained against Great Britain.³

Britain now fully realised the dangers of the policy of isolation.⁴ She first of all sought a continental alliance with Germany. But seeing that it was directed against Russia, the German Emperor rejected it. England thereupon concluded the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902,⁵ as a set off to Russia in the Far East and closed the era of British isolation.

Neither Curzon nor anyone else in authority considered that a Russian invasion of India through Tibet was probable or of immediate threat, but everyone realised that a hostile Tibet

1. For an analysis of the policy of the United States in the Far East in connection with the writing of the Open Door Notes, see A. Whitney Griswold : *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States*, New Haven and London, 1962, Chap. II, pp. 36-86.
2. For the details of the Boxer rising, see William L. Langer ; *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, Vol. II, New York and London, 1936, pp. 581-604.
3. Griswold has given an interesting analyses of the writing of the Open Door Notes. He says, "...the famous notes were to a large extent influenced by forces extraneous to both the United States and the Far East. Chief among these were Great Britain's attempts to restore the balance of world power recently upset by her three great rivals". A. Whitney Griswold : *op. cit.* , p. 36.
4. Griswold has remarked : "England stood alone, friendless, amid the ruins of her once 'splendid' isolation,". *ibid.*, p. 36.
5. For an exhaustive discussion of the Anglo-Japaness Alliance of 1902, see William L. Langer : *op. cit.*, pp. 747-787.

was capable of upsetting the peace of northern frontiers of India, by causing unease and disturbance along the Himalayan frontier. Hamilton was apprehensive, and wrote to Curzon on July 4, 1901 :

If the Russians got control in Tibet, it would ultimately result in their obtaining an influence in Nepal and might be dangerous to the safety of India and fatal to that territory as a recruiting ground for our enemy.¹

Curzon on whom lay the responsibility decided that the issue could be settled only by a mission to Lhasa. "I think that if a Russian protectorate over Tibet is to be stopped then the only way to stop it is by being in advance ourselves,"² he wrote to Hamilton on July 11, 1901. He, however, hastened to assure him that he did not "propose to rush into a military advance in Tibet".³ In the first instance he insisted on the execution of the treaty, (of 1890) which was to be enforced by some display of resolution and strength. At this stage the plans of marching to Lhasa were only ideas which had hardly taken shape, as he himself testified, and which were certainly by many stages removed from action. He was eager to assure Tibet that Britain's "only desire is to see her (Tibet) independent and strong" and point out that "the advance of Russia in Central Asia will have a disturbing effect on her independence," and although we have unsettled questions with Tibet we do not desire to unduly press them, but as certain treaty rights have been ignored we want to come to close relation with Tibet to bring about a satisfactory conclusion of these points..."⁴ Hamilton tried to explain to Curzon the dangers of involvement in Tibet. He said, "Tibetans are but the smallest powers on the political chess-board, but Castles,

1. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 2 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/159) letter no. 43. Hamilton to Curzon, 4 July 1901.
2. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 2 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/160) letter no. 38. Curzon to Hamilton, 11 July 1901.
3. *ibid.*, letter no. 52. Curzon to Hamilton, 31 July 1901.
4. *ibid.*, letter no. 57. Hamilton to Curzon, 22 August 1901.

Khights and Bishops may be all involved in order to take that power...”.

By 1902 the situation had become far more complicated than is apparent from the Blue Books on Tibet. Agreements between the British and Tibetans about trade and frontier matters, and questions regarding the observance of treaties does not exist in the official documents. A reading of the private correspondence between Curzon and Hamilton makes it clear that it was the “Great Game” which was given the primary consideration, as has been discussed earlier. The Russo-Chinese agreement was widely believed in, and Curzon who was only considering marching an army into Lhasa, was convinced by 1902 of the grave urgency in the situation. Referring to the Dalai Lama’s behaviour in refusing intercourse he wrote to Hamilton : “ It is really the most grotesque and indefensible thing that at a distance of little more than 200 miles from our frontier this community of unarmed monks should set us perpetually at defiance”.¹ Curzon stated explicitly that any move on the part of Russia in the direction of Tibet, were it confirmed would mean that without the slightest delay I would put a British army into Lhasa.²

In January 1903 Curzon recommended to the Secretary of State a radical departure from the policy of forbearance, which four years earlier he had described as “unproductive and inglorious”. On January 8, 1903 he set out his arguments in a masterly despatch. He put forth his major objective, and traced his plans to accomplish it. This despatch marks the opening of a new phase in the Tibet question. The following quotation from this document will clearly explain the factors involved in the situation:³

1. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 2 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/160), letter no. 45. Curzon to Hamilton, 11 June 1901.
2. *Hamilton Papers*, Curzon to Hamilton, letter, 28 May 1902. Quoted by P. Mehra : *The Younghusband Expedition, An Interpretation*, New York, 1968, p. 164, footnote 75.
3. *Papers Relating to Tibet*, C. 1920, No. 66, pp. 150-156. See also *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-88 February 1903*, No. 82 Curzon to Lansdowne, 8 January 1903. For an academic discussion of the despatch of 8 January 1903 read P.L. Mehra *Lord Curzon’s Despatch of January 8, 1903. Its impact on his Tibetan Policy. Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 21st Session, 1958, pp. 536-542.

If we (Govt. of India) therefore now enter upon negotiations with no other vantage ground than the successful reassertion of our authority on a very inconspicuous section of the border, it does appear that there is much reason for anticipating a more favourable solution of the Tibetan problem than has attended our previous efforts, unless, indeed we are prepared to assume a minatory tone and to threaten Tibet with further advance if the political and commercial relation between us are allowed any longer to be reduced to a nullity by her policy of obstinate inaction. The second combination of circumstances that has materially affected the situation is the rumoured conclusions of a secret agreement by which the Russian Government has acquired certain powers of interference in Tibet. We have ourselves reported to Your Lordship, circumstantial evidence derived from a variety of quarters all pointing to the same direction and tending to show the existence of an arrangement of some sort between Russia and Tibet. This is the situation with which we are confronted at the moment when we are asked by Your Lordship to advise as to the answer that should be returned to the Chinese proposals for the reopening of negotiations with our Political Officer on the Tibetan frontier. It is obvious that any such negotiations are hereby invested with far more than local importance, and that what are concerned to examine is not the mere settlement of border dispute or even the amelioration of our future trading relations with Tibet but the question of our entire future political relations with that country, and the degree to which we can permit the influence of another great power to be exercised for the first time in Tibetan affairs. It is unnecessary for us to remind your Lordship that the Russian border nowhere even touches that of Tibet, and the nearest point of the Russian territory is considerably more than a thousand miles short of the Tibetan capital, which is situated in the extreme south and in close proximity to the northern frontier of the Indian Empire. Neither need we point to the historical fact that no other states or powers have, during the time that the British dominion has been established in India, had any connection with Tibet,

but firstly China who possesses a nominal suzerainty over the country; secondly Nepal, a state in close connection with India; and, thirdly the British Government itself. The policy of exclusiveness to which the Tibetan Government has during the last century become increasingly addicted has only been tolerated by us, because, anomalous and unfriendly as it has been, it carried with it no element of political or military danger. At no time during that century do we imagine that Great Britain would have permitted the creation of a rival and hostile influence in a position so close to the Indian border and so pregnant with possibilities of mischief. We are of opinion that the only way in which we can counteract the danger by which we regard that British interest as directly threatened in Tibet, is to assume the initiative ourselves and we regard the Chinese proposals for a conference as affording an excellent opportunity for pressing forward and carrying out this policy. We are in favour, subject to qualifications that we shall presently mention, not only of acceptance of the Chinese proposals but of attaching to them the importance that the conference shall take place not upon the frontier, but at Lhasa, and it shall be attended by a representative of the Tibetan Government who will participate in the proceedings. In our view, the attempt to come to terms with Tibet through the agency of China has invariably proved a failure in the past, because of the intervention of this third party between Tibet and ourselves. We regard the so-called suzerainty of China over Tibet as a constitutional fiction, as political affection which has been maintained because of its convenience to both parties. Our views, as His Majesty is aware, have been for sometime in favour of dealing with Tibet alone; and it is upon these lines that we have proceeded with the consent of His Majesty's Government, in attempting to open up direct communication with the Dalai Lama. In our view, any country or Government, or Empire has a right to protect its own interests, and if these interests are seriously imperilled, as we hold ours to be in Tibet, we hold that the first law of national existence which is self-preservation, compels us to take such steps as will avert these dangers and place

our security upon an assured and impregnable footing. In view of the contingency of oppositions, we think that the mission, if decided upon, should be accompanied by an armed escort; sufficient to overcome any opposition that might be encountered on the way, to ensure its safety while in Lhasa. The military strength of the Tibetans is beneath contempt and serious resistance is not to be contemplated. At the same time the most emphatic assurance must be given to the Chinese and Tibetan Governments, that the mission was of an exclusively commercial character, that we repudiate all designs of a political nature upon Tibet, that we have no desire either to declare a protectorate or permanently to occupy any portion of the country, but that our intentions were confined to the removing of the embargo that at present rests upon all trade between Tibet and India and to establishing these amicable relations and means of communication that ought to subsist between adjacent and friendly powers. We believe that the policy of frank discussion and co-operation with the Nepalese Durbar would find them prepared to take part in our mission. If such steps be not taken as we have advocated, a serious danger will grow up in Tibet, which may in one day, and perhaps at no very distant date, attain to menacing dimensions. We believe that our territorial position and our rights, enhanced as they are by complete disrespect shown by the Tibetans for existing stipulations, place it in our power to nip any such danger in the bud before it had developed; and we earnestly hope that the opportunity be not lost. We regard the situation as one affecting the frontiers, which we are called upon to defend with Indian resources, which is entitled to carry weight with his Majesty's Government and we entertain a sincere alarm that if nothing is done and matters are allowed to slide, we may before long have occasion gravely to regret that action was not taken while it was still relatively free from difficulty.

The above despatch which became the corner stone of British policy towards Tibet makes clear the following points : (1) The question of Chinese suzerainty was a mere "constitutional

fiction and political affectation” (2) For the security of the Indian Empire Great Britain did not desire that any powerful nation should have political influence in Tibet. The British Government did not interfere in Tibet directly as there was no such menace. As soon as Russia appeared on the scene the British attitude changed (3) The idea of the British Government was to carry on negotiations to bring Tibet within the political influence of Britain (4) Tibet must be controlled as soon as possible so that Russian influence may be nipped in the bud. (5) The policy was even to use Nepal as an instrument against Tibet.

The Secretary of State accepted Curzon’s policy in principle, but was very cautious about the move recommended by the Governor-General in Council headed by Curzon. On February 27, the Secretary of State among other things instructed Curzon in the following way:¹

1. The proposals regarding Tibet submitted with Your Excellency’s secret letter no. 4, of the 8th January last, have received most careful consideration by His Majesty’s Government, who have examined them, not only in so far as they furnish a solution of the difficulties created on the Indian frontier by the attitude of the Tibetan Government but from the wider point of view of the relations of Great Britain to other powers, both European and Asiatic...It would not be desirable that, while these discussions are proceeding, forcible steps of the kind contemplated in Your Excellency’s letter should be taken for the purpose of establishing British influence at Lhasa.

2. ...To inform the Chinese Commissioner, in reply to the request of the Chinese Government that you are ready to renew negotiations in accordance with the wish they have expressed, but that a representative of Tibet, accredited by his Government with the necessary authority must be a party to the proceedings, and that the time and place where the negotiations shall be conducted are still under consideration.

1. *For. Sec. E. Nos. 130-172, April 1903, No. 142.*
Hamilton to Curzon, 27 February 1903.

3. The question at issue is...no longer one of details as to trade and boundaries...but the whole question of the future political relations of India with Tibet.

4. His Majesty's Government are entirely in agreement with Your Excellency in thinking that, having regard to the geographical position of Tibet on the frontiers of India and its relations with Nepal, it is indispensable that British influence should be recognised at Lhasa in such a manner as to render it impossible for any other power to exercise a pressure on the Tibetan Government inconsistent with interests of British India. Moreover...interest shown by the Russian Government in the action of the Government of India on the Tibetan frontier demonstrates the urgency of placing our relations with Tibet on a secure basis.

5...The maintenance of friendly relations with Nepal is a matter of vital importance to the interests of India, having regard not only to the circumstances that Nepal is coterminous with Bengal and the United Provinces for over 500 miles, and to the warlike character of the ruling race but also to the fact that it is the recruiting ground from which we draw the Gurkha Regiments which add so greatly to the strength of the Indian army.

6. Having regard to these considerations, His Majesty's Government while regretting the necessity of abandoning the passive attitude that has hitherto suffered in the regulation of the affairs of this portion of the frontier, are compelled to recognise that circumstances have recently occurred which throw on them the obligation of placing our relations with the Government of Lhasa upon a more satisfactory footing.

7. Your Excellency's proposal to send an armed mission to enter Lhasa, by force if necessary and establish there a Resident, might no doubt, if the issue were simply one between India and Tibet, be justified as a legitimate reply to the action of the Tibetan Government in returning unopened the letters which on three occasions you have addressed to them, and in disregarding the Convention with China of 1890, the validity of which was repudiated by the Tibetan officials who visited our political officer while he was inspecting the frontier laid down by that

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

The problem before Hamilton was, "can there be a good international case for the course you suggest in Tibet..."¹ he privately wrote to Curzon. Again on February 13, 1903 Hamilton expressed about Tibet :

If we are not prepared to take action now with these elements in our favour, it seems to me perfectly hopeless for Great Britain to attempt to arrest Russia's progress in any part of Asia. But there are obvious difficulties which will have to be faced if the mission you suggest is to force its way to Lhasa and unless some satisfactory explanation

1. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 3 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/161) letter no. 6. Hamilton to Curzon, 28 January 1903.

can be given to these points, the Cabinet will probably hesitate and delay until it may be too late to send an expedition this year".¹ "The Cabinet", he wrote to Curzon five days later "was in fact not willing to run the risk of international complications, and disturbances to trade, and all the other hindrances and embarrassments which arise from strained relations with a foreign power, they are not willing to incur that risk unless some gross and irrelevant insult is offered to our honour or our flag... and this decision must be taken as not only relating to a particular transaction, but to a large extent as governing our future policy in Central Asia."²

The Curzon-Hamilton correspondence throughout 1903 shows that Curzon untiringly stressed his point that the solution to the Tibetan problem lay in the mission to Lhasa. The goal was fixed. The problem before Curzon was to make the plan for achieving this goal acceptable to the Home Authorities. He refused to listen to Russia's denials, of her activity interest in Tibet and insisted on preventive action.³

The private papers throw interesting light on Curzon's differences with Witehall, and the final victory of his views. Curzon kept urging the clear interests of Indian security while the Home Government although agreeing in principle kept pleading its other responsibilities, seeking to soften and circumscribe the firm, decisive action which Curzon wanted to take.

In a despatch from the Marquis of Lansdowne to Sir G. Scott, dated February 18, 1903 the British Government's position has been made clear. The despatch in part reads :

The interest of India in Tibet was, I said, of a very special character, with the map of Central Asia before, I pointed out to His Excellency that Lhasa was within a comparatively short distance of the Northern frontier of India. It was

1. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 3 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/161) letter no. 29. Hamilton to Curzon, 13 February 1903.
2. *ibid.*, letter no. 34. Hamilton to Curzon, 19 February 1903.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 102-194. September 1904*, No. 153. Hardinge to Lansdowne, 20 June 1904.

on the other hand, considerably over 1,000 miles distant from Asiatic possessions of Russia, any sudden display of Russian interest or activity in the regions immediately adjoining the possessions of Great Britain surely fail to have a disturbing effect upon the population or to create the impression that British influence was receding and that of Russia making rapid advances into regions which had hitherto been regarded as altogether outside of her sphere of influence should there be any display of Russian activity in that country we should be obliged to reply by a display of activity not only equivalent to, but exceeding that made by Russia. If they send a mission or an expedition we should have to do the same in greater strength...¹

While Curzon urged immediate action,² the Cabinet viewed with disapproval the idea of a hostile advance to Tibet or the location of a British Agent, far beyond the frontier.³ The impatience of Curzon becomes clear in his telegram of March 21, to the Secretary of State stating that delay in accepting his proposals may mean the appearance of a Russian Agent in Lhasa.⁴ A month later Hamilton confessed to Curzon that "the objection of our policy in Tibet was not due to practical difficulty, but that if Russia should send an agent before us our policy would be more defensible."⁵ Hamilton was trying to appease Curzon constantly. The latter condemned the policy of the Cabinet as involving India in a position of eternal sterility on the whole of the most vulnerable portion of the Indian border.⁶

Ultimately Curzon accepted the Cabinet's compromise solution of a mission to Khamba Dzong. But when the mission

1. *Papers relating to Tibet*, C 1920, No. 73, pp. 181-182.
2. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 5 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/173) telegram no. 25. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 6 February 1903.
3. *ibid.*, telegram no. 185.
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 28 May 1903.
4. *ibid.*, telegram no. 84.
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 21 March 1903.
5. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 3 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/161) letter no. 92.
Hamilton to Curzon, April 1903.
6. *Hamilton Papers*, Roll No. 12 (D 510/1-14), letter no. 11
Curzon to Hamilton, 12 March 1903.

failed, he put forth the argument that relations with Tibet must be settled by an armed invasion. He attributed the obstructive policy not to the Tibetan people "But to the clique of Lamas, a narrow, intolerant and superstitious ecclesiastical hierarchy, whose continued ascendancy depends entirely upon the exclusion of the foreigner...we are looked down upon and despised by the Tibetans..." he further added "...the only power which they fear is Russia".¹

Meanwhile the political scene in London underwent a change. Hamilton had somehow managed to keep the peace between His Majesty's Government and the King Emperors representatives in India. Brodrick became the Secretary of State for India in the midst of the controversy between Curzon and Whitehall. Hence he had to take an immediate stand on the Tibet issue. Brodrick's first telegram to the Viceroy revealed his disagreement with him. He wrote :

Though I fully appreciate the force of reasons which cause you to urge an immediate advance on Gyantse, I see from my predecessor's telegram to you of October, that the advance was contingent on a rupture of negotiations which has not yet taken place.²

Curzon was, however, determined in his object. He wrote to Brodrick on November 4, 1903,³ "there is no other alternative (than the advance to Lhasa)". He went on to say : "my administration has been remarkable...being the only one in which no such advance has been made in the last fifty years". He concluded that he was adopting this measure "only under grave provocation and from a conviction that no other course lies before us".

Luckily at this time an incident occurred which greatly assisted Curzon to materialise his plans. Tibetan troops were

1. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 4 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/162) letter no. 63. Curzon to Hamilton, 2 September 1903.
2. Due to the attitude adopted by Brodrick to the Tibet issue there was a temporary setback in Curzon's policy. Brodrick's first telegram to Curzon was dated 19 October 1903.
3. *Curzon Papers*, Roll No. 4 (MSS. Eur. F. 111/162) telegram no. 83. Curzon to Brodrick, 4 November 1903.

reported to have attacked Nepalese yaks on the frontier and carried off many of them. Curzon with his intellectual capacity reported this incident to the Secretary of State as 'an overt act of hostility' and managed to continue the active policy in Tibet.

On November 6, 1903 Brodrick in a short telegram to the Viceroy summarised the Cabinet's decision with regard to Tibet. The statement of policy contained in this telegram was the key note of British policy and therefore requires to be quoted in full:¹

In view of the recent conduct of the Tibetans, His Majesty's Government feel that it would be impossible not to take action, and they accordingly sanction the advance of the Mission to Gyantse. They are clearly of opinion that this step should not be allowed to lead to occupation or permanent intervention in Tibetan affairs in any form. The advance should be made for the sole purpose of obtaining satisfaction, and as soon as reparation is obtained a withdrawal should be effected. While His Majesty's Government consider the proposed action to be necessary, they are not prepared to establish a permanent mission in Tibet and the question of enforcing trade facilities in that country must be considered in the light of the decision conveyed in telegram.

The wording of the telegram was vague, and the object of the mission was not defined. The very phrase "obtaining satisfaction" was elastic, and could be interpreted according to discretion. The nature of payment, and the amount of reparation was not stated, the purpose of the advance was not made clear. Strangely, however, this telegram remained the official declaration of British policy till the signing of the Lhasa Convention of 1904.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 394-429, January 1904, No. 395.*
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 6 November 1903.

3

Tibet in the Development of India-China Dialogue Since 1904

In spite of the hesitations of Whitehall Curzon managed to take a step forward, which ultimately resulted in the Younghusband Expedition to Lhasa in 1904.¹ When the Younghusband Expedition sought its way into Lhasa it found that the XIII Dalai Lama had left the holy city for Peking. The Chinese Amban at Lhasa could do little to arrange negotiations, as he had visibly no authority over the Tibetans. The deadlock was averted with the appearance of the elderly monk, the Ti Rimpoche of Gaden, whom the Dalai Lama had appointed as Regent when he left Lhasa. The Ti Rimpoche obtained the authority of the Tibetan Assembly and without further delay an

1. It may be mentioned here that the nature of this expedition is a controversial topic. Some authorities regard it as an armed mission which due to circumstances was compelled to assume a military character. Others regard it as a purely military adventure. As this problem is not included within the scope of my study I have not attempted to discuss it at length. For an interpretation and exhaustive analysis of the Younghusband Expedition see P. Mehra : *The Younghusband Expedition, An Interpretation*, New York, 1968, pp. 156-334. See also Peter Fleming : *Bayonets to Lhasa*, London, 1961, Younghusband describes the despatch of the expedition to Lhasa as "...proposal to send an armed mission to enter Lhasa, by force if necessary, and establish there a regent".

Sir Francis Edward Younghusband : *India and Tibet*, London, 1910, p. 85.

Younghusband has given a connected account of the Younghusband Expedition deduced from the Blue Books on Tibet, which had been presented to the Parliament, along with his personal impressions.

See *ibid.*, pp. 84-306.

Anglo-Tibetan Convention was concluded at Lhasa on September 7, 1904.¹

Results of the Younghusband Expedition

The preamble to the Convention (of 1904) states that the Convention was concluded to “resolve” the “doubts and difficulties which have arisen as to the meaning and validity of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and the Trade Regulations of 1893 and as to the liabilities of the Tibetan Government under these agreements”. It is striking to note that the Convention expressly mentions Government of Tibet and that the seal of the Chinese Government appears nowhere in the treaty.

An important provision of the treaty was that the Government of Tibet “engages to respect the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, and to recognise the frontier between Sikkim and Tibet, as defined in Article I of the said Convention, and to create boundary pillars accordingly”.² (Article I).

It is to be noted that prior to 1904 Tibet had not recognised the validity of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, as she did not consider herself to be bound by it since she was not a signatory to it. This provision, therefore, carries the clear implication that any treaty concluded by China on behalf of Tibet could not be binding on the latter, and would by no means be implemented by her.

On the other hand, the absence of the Chinese Government’s seal in the Lhasa Convention of 1904 was an express acknowledgement of Tibet’s independent and direct power to make treaties and it contained nothing whatsoever to suggest the suzerainty of, or any special connection with China. On the contrary, by the terms of Article IX of the Convention, it established Great Britain if not as suzerain, at least in a special position as a kind of protector of Tibet. This article formed the basis of objection to the Lhasa Convention of China, and hence is quoted in full :

IX. The Government of Tibet engages that, without the previous consent of the British Government :

1. C.U. Aitchison : *Collection of Treaties Engagements and Sanads, Relating to India and the Neighbouring Countries*, 1929, Vol. XIV, p. 23.
2. *ibid.*, p. 23.

- (a) No portion of Tibetan territory shall be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise given for occupation, to any foreign power;
- (b) No such power shall be permitted to intervene in Tibetan affairs;
- (c) No Representatives or Agents of any Foreign power shall be admitted to Tibet;
- (d) No concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights, shall be granted to any foreign power, or the subject of any foreign power. In the event of consent to such concessions being granted, similar or equivalent concessions shall be granted to the British Government;
- (e) No Tibetan revenues, whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to any foreign power or to the subject of any Foreign Power.¹

Other important provisions of the Lhasa Convention of 1904 included the opening of Trade Marts with Resident British Agents at Gyantse, Gartok, and Yatung (Article II).

In this context P. Rubins' statement may be noted. He says with little persuasiveness that "the treaty of 1890 was accepted in its entirety by the Lhasa Convention in 1904".² But it is distressing to note that he has passed such a comment without analysing the historical background against which Tibet was compelled to accept the said Convention.

In fact the powers which the Government of Tibet gave to the British Government under the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 constituted a form of international guardianship of Great Britain over Tibet.

The Convention of 1904 even after modification, was not a complete instrument. The 2nd and 3rd articles provided for a revision of Indo-Tibetan trade regulations. Article II reads in part "the Tibetan Government undertakes to place no restrictions on the trade by existing routes, and to consider the question of establishing fresh trade marts under similar

1. Aitchison . *op. cit.*, pp. 23-26.

2. P. Rubins : The Sino-Indian Border Dispute, *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 1960, p. 112.

conditions if development of trade required it". Article III states "the question of the amendment of the Regulations of 1893 is reserved for separate consideration and the Tibetan Government undertakes to appoint fully authorised delegates to negotiate with representatives of the British Government as to the details of the amendments required".

The Younghusband Expedition did not establish an Indian protectorate to the North of the Himalayas nor did it declare Tibet to be an independent state. In fact it gave rise to a series of discussions and controversies over the status of Tibet. The boundaries of Tibet were not delimited and in the Lhasa Convention no geographical definition of Tibet is given. Consequently it ushered in a decade of Anglo-Chinese and Anglo-Russian discussion over the nature of the Government in Lhasa and the kind of relations which the British might have with the authorities there.

In fact a power vacuum was created in Tibet which China tried to fill in subsequent years.

Two months after the signing of the Convention rumours were going around of the Chinese intention to declare Tibet a province of China.¹ His Britannic Majesty's Minister in Peking anticipated that China by a clever stroke of policy might declare Tibet to be an integral part of the Chinese Empire on the birthday of the Empress Dowager on 16th November 1904.²

The possibility was a valid reason for the British effort to secure Chinese adherence to the Lhasa Convention of 1904.³ Prince Ching expressed to Satow that China did not object to the convention being signed with the Tibetans but objected to Article IX, which according to the British was intended as a safeguard against Russia, creating difficulties for them as infringing the most favoured nation rights of the other powers. Both China and Russia took exception to the term "Foreign Powers"

1. *Foreign Department, Secret External Proceedings*, Nos. 1021-1061 February 1905, No. 1061.

Satow to Amphyll, 5 October 1904.

2. *ibid.*, No. 1034.

His Britannic Majesty's Minister in China, Peking to his Excellency the Viceroy, 1 November 1904.

3. *For Sec. I, Nos. 1219-1245, February 1905*, No. 1239. Lansdowne to Satow, 5 October 1904.

in the said clause. They were prepared to let the Convention stand unaltered, but wanted an explanation of Article IX. On September 11, 1904 Younghusband assured the Chinese Imperial Resident at Lhasa that the term "Foreign Powers" in Clause IX did include China.¹

Hardinge wrote to Lansdowne on September 23, 1904 that Count Lamsdorff had mentioned to him that the publication in the *Times* of the treaty which His Majesty's Government had concluded with Tibet had made a generally bad impression, since its terms were inconsistent with the assurances contained in the memorandum given to Count Beckendorff, and constituted a virtual protectorate over Tibet. Particular exception was taken to Article IX.² The indemnity imposed, he said, would be impossible for the Tibetans to pay, and the British occupation of the Chumbi Valley he felt was likely to be indefinitely prolonged.

In spite of the British assurances,³ to the Amban to the Wai-Wu-Pu, that there was nothing in the agreement against Chinese suzerainty, the Wai-Wu-Pu ordered him not to sign the Adhesion Agreement as the Convention robbed China of her suzerainty.⁴ China at this stage insisted on direct arrangement with her. The following telegram sent by the Wai-Wu-Pu to the Amban on September 15, 1904 makes clear the stand taken by the Chinese:⁵

Your telegram forwarding the Convention of 10 clauses sent to you by the British officials has been duly read. The

1. *For, Sec. E, Nos. 983-1020, February 1905*, No. 998 Younghusband to Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, 13 September 1904.
2. *For, Sec. E, Nos. 1021-1061, February, 1905*, No. 1051. Walpole to Under Secretary of State, 10 October 1904.
3. *For Sec. E, Nos. 809-880, February 1905*, No. 861. British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Matters, Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, 18 September 1904.
4. *ibid.*, No. 862.
British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Matters, Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, 18 September 1904.
5. *ibid.*, No. 860.
British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Matters, Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, 18 September 1904.

convention robs China of her suzerainty, you are on no account to sign it. Discuss this point and send telegraphic reply.

The second telegram received on the 13th begins :

Tibet is a dependency of China, the two treaties concluded in 1890 and 1893 respectively were concluded between Great Britain and China after negotiations had been carried on by officers appointed by these countries.

In the present instance the treaty should be between Great Britain and China, and the Tibetan Government instructed to agree and sign. Great Britain should not conclude a treaty direct with Tibet, as by that China loses her suzerainty, and that lost her admonitions to the Tibetans will be of no avail. This is the important idea throughout...

The Wai-Wu-Pu accepted Calcutta as the venue for the talks on the Lhasa Convention, and instructed T'ang Shaw Yi¹ to proceed to Tibet via India, and negotiate with the Indian Government on the way. T'ang arrived in Calcutta on February 2, 1905. In March 1905 the Anglo-Chinese discussions were formally opened. The British were represented by S.M. Fraser, the Indian Foreign Secretary assisted by E.C. Wilton of the Chinese Consular Service, who had been the main adviser on Chinese affairs to the Younghusband mission.

From the initial stages it was clear that the Chinese representative was proceeding to question the validity of the Lhasa Convention. As early as March 1905 in reply to Wilton's enquiry as to the course he intended to adopt during his visit to Fraser he said that he proposed to discuss the articles one by one of the "so called" Convention of September 4, 1904.² And within a few days he was suggesting a direct convention with China, saying that the Lhasa Convention was one which

1. T'ang Shaw-Yi was one of the ablest men then at the disposal of the Chinese Government. He was a graduate of Yale, held a Doctors degree and spoke, as one would expect with this background, excellent English. His appointment shows clearly the importance which the Chinese Government attached to Tibet from that period.
2. For the text of the Convention of 1904, see Aitchison : *op. cit.*, pp. 23-26. See also *For. Sec. E, Nos. 575-613, October 1905, Notes*, p. 2. Note by Wilton, 2 March 1905.

was of little use to India and brought no material advantages.¹ He questioned the validity of the Lhasa Convention on the ground that the terms had been extorted from the Tibetans by force of arms, the Tibetans having agreed only under compulsion to whatever Colonel Younghusband proposed.² He quoted the precedent of direct treaties between Great Britain and China.³ (The Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1890 and the trade Regulations of 1893) and presented the Chinese text of the proposed draft Convention to the British Representatives.⁴

T'ang's primary objection was, with regard to the term 'suzerainty', which he declared, was a word quite inadequate to define China's position towards Tibet, which according to him was one of 'sovereignty'.⁵ The Calcutta negotiations mainly centred on the terms 'suzerainty' and 'sovereignty'.

Ultimately by July 1905 the issue was that Fraser and Wilton maintained that China was the suzerain power in Tibet, and T'ang insisted that China was sovereign.⁶

Prince Ching fearing that outside comment may be provoked if the negotiations continued to drag on without any result suggested the transfer of the negotiations to London. T'ang went back to Peking on the 22 under the pretext of ill health and Chang was sent to take his place. Satow, however, informed Prince Ching that "if this agreement were not accepted, His Majesty's Government, would dispense with China's adhesion and rest content with the agreement which had been concluded

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 575-613 October 1905, Notes, p. 13.*
Note by Fraser, 20 March 1905.
2. This was contrary to fact. The records show that in negotiating the Convention Younghusband had not only listened to all that the Tibetan Government had to say, but had throughout the negotiations been in close consultation with the Chinese Amban as to the details of the terms finally arranged.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 575-613, October 1905.* Notes, p. 1. Note by Wilton, 1 March 1905.
4. *ibid.*, Notes pp. 5-6. Text of the proposed Draft Convention of 1906.
5. *ibid.*, No. 581. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 May 1905.
6. *ibid.*, Note p. 57. Telegram, Britannic Majesty's Minister in China, Peking to Viceroy, 6 July 1905.

with Tibet. He insisted that Chang should be provided with full powers.¹

Chang refused to sign the British draft which had been presented to T'ang, saying that it did not meet the wishes of the Chinese Government. and Fraser informed him that the negotiations had from that moment come to an end.²

Morley, believing in minimum possible involvement on the Tibetan border, suggested "having regard to the failure of the negotiations at Calcutta they should be in the hands of His Majesty's Minister at Peking."³

The new liberal Cabinet wanted to create an impression of good faith and moderation in the matter of Tibet, and with this idea in mind, Morley wrote privately to Minto on January 16, 1906 :

One thing I may mention to you at this early stage for it much concerns the Government of India. The new Resident and the new Cabinet will be in the highest degree zealous both of anything that looks expansion, extension or protectorate, spheres of influence, and the like, and of anything with the show of militarism about it. I don't for a moment dream that the Government of India in your hands will follow in the steps of Curzon as to Tibet, Persia and the Amir.....⁴.

Hence when the venue of the negotiations was transferred from India to Peking argument of the British Officials in the service of the Indian Government was ignored, and the Chinese Government would never have agreed if left to its own devices.

1. *For. Sec. E. Nos. 575-613, October 1905*, No. 599. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 25 September 1905. *ibid.*, No. 609. Secretary of State to Viceroy, 11 October 1905.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 154-191, March 1906*, Notes, p. 4. Note by Fraser, 13 November, 1905.
3. *ibid.*, No. 189. Foreign Office to India Office, 17 January 1906.
4. *Minto Papers* Roll 5 (M. 1005-1010) letter No. 23. Morley to Minto, 16 January 1906.

On 23 March 1906 he again expressed the same view to Minto. He wrote: "In the House of Commons I foresee a breeze swinging up, that may grow into a gale about Tibet. That expedition was never much liked in this country, and the kind of men now dominant in the House of Commons intensely disliked it, and will undo so much of it as they can. My own mind goes very much like Them".

China had to choose between absolutely losing hold over Tibet in one form or other, and the acknowledgement of legitimate British interests there. After eighteen months of strenuous and protracted negotiation in Calcutta and Peking she signed the Anglo-Chinese Agreement concerning Tibet on April 27, 1906.¹

The preamble to the Convention of 1906 referred to the refusal of Tibet to recognise the validity of or to carry into full effect, the provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of March 17, 1890, and the Trade Regulations of December 1893,² and also thereby recognised the fact that the Lhasa Convention of 1904 was validly concluded and was in full operation. In fact, Article I of the Anglo-Chinese Convention went to the length of confirming the 1904 Convention. If it were true that China had the power to conclude the treaties on behalf of Tibet, then the Convention of 1906 should have confirmed the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, and provided for cancellation of 1904 Convention, as this Convention would be a standing pointer to the stark incapacity of China to contract treaty obligations on behalf of Tibet.

At least one thing becomes clear if both the Lhasa Convention of 1904 and the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 are read together. Under both these conventions China accepted the authority of the British Government in the matter of external relations of Tibet, and agreed to take the same position as any other foreign power, other than Britain vis-a-vis the Government of Tibet, except in regard to concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining and other rights as laid down in Article IX (d). In other words the Government of China agreed that like any other foreign power she would not without the previous consent of the British Government (a) obtain any portion of Tibetan territory by session, sale, lease, mortgage or otherwise or (b) to intervene in the internal affairs of Tibet or (c) obtain any pledge or assignment of Tibetan revenues whether in kind or in cash.

The Chinese representative had insisted on the recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. That was resisted, but

1. *For Sec. E, Nos. 373-425A, September 1906, No. 382 Secretary of State to Viceroy, 27 April 1906.*
2. Aitchison : *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 27.

concessions were made with the object of preserving Chinese suzerainty. Neither of these two terms, however, was specifically used in the 1906 Convention. The privileged position which Britain had acquired from the Lhasa Convention of 1904 was no doubt partially compromised by the recognition that China was not a foreign power for the purposes of that convention, and had the responsibility for preserving the integrity of Tibet. Richardson points out that the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 registered a diplomatic success for Peking as it recognised Chinese rights in Tibet to an extent to which the Chinese had recently been wholly unable to exercise them.¹ But for the purpose of clarity it must be remembered that the Convention of 1906 expressly enjoins in China as signatory to the Convention the duty to refrain from, and restrain others, from interfering with the territorial integrity or internal administration of Tibet. It must be noted that this was as much a duty imposed on the British Government as on the Chinese.

The Dalai Lama in Exile

The Dalai Lama fled to the North, to the monasteries of Tokling and Retung in the company of a small escort shortly before the British forces reached Lhasa. The Lama was in exile from 1904-1909, first in Mongolia and then at the Kumbum monastery near Sining in Kansu. During his absence from his country he never gave up his hope of restoring his fortunes.

