

# **PROBLEM OF THE HILL TRIBES NORTH-EAST FRONTIER, 1873-1962**

**VOLUME III**

**INNER LINE TO McMAHON LINE**

*A critical and comprehensive study of the problems and policies of the British and Indian Government towards the Hill Tribes, North-Eastern India and as a corollary to it Sino-Indian border dispute in the Eastern Sector based on original sources—both published and unpublished*

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**For Suryya  
To whom I owe much**



## PREFACE

The present study, the last of the series, covers the period 1873 to 1962—from the introduction of the *Inner Line* to the extension of administrative control up to the *McMahon Line* leading to the border conflict with China. It deals mainly with tribes that remained unconquered or beyond the sphere of British influence till the close of the last century. Of these, despite repeated expeditions when the Angamis remained unsubdued as ever, the government had no option but to withdraw from the hills altogether leaving the Nagas 'to cut each other's throats'. The result was disastrous ; even British districts were not spared from the incursions of the Nagas, which the local authorities were powerless to meet or to punish. It was feared that in no time the Nagas would descend down on the plains and compel the English to pull out of the province. The only course that was left open was to assert British authority over these tribes and to bring them under a system suitable to circumstances. The forward policy thus begun and extended up to Samaguting (*Chimakudi*) had its primary objective—the protection of the lowlands from the inroad of the Nagas and the officers were warned, rather sternly, not to interfere in the internecine strife of the Nagas beyond a line, specifically laid down, the *Inner Line*.

The extension of police and revenue jurisdiction and operation of the European tea-planters beyond the border could not but produce irritation and resentment of the hillmen to whom no motive was so strong as the preservation of their rights 'on lands and forests whether old or newly acquired'. The demand for labour and at times of *rasud* made collision with the Nagas inevitable. Their attacks on survey parties, murder of officers on duty and above all internal-feuds affecting settled districts convinced the authorities in India and England the demand for 'a more active policy'. The process which began at Samaguting extended to Kohima and continued, with

occasional breaks, until the entire tract on this side of the Patkais on the one hand and the frontier of Burma on the other came under administrative or political control of the government. More or less, the same causes were in operation behind uprisings of the Lushais, Western and Eastern. In a sparsely populated country like that of the Lushais, the pressing demand for labour fell heavily on a people who loathed, above all, to be away from home for long. Outrages and outbreaks invariably followed punitive expeditions, subjugation, absorption and domination by extension of roads and erection of fortified posts. The process was accelerated after the annexation of Upper Burma (1885) when it was generally felt that the interests of districts in plains demanded extension of political control over Chin-Lushai tribes. The hill districts continued to be a liability than an asset to the public exchequer—the cost of military occupation had to be borne by Indian tax-payers ; yet, the exigencies of the situation demanded a slow but steady penetration.

In the north, for reasons political and economic, the policy towards Bhutan was one of friendly cooperation but non-intervention. The hill tracts east of Bhutan to the north of the valley of Brahmaputra continued to be a *terra incognita* which had been considered 'the habitat of savage tribes whose bloody raids and thieving forays threatened serious danger to the cause of tea'. For fear of political complications arising out of exploitation of the unsophisticated tribesmen by outsiders, without a pass no one was allowed to cross the *Inner Line* extended to that area in 1875 ; and beyond the line even frontier officials were debarred, except under compelling circumstances, from meddling into the internal affairs of the tribes. Despite pressure and persuasions, Whitehall clung fast to *laissez faire* ; 'the occupation of posts in the hills would mean practically annexation followed by progressive annexation to which it would be difficult to set a limit.'

The Himalayan frontier in the north-east, in fact, remained dead when Russo-phobia dominated British foreign policy while

under the weak and effete Chinese monarchy autonomous Tibet provided an excellent 'buffer' beyond the rampart of the Himalayas. The emergence of a strong, united, centralised People's Republic of China upset the balance of power in the north and started the 'triangular contest' between Great Britain, China and Tibet. How and with what effect Britain and later the Indian government attempted to meet the Chinese challenge has been covered in a number of books, monographs, articles in learned journals apart from official publications. Yet, normalisation of relations with China is not in sight. To many, without settlement of the boundary question a *rapprochement* with China is unthinkable. What actually prevented the British and later Nehru's government to leave the border issue unresolved? Is it incorrect to say that the border conflict arose not so much out of motivation as of misunderstanding? Is it really insoluble? Opinions differ and are bound to differ even amongst impartial observers unless posted with dependable facts. The object of the present study is not to add another controversial book on the subject, but to highlight in its concluding chapters the main trends and developments in the North-East Frontier areas—the evolution of India's strategical frontier or the *McMahon Line*—leading to the border dispute and to lay bare the facts, objectively and dispassionately, for a correct assessment of the realities of the situation so essential for a settlement of the vexed issue. Incidentally the problem of Aksai Chin, though beyond its purview, has to be tackled to some extent as it has considerable relevance on the subject under review. The insurgency in Nagaland and Mizoram at the end, though sketchy for dearth of reliable materials, has brought the narrative up-to-date.