While at Retung Monastery he decided to go to Mongolia and sent a message to the Regent Ti Rimpoche in Lhasa to this effect.²

The Chinese Amban characterised the Dalai Lama's conduct in this respect as a very grave breach of the trust reposed in him by the Emperor of China, believed the Dalai Lama would make for Urga and await there the issue of events.³ In his discussion with Younghusband the Amban

1. H.E. Richardson : *Tibet and its History*, London, 1962, p. 94.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 578-726, February 1905*, No. 613. Younghusband to Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, 4 August 1904,
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 809-880, February 1905*, No. 813. Younghusband to Dane, 23 August 1904.

disclosed that he had definitely decided to denounce him to the Emperor, and would send a telegram to this effect through him to Peking. According to the Amban the Dalai Lama had always been headstrong and obstinate, he had never followed good advice, and further accused him of gross disrespect to the Chinese by not guarding the portrait of the Chinese Emperor in the Potala, which it was his duty to do during the Younghusband Expedition. Moreover, though the Dalai Lama had taken his affixing seal with him, the fact of his denunciation would take away the authority of this seal. Younghusband did not refute any of the arguments of the Amban, on the contrary agreed with him.¹

From the middle of August 1904 reports were current that Dorjief was accompanying the Dalai Lama. On 16th August 1904 the British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier matters at Gyantse reported to the Foreign Secretary at Simla, of the Dalai Lama's presence then at Nagchuka eight marches north.² He repeated the same information on August 28, 1904 and August 30, 1904.³ This was confirmed by similar reports from the Nepalese Representative.⁴

In Tibet the main feature of the situation was the absence of any responsible authority. The so-called Regent was an old man, who actually had no authority. The Shaps had lacked capacity, and were new to their post, the real Shaps having been imprisoned. Actually the present ones were nothing but a mob of monks responsible to no one, and without any leader.

Such being the internal situation in Tibet, after the withdrawal of the Younghusband Expedition from the country without establishing a British protectorate, it was only natural that the Chinese should endeavour to bring the Dalai Lama

1. Younghusband reported to Dane on 21st August 1904 his discussion with the Amban.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 578-726, February 1905*, No. 602. British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Matters Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, 16 August 1904.
3. *ibid.*, No. 690. British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Matters Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, 3 September 1904.
ibid., No. 693. Britannic Majesty's Minister in China to Viceroy, 4 September 1904.
4. *ibid.*, No. 613 Younghusband to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 4 August 1904.

within their grip, and assume a dictatorial attitude towards him.

The British, it appeared, were not anxious to enter into any responsibility in Tibet. The Foreign Office warned the India office about making it clear that the proposal of the Chinese to denounce the Dalai Lama did not originate from His Majesty's Government, and they would assume no responsibility for the person who may be appointed to take the Dalai Lama's place.¹

On September 12, 1904 the Amban posted a proclamation denouncing the Dalai Lama for leaving his state. The British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier matters at Gyantse reported to the Foreign Secretary at Simla that the proclamation has been torn down,² and Ravenshaw³ described the proclamation as not only most unpopular, but was considered ultra vires, and would never be accepted. It has been spat upon and torn down. The Digarcha Lama had been appointed in place of the Dalai Lama.

The Amban was disturbed at this behaviour of the Tibetans, was strengthening his Chinese troops, and asked for 500 of the latest rifles from the Emperor of China.

The Statesman of January 11, 1905,⁴ in an article titled, 'The Dalai Lama and Mongolia' described Mongolia's reception of the Dalai Lama.

Shakabpa states,⁵ (without citing the source) that after three months of travel the Dalai Lama reached outer Mongolia. At that time outer Mongolia was divided into four provinces, and ruled by the Jetsun Dampa Lama, who was known to the Mongolians as Bogdo Goden. His capital was at Urga, also known as Ulan Bator Knota.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 892-955, February 1905, No. 892.* Foreign Office to India Office, 29 August 1904.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 809-880, February 1905, No. 856.* British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Matters, Gyantse to Foreign Secretary Simla, 15 September 1904.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1147-1180, February 1905, Nos. 1163.* Ravenshaw to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 15 November 1904.
4. *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 11 January 1905.
5. Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa ; *Tibet [a Political History]*, London, 1957, p. 220. The records do not give such indication.

During the Lama's stay at Urga for about a year, he received a great deal of reverence from the Mongols. Satow wrote to Lansdowne in April 1905 that the Mongols were taking large presents to the Dalai Lama in silver bullion, cattle, and horses. He was said to have a personal following of 2,000 men, but this was probably an exaggeration. Seven hundred or eight hundred men would be nearer the mark. His presence at Urga was ruining the Incarnate Buddha, the Bogde Lama both in revenue and in reputation, which was one of the reasons why it was considered desirable that he should not remain long at Urga,¹ As such the relations between the two Incarnate Buddha's was bound to be the reverse of friendly.

From February 1905 the anxiety of the Tibetans for the return of the Dalai Lama to Lhasa was apparent. Bell wrote to White, "practically all are agreed that the Tibetans are anxious to bring him back to Lhasa...". Parties of officials were stated to have started from Tibet to bring back the Dalai Lama. O'Connor in his diary for the week ending May 14, 1905 wrote, "2 parties have started for Mongolia with this object in view—one from Lhasa and other from Shigatse".² Similar reports were given by Bell in April and May 1905.³

But it appears doubtful whether there was any real desire on the part of the Tibetans to induce the Dalai Lama to return. Perhaps they considered it politic to make a display of anxiety for his presence at Lhasa, as all classes dreaded his possible vengeance upon those who had acted in a manner displeasing to him during his absence.

Now what was the attitude of China towards the Dalai Lama? At Urga he was a source of trouble due to his intrigues with Russia. Moreover they (China) were not satisfied with their Resident at Urga.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 615-638, June 1905, No. 638.* Satow to Curzon, 28 April 1905.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 588-599, June 1905, No. 591.* O'Connor to Secretary Government of India Foreign Department, 8 May 1905, *Diary of Captain O'Connor British Trade Agent Gyantse, for the week ending 7 May 1908.*
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 639-651, July 1905, Encl. No. 639.* Bell to Political Agent Sikkim, 20 April 1905. *Frontier Confidential Report No. 17.*

Ernest Satow was fairly certain that the Dalai Lama on return to Tibet would first of all try to punish and imprison all those Tibetans who had been instrumental in concluding the Lhasa Convention, or who had any amicable relations with the British Expedition or British authorities, and generally he would set to work to undo all the accomplishments of the British. Satow was inclined to believe that the "last state of Tibet would be worse than the first" if the Dalai Lama were allowed to return to Lhasa.

No Tachen feared, the Tashi Lama and the Dalai Lama being in opposite camps, the one pro-British and the other pro-Russian, something would happen. In his view the best place for the Dalai Lama was Hsi-ning, where he would be away from Russian influence, and still far enough from Tibet. But, it was important in the circumstances, to settle the question at issue between the two Governments in regard to the Lhasa Convention in the first place. While these remained undecided the Dalai Lama would be a focus of trouble. Moreover, peace between Japan and Russia was under discussion, and if it was concluded and Russians "recovered their breath" the settlement of Tibetan matters would become more difficult.¹

In 1906 the Dalai Lama returned to the Kokonor region and visited Kumbum monastery where the founder of the Ge-lung-pa sect had been born.² He resided in this monastery till the end of 1907, and upto that time appeared to have looked to the Russians for salvation.

His Majesty's Secretary of State for India gathered from His Britannic Majesty's Charge D'Affaires at Peking and reported to the Viceroy on 19th March 1906,³ that recently Dorjief had gone on secret mission to the Tsar with presents

1. Satow reported his conversation with Prince Ching to Lansdowne on August 10, 1905.
For. Sec. E, Nos. 575-613, October 1905, Sub. Encl. No. 595 Satow to Lansdowne, 10 August 1905.
2. This monastery was on the Kansu Kokonor border near Sining. On September 28, 1905 Prince Ching informed Ernest Satow in interview that the Dalai Lama had left Urga and had reached the territory of a Mongol Prince.
See For. Sec. E, Nos. 154-191, March 1906, No. 169. Satow to Viceroy, 30 November 1905.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 116-130, April 1906, No. 128.* Secretary of State to Viceroy, 19 March 1906.

and a message from the Dalai Lama asking for protection, in case his life was in danger. On May 17 in a note by Lous Dane it is stated that the Dalai Lama had actually started for Tibet, escorted by a body of Russian Bruiat Cavalry.¹

Count Lamsdorff explained that permission to accompany the Dalai Lama was given to the Bruiats, because if any accident befell him then the Russian Government feared an outbreak among them. His personal impression was that the Bruiats would not go beyond the Tibetan frontier, and instructions would be sent by the Russian Government to the Ministers at Peking, and the Consul at Urga, to arrange if possible, that the escort of Bruiats should hand over their charge to the Tibetans, as soon as the frontier was reached. Lamsdorff was personally opposed to intervention in Tibet, he stated, and added that the Dalai Lama should be given to clearly understand that he was expected to keep quiet, and he could not count upon support or assistance from the Russian Government.²

Spring Rice believed the Russian Government would not think of objecting to this decision dictated by sentiment, and believed it would contribute to hasten the return of the Dalai Lama to Lhasa, which was highly desirable for the restoration of order in Tibet.³ Russian policy, he believed, was aimed at the consolidation of Russian influence in Mongolia, and for this purpose an Agent in the person of the revered head of the Buddhist communities would be of paramount importance.⁴

More than the Russian Government, it is likely that the whole business of the Bruiat guard had been engineered by the Russian Consul at Urga, and was probably an attempt to get a nucleus of Russian subjects to Lhasa, who would eventually prove as useful to their Government at Kosogowsky as the Persian "Cossacks" had been at Teheran. "Pacific infiltration" into the countries bordering on India with a view to exerting influence by diplomatic pressure had for a long time been an

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 88-140, October 1906*, Notes, p. 3. Note by Duff, 6 June 1906.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 600-609, May 1906*, No. 607. Secretary of State to Viceroy, 4 May 1906.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 88-140, October 1906*, No. 99. Spring Rice to Grey, 29 April 1906.
4. *ibid.*, No. 102. Spring Rice to Grey, 10 April 1906.

avowed feature of Russian policy, and there was no reason for them to have suddenly discovered an intense solicitude for the welfare of the Dalai Lama. The opportunity for entering Tibet under the auspices of the Dalai Lama himself was a unique one. It would have been a most surprising thing if the wire pullers at St. Petersburg had not sought to avail themselves of it, but it is certainly a little far-fetched when a foreign power desires to safeguard an ecclesiastical potentate in the territories of a neighbouring and friendly power, which is also the said potentate's political suzerain, and to see that he "should arrive safe at his capital and that nothing should befall him enroute". Russia might just as well have intervened to restore the Pope at Rome when political reasons obliged him to take up his abode at Avignon.

Nevertheless, the Chinese Government on being informed of the Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa with Russian escort warned him against intrigues with Russian officials, and taking any action which was likely to create complications with foreign powers, further if he disregarded this warning he was to be removed from the Dalai Lamaship.¹

On hearing of the rumours of the Bruiat guard according to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, Britain could have enforced the strict prohibition of their entry into Tibet from the British side. Another means of stalemating any designs that the Russians may have had at Lhasa would have been to obtain from the Chinese Government an assurance, that the Dalai Lama would be provided with all necessary guards for his safety, so as to make the Bruiat guard unnecessary. The British Government, however, maintained its policy of non-intervention,² leaving China to do what she wished.³

The Secretary of State wrote to the Viceroy on July 21, 1906 that Nicholson was advised, "he must be careful not to

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 600-609, May 1906*, No. 608. Secretary of State to Viceroy, 7 May 1906.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 88-140, October 1906*, No. 89. Spring Rice to Grey, 9 April 1906.
ibid., No. 118. Nicholson to Grey, 7 June 1906;
3. *ibid.*, No. 120. Secretary of State to Viceroy, 21 July 1905.
ibid., No. 127. Nicholson to Grey, 13 July 1906.
ibid., No. 130. Grey to Nicholson, 19 July 1906.

use language which could be construed as prohibiting us from requesting China not to permit or facilitate return of the Dalai Lama".¹

While at Kumbum the Dalai Lama sought the permission of the Chinese Government to proceed to Peking, but the latter intimated to him that he had better return to Tibet.²

After 1907 the Dalai Lama realising that he could not rely on either British or Russian support made efforts to come to a compromise with China, and made up his mind to pay his respects to the Manchu Dynasty in Peking.

Towards the end of 1907 the Dalai Lama reached Sianfu, which had been the Chinese capital known as Ch'angan during the T'ang dynasty. In 1908 accompanied by a vast entourage the Lama arrived at the Buddhist centre of Wu-ten-Shan in the Shansi province, and sought permission to go to Peking.

This shows a marked change in the attitude of the Dalai Lama to China. It has been observed that in the past he was impatient of the Ambans control, and had developed his own authority to such an extent of independence that he was even able to prevent the Amban from securing transport for the journey to Lhasa, to the British Commissioner's head-quarters. At least this was what the Amban had alleged, and there can be no doubt that the authority possessed by the Lama was sufficient under former conditions to checkmate every attempt by the Chinese to usurp the functions of sovereignty in Tibet.

China wanted to exclude the Tibetan delegate from all practical share in the revision of the Trade Regulations of 1893,³ and were invading Tibetan territory with armed forces.⁴ Evidently the situation in Lhasa had undergone a vital change from what it was when the Dalai Lama had left Tibet. Chinese authority there was certainly stronger in 1907-1908 than it was at the time of the Younghusband Expedition, and naturally the Lama found it difficult to revert to his old position in Tibet.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos 600-609, May 1906* No. 120. Secretary of State to Viceroy, 21 July 1906.
2. *ibid.*, No. 122. Nicholson to Grey, 12 June 1906.
3. For a detailed discussion of the Revision of the Trade Regulations of 1893 see section IV of this Chapter.
4. The activities of Chao Er-feng in Eastern Tibet has been in Sec I examined of this Chapter.

The fact that China had concluded the adhesion Convention with Great Britain, which had doubtless been represented to the Dalai Lama as modifying the Lhasa Convention of 1904 and the idea of his return to Lhasa under Chinese auspices could be expected to convince him that it was the Chinese Government who had extradited him from his difficulties, and in future he ought to look to China for support. Further there was the significant fact that the Chinese Government was anxious for his return. This anxiety may, of course, be connected, to some extent, with the knowledge that he was a nuisance in Mongolia, and also as head of the Buddhist religion it was desirable for sentimental reasons that the Dalai Lama should be reinstated on his pedestal in Lhasa.

Taking in view the Chinese activities under Gow at the trade marts, and the activities of Chao Er-feng in Eastern Tibet it appears that their ultimate desire was to absorb Tibet as a province of China. Obviously the Chinese were attempting to make the Dalai Lama their puppet.

The Dalai Lama, however, did not give up hopes of regaining his former position. At Wu-tai Shan Shou he looked to foreign powers for assistance (despairing of British and Russian support).

He accorded two interviews to Rockhill, the American Minister in China. This was probably the first contact between Tibet and the United States.

According to Rockhill, the Dalai Lama appeared to be deeply conscious of the isolation, and of the ignorance of his people, consequently of their need for enlightenment, but he evidently did not believe in the Chinese reform of Tibet. He enquired as to the terms of the recent treaty with India, and believed that it related chiefly to trade, and said that he had every desire to encourage trade, but believed that the trade convention, if accompanied with other conditions, was apt to lead to undesirable complications. He was afraid that any concessions made to India would be claimed by Nepal and other countries. Regarding his visit to Peking he said, he had made no application to be received by the Chinese Government. He was desirous of returning to Tibet, but gave Rockhill to understand that he would select his own time, and would not submit

to Chinese dictation in the matter.¹

The Dalai Lama had definitely become politically conscious. His travels had widened his perspective and broadened his outlook. He was actively interested in the welfare of his country, and conducted his policy in exile with mature understanding and reasoning. His activities and eagerness to enroll foreign assistance revealed that the relations between the Lama and the Chinese were evidently far from cordial.

R.F. Johnsten of the Colonial Service District Office at Wei-hai-wei who had started on a journey through the North Western Province of China, was received by the Dalai Lama on July 5, 1908. The Japanese Military attache Massonani Fufushim, also met the Dalai Lama and gave him an explanation of the Japanese military training system.²

By 1908 British prestige on the Tibetan was at a low ebb, and the foundations of a new Chinese dominated administrative structure in Central Tibet was on its way. By the successive Conventions of 1906, 1907, 1908 Britain abandoned her position in Tibet, and did not show interest in the Chinese reform of the Tibetan administration. Morley believed in the policy of strict non-intervention in Tibet. The Secretary of State wrote to the Viceroy on February 12, 1908³ that "...it is primarily for the Chinese Government to decide as to the Lama's return". Godley informed the Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office:⁴ "The question of the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet, is in Mr. Morley's opinion, primarily one for the Chinese Government to decide..."

Jordan feared the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet would be scarcely advantageous to the British, especially if he visited

1. This was not the first interview the Dalai Lama had with the Western people. The late Russian Minister M. Pokotilov paid a visit to him at Urga.

For. Sec. E, Nos. 269-288, October 1908, Encl. No. 298. Jordan to Grey, 9 July 1908.

Jordan reported to Grey of Rockhill's visit to the Dalai Lama.

2. *ibid.*, Encl. No. 280. Jordan to Grey, 21 July 1908.

3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 966-980, April 1908, No. 971. Secretary of State to Viceroy, 12 February 1908.*

4. *ibid.*, No. 976. Godley to Under Secretary of State, 3 February 1908.

Peking, and came under the influence of the Court and Government there.¹

The Chinese hoped the appearance of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, after his visit to Peking would reveal his subordinate relationship to the Manchu Dynasty and thus assist the Chinese to make legitimate the reforms of Chang, and pacify the Tibetans in Eastern Tibet.

An Imperial Decree was issued by China in July 1908 which in part stated :

Now that the affairs of Tibet have been for the most part settled and the Dalai Lama is already at Wu T'ai Shan, let the Governor of Shansi transmit our Command to the Dalai Lama aforesaid to come to Peking for an audience and let the Governor aforesaid select and appoint high officers, civil and military to escort him and his suite and render him all necessary facilities.²

Thus at the invitation of the Chinese Government he set out from Wu T'ai Shan in Shansi province and arrived in Peking by train from Honan on September 28, 1908.

The North China Herald of 23 May 1908 gives a vivid description of the Dalai Lama's arrival in the capital:

The Dalai Lama and his followers arrived in the capital yesterday. Nearly all the Peking population seemed to have turned out to have a look at the Pontiff who looked well and bore no signs of his recent illness. The crowd, including members of the nobility performed the "Kow tow" as the Pontiff passed them. He was met by the Ministry of Dependencies, the Comptroller-General of the Imperial Household, the Governor of Peking and the General Commandant of the Peking Gendarmerie. Guards of Honour and Military band were also furnished.³

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 69-95, February 1908, No. 92. Jordan to Viceroy, 23 December 1907.*
2. *Peking Gazette, July 19, 1908 Quoted in For. Sec. E, Nos. 269-285. October 1908. Sub. Encl. Encl. No. 280.*
3. Extract from *The North China Herald* dated 23 May 1908. *Notes on Native Affairs : The Dalai Lama, see ibid., Notes, p. 2.*

During his stay in Peking it was observed that the Chinese authorities tried to belittle as much as possible the Lama Pontiff's political importance. With regard to the reception of the Foreign Ministers at Peking and their Legation Staffs by the Dalai Lama the Wai wu pu (Foreign Office) issued the following notification in English.

"If any members of the staff of the Foreign Legation desired to visit the Dalai Lama they should proceed to the Yellow Temple on any day of the week except Sunday between the hours 12 and 3". Teichman has rightly observed¹ that the notification was worded as though it referred to a public exhibition rather than to the reception of the Representatives of the Great Powers of Europe and America by the Ruler of Tibet and Pope of Lamaism, whose religious authority extended over half of Asia. Further the Ministers and their staffs were to be granted very formal and brief interviews with the Dalai Lama, and in the presence of Chinese officials. This measure, according to Teichman, was evidently taken so as to prevent the Dalai Lama from holding intercourse with foreigners, and to keep him in ignorance, so far as possible of what the Imperial Government proposed doing concerning him, increase his fears, and make him entirely subservient to the wishes of China.

The Dalai Lama, however, was in earnest, seeking foreign help against China, and Dorjjeff came to his rescue. He tried to secure the support of the British, Russian and American Ministers of Peking in favour of the Dalai Lama against the Chinese manoeuvres and make him their nominee.

Dorjjeff saw the Russian Minister M. Korostovetz at Peking in October 1908, and asked him for information concerning the settlement of Tibetan Affairs the Chinese Government proposed to make. M. Korostovetz told Dorjjeff that the Dalai Lama had only to submit to what the Chinese Government might decide upon; and had no advice to give. He added, the time when Russia was concerned in advising or supporting Eastern rulers was at an end, as a spiritual ruler Russia was greatly interested in the welfare of the Dalai Lama, but as a temporal ruler he ought to obey China.²

1. Eric Teichman : *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, Cambridge, 1922, p. 14.
2. *For. Sec. E. Nos. 244-274*, June 1909, Encl. No. 255. Rockhill to Roosevelt, 8 November 1908.

On October 21, Dorjiew called on Rockhill, and said he heard that the Chinese Government was making certain important changes in the internal administration of Tibet. He wanted Rockhill's opinion as to whether it was better for the Dalai Lama to remain in Peking until the changes were made, or to return immediately to Lhasa. Rockhill opined that whatever may have been the sovereign rights of the Dalai Lama before the present dynasty came to the throne, his present position, like that of his predecessors since the middle of the 18th century was that of a vassal prince, whose duties, rights and prerogatives had been fixed by succeeding Emperors. Moreover, he could not see what objection the Dalai Lama could have to the reforms contemplated in China, and thought it desirable that he should return to Lhasa without delay, in order to show the Chinese Government that he was sincerely favourable to all measures for the good of his country. On this would depend the continuance of Imperial favours.¹

M. Korostovetz informed Dorjiew that Jordan had told him he could have no direct relations with the Tibetans, questions concerning Tibet ought to be settled with the Chinese Government the suzerain state. Consequently from this quarter also Dorjiew could enlist no support.

Korostovetz and Jordan called on the Lama at the Yellow Temple, but these meetings did not have any political significance, and were very brief, consisting of the presentation of scarf by Jordan to the Dalai Lama, and the exchange of formal

1. See Rockhill's account to President Roosevelt of November 8, 1908 of what passed between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Government during his stay at Peking.

ibid., Encl. No. 255. Rockhill to Roosevelt, 8 November 1908.

It is to be noted that the account of Rockhill's conversation with Dorjiew, reflecting the policy of the United States of America, is to be treated with certain reservations. Rockhill was very friendly with Hippestuy of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service. It is known that officials in this service were often sympathetic to the Chinese Government. Knowing of Rockhill's intimacy with one of these officials it may be presumed that to a certain extent he was influenced by them in giving his opinion on the Dalai Lama's future. Therefore, though this was the view of the representative of an absolutely disinterested power in Tibet, it is doubtful to what extent the American Government cherished the same views.

courtesies. Jordan remarked that the attitude of the Chinese Officials was supercilious throughout the interview (Jordan's interview with the Dalai Lama had lasted about eight minutes).¹

An Imperial audience was granted to the Dalai Lama with the date fixed for October 6, but the day before it was to have taken place it was countermanded.

Rockhill who was an eye-witness of these events, and a neutral power with regard to Tibet, said that the Dalai Lama refused to comply with the court ceremonial, which included kneeling and Kow towing, contending that it had not been required of his predecessor, the 5th Dalai Lama, when he had visited the first Emperor of that Dynasty at Mukden. No reason was given, Rockhill says, by the Imperial Government for countermanding the audience at the last moment, and fixing it for October 14. Perhaps the Chinese Government deferred the audience simply to show the people that the Dalai Lama was subject to the orders of the Chinese court.

As Dorjjeff had failed to secure foreign aid the Dalai Lama had no alternative but to present himself to the Emperor and Empress Dowager. Elaborate arrangements were made for his audience with the Emperor and Empress Dowager, and after some argument he was permitted to kneel instead of prostrating himself in the Imperial Presence. Endeavour was made to stress his position as a vassal of the Manchu Throne.²

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 448-464, January 1909, Sub. Enclo. Enclo. No. 458. Memorandum on Jordan's visit to the Dalai Lama on 20 October 1908 at the Yellow Temple by S.F. Mayers.*

2. Rule No. 14 of the Regulations for the Reception of the Dalai Lama reads as follows : (translated from the Government Gazette).

"The Board of Dependencies will memorialise the Throne asking that a date may be fixed for an Imperial audience. The Dalai Lama will familiarise himself with the ceremonies before hand. He will enter the Palace Gate, the Emperor will receive him standing. The Dalai Lama will respectfully greet the Emperor, and will prostrate himself Kow towing to thank His Majesty for the Imperial gifts. The Emperor will then ask after his health. The low couch will be prepared below the Throne on which the Dalai Lama may sit. After the Emperor has taken his seat, His Majesty will invite the Dalai Lama to be seated, after which refreshments will be taken, and His Majesty and the Dalai Lama will discuss Tibetan affairs".

Quoted in Teichman : *op. cit.*, p. 19 Francis Edward Younghusband : *op. cit.*, London, 1910, p. 380.

On 10 October, 1908 a decree was issued conferring new honours and titles on the Dalai Lama, appointing him to be the Emperor's loyal and obedient representative, laying down directions on his conduct on his return to Tibet, bidding him to memorialise the Throne, and all matters through the Amban, and respectfully await the Imperial will.¹ No document or agreement was drawn up after the Dalai Lama's discussions with Emperor and Empress Dowager. There was obviously a difference of opinion between the Dalai Lama and the Foreign Office, even though it was not permitted to come into the open.

The Dalai Lama's visit to Peking did not imply that he had foregone his powers and become a suppliant vassal of China. But the reception accorded to the Dalai Lama by the Manchu Court during his visit to Peking could scarcely be calculated to improve the relations between China and Tibet, and from that time the intention of the Chinese Government was to assume full control over Tibet, as far as its internal affairs were concerned, and also to deprive the Lama king of all temporal authority.

The ceremonies attending the Dalai Lama's visit were abruptly cut short by the sudden and unexpected deaths of both the Emperor and Empress Dowager. He was delayed in Peking for a few days, in mourning these two deaths, and eventually left Peking on December 21, 1908, and travelled through Honan, Shansi, Shensi, and Kansu to Sining, where he arrived in the Spring of 1909, and stayed in the Kumbum monastery. There an interesting thing occurred, implying China's persistent efforts to emphasise her overlordship of Tibet, before the Dalai Lama set out from Kumbum, a special decree was sent from the Emperor to him to insist him to start. This decree was put in a Sedan Chair carried by eight men dressed in long red garments with yellow stars spotted all over. Passing out of the West Gate to the foot of the southern hill the chair was met by all the High officials, who had ridden out before hand on horseback, and now dismounted, came towards the chair,

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 448-464, January 1909. Sub. Encl. Encl. No. 461.*

Jordan to Grey, 11 November 1908 quoted in *Peking Gazette* dated 3 November 1908. The Imperial Decree was issued in the name of the Empress Dowager on her birthday on 10 October 1908.

and bowed before the sacred will of the Emperor, The decree was carried in the chair to the Kumbum, followed by the official and apparently they expected the Dalai Lama to come out, and meet the will of the Emperor, but to their disappointment and disgust he only met it at the inner door of his temporary palace, which no doubt was expected of him in the high position he held.¹

In late 1909 the Dalai Lama left Kumbum on the final stage of his return from exile, and on December 25, 1909 after an absence of over five years he entered once more his capital and took up his residence in the Potala.

Neutralisation of Tibet

The most puzzling and shocking aspect of Tibetan history after the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 was the persistent and deliberate refusal of Britain and other powers to face the fact of Tibetan independence, and their spurious recognition of Chinese suzerainty, which was at best nominal and at worst fictitious, for geo-political advantages of their own.

It has been pointed out elsewhere that the Tibetan policy of Great Britain was largely shaped by her attitude towards Russia. It may be recalled that Russian Imperialism sustained a crushing blow in 1904-1905 when she was disastrously defeated by Japan. Thus the hovering ghost of Russophobia receded from the British mind and was a direct consequence of this single event.

On the other hand, the kaleidoscopic change on the European scene made things worse for British Imperialism. Germany under Kaiser William II had posed a serious threat to British colonial possessions and naval supremacy in the world. To counter this threat Britain entered into Entente Cordiale with France in 1904. So egged on by France, who had been an ally of Russia since 1894, and inspired by the fear of Germany which Russia and Britain equally shared the two erstwhile adversaries decided to liquidate their outstanding differences in areas of conflict—Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet.

1. The Patron-Priest formula which had for long kept the Manchus and Tibetans in a unique alliance was now sought to be reversed to make Tibet a vassal of the Chinese Emperor.

The formula which the British were groping for in the early twentieth century was an autonomous Tibet, subject to a weak Chinese suzerain and guaranteed by a British-Russian treaty.

Curzon had written to Amthill in July 1904, (when Amthill was acting as Viceroy while Curzon was on leave):

With no one to keep the Tibetans straight at headquarters, they may begin a hostile and Russo-ophile policy again the moment our backs are turned. Forts may be rebuilt, Dorjief's may multiply. Trade may be prohibited. Our man (if we have one) sitting in Gyantse will be quite powerless, for one thing we may be sure—that no Government, that we can contemplate for a long time to come will send another mission or another expedition to Lhasa.¹

Russia's relations with the Dalai Lama was a valuable asset in the control of the tribes of Mongolia who owed allegiance to the God King. She understood that it was not possible for her to prevent contact between the British and the Dalai Lama, and therefore she embarked on a policy of neutralisation of Tibet along with Morley.²

It may be noted that a major incentive to the Younghusband Expedition to Lhasa was Russian intrigue with the Dalai Lama. But it was apparent very soon that this mission was not the final answer to Russian interest in Tibet.

With the arrival of the Younghusband Expedition to Lhasa in 1904 the Dalai Lama fled to Mongolia and took up residence at Urga, and throughout his exile he maintained his contact with Russia,³ culminating in the reported formation of a volunteer guard of Russian Bruiats to escort their religious chief the Dalai Lama from his place of exile back to Tibet.⁴

1. It is to be noted that British India's Tibet policy was to a large extent the policy of Curzon. Even while not actively present on the scene his manoeuvres were the guiding force behind British policy towards China and Tibet.
2. The Records show that the Home Government at this period was not interested in establishing positive influence in Tibet.
3. The Dalai Lama's contents with Russia have been discussed in section II of this Chapter.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 575-613. October 1905*, Note, p. 1. Note by Wilton, 1 March 1915.

His Majesty's Government objected to the Bruiat guard as constituting an interference in the internal affairs of the country on the part of Russia.¹

With the Chinese warning to the Dalai Lama not to intrigue with Russia, the Bruiat guard episode ended,² but the conclusion arrived at in St. Petersburg and London was that though the crises had been avoided an Anglo-Russian Agreement on Tibet was essential.

In June 1906 British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, Sir Arthur Nicholson, formally opened negotiations with Alexander Isvolski, the newly appointed Russian Foreign Minister, to remove some of the major causes of Anglo-Russian tension in Asia. Tibet was on the agenda along with Persia and Afghanistan.³

Nicholson proposed to M. Isvolski the following five points as a basis for discussion on Tibet:⁴

1. The Russian Government will doubtless recognise as His Majesty's Government have done, the suzerainty of China over Tibet, engaging at the same time to respect the territorial integrity of Tibet, and to abstain from all interference with its internal administration.
2. It is clear that by reason of its geographical position, Great Britain has a special interest in seeing that the external relations of Tibet are not disturbed by any other power, and I have no doubt that the Russian Government will recognise that fact.

1. Though conflicting reports about the Dalai Lama were reported, in every probability he was intimately connected with Russia.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 189-219, October 1906*, No. 203. Nicholson to Grey, 8 June 1906.
3. The Clarendon-Gorlchokoff discussions of 1860 dealt with the idea of easing Anglo-Russian tensions in Central Asia through the negotiations of agreements defining the limits of the spheres of influence of both powers. In 1881 Sir Alfred Lyall had proposed that the best solution to the Afghan question was an Anglo-Russian treaty. See A.H. Durand : *Sir Alfred Lyall and the Understanding with Russia. Journal of the Central Asian Society, 1914.*
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 189-219, October 1906*, Sub. Encl. 1. No. 203. Nicholson to Isvolsky, 14 June 1906.
Bases of Prospective Conversation between Nicholson and Isvolski respecting Tibet.

3. The British and Russian Governments to agree not to seek or obtain, whether for themselves or for their subjects, any concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights in Tibet.
4. The British and Russian Governments to severally engage not to send a representative to Lhasa.
5. The British and Russian Governments agree that no Tibetan revenues whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to them or to any of their subjects.

Isvolski desired a clarification of the meaning and scope of point 2.¹ He wanted an explanation as to what would be considered "disturbed". Moreover, if Russia recognised the special interests of Great Britain by reason of her geographical position, then the British Government should be willing to acknowledge what he termed the "spiritual interests of Russia in Tibet". The other points raised by him were :

1. Russia's relations with the Dalai Lama in future ;
2. Rules regarding entry of Russian officials into Tibet ;
3. Rules regarding scientific and geographical mission to Tibet ;
4. Rules regarding the despatch of British officials to Lhasa from the trade marts established by the Convention of 1904;
5. Geographical definition of the frontiers of Tibet;
6. Question of Mongolia to be included in the negotiations.

Surprisingly, despite the importance of the above points, the records show that there was no exhaustive discussion on these issues, and the questions were either shelved or partly answered but none of the points were fully discussed and the problems solved.

Neither Isvolski nor Nicholson were eager to go into details. They appeared anxious to settle the present relations without regard to the future in view.

The question of the Dalai Lama's future movements was left unsettled.

Isvolski sought a clarification of the rights which the British had in Tibet by the Lhasa Convention. He did not appreciate

1. *For Sec. E, Nos. 189-219 October 1906, Enclo. 2. No. 203. Nicholson to Grey, 13 June 1906.*

the idea of direct relations between Britain and Tibet through the Trade Agents, if Russia was denied similar rights.¹ Ultimately the matter was dropped.

Nicholson wanted to prohibit Russian officials from going to Tibet, Isvolski objected that this would stand in the way of the Russian geographical society sending an expedition to Tibet. The question was a tricky one. If Russia was prohibited from entering Tibet, then she might say that the British had access to Tibet through the trade marts, and moreover, neither power could stop private individuals from entering the country through Chinese territory. Morley was determined that nothing should be written in the Anglo-Russian Arrangement on this subject.² Ultimately the Government of Great Britain and Russia decided that so far as lay in their power, to permit no scientific missions to proceed into Tibet for a period of three years without the mutual consent of both Governments.³

Morley would deprecate the importation into the Anglo-Russian negotiations of matters concerning Mongolia,⁴ and the issue was dropped. In this context it must be remembered that Russian interest in the Dalai Lama was partially a product of Russian policy in Mongolia. This interest continued in the years to come. If Britain had included Mongolia in the Anglo-Russian Arrangement then she could exploit this to increase her influence in Tibet.

The limits of Tibet had not been defined in the previous agreements of 1876, 1886, 1890 and 1906.⁵ In 1907 this crucial question occupied the thoughts of both Isvolski and Nicholson,

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 31-74, March 1907, No. 43.* Godley to Under Secretary of State, 14 November 1906.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 523-536, March 1908, Enclo. No. 527* Jordan to Ching, not dated.
3. In fact the decision was postponed for three years in deference to the wishes of the India Office.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 795-863, June 1907, No. 809.* Walpole to Under Secretary of State, 5 February 1907.
ibid., No. 798. Nicholson to Grey, 6 January 1907.
5. Article I of 1890 Convention defined the alignment of the very short Tibet boundary with Sikkim.

but none of them were able to define the limits of Tibet.¹ Both of them were willing to accept the boundaries as recognised by China. The latter, however, was unable to give any precise definition of Tibet.² The Secretary of Na Tung replied that the definition of the boundaries of Tibet could not be stated off-hand.³

British occupation of the Chumbi Valley continued to worry Isvolski throughout the negotiations.⁴ As an annex to the final arrangement Great Britain declared that occupation of the Chumbi Valley by British forces would cease after the payment of three annual instalments of the indemnity. In return for this Isvolski agreed to insert in the preamble to the agreement a declaration that Great Britain by reason of her geographical position had a special interest in the maintenance of the status quo in the external relations of Tibet.

After fourteen months of discussion Nicholson and Isvolski signed on August 31, 1907 the Anglo-Russian agreement concerning Tibet along with an agreement concerning Persia and Convention concerning Afghanistan.

The agreement, however, could not be a permanent instrument, as it left a number of loopholes and consequently misunderstandings and problems were bound to arise.

The danger of Russia was removed, and the Dalai Lama's scheme with her destroyed. But the danger of China still continued.

In the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 the fiction of Chinese suzerainty was for the first time expressly recognised.⁵

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 725-863, June 1907*, No. 804. Nicholson to Grey, 6 January 1907.

For. Sec. E, Nos. 31-74, March 1907, No. 55 Godley to Under-Secretary of State, 2 January 1907.

2. *ibid.*, Encl. No. 63. Foreign Office to Jordan, not dated.

3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 240-273, October 1907*. No. 264. Secretary of State to Viceroy, 20 September 1907.

4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 31-74, March 1907*, No. 41. Nicholson to Grey, 7 October 1906.

ibid., No. 67 Nicholson to Grey, 26 December 1906.

5. Article II of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 lays down: "In conformity with the admitted principle of the suzerainty of China over Tibet, Great Britain and Russia engage not to enter into negotiations with Tibet, except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government...". For this and other relevant provisions of the Convention of 1907, see Richardson : *op. cit.*, Appendix 12, pp. 258-259.

Tibet denied to British and Russian influence was automatically an invitation to China. The barrier to direct relation with the Tibetan Government which had been demolished in 1904, was thus rebuilt, and this in fact threw away to a large extent the effects of British diplomacy and trade in the region for more than a century.¹

This treaty gave Russia a legitimate right to show interest and concern in British India's frontier policy. She could exert pressure on India if Britain opposed her ambitions in the West, and to this extent British India was denied flexibility in determining her policies.

Miscalculation of Chinese strength and consequent Chinese designs on Tibet, on the part of the British diplomats may be attributed to the signs of China's weakness then apparent and the siege of Peking. The necessity of a buffer between India and China did not occur to the British diplomats. They were satisfied that the search for a buffer between Russia and India had been accomplished.

This appears to have been the guiding force behind British policy when the Anglo-Russian Convention was signed.²

According to P.C. Chakravarti British recognition of Chinese suzerainty in Tibet was not entirely without purpose, because by this single stroke of diplomacy Britain turned Tibet into a "protective cushion for India in the north" and "once the threat from the north was removed and the main objectives of British Policy secured, Britain felt no qualms of conscience in recognising the fiction of Chinese suzerainty. So long as she had the substance she felt no urge to chase the shadow. The

1. The treaty had been signed directly with the Tibetans. It was extremely negligent on the part of the British Government not to inform Tibet of the 1907 Convention which modified this treaty.
2. Two points should be borne in mind in connection with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Firstly, Tibet was not a party to this Convention and could not, therefore, be held to be bound by its provisions. Secondly this Convention did not effect the validity of the Anglo-Tibet Convention of 1901 or the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 and the authority which these conventions conferred on the British Government were expressly excluded, and therefore continued to exist.

shadow might in fact, the British thought, be used to consolidate the gains".¹

Chinese Efforts to Dominate Tibet

One indirect result of the transactions of the years 1904-1907 was that Tibet lay prostrate and China was technically left with a free hand to deal with that helpless country in any manner she desired. The Lhasa Convention of 1904 was a great eye-opener to the Chinese.

The Younghusband Mission withdrew from Lhasa without establishing a British protectorate or leaving behind a British Resident. London's refusal to sanction the terms for Tibet proposed by Curzon and Younghusband may be attributed to the view of the British diplomats, that an understanding with Russia was essential, so that both empires coexist peacefully from Persia to the Pamirs. There is no doubt that even without this consideration it would be a mistake to extend the boundaries of British India beyond the Himalayas and across the Tibetan plateau to the borders of China. Communications could not be kept open, there, and it is doubtful how the British forces would have been supported in Tibet if they had been garrisoned there.²

1. P.C. Chakravarti : *India-China Relations*, Calcutta, 1961, p. 20.

It appears that the famous scholar was considering British India's policy towards China and Tibet from the narrow angle of the foreign policy of the British Indian Government formulated exclusively with the interest of India in mind. But British India's policy towards China and Tibet, it must be remembered, was determined mainly by the Home Government, as such it must be viewed in the wider perspective of the international relations of the British Empire and European diplomacy. At this period for Britain the most important feature of her foreign policy was the Anglo-German rivalry. Under this circumstance Britain was not in a position to give active military assistance to Tibet or to advocate her independence. Independent Tibet may have thrown itself into a conflict with China which would have been embarrassing for the British.

The scholar writing in 1960, when the first spells of Chinese aggression of India was still fresh in the mind of the Indians, was advocating a certain line of thinking. As such he did not look into the wider considerations guiding British policy towards China and Tibet.

2. If the British had established a common frontier with China perhaps the situation which arose in the borders in 1959 could have occurred much earlier,

The British expedition to Lhasa and China's inability to come to the assistance of the Tibetans, not only belittled her in the eyes of the Tibetans but hampered her prestige before the western world. With French, British, Russian and Japanese spheres of influence in China (tacitly designated), a collapse of her landward frontiers seemed imminent.

Towards the beginning of the twentieth century the Manchu dynasty which had nearly reached the end of its life cycle made her last forceful attempt to impose her dominion on Tibet, and extend the boundaries of China as far West as possible into Eastern Tibet. From a study of the official records it is concluded that China's aim was to convert by ingenious methods the whole of Tibet into a province of China.¹

In order to achieve this she embarked on a two-fold programme. In central Tibet the Chinese officials endeavoured to replace the traditional Tibetan Government by their own institutions and officials, at the same time to destroy British prestige and influence from there by diplomacy, and largely by obstructive tactics.

From Szechuan, China endeavoured to extend by military conquest westward, into Eastern Tibet, the intention being ultimately to concert the two programmes together, thus bringing the whole of Tibet under Chinese administration.

By 1905 the Tibetans started levying duties at Phari on India-Tibet trade and obstructing communication between the British Trade Agent at Gyantse and the Tibetans, in spite of the fact that the Amban at this stage was in a cooperative attitude with the British.²

On the arrival of the Chinese Commissioner Chang in Chumbi in September 1906,³ the progress of affairs in Tibet which had continued without serious interruption since the departure of the Mission from Lhasa in September was rudely disturbed. He at once commenced to behave in an over-bearing manner,

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 729-740, June 1905, Note, pp. 1-2. Note by O'Connor, 13 December 1904.*
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 578-726, February 1905, No. 612. Younghusband to Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, 4 August 1904.*
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 181-279, May 1907, No. 252, O'Connor to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 14 March 1907.*

intimidating the local Tibetans, and endeavouring to secure supplies without payment.¹ Chang made it clearly apparent from the moment he crossed the Sikkim frontier that he resented British presence in Tibetan territory, and was prepared to make the position of the British as uncomfortable as he could. In his quarrell with Campbell² he displayed a venom quite disproportionate to the insignificance of the case, and endeavoured to raise a grave diplomatic question in reference to a circumstance of the pettiest personal matter. At Dibitang he refused to receive in a suitable manner the local British officer who called upon him to tender his services, and telegraphed to the Government of India, complaining of want of facilities and uncivility. On reading the report³ regarding this occurrence one is compelled to conclude that Chang was bent on asserting Chinese supremacy in the Chumbi Valley. His next step assumed a more serious character. He issued instructions both in Chumbi and at Gyantse for the production by the local people of complaints,⁴ true or false, against the British officers and employees. The means employed to secure the appearance of such complaints leaves no doubt that he clearly understood and determined that if true accusations were not forthcoming false ones would ensure the purpose equally well. Bailey in his diary wrote: "He (Chang) intends to treat the Trade Mart here as though it was a treaty port of China".⁵ Throughout his stay in Lhasa Chang carried on his anti-English campaign with vigour. He disgraced and degraded all officials,⁶ Tibetan and

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 328-391, January 1907*, No. 345 Foreign Secretary to Political Officer, Sikkim, 27 September 1906.
2. *ibid.*, No. 360.
3. *ibid.*, No. 372. Campbell to Political Officer, Sikkim, 30 October 1906.
4. *ibid.*, No. 372. Campbell to Political Officer Sikkim, 30 October 1906.
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 538-541, January 1907*, No. 538. *Diary of Bailey Officiating British Trade Agent at Gyantse for the week ending on the 10 November 1906.*
ibid., No. 540. Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 28 November 1906.
6. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 295-353, February 1907*, No. 336 British Trade Agent Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, 24 January 1907.
ibid., No. 341. O'Connor to Foreign Secretary, 31 January 1907.

Chinese who were suspected of any pro-British proclivities, and he recalled to Lhasa several of the notoriously bitter opponents of the British. O'Connor noted in his diary : "This action of Chang's finally destroys the results of our mission in Tibet, and unless we chose to contradict him and assert our just rights, our prestige in this country must dwindle to its former insignificant consequence which rendered our Mission to Lhasa necessary."¹

With the departure of Chang from Chumbi in April 1907, Gow, Chinese representative at Gyantse² improved upon Chang's anti-foreign methods.

Gow, a subordinate of Chang who had been appointed by him to be in charge of the 'Chinese Trade and Diplomatic Agency' at Gyantse threatened to stop the supplies furnished by the Tibetans to the Trade Agents, unless they were paid for at rates fixed by him.³ Further he claimed the right to act as intermediary in all transactions between the British officers and Tibetans.

Early in March 1907 Gow fulfilled this threat by prohibiting intercourse between the British Trade Agent and the local Tibetan authorities. This action bore fruit in the refusal of the Tibetans at Gyantse to have any dealings with Captain O'Connor. The latter in desperation wrote to the Secretary of State, "Mr. Gow has interdicted communication between myself and them in any matter".⁴

The Quarterly Trade Report of the British Trade Agency at Gyantse for the quarter ending March 31, 1907 stated, "During the quarter under report the principal measure affecting our trade with Tibet has been the action of the Chinese in cutting off the British Trade Agent from all direct

1. *For. Sec. E. Nos. 554-602, June 1907, No. 5888. Diary of Captain O'Connor British Trade Agent at Gyantse for the week ending on the 4th May 1907.*
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 295-353, February 1901, Note p. 1. Note by Holland, 8 December 1906.*
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 181-279, May 1907, No. 231 Diary of Captain O'Connor British Trade Agent at Gyantse for the week ending on the 9 March 1905.*
4. *ibid.*, No. 249. O'Connor to Secretary to Government of India in the Department, 23 March 1907.

intercourse with the Tibetan officials.”¹ Gow in fact opposed any action by the British Trade Agent at Gyantse. He alleged breach of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 by Bailey by introducing compulsory vaccination, which he said was an interference in the internal administration of the country.² He had the boldness to express himself to the British Trade Agent in the most discourteous and undiplomatic language.³

The Trade Agent at Gyantse was thus completely isolated at the trade mart and precluded from performing the duties attached to his appointment as Trade Agent. O'Connor wrote to the Foreign Secretary, Calcutta on 7 March 1907:

A complete deadlock has now been arrived at here. The local Tibetan authorities have refused point blank to deal directly with me in any matter and have referred me to Gow as the proper person to communicate with, under Clause 6 of the 1893 Regulations. He further added : “We have in fact reverted to the same situation as compelled us to send the mission to Lhasa in 1904.”⁴

At this stage a discussion of the Revision of the Trade Regulations of 1893 is relevant as the history of the revision of these Regulations at every stage reveals the Chinese insistence to obtain control of the trade marts, and to in fact replace the Tibetan officials by Chinese officials. This was a convenient method of Chinese penetration in Tibet.

Failure of the Tibetans to comply with the provisions of the Agreement of 1893 made without their consent by the

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 554-607 January, No. 597.* O'Connor to Political Officer Sikkim, 4 May 1907.
Quarterly Trade Report of the British Trade Agency at Gyantse for the quarter ending on the 31 March 1907.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 295-353, February 1907, No. 303.* Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 7/8 December 1906.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 181-279, May 1907, No. 259.* Viceroy to Secretary of State, 15 April 1907.
For. Sec. E, No. 295-353, February 1907. Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 7/8 December 1906.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 181-279, May 1907, No. 200* O'Connor to Foreign Secretary, 7 March 1907.

Chinese, and other matters resulted in the Younghusband Mission of 1903. In 1904 owing to the hurried return of the Mission the Trade Regulations were not framed. The 1904 Convention stipulated that "the question of the amendment of the Regulations of 1893 is reserved for separate consideration, and the Tibetan Government undertakes to appoint fully authorised delegates to negotiate with representatives of the British Government as to the details of the amendments required" (Article III), and matters were allowed to proceed on the Regulations of 1893. No real difficulty occurred in practice until 1906. The Anglo-Chinese confirmation Convention of 1905 failed as China wanted to assert sovereignty and not suzerainty over Tibet and negotiations were transferred to Peking.

By Article IV of the Anglo-Chinese Convention concluded on April 27, 1906 the provisions of the Regulations of 1893 were subject to the terms of the Lhasa Convention of 1904 to remain in full force.

Difficulties in practice arose with the coming of Chang to the Chumbi Valley in September 1906, as a result of Gow's obstructive tactics a complete deadlock was reached at Gyantse as has been discussed earlier.

The change of situation was clear from the fact that in spite of the Lhasa Convention, the Indian Government found itself obliged to discuss with the Chinese its past treaty relations with the Tibetans. The Wai-wu-pu's reply to Jordan communicated to the Viceroy, clearly shows that China did not consider Tibet to be a party to the discussions. The Wai-wu-pu wrote:¹

Now that Yatung, Gyantse, and Gartok had been opened as trade marts under the Tibet Convention, it is regarded as of urgent importance that Regulations should be drawn up under which the marts should be administered. Chang, the special Commissioner has been authorised by Imperial Command to attend the arrangements for the opening of these marts. If the Government of India will appoint a

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 98-142, August 1907, No. 127. Jordan to Viceroy, 8 April 1907.*

special representative of high rank and with full powers, Chang will proceed to Calcutta and negotiate the Trade Regulations with him or if they are to be settled with the Trade Agent at Gyantse, Chang will select a representative to conduct negotiation with that office. The appointment of Tibetan Agents at each of the three marts shall be made in accordance with the Convention as soon as Trade Regulations are settled.

India, however, insisted that a Tibetan representative of adequate rank should be present at the discussions which should take place at Simla.¹

After the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 it became necessary for Britain to discuss the new trade regulations with China as well as the Tibetans. But she insisted that the Tibetan representative should be provided with authenticated credentials² so that the Lhasa Government could not disclaim responsibility for its operation,³ the Tibetan representative having full authority to negotiate and sign the regulations. Britain understood that Chinese participation to the exclusion of Tibet in the Trade Regulations would imply the strengthening of Chinese influence in Tibet, and the weakening of Younghusband's treaty which it appeared was the aim of China.

Therefore India was not unnecessarily apprehensive that in the event of a revision of the Trade Regulations China might exploit the discussion to bring about her interposition in as many aspects of Anglo-Tibetan relations as she could.⁴

The Home Government agreed to the proposal of the Government of India for a revision of the Trade Regulations, as they felt that it would end the tense situation along the

1. *For. Sec. E. Nos. 98-142, August 1907, ibid., No. 131. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 23 April 1907.*
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 143-204, August 1907, No. 148. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 27 June 1907.*
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 98-142, August 1907, No. 132. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 24 April 1907.*
4. Policy of Chang and Gow towards the trade mart at Gyantse made British representation to the Chinese Government inevitable, and hence China was unavoidable in the new Trade Regulations. She managed to bring about this situation and it was unlikely that she would miss the opportunity to exploit it to her advantage.

Tibetan border, and prevent Minto from adopting any active measures.

China unable to ignore the British demand for a fully authorised Tibetan delegate to take part in the discussions suggested a clever device that O'Connor and Tibetan delegates meet at Gyantse and talk over the new Trade Regulations, submit their proposals to the Viceroy and Chang respectively, and the final text would be signed by them, thereby implying that Tibet had no treaty making powers, and the Viceroy and Chang were of equal status.

Throughout, Britain insisted that the discussions take place on a tripartite basis between Chinese, British and Tibetan delegates, and on August 27, 1907 Chang Yin Tang accompanied by the Tibetan delegate arrived at Simla where discussions began.

Apparently the Trade Regulations were concerned with the practical details of the conduct of Indo-Tibetan trade. Actually it had wider political implications. The term "Tibet Government" in the draft regulations gave rise to controversy. The Government of India understood it as the Tibetan administrative authority centralised at Lhasa.¹ Chang's interpretation was Chinese authorities in Tibet.

In Chang's draft preamble Tsarong Shape was described as having been appointed by the Chinese Emperor to act under the direction of Chang, whereas the appointment had been made by the Tibetan authorities.² Referring to the appointment of the three plenipotentiaries to the revision of Trade Regulations, the preamble in part reads :

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, Emperor of India ; Mr. E.C. Wilton, C.M.G. ; His Majesty the Emperor of China : His Majesty's Special Commissioner Chang Yin Tang ; and the High authorities.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 59-74, November 1907, No. 72.* Viceroy to Secretary of State, 9 October 1907.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 385-437, November 1907, No. 385.* Translation of Chinese Commissioners Draft Regulations for Trade between India and Tibet. Received in Chinese by the British Commissioner on the 28 September 1907, and translated by E.C. Wilton.

of Tibet have named as their fully authorised representative to act under the directions of Chang Tachen and take part in the negotiations, the Tsarong Shape Wang Chuk Gyalpo.

Chang further said that China was the source of all administrative authority in Tibet,¹ and claimed on behalf of China sovereignty as well as suzerainty over Tibet, as well as full administrative authority.² He was even reluctant to have a Tibetan text of the Trade Regulations.³ Chang was in fact reflecting only the views of the Chinese Government, whose policy in Tibet was to claim sovereign rights there, and gradually try to establish these rights.

Ultimately by March 1908 a compromise draft of the Regulations was worked out informally.⁴ It must be noted that the Chinese and British representatives were the participants in the discussions. The Tibetan representative was present at the discussions formally, but he took no active part. His status was not clearly clarified in the preamble to the Convention.

The Regulations were a diplomatic victory for China. The Tibetan representative was to act under the directions of Chang. This in fact implied that he did not enjoy independent powers. It was a cleverly worded phrase to hoodwink the British, and at the same time to ease the way for further Chinese penetration in Tibet. The need for a fully authorised Tibetan representative was not necessary when he was to act under the direction of Chang.

In spite of the limitations of the revised Trade Regulations, perhaps with the precedent of the 1905 negotiations, Minto thought it unwise to break off talks even when China proved obstinate, as in that case there was a possibility of the negotiations being transferred to Peking or London from Calcutta.

1. *For. Sec. E. Nos. 385-437, November 1907* No. 410. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 22 October 1907.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 59-74, November 1907*, Note p. 10. Extract from a note of a conversation between Wilton and Liu Secretary to Chang, held at Mahasu on the 16 October 1907.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 385-437, November 1907*, Note p. 6. Note by Holland, 10 October 1907.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 741-794, May 1908*, No. 743. Jordan to Viceroy, 17 March 1908.

The final text of the Trade Regulations was signed at Calcutta on April 20, 1908 by Wilton, Chang and the Tibetan delegate Tsarong Shape in quadruplicate.¹

The purpose of the Regulations was to provide for Trade Marts and specified trade routes under the Chinese supervision, including the provision of adequate police protection. The right of personal intercourse between British officers and Tibetans, and the right of British subjects to buy and sell, from and to whom they please, and to lease land for shops etc., were included.² The British obtained these advantages at a very high price. The Regulations gave scope to China to become the ultimate authorities in Tibet. Article 3 specified that "the administration of the Trade Marts shall remain with the Tibetan officers but these officers were to be under the supervision and direction of the Chinese officers". By Article 5 Great Britain relinquished her extra-territorial rights in Tibet, and by Article 6 the six rest houses built by Great Britain upon the routes leading from the Indian frontier to Gyantse were to be taken over at original cost by China and rented to Government of India at a fair rate.

Great Britain was also prepared to consider the transfer to China of the telegraph lines from the Indian frontier to Gyantse when the telegraph lines from China reach that Mart, in the meantime Chinese and Tibetan messages would be duly received and transmitted by the line constructed by the Government of India. Further China would be responsible for the due protection of the telegraph lines from the Marts to the Indian frontier. By Article 12 China took upon herself to arrange effective police measures at the Marts and along the routes to the Marts. In the concluding article of the Trade Regulations the British and Chinese representatives were described as plenipotentiaries and the Tibetan representative as Tibetan delegates.

1. *For Sec. E. Nos. 741-794, May 1908 ibid.*, Encl. 1. No. 783. Wilton to Butler, 20 April 1908.
2. If these provisions had been properly carried out the Regulations would have provided some advantages to British subjects ; but the same obstructions that had existed before 1908 continued unchanged in the following years.

It is debatable whether the Indian Government if given a free hand would have accepted the final text of the Regulations. It was Morley's policy of inactivity and non-involvement that was responsible for this compromise solution. China at this period was not interested in the foreign trade of Tibet, and the regulations were only a means to secure political objectives and gain a footing in Tibet, to legally interfere in its internal administration. In the negotiation and conclusion of these regulations there was an effort to get rid of those aspects of the Anglo-Tibetan and Anglo-Chinese negotiations which could prevent her from interfering in the affairs of Tibet.

In the meantime Chang at Lhasa had been pursuing his anti-British policy with fervour.¹ He degraded and imprisoned the Amban Yu Tai, who was the Amban concerned with the negotiation of the Tibet Convention of 1904. The Shigatse and Chumbi Papons, who were suspected of leanings towards the British were degraded, while the Teling Depon a strenuous opponent of the Mission at Khamba Jong, had been received into favour at Lhasa.

An interesting sidelight is thrown on Chang's motives by a conversation which O' Connor had with Henderson in December 1906, and in the course of which the latter explained that the Chinese claimed the British admitted their suzerainty over Tibet by signing the Convention at Peking in April 1906. And as a consequence of which they believed that they were at liberty to substitute the words "Chinese Government" for the words "Tibetan Government" whenever they occur in the Convention of 1904, and that all British relations with Tibet must henceforth be conducted through China. Their attitude is further proved by the fact that the Ti Rimpoche in inviting Captain O'Connor enquired,² doubtless at the instigation of Chang, whether he was aware that a Convention was concluded between Great Britain and China, which had modified the terms

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 275-353, February 1907, No. 343. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 3 February 1907.*
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 181-279, May 1907, No. 194. Diary of Captain O'Connor British Trade Agent at Gyantse for the week ending on the 2 February 1907. ibid., No. 257. O'Connor to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 26 March 1907.*

of the Lhasa Convention. Again Chang had actually announced¹ to the Government of India the appointment of Chinese officials at the trade marts with the obvious intention of replacing the Tibetan Agents, who were to be appointed under the Lhasa Convention. China not only wanted to act as intermediary in every aspect of British official contact with Tibet, but actually wanted to replace the Tibetans, by Chinese wherever possible.

But Chang's intrigues and anti-British policy appeared to contemplate a wider scope than mere obstruction and denial of British legitimate treaty rights. The Nepalese Resident at Lhasa had reported conversations between himself and Chang at Lhasa, which appeared to bear a very sinister significance. To the Nepalese he hinted at a combination of the frontier states, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim together with China, in some sort of alliance evidently intended to be hostile to the British and their policy in these parts. Chang spoke of visiting Nepal and appeared to cherish the idea of recruiting the Tibetan army from there.²

It is interesting to observe that the situation existing in 1903 had reproduced itself in 1907.

- (i) Tibetans refusing to communicate directly with the British.
- (ii) Persistent violation by the Tibetans of treaty obligations.
- (iii) The Chinese claiming suzerainty (and even sovereignty in Tibet, with no better right and power to make good these pretensions than before.
- (iv) Fresh dangers growing up on the northern frontiers in India.

On Eastern Tibet during this period Chao Erh-feng was proceeding by military strength.

China's new policy in Eastern Tibet was inaugurated in 1904 by the creation of a new post of Imperial Resident at Chamdo, to which a Taotai named Feng Ch'uan was appointed,

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 275-353, February 1907*; No. 334. Chang-Y'n-Tang to Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, 17 January 1907.
2. *ibid.*, No. 347. Manners Smith to Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, 20 January 1907.

with instructions to curtail gradually the power of the native rulers and lamas, and bring the country under the more direct control of the Chinese government. At the same time a start in the introduction of the new order of things was made by converting Techienlu, hitherto the capital of the semi-independent Tibetan state of Chala, into the seat of Chinese magistrate controlling a Chinese district.¹

In April 1905, the Tibetans of the neighbourhood and the lamas of the Great Batang monastery rose in open revolt, and attacked the Chinese, followed by anti-foreign rising and the killing of Catholic priests.²

These events at Batang were the signal for a general rising of all the big monasteries on the borders of southern-western Szechuan and north-western Yunnan.

At the beginning of the outbreak the lamas and tribesmen had met with little resistance, but the Szechuan authorities were preparing a punitive expedition, and a Taotai named Chao Erh-feng, a Chinese Bannerman, was appointed by Hsi Liang, the Viceroy of Szechuan, to undertake the management of the punitive measures, and the pacification of the border country. From this time upto his execution by the Szechuan revolutionaries at Ching-tu in 1911 Chao Erh-feng remained the central figure in Eastern Tibet.

Chao Erh-feng along with Ma Wei-chi went about chastising the Batang Tibetans. Chao's harsh measures to bring the country under direct Chinese rule resulted in a renewal of revolts towards the end of 1905, and the Batang Lamas who managed to escape the fighting in the North Western Yunnan.

1. Eric Teichman : *Travels in Eastern Tibet*, Cambridge, 1922, p. 21.

2. It is said that Feng Ch'uan himself whose troops were quite insufficient to quell the outbreak escaped through the backdoor of his Yamen by the ingenious expedient of scattering rupees amongst his assailants. He then endeavoured to withdraw down the Litang road, but was killed with nearly all his followers in a narrow gorge just outside Batang. The killing of these Catholic priests does not signify that the rising had any particular anti-foreign character. But as they were teachers of a strange religion among a population so deeply attached to their own religious beliefs, the Catholics had roused the bitter enmity of the lamas.

For. Sec. E, Nos. 639-651, June 1905, No. 643. Bell to White, 4 May 1905 of a Consular Officer.

From behind the massive walls and fortification of a large monastery they defied the Chinese. Chao Erh-feng took up the challenge and laid siege to the monastery with 3,000 Chinese troops.¹

The siege of Hsiang Ch'eng monastery came to an end in the summer of 1906 temporarily. The district was destined for many years to come to be the principal thorn on the side of the Chinese authorities in Eastern Tibet, and the chief obstacle in the subjugation of the border states.² With the fall of Hsiang Ch'eng the main south Road from Techienlu upto Batang and the adjoining districts were in Chinese hands.

In December 1906 Chao-Erh-feng resumed his work at Batang.³ The large province of which this place was the capital, had formerly been ruled by two native chiefs and by the head lama of the monastery, the Chinese officials stationed there being merely charged with the forwarding of mails and supplies between China and Tibet, and exercising no authority over the local Tibetan population. Chao-Erh-feng abolished the office of the native chief, the last incumbents having been decapitated, appointed a Chinese Magistrate in their place,⁴ introduced new laws limiting the number of lamas, and deprived the monasteries of their temporal authority, started various schemes for colonising the country with Chinese immigrants.⁵

In November 1906 Chao-Erh-feng returned to Chengtu, the capital of Szechuan, where he was received in state as a victorious general, and was subsequently granted the Batan decoration, the Manchu order of merit by the Emperor. He had shortly before been appointed to the newly created post of Frontier Commissioner, with the rank of Vice President of a

1. Teichman ; *op. cit.*, p. 22.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 560-574, February 1907*, No. 661. Extract from Carnegies Monthly Summary for June 1906.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 690-697, June 1907*, Encl. No. 691. Goffee to Jordan, 29 December 1906.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 257-295, February 1907*, Encl. No. 258. Translation of a letter from the Nepalese Representative at Lhasa, dated 20 September 1908.
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 328-356, November 1907*, Encl. No. 352. Manners Smith to Dane, 11 September 1907. Precis of the contents of a Tibetan newspaper received with letter from the Resident in Nepal, No. 159, dated 11 September 1907.

Peking Board.¹ The appointment being considered to be similar in scope to that of the Ambans at Lhasa and Sining.

He was thus placed in independent control of a vast tract of country extending from the borders of Kansu and the Kokonor in the north, to those of Yunnan, Burma and Assam in the south, and from Techienlu in the east to the confines of Central Tibet in the west, with the duty of bringing under closer Chinese control the congeries of semi-independent Tibetan states, nomadic tribes, and lama principalities which occupied this region.

It, however, appears that while Chao Erh-feng had definitely determined to introduce the Chinese provincial administration in the whole of Tibet, thus directly challenging the Priest rulers of Tibet, the throne had by no means committed itself to such far reaching action. The history of the next few years read in the light of the Imperial Edicts, Memorials to the throne and other state papers show the Manchu Court somewhat reluctantly agreeing to the forward policy of its powerful Viceroys on the frontier.²

By early 1907 what was known as the southern circuit of the frontier, namely all the districts along the main South Road from China to Tibet as far as the old historical frontier line in the Bun La just west of Batang had been brought under direct Chinese administration.³ The native chiefs of Techienlu, Litang and Batang had been deposed and Chinese Magistrates had been appointed to the newly created districts of Techienlu, Litang, Batang Sanpa, Tao Ch'eng, Hsiang Chen Liyung and Yunchingy. All these districts, however, lay in territory which had always been under the influence of Peking, rather than of Lhasa. The more formidable task of subjugating the Lhasa controlled parts of Eastern Tibet remained still to be accomplished.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 560-574, February 1907*, Sub. Encl. No. 567. Goffe to Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department 17 June 1906.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 385-510, March 1910, No. 417*. Bell to Foreign Secretary, 21 January 1910.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 560-574, February 1907*, Sub. Encl. No. 570. Goffe to Jordan, 15 October 1906.

In March 1908, two Imperial Edicts appeared, one appointing Chao Erh-feng to be Imperial Commissioner for Tibet, with the rank of President of a Peking Board, and the second appointing his brother Chao-Erh-hsen to be Viceroy of Szechuan.¹ The object of these two appointments was that the two distinguished brothers would work in cooperation, the one in Tibet, and the other in Szechuan. The appointments were most successful from the Chinese point of view, and resulted in the complete subjugation of Tibet for a brief period to Chinese rule.

In the Autumn of 1908 Chao-Erh-feng advanced by the North Road towards De-ge, the wealthiest and most important of the native states of Eastern Tibet, which extended from the neighbourhood of Jyekundo in the north to within a short distance of Batang in the south, and from Chamdo and Draya in the west to Kanze and Nyarong in the east.²

Chao-Erh-feng's army taking advantage of internal dissensions in the state and offering support to the elder brother against the younger brother, (both claimants to the throne) entered and occupied De-ge Genchen the capital, deposed the chief and introduced Chinese administration, and subsequently divided the state into five Chinese districts.³

In the autumn of 1908 the Tibetan Government which was by that time much alarmed by the rapid advance of the Chinese in Kam, memorialised the throne through the Amban Lien Yu, claiming that the realm of the Dala Shung extended to the borders of the districts of Ch'uing Chow (near Chengtu in Szechuan) and requested that the Chinese should revert to the old *status quo* in eastern Tibet.⁴ The only result of the Memorial to the throne seems to have been to hasten the Chinese forward movement in Kham.

Having secured De-ge, Chao-Erh-feng was now in a position to carry out his next step in his plans and advance on

1. *For Sec. E, Nos. 267-275, February 1909, No. 267. Jordan to Grey, 8 September 1908. Monthly Summary of Events. Not Dated.*
2. Teichman : *op. cit.*, p. 25.
3. Shih Ch'u (Seshu) and Dangk'o in the North, Teko and Tehera in the Centre, Panjee in the south and Y'ungp'u in the west.
4. Teichman : *op. cit.*, p. 27.

Chamdo,¹ the most important centre in Kham, and a strategic point at the junction of the main roads from Yunnan, Szechuan, and Kansu in Central Tibet. Towards the end of the year 1906 some thousands of Chinese troops were concentrated at Batang and De-ge Gönchen, and soon after first Chamdo and then Draya and Markham were occupied without difficulty, the local Tibetan levies who did not know whether to fight or not dispersed before the superior forces of the Chinese.²

Chao Erh-feng's evident intention to advance on Chamdo, an autonomous lama ruled state in close relations with Tibet proper, and the news that a fresh army of Chinese Imperial troops had left Chengtu in the late autumn of 1907, with the avowed intention of marching to Lhasa,³ naturally created a stir in the minds of the Dalai Lama and his Government, who were uncertain perhaps whether or not they should resist the invasion of the Chinese, with whom so far they had no quarrel technically. The local people of the Tibetan frontier states, including Chamdo, Draya, Markham, petitioned to the Lhasa Government for permission to resist the Chinese advance by force of arms.⁴ The latter reluctant to take up arms against their nominal sovereign, refused and attempted to stop the advance by negotiation with the Amban Lien Yu temporised, and assured the Tibetans that Chao Erh-feng himself would not advance further, and that if any Chinese troops entered Tibet it would be merely for the purpose of doing police work on the main roads.⁵

After the occupation of Chamdo and the expulsion of Tibetan officials and chief lamas, who fled into central Tibet

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 365-510, March 1910, No. 442.* Viceroy to Secretary of State, 15 February 1910.
For. Sec. E, No. 58-246, August 1910, Notes p. 12. Note by Clarke, 10 June 1910.
2. Teichman : *op. cit.*, p. 28.
3. *ibid.*, p. 29.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 182-188, March 1909, No. 182.* Macdonald to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 7 January 1909.
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 385-510, March 1910, Encl. No. 388.* Translation of a letter from the Nepalese Representative at Lhasa, not dated.

the way was now clear for the column of Imperial Chinese troops to continue their march on Lhasa.¹ Although the Tibetans were massed in considerable numbers² west of Chamdo, they offered little or no resistance to the Chinese advance in consequence of the indecision of the Lhasa Government and the diplomatic persuasiveness of the Amban.³ The columns finally marched into Lhasa on February 12, 1910.⁴

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 251-275, February 1909, No. 266. Diary of Bailey, Officiating British Trade Agent at Gyantse for the week ending on the 21 November 1908.*
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 385-510, March 1910, Encl. No. 403. Kennedy to Political Officer in Sikkim, 8-9 December 1909.*
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 53-246, August 1910, Sub. Encl. No. 134, John R. Muir to Wilkinson, 5 April 1910.*
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 385-510, March 1910, No. 448. Trade Agent Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, Calcutta.*

4

Reappraisal of British Policy Towards China

The Dalai Lama after five years of exile in Mongolia returned to the Potala in December 1909. On his return it was apparent to the God King that the Chinese would be content with nothing less than the total absorption of Tibet. Chao Erh-feng on arrival at Chamdo threatened annihilation if the Tibetans offered resistance. The Dalai Lama, realising that his position was precarious, sent four Tibetan officials to India in February 1910 to present the case of the Tibetans to the Viceroy.¹ The Tibetan officials spoke freely of Chinese repression, and said that they looked to the British for help.

British Handling of the Dalai Lama

Ultimately on February 17, 1910 when Chao Erh-feng's troops entered Lhasa the God King fled from his capital once more and took refuge in India. At midnight accompanied by Chief Ministers, shapes and other officials and attendants and two hundred soldiers he left the holy city.² And on February 19, 1910 information was received that the Dalai Lama was proceeding to Calcutta to place himself under British

1. *Foreign Department, Secret External Proceedings, Nos. 385-510, March 1910, No. 442.*
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 15 February 1910, cited hereinafter as *For. Sec. E.*
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 303.*
Political Officer in Sikkim to Foreign Secretary, 3 March 1910.

protection.¹ He arrived in India on February 24, 1910.²

Max Muller, British Minister in Peking, was able to gather from the Wai-Wu-Pu that Amban Lien Yu was the man chiefly responsible for the flight and degradation of the Dalai Lama.³ The former Junior Amban (General Won) writes that the "Dalai Lama's nobles were killed and he fled out of fright and sense of insecurity..."⁴

The Chinese case as stated by the President of the Wai-Wu-Pu to the Councillor of the British Legation at Peking is as follows :⁵

- (a) The existing administrative system of Tibet has not been interfered with by China.
- (b) China is within her rights in deposing the present Dalai Lama as she deposed the Sixth Dalai Lama for misconduct, and there are numerous precedents for removal of lamas.
- (c) The Chinese troops have not been guilty of excesses and only one monastery has been destroyed and that for killing of one Amban and thirty of his escorts.

Bell dealt with the above three assertions, and showed that they were contrary to facts.⁶

Towards the end of February the Chinese were speaking of punishing the Dalai Lama by deposing him and appointing a new Dalai Lama.⁷ Prince Ching declared that : "By thus fleeing again the Dalai Lama must be considered to have

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 385-510, March 1910, No. 464.*
Macdonald to Foreign Secretary, 19 February 1910
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 294.*
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 2 March 1910.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 20-34, November 1910, No. 33.*
Max Muller to Grey, 8 September 1910.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 533-701, February 1911,, Sub. Encl. No. 554*
Extract from *Peking Daily News. Tibet : The Deposition of the Dalai Lama.* The former Junior Amban relates the history of a momentous escape.
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 358.*
Max Muller to Viceroy, 6 March 1910.
6. *ibid., No. 473.*
Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 2 April 1910.
7. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 385-510, March 1910, No. 506.*
Max Muller to Viceroy, 26 February 1910.

voluntarily renounced his position".¹ His letter to Jordan dated February 25, 1910 contained a translation of the decree of the Chinese Government deposing the Dalai Lama.² The Wai-Wu-Pu justifying the deposition of the Dalai Lama described him as "...high handed, proud, arrogant, refused transport to the Chinese during the Younghusband Mission, fled to Tibet, Mongolia and then Peking. Disobeyed imperial orders... instead of being engaged in religious pursuits was engaged in war".³

The Novoe Uremya commenting on the deposition of the Dalai Lama observed, that it was useless for the adherents of the Dalai Lama to hope to escape from Chinese suzerainty, for one of the clauses of the Anglo-Chinese Convention clearly defines the mutual relations between Tibet and the celestial Empire, and the agreement has already settled the suzerainty of China. The Chinese residents, from the occupation of Lhasa have been the chief directors of politics, and the Dalai Lama being chosen by the people with the full sanction of the Chinese Government, is able to take full advantage of his position as chief of the Tibetan spiritual world. It is evident that the Tibetan vassal does not conform in the way he should to the existing agreement between Peking and Lhasa and there is no doubt that he is a vassal. Besides, by an ancient tradition Ching may dispense with the spiritual power of the Dalai Lama, thus showing still further how subordinate he is.⁴

The Emperor on April 21, 1910 had an interview with the Chinese councillor regarding the deposition of the Dalai Lama.⁵ Speaking of the latter, the councillor stated that the Chinese Government no longer recognised his authority in a

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 279.*
Max Muller to Viceroy, 28 February 1910.
2. *ibid.*, Sub. Enclo. 1 Enclo. No. 504.
Prince Ching to Jordan, 25 February 1910.
3. *ibid.*, Sub. Enclo. No. 518.
Wai-Wu-Pu to His Majesty's Minister, 9 March 1910.
4. *Novoe Uremya* : April 16, 1910 quoted in *For. Sec. E, Nos. Deposition of Dalai Lama.*
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, Note p. 1.*
Extract from the *Empire* dated 21 April 1910. *Deposition of the Dalai Lama : New Pope to be appointed : Chinese Councillor interviewed.*

diplomatic sense. Internal troubles in Tibet compelled the Chinese to send troops over the frontier, and although the Dalai Lama was not supposed to be engaged in politics in any shape or form, it was his duty as being practically the head of the state, to provide accommodation and facilities of transport for the Chinese soldiers. Instead of doing so, however, he seems to have regarded the troops as enemies, his aloofness being followed by his flight, which the Emperor cannot and will not easily forget. Had he remained in Lhasa he would not have lost his title, he had now become in the eyes of the Chinese nothing but a common lama.