Gauhati : August, 1981

H. K. B. P.





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# CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi

## CHAPTER I

<i>The Inner Line (1873-78)</i>	1-27
---------------------------------	------

The planters and the Nagas—boundary disputes—Ladoigarh boundary examined—*Inner Line*, the genesis—survey and operations: Naga Hills—collision with the Nagas—inter-tribal feuds and extension of protectorates—gradual advance, Keatinge and Bailey proposed—Northbrook disagreed, Lytton advocated forward policy—administrative arrangements—policy approved by Secretary of State.

## CHAPTER II

<i>South and South-West Frontier (1873-74)</i>	28-49
--	-------

Edgar's second Lushai mission—Sukpilal's territory delimited—Lushai raids in Cachar, Sylhet and Manipur—Landholder's Association, its memorial—causes analysed by Edgar—enquiries as to offenders and measures of punishments—operations of Left Column under Bouchier and Right Column under General Brownlow—policy and Chittagong Hill Tracts—defence of the frontier—Ratan Poea.

## CHAPTER III

<i>The Siege of Kohima (1878-81)</i>	50-69
--------------------------------------	-------

G. H. Damant appointed Political Officer, Naga Hills—Kohima selected headquarters—intrusion of English, a challenge to Angamis—PO's objectives—murder of Damant and its aftermath—the siege—vulnerability of Kohima—arrival of reinforcements—fall of Khonomah—war of attrition—subjugation and retributions—policy towards Nagas reviewed—Bailey's recommendations received approval of Governor-General in Council.

## CHAPTER IV

*Paramountcy in the Hills (1875-98)*

70-110

Naga Hills, a settled district under Deputy Commissioner—Elliot's early difficulties—trans-frontier raids, policy laid down—urge for an extension of political control—outrages in trans-Doyang and trans-Dikhow areas—Ao territory annexed, sub-divisional headquarters at Mokokchung : Lushai Hills, inter-tribal feuds—Chin Hills reconnaissance—J. F. Stewart and his party ambushed—outrages in Chema Valley—murder of Pokuma Rani—annexation of Upper Burma demanded political control over Chin—Lushai tribes—punitive expedition under F. V. W. Tregear—North Lushai Hills district—uprising and reduction of Western Lushais—South Lushai Hills district placed under Government of Bengal—subjugation of Eastern Lushais and restoration of peace—Chin-Lushai Conference, 1892—administrative measures—chieftainship maintained—amalgamation of the North and South Lushai Hills.

*Appendix—A*

111-112

Geneological Table of the Lushai Chiefs

## CHAPTER V

*Northern Frontier (1873-1900)*

113-138

Demarcation of Assam-Bhutan boundary—policy towards Bhutan, conciliatory but non-intervention—*Inner Line* and *Outer Line*, clarified—friction with the Kapachors—Dufra raids and expedition—settlement of Dufas—Abor policy re-examined—temporary occupation of Nizamghat—Needham appointed APO—relation deteriorated—outrages and expeditions—massacre at Bordak—severe punishment ruled out—expedition against Bebejia Mishmis.

*Appendix—B*

139

Medhi Aka Raja and 14 Other Rajas letter to the Deputy Commissioner, Darrang, 26 November 1883.

## CHAPTER VI

*Non-Intervention (1900-10)*

140-163

Forward policy, advocates and opponents of—change in policy urged by Minto, turned down by Morley—extension of control beyond *Outer Line* opposed: Younghusband expedition and Lhasa Convention (1904)—Anglo-Chinese (1906), Anglo-Russian Convention (1907)—Chinese troops under Chao Ere-feng entered into Lhasa—Indo-Tibetan border endangered—Anglo-Bhutanese Treaty (1910)—Chinese demand on Miju chief of Pangum—Charles Bell and Chief of General Staff on security of the frontier—Minto's telegram on strategical external line—reaction at Foreign Office—urge for an 'active line' opposed by Hardinge.