China at this stage was introducing into her present dealings with Tibet a business-like attitude that was certainly at variance with the usual practice of her diplomacy. As has been stated earlier within a fortnight of the Dalai Lama's second flight from the Potala he was solemnly deposed, and excommunicated with a thoroughness that did credit to the intentions of the Chinese Government. On a previous occasion the Dalai Lama had been divested of his temporal power, which he had virtually forfeited by his flight from the country, but this time he was deposed from his spiritual office, and the announcement made that another re-incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avaloketshevara another Gyalpo Rimpoche or precious king must be found. When the former proclamation declaring the Dalai Lama's deposition was posted up at all the street corners in Lhasa, the mob tore it down, and trampled it in the dust, while the Tashi Lama also refused to agree to the deposition. This time there was no report of any such incidents. Perhaps during the five years of the Dalai Lama's absence from Tibet he must have forfeited some of the unquestioning veneration and belief in his infallibility that his office evoked amongst the Tibetans.

In support of China's high-handed action it may be asserted that (1) the status of the Dalai Lama was entirely the gift of the Emperor of China (2) that the latter could also deprive the Dalai Lama of the spiritual distinction (which all his Lamaist devotees believed him to possess) of being an embodiment of Buddha, the "Living Buddha".

But neither of these allegations is true. The appointment of a Dalai Lama is not, and never has been the gift of the Emperor

of China. The Dalai Lama was elected by a chapter of lamas at Lhasa. The golden urn which Chien lung presented to Lhasa in 1793, and prescribed to be used in selecting the new Dalai Lama by lottering in the presence of the Amban, in the hope of controlling the nomination seems only to have been used once out of five times. The present Dalai Lama was selected by the No-Chung oracle at Lhasa without regard to Chinese wishes. The election it is true, was afterwards notified to the Emperor for his "recognition", but this had always invariably followed as a matter of course, as the whole principle of the election rested upon the infallibility of the Oracle, in which the people implicitly believed. All attempts on the part of China to capture the election had been jealously frustrated by the lamas.

His great and unpardonable offence against China was that, on attaining his majority, he managed to escape from being assassinated by the Amban in collusion with the Regent, like all his unfortunate predecessors ; and thus deprived the Amban of an active hand in the Government.

As regards the so-called deposition of the Dalai Lama the National Assembly of Tibet claimed that China and Tibet were not in the position of suzerain and dependency, and that China had power neither to appoint nor dismiss a Dalai Lama.¹ In fact the Chinese deposition of the Dalai Lama was due to his refusal to be a Chinese puppet. General Chung Ying and the Amban practically took over the Government of Tibet.

As regards the Dalai Lama's constitutional position in 1910, he was the ruler of Tibet in exile. The God King with representatives and all seals of Tibetan Government,² and with full power to bind the Tibetan Government was in British territory, seeking British assistance.

Consequently in spite of its military success the Chinese invasion of Lhasa in 1910 was an administrative failure. The Manchus received no cooperation from the Tibetans, the Dalai Lama along with his leading ministers was in exile. The

1. *For Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 473.*

Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 2 April 1910.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 58-246, August 1910, No. 128.*

Political Officer in Sikkim to Foreign Secretary, Simla, 17 June 1910.

Panchen Lama refused to head a temporary administration, and the Tibetan National Assembly was bitter and obstructive. It kept in touch with the Dalai Lama and sent messages to the Government of India through him denouncing Chinese action. Active resistance to Chinese activities in South East Tibet continued. It was apparent that the Dalai Lama was the key to the situation in Tibet. The Chinese soon realised their mistake, and made persistent efforts to persuade the Dalai Lama to return.

The Chinese were, however, unwilling to commit themselves to any definite pledges as to the Dalai Lama's treatment on his return to Tibet. Assurances given by the delegates deputed to bring back the Dalai Lama referred only to his person and property. In August 1910 the Amban was instructed to induce the Dalai Lama to return, and he sent a delegate to India to do this job. It is interesting to note that the Tibetan delegate was given a passport by the Amban bearing the words "Dalai Lama" and not "deposed Dalai Lama".¹ The Chinese Government proposed to send Taotai Lo Chang Chi to India to persuade the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet, and sent a note to the British Legation in Peking to this effect.² Lo's Mission failed as the Dalai Lama wanted definite statements regarding his status on return to Tibet before anything else.³ Through the National Assembly in Tibet and through individual Chinese administrators in Tibet the Amban invited the Dalai Lama to return, and he provided the men with passports. But they were not instructed to mention anything to the Dalai Lama as regards his reinstatement.⁴ The Dalai Lama throughout

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 439-661, December 1910, No. 57.*

Political Officer in Sikkim to Foreign Secretary, 11 August 1910.

2. *ibid.*, No. 459.

His Majesty's Minister at Peking to Viceroy, 12 August 1910.

3. *ibid.*, No. 657.

Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 18 October 1910.

4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 58-246, August 1911, No. 63.*

British Trade Agent at Yatung to Foreign Secretary, 19 May 1910.

For. Sec. E, Nos. 439-661, December 1910, Encl. 2 No. 440.

Translation of a letter from the Nepalese Representative at Lhasa, 8 July 1910. *ibid.*, No. 442.

Political Officer, Sikkim to Foreign Secretary, 6 August 1910.

1910 maintained the stand that he would not return unless his temporal and spiritual powers were restored to him,¹ and invited the Amban to come to Darjeeling to discuss matters.

The British Government promptly protested against the subversion of existing political conditions without any intimation to them, and demanded that an effective Tibetan Government should be kept in being with which they could maintain their treaty relationship. They were answered with vague assurances that their treaty relationship would be fulfilled. The Government of India was gravely perturbed at this alteration of the balance on its borders, but the British accepted the opinion of Morley, then Secretary of State for India who opined² that the Chinese Government was deliberately making its suzerainty over Tibet effective, and that the result of its proceedings would be the substitution of a strong internal administration for the feeble rule of the Dalai Lama. In fact he was unwilling to pursue an active policy until according to him a precise breach of treaty obligations occurred.

While in India, the Dalai Lama repeatedly appealed to the British Government for help. He sent written and verbal messages to the Viceroy and Charles Bell, and also appealed through Tibetans.

On May 27, 1910 he wrote to the Viceroy³ "...Tibetans have not been allowed to live peacefully in their own country, but the large has been trying to swallow the smaller, just like beasts and not at all according to the laws which guide nations and kingdoms..." and recalled various instances of the infringement of the terms of treaties regarding China by Tibet. "We are placed in such a way" he wrote "...that we can only appeal to the British Government for redress and enforcement of the observance of these treaties. We have got no other power to appeal..."

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 58-246, August 1910, Encl. No. 495.*
Foreign Office to India Office, 26 July 1910.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 58-246, August 1910 Encl. 1. No. 133.*
Substance of Dalai Lama's representation to the Viceroy of India, dated 27 May 1910.

3. *ibid.*

To Charles Bell he wrote on August 8, 1910"¹ .. Chinese have been disregarding the laws of all nations, unscrupulously trampled down all feelings of shame and decorum, and have committed repeated acts of violence..." and prayed for British aid and help.

The three Lonchens of Tibet appealed to Bell² :

We want an alliance with the British Government on the same terms that Nepal has her alliance with the British Government, namely, that the British Government and Tibet should help each other with armed assistance as each requires of the other...

It must be noted that verbal or written messages from the Dalai Lama were never received before by the British Government. Two attempts were made in Lord Curzon's time to send letters to His Holiness.³ The first letter was returned, and it was doubted whether the second letter was actually delivered.⁴

The presence of the Dalai Lama in India posed a problem for the British authorities. After the Dalai Lama had set his foot on Indian soil, the Viceroy wrote to the Secretary of State⁵ "...British Government are precluded from interfering in the internal administration of Tibet by their treaty obligations with China and Russia".

Theoretically the British position was that they should not help either side as she was bound by the terms of the convention.

1. *For Sec. E, Nos. 439-661, December 1910, Encl. No. 495.*
Foreign Office to India Office, 26 July 1910.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 473.*
Bell to Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, 2 April 1910.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 18-28, August 1901, Notes pp. 1-6.*
Attempts made at the time of Curzon to open direct communication with the Dalai Lama.
For. Sec. E, Nos. 78-108, September 1900, No. 82.
Curzon to Hamilton, 26 October 1899.
4. *For. Sec., E, Nos. 91-102, September 1903, Encl. No. 98.*
Communication from Kasha (Tibetan Council) to Frontier Officer Dackey, 14 October 1902.
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 385-510, March 1910, No. 442.*
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 18 February 1910.

of 1906 and 1907 with China and Russia. But from the point of view of India's security in the Northern frontiers, that is from the practical point of view, British interests in Tibet and sympathy with its people demanded that she actively side with the Tibetans.

His Majesty's Government, however, accepted the deposition of the Dalai Lama by China, and expressly said on April 12, 1910,¹ "no action on our part will be required". On May 4, the Secretary of State telegraphed²: "Definite information should now be communicated to the Dalai Lama that His Majesty's Government cannot interfere between them and the Chinese Government". In fact it was declared officially that the Anglo-Chinese and Anglo-Tibetan Conventions specially precluded His Majesty's Government from interfering in the internal administration of the country, and therefore they could only recognise the *de facto* Government.³ The British Minister in Peking made it clear to a councillor of the Wai-Wu-Pu⁴ that "His Majesty's Government would absolutely refuse to influence the Dalai Lama one way or the other or to take any responsibility...".

It is remarkable that after his deposition the Viceroy refused to communicate directly with the Dalai Lama. The latter's letters it was seen was replied through the political officer in Sikkim.

At this stage the British Government overlooked the disregard by the Chinese of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 and the Trade Regulations of 1908.⁵

The frontier officials were strongly advocating an active policy. Bell wrote to the Foreign Department on April 18,

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 320.*
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 3 March 1910.
ibid., No. 477.
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 12 April 1910.
2. *ibid.*, No. 532.
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 4 May 1910.
3. *ibid.*,
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 439-661, December 1910, No. 441.*
Political Officer in Sikkim to Foreign Secretary, 4 August 1910.
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 377.*
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 12 March 1910.

1910¹: "The presence of the Tibetan Government gives the British Government a chance to rectify some of the mistakes made in its action during and after the Younghusband Mission". And put forward four suggestions (a) That the number of Chinese troops in Tibet should be reduced to the normal number that is to the number kept there before the Younghusband Mission. (b) That the Dalai Lama's powers should be restored to him as it was before the Younghusband Mission. (c) That the British Government should have the power of sending a British official to Lhasa whenever it is considered necessary. The object of this would be to arrange disputes between the Chinese and Tibetans and to see that British interests, including the interests of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan are not interfered with. (d) That more Indian troops than was there at present should be stationed at Gyantse and Yatung. The British to tell the Chinese that they would police the Trade Marts.

Minto explained that Bell's suggestions were entirely opposed to the policy of His Majesty's Government.²

O'Connor suggested that to keep in touch with Tibetan politics, and to safeguard legitimate British interest in Tibet, India must have an Agent at Lhasa.³

The idea behind the suggestions of the frontier officers was that if Curzon's intentions had not been disregarded, and a British Residency established at Lhasa, the present embarrassing situation for the Indian Government would not have arisen.

Morley and Minto were apprehensive that the Dalai Lama on returning to Tibet might stir up revolt there. Minto wrote to Morley on July 25, 1910: "If he returns without the concurrence of the Chinese general disturbances will almost certainly follow".⁴ He was reluctant to abandon his neutrality.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June, 1910, No. 510.* Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 18 April 1910.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 58-246, August 1910, Notes p. 16.*
Note by Minto, 20 June 1910.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, Encl. 450.*
Notes on Tibetan Affairs by O'Connor, dated 20 March 1910.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 58-276, August 1910, No. 288.*
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 28 July 1910.
ibid., No. 175.
British Trade Agent at Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, 9 July 1910.

Throughout 1910 the British Government whenever approached declared its neutrality regarding assistance to the Dalai Lama for his return to Tibet.¹ He was told in August 1910 that his presence near the frontier would not be tolerated unless he exerted himself to the cause of peace.²

The Dalai Lama in India appeared anxious to clear up Anglo-Tibetan misunderstanding, all of which he blamed on the Chinese. He was earnestly hoping that His Majesty's Government's policy of non-intervention would be abandoned.³ He displayed little faith in the Chinese.⁴

Towards the end of 1910 the Indian Government failed to find any particularly promising policy towards the Dalai Lama and Tibet. His Majesty's Government said that they regarded the Dalai Lama's movements with indifference.⁵ And in January 1911 the Secretary of State advised the Viceroy, that the Dalai Lama must be further informed that "His Majesty's Government regrets that he is unable to interfere between the Dalai Lama and his suzerain".⁶

It was obvious that the Chinese faced with unrest in Tibet would be anxious for the Dalai Lama's return. Therefore, British mediation on the Dalai Lama's behalf with the Chinese was a good card in British hands which the British did not use due to her policy of non-involvement in Tibetan affairs and the need to maintain treaty relations with China.

The British in the interest of the security of the frontiers of India could have considered giving help to the Dalai Lama.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 439-661, December 1915, No. 480.*
Political Officer in Sikkim to Foreign Secretary, 18 August 1910.
For Sec. E, Nos. 553-701, February 1911, No. 595.
Deputy Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department to Bell, 25 November 1910.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 159-197, September 1911, No. 182.*
Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department to Weir, 15 August 1911.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 553-701, February 1911, No. 661.*
Foreign Secretary to Political Officer, Sikkim, 23 January 1911.
4. *ibid.*, Encl. 2 No. 590.
Dalai Lama's letter to Lo-Tao-Tai, 20 October 1910.
5. *ibid.* Notes 9.7.
Note by Clarke, 21, November 1910.
6. *ibid.*, No. 647.
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 17 January 1911.

To a certain extent, the increase of Chinese power in Tibet was the outcome of the policy which Morley had obliged Minto to follow.

Finding no response from the British Government the Dalai Lama appealed to the Russian Government for help against the Chinese, which was answered through the British Legation to his embarrassment.

In late 1910 Hardinge became Viceroy in place of Minto and Crewe at the India Office took up the position of Morley. On taking over office, Hardinge did not show sympathy for the views of the frontier men, and Crewe favoured a quiet frontier like Morley.

The Indian Government and the Foreign Office concluded that the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet with the consent of the Chinese was the best possible solution. British mediation suggested by both parties was turned down by the British policy makers.¹

Grey wrote to Macdonald "...Both the Tibetans and the Chinese had appealed to me for mediation there, but we were reluctant to intervene in any way, feeling that, if we did so, whichever party found the development of events unfavourable afterwards would base upon anything which we did now and claim for a further intervention. We wished to avoid interference in Tibet, at the same time we held that though we recognised Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, Tibet ought to remain an autonomous state between India and China; and this view we should press diplomatically in Peking as strongly as need be".

The Tibetans not unnaturally were considering themselves being betrayed by the British, and started negotiating with the Chinese regarding the surrender of Chinese arms and the return of the Dalai Lama to Lhasa.

Negotiations began on August 12, and the following terms were arranged after three conferences with the Chinese.²

(a) Chinese military officers and soldiers to return to China via India, (b) arms and ammunitions to be kept under the charge of

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 59-282, October 1912, No. 245.*

Grey to Macdonald, 24 July 1913.

2. *ibid.*, No. 236

British Trade Agent at Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, 21 August 1912.

the Nepalese representative; (c) free transport and rations for the Chinese *enroute* to India.

At this time an interesting piece of news came to light. It was reported that Dorjieff was waiting at Phari to meet the Dalai Lama on his way to Tibet, thus implying the possibility of an independent foreign policy being pursued by the Dalai Lama on his return home.¹

On June 24, 1912 the Dalai Lama started for Tibet,² and on July 15, according to the Viceroy's report to the Secretary of State, was at Ralung, and was proceeding to Samding.³ In February 1912 the Lama's Ministers had formally requested Bell for British military help in escorting the Lama back home. Lonchen Shatra made the appeal. McMahan made no comment beyond observing "that the matter was a difficult one". The interview then came to an end.

On October 28, 1912 the President of China issued a decree restoring the Dalai Lama, and on November 27, the Dalai Lama's titles were restored, and Chung Ying formally appointed the new Amban. But it was not until January 1913 after the departure of the last Chinese that he entered Lhasa.

Beyond empty expressions of goodwill Hardinge gave no concrete help to the Dalai Lama. He was not prepared to involve his Government for the cause of the Dalai Lama to the extent of providing military support for him. His approach to the Tibet problem at this stage was essentially negative. And by 1912 it appeared that even the frontier officials were not prepared to help the Dalai Lama. Hardinge wrote to the Secretary to the Government of India on March 31, 1912⁴ "... our neutrality has frequently been announced by us and we have refused to intervene in favour of Tibetans. Should we now intervene we shall have to do afterwards in order to protect Tibetans. Our returning might provoke an attack from the

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 59-282, October 1912, No. 1012.*

British Trade Agent at Yatung to Foreign Secretary, 8 July 1912.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 70-386, June 1912, No. 292.*

Viceroy to Secretary of State, 5 November 1912.

3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 59-282, October 1912, No. 134.*

Viceroy to Secretary of State, 15 July 1912.

4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 315-419, April 1912, No. 394.*

Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 30 March 1912.

aggrieved party and this we would not be able to meet. In the circumstances I do not think we shall intervene...”.

In the meanwhile Chinese activities in Eastern Tibet and the Assam Himalayan region were going on with vigour. Towards the Dalai Lama the Government of India and the Home Government adopted an attitude of indifference. But it soon became apparent that it was impossible for her to remain neutral in conflicts so near her northern frontier.

Effect of Revolution of 1911 on Tibet and China's Policy

The upheaval which began in 1911 and made China a Republic was felt almost immediately in Tibet. The first news of the uprising was reported by the British Trade Agent at Yatung to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department on November 21, 1911¹. He wrote²: “All Chinese troops in Chumbi Valley have mutinied and several officials who were evicted have fled to British territory. Chinese frontier officer reached Gnatong this morning having travelled whole night. About 120 Chinese soldiers out of 130 who were in Chumbi Valley left this morning for Phari, and rest having escaped to Kalimpong and elsewhere. They have left their military station Chutkapur in a state of utter desolation ...”. Two days later the British Trade Agent at Gyantse reported,³ that the Chinese troops at Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse had declared themselves rebels, and the Amban had fled to Lhasa with 100 Chinese soldiers. The modern drilled troops had forcibly seized 1,000 transport animals in order to

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 208-298, January 1912, No. 216.*

British Trade Agent Yatung to Secretary to Government of India in Foreign Department, 20 November 1911.

ibid., No. 217.

Viceroy to Secretary of State, 21 November 1911.

ibid., No. 219

British Trade Agent Gyantse to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 20 November 1911.

2. *ibid.*, No. 221.

British Trade Agent Yatung to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 21 November 1911.

3. *ibid.*, No. 228.

British Trade Agent Gyantse to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 29 November 1911.

return to China. On November 26, 1911 referring to the above incident, the Viceroy sent a private telegram to the Secretary of State.¹ stating that the officials' wives and other Chinese women had been coming to Gyantse Agency for refuge, the headmen in Chumbi Valley had applied to the Trade Agent at Yatung for British protection in case of danger to their lives and property. The Political Officer of Sikkim ordered Trade Agents to protect all who took shelter in the British Trade Agency, but to maintain strict neutrality.² In a later telegram³ the Viceroy said that the Lhasa Amban had been taken prisoner, and two of his officers had been murdered. Lo Chang Chi who was returning to Lhasa from Pome had also been murdered by Chinese troops. Chen Shi-pau the acting Amban was trying to pacify the Chinese soldiers who had looted Tibetan officials and shopkeepers at Lhasa. A Tibetan soldier at Gyantse while endeavouring to prevent a Chinese soldier from looting on November 26, was shot dead. On the same day Chinese troops from Khamba Jong had looted Kalu village. And during the next few months hostilities amongst Chinese and Tibetans commenced.⁴ There were frequent skirmishes between the two parties, and often excesses were committed on the part of the Chinese troops.⁵ The latter, being an unruly mob indulged in looting and destruction. Their frustration and hatred of Chinese rule was apparent. The Tibetans rose against the disorganised Chinese and slaughtered thousands of them before the British intervened to rescue survivors.

General Chung Ying a Chinese was appointed Amban in place of the Manchu Lien Yu who was forced to give up his

1. *Hardinge Papers* Vol. 95. Telegram No. 362. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 26 November 1911.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 208-298, January 1911*, No. 223. Political Officer Sikkim to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 22 November 1911.
3. *ibid.*, No. 241. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 28 November 1911.
4. *ibid.*, No. 288. British Trade Agent Gyantse to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 27 November 1911.
5. *ibid.*, Encl. 2. No. 264. Translation of a letter from the Nepalese [Representative at Lhasa, dated 18 November 1911.

appointment.¹ He decided to keep a part of his force with him and to play on local rivalries.²

By 1912 it was noticed that the Chinese were in most places in the defensive than in the offensive,³ and towards the middle of 1912 they were suffering losses at the hands of the Tibetans. The Chinese garrisons were annihilated in Lhasa and Shigatse, and at times there was continuous fighting.⁴ In December 1911 the revolutionaries at Chengtu had expressed their willingness to withdraw. Extract from the diary of Captain L.R. Weir, British Trade Agent Gyantse, for the month of January 1912 reads,⁵ "that the soldiers were completely out of hand both in Lhasa and Gyantse, and also at Shigatse. Chinese officers, Civil and military were afraid of their troops, and for this reason Tsuir Sheh-pao and other officers, had left for China via India. The present Amban Chung Tungling managed to pacify the soldiers in Lhasa by paying them ten lakhs of Tankan, (about 2,50,000 rupees) which had been obtained from the Tibetans by threatening the loot of Lhasa and the Potala."

The British Government advised the Dalai Lama to use his influence to stop fighting, save the Chinese from annihilation

1. *For Sec. E, Nos. 208-298, January 1911, No. 266.*
Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 15 December 1911.
ibid., No. 268.
Trade Agent Gyantse to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 15 December 1911.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Notes p. 34.*
Note by Grant, 29 November 1912.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 315-509, April 1912, Encl. No. 317.*
Wilkinson to Jordan, 5 December 1911. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 70-386, July 1912, No. 73.* Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 8 April 1912.
ibid., No. 83.
Bell to Secretary to Government of India in Foreign Department, 15 April 1912.
ibid., No. 93.
British Trade Agent, Gyantse to Secretary to Government of India in Foreign Department, 28 April 1912.
4. *For Sec. E, Nos. 59-282, October 1912, No. 180.*
British Trade Agent at Yatung to Foreign Secretary, 1 August 1912.
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 315-409, April 1912, No. 353.*
Extract from the diary of Captain J. L. R. Weir, British Agent, Gyantse for the month of January 1912.

and allow them to be conducted back to China, as it was not possible for her to mediate due to her 'treaty obligation'.¹ Eventually the troops returned to China via India, through the good offices of the Nepalese Government.²

The Revolution of 1911 was primarily responsible for the collapse of Chinese power in Tibet, which China was endeavouring to establish after the withdrawal of the Younghusband Mission in 1904.

After the Revolution there was a complete change of atmosphere. Upto this time China and India contributed to the same Asian political ideas and convictions. But lately the Manchus had bitter experience at the hands of western powers, who taught them a novel political method and language which they proceeded to apply to the innocent Tibetans. Chinese officials in Tibet started preaching new ideas and proclaiming that Tibet was being modernised, so that it could hold its own with any country in the world. The Revolution upset this plan.

Technically on the disappearance of the Manchu Emperors at the time of the Chinese Revolution in 1911 Tibet became either entirely independent, or equal partners in the new Commonwealth with the Chinese themselves, and other constituted elements of the former Manchu Empire.

But most important of all the meaningful bond between the Manchus and the Dalai Lama had been the patron-priest relationship with the establishment of the Republic this relationship was ended, and the Tibetans no longer felt any such attachment for the Chinese.

It must be remembered that the Tibetans previously in all that had been done had acquiesced, but they never explicitly declared their consent to Chinese overlordship, and were unwilling to admit dependence on the Emperor, they, however, laudably accepted the relationship and never openly questioned the right of the Emperor to have his representatives at Lhasa, or to send troops into Tibet on occasions. The Emperors on their side had been careful for nearly two centuries to do nothing to upset the amicable basis of that relationship.

1. For a discussion of this problem see sec. I of Chapter IV.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 70-386, July 1912, Note p. 3.*
McMahon to Ker (Demi-official), 19 April 1912.

On March 16, 1912 Yuan Shih-kai was inaugurated as President of the Chinese Republic. He promised to develop a Chinese Republic, and create the nation from the five faces—Chinese, Manchus, Mongolia, Mohammedan (sic) and Tibetan, symbolised in the colours of the Republican flag.

The Presidential order of April 21, 1912 ran in part as follows¹ :

Now that the five races are joined in democratic union, the lands comprised within the confines of Mongolia, Tibet Turkestan all became a part of the territory of the Republic of China. The term 'Dependencies' as used under the Monarchy must therefore cease to be used, and henceforth as regards Mongolia, Tibet and Turkestan are regarded as on an equal footing with the Provinces of China Proper. For the future all administrative matters in connection with these territories will come within the sphere of internal administration....

This was China's avowed intention.

Yuan's declaration shows that although the Republican Government had expelled the Manchus as hated foreigners, it was keen on keeping all the territorial advantages which had accrued to it in 200 years of Manchu rule. Yuan's declaration implied that the object of Chinese campaign in Tibet was to bring the Tibetans into the "family of the five races". Yuan failed to realise that the Revolution had brought about a change in China, and consequently a change in the relations between China and Tibet. It was impossible for the Tibetans to recognise the new President of China Yuan Shih-kai as a successor to their Manchu patron. Tibet, therefore, was completely independent from the moment of the abdication of the Chinese Emperor, and continued her struggle for independence against the Chinese in Szechuan, Yunnan, the Marches and in Assam Himalayas. China on her part went on proclaiming the union

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 12-45, October 1912, Encl. No. 36.*
Jordan to Grey, 27 April 1912.

of the 5 races. The Governor of Szechuan unable to bring the Tibetans within his grip declared¹ :

The Republic was based on the union of the five races, a union which Tibet is the first to break, this was a dark blot on the confederacy. Our army must inspire fear by might; but still more must it evoke affection by kindness. Just as in a family of five brothers if the youngest will not submit to proper restraint, his elders shall first admonish him, in the hope of bringing him to one mind with them. Tibet again is like the back door to a house ; If the door is opened wide, robbers will flock into the apartments....

Yuan realised that his position was difficult, as one aspect of his policy tried to bring Tibet under China by negotiation and persuasion. As a conciliatory gesture he recalled the Chinese Commander from the Eastern frontier, and issued a declaration reinstating the Dalai Lama and restoring his official rank.² He started to woo the Dalai Lama and telegraphed to him "...I am gratified and moved to admiration. It is my duty to reinvest you with your former rank and titles, and to reinstate you as head of the Yellow Church, so that peace may be restored in Tibet...".³ He sent a telegram expressing regret for the excesses of the Manchu regime, and assuring the Dalai Lama that his former errors would be overlooked,⁴ and his former title of Ch'eng-Shun-tzu-tsain Buddha was restored, in the hope that he may strengthen the Yellow Church, assist the Republic, and remain on peaceful terms with China. He further gave assurances to Tibet through the Governor of Szechuan that

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 58-282, October 1912*, Encl. No. 195. Wilkinson to Jordan, 21 June 1912.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 261-502, May 1913*, Encl. 1. No. 290. Jordan to Grey, 14 December 1912. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913*, No. 282. His Majesty's Minister at Peking to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 29 October 1912.
3. *ibid.*, Sub. Encl. No. 451. Extract from the *Kuo Min Pao* of 29 October 1912 (Translation) : *Restoration of His Rank and Titles to the Dalai Lama.*
4. *ibid.*, Sub. Encl. No. 451. Presidential Order : *Gazette of 28 October 1912 (Translation).*

the Emperor of China was protecting her. The Dalai Lama, however, declined to receive any rank from the Republic of China.¹

It must be noted, however, that the opposition of the Tibetans to the Chinese was not uniform. Sera and Gaden played a prominent part in the attacks on the Lhasa garrison. Drepung was lukewarm in its hostility to China.²

With Chung Ying's departure Lu Hsung-chi was appointed by Yuan Shih-kai to the post of 'administrator of Tibet', by which may be understood the equivalent in Republican terminology of the old office of Lhasa Amban. He advised that the Tibetans should be made to recognise the Republic, and to agree to the election of Tibetan representatives to the Chinese parliament by pressure and persuasion. The Chinese failed to persuade the Tibetans of their own free will, to acknowledge their dependence on the Republic. Tibet was included within the representative assemblies of the Chinese Republic implying thereby that Tibet was similar to one of the 18 provinces of China proper.

It is significant that Yuan did not suggest that the Dalai Lama was out to destroy the power of the Republic. He in fact tried to appease the Dalai Lama.

On the other hand, the Tibetan Government, far from making any concessions to the Chinese took active measures to reestablish their own position. They sent reinforcements to the Eastern frontier to meet the new threat from Yuan Shih-kai.³

At this time rumours were current that Dorjjeff had negotiated a treaty between Mongolia and Tibet. The Russian Legation confirmed the signature at Urga on January 11, 1913 of a Tibeto-Mongolian treaty.⁴

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Enclo. 5. No. 487.*
Dalai Lama to Yuan Shi-kai, not dated.
2. *ibid.*, No. 218.
British Trade Agent Gyantse to Foreign Secretary, 11 October 1912.
3. For a discussion of Chinese activities in Eastern Tibet see Section IV of Chapter IV and see I of Chapter V.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 199-239, July 1913, No. 211.*
His Majesty's Ambassador St. Petersburg to India Office, 11 February 1913. *ibid.*, Notes p. 1. Note by Grant, 8 February 1913.

It is a treaty with a preamble and 8 articles.¹ The preamble states that the two countries, "having freed themselves from dynasty of Manchus and separated from China having formed their own independent states". The main provisions of this treaty are joint consideration for well-being of Buddhist faith, reciprocal recognition and approval of independence, reciprocal facilities for travellers and trade, and mutual assistance against external and internal dangers.

It is significant that the Tibetans and Mongolians in this agreement claimed 'independence' and not merely 'autonomy'. Perhaps this was because there was no way of distinguishing between these two conditions in Tibetan, and in Mongolia there is only one word for both.

This treaty is interesting as indicating that the Dalai Lama had repudiated the suzerainty of China by making an alliance with a foreign state without the sanction of the Chinese. The position was extraordinary. China claimed both sovereign and suzerain rights over Tibet. Britain conceded that she had suzerain rights. The Dalai Lama denied that she had either.

The Republican Government of China was in fact making a vain attempt to hang on to the symbols of suzerainty and thereby asserting sovereignty over Tibet, even though they realised that they were not in a position to give effect to their asserted claims. The Revolutionary regime had not till then received international recognition.

British Policy towards Tibet and the Republic of China

Neither the Chinese Republic's policy of considering Tibet a province of China nor the Dalai Lama's rejection of Chinese suzerainty suited the British. What was her attitude to the nascent Republic ?

The object of Great Britain in concluding the Lhasa Convention of 1904, the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and the revised Trade Regulations of 1908 was to assure the territorial integrity of Tibet, and to safeguard her existence as a peaceful autonomous buffer

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 199-239, July 1913, Encl. 1 No. 211.*
Mongol-Tibetan Treaty concluded at Urga, 29 December, 1912;
11 January 1913.

state between the three Great Asiatic Empires, Russia, India and China, as well as to provide for the opening of friendly relations between the British and Tibetan authorities in the interests of the peace of the Indian border, and of trans-frontier trade.

What was the position of the new born Chinese Republic in 1911 ? It was weak and vulnerable. Britain, Russia, France and Japan had joined together in an alliance directed against Germany. China was on the verge of disintegration, and the powers were trying to detach the peripheral regions from her. Therefore her goodwill was not much sought after now. According to Herbert Adams Gibbons¹ :

The situation after the Chinese Revolution was a serious one for the new Republic. International pressure was used against the newly born Republic to sell her interest to please other nations. Yuan Shih-kai as the President, had a very hard job to preserve the integrity of China. If he refused to continue to sell the interests of China, as the old Imperial Government had done, the Foreign Ministers were ready to combine to prevent him from getting money to carry on his government.

British attitude towards China and Tibet had been to patch up issues between the two countries in a way which would restore the formal connection between them, save Chinese face, but restrict Chinese control.

Britain had ignored the Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan Assembly's declaration of independence. A message was given to the Dalai Lama on his return to Tibet expressing the desire of the Government of Britain to see the internal autonomy of Tibet under Chinese suzerainty maintained, without Chinese interference, so long as treaty obligations were duly performed and cordial relations preserved between Tibet and India.

Britain decided to recognise the Republic of China on certain conditions. Crewe said that recognition in any case must be conditional on the new Government demonstrating its ability to control the outlying provinces of the Empire. Regarding

1. Herbert Adams Gibbons : *An Introduction to World Politics*, New York, Century Co., pp. 313-314, quoted by Taraknath Das : *British Expansion in Tibet*, Calcutta, 1927, pp. 101-102.

the political status of Tibet, he opined that the conversion of Tibet into a regular province of China would be a contravention of the Anglo-Chinese treaty stipulation. He wanted an undertaking from China that the autonomy of Tibet under Chinese suzerainty would be preserved. He declined to accept any general guarantee from her as to the safeguarding of foreign treaty rights in China, as it did not provide for the maintenance of a bonafide Tibetan administration.¹

British Government on May 24, 1912 protested against Yuan's declaration of Tibet to be a province of China and demanded that the status quo be maintained. On June 23, 1912 Jordan wrote to Grey that "the intention of incorporating Tibet as a province of China was entirely contrary to existing engagement".² He said that Britain had absolutely no designs on Tibet or a desire to interfere in its internal administration. Her only desire was to see an autonomous Tibet, lying between the territories of Great Britain and China.

At this stage it is interesting to examine the views which were held in the past on the question of whether Tibet was a part of China proper.

As far back as 1891 when negotiations were in progress for Tibet Trade Regulations, Hart the Chinese political Officer, stated that Tibet's condition was not the same as the Turkestan frontier, Manchuria and Mongolia, which belonged to China, but was to be dealt with by China as still having something of the simple tributary in it.³

In February 1903 George Hamilton⁴ spoke of Tibet as still to be "regarded as a province of China". Shortly afterwards Lansdowne reported that the Russian Ambassador had mentioned that his government "regarded Tibet as forming part of the Chinese Empire in the integrity of which he took an

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 12-45, October 1912, No. 25.*

Manners Smith to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 22 April 1912.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 58-287, October 1912, Encl. 1. No. 181.*
Jordan to Grey, 26 June 1912.

3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-23, July 1892, K.W. No. 2, pp. 23-24.*
James H. Hart to Lansdowne, 21 September 1891.

4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 130-172, April 1903, No. 142.*

Hamilton to Governor General of India in Council, 27 February 1903.

interest".¹ Similar language was used by the Ambassador in June 1904 when he spoke of the necessity of maintaining the political *status quo* in that province (i.e. Tibet) of the Chinese Empire.² The Russian Ambassador's language was not challenged by Lansdowne on either occasion.

The following passage occurs in a memorandum prepared by the Foreign Office in September 1904.³

Tibet would appear to constitute theoretically a portion of the Chinese dominions and though the suzerainty exercised by China is...of a very shadowy nature, yet China does not nominally exercise it and we have recognised the fact that she does so by negotiation, with her as to Tibet and by submitting our treaty to her for ratification. We shall therefore...find it difficult to argue that Tibet does not constitute a portion of the Chinese Empire.

About the same time the Government of India pointed out, in connection with the objections which were being raised to the Lhasa Convention on the ground that it infringed the rights of China, and the most favoured nation clause, that history and their experience at that time showed that China did not possess full sovereignty in Tibet which was not one of the 18 provinces of China, or even under the direct administration of the Imperial Government, as in the case of the New Dominion.

In November 1904 the British Minister in Peking communicated a rumour that the Chinese were considering whether they should declare Tibet a province and so an integral part of the Chinese Empire.⁴ With reference to this the Government of India pointed out to His Majesty's Government that such action:

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 38-95, July 1903, Encl. 2. No. 42.*
Foreign Office to Scott, 8 April 1903.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 102-194, September 1904, No. 127.* Hardinge to Lansdowne, July 1904.
3. *For. Sec. E. Nos. 983-1020, February 1905, No. 997.*
Walpole to Under Secretary of State, 20 September 1904.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1021-1061, February 1905, No. 1034.*
Britannic Majesty's Minister in China, Peking, to Viceroy, 17 November 1904.

if taken, would clearly indicate that Tibet hitherto was an integral part of China proper. It may also be mentioned that the rumour was brought to the notice of Prince Ching¹ who assured the British Minister that such a measure had not been contemplated, and it would be difficult of accomplishment. On another occasion Prince Ching admitted the political status of Tibet was not at all like that of the Province of China.²

In January 1906 Sir. E. Grey informed³ the Russian Ambassador that the question of the position of Tibet had in no way changed since Lansdowne spoke to Count Benckendorff in 1904.⁴

In March 1910 the President of the Wai-Wu-Pu informed the British Minister that there was not a shadow of foundation for the newspaper report, as to the proposal to convert Tibet into a province of China. Such a course he said would be a contravention of Anglo-Chinese treaty stipulations, and did not enter the thoughts of the Chinese Government.⁵

Lastly when the India Office in a letter dated August 20, 1910⁶ referred to the admission of the British and Russian Government that Tibet was a part of China, the Government of India held,⁷ that the admission did not appear to be quite consistent with Britain's treaties with China and Tibet. In reply to this the India Office referred to the language used by the British and Russian Governments in 1903 and 1904.⁸

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1021-1061, February 1905, No. 1060.*
Britannic Majesty's Minister in China, Peking, to Viceroy 11 November 1904.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1147-1180, February 1905, No. 1160.*
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 154-191, March 1906, No. 186.*
Grey to Spring Rice, 3 January 1906.
4. *ibid.*
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 358.* Max Muller to Viceroy, 6 March 1910.
6. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 749-768, December 1910, No. 758,* Ritchie to Under Secretary of State.
Foreign Office, 26 August 1910.
7. *ibid.*, Notes pp. 6-7.
Butler to Kertzel (Demi-official), 28 September 1910.
8. *ibid.*, Notes p. 8.
Note by Clarke, 18 November 1910.

From the foregoing it will be seen that while His Majesty's Government and the Russian Government had in the past considered Tibet to be a part of China proper, the Government of India held just the opposite view, which had also been taken by the Chinese Government itself. For the Foreign Office to talk in 1911 of opposing the inclusion of Tibet in China proper suggested that they did not at that period hold the same views as they did in the past. That the contention of the Government of India was the correct one is shown clearly by the fact that Chinese treaties with foreign powers had not been valid in Tibet.¹

Now the question arises whether His Majesty's Government was justified by their treaty rights in opposing the inclusion of Tibet in China proper. In this connection it may be mentioned that, when in 1904 a report was current that the Chinese were considering whether they should declare Tibet to be an integral part of China, the Government of India informed the Secretary of State that a change in the status of Tibet could not affect the treaties already made with that country, such as those of Kashmir, Nepal, Bhutan and India,² and suggested that it might be desirable to be prepared to make an intimation to this effect to the Chinese Government. As Prince Ching contradicted the report no communication was made to the Chinese Government, but the British Minister, Peking, reported that if they had contemplated that the annexation of Tibet to China would have the effect of annulling at once all the existing treaties or conventions made by Tibet with Foreign States, he was prepared to declare that His Majesty's Government would regard it as an unfriendly act, and would refuse to recognise it as having any effect.

Tibet had always been regarded as an autonomous state, under the suzerainty of China and British treaties and the Trade Regulations provided for a Tibetan Administration.³ If

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 983-1020, February 1905, No. 985.* Viceroy to Secretary of State, 10 October 1904.
ibid., No. 1011.
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 24 October 1904.
2. *For Sec. E., Nos. 1021-1061, February 1905, No. 1041.*
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 5 November 1904.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 892-955, February 1905, No. 922.*
Viceroy, to Secretary of State, 29 September 1904.

therefore Tibet was converted into a Chinese Province, Tibetan administration would no doubt be abolished,¹ and His Majesty's Government was, therefore, justified by their treaty rights in opposing the step referred to. Only in February 1910 the Chinese Government was informed that His Majesty's Government had a right to expect that an effective Tibetan Government would be maintained with whom, they could when necessary, deal in the manner provided by the Lhasa Convention of 1904 and the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906.²

In considering the first part of this question we must remember the statement made by Lord Lansdowne in September 1904,³ that owing to the geographical position of Tibet it was absolutely necessary that Great Britain should be the titular power and should occupy as such a predominant position with regard to Tibetan affairs. This principle was repeated in the Secretary of State's telegram of October 1, 1904.⁴ Furthermore, it had been the policy of His Majesty's Government to maintain Tibet in a state of political isolation. If Tibet was then included in China proper, foreign powers could claim most favoured nation treatment in Tibet, and the British Government would lose the predominant position which she then held in that country.

British interests also included those of such frontier states as Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. As regards Nepal the Secretary of State wrote as follows in 1903 :⁵

The maintenance of friendly relations with Nepal is a matter of vital importance to the interests of India having regard not only to the circumstances that Nepal is conterminus with Bengal and the United Provinces for over 500 miles and the warlike character of the ruling race, but also the

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1147-1180, February 1905, No. 1160.*
Satow to Amphyll, 7 October 1904.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 382.*
Ritchie to Under Secretary of State, 22 February 1910.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 983-1020, February 1906. No. 997.*
Lansdowne to Satow 29 September 1904.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 892-955, February 1905, No. 933.*
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 1 October 1904.
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 130-172, April 1903, No. 142.*
Hamilton to Governor General of India in Council, 27 February 1903..

fact that it is the recruiting ground from which we draw the Gurkha regiments which add greatly to the strength of the Indian army. Nepal has hitherto held its own without difficulty against Tibet, but for this reason Nepal is rightly sensitive as to any alteration in the political position of Tibet, which would be likely to disturb the relations at present existing between the two countries. His Majesty's Government fully recognise that the establishment of a powerful foreign influence in Tibet would disturb these relations, and might even, by exposing Nepal to a pressure which it would be difficult to resist, effect those which at present exist on so cordial a basis between India and Nepal.

Similar remarks were made by the India Office on March 31, 1910.¹

The establishment of a powerful foreign influence in Tibet would also have a most upsetting effect on Bhutan and Sikkim. Besides all three states had special rights and privileges in Tibet which Britain had pledged to defend, but which would undoubtedly be prejudiced by the inclusion of Tibet in China proper.²

The answer to the first part of the second question appears to be that British interests in Tibet and Himalayan borders could be maintained by opposing the inclusion of Tibet in China proper.

Now the consideration arises as to whether opposition would not be likely to lead to an anti-British outbreak and the dismemberment of other outlying provinces of the Chinese Empire. The Mongolians had recently declared their independence and appealed for support to the Russians, who held that the Mongolians must be guaranteed their autonomous state. Russian action had not led to an anti-Russian outbreak, and therefore there was no reason to suppose that British opposition

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 503.*

Ritchie to Under Secretary of State, 31 March 1910.

2. *ibid.*, No. 549.

Foreign Secretary to Political Officer in Sikkim, 14 May 1910. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 58-246, August 1910, No. 216.* Minto to Morley, 21 July 1910.

to the inclusion of Tibet in China would lead to an anti-British attack.

Chinese attitude towards the British had changed considerably after the Mission of 1904. China appeared either unwilling or unable to keep her word or make the Tibetans keep theirs. After 1904 China was more hostile to the British than ever and did not appreciate the conciliatory and accommodating spirit which Britain had shown towards her in the negotiations at the Adhesion Agreement of 1906 and the Trade Regulations of 1908. She took advantage of British compliance, and of the terms of these instruments to conduct in Tibet and the neighbouring states an active campaign directed frankly against British interest, and tried to deprive the British of the advantages gained by the Lhasa Convention of 1904.

In 1912 the Chinese Government paid no heed to the British protests regarding the change of *status quo* in Tibet, and the Governor of Szechuan set out on an expedition towards Tibet.¹

By the latter half of 1912 the British Government kept the Indo-Tibetan border firmly closed to all Chinese officials.²

Towards the end of 1912 the Political Officer in Sikkim intimated to Prince Ching that Britain's neutral position prevented her from transmitting messages from one Chinese official to another,³ and by the beginning of 1913 it was proposed that in future all correspondence passing via India between Chinese officials and Lhasa would be interrupted.⁴

The British Government was prepared to accept Chinese suzerainty in Tibet, and since she had never recognised Chinese

1. For this expedition and Chao Erh-feng's policy in the Marches see sec. I of this chapter. see Yuan Shih-kai's Presidential Order of 27 April, 1912. see also *For. Sec. E, Nos. 12-45, October 1912, Encl. No. 36, Jordan to Grey, 27 April 1912.*
2. *ibid.*, No. 14. Deputy Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department to Bell, 8 February 1912.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-271, September 1913, No. 270.* Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department to Britannic Majesty's Charge d' Affaires, Peking, 15 August 1913.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 261-502, May 1913, Notes p. 14.* Note by Grant, 11 February 1913.

sovereignty,¹ was now unwilling to concede the point. Her opinion was that attempts to exercise sovereignty by China would unnecessarily excite the Tibetans and cause disturbance on the northern frontiers of India. To the Tibetans, Britain said that she would not give support or countenance any attempts to throw off Chinese suzerainty, but that she meant to maintain the status existent when she made her treaty with Tibet, and to hold both Tibetans and the Chinese to that treaty.²

Hardinge definitely viewed that British recognition of the Republic should be conditioned on a Chinese settlement of the Tibet question. London was still hesitant to this positive approach, as she was still bound by the clauses of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.

The British Government protested to China on August 17, 1912 against her action. It was on the basis of this memorandum that negotiations between India, China and Tibet were opened in Simla in 1913. The Government of India had no choice but to accept the modifications and declarations suggested by London. In this memorandum Britain clearly stated her stand. It was as follows :³

1. His Majesty's Government while they have formally recognised the suzerain rights of China in Tibet, have never recognised and are not prepared to recognise the right of China to intervene actively in the internal administration of Tibet which should remain, as contemplated by the treaties, in the hands of the Tibetan authorities, subject to the right of Great Britain and China—under Article 1 of the Convention of April 27, 1906, to take such steps as may be necessary to secure due fulfilment of treaty stipulations.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-271, September 1913, No. 207, Memorandum communicated to the Japanese Charge d' Affaires, Foreign Office, 9 June 1913.*

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Notes p. 6.*
Extract from the *Times* dated 3 September 1912. Sir Francis Young-husband's views to the Editor of the *Times*, 30 August 1912.

3. *ibid.*, Sub. Encl. No. 184.
Jordan's Memorandum of 17 August 1912.

2. On these grounds His Majesty's Government must demur altogether to the conduct of the Chinese officers in Tibet during the last two years in assuming all administrative power in the country and to the doctrine propounded in Yuan Shih-kai's Presidential Order of April 21, 1912 that Tibet is to be regarded as on an equal footing with the provinces of China proper and that all administrative matters connected with that country will come within the sphere of internal administration.
His Majesty's Government formally declined to accept such a definition of the political status of Tibet, and they must warn the Chinese Republic against any repetition by Chinese officers of conduct to which exception has been taken.
3. While the right of China to station a representative with a suitable escort at Lhasa, with authority to advise the Tibetans as to their foreign relations is not disputed, His Majesty's Government are not prepared to acquiesce in the maintenance of an unlimited number of Chinese either at Lhasa or in Tibet generally.
4. His Majesty's Government must press for the conclusion of a written agreement on the foregoing lines as a condition precedent to extending their recognition to the Chinese Republic.
5. In the meantime all communication with Tibet via India must be regarded as absolutely closed to the Chinese and will only be opened on such conditions as His Majesty's Government may see fit to impose when an agreement has been concluded on the lines indicated above.

In this memorandum the uncompromising attitude of the British Government was clear and the policy laid down by His Majesty's Government defined.

For four months China did not mention a word about this memorandum. A firm and straightforward policy by the British Government was not traditional, and hence their delay

in grasping the gravity of the situation and in formulating an appropriate answer.

This memorandum had not only been communicated to the Chinese Government, but had also been communicated to the Russian Government, and made public in the press.

The first Chinese reply received is given in Jordan's telegram of December 16, 1912 in which he stated that the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of China had expressed his desire to him to have a friendly exchange of views on various points before making a formal reply. China, it appeared insisted on her treaty rights to interfere in the administration of Tibet. She considered the existing treaties sufficient and saw no reason for entering into a new agreement at a time when the previous treaties were still unrecognised.¹

In a memorandum dated December 23, 1912 Chinese Government answered the British Memorandum of August 17, 1912. China pointed out to the British Government that the Anglo-Chinese treaty of 1906 did preclude China from interfering in Tibet and to preserve order she must maintain sufficient force in that country.² The material alterations made by China may be noted.³

Clause 1 : Reference was made to the British note of January 17, 1911, and from the statement that His Majesty's Government recognised the interests of China and were unwilling to embarrass her in her action there so long as she adhered to her pledges the inference was that China had full administrative powers in Tibet without any treaty restriction.

Clause 2 : After repeating President's assurance that China had no intention of converting Tibet into a province, the memorandum added that the attitude of the Chinese

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 107-509, February, 1913, No. 433.*
His Majesty's Minister, Peking to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 December 1912.
2. The answer to the Memorandum of 17 August 1912 was on the lines of Jordan's telegram of 16 December 1912.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, No. 471.*
His Majesty's Minister, Peking to Secretary of State, 26 December 1912.

Government towards the future administrative system of Tibet was to be gathered from the provisional constitution of the Chinese Republic; from abdication edict of the late Emperor, from oath of the President and from the order of October 28, restoring his titles to the Dalai Lama.

The object, they said was to complete the union in one family of the five races, and maintenance throughout the *status quo*, was they said in harmony with the view of His Majesty's Government.

Clause 5 : Closing of communication was a measure resorted to only in case of war, and China earnestly looked for its early discontinuance.

Memorandum concluded by expressing the hope that Great Britain was the power with the longest intercourse with China, and as such would take the lead in recognising the Republic.

Percival Landen lucidly explains how this ultimatum (of August 17, 1912) solved the question in favour of Great Britain.¹ He writes :

This (British) ultimatum courteously worded as it is, amounts to declaration to the Chinese Ministry that the maintenance of the *status quo* in Tibet, in which India is directly interested, is inconsistent with despatch of a large armed force from China to Lhasa. England readily admits Chinese suzerainty but she sees no reason why more than a Resident with a small escort should be needed to maintain the dignity of the celestials of Lhasa. And to bring home the seriousness of her intentions, she is compelled to decline to recognise the new Republic until she has definite assurance on these points. At first it was reported that China had refused to give them, but this appears to have been merely an *obiter dictum* of the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was promptly snubbed by Yuan Shih-kai for expressing his opinions. England's request, no doubt places China in a considerable difficulty as she has already allotted to Tibet 10 seats in the National Assembly.

1. Percival Landen : Tibet, China, and India, *Fortnightly Review*, October 1912, pp. 655-662, quoted by Taraknath Das : *op. cit.*

To Cancel them will mean much like acquiescing in the relinquishment of a province at the bidding of a foreign nation, and newly formed democracies are unusually touchy upon such points. On the other hand the certainty of serious trouble and the probable establishment of a permanent North Eastern question has been definitely postponed by the recreation of Tibet as an insulating force along the northern frontier, and those who have their best interest at heart will seriously congratulate the British Foreign Secretary upon the use that has been made of the opportunity thus unexpectedly offered to him by Chinese Revolution.

Peking's analysis of British policy towards China,¹ after the Revolution of 1911 was that continued possession of Tibet by China may be considered by England to be inexpedient to her "vital interests" in India on one or two grounds. If the policy existed of creating Tibet into a buffer state as a protection to the Indian frontier, the presence of China in Tibet might have proved embarrassing to England, and on this account she might have thought it desirable to object, *vis-a-vis* China, to the maintenance of the *status quo* in Tibet in order to secure a free hand in the internal administration of the country. Whatever may be said in general as to the political soundness of the theory of the buffer state, there can be no doubt that unless England was prepared ultimately to apply the principle of annexation to Tibet, the idea of turning that country into such a state in order to entrench India against Russian aggression would be more of the nature of a "pious aspiration" than of a serious political enterprise.

The other conceivable ground of objection to China in Tibet was the fear that China might develop such a degree of strength in the table land that the security of India would have been threatened. The reason which might have impelled Russia in the direction of India was certainly not a motive that would ever activate China. Russia wanted the sea. China possessed one of the greatest continuous coast-line of ice-free waters in the world. China did not desire India for her people, because India thickly populated as it was with a native population, was

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Encl. 3. No. 270. The Peking Daily News, Tuesday, 3 September 1912.*

unfit or rather unsuitable for alien colonisation. The truth lies in the fact that Tibet as well as China's other frontier possessions were important to her present and future fields of colonisation.¹

By the beginning of 1913 it was apparent that the Government of India, Home Authorities and the Foreign Office were determined to settle the Tibet question directly with the Tibetans, and adopted a firm and uncompromising attitude towards China in adhering to the policy declared by her in her memorandum of August 17, 1912.

On January 16, 1913 the Viceroy telegraphed to the Secretary of State "...we feel we cannot place implicit confidence in long continuance of friendly attitude of China as neighbours. In the circumstances we think it preferable in spite of the inconveniences involved to adhere to the strong line already adopted".²

Prior to the latter half of 1912 the policy of His Majesty's Government had been to abstain from all interference in Tibet, but Chinese activity in Tibet seemed to Crewe³ to show that this policy could only preserve the security of the northern frontier of India, on the condition that other powers observe an equal degree of abstinence. Against overt Russian interference the Convention of 1907 afforded sufficient security. The British proposed to obtain similar security against China by an agreement on the lines of the Memorandum of August 17, 1912.⁴

Policy of China in Eastern Tibet after Revolution of 1911.

Chao Erh-feng arrived in Chengtu in August 1911 to take up his post as Viceroy of Szechuan. After the outbreak of the revolution he surrendered to the terms of the Revolutionaries, and the Republic of Szechuan was duly proclaimed. On December 23, 1911, however, he was treacherously beheaded by the revolutionaries. China's greatest empire builder died a

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Encl. 2. No. 270. The Peking Daily News, Monday, 2 September 1912.*
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 261-502, May 1913, No. 272. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16 January 1913.*
3. This point has been discussed earlier.
4. Memorandum of August 17, 1912 has been discussed earlier.

tragic death at the hands of his own countrymen, and with him passed away Chinese ascendancy over Tibet.

Teichman gives a vivid description of this man¹ :

Light and wiry in stature, and sparing in eating and drinking, he was always prepared to undergo the same hardships incidental to frontier campaigning as his officers and men. Unlike the somewhat effeminate and easeloving Szechuanese he disclaimed the Sedan Chair, and travelled all over Eastern Tibet on horseback. He was universally successful in all his military operations in Kam, after attaining his ends as much by bluff and astute diplomacy as by force of arms. But when, he had to fight, his campaigns were always well planned and carried out...Chao Erh-feng always received the fullest support from his brother the Viceroy of Szechuan, and that both had behind them the power and prestige of the Manchu Empire.

In the Republic, however, there was little cohesion and unity of action amongst the various military leaders in western China. Though he was known amongst the Szechuanese by the nickname of Butcher Chao he was a just man. His treatment of Tibetans and Chinese was alike ; His anti-Lama attitude, however, made him their arch enemy, this was a departure from the traditional Manchu policy, of exercising authority over Tibet and Mongolia largely through the instrumentality of the Lama Church.

After the Revolution the Szechuan Government in its territory started circulating photographs of Chao's severed head in the border districts, to demonstrate their victory and rise to power.

When the Tibetan tribes realised that due to the Revolution Chinese control over them had relaxed to a certain extent, troubles started. It began in Hsiang Ch'eng which had been known for its uprisings. In Sangu, Ganjee, Draya, Markham and Chamdo the lamas and tribesmen revolted.²

1. Eric Teichman : *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet* Cambridge, 1922, p. 35.
2. *For. Sec E, Nos. 261-502, May 1913, Sub. Encl. No. 347. Report from the Military Attache Peking No. 1-1913, dated 3 January 1913 (Confidential) Chinese Military Situation in the Tibetan Marches.*

By 1912 the Chinese, losing control over the frontier districts, withdrew their garrison to Batang and Chamdo which became the centres of Chinese resistance.

China was determined on subjugating the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama often appealed to the British Government complaining of Chinese tyranny and burning of monasteries. In one of the appeals he wrote, "the Chinese have also given out that unless the Tibetans surrender they will destroy everybody and will not leave a single person alive".¹

The Chinese officials explained their behaviour by saying that it was due to the disobedience of the Tibetans to the orders of the Chinese. That troops had to be taken to destroy the monastery and country of Traya. They put the responsibility for the atrocities on the Tibetans themselves and threatened that they would not leave even a bird or a dog alive.²

The Chinese officials at Traya wrote to the Tibetan officials at Kenchung: "Nothing will be said if you submit to the Chinese, but if you do not submit troops will certainly be sent".

Pin Kwan-thal, and his soldiers had a small quarrel with the monks of Chamdo, looted the monastery, took away gold, silver and gold-gilted images, books written in gold letters and golden chartens (Chaitya), and burnt down about 2,000 houses with the valuables contained in these houses. This was done between June 30, 1912 and July 14, 1912. It was estimated that the total amount of damage done by the fire came to about 75 lakhs of rupees of English money. The Chinese killed over 100 monks, and the troops continued to stay on in Chamdo.³

The Chamdo monastery was the largest in Kham, it menaced the Chinese by its commanding position on a bluff immediately behind the town.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-271, September 1913, Encl. No. 17.*
Dalai Lama to Bell, 3 April 1913.

2. *ibid.*, Sub. Encl. 6. No. 17.

Reply from the Chinese officials at Traya to the Tibetan official Kenchung, submitted for perusal, not dated.

3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Encl. 2. No. 235.*
Lonchens of Tibet to Bell, 7 October 1912.

It must be remembered that until this time the Lhasa Government was not formally at war with China. The issue was between the Chinese and the local lamas and tribesmen of eastern Tibet, who were without cohesion or organisation and practically without arms, while the Chinese were in possession of large stocks of rice and ammunition carefully collected by Chao Erh-feng.

After the completion of the revolution by the formal abdication of the Manchu Dynasty, matters began to settle down. China began to retrieve her position in eastern Tibet, and Chao's demarcation of the Marches was upheld by the Republic.¹

Throughout 1912, was noticed the ebb and flow of Chinese administration in the Marches, in spite of eagerness on the part of China to recover the position of Chao.² In this circumstance the Chinese were naturally anxious to replace military measures by a policy of conciliation wherever the change could be afforded without prejudice to their dignity.³ Yin Ch'ang-heng the military Governor of Szechuan was appointed the new warden of the Marches. Yin started in person on July 10, from Chengtu with a force of 4,000 men (infantry, artillery, and engineers) and reached Techienlu on July 29, 1913.⁴ Working from Techienlu as his base he sent two columns, one of 2,000 strong along the main road, and one about 1,000 strong along the north road. Though the Chinese had reached Litang, the country off the main road between Techienlu and Litang was by no means resubjugated. The Tibetans were reported to be assembling forces in the Hsiang Ch'eng district.⁵

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Encl. No. 354.*
Louis King to Jordan, 5 October 1912. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 261-C502*
May 1913, Notes p. 1. Grant to Nabokoff, 10 January 1913.
2. *ibid.*, No. 211.
Political Officer Sikkim to Foreign Secretary, 9 October 1912.
3. *ibid.*, Encl. No. 441.
Jordan to Grey 4 November 1912.
4. *ibid.*, Sub. Encl. No. 403.
Extract from Chengtu Intelligence Report for September Quarter.
Tibet: The Expedition.
5. *ibid.*, Encl. No. 346.
Memorandum on the situation in the Marches of Eastern Tibet,
dated 2 November 1912 with maps by Major H. R. Stokley.

Yin was the head of the first Republican Government of the Province. Inasmuch as he had been directly responsible for the execution of Chao Erh-feng there was a certain justice in his being sent to reconstruct the work which had collapsed on Chao's fall.

Yin Ch'ang-heng's plans were similar to those adopted by Chao Erh-feng, namely to converge on Chamdo by parallel advances by the north and south roads,¹ and from there to march on to Lhasa.

There are only three or four difficult passes between Chamdo and Lhasa whereas there are ten or twelve difficult passes beyond Chamdo in Chamdo and Fraya territory. A letter² (which Wilkinson considered to be genuine) from Yun tutu, to his friends at Chengtu, written shortly after his arrival at Techienlu which appeared in the *Kuo-Min Pao* of August 22, explains in detail the flank movement which Liu proposed to make.

On arrival at Techienlu the expeditionary force proceeded to loot the city, burned down the palace of the ex-Chief of Chala, and decapitated his brother. The Chief himself making good his escape into the inaccessible mountain regions of the interior of his former state. Batang and Chamdo were duly reached and relieved, and Draya, Markam and other frontier districts fell again into Chinese hands. De-ge and Kaze on the north road had never been lost.³ Lengthy military operations in Hsiang Ch'eng⁴ accompanied by the usual atrocities which appeared to grow worse with each rebellion and subsequent campaign of suppression resulted in the reduction of that district in 1913.⁵ On the north road between Techienlu and

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Sub. Encl. No. 403.*
Extract from Chengtu Intelligence Report for September Quarter Tibet : The Expedition.
2. *ibid.*, Encl. 1. No. 227.
Wilkinson to Jordan, 24 August 1912.
3. *ibid.*, Sub. Encl. No. 403.
Extract from Chengtu Intelligence Report for September Quarter, Tibet : The Expedition.
4. *ibid.*, No. 247.
Jordan to Grey, 24 October 1912.
5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-251, March 1914, Encl. No. 204.*
Louis King to Alston, 27 October 1913. *ibid.*, Appendix to Notes, p. 3, para 15, *Memorandum on situation in Tibet.*

Kanzu a local rebellion, which nearly cost a Catholic priest his life was easily quelled.

Towards the end of 1912 Yin was serious in his project of converting the Marches and a portion of Tibet into a new Chinese province. On September 10, 1912 he telegraphed¹ to the Provincial Government of Chengtu for the immediate casting of a gold seal to bear the words, "The Resident Pacifier of the Marches and Tibet". He further ordered eight lesser seals for the following prefectures he proposed to establish.

K'ang Fing Fu	formerly	Techienlu
Li Lhua Fu	,,	Litang
Pa An Fu	,,	Batang
Ch' ang Ju Fu	,,	Chamdo
Leng K' Fu	,,	Derge
T'ai Chao Fu	,,	Shihbado
Chia Li Fu	,,	Lali

He proposed that Chamdo would become the capital of the new province.

By the beginning of 1913 it become apparent that in majority of the areas China was on the defensive than in the offensive. His Majesty's Minister in Peking reported on April 21, 1913 :²

The Tibetans seem to be still holding their own against the Chinese, are said to be in entire possession of the country between Chamdo and the Indian frontier..." General Chung wrote to the Viceroy on November 29, 1912 that the Tibetans were attacking him day and night.³ Yin too realised the precarious position of China, and declared that Chinese victories must be promptly followed by efforts at conciliation.⁴

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Encl. No. 304.*
Louis King to His Majesty's Minister Peking, 17 September 1912.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 261-502, May 1913, Notes p. 43.*
Note by Reynolds, 18 April 1913.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, No. 366.*
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 29 November 1912.
4. *ibid., Encl. No. 271.*
Jordan to Grey, 12 September 1912.

Meanwhile, J. Jordan had been instructed to inform the Chinese Government,¹ that as soon as they intimated their formal acceptance of the proposal regarding the Conference in India the British Government expected an immediate suspension of hostilities in Eastern Tibet, and until the Tibetan limits had been defined by the Conference the further advance of Chinese troops should be forbidden. But Chinese activities in Eastern Tibet and the Marches continued during the period of the Conference. The President of the Chinese Republic excused himself by saying that in spite of his order the Chinese officials had got out of hand in Eastern Tibet.²

During the period of Chao Erh feng's advance he was loyally supported by his brother Chao Erh-hsen, who was the Governor of Szechuan, and the frontier campaigns were under the direct guidance of, and assured of the direct financial support of a rich and stable Government. There was an open breach between the authorities at Chengtu and Tschienlu funds were not forthcoming, and the men were weary, discontented and irregularly paid, whilst the latest news from Szechuan showed that the province was in a state of confusion, troops mutinying, and the Government entirely disorganised.³

Chinese hold over the Marches in 1911-1912 was as artificial and insecure as it was in Chao's time, though by the end of 1914 Chinese control had been to a great extent re-established in the frontier regions as far as Mekong, the many short-lived rebellions left behind, a greater feeling of bitterness on the part of the natives towards the Chinese, than any of Chao Erh-feng's campaigns, owing to the absence of order and restraint amongst General Yin's ill-disciplined republican soldiers.

The Lhasa Government having their autonomy and being determined to retain it, viewed the advance of the Szechuan expeditionary force with some alarm. The Kalon Lama, the Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan army, was sent with troops into Kham to stop the Chinese advance wherever he might

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-271, September 1913, No. 93.*
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Viceroy, 17 June 1913.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-251, March 1914, No. 49.*
Majesty's Charge d' Affaires Peking to Viceroy, 30 August 1913.
3. *ibid.*, Encl. 4. No. 122A.
Alston to Viceroy, 9 September 1913.

meet it.¹ As a result the advancing Chinese force was brought definitely to a halt on the line of the Mekong and the Mekong Salween divide, where they came in contact with the newly raised regiments from Central Tibet.

From this time the situation on the frontier changed its aspect. The confused border warfare between the tribesmen and lamas of Kham developed into a war between China and Tibet, over the question of the Sino-Tibetan frontier.

Towards the end of 1913 Yin Ch'ang-heng left the frontier for Peking, where Yuan Shih-kai was then engaged in establishing his control over China, with a view to becoming first President Dictator and then Emperor of a new Dynasty. When he arrived in Peking, General Yin instead of receiving honours, and high military ranks, was immediately arrested, but after languishing for a time in prison and narrowly escaping execution for the murder of Chao Erh-feng, was released and relapsed into obscurity.

The commencement of the year 1914 found the position beginning to stabilise itself. The Chinese front extended along the Mekong river from the Yunnan border northwards to the neighbourhood of Chamdo, whence it ran along the Mekong Salween divide up to the southern border of the Kokonor territory (Chinese Ch'ing Hai). Batang and Chamdo were as before the principal outlying bases, while outlying Chinese garrisons were scattered up and down the frontier, watching the Tibetan forces under the Kalon Lama. The latter's troops being centred on Sherapando and Sha-Yu Zanka (Chinese Chaiyu Chiago) in the Salween Valley. This line remained the frontier for the next few years, due to the truce resulting from the Sino-Tibetan negotiations, which had in the meantime taken place in India.

Thus it is observed that the Chinese Revolution did not bring any fundamental change in the nature of Chinese policy towards the Central Asian territories. There was only a modification of the language from that in which this policy was originally expressed.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 404-555, August 1914, No. 540.*

Macdonald to Deputy Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department.

The Republican Government of China did not give up the plans of Chao Erh-feng, though there were quiet periods, Yin Ch'ang took up the work of Chao. Like Chao he too had planned to march to Lhasa from Chamdo, but the plan did not materialise.

There was no joint effort in the Tibetan Marches in the post Revolutionary Era. By 1914 the Chinese were definitely on the defensive in Marches, and it seemed extremely unlikely that the Chinese would be able to establish themselves even in the Assam Himalayas,¹ let alone advance from their base at Chamdo for the reoccupation of Lhasa.

1. For a discussion of the Assam Himalayan region see Section I of Chapter V.

5

New British Policy vis-a-vis China

Early in 1911 the Chinese forces in Tibet were posing a problem to the British in the Assam Himalayas. Evidence of Chinese pressure in the Assam Himalayas, India's North-East frontier with Tibet made the British extremely uneasy. It was clear that China had definitely embarked on a forward policy. She sensed British weakness and indecision, and decided to exploit it as best as she could. The Chinese contention that the areas comprising the North-East frontier of India and down to the plains of Assam was under her jurisdiction, however, is falsified in the light of historical perspective.

Problem of Assam Himalayas

In the Assam Himalayas Pome and Zayul were the targets of Chinese colonisation and absorption. Pome is a Tibetan district, in that regions where the Tsangpo turns abruptly south, to cut its way through the Assam Himalayas and become the Brahmaputra. Both Pome and Zayul are situated in the south of the tribal tracts of the Assam hills, where the British exercised indirect administration. These two provinces were of interest to China because they commanded the shortest route between Lhasa and Yunnan province, an alternative to the main Szechuan Lhasa road. The Chinese in fact contemplated opening up a road through Pome region in order to provide a short-cut between China and Lhasa via Batang and Zayul.

In August 1910 Chao Erh-feng decided to experiment in Chinese settlement in Zayul, a district of Tibet proper bordering on Assam. According to J.R. Muir's description Zayul is a

place in the tributary of the Brahmaputra within nine days journey of the Assam frontier.¹

In bleak Batang Chao Erh-feng's policy of colonisation had failed. Zayul and Pome, contained tracts of land which by Tibetan standards were at low altitudes. In the Zayul Valley rice cultivation was considered to be possible. China imagined that colonists would fare much better there. A notification was issued by Chao Erh-feng Warden of the Marches, inviting Chinese husbandmen to take up lands in a district which he called Tse-yu, and affirmed to be suitable for the production of rice.² This project is of interest because it was the first effort to colonise any part of Tibet proper, with Chinese immigrants as distinct from the Tibetan states of Western Szechuan, Wilkinson was apprehensive that if this scheme succeeded there would be a Chinese agricultural colony north of Rima, likely to spread to the confines of Northern Burma and North-Eastern Assam.³

Towards 1912 the British became conscious of the position of Zayul, and were eager to exclude it from that part in which the Chinese would be allowed to station troops according to the Memorandum of August 17, 1912.⁴ Britain protested against the presence of Chinese in Rima, on the Lohit Valley.⁵

Chinese activities in Zayul with the intention of bringing the province under her domination was noticed from 1910 onwards. Strangely, at first Britain tacitly accepted the occupation of Rima by China when she should have protested. In 1911-1912 it was rumoured that China meant to incorporate not only Zayul district but the whole of the province of Kham eventually in China proper,⁶ and according to Bailey's report of late 1912:

1. *Foreign Department, Secret External Proceedings, No. 553-701. February 1911, Sub. Encl. No. 631. Muir to Wilkinson, 7 October 1910, Cited hereinafter as For. Sec. E.*
2. *ibid.*, No. 557.
Wilkinson to Max Muller, 3 September 1910.
3. *ibid.*, No. 569.
Max Muller to Foreign Office, 27 September 1910.
4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, Sub. Encl. No. 184. Jordan's Memorandum of 17 August 1912.*
5. *ibid.*, Notes, pp. 23-24.
Note by McMahan, 22 November 1912.
6. *ibid.*, Notes p. 26.
Note by Grant, 11 November 1912.

the conversion of Zayul into a Chinese civil district was practically an accomplished fact when he was there.¹ There was, however, no confirmation of this report from any other source. On the contrary the Viceroy's telegram to the Secretary of State of November 20, 1912 reads :

From recent reports it appears that the small Chinese garrison at Rima were massacred in September by Tibet.² Therefore, the reports of the conversion of Zayul into a Chinese Civil district must be looked on as doubtful. The British authorities were laying stress on this rumour, as it would provide an excuse for an immediate answer to the Memorandum of August 17, 1912.

The Foreign Office became really assertive after sending this Memorandum (of August 17, 1912) to China. Jordan suggested on October 29, 1912,³ placing a force on the frontier between Sadiya and Rima sufficiently strong to serve as a warning against a further Chinese advance into Tibet, and if this was insufficient he considered the necessity of advance to Rima or beyond. Measures of this kind once commenced would be continued until permanent settlement was obtained. He considered this a suitable time, as the President of the Republic of China was unlikely to make any definite decision until he was elected by popular vote.

Jordan also advocated a forward move in the disputed area in the Burma-Yunnan frontier. The armed force working on the road to Menilkral was considered sufficiently large, and the establishment of a military police post at or near Menilkral was suggested. In the meanwhile, he was in favour of sending an immediate warning to China. In fact the India Office, Indian Government, and Foreign Office wanted a return to the *status*

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, No. 296.*

Secretary of State to Viceroy, 5 November 1912.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 276-550, June 1910, No. 358.*

Max Muller to Viceroy, 6 March 1910. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913, No. 357.* Viceroy to Secretary of State, 26 November 1912.

3. *ibid.*, No. 287.

Britannic Majesty's Minister to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1 November 1912.

quo ante the Tibet Mission.¹ The Viceroy wrote to Secretary of State on February 4, 1913, that not only Zayul but also Markham should be left in Tibet proper.²

This encroachment of China down to Rima and right on Britain's administrative border was one of the main causes of the anxiety and activity of the British, on the North-East frontier of India.

On China's part her attempts at the absorption of Zayul were probably part of the general scheme for a new Province of Tibetan territory in the East. The Chinese contemplated calling the new Province Hsi K'ang, extending from Techienlu on the east to the Tantu Pass (Chu Kang-la) on the west, and from Wei Hsi on the south to Kokonor in the north. Such a province would include a large portion of the country of Kham which was undoubtedly Tibetan territory. The westerly limit of Kham is said to be the Gai-la, only about 100 miles, from Lhasa, and Kham is supposed to extend from that pass to the Tibet border on the east, and as far south as the northerly limits of the independent tribes of the Assam border³ (The Chinese evidently claimed that it included these tribes).

For the British, Pome until 1910 was quite an unexpected district of Tibet to the west of Shiuden Gomps.⁴

Early in 1911 the Chinese forces in Lhasa, under the control of General Chung Ying and the Amban Lien Yu were engaged in military operations in Pome.⁵ The Abor country was evidently included by the Chinese in Pome, (it is called Pomed in places) and the rumours of considerable Chinese operations in the region just north of the Abor country

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913* Notes p. 27.