## CHAPTER VII

*Expeditions and Explorations (1910-14)*

164-190

Noel Williamson's tour beyond *Outer Line*—Chinese intrusions into Upper Burma, Upper Lohit Valley and Aka country—murder of Williamson and Gregorson, causes analysed—Abor expedition, successes and failures: Mission under Bentinck—Kerwood's Miri mission—Mishmi mission under Dundas—'Walong Promenade'—Nevill's exploration of the country of Akas, Mijis and Monbas—Tawang Monastery—Nevill's recommendations shelved on outbreak of World War I.

## CHAPTER VIII

*The Simla Convention (1911-14)*

191-213

October Revolution (1911) and its aftermath—Tripartite Conference—Henry McMahon, Lonchen Shatra and Ivan Chen—Simla Convention, 27 April

1914 : Indo-Tibetan boundary—Chief of General Staff and Army Department notes—‘rectification’ of the line at Tawang—dialogues between Bell and Lonchen Shatra—exchange of letters between Plenipotentiaries of Tibet and Great Britain—The McMahon Line—on Chinese refusal McMahon and Shatra signed Convention accompanied by a ‘Declaration’—Chinese arguments examined—Great Britain, greatest beneficiary—McMahon’s final Memorandum.

*Appendix—C* 214–216

The McMahon Line : Exchange of Notes

### CHAPTER IX

*The World War I and Tribal Areas (1914–34)* 217–235

Contribution to war efforts by North-Eastern tribes—Thado-Kukies rebelled, causes analysed—subjugation and administrative measures : Trans-frontier Nagas, extension of political control—uprisings of Kabui Nagas under Jadonang and Gaidiliu—expedition against Mishmis : McMahon’s recommendations, financial stringency delayed implementation—proposed relaxation of control over Sadiya-Balipara Frontier Tracts—Indo-Tibetan frontier, ‘a remote concern’ to the authorities—McMahon Line ‘apparently forgotten’.

### CHAPTER X

*The McMahon Line : Forward Move (1934–40)* 236–254

The McMahon Line, discovery of—Kingdon-Ward—Olaf Caroe’s enquiries—Caroe-Walton exchanges—nature and extent of Assam government’s political influence over Tawang—Gould’s mission to Tibet—revelations and recommendations of ‘definite action’—Survey of India map and revised version of Aitchison’s *Treaties* published—Lightfoot’s exploratory mission to Tawang—his recommendations and

also of Reid's unacceptable—Twynum's proposals negated in view of altered situation on outbreak of the war—Whitehall's policy remained unaltered.

## CHAPTER XI

### *The McMahon Line: Establishment of Control (1940-51)* 255-288

North-East Frontier, significance in international politics—forward policy, opposed by Foreign Office for fear of Sino-American propaganda—fears allayed and proposal accepted—directives to Mills, newly-appointed Adviser, Tribal Affairs: Problems and difficulties—outposts at Walong, Riga and Karko followed by annual tours: Apa Tani plateau, Haimendorf's reconnaissance and establishment of a friendly base for extension of British influence—Mills' tour in Eastern Dufu and Apa Tani areas—reversal of policy proposed by Adviser—unacceptable to External Affairs Department: Post established at Dirang-dzong and that of Rupa strengthened—house-tax replaced Tibetan levies—Tibetan influence on decline: Mills on material and educational needs of NEFA.

Tibetan reaction: on developments south of the Line, on transfer of power to India—replacement of Kuomintang by People's Republic followed by 'Liberation of Tibet'—IB's apprehensions, *New Problem of Internal Security*—administrative control extended up to the Line, including Tawang.

*Appendix—D* 289-290

*Aide memoire* to Tibetan Foreign Bureau by B. J. Gould.

*Appendix—E* 291-295

Excerpts from Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel's letter to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, 7 November 1950.

## CHAPTER XII

*The Border War (1951-62)*

296-334

Sino-Indian friendship—rift in the lute—India's reaction on Chinese occupation of Tibet—Nehru's dilemma—towards *Panch Sheel*—security measures—north-east Ladak left out—problem of Aksai Chin: Chinese cartographical aggressions—border incidents and Nehru-Chou En-lai exchanges—Nehru and opposition lobbies in Parliament—Delhi Summit (1960) and *Official's Report*—war psychosis—'game of chess and battle of wits'—NEFA debacle—evacuation of Tezpur—Nehru's appeal for aid—Chou En-lai's announcement of unilateral cease-fire, 20 November 1962, causes analysed—terms rejected by Indian Prime Minister—abortive attempt at compromise by non-aligned powers—formula accepted *in toto* by India, China under pre-conditions—Nehru passed away, border problem remain unsolved.