Note by Grant, 19 November 1912.

2. *ibid.*, No. 495.

Viceroy to Secretary of State, 4 January 1913.

3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 261-502, May 1913*, Notes p. 39.

Note by Reynold, 25 March 1913.

4. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 159-197, September 1911*, No. 184.

Bailey to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 8 August 1911.

5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 553-701, February 1911*, No. 603.

Bell to Secretary to Government of India in Foreign Department, 28 November 1910. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 159-197, September 1910.* Jordan to Grey, 22 July 1911.

leaves doubt whether these operations were planned by the Chinese before Williamson's murder by the Abors. The British Minister at Peking reported¹ to the Viceroy that the *Peking Gazette* of July 14, contained a memorial by Amban of Lhasa, referring to operations which had been carried on for over a year against Pome country, north of Sadiya, and described arrangements for despatch of a force down the Dihang river towards the Abor country. Bell viewed that the Chinese campaign against Pome would be a prolonged one,² and it was feared that the reinforcement of Chinese troops there³ was an attempt on the part of the Chinese to establish suzerainty or sovereignty over the Abors and other tribes on the northern frontier of Assam.

But it appears doubtful whether China had any deliberate plans of establishing suzerainty or sovereignty over Pome ; more likely it was part of her general scheme, of colonising Tibet, and having already subdued Draya, Chamdo, Dergo and Zayul in eastern Tibet she was now devoting her attention to the southern portion of Tibet.

Pome enjoyed a real degree of independence from the rule of the Dalai Lama's Government, and did not show signs of welcoming an increase in indirect Chinese influence in its local administration. Extract from the diary of J.L.R. Weir, British Trade Agent at Gyantse for the month of June 1911 reads :⁴ "The Po-pas (inhabitants of Poyul) are giving the Chinese troops who are sent to conquer them a lot of trouble". Chinese colonising activities were not accepted by the Pome people. Though Chinese reinforcements were continually sent to Pome from Lhasa, disturbances continued, and the Chinese sustained

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 159-197, September 1910*, No. 159. Britannic Majesty's Minister at Peking to Viceroy, 21 July 1911.
2. *ibid.*, No. 171. Bell to Secretary to Government of India in the Foreign Department, 25 July 1911.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 225-301, August 1911*, Notes p. 9. Note by Clarke, 13 July 1911.
4. *ibid.*, No. 292.

Extract from the diary of Captain J.L.R. Weir British Trade Agent at Gyantse for the month of June 1911.

serious loss.¹ Information was received from diverse sources that the people of Pome had been proving too much for the Chinese.²

In fact Chinese control of Pome and Zayul was only for very short periods before the Revolution of 1911, and from the records no definite information can be gathered specifying the period during which China exercised unchallenged control over these two provinces. The Chinese also extended their activities to Rima (administrative centre of Zayul), but as has been described earlier, the colonisation of Zayul failed, and consequently Chinese districts to be called Pome Hsien and Tsanju Hsein, which had subsequently been planned for Pome and Zayul never actually materialised.

Nevertheless Chinese in Pome and Zayul would naturally extend their influence to the Assam hill tribes. (Pome is just north of Abor tribal territory), and reports were current that Chao's Agents had convoked a meeting of Mishmi tribal headmen and solicited from them allegiance to Peking.

Such instances of Chinese pressure in the Assam Himalayas, India's North East frontier with Tibet made the British extremely uneasy.

If China acquired control of the Assam hills then the rich Assam Valley would be lost to India. During 1910 and 1911 London was cautious in her steps, and anxious not to jeopardise British coastal trade with China. Moreover, she was apprehensive that Russia might take advantage of British action in the Assam Himalayas to disregard the 1907 Convention. Thus, despite repeated warning from the Government of India regarding Chinese moves towards Assam, London was in a dilemma, which made retaliation difficult in the initial stages.

After the death of Noel Williamson in 1911, the British Government pursued an active and defensive policy in the Assam frontier which in many respects departed radically from the concept of non-interference.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 225-301, August 1911, No. 295.*

Extract from the diary of D. Macdonald British Trade Agent at Yatung, Tibet for the month of June 1911.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 159-197, September 1911, Notes p. 1.*

Note by McMahan, 22 July 1911.

In fact at this stage the British were faced with a boundary problem far more serious than any which had arisen along the Indo-Tibetan border since the Tibetans were expelled from Sikkim in 1888.

Previously the British had as a matter of practice reasserted their position from time to time. But in 1911 and 1912 that appeared to be of no avail. For the first time on the basis of the Memorandum of August 17, 1912 Britain proceeded to negotiate the status of Tibet, and adopted a firm attitude towards China. The problem of the Assam Himalayas, which developed rapidly in 1910 and 1911, was the immediate operating factor behind the fundamental change in British policy.

British Administration of the Hill Tribes of Assam¹

Before proceeding to examine the changed British policy towards China it is essential to trace the history of British India's connection with the hill tribes of Assam in the 19th and 20th century, for a clear picture of the extent of British control in this region.

From the 13th to the 19th century the Ahom Kingdom prevailed over the ancient land of Kamrupa.² The Ahom Rajas were generally successful in their dealings with the tribal communities inhabiting the frontier track, and established their political authority over them. In the political geography of the Assam Valley the names of the tribes who were tributaries of the Ahom King, the Daphlas, Akas and Bhutias are referred to, the

1. This discussion has been wholly adopted from Ray, Ashis Kumar. *A Dissertation on India-China Border Dispute on the Eastern Sector of India (NEFA)*. In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Arts Degree of the University of Jadavpur, 1966, with the consent of the Author.
2. In the ancient Indian chronicles the Assam Himalayan region has been repeatedly and explicitly mentioned as a part of India. For a brief discussion of the references in ancient Indian Literature to the tribal areas in India see : *Report of the Officials of the Government of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, February 1961, pp. 103-104* cited hereinafter as Boundary Commission Report. The Chinese side made only general statements criticising the Ancient Indian Chronicles : *ibid.*, p. 116.

tribute paid by them and the passes by which they descended to the plains are noted.¹ The success of the Ahoms in their dealings with the hill tribes has been admitted by Michell : "In 1820 before we took possession of Assam, the Mishmis were obedient to the orders of the Government and paid tribute to the Sadiya Khow Gohain".² Michell further noted : "In 1825 Captain Neufville reported to the Quarter Master General, that the Abors were giving assistance to the Gohain of Sadiya against the Singphas".³ The Mogul historian Shihabuddin Talish, who accompanied a Mogul expedition in 1662-63 wrote : "Although most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring hills paid no taxes to Raja of Assam yet they accepted his sovereignty and obeyed some of his commands."⁴ Assamese Ambassador Madhabeharan Kataki, with the Mogul Commander Raja Ram Singh, had referred to the Tribal legions of Ahom Army :⁵ "Numerous chieftains of the mountainous regions have become our willing allies in the campaign. They consist of a total strength of 3 lakhs of soldiers. They are not amenable to any consideration of right or wrong. Their participation in this campaign has been directly sanctioned by His Majesty and they rush furiously against the enemy without waiting for the orders of the general. They are quick and sudden in their attacks, and their movements and sections cannot be presaged." Interested travellers like Desideri (1716-1721) Della Penna (1731) and Gutaloff (1349) have also testified to the limits of Tibet along the high Himalayan range.⁶

1. *Boundary Commission Report*, p. 104.

2. G.N. Patterson who now more or less contradicts India's title to the North East Frontier Agency, however, freely admits that "India's northern frontier is a traditional one in the sense that it has existed where it is now recognised by India for nearly 3,000 years". See G.N. Patterson : *Peking vs. Delhi*, London, 1963, p. 167.

3. *ibid.*, p. 104.

4. *ibid.*

5. *ibid.*

6. *Boundary Commission Report* : pp. 105-106.

De Filippi (ed.) Desideri : *An Account of Tibet*, London, 1939 pp. 143-145. Markham : *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, London, 1879, p. 314. Horace Della Penna (1760) States that Mon (Tawang) Lhaba and Lhakapatre (rest of N.E.F.A.) were outside Tibet.

In 1961 during the discussion between the officials of the Government of India and the People's Republic of China on the boundary questions, the Chinese officials denied that that area was controlled and ruled directly by the Ahoms, and that tribute was paid to them. The Chinese officials stated that the various passages specifically quoted by the Indian side referred possibly to other parts of Assam in the east and south and not the areas north of the alignment claimed by the Chinese side. This was, however, a misinterpretation. When the Mogul historian Shihabuddin Talish referred to the inhabitants of "neighbouring hills" accepting the sovereignty of the Raja of Assam, he was undoubtedly referring to the tribal areas in the north, because the expedition of Mir Jumla, the Mogul General whom Talish accompanied, went only into this northern area. Talish never went anywhere into eastern or southern Assam. In his statement about the Tribal legions, the Assamese Ambassador Katakai in referring to the Ahom Army, was evidently thinking of the Himalayan areas, because nowhere else in Assam are "mountainous region" to be found.¹

In 1961 China asserted that the Assam Himalayas for a very long time belonged to Tibet.² They brought forward actual evidence with regard to Monyul Layul and Lower Zayul. China did not, however, state what she considered to be the areas of these three localities, and judging from the evidence these appeared to be only three pockets of the large area claimed by the Chinese side in the eastern sector. For example Lower Zayul may have referred only to Rima area. China claimed that Monyul became Tibetan territory only around 1580 when the Fifth Dalai Lama deputed Lancheu K'e and Mera Lama to take over this area. Later during the discussion, the Chinese side argued that this area had come under the rule of Tibetan authority in the days of the Second Dalai Lama. There was, therefore, a clear contradiction in the Chinese position.

In February 1826 the British were victorious in the First Burmese War and by the Treaty of Yandaboo British East India Company's Government acquired Assam.

The Company's Government, however, did not immediately take over the direct administration of the mountainous north-

1. *Boundary Commission Report*, p. 104.

2. *ibid.*, p. 121.

east frontier tract. Through the instrumentality of local rulers the Government exercised indirect administration in this sparsely inhabited tribal territory. In course of time the Ahom kings extended their administrative jurisdiction over the wild tribes. The Ahom Government appointed frontier wardens and Governors to rule over the different tribes, for instance the Barphy Kam Darrang Rajas were appointed to deal with the Bhutias.¹

As the Ahom system of administration was working well, the British after taking possession of the country thought it advisable to leave the administration of the whole of the tract to the same independent local tribal chiefs, who were in possession of the country at the time of the British annexation. This arrangement continued until it was finally annexed into Assam which had been converted into a Non-Regulating Province of British India in 1892.

Sadiya and the neighbouring villages which covered the central and eastern portion of the frontier tract were handed over to the Sadiya Khow Gohain, the Chief of the Khamptis, who had been governing the area since 1794, with special rights granted by the Ahom kings. This arrangement was made by David Scott, the first Agent to the Governor General in the North-East frontier tract.²

The old Sadiya Khow Gohain died in 1835 and in 1842 a proclamation was issued announcing the incorporation of Sadiya and Matok (which had fallen heirless after the death of Miju Gohain in 1839) into British territory.³ Both the tracts were added to the Lakhimpur district, the headquarters of which were transferred to Dibrugarh, in the Matok country for administrative convenience. From that time Principal Assistant at Dibrugarh, or the Deputy Commissioner as was his subsequent designation, generally performed the duties of Political Agent,

1. For the detailed history of the Ahom rule in Assam, see Edward Gait: *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1926. R.M. Lahiri: *The Annexation of Assam*, Calcutta, 1954. S. Bhuyan: *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Gauhati, 1949.
2. For the technical nature of the Ahom administration in the North-East Frontier Tract, see *Assam District Gazetteer*, Vol. VIII (Lakhimpur) by B.C. Allen, Calcutta, 1905, Pp. 48-94.
3. *ibid.*, p. 49.

with the help since 1882, of an Assistant Political Officer stationed at Sadiya.

As to the early British administration in the western sector of the North-East frontier land, it may be recalled that the western tract (the Balipara frontier tract as it subsequently came to be known) was brought under the Darrang District of Assam, which had been separated from lower Assam and created into a special district in 1833. Its headquarters were first established at Mongoldari, but in 1838 was removed to Tezpur, which was situated at the centre of the district and nearer to the Dafla tribes, who at that time were a source of some anxiety to the British Government.

Thus the history of the North-East frontier of India from 1842 was the history of Lakhimpur and Darrang districts, until the Sadiya and Balipara frontier tracts were formed in 1912 and 1914.¹

Before proceeding further it is relevant to discuss a few of the agreements which the British entered into with the tribes on the North-East frontier of India. Soon after the British annexation of Assam, Deb Raja, the Chief of the Tawang Monbas undertook to submit to British jurisdiction in 1844.² A number of Bhutia chiefs also undertook in the same year "never to join any person or persons that may be at enmity with the British Government..." They also agreed "to act up to any orders we may receive from their authorities". They also promised good behaviour on pain of forfeiting the pensions they were receiving from the Government of India. The British Government also signed three agreements with the Akas between 1862 and January 1863 and the fourth in 1866.³

Here one cannot help contradicting Lamb and Rubin for their statements not befitting an impartial observer.

1. *Calcutta Gazette* (1842), p. 653.
Quoted in E. Gait, *op. cit.*
2. In recent years there has been a tendency on the part of some scholars to prove that Tawang belonged to Tibet and China. For my analysis of the position of Tawang, see Appendix-IV.
3. For the relevant documents of the Agreements, see C.U. Aitchison : *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and the Neighbouring Countries.* (5th ed.), 14 vols., Calcutta, 1929. Vol. XII, pp. 119-122, pp. 142-165.

Rubin assumes that : "It would seem unwise to rely on relations apparently set up by the relevant treaties..."¹

Lamb has raised the problem of the interpretation of these agreements. In support of this contention he cites a treaty which was entered into by F. Jenkins, Agent for the Governor-General for the North-East frontier in 1844 with six chiefs from the Tawang tract. He has expressed his doubt about the status of these chiefs. He gives the example of another agreement by which the Aka tribes accepted a subsidy in return for their promise not to violate the British border and he cites the oath by which they bound themselves that "we hereby swear according to our customs, by taking in our hands the skin of a tiger, that of a bear, and elephants dung, and by killing a fowl". Then he says that "suppose it turned out that the British negotiation of this agreement was in error, and had been misled and that the custom actually demanded the use of cow-dung and not elephant-dung? Would the agreement be valid?"²

There appears to be no reason at this late date to doubt the provision of the treaties in so far as they had been carried out by both the signatories in good faith for years. It is to be noted that in treating this subject both Rubin and Lamb underestimate the functional value of international agreements.

At this stage it is relevant to look into the history of the British dealings with the tribes inhabiting the North-East frontier tract of India.³

The Chief tribes of this region were :

- (1) The Monbas in the Tawang, Tammapha, Donkho and Dulper Ko river valleys.
- (2) The Akas in the Tengpo and Beichon river valleys.
- (3) The Daflas in the area east of the Aka and Monba territory and between the Kaw and Subansiri rivers.

1. P. Rubin : "The Sino-Indian Border Dispute," *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, January 1960, p. 105.
2. Alastair Lamb : *The China-India Border*, London, 1964, pp. 543-547.
3. See T. Dalton : *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872.
A. Mackenzie : *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1884.
V. Rlwin, *India's North-East Frontier in the 19th century*, Bombay, 1959. Ried : *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941*, Shillong, 1942.

- (4) The Miories in the area north and east of the Daffa river upto the Subansiri river.
- (5) The Abors in the area between the Subansiri and the Dihang river valleys, and
- (6) The Mishmis in the area in the Dihang Valley.

As early as 1826 the British Political Officers whilst dealing with the hill tribes along the north of the Brahmaputra Valley realised that they posed peculiar administrative problems. These tribes living in extremely difficult territory had been accustomed to raiding the plains of Assam, and the rulers of Assam kept them in check by giving them bribes and subsidies. It may have been possible to bring the fringe of the tribal areas under direct administrative control, but difficulties of communications made it impossible to penetrate deep into the tribal hills. Consequently, the British heavily preoccupied with other problems of their Indian Empire sought to preserve peace and tranquillity of the Assam border with the minimum of fuss and expenditure.

The initial instrument of British policy was the payment of "Posa" and its suspension if the tribes misbehaved. On occasions more serious measures would be called for. Then the tribes in question would be subjected to a "blockade" which amounted to denying them access to Assamese market and goods, a real hardship in view of the scarcity of salt in the Assam Himalayas. If the blockade failed, then a punitive expedition would be sent into the hills to show the flag.¹

At the same time efforts were made to extend the administrative jurisdiction of the British Government into the tribal

1. Rubin contends that these payments "appear to have represented the commutation of traditional rents and levies which the tribal politics appear to have exacted periodically from the people of Assam before the establishment of British rule in the plains". P. Rubin : *op. cit.*, p. 106. This may suggest that the British were compelled to continue to pay tributes to these tribes, such an interpretation picturing the British authority in the helpless role of 'vassal' to tribesmen, is obviously preposterous. It must be recalled that when the tribesmen proved troublesome, the payments were stopped and punitive expeditions were sent, if necessary. This proves that the payments were really in the nature of pension or stipends, that were paid, *ex gratia* and not by way of commutation of formal levies.

areas.¹ In 1873 laws were passed and notifications issued defining the regular administrative boundaries between the plains and the hill tracts. By the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations the so-called Inner Line was created. It was a device designed to reduce the likelihood of a situation arising in which a punitive expedition would become unnecessary. This was a purely administrative measure, a line was defined across which certain classes of persons could not pass without the tribes in the Assam tribal areas and people such as the tappers of rubber and catchers of wild elephants, who might wander into the dangerous territory. The other intention of the Regulations was to collect taxes from those traders who procured jungle products from the tribes at a very low price. Moreover, the spread of tea plantation into the foothills of the Assam Himalayas also promised tribal trouble and confusion, and the Government felt it to be as well as to have some means of regulating economic development in this direction. The 'Inner Line' where it existed served as an administrative boundary. Taxes were not collected beyond it. It was not, however, the International Boundary of British India, as the Chinese officials tried to establish without adequate evidence during their discussions with the Indian officials on the boundary question in 1961.² Such a boundary was the Outer Line.

In the notifications of 1875 the Inner Line was clearly defined and published for the Darrang and Lakhimpur Districts of Assam, running along the foothills of the Bhutanese border to Nizanghat in the lower reaches of the Dihang territory of the Brahmaputra. At the same time, part of the Outer Line was demarcated though no publicity was given to this fact. It ran from the Bhutanese border to the Barai river at latitude 27°, longitude 98°20' east of the Barai the Outer Line was however, not properly demarcated though the course of such a line was defined verbally by the Indian Government. There was no need to define the question further, because there was no other

1. For the details of internal administration in the tribal areas, see *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. III and Vol. V in general.
2. See *Boundary Commission Report*, comments on the Eastern Sector under Item 3, pp. 212-213.

sphere of influence in the immediate neighbourhood into which the tribal areas might fall.¹

In 1961 the Chinese officials asserted that there was no evidence to establish British administration beyond the Inner Line or the exact location of the Outer Line.² They evidently ignored the evidence that permits were granted to foreigners to cross the Inner Line, and there was exercise of civil and judicial administration. The Chinese in claiming the Inner Line was in fact claiming what was never more than an administrative line, with no international significance whatsoever. It was, in fact, not even a municipal line. The very term Inner Line showed that it was only an administrative line within, and south of the international alignment. Obviously there was a misunderstanding of the nature of the Inner Line. The area north of the Inner Line was inhabited by tribes with

1. Alastair Lamb contends that the British International Border before 1914 followed the foothills and not the main Himalayan watershed. In support of this contention he says "The true situation as of 1908 is shown with great provision in the map. The province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 32 miles to the inch..., appended to the Vol. II of the 1909 edition of Aitchison's *Collection of Treaties*.....while the map first referred to locate correctly the international boundary of pre-McMahon days as following the foothills it also makes clear that the tribal areas were not considered by the British as being of the same status in international law as, for example, was Sinkiang..."

Alastair Lamb: *The China-India Border, Origins of the Disputed Boundaries*, Oxford, 1964, pp. 126-127. About the position regarding maps of pre 1916 days of the north-east frontier, the best explanation has been given by Caroe Olaf, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India from 1939 to 1945. He says, "In the early days of British rule the external frontier of India was conceived as lying at the limits of the territory where British writ ran. But on the north-east, as on the belt known as the North-West frontier, there lay beyond the limits of the administrative territory an agglomeration of tribes owning no master. In such cases it became the practice of the early British administrators to exercise in the region beyond the administered border what was known [as loose 'political control'. Trans-border agencies were set up, but it was not until later that the need was felt to show the tribes so politically controlled as excluded from the neighbouring states and included in India. Caroe Olaf: *The Geography and Ethnics of India's Northern Frontier, United Asia* Vol. III. No. 4, p. 321. Quoted in P.C. Chakravarti's *India-China Relations*, Calcutta, 1961, p. 149.

2. *Boundary Commission Report*, pp. 212-213.

a distinct culture, and a way of life of their own, and the policy of the Indian Government was to preserve the unique quality of tribal life. For that reason regular administration such as was to be found in other parts of India, was not extended to these areas. What was to be found north of the Inner Line and upto the international boundary was a special type of administration adopted to the peculiar needs of the tribal areas.

In 1908 the Government of India issued a notification conveying the Governor-General's sanction to the Frontier Tract Regulation of 1880. This regulation extended to any tract inhabited or frequented by barbarous, or semi-civilised tribes adjoining or within the territories under the administration of the Chief Commissioner of Assam. Under the Regulation, the administration of civil and Criminal Justices as also revenue administration were to be vested in such officers as the Chief Commissioner might appoint.

The illustration of all these relevant administrative measures adopted by the British Government simply contradicts Patterson's observation that "the extension of British administration in the north-east frontier was done sporadically without a central policy..."¹ The Chinese officials in 1961 expressed doubt,² as to how the Border Regulations of 1880 could have applied also to tribal territories adjoining the districts administered by the Chief Commissioner of Assam. Actually special arrangements were made for administration of these areas. Variation in types of administration was not peculiar to India.

At this stage, it is relevant to analyse at some length the history of British dealings with tribal politics in the Assam Himalayas.³

1. Patterson : *op. cit.*, pp. 171-173.

2. *Boundary Commission Report*, pp. 213-214.

3. Rubin has bluntly argued that before 1914 there was hardly any such thing as British Administration in the Assam Himalaya, and that although in 1882 the Government of India authorised the appointment of an officer to control British relations with tribes, effective British administration in the area remains doubtful. (For this statement see, P. Rubin : 'The Sino-Indian Border Dispute,' *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, January 1960, pp. 97-98). There is, however, ample evidence to prove that actual authority of the British Indian Government affected the lives, births, deaths, marriages, agreements, crimes, business, actual property and so on, of the peoples in the tribal areas among themselves and between them and the peoples on the plain. For a full documentation see, Michell, Report on the North East Frontier of India, pp. 202-206.

It may be recalled that ever since the occupation of Assam the British Government, throughout the 19th century entered into various agreements with these hill tribes; involving peace, economic and administrative matters. These undertakings by the tribes confirmed their acceptance of the authority of the British Indian Government.¹

By the beginning of the 20th century the nature of British administration in the Assam Himalayas assumed a more positive and definite character. The developing economy of Assam began to find an obstacle in the Inner Line restrictions. Timber companies looked enviously at the unravished forests beyond the Inner Line. Tea planters saw great profits in the foothills. The Indian Government began to receive requests by important trading interests that the Inner Line be advanced northwards. At the same time, it became clear to those who had any understanding of the tribal problems, that expediency dictated that the hill people must be brought under more definite British control. A champion of this masterly active approach towards the tribes emerged in Noel Williamson, who in 1905 took over the post of Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, from J.F. Needham, after the latter's long tenure of twenty-three years.

The policy in regard to these tribes had hitherto been one of non-interference, except in cases of (a) outrages on British subjects (b) violation of the Inner Line and (c) danger to the interests of people dwelling inside the British border by reason of the proximity of disturbances outside, and all proposals made for the exercise of closer control of the tribes between the Inner Line, which represents the limit of ordinary administration, and the Centre Line which represents the limits of British Political control, had been opposed.

Williamson, backed by the Assam Administrative authorities argued that tribesmen should be encouraged to settle within the regularly administered British territory, where they could benefit from modern civilisation, and British officers should venture further into tribal territory, visit the villages and establish posts, not as a punitive measure, but as a matter of

1. For the details regarding the relevant treaties see, in general C.U. Aitchison : *Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. II (1908) and Vol. XII (1929) pp. 119-122, pp. 142-165.

routine policy to make the tribes aware of the benefits of British rule in India.¹

In January 1909, a tour by the Political Officer Sadiya, in the Abor country lying between the Inner and Outer lines in order to assert British sovereignty over the tract between these lines, to come to an arrangement with the Abors in regard to the cessation of blackmail, and the imposition of a reasonable poll tax or house tax on all settlers within the tract, and if possible to make such arrangements as might be practicable for the reservation of the forests, was sanctioned, but had to be abandoned for the time being owing to the illness of Williamson, the Political Officer. Meanwhile Williamson had accidentally met a Kebong headman of influence on the Brahmaputra early in the year, and had been invited by him to visit his village.

Williamson was able to collect much useful information as a result of this tour. His general conclusions were summarised at the time by the Government of eastern Bengal and Assam as follows :²

- (1) That there was no Tibetan influence in the tract in question.
- (2) That Kebong controlled several of the villages which Government would have to deal with in order that a complete settlement could be arrived at, and that it was, therefore, an important centre for negotiations.
- (3) That the attitude of the hillmen were generally friendly.

1. It may be recalled here that before Williamson, between 1826 to 1886 about a dozen British explorers trudged all over the tribal territory as may be seen from the letter no. 1199 dated June 21, 1886 from the Assam Secretariat to the Chief Commissioner to the Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department (See B.C. Allen : *Assam District Gazetteers*, Lakhimpur, Vol. III, pp. 82-83. Captain Beford and Captain Wilcox made separate journey up the lower Lohit in 1826, Lt. Rowlatt in 1844-1845, T.T. Cooper in 1869-1870. A French missionary Father Kriel reached Tibetan territory by this route in 1851 and again in 1854. In 1885-1886 J. F. Needham and Captain Mobsworth also reached Tibet this way. As a result of all these explorations, the British officers had a definite knowledge of British administrative limits in the north-east frontier tract.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 36-50, May 1915, Appendix to Notes, pp. 1-28. Summary of correspondence attached to Sir Henry McMahon's Report on the North-East Frontier.*

- (4) That they recognised that all the country upto the foot of the hills was British territory.
- (5) That they were very amenable to the influence of money, and were, therefore, likely to welcome a settlement which would probably carry with it pecuniary benefits.

The local Government suggested that a promenade to Kebong, Padu, Membo, Salluk and Damdub, and Sedumo which is south-west of Kebong, should be undertaken by Williamson during the ensuing open season, accompanied by an adequate escort of military police. Kebong was three marches distant from the British border, while the other villages were all either in territory between the Inner and Outer lines, or a little beyond the latter. The local Government thought it would be impossible to effect a complete settlement with the Abors without extending the tour on these lines.

After consulting the Secretary of State the Government of India sanctioned this tour in September 1909 "on the understanding that arrangement for settlement of difficulties in area between Outer and Inner lines should be the sole object of visit to villages beyond Outer line". The tour was, however, abandoned.

This was the position of affairs early in 1910, the year which saw the Chinese so active not only in Tibet, and all along the Burma-China frontier, but also (as discussed in the earlier part of this chapter) in the Assam Himalayan region.

Later the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam asked for instructions as to the policy to be pursued on the North-East frontier in the event of further information being received confirming the report of the effective occupation of Rima by the Chinese.

On October 23, 1910, the Viceroy Lord Minto telegraphed as follows to the Secretary of State :¹

In consequence of the proceedings of the Chinese in Rima and in the vicinity of tribal tracts on the North-East frontier, the question of our future relations with these tribes is causing anxiety locally. The military authorities consider

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 36-50, May 1915 Appendix to Notes, p. 19.*

that with reference to the advance of the Chinese the existing position is strategically unsound and hold that our influence should run approximately from the east of the wedge-shaped portion of Tibetan territory, known as the Tawang district, which runs down to the British Frontier north of Odalguri, in a north-easterly direction, to latitude 29° to longitude 94° , thence along latitude 29° to longitude 96° , thence in a south-easterly direction to the Zayul-Chu, as far east and as near as possible to Rima, thence across the Zayul-Chu valley to the Nazul-Chu Irrawady divide. In this area the tribes for the most part are believed to be independent, and some of them are already under our influence. We are inclined to think that the best policy to pursue would be to gain a buffer by extending the 'Outer Line' so far as may be necessary and by arranging that the tribes within or beyond it have no intercourse or relations with any other foreign power than ourselves. More complete information than is available, however, is required as to (i) the nature and extent of the territory of each tribe; (ii) how far, if at all, the tribes at present recognise the suzerainty of China or Tibet; and (iii) the possibility of executing arrangements on the lines indicated and the probable cost...

He further stated: "The Political Officer at Sadiya points out that these Mishmis are accustomed to look upon us as the dominant power on that frontier" and he is of opinion that, unless definite orders can be given, the tribe will be estranged and the Chinese may succeed in imposing their authority upon them. "The Mishmis have been under our influence hitherto, and one of their Chiefs has claimed to be a British subject. The Lieutenant Governor who is still considering the general question of securing a buffer between us and Tibet, holds that it will be unwise in any case to surrender to China the Mishmis over whom we have exercised our influence and urges that with the settled district of Lakhimpur and the important station at Dibrugarh to protect it is inadvisable to allow a possibly hostile power to thrust itself in upon us nearer than we can legitimately prevent..."

The question was further discussed at an interview between Lord Hardinge and Sir Lancelot Hare in Calcutta on November 22, 1910, when Hardinge expressed the opinion that any forward movement beyond the administrative frontier was to be strongly deprecated. Chinese aggression would, in Hardinge's view, be met not in the tribal territory bordering Assam, but by attack on the coast of China. He was, therefore, opposed to running risks or spending money on endeavours to create a strategic frontier in advance of the administrative border, and he was unable to agree to any promise of support being held out to the Mishmis or other tribes beyond our frontier who might appeal for help against Chinese aggression. Frontier Officers should, Hardinge thought, confine themselves to cultivating friendly relations with the border tribes, and punishing them for acts of hostility within the limits of British territory.

Subsequently, Sir Lancelot Hare addressed a demi-official letter to the Viceroy, which conveniently sums up the position, and is quoted in full. The letter ran as follows :¹

I think I hardly brought out with sufficient distinctness one important consideration which should induce us to press forward beyond the limits by which under a self-denying ordinance our frontier is at present limited. We only now claim suzerainty upto the foot of the hills. We have an inner line and an outer line. Upto the inner line we administer in the ordinary way. Between the inner and the outer lines we only administer politically. That is, our Political Officer exercises a very loose jurisdiction and to prevent troubles with frontier tribes passes are required for our subjects who want to cross the inner line. The country between the two lines is very sparsely inhabited and is mostly dense jungle.

Now should the Chinese establish themselves in strength or obtain complete control upto our outer line, they could attack us whenever they pleased and defence would be extremely difficult. We have a chain of frontier outposts directed to controlling the main routes used by the neighbouring hill tribes when they come down to trade in the

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 36-50, May 1915 Appendix to Notes, p. 21.*

cold weather. These are not on the outer line, because such position at the foot of the hills would be too unhealthy to occupy, as they would be in the worst part of what is called the Terai. It is accepted that, if the outposts were pushed forward so far as the line, then in each case it would be necessary to place them on the spurs of the hills and above malaria height. This we could only do if we established our suzerainty or could claim the consent of the hill people, who are in occupation as being under our protection. It seems to me, in view of the possibility of the Chinese pushing forward, that it would be a mistake not to put ourselves in a position to take suitable strategic points of defence. It is true in any trial of strength between England and China the contest would not probably be decided on this frontier, but we should be bound to defend our valuable tea gardens, and unless we had suitable positions this would be extremely difficult, and we could very easily be greatly harassed and put to great expense and have to maintain an unduly large force on this frontier.

I am, therefore, of opinion that we should take a more active line and should (a) tour in the hills bordering our frontier, (b) improve the trade routes to the principal villages so far as they lie within our recognised borders and further if not opposed and (c) give presents to our neighbours for friendly services and information.

Where we have already established ourselves by friendly relations, as in the country on the extreme east upto Sati on the road from Sadiya to Rima, we should maintain our present standing and should forbid China stepping in. After all if China press forward, we must forbid further progress some day, and at this point on our frontier I do not think we can safely allow the Chinese to advance beyond Sati. I think it would be a pity to give away any advantage we now possess here, and as far as I can see, this is the only point where any immediate measure is likely to be required. We should be well advised to take our stand. To allow the Chinese to intrude here would make the defence of the Lakhimpur district difficult and would not be in agreement with the accepted Burma frontier line. I have already

advocated this view in my official representation, and I wish to make it clear that I do not recede from the position.

The foregoing arguments were placed before His Majesty's Government by Hardinge's Government in a despatch, dated December 22, 1910,¹ where the Government of India said :

We have given our most careful consideration to these arguments, but we do not see our way at present to recommend the more active policy which the Lieutenant Governor allocates. We recognise that the Chinese may ultimately compel us to fix a line beyond which no further advance can be permitted but we see no necessity at present for incurring the risks and responsibilities entailed by a forward movement into the tribal territory now beyond our control and we propose, with Your Lordship's approval to request the Lieutenant Governor to instruct his frontier officers that they should confine themselves as hitherto, to cultivating friendly relations with the tribes beyond the 'Outer Line' and punishing them for acts of hostility within our limits should it be possible to obtain further information about the country beyond the 'Outer Line' without risk of complications, we should be prepared to authorise explorations for the purpose, but we would not permit any general increase of activity in this direction, nor can we recommend that any sort of promise should be given to the tribes that they may rely on our support or protection in the event of Tibetan or Chinese aggression.

While the matter was under the consideration of His Majesty's Government, Williamson the Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya made a tour up the Lohit river to Walong in the Mishmi country and obtained certain further information as to the proceedings of the Chinese in the vicinity, which caused the local Government to reiterate their proposal that the Mishmis should be brought definitely under British protection forthwith.²

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 36-50, May 1915, Appendix to Notes, p. 22.*
2. In the cold weather of 1907-1908 Williamson went up the Lohit almost to Walong. In the winter of 1909-1910 Williamson made another trip up the Lohit, during which he met and talked with the Tibetan officials of Rima. In early 1911 he went up the Lohit again, all the way up the border to Walong.

In March 1911 Williamson proposed to trek up the Dihang extension of the Brahmaputra into Tibet into the Abor tribal country to investigate reports of the Chinese probing into this territory. On March 6, the Provincial Government of East Bengal and Assam recommended to the Viceroy, that he be permitted to make this trip on the justification that he arrange with the hillmen the payment of poll tax for land cultivation.¹ The Government of India replied by telegram on March 22, asking specifically whether Williamson intended to cross the 'Outer Line'. This was followed by another telegram on March 23, which assured that it would not be necessary for him to go beyond the line. None of the messages reached him because he had set out from Sadiya on March 4, long before Calcutta got a chance to reply to the first message sent by the Governor of East Bengal.

Late in March Williamson and his companion Dr Gregarson and almost the whole of their followers were murdered in the village of Kebong.² His murder provided the immediate occasion for adopting a more vigorous tribal policy, for which Williamson had been arguing for several years.

It was impossible, in the interests of the general peace and security of the frontier, to overlook the treacherous behaviour of the Abors, and in making the necessary proposals for the punitive measures against them, the Government of India recommended that advantage should be taken of the expedition to survey and explore the tribal area, as far as possible in order to obtain knowledge requisite for the determination of a suitable boundary between India and China in the locality and at the same time, a friendly mission under escort of military police should be sent into the Mishmi country, with the object of preventing the Mishmis combining with the Abors and of obtaining information as to the nature and limits of the Mishmi country ! As regards the question of future policy, the Government of India said :

We do not propose that the Mishmis should be given a guarantee of protection, but we would leave them, as well

1. Angus Hamilton , *In Abor Jungles*, London, 1912, p. 43.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 36-50, May 1915*, Appendix to Notes, pp. 1-28.

Summary of Correspondence attached to Sir Henry McMahon's report on the North-East Frontier, p. 22.

as the Abors, in no manner of doubt as to their being under us, or as to their having to look to us for future reward or punishment according to their conduct. We should see no objection to the erection by this party of Cairns and boundary stones on what may be considered a suitable frontier line, since this would greatly strengthen our position in the event of future negotiations with China for frontier demarcation. It is not proposed to advance our administrative frontier ; our future policy would be to cultivate friendly relations with the Mishmis, and, in the event of our demarcating our external limit, we should explain that we regard it as the line within which no Chinese officials should come, and that we should periodically send a small police column to visit their country.

At the same time, it was proposed to send a friendly mission to the Miri country, with the object of obtaining information about the tract of country on the North-East frontier, which would not be covered by the Abor Expedition and connected exploring parties or the Mishmi Mission. In the despatch, dated the September 21, 1911, the Government of India, in placing the situation before His Majesty's Government said :

During the past few months, there have been further developments in the Chinese policy of expansion which it is impossible to ignore...circumstances have thus forced us to revert practically to the original proposals of Lord Minto's Government that endeavours should be made to secure, as soon as possible, a sound strategical boundary between China and Tibet and the tribal territory from Bhutan upto and including the Mishmi country, and this should we consider, now be the main object of our policy. As long as such tribal territory lay between us and our peacefully dormant neighbour Tibet, and undefined mutual frontier presented neither inconvenience nor danger. With the recent change in conditions, the question of the boundary well defined and at a safer distance from our administrative border has become one of imperative importance and admits of no delay, for we have on the administrative border of Assam some of the wealthiest districts of British

India, districts where large sums of private European capital have been invested and where the European population outnumbers that of almost any other district in India. The internal conditions moreover of our Eastern Bengal and Assam province are not such as to permit us to contemplate without grave anxiety the close advent of a new aggressive and intriguing neighbour...

The question of future arrangements for controlling and safeguarding the area between administrative boundary and the new external frontier remains to be considered. We consider that our future policy should be one of loose political control, having as its object the minimum of interference compatible with the necessity of protecting the tribesmen from unprovoked aggression, the responsibility for which we cannot avoid, and of preventing them from violating either our own or Chinese territory; and while endeavouring to leave the tribes as much as possible to themselves to abstain from any line of action, or inaction as the case may be, which may tend to inculcate in their minds any undue sense of independence likely to produce results of the nature obtaining under somewhat analogous conditions on the north-west frontier of India.¹

These proposals were generally approved by the Secretary of State on November 8, 1911.

Here it is relevant to note that the Chinese officials in 1961 sought to argue that the murder of Williamson was evidence that British administration did not exist in the Assam Himalayan region.² A stray murder in the course of over a hundred years of continuous exercise of administrative authority by British Indian Government does not prove either lack of administrative control, or that these areas belonged to Tibet. Occasional murders of officials took place in every part of the world, but on that ground no one can argue that administrative control did not exist.

It must be noted that by 1911 there were other urgent reasons besides the murder of Williamson, or of opinions of an

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 36-50, May 1915*, Appendix to Notes, pp. 22-23.

2. *Boundary Commission Report*, p. 214.

Assistant Political Officer for a new approach to the problem of the Assam Himalayas.

It may be recalled that after the occupation of Lhasa in 1905 China's forceful and ambitious Frontier Commissioner General Chao Erh-feng undertook the subjugation of Pome,¹ just to the north of the Abor country, along the Tsangpo Brahmaputra. There were also persistent rumours of Chinese activity among the Aka tribes to the east of the Tawang tract.²

With the Chinese penetration the British Government awoke to the immediate danger threatening the plains of Assam. It was realised that something ought to be done in order to counter the Chinese intrusion.³

With this clear understanding of the whole history of British administration from 1826 to the first quarter of the 20th century one can hardly fail to agree with Christopher Van Furer-Heimendorf who holds that "...I know from my observation that the Daflas and Miri country...had then within human memory never been entered by Chinese or Tibetans...it is difficult to imagine what historical arguments China could put forward in support of a claim to a country which has never been a part of China and is today administered by India".⁴

1. Discussed in detail in the earlier part of this chapter.
2. In June 1951 when F.M. Bailey was travelling down the Lohit on the last phase of his daring overland journey from Peking to India he met a number of Mishmi Chiefs who were evidently on their way upto Rima to attend a tribal conference which the Chinese had summoned.
3. Sir Arthur Hertzell of the Political and Secret Department at the India Office put the situation clearly when he wrote on 12 January, 1911. "...if anything goes wrong in Assam there would be very voiceful public opinion against us. There are no European Industries along the North East Frontier...But in Lakhimpur district there are over 70,000 acres of tea gardens turning out over 30,000,000 pounds of tea annually and employing over 200 Europeans and over 100,000 Indians. The European capital risks in tea must be enormous and there are other industries as well...Think of the howl the planters would let out, and the rise in the price of tea". *India Office Political External Files*, 1910, Vol. 13, quoted in Alastair Lamb: *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.
4. Furer Heimendorf, *Primitive Peoples of McMahon Line Country, Tribal Life in a Territory now claimed by China*, 236. *The Illustrated London News*, January 16, 1950, p. 94, quoted in S.P. Sharma: *The*

The Simla Conference of 1913-1914

Chao Erh-feng's campaigns, particularly his probes into Assam, made clear the dangers of an ambiguous status for Tibet.

In August 1912 the British Government proposed to the new Republic that Tibet's status be negotiated on the basis of the situation which had existed before Younghusband's Mission.

His Majesty's Government informed the Chinese Government in formal and unambiguous language of their policy as regards Tibet. This memorandum communicated on August 17, 1913¹ insisted on a new Anglo-Chinese guarantee against Peking's claims to sovereignty over Tibet. The unsettled military situation made some sort of Sino-Tibetan conciliation desirable.

One of the reasons advanced for bringing the Chinese and Tibetans together at the Conference table was that the disturbances between the two countries had given rise to serious unrest in the border area. If Nepal were to enforce claims for damage suffered by her citizens it would be difficult to restrain her, but Britain would still be held responsible by Russia.

Originally, London assumed that a bilateral Sino-Tibetan agreement could be reached and possibly concluded in Indian soil, which would take into consideration parts of Tibet inside which Chinese troops should not be sent.²

Indo-China Border Dispute; An Indian Perspective, 59 *American Journal of International Law*, January, 1965, pp. 16-47.

Alastair Lamb in *The India-Tibetan Border*, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, May 1960, p. 290, makes the rather distressing statement that the McMahon Line "ran through territory which had never been visited by Europeans, let alone surveyed". But fortunately for us there is a wealth of material to contradict Lamb. Elwin's *India's North-East Frontier in the 19th century*, Cambay, 1959 contains numerous accounts of explorations made in this area by both British officials and private individuals in the 19th century. Surveys had been made as early as 1864. In particular this portion of the boundary had been extensively surveyed in 1912-1913. See *Records of the Survey of India*, Vol. IV. (Exploration of the North-East Frontier) 1911, 1912, 1913-1914.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 170-509, February 1913*, No. 184. Britannic Majesty's Minister at Peking to Viceroy, 19 August 1912. The Memorandum of 17 August 1912 has been discussed in Ch. IV, Pt. III.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-271, September 1913*, Notes p. 36 Note by Reynold, 25 July 1913.

Following a suggestion from Jordan,¹ the Minister at Peking, a tripartite conference was considered a more effective means of obtaining a solution. He did not think that the course proposed by His Majesty's Government as to a conference between Chinese and Tibetans would lead to a permanent settlement of the Tibet question, but he agreed that it might prove a temporary solution of the immediate difficulties between the Chinese and Tibetans. Whether the Chinese Government would consent to negotiations being controlled by a third party, who was not to sign the agreement appeared doubtful. In his opinion, it would be if not impossible extremely difficult to exercise any effective control over them if they did not consent. His suggestion for a tripartite agreement was based on the precedent of the 1908 Trade Regulations. He submitted that it would involve the British Government in less responsibility than if they had followed their original course of first coming to an agreement with China and then getting Tibet to accept it. In proposing the abandonment of the traditional disinterested policy Jordan was primarily concerned with the danger of Tibet gravitating towards Russia.

With a view to concluding a tripartite agreement His Majesty's Government decided in May to invite the Tibetan and Chinese Government to a joint conference in India. Jordan was accordingly instructed² to reply to the Chinese offer to negotiate on the lines of the Memorandum of August 17, 1912, saying that His Majesty's Government proposed that China should participate with the British and Tibetan Government in a joint conference in India, with a view to a settlement of the Tibet question, by means of an agreement, to which all three Governments would be signatories.

After considerable reluctance the Chinese agreed not only to negotiate Tibet's status with the British,³ but to accept a representative of Lhasa as a co-equal plenipotentiary in the negotiations.⁴

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 262-502, May 1913, No. 462.*

His Majesty's Minister at Peking to Viceroy, 10 April 1913.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-271, September 1913, No. 37.*

Secretary of State to Viceroy, 23 May 1913.

3. *ibid.*, No. 250.

Alston to Viceroy, 2 July 1913.

4. *ibid.*, No. 252.

His Majesty's Charge d' Affaires Peking to Viceroy, 10 August 1913.

The inclusion of such a representative had significant implications. Tibet's full participation in the negotiations would constitute evidence of autonomy, and would thereby add substance to whatever agreement on Tibet was finally reached.

Before proceeding to the details of the conference it is worthwhile to make a note of the way in which China ultimately decided to participate in the conference. On January 30, 1913, Jordan reported that the Chinese Foreign Minister had expressed a desire to resume negotiations. China proposed negotiations on the basis of the British Memorandum of August 17, 1912, which would result in an exchange of notes, which they considered to be sufficient. Jordan, however, was keen on a formal agreement¹ and in correspondence with London added that Tibet might resent an Anglo-Chinese agreement without previous reference to her, as it would endanger the independence which she had won by her own efforts.

In March 1913 China proposed talks in London, but Britain suggested Darjeeling,² which was finally changed to Simla, Jordan justifying this choice on grounds of general and administrative convenience.³

Shortly before accepting the invitation and naming Ivan Chen as the Chinese Plenipotentiary Peking appointed him "Commissioner for the pacification of Tibet"⁴ which provoked a prompt British protest. China refused to communicate to him full powers until the designation of the delegates had been agreed to.⁵ She explained the appointment of the pacificator in the following way on July 25, 1913.⁶

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 261-502, May 1913, No. 302.*

His Majesty's Minister at Peking to The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (repeated to His Excellency the Viceroy), 31 January 1913.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-271, September 1913, Notes p. 28.* Extract from the *North China Herald*, dated 7 June 1913. *The Tibet Question: Proposals for a Conference at Darjeeling.* From the British correspondent, Peking, 30 May.

3. *ibid.*, No. 86.

Secretary of State to Viceroy, 28 June 1913.

4. *ibid.*, No. 86.

His Majesty's Minister at Peking to Viceroy, 15 June 1913.

5. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-251, March 1914, Appendix to Notes, p. 15, para 59.* Memorandum: Situation in Tibet.

6. *ibid.*, Sub. Encl. 2. No. 12.

Memorandum from Wai Chiao Pu to His Majesty's Charge d' Affaires, 5 July 1913.

The only reason for the appointment of the Pacification Commissioners was that owing to internal disorders during the last few years the people of Tibet had in many cases been compelled to leave their homes. In view of this, special officials were appointed to announce the pacific intentions of the Government. With the internal administration of Tibet they have no connection, and still less with the Tibetan negotiations”.

It is interesting to note that at the very outset China was loath to undertaking negotiations with the British Government regarding Tibet as a matter of fact their main objection wielded around the snag of entering a conference in which the Chinese delegate would be on the same footing as the Tibetan delegate.

On July 14, 1913 Jordan¹ informed the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs that the representative of Great Britain and Tibet were ready to meet at Simla, and enquired when the Chinese representative might be expected to start. The Minister at once raised the question of the Tibetan representative occupying the same position as in the 1908 negotiations, and laid stress particularly on his signing after and as adjoint to the Chinese representative. Jordan said the question of signature might remain until an agreement had been reached, but insisted that the representatives must go to the Conference on an equal footing.

Still China's diplomatic manoeuvring to secure in advance a recognition of their claims to supremacy over Tibet did not cease until they received a firm declaration from the British Charge d'Affaires in Peking that “it would be a wastage of time to consider all this again” as they had “gone over it all before” and he could only report that it was the intention of His Majesty's Government that delegates should attend the Conference on an equal footing. This memorandum further warned the Chinese Government that unless the Chinese Plenipotentiary arrived at Simla by October 6, 1913 negotiations would be started directly between the British and Tibetan Government.²

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-271, September 1913, No. 183.*

His Majesty's Minister at Peking to Viceroy, 14 July 1913.

2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-251, March 1914, No. 16.*

His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Viceroy, 21 August 1913.

After the warning, the Foreign Minister of China wrote to the British Government on August 7, 1913, that the Chinese Plenipotentiary would proceed to India to open negotiations for a treaty jointly with the Tibetan and British Plenipotentiaries.¹ In this connection it must be noted that contrary to later Chinese claim, China was not forced to attend the Simla Conference, nor did her performance in any way suggest that she was negotiating under duress.

In the meantime China also probed in another direction by trying to arrange a meeting with the Tibetans in Chamdo prior to the Simla Conference.² Lonchen Shatra wrote to Bell on August 7, 1913. "...Recently the Chinese official at Chamdo wrote to the Tibetan Commissioner of Domed hoping that the negotiations for peace may take place at Chamdo..." In fact China's efforts to achieve this continued even after the negotiations had started.³ The Consul-General at Changtu reported on October 28, 1913,⁴ that independent negotiations between the Chinese Pacification Warden and Tibetan Envoys were in progress at Chamdo. He even quoted the terms (10 articles) of the proposed arrangement which had been published at Changtu.

On October 8, 1913 almost simultaneously with the opening of the Conference Britain extended recognition to the Chinese Republic, thus foregoing the written agreement it had originally asked for and losing her most effective lever on China.

The host and Britain's delegate at the Simla Conference (of 1913-1914) was Sir Henry McMahon Secretary to the Government of India who officially assumed the role of mediator between the two participants.⁵

1. China was anxious to exhibit her position as the power directly concerned and interested in Tibet.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 1-251, March 1914, Encl. 1. No. 2.* Lonchen of Tibet to Bell, 7 August 1913.
3. *ibid.*, No. 135.
Secretary of State to Viceroy, October 1913.
4. *ibid.*, No. 148.
His Majesty's Consul-General Chengtu to Foreign Secretary, 28 October 1913.
5. In fact McMahon was keen to pose as "honest broker" as he himself wrote privately to Hardinge on 30 October 1913. See *Hardinge Papers* Vol. 96, telegram No. 319. McMahon to Hardinge, 30 October

Finally the Conference which met at Simla on October 13, 1913,¹ continued its sessions for six months and discussed at full length the whole Tibet question as the main topic on its agenda. As has been mentioned earlier Henry McMahon was the British delegate. China was represented by Ivan Chen and Tibet by Lonchen Shatra, each of whom was properly accredited plenipotentiary who "communicated to each other their respective full powers".²

1913. Alastair Lamb emphasises that it was only as mediators that the British could reconcile their Tibetan policy with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. *The China-India Border : The Origins of the Disputed Areas*, Oxford, 1964, pp. 142-143.

He further argues that "the terms made at Simla would have required the consent of St. Petersburg...". *ibid.*, pp. 50-53. Rowland also expressed the same opinion. See John Rowland : *Sino-Indian Relations : Hostile Co-existence*, p. 47.

By the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 Russia expressly recognised that "Great Britain by reason of her geographical position, has a special interest in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the external relations of Tibet" (See preamble to the Convention between Great Britain and Russia, 1907, Richardson, *op. cit.*, Appendix 2, p. 258). As such the British Government was not bound to require the consent of the Russian Government for settling her boundary questions with Tibet. Moreover as a result of the Chinese Revolution and the consequent collapse of the Manchu authority in Tibet, there was what is called in International Law a 'vital change of circumstances' consequently the effective operation of the Convention of 1907 automatically receded in the background as a result of the principle of *Rebus Sic Stantibus*. For explanation of this principle of International Law, See L. Oppenheim : *International Law (Peace)* Vol. 1, pp. 938-944.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, No. 139.*

Proceedings of the 1st Meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Simla on the 13 October 1913. Submitted by T.G.B. Waugh, Acting Secretary at the Conference. Cited hereinafter as Proceedings of the first meeting of the Tibet Conference.

2. In contrast with this in the declaration to the Tibet Trade Regulations signed at Calcutta on 20 April 1908 the Tibetan representative was described thus "the high authorities of Tibet have named as their authorised representative to act under the directions of Lonchen Shatra (Chinese Delegate) and take part in the negotiations, Tsarong shape...". The form in which the Simla Conference was held and the equal status accorded to the Tibetan Plenipotentiary is indicative of the fact that Tibet had the power to conclude treaties with other states on an absolutely equal footing.

At the very beginning the Simla Conference was confronted with the uphill task of adjusting the conflicting interests of Tibet¹ and China.²

The Tibetans wanted nothing less than complete independence. The Chinese on the other hand desired the restoration of their sovereignty over Tibet, resting it on the conquest by the Mongol Chengiz Khan.³

The British plenipotentiary McMahon was all through the negotiations in the position of a placid mediator, trying to find some common ground between the widely divergent claims of the Tibetans and the Chinese. In order to bring about a compromise, and to narrow the void between the irreconcilable claims of Tibetans and Chinese he advocated the concepts of autonomy and suzerainty in place of independence and sovereignty. Such a solution McMahon expected would restore peace between Tibet and China, and bring about the development of a stable Tibetan Government free from outside encroachment. It was a diplomatic necessity as the British were anxious to ensure security and peace along India's vital northern frontier,⁴ without alienating her relations with China.

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, Encl. 4. No. 139. Proceedings of the 1st meeting of the Tibet Conference. Annexure IV. Statement of Tibetan claims.*

2. *ibid.*, Encl. No. 149.

The Chinese counter proposals to the statement of Tibetan claims, 30 October 1913.

3. Hardinge confided to the Secretary of State on 3 July 1913. "It is perfectly clear that complete autonomy, if not independence is the aim of the Tibetans, and that any settlement which involves control or interference by China in any portion of territory which Tibetans consider as belonging to Tibet, will not be accepted by them".

Hardinge Papers. Vol. 97, telegram No. 440.

Hardinge to Secretary of State, 3 July 1913.

4. The cause of British anxiety was two-fold. First there was a potential threat to the Himalayan frontier of India from a strong and irredentist China. Secondly another source of danger to the security of British India's possessions was the old chronic fear of Russia's designs on Tibet.

In 1912 after the Chinese Revolution of 1911 Mongolia declared her independence and virtually became to the British eyes a Russian satellite. Immediately after this Tibet proceeded to sign a treaty with Mongolia. This treaty, as it was finally negotiated came to be

An obvious compromise for the claims of Tibet and China was the historic boundary¹ running roughly along the upper waters of the Yangtse, which had existed at least since the time of the Manchu dynasty, but there was a case for saving Tibetan interests in the estates and monasteries of Tibetan origin lying to the east of that line in country which had never been controlled by the Chinese before the recent intrusions by Chao Erh-feng, and where since the Revolution of 1911-1912 Chinese influence was withering away at a rapid speed. To bridge the conflicting claims McMahon devised the plan of dividing Tibet into two distinct regions, that is Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet. The former is the part nearer China including Batang, Litang, Tschienlu, and a large portion of eastern Tibet. The latter is the part nearer India, including Lhasa, Shigatse and Chamdo.² This plan was presented by McMahon to his colleagues on February 17, 1914.

On March 7 China criticised this division.³ The Lonchen maintained that the territories included within both the Inner

known as Treaty of Urga, January 1913. In this treaty the Dalai Lama was represented by Dorjjeff, who was known to have Russian leanings. Under Article 4 of this treaty Mongolia and Tibet agreed "to afford each other aid against dangers from without and from within" (Bell: *Tibet, Past and Present*, Oxford, 1924, Appendix XIII, p. 304.).

By articles 5 and 6 the Mongols were allowed to travel and trade freely in Tibet and to open industrial establishments there. It may again be recalled that even during the sessions of the Simla Conference sporadic border skirmishes were going on between Tibet and China and therefore as Charles Bell noted there was a danger that Tibet might be driven to seek assistance from Mongolia and through Mongolia from Russia since Mongolia was under Russian influence (Bell : *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149).

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, Encl. 1 No. 201.*
Proceedings of the 4th meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Delhi on 17 February 1914. Submitted by T.G.B. Waugh, Acting Secretary to the Conference.
Annexure I : British statement on the limits of Tibet. Communicated by McMahon at the meeting of 17 February 1914.
2. *ibid.*, No. 179.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914.* Notes p. 52.
Tibet Conference : Memorandum regarding the progress of negotiations from 25 December 1913 to 20 April 1914 by McMahon, dated 30 April 1914.

and Outer zones were under the direct control of the Lhasa Government, in whose hands lay the right of levy to collect rents and taxes and to appoint the hereditary chiefs, and that he was unable to recognise any consolidation of Chinese influence, even within the inner zone. China sought to ignore not only the background of history and tradition, but also the foreground of the cessation of Chinese control in any part of Tibet, and based her claims on the middle stance, represented by the campaigns of Chao Erh-feng and the accession of territory which had ensued as a result of that short-lived period of Chinese success. The Chinese delegate declined to consider McMahon's proposals, in regard to the zones and was prepared to recognise only a limited Tibetan autonomy in a loosely defined area, which appeared to consist of little more than the country in the immediate vicinity of Lhasa. McMahon informed him that he was unable to recede from his position,⁹⁰ and the India Office on March 7, prepared a draft outlining the conclusions which would be acceptable to His Majesty's Government.¹ It was an instrument with a preamble and six articles prepared with a view to securing the return to the *status quo ante* 1904. On March 20, Chen virtually rejected the British draft, without, however, offering an alternative draft.² On April 21, he presented to McMahon five new demands,³ which showed no signs of conciliation. McMahon was now firm on his decision, and declared⁴ that his

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, Notes p. 53.*

Tibet Conference : Memorandum regarding the progress of negotiations from 25 December 1913 to 30 April 1914 by McMahon dated 30 April 1914.

2. For the details of this draft, see *For. Sec. E, Nos. 261-502, May 1913, No. 322.* His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to His Majesty's Minister at Peking, 12 February 1913.

3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, Notes p. 53.*

Tibet Conference : Memorandum regarding the progress of negotiations from 25 December 1913 to 30 April 1914 by McMahon, dated 30 April 1914.

4. *ibid.*, Notes p. 54.

Tibet Conference : Memorandum regarding the progress of negotiations from 25 December 1913 to 30 April by McMahon, dated 30 April 1914.

5. *ibid.*, No. 218.

Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 March 1914.

statement of February 17, laid before his colleagues "was his carefully considered view and was the only solution which would meet the just requirements of, and provide honourable satisfaction to the two Governments who had entrusted to him the consideration of their claims". Chen was in a difficult position. On the one hand his Government though fully informed of the conclusive nature of the meeting had given to him no indication of their willingness to accept the terms proposed by the British, on the other hand he saw the possibility of losing the Chinese seat in the tripartite Conference and the danger of the conclusion of an agreement between Great Britain and Tibet.

With British persuasion the Tibetans modified their claim for an independent state, on condition that China engaged not to convert Tibet into a Chinese province, and not to interfere in the internal affairs of Tibet.

A Tibetan suggestion to establish a permanent British Mission in Lhasa¹ was rejected by Britain in view of her obligations under the Anglo-Russian Convention. Instead the British Agent at Gyantse was permitted to visit the capital (Lhasa) whenever he needed to consult the Tibetan Government on matters arising out of the Lhasa Convention.

McMahon also obtained the right of direct negotiations with Tibet to establish new trade regulations. As her troops would not be allowed in Tibet China was released from her engagement of 1890 to prevent acts of aggression from the Tibetan side of the Tibet-Sikkim frontier.

Before final drafts of these texts had been agreed upon the British and Tibetan delegates completed discussions on the North-Eastern border of India,² later to be known as the McMahon Line. This line was fixed roughly along the crest of the Himalayas from the north-east corner of Bhutan to Isu Razi Pass in the north of Burma.³

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos., 1-251 March 1914*, Notes, pp. 35-36, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 8 November 1913.
2. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 76-101, September 1915*, No. 97. *Memorandum by McMahon dated 28 March 1914 regarding the India-Tibet boundary between the Isu Razi Pass on the Salween Irrawaddy divide on the east and Bhutan on the west.*
3. *ibid.*, No. 84. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 21 November 1913. Details and features of McMahon Line stated.

It was drawn on a map in two sheets attached to the exchange of notes and sealed by both plenipotentiaries. The McMahon Line was later embodied on a reduced scale in maps showing the proposed boundaries between Tibet and China under Article IX of the draft convention.

The draft Convention was initialled by the three representatives on April 27, 1914, the maps showing the historic frontier of Tibet was placed before the full conference. The Indo-Tibetan frontier east of Bhutan, marked in red line was shown on these maps.¹

Upto the last minute the Chinese delegate had pressed for fresh concessions, and soon after the three delegates initialled the convention it was repudiated by China. On April 28, 1914 the Wai Chiao Pu telegraphed to Chen,² that the Central Government dishonoured his action, and he was told to inform his British colleagues that his act of initialling was null and void. He was, however, prepared to continue the negotiation if the British plenipotentiary agreed to his proposals. It is interesting to note that the Chinese Government even after initialling brought forward fresh proposals aiming to destroy the results of the Conference.

The suzerainty of China over both Outer Tibet and Inner Tibet was recognised by the Convention, but China did not agree to recognise the complete autonomy of Outer Tibet.³ The Chinese Government was unwilling to recognise the boundaries between Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet.

Chinese acceptance of the division of Tibet into two zones would have meant the surrender of the town of Chamdo, but

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, Notes pp. 52-57.*

Memorandum regarding the progress of negotiations from 25 December 1913 to 30 April 1914 by McMahon.

See also *ibid.*, No. 257. Proceedings of the 7th Meeting of Tibet Conference held at the Foreign Office Simla, on 22 and 27 April 1914. For the text of the Draft Convention, see *ibid.*, Encl. 1. No. 257.

2. *ibid.*, No. 263. Wai Chiao Pu to Chen, 28 April 1914.

3. In Outer Tibet Chinese influence would be severely restricted and the presence of Chinese limited to one high official with an escort of 300 men, and in Inner Tibet a broad peripheral area next to China the Chinese could send officials and troops, but it could not be converted into a Chinese province.

Tibet would also have made substantial territorial concessions. What China was asked to give up in Central Tibet had in practice been acquired by her only four years earlier. While in Inner Tibet an efficient Chinese administration could have easily established its influence. Nevertheless fear of the surrender of territory appeared to be too much for Peking. Although disagreement concerning the border between Inner and Outer Tibet has consistently been advanced as the reason for the Chinese refusal to adhere to the Convention, it seemed only a symptom of a deeper resentment against the whole bases of these proposals. Nationalist Chinese writers also describe reasons for the deadlock as something wider than the border of Inner Tibet. According to Shen¹ the Conference broke down first of all because suzerainty proved too restricted an idea to force on Chinese public opinion. Li² accused the Chinese delegates of having exceeded his instructions, which were confined to Tibet by dealing with the territory of China proper.

Article 2 which is the very soul of the Convention in connection with the status of Tibet stipulates :

The Government of Great Britain and China recognising that Tibet is under the suzerainty of China and recognising also the autonomy of Outer Tibet engage to respect the territorial integrity of the country and to abstain from interference in the administration of Outer Tibet (including the installation of the Dalai Lama) which shall remain in the hands of the Tibetan Government at Lhasa.

The suzerainty of China which the Government of Great Britain and Tibet purported to recognise under this Convention did not, however, confer on China the power (a) to convert Tibet into a Chinese province, or (b) to interfere in the administration of Tibet, or (c) to send troops into Tibet, or to station civil or military officers, or to establish Chinese colonies in the country, or (d) to enter into any negotiations or agreements

1. Tsung-Lien Shen and Shen-Chi Liu : *Tibet and the Tibetans*, California 1953, p. 51.
2. Tien-Tseng Li : *The Historical Status of Tibet*, New York, 1956, p. 141.

regarding Tibet with the Government of Tibet or any other power.

Article 2 of the Simla Convention should not be interpreted *prima facie*, in its legal abstraction, because the proposed suzerainty of China over Tibet was conditional upon Chinese recognition of the autonomy of Outer Tibet.

Throughout the course of the Simla Conference the British Government realised that the terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 which was concluded before the period of Chinese activity in Tibet would need certain modifications in order to meet the new conditions then prevailing in that country. The Viceroy confided to the Secretary of State on December 11, 1913 :

Since the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention we have been faced by a complete change to our disadvantage in the *status quo* in Tibet in the maintenance of which Russia has recognised our special interest in the preamble to Tibet section of Anglo-Russian Convention.¹

Both Great Britain and Russia had placed their reliance on a peaceful Chinese suzerain who would allow Tibet to remain peaceful and dormant, as a buffer between the three Great Powers of Central Asia. They had been disappointed in this hope by the activity and aggression of the Chinese, which had eventually resulted in the revolt of the Tibetans and the declaration of Tibetan autonomy. The draft letter sent by the British to Buchanan informing the Russian Government of the proceedings of the Conference contained the following passage.

The events of the last few years have so radically altered the circumstances and so profoundly modified the relations between the various parties concerned, that certain changes have become inevitable, if the ultimate goal of both British and Russian policy is to be attained.²

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, No. 178.*
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 December 1913.
2. *ibid.*, Encl., No. 211.
Draft letter to Sir G. Buchanan, January 1914.

The creation of an active Russian sphere in Mongolia, moreover, and the linking of Mongolia and Tibet by a new political bond in January 1913, had prejudicially affected the international position of Great Britain since the year 1907 by introducing a further element of foreign influence in Tibet, and so directly affecting the external relations of the Government of India along some 1,500 miles of frontier.

In these circumstances Britain considered it essential to come to some new understanding with Russia.¹ In the middle of May the initialled convention was communicated to the Russian Government by His Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg,² and a series of conversations ensued.

As a result of these conversations Article X was remodelled and McMahon was instructed, on May 26, to use every endeavour to procure the early signature of the Convention in its amended form, that is to say, with a provision that the English text should be authoritative in case of need, but without the clause which bound China and Tibet to seek British arbitration in all disputes.

In the meanwhile the Chinese Government had persistently refused to proceed to the formal signature of the initialled Convention, and had brought forward fresh proposals in regard to the maps attached to it, which aimed at the recognition of a Chinese-Tibet frontier within 200 miles of Lhasa. The Chinese Government in fact showed no intention of reaching a finality. The advanced claims, which would have entirely destroyed the whole basis of the initialled document, and which sought to reconstruct the same conditions which had resulted in the convening of the Conference.

In these circumstances the final text of the Convention was communicated to the Peking Government by Jordan on June 7, 1914, and the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs was informed that unless the Chinese plenipotentiary was instructed to proceed to signature, the British and Tibetan plenipotentiaries would do so independently. The Chinese reply was entirely unsatisfactory; they confined themselves once more to purely

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, No. 290.*
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 26 May 1914.
2. *ibid.*, No. 333.
Nicolson (for Grey) to Buchanan, 4 May 1914.

destructive criticism, and showed an entire lack of conviction that the British were in earnest in their determination to effect a final issue. On June 30, they presented a written statement to the effect that they would be willing to regard the (undefined) tract to the south of the Keun Lun ranges as Inner Tibet, whilst the district of Jyade (39 Banners) would become a "doubtful area of Inner Tibet in which no large bodies of Chinese troops would be stationed".

Such a reply, vague in its terms and unintelligible in its practical application was not acceptable. The Tibetan plenipotentiary categorically refused to consider it, or to sign any document which accorded fresh privileges to China without some corresponding concession to Tibet.¹

In these circumstances, the British Government had no alternative but to inform the Chinese Government that further discussion was useless, and that a final meeting of the Conference would be held on July 3. Failing the participation of the Chinese plenipotentiary in the signature of the Agreement on a tripartite basis, His Majesty's Government would hold themselves free to sign it independently with Tibet, and in that case China would forfeit all those privileges in Tibet which were contemplated by the Convention.

The position was somewhat complicated. While His Majesty's Government communicated to the Chinese Government their willingness to conclude a dual signature with Tibet, in the event of China refusing to sign the Convention, on the other hand McMahon had been informed that a dual signature of the Convention with Tibet would be undesirable. The Secretary of State notified to the Viceroy on July 1, 1914.² "A final meeting of the Conference should be summoned by Sir H. McMahon on July 3. If the Chinese Plenipotentiary then refuses to sign the Convention, negotiations should definitely be terminated by Sir Henry". Even on the day of the final meeting the Secretary of State hastened to warn the Viceroy

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, Notes pp. 75-76. Memorandum regarding the progress of negotiations from 1 May to 8 July 1914 by McMahon.*
2. *ibid.*, No. 341.
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 1 July 1914.

that¹ "Separate signature with Tibet cannot be authorised by His Majesty's Government. Sir H. McMahon should proceed in the manner laid down in my telegrams dated respectively the 1st and 2nd July, if the Chinese Delegate refuses to sign". Crewe was in fact concerned about the international situation on the eve of the first world war, and did not want perhaps to alienate China or have British troops engaged in Tibet.

The Chinese plenipotentiary had been instructed by his Government to attend the final meeting of the Conference, but to refrain from signing the Convention.² As there was no other alternative McMahon and Lonchen Shatra initialled copies of the Convention³ as revised, which contain the amended formal Declaration, covering the initialled document, to the effect that Britain and Tibet acknowledge the Convention as initialled by themselves to be binding on their respective governments, and that so long as the Chinese plenipotentiary withheld his signature they held the Chinese Government to be debarred from her privileges under the Convention. There is no indication that the declaration was kept secret from China, and there is not enough documentary evidence to convince that she was absolutely ignorant of it. This declaration was signed and sealed by Lonchen Shatra and Henry McMahon. It also contained the seals of the Dalai Lama, Drepung Monastery, Sera Monastery, Gaden Monastery, the National Assembly of Tibet.⁴ This declaration served the intention of the Home Government because it did not ultimately deprive China from the privileges arising from the Convention, as it was open for her to sign whenever she desired.

Before closing the meeting McMahon informed the Chinese plenipotentiary that the settlement which had been concluded was of a final character, but that the Tibetan plenipotentiary

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, No. 345.*
Secretary of State to Viceroy, 3 July 1914.
2. *ibid.*, No. 342.
Viceroy to Secretary of State, 2 July, 1914.
3. *ibid.*, No. 346.
Proceedings of the 8th Meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Simla on the 3rd July 1914.
4. *ibid.*, Encl. 1. No. 346.
Annexure I : Declaration of 3 July 1914.
For the text of the Declaration see Appendix.

and he hoped that he would be authorised to append his signature to the Convention before they went away from Simla.¹

In view of the above findings from original Simla Conference records it is difficult to agree with Alastair Lamb when he writes that the Simla Conference ended in a charade even though it is a fact that the Simla Convention was initialled by the British and Tibetan plenipotentiaries, and not signed by them. While discussing the McMahon Line in a footnote he mentions that there are two versions of 1929 Aitchison treaties, one containing the Text of the McMahon Line notes and the Simla Convention and the other without these documents.² Addis believes that these texts were inserted into the Aitchison Collection, at a date later than 1920, and the new volume Addis says is available at the Harvard University, and he has seen it. Lamb concludes from all this that the Simla Conference produced no valid agreement.³

It is interesting to observe that Neville Maxwell who has also used John Addis's 'The India-China Border Question' does not draw the same conclusion as Alastair Lamb on the Simla Conference. The original 1929 edition of Aitchison's *Treaties*, which both Lamb and Maxwell claim to be an authoritative record, said of the Simla Conference only this :

In 1913 a conference of Tibetan, Chinese and British plenipotentiaries met in India to try and bring about a settlement with regard to matters on the Sino-Tibetan frontier, and a Tripartite Convention was drawn up and

1. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, Encl. 1. No. 346. Proceedings of the 8th Meeting of the Tibet Conference held at Simla on the 3rd July 1914 (summary).*
2. John Addis has discussed this question at length in his *The India-China Border Question*, privately circulated by the Centre for International Affairs, Harvard University in February 1953. Addis sent Lamb a copy of this article.
3. Alastair Lamb : *The McMahon Line*, London, 1966, Vol. II p. 546, footnote 26.

Lamb does not attach importance to the 3 July 1914 Declaration, and consequently its legal implications which made the initialled Simla Convention a valid agreement. I shall discuss this point subsequently.

initialled in 1914. The Chinese Government, however, refused to permit their plenipotentiary to full signature.¹

The utmost which Maxwell has been able to derive from the Harvard edition of Aitchison's *Treaties* is that :

The Simla Conference produced no agreement to which the Government of China was a party.² He, however, does not suggest as Alastair Lamb has done that nothing came out of the Simla Conference. He does not deny that a bipartite treaty was concluded between Britain and Tibet.

This covering Declaration of July 3, 1914 made the initialled Convention a legally valid agreement between Tibet and Britain even without the act of signing it.

McMahon was acquainted with frontier problems, and concerned about the security of the Northern frontiers of India. Being the man on the spot he acted judiciously on his own initiative. Prior to the signing of the Declaration he had said :³

“I would not sign with Tibet but would initial the amended Convention and map in concert with my Tibetan colleague, at the same time covering the initialled document by a formal Declaration, under which the terms of the Convention would become binding on the Governments of Great Britain and Tibet”. He further added ; “I believed that this procedure, however, would sufficiently safeguard our position. It would avoid a dual signature of the document drawn up on a tripartite basis, whilst at the same time the covering Declaration would assure to Great Britain and

1. John Addis : *The India-China Border Question*, unpublished paper for the Center for International Affairs Harvard, 1903, p. 27, from the edition of Aitchison in the Harvard Library. Quoted in Neville Maxwell : *India's China War*, Bombay, 1907, p. 447, footnote 116.
2. *ibid.*, p. 49.
3. *For. Sec. E, Nos. 134-396, October 1914, Notes p. 76. Memorandum regarding the progress of negotiations from 1 May to 8 July 1914 by McMahon.*

Tibet, and would preclude China so long as she refused to sign, the privileges contemplated by the Convention.”

It follows from this that with the signing of the Anglo-Tibetan Declaration the Simla Convention was an accomplished fact. Lamb, however, does not go into the legal implications of the case. He is more concerned with the political background to the Simla Convention. His emphasis is on the initials of Henry McMahon. He has made subtle distinction between signature and initial. But technically speaking the distinction between them is not of such grave consequence as he has made it to be. In certain circumstances they can even be synonymous. According to *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, to initial means “to sign with initials”.¹

In international law a declaration has as much binding force as a treaty. It was on the basis of the Lhlen Declaration that the permanent Court of International Justice in 1933 decided in favour of Denmark in the Eastern Greenland Case. When Norway issued on July 10, 1931 a decree claiming sovereignty over portions of Eastern Greenland, Denmark referred the case to the permanent Court of International Justice, claiming that Denmark had sovereignty over the entire island. One of the bases of the Denmark claim was that Norway could not rightfully claim sovereignty in view of assurances given by M. Lhlen, the Norwegian Foreign Minister. Norway argued that he lacked authority to bind the Norwegian Government by such an agreement. The Court found by twelve votes to two that Denmark had established sovereignty over all of Greenland, and Norway immediately withdrew her claims. The Declaration which the Minister for Foreign Affairs gave on July 22, 1919, on behalf of the Norwegian Government was considered definitely affirmative.²

1. Prepared by William Little, H.W. Fowler, J. Coulson (Rev. and ed. C.T. Onion) : *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Oxford, 1933, Vol. I. p. 1007.
2. See William W. Bishop : *International Law : Cases and Materials*, Toronto, 1954, pp. 89-90
L.C. Green : *International Law Through the Cases*, London, 1959, pp. 126-139.

It must be mentioned here that the omission of the Declaration of July 3, 1914 from Aitchison Collection is not of such significance as Lamb has indicated. Aitchison, as the name itself indicates is a collection of treaties. Therefore if the Declaration of 1914 was missing from the original collection, this does not detract from its validity, or prove that it was not effective.

In the 1920's China was busy with her National Rights recovery. She was anxious to get rid of the unequal treaties, therefore it was not likely that at that time China would sign the Simla Convention. In 1928 by including the Simla Conference records and stating categorically that China did not sign it in the Aitchison Collection, it would have perhaps implied pre-determining her policy. It was likely that the British Government expected that at a later date China would sign it, and was therefore waiting for this eventuality, to include the Simla Conference Records in the Aitchison Collection.

6

Summary and Concluding Observations

Recent developments in Sino-Indian relations have portrayed Tibet apparently as dividing democratic South Asia from totalitarian China. A thorough analysis of India-China relations and a clear understanding of the border dispute, however, reveals that the Sino-Indian border dispute is not merely a dispute over territory. It is just a camouflage for the complex motivation pattern of the traditional Chinese policy of expansionism. Consequently, Tibet due to her geographical position has been and will continue to be an inevitable factor in Sino-Indian relations throughout history.

Situated as she is between India and China it was perhaps inevitable that Tibet should acquire a prominent position in the frontier policies of India and China regardless of the nature of the government in control in these areas. Added to this are the extensive cultural and religious ties between Tibet, Mongolia, Kham, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Ladakh which further motivated Chinese and Indian interest as also Russian in the last two centuries.

The history of the relations between China, India and Tibet from 1899 to 1914 falls naturally into three periods.

In the first phase which culminated in the despatch of the Younghusband Mission in 1903, Chinese suzerainty existed only in name. Towards Great Britain, Tibet attempted to preserve the policy of exclusiveness which she had maintained during the past century. Trade Regulations of 1893 were ignored by her, and every obstruction was placed in the way of trade with India. Russian influence on the other hand showed signs of increasing. To counteract this tendency, the existence of

which was confirmed by evidence of overtures between Lhasa and St. Petersburg, the British Government under the insistence and clever manoeuvres of Curzon eventually decided to abandon their policy of non-interference in the affairs of Tibet. The active policy resulted in the Younghusband Mission and the conclusion of the Lhasa Convention of 1904 with Tibet was the clearest recognition of the fact that Tibet had always enjoyed the sovereign power to conclude treaties of a political nature with foreign states without the participation and permission of China.

Similarly all treaties and engagements concerning Tibet (for example the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and the Trade Regulations of 1893) in which she was not a party were not recognised by the Tibetans who simply ignored them and the Chinese were not in a position to enforce the provisions of these treaties.

The second phase opened with the withdrawal of the Mission and closed with the outbreak of the revolution in China in 1911. The striking feature of this period was the gradual establishment of the ascendancy of China in Tibet. Chinese suzerainty was no longer a shadow but a living force and the power exercised by the local Tibetan officials was transferred to the Chinese. Several courses contributed to this end. The conclusion of the Lhasa Convention of 1904, to which China declared her adhesion in the Peking Convention of 1906 was followed by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. The defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 put an end to fears of Russian expansionism which had haunted Curzon in previous years. In these circumstances the way was clear for the two erstwhile rivals to arrive at an agreement, and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 marked a complete change of policy towards Tibet.

Under its terms both countries agreed to abstain from all interference in Tibet, and agreed not to send representatives to Lhasa and not to open negotiations except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government. Thus the way was prepared for the establishment of Chinese influence. The policy of His Majesty's Government henceforth was neither to push trade nor to assert political influence but to reduce the establishments at the trade marts to the lowest minimum consistent with the

Lhasa Convention. The Chumbi Valley was accordingly evacuated early in 1908. The Chinese were not slow to take advantage of the new conditions, and at once commenced to pursue an unusually active policy with the object of upsetting the *status quo* and destroying the results of the Mission of 1904. Gow became busy at the trade Marts and Chao Erh-feng was active in Eastern Tibet, attempting to colonise the districts and ultimately to march to Lhasa.

Finally, the Dalai Lama, shorn of all his powers, had left Lhasa and appealed to the British Government for assistance. The 13th Dalai Lama when he was in Darjeeling in 1910 repeatedly asked Sir Charles Bell to induce the British Government to take Tibet under its protection and place her in the same relationship as India's Princely states. The British Government however, declined to accede to the request. It is probable that at that time if the British Government wanted it would not have been difficult for them to have the whole of Tibet for the asking.

In this phase the Tashi Lama, who was second only to the Dalai Lama in the Tibetan hierarchy, adopted a friendly attitude to the British Government.

The third phase opened with the mutiny of Chinese troops in Lhasa, as a consequence of the outbreak of the revolution in China. In this phase the position was entirely reversed. The Tibetans had succeeded in expelling the Chinese from Tibet proper and the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa. On the borders of Eastern Tibet, however, fighting with the Chinese continued. It was at this time that China concentrated her attention on Pome and Zayul, that is the Assam Himalayas. The British compelled by circumstances became conscious of the security of the North East Frontier region. As a result they embarked on a policy of stabilisation of this sensitive area by exploration, survey and direct administration of the region if necessary, thus demonstrating a distinct reversal from Morley's policy of non-interference.

China distracted by rebellion and domestic trouble was powerless to take steps to regain her lost position. In 1911 the Manchu dynasty had ruled China for 267 years. Like other successful conquerors of the middle kingdom, it had recognised the superior cultural attainments of the conquered people, and

had associated Chinese with Manchus in Government. By midnineteenth century, however, the Manchus faced economic dislocation at home and the impact of the western world of ideas on their sea-board. These conditions called for radical adjustments in China's political, economic, and social structure—adjustments which the Sino-Manchu hierarchy could neither conceive nor execute.

Tibet's *de facto* independence had become legally valid and effective when in 1912 the 13th Dalai Lama issued a proclamation, declared the complete independence of Tibet and denounced the Chinese claim to sovereignty.

Tibet appealed to Great Britain to mediate a settlement. China on her side agreed to a tripartite conference with Great Britain and Tibet to settle the dispute.

In 1913-1914 at the time of the Simla Conference with the newly established Republican Government of China groping for stability, Chinese influence was at a low ebb with her forces expelled from Tibet. The time was propitious for Great Britain to dictate terms to China on the Tibet issue. But Britain did not do so, and none of the records show that China entered the Conference due to pressure, or that the Chinese delegate Ivan Chen acted under duress.

The crucial period from 1899-1914 was characterised by a complex of rivalries and conflicts out of which a new pattern of inter-governmental relations emerged, and also affected local conditions.

The administrative machinery in Tibet underwent a vital change with the conclusion of the Simla Convention. In 1915 after 150 years the 13th Dalai Lama took part in the administration of the country. He strove to assume the powers enjoyed by the 5th Dalai Lama. He was intent on assuming full power and responsibility and concentrated on reorganising the Government according to his liking.

There is some misconception regarding the role of China in the fixing of the McMahon Line as the boundary between India and Tibet in the eastern sector of the Himalayan frontier of India, which requires clarification.

During the Simla Conference in 1913-1914 McMahon believed that the political status of Tibet could not be meaningfully discussed until the limits of the country were

defined. Ivan Chen, the Chinese delegate explained that he was not authorised to join in boundary discussions. McMahon suggested that to save time he discuss it with the Tibetan delegate.

Ivan Chen did not raise any objection to this proposal and bilateral discussions were held between January 5 and January 13, 1914, in the midst of the Simla Conference. An exchange of letters between the British and Tibetan representatives on March 24 and March 25 documenting the results of the discussions constitutes the Anglo-Tibetan Boundary Agreement of 1914. This North Eastern border of India, later to be known as the McMahon Line was drawn on a map in two sheets and attached to the exchange of notes and scaled by both plenipotentiaries. This line was later embodied on a reduced scale in maps showing the proposed boundaries between Tibet and China under Article IX of the draft convention. The latter was initialled by the three representatives on 27 April 1914, the maps showing the historic frontier of Tibet was placed before the full conference. To this extent only Ivan Chen was concerned with the Anglo-Tibetan Boundary Agreement. Chen had argued and discussed with regard to the boundary between Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet. He did not raise any objection at all with regard to the McMahon Line at the Simla Conference of 1913-1914.

Article 2 of the Convention conferred on China the suzerainty of Tibet, but as she did not ratify the Convention she was debarred from enjoyment of its privileges, and consequently, as Hugh Richardson said, "gave a decent burial to the fictitious concept of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet". Hence theoretically Britain's connection with Tibet greatly increased after the signature of the Convention of 1914. Her relationship with Tibet was put on a new basis. The political ties between the two countries formerly loose were now drawn closer. The autonomy of Outer Tibet, the right of the British Agent to visit Lhasa, the new trade regulations providing for closer intercourse between the Tibetans and the British authorities in India, and the new frontier east of Bhutan which made India limitrope with Tibet for a further stretch of 850 miles, where formerly the frontier of Assam intervened, all these considerations placed British relations with Tibet on a far closer footing than before.

Here it must be mentioned that China's adherence to the Convention remained open. In the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 for the first time the term suzerainty was employed to describe China's relations with Tibet. This Convention remained effective even after the conclusion of the Simla Convention of 1914, by which China forfeited her suzerain rights in Tibet by her non-ratification, as has been stated earlier. Strangely neither Britain nor Russia raised the question of the reconciliation of Chinese suzerainty in these circumstances, and with the outbreak of the First World War neither of the powers had any time to consider Tibet.

McMahon was an enthusiastic believer in the buffer concept. He equated "frontier" with "buffer" and defined it as a tract of neutral territory separating two potentially antagonistic neighbours. To him it was the frontier, the buffer zone which was of the greatest importance, and once he had been able to agree on a boundary between Inner and Outer Tibet he did not consider the related questions. He was satisfied that he had prevented a vacuum in Tibet, which China and also Russia with her background of the traditional policy of expansionism may have tried to fill. By fixing the McMahon Line as the India-Tibet boundary along the crest of the Himalayan watershed in India's north frontier he sought to make the Assam Himalayas secure and remove any ambiguity about India's sovereignty over tribal areas on the mountainous southern slope.

An examination of Sino-Indian relations with Tibet as a factor in this relation during the period 1899-1914, however, reveals that in spite of the apparent satisfaction of the British plenipotentiary McMahon at the conclusion of the Simla Convention of 1914, no clearly defined and permanent relations were established between China, India and Tibet. The British attitude to China throughout this period, as has been observed and examined, was to patch up and arrive at a compromise, without a thorough analysis leading to solution of problems, keeping long-term prospects in view.

In consequence of the refusal of the Chinese Government to ratify the Simla Convention the struggle for power between China and Tibet continued near the eastern frontier of Tibet, and the Tibetan army began to recover territory which had been seized by China.

The official records show that even while the Simla negotiations were in progress sporadic fighting was going on between the Chinese and the Tibetans on the border country and in Chamdo. In the ensuing years following the Simla Conference the relations between the two countries continued on the footing of undeclared and desultory war, and no amicable relations were established and stabilised.

The Simla Convention failed to solve most of the fundamental problems that the new political orientation in this era had brought to the surface. At best the Convention was a compromise solution, and no one who has read the original records of this conference would for once think that the powers involved were likely to be satisfied with their situation in 1914 and after.

The survival of the *de facto* independence achieved by Tibet in 1914 depended on British goodwill and Chinese weakness. The refusal of London and Peking to recognise Tibetan claims to independence was bound to make her feel politically insecure. Peking continued to assert suzerain right in Tibet and London recognised these formally with the significant condition that China should refrain from any action that would limit Tibetan autonomy. Here it must be mentioned that the Chinese did not clearly distinguish between suzerainty and sovereignty. In fact the term suzerainty is not capable of any absolute definition. In theory as well as in practice its content has varied in the relations between different European powers who all inherited concepts and usages of Roman jurisprudence. Naturally in the context of Asia the very application of the term suzerainty was liable to be inappropriate and confusing. Moreover, it is not likely that Tibet would have forgotten British treatment of the Dalai Lama during his stay in India in 1910-1911, and how London had virtually abandoned Tibet in 1910-1912. Due to the fact of the remorseless Anglo-German rivalry Great Britain at that time was not interested in taking up arms against China for the sake of Tibetan independence, and consequently looked on her as an unreliable source of support. It was quite possible for the Tibetans to conclude that the British would follow a similar policy if circumstances warranted.

In 1914 even after the initialling of the Convention the Chinese delegate put forward new demands and ultimately China refused to ratify the Convention. It was, therefore, obvious that China had not accepted the 1914 situation as a final settlement. With the growth of Nationalist sentiment in China her traditional frontiers were interpreted to include Tibet. The latter as a British sphere of influence was disliked by her. China in fact feared western imperialist encroachment as a real danger.

With the undermining of Chinese authority in Sikiang, Mongolia and Manchuria the importance of Tibet to China was enhanced in view of the religious, cultural and political ties between these various regions. In such circumstances it was natural for China to continue her efforts to absorb Tibet into her own political framework.

By 1914 the British ambition of an autonomous Tibet to the North of the Himalayas had been achieved. At the same time it was clear that Britain had become convinced of the inadvisability of an active "forward policy" in the trans-Himalayan areas, and determined to exercise her influence by diplomatic and economic means avoiding military entanglements. With such an idea in view British influence in Tibet was conditioned on Chinese weakness.

Tibet gauged the strength of British support and adjusted her policy accordingly. Unlike Nepal and Bhutan which accepted British overlordship in the international sphere in exchange of internal autonomy, Tibet continued to exercise a considerable degree of independence in formulating her foreign policy. She was not hesitant in seeking a settlement with the Chinese detrimental to the British interests, nor approaching Russia and Japan for support against both, the British and the Chinese.

A casual look at Sino-Indian relations and the role of Tibet in it leads one to wonder why Britain did not establish a protectorate in Tibet in spite of her advantageous position in 1904 at the time of the Younghusband Expedition, and in 1910-1912 with the Dalai Lama in India and with China disturbed by internal conditions, and why she was so understanding, and unusually accommodating to China on the Tibet issue.

In order to understand this it must be remembered that in the last two centuries India was ruled by a power whose political centre lay outside this subcontinent, consequently her motivations were bound to be more complex than those of a purely Indian Government. The architect of British foreign policy was not British India but Whitehall, and naturally during this period (1899-1914) British India's policy towards China was influenced by wider considerations of British policy in Asia and in Europe.

In the 19th and 20th century British interest in China was mainly trade. By the treaty of Nanking (1842) and the two Tienstin Treaties (1861) China was opened to foreign trade. Following these two treaties British trade which was ten times as great as that of any other nation, increased by leaps and bounds. Due to her trade interests Britain was especially interested in maintaining the territorial integrity and independence of the Empire of China. British policy being dominated by Anglo-German rivalry at this period, it was natural for Jordan and Crewe to be more concerned with the international problems of the British Empire and China trade, than the security of the frontiers of India. There was a general desire on the part of the Home Government to avoid military entanglements.

Britain sought to stabilise her relations with China by her recognition of the fiction of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. The fear of Russia in Tibet had been removed by the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. And through China Japanese interest in Tibet was sought to be stunted.

In this international complexity Tibet became the bargaining power. Britain was considerate to China in Tibet, as she was eager to keep her active in the Far East and in Asia.

Getting involved in Tibet would have meant for the British :

- (i) Expenditure
- (ii) Involvement of troops
- (iii) Estrangement of relations with China and consequent hampering of trade.

The British policy of maintaining Tibet as a buffer by recognition of Tibetan autonomy under Chinese suzerainty was the least expensive and most practical policy for her. For

Whitehall the interests of the British Empire was more important than that of India, and their policy in Tibet was based on this consideration. It is conceivable that any other power in place of Britain in control of the Indian Empire would have acted in a similar manner.

Lastly, the most crucial question which arises from this study is, if China had no sovereign rights over Tibet, was she entitled to enjoy over Tibet the type of suzerainty as it is understood in international law? What was the international status of Tibet?

Before proceeding with the discussion it may be noted here that being aware of the difficulty of identifying the patron-priest relationship between the Manchu Emperor and the Dalai Lama with any concept of Roman or European jurisprudence after an analysis of the position of Tibet in international law, I have reviewed it in the context of the suzerain-vassal relationships as it was exercised in China between the Chinese Emperors and their vassals, the kings of the Tartars.

Suzerainty was a term peculiar to the feudal regime belonging to the arena of constitutional law, and was transferred to the field of international law only during the 19th century. The essence of this concept lies in its chameleon-like variegation.¹ Due to this vagueness of suzerainty there has been a great deal of misconception regarding its precise significance. Hall and Karl Strupp, for instance have unfortunately failed to appreciate its essential significance.

According to Hall, there are two distinctive criteria of suzerainty. In the first place, "states under the suzerainty of others are portions of the latter", secondly "a presumption exists against the possession by them of any given international capacity". He defines 'suzerainty' as the "union of internal public law of several states in which the vassal or inferior state is legally subject to the authority of the suzerain or superior state". He also asserts that the vassal state is part of the

1. The Encyclopaedia Britannica confirms this by stating, "in modern times, the term has come to be used as descriptive of relations, ill-defined and vague, which exist between powerful and weak states, its very indefiniteness being its recommendation".

suzerain state.¹

On a critical analysis, however, none of these above statements appear to be tenable. In the first place, if a vassal state is part of its suzerain, this means that internationally a vassal state is not a state at all, and therefore has no existence in international law. All questions of suzerainty, therefore must be foreign to international law and as Strupp asserts, fall exclusively within the arena of internal public law. It follows from this hypothesis that a vassal state, being no state at all, cannot enter into relations with foreign powers.

But both these conclusions are basically at variance with facts of international life. The misconception that the vassal state is a mere portion of the suzerain has arisen as a result of the failure on the part of these authorities to distinguish between the position of the vassal state under the public law of its suzerain and its new status in consequence of its recognition as a vassal state in international law. Thus when Bulgaria was constituted a vassal under the suzerainty of the Sultan of Turkey under Article I of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, her territory was detached from the Ottoman Empire, as is abundantly clear from Article IV of the Preliminaries of San Francisco, 1878. In the face of this and other precedents, the conclusion is, therefore, irresistible that the term 'suzerainty' as it is understood in international practice, does necessarily imply that the vassal state must be considered a mere portion of the suzerain state.²

Hall's second thesis that a presumption exists against the possession by vassal state of any given international capacity is equally fallacious. He argues that "a state under the suzerainty equally of another, being confessedly part of another state, has those rights only which have been expressly granted to it, and the assumption of larger powers of external action than those which have been distinctly conceded to it, is an act of rebellion against the sovereign".³

1. William Edward Hall : *A Treatise on International Law* Oxford, 1904, p. 29.
Strupp : *Element de Droit International Public*, Paris, 1930, Vol. 1, p. 56.
2. For other instances, see G. Scelle ; *Studies on the Eastern American Journal of International Law*, 1911, and 6, *American Journal of International Law*, 1912.
3. Hall : *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Here, again, however, there is a confusion between suzerainty of constitutional law and the suzerainty as it is understood in international law and practice, as we have already seen a vassal state is not in international law an integral part of the suzerain and must, therefore, have separate existence with capacity to act in the sphere of international relations. This is fully borne out by the history of vassal states.¹ For instance, when Bulgaria, again, became a vassal of the Ottoman Porte under the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, she began to enter into direct relations with foreign powers without the authorisation of her suzerain.²

As regards the vassal's position in the war of the suzerain with a third party, Oppenheim observes that such a war of the suzerain is "*ipso facto* a war of the vassal".³ But this observation is questionable. For example, in the 1911 war between Italy and Turkey, Egypt, although an acknowledged vassal of Turkey, did not thereby become a belligerent. Similarly, when in 1941 Turkey entered the First World War, her vassal Egypt was not considered by the Allied Powers to be at war with them.⁴

1. Vattel and Bluntschli agree upon this capacity of the vassal state. See Emmerich de Vattel : *The Law of Nations* (Classics of International Law series, 1916, Trans. by C. G. Fenwick). London, 1793, Vol. III, pp. 11-12. Bluntschli, cited in W.H.H. Kelhi : *Feudal suzerains and modern suzerainty*, 1896, *Law Quarterly Review* 215, and 222.
2. At the Peace Conference held at Hague in 1899, for example, Bulgaria had a separate representation from that of Turkey and signed the *acte finale* of the Conference as a separate state. It should also be noted that on the last day of the Conference, Bulgaria was a signatory to some of the conventions which were not signed by the Government of Turkey. Her position was the same at the Second Hague Conference in 1907, and her name appeared in the alphabetical list of signatories, although her suzerain was not a party to the *acte finale* of the Conference.
3. L. Oppenheim : *International Law*, London, New York, Bombay 1905-1906. Vol. I, p. 172.
4. Oppenheim's definition of suzerainty as a kind of International guardianship is equally erroneous. As Despagnet rightly points out, international guardianship is of different kinds corresponding to the distinction made in Roman Law between "Tutela" and "Curatela" (See Despagnet : *Essai Sur les Protectorats* S. Paris /1896/) quoted in D.K. Sen : "*China, Tibet and India Quarterly* (1951), Vol. 7, p. 128.

Now, in the light of the above discussion, let us examine the nature of the suzerain-vassal relationship as was in practice in China between the Chinese Emperor and their vassals, the kings of the Tartars. That relationship implied that (1) the vassal had to perform every year an act of homage and submission to the suzerain; (2) he had to pay a tribute annually to the suzerain; (3) he had to serve the Emperor with his soldiers in times of war and emergency; and (4) the suzerain granted a subsidy or pension to the vassal. This was precisely the meaning of suzerainty according to the constitutional usages of China.¹

The characteristics of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, however, did not conform with this criteria. Accounts of independent witnesses clearly show, that the ruler of Tibet was under no obligation to the Chinese Emperor apart from the annual tribute (which was subsequently converted into a tribute every three years). To this was added the right of the Chinese Emperor to participate in the selection and installation of the

Under the first term, the exercise of external sovereignty of the inferior states is completely vested in the superior. Such, for instance, was the position of Sikkim under Article IV of the treaty concluded between India and Sikkim in 1950. This was also the position of Egypt under the Convention of London of 1840. The second form of international guardianship which closely resembles Curatela of Roman Law does not confer on the superior state the authority to act in respect of external relations of the inferior state. Article II of the Treaty between Bhutan and India signed in 1949 is a typical instance of this. It is clear from this Article that the capacity to act in the field of international relations still continues to vest in the Government of Bhutan, but this external sovereignty can only be exercised in agreement with the Government of India. Similar provisions are to be found in the Treaty of Casr-Said concluded between France and Tunis in 1881 and the Treaty of 1912 between France and the kingdom of Morocco; but neither of these two kinds of international guardianship may be found in a particular case of relationship of suzerain and vassal. As the case of Tunis clearly demonstrates suzerainty did not necessarily imply any form of control of the external relations of the vassal state. Thus, the kingdom of Tunis, although, under the suzerainty of Turkey was competent to enter into relations with France and place herself under the protection of the French Government. This was exactly the position of Tibet when she concluded the Convention of 1904 with the Government of Great Britain

Dalai Lama, but the right was vehemently contested and was not uniformly exercised.¹

As regards the external relations of the vassals of China one may quote Shupsi Hsu who points out "it has been the practice of China as a suzerain not to interfere with her vassals in their relationship with other nations so long as she was not called upon."²

The Treaty of Friendship and Commerce concluded in 1883 between Britain and Korea, which did not contain any reference to Chinese suzerainty is one example.³ This was ratified by Korea and Great Britain independently without the participation of China. Similar treaties were concluded by Germany, Italy and Russia, not to mention the Japanese treaty with Formosa. Thus it can be assumed that the British, aware of this treaty making capacity of China's vassal states, were equally convinced of the like capacity of Tibet, especially in a period when no Chinese control existed therein.⁴

1. See Hue : *Souveniers d' un Voyage dans la Tartarie et le Tibet*, (English Edition) London, 1928, Vol. II, p. 180.
2. Hue : *ibid.*, p. 185.
3. Quoted in the International Commission of Jurists : *The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law*, Geneva, 1959, pp. 84-85. See also J.B. Morse : *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, London, 1910.
4. E. V.G. Kiernan : *British Diplomacy in China, 1880-1885*, Cambridge, 1959, pp. 104-110.
5. It should be noted that there is no treaty provision between Tibet and China, prohibiting the former from entering into any treaty relations with other countries. On the other hand, China has acquiesced in the treaties concluded by Tibet with others, as is clearly borne out by the treaty of 1856 between Nepal and Tibet at the termination of a war between the two (See C.U. Aitchison *Collection of Treaties Engagements and Sanads*, 1929, Vol. XIV, p. 43). The legal position appears to be that Tibet and Nepal were on the same footing in relation to China. Evidence that the People's Republic of China recognised the validity of this treaty is afforded by the 1956 Treaty between Nepal and China, by which the extraterritorial privileges accorded to the former in Tibet were renounced, thus confirming that treaties concluded by Tibet without the mediation of China had continued validly until abrogated and replaced by other provisions in regard to the same subject. See for example, Article 3 of the Sino-Nepalese Treaty of 1956, which provides that "All treaties and documents which existed in the past between China and

Such indeed was the position of Tibet under the suzerainty of the Chinese Emperors. The history of the relations between the two countries clearly proves that at no period in history was there a definite *de jure* surrender of any power of sovereignty on the part of Tibet. She did not at any time confer on the Government of China the right to control her external relations.

Now, the final question comes up; has this vague suzerainty of China over Tibet survived after the downfall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911? The answer to this question from the perspective of international law appears to be clearly in the negative. In the first place, whatever suzerain powers were enjoyed or exercised by China over Tibet, these came to an end when Tibet declared her independence after the outbreak of the Chinese Revolution in 1911. Since that date, no authority or power has been exercised by China in respect of her internal and external affairs. Professor Alexandrowicz correctly points out that the allegiance of the Dalai Lama to the Manchu Emperor was too personal a relationship which came to an end with the overthrow of the Manchu Empire and that "as sovereignty in China came to be vested in the Chinese people, no new type of allegiance of Tibet towards China would have replaced the one which had been abolished".¹ Then again, Tibet's international status was made clear in the tripartite Simla Convention of 1914 in which she participated as a separate and independent state. Thus in the light of these arguments, it is difficult to sustain the plea that China's suzerainty has continued after the Declaration of Independence by Tibet in 1912.

Nepal including those between the Tibet region of China and Nepal are hereby abrogated". This is unmistakably a clear admission by China that Tibet had the power, without the intermediary of China to conclude treaties with foreign states.

1. C. H. A. Alexandrowicz: *The Legal Position of Tibet*. 58 *American Journal of International Law*, 1954, p. 270 Although such a view may look surprising in view of the well-accepted rule of international law that constitutional changes within a state will not alter its international rights and obligations, but Asian state practice seems to support the learned Professor's view that the suzerain-vassal relations in these countries were purely personal in character. Thus, like the Tibetans, the Mongols declared that Mongol princes and Chieftains of Outer Mongolia owed allegiance to the Manchu Emperor only and that bond was dissolved with the revolution in China.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Prince Ching's letter to Jordan, 25 February 1910, containing a translation of the decree of the Chinese Government deposing the Dalai Lama, and the Wai-Wu-Pu's justification of the deposition.

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that on 20 February a telegram was received from the Imperial Resident in Tibet stating that the Dalai Lama had flown from Tibetan territory in the night of 12 February, he knew not whither, but the officers had been sent in all directions to follow him up, attend upon him and protect him. At the moment although the Dalai Lama was gone the Clergy and Laity of Tibet were as peaceful as usual.

A report was forthwith presented to the Throne by this Board, and on 25 February the following Decree was received :

“The Dalai Lama of Tibet, A-wong-to-pu-tsang-t'u-tan-Chia-t' se-chi-chai-wang-ch'u-eh' euh-le-lang-chieh, has long been the recipient of the favour and abounding kindness of my Imperial predecessors, and if he putforth the good that was in him he would devoutly cultivate the precepts of his religion and scrupulously observe the established rules, in order to spread the doctrines of the Yellow church. But since he assumed control of the administration he has been proud, extravagant, lax and slothful beyond parallel, and vice and perversity such as his has never been witnessed. Moreover, he has been violent and disorderly, has dared to disobey the Imperial Commands, has oppressed the Tibetans and precipitated hostilities.

“In July 1904 he fled during the disorder and was denounced by the Imperial Resident in Tibet as of uncertain reputation and a decree was issued depriving him temporarily of his title.

He went to Urga and on retracing his steps to Hsi-ning, the Court mindful of his distant flight and hoping that he would reform and repent ordered the local authorities to pay him due courtesy and attention; and when he came to Peking in the year before last he was received in audience, given an addition of his title, and presented with numerous gifts. Further, on his way back to Tibet, officers were sent to escort him, but though the aforesaid Dalai loitered and caused disturbance by his exertions, every indulgence was shown to him in order to manifest our compassion. The past was forgiven in the hope of a better future, and our intention was generous in the extreme. The present entry of the Szechuan troops into Tibet is especially for the preservation of order and the protection of the trade marts, and the Tibetans should not have been suspicious because of it, but the aforesaid Dalai, after his return to Tibet, spread reports and became rebellious, defamed the Resident and stopped supplies to our officers. Numerous efforts were made to bring him to reason, but he would not listen and when Lien-yu telegraphed that on the arrival of the Szechuan troops in Lhasa, the Dalai, without reporting his intention, had flown during the night of 12 February, and that his whereabouts were unknown we commanded the Resident to take steps to bring him back and make satisfactory arrangements for him. Upto the present his whereabouts are unknown. How can he be allowed to absent himself repeatedly from the control of the administration? The aforesaid Dalai has been guilty of treachery over and over again, and has placed himself outside the pale of the Imperial bounty. To his superiors he has shown ingratitude, and he has failed to respond to the expectations of the people below him. He is not a fit head of the saints (Hu-t'u-k'o-tu).

“Let Awang, & e, & e; be deprived of the title of Dalai Lama as a punishment. Henceforth no matter whither he has flown or whether he returns to Tibet or not, he is to be treated as an ordinary person, and the Resident in Tibet shall at once institute a search for a number of male children bearing miraculous signs, inscribe their names on tablets, and according to precedent, place them in the golden urn, from which one shall be drawn as the true re-embodiment of the previous generations of Dalai Lamas. A report shall be made to the Throne and

the Imperial favour will be bestowed on the child selected, who will thus be enabled to continue the propagation of the doctrine and glorify the church. The Courts regard virtue that vice may suffer, and holds perfect justice. You, Clergy and Laity of Tibet, and our children, and from the issue of this decree let all of you obey the laws and preserve peace, and let none disregard our extreme desire for the tranquillity of a border dominion and for the support of the Yellow church”.

I have the honour to observe that an Imperial Decree has been issued depriving the Dalai Lama, A-wang & e & e of his title and ordering the selection of a person in accordance with precedent, upon whom the title of Dalai Lama will be bestowed by His Majesty the Emperor, to keep order in the Yellow church; and that all matters affecting the relations of Tibet will continue to be dealt with according to the treaties concluded between China and Great Britain. Instructions in this sense have been sent by telegraph to Imperial Resident in Tibet.

In communicating the above to Your Excellency I have the honour to request that the British Government may be informed.

I avail, & C.,
Prince Ching.

APPENDIX II

*Yuan Shih-kai's Declaration
Presidential Order, April 21, 1912*

Now that five races are joined in democratic union, the lands comprised within the confines of Mongolia, Tibet and Turkestan all become a part of the territory of Republic of China and the races inhabiting these lands are all equally citizens of the Republic of China. The term 'Dependencies', as used under the Monarchy, must therefore cease to be used, and henceforth, as regards Mongolia, Tibet and Turkestan, a complete scheme must be devised to arrive at a unified system of administration and so promote unity in general among all races of the Republic. The reason why the Republican Government did not create a special Ministry to deal with dependencies was that Mongolia, Tibet and Turkestan are regarded as on an equal footing with the Provinces of China proper. For the future all administrative matters in connection with these territories will come within the sphere of internal administration. Now that the establishment of a single united government is an accomplished fact, let all matters formerly dealt with by the Ministry of Dependencies, be forthwith transferred to the control of the Ministry of the Interior, and all matters which belong to the province of other Ministries be handed over to the Ministries respectively concerned. Until the local politics have all been brought into harmony, all matters, Mongolia, Tibet and Turkestan should be dealt with in accordance with existing procedure.

APPENDIX III

A Note on Tawang

Soon after the British annexation of Assam, Deb Raja, the chief of the Tawang Monbas undertook to submit to British jurisdiction in 1844. Since the British had replaced the Ahoms and the Monbas had been dependents of the Ahoms, Deb Raja did not feel that he was taking any revolutionary step. He willingly signed an undertaking for good behaviour and was assigned an annuity of Rs 5,000.

The Annual Report for 1885-1886 of the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang stated that the Tawang representative attended the Darbar held by the Deputy Commissioner, where a dispute that had arisen between the Tawang traders and the Kuriapara people, was settled.

The Tawang representative received his annual pension of Rs 5,000 at this Durbar. The presence of the Tawang representative at the Durbar of the British official in 1885 and his conduct there constitute formal evidence of Tawang's acceptance of British sovereignty.

Tawang was called Monyul (low country) by the Tibetans; but neither geographically nor racially did it really form a part of Tibet. Geographically it was separated from Tibet proper by a wild range of rugged mountains averaging 16,000 feet in height. Racially the difference between Tibet and the Tawang district were almost equally marked. The bulk of the people living in Tawang; called Monbas, were in dress and manners, race and language so close to the Bhutanese that in early British records they are often referred to as Bhutias.

Actually since the establishment of the Tawang monastery in the middle of the eighteenth century as a daughter house of the famous Drepung monastery at Lhasa, the Monbas had adopted the Lamaist religion and thus come under considerable Tibetan influence.

Lamb states that Tawang proper to the north of the Se-La in the valleys of the Tawang and Nyanjang rivers, which was the seat of the great Tawang monastery, was an integral part of the Tibetan administrative district of Tsona. This argument, however, loses its force with P. C. Chakravarti's research on the northern borders of India. The famous scholar has noted that Tsonadzong was the administrative headquarters of the district to the north of the range that divided Tawang from Tibet, through which all trade between Assam and Tibet passed.

Pandit Nain Singh who visited the area in 1874-1875 also testified to this. He observed : "There is free trade between Hor, Lhasa and Tsonadzong, but on all goods to and from the south a duty of 10 per cent is levied at Chukhong or Custom House one day's long march to the south of Tsonadzong. Arrangements are made by the Collector of Taxes that merchants shall not have to pay both ways. The Taxes go to the Dzungpon and are remitted by him to Lhasa".

Arriving at Tawang Nain Singh found that : "The Tawang monastery is entirely independent of the Dzungpon (of Tsona) and of the Lhasa Government... the affairs of the Tawang district are managed by a sort of Parliament termed Kato, which assembles in public to manage business and administer justice. To Kato is composed entirely of Lamas, chief officials of the principal monastery".

In 1913 when Neville visited the area with a Tawang passport, he found Monyul still governed by the Lamas of Tawang. In a report dated 11 November 1913 he stated. "The people are not ruled by the Jongpen of Chonajong, but are under the Tawang Kato, a sort of parliament composed of lamas.... The Tawang people are very jealous of their trade with Assam, and have succeeded in keeping it entirely in their hands. Lhasa traders are not permitted beyond the Chenajong jurisdiction, and all strangers are systematically prevented from passing through their country".

The above discussion leads to the following conclusion (1) Regardless of the influence the Tibetans exercised over Tawang, the Lhasa Government had no direct political authority over the region. (2) Tawang was not a province of Tibet, as is shown among other things by the existence of a custom

barrier between it and the Tibetan province of Tsonadzong. (3) There were links of a remote and tenuous kind between Tawang and Lhasa.

APPENDIX IV

Declaration signed by Henry McMahon and Lonchen Shatra on July 3, 1914, along with the Simla Convention of the same date, which was initialled by Henry McMahon and Lonchen Shatra.

We, the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain and Tibet, hereby record the following Declaration to the effect that we acknowledge the annexed convention as initialled to be binding on the Governments of Great Britain and Tibet, and we agree that so long as the Government of China withholds signature to the aforesaid Convention, she will be debarred from the enjoyment of all privileges accruing therefrom.

In token whereof we have signed and sealed this Declaration, 2 copies in English and 2 in Tibetan.

Done at Simla this third day of July A. D., one thousand nine hundred and fourteen, corresponding with the Tibetan date, the tenth day of the fifth month of the Wood-Tiber year.

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