The problem analysed and examined—Chinese claim without any basis and so also of India not on solid foundation—solution not in confrontation but in compromises—package deal 'without compromising security' only basis for future talk and ultimate settlement.

*Epilogue*

335-349

Insurgency of the Nagas and the Mizos—rôle of Foreign Missionaries, misrepresentation of actual facts—demand for independent Nagaland turned down by Nehru's government—Phizo and his men took the cult of violence—Nagaland Federal Government—operations of Security Forces—Phizo flew to Karachi and then London—urge for peaceful settlement—overtures, Naga Peoples Convention—birth of Nagaland as a separate State : Lushai



politics, rise of extremist MNF—Laldenga demanded 'Sovereign' State of Mizoram—attack on Aizawl and Lungleh—parallel government established—Mizoram declared disturbed area—insurgents went underground and let loose a reign of terror: Nature and extent of Chinese aid to Nagas and Mizos; Emergence of Bangladesh crippled insurgents—Shillong Accord, November 1975—rift in Laldenga's camp—growing demand for peace and upgrading of Mizoram an Union territory. Nature of peace tenuous.

Chinese intrigues and the demand for military preparedness, arguments for and against—towards Sino-Indian *detente*, process started and continues—Chinese motives examined—settlement of border dispute in India's interests, internal and external—need for mutual goodwill and accommodation—present time highly opportune.

<i>Glossary</i>	350-351
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	352-358
<i>Index</i>	359-372
<i>Sketch Maps</i>	
1. Trans-Doyang and Trans-Dikhow Areas	82
2. Lushai Expeditions, 1890-92	93
3. Abor Expeditions and Explorations, 1911-2	175
4. Mishmi Section	195
5. Abor and Miri Sections	197
6. McMahon Line	202
7. Eastern Sector	323
8. Western Sector	324

## ABBREVIATIONS USED

### *Documents*

*AS*, Assam Secretariat Records.

*AC*, Assam Commissioner files.

*BJP*, Bengal Judicial Proceedings.

*BJP (P)*, — — — (Political).

*CD*, Despatch from the Court of Directors.

*FPA*, Foreign Political Proceedings—A.

*FPB*, — — — —B.

*FIA*, — — Internal—A.

*FEA*, — — External—A.

*FSE*, — — Secret-External.

*IOR, L/P & S/—*, India Office Records : Political and Secret.

*PP*, Parliamentary Papers.

*WP*, White Paper.

### *General*

*APO*, Assistant Political Officer.

*DC*, Deputy Commissioner.

*EAD*, External Affairs Department.

*EBA*, Eastern Bengal and Assam.

*FO*, Foreign Office.

*IO*, India Office.

*PO*, Political Officer.

*MEA*, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi.

*MFA*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking.

*PMSIR*, Prime Minister on Sino-Indian Relations.

*Aitchison*, Aitchison's Treaties, Engagements and Sanads.

*Reid*, R. Reid's History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on  
Assam.

## CHAPTER I

### *The Inner Line*

Ever since the extension of tea-plantation beyond the settled districts, troubles were brewing between the Nagas and the planters in the north. The Assam Tea-Company, the pioneer in the field, had received a grant of the Gabharu hills in early 1836 from ex-*raja* Purandar Singha of Upper Assam.<sup>1</sup> Gradually, the Company extended its activities beyond the borders and entered into agreements with the Naga chiefs on the belief that these areas belonged to the Nagas and not to the government. Major Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam, who was not in favour of such transactions, wanted that the government should assert its sovereignty over all the Naga tribes on the northern face of the hills and under no circumstances should allow agreements to be made by European or Indian speculators without the knowledge and approval of the government.<sup>2</sup> Considering such a measure to be discouraging to the commercial speculators, William Grey, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, was not prepared to put any restriction upon private bodies on the distinct understanding that their relations must be consistent with the people they were to deal with and that the latter should feel that they were benefitted by the advance of these strangers. The planter could therefore make no claim of protection of the government in areas beyond the frontier and the local authorities should make insecurity and difficulties of protecting him in it a reason for withdrawing the grant.<sup>3</sup> Left to his own resources, he had no alternative

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1. BRC, 1836 ; 11 July, Nos. 5-6.

2. BJP, 1855 ; 26 July, No. 56 ; Jenkins to Grey, 20 October.

3. *Ibid.*, Grey to Jenkins, 9 June.

but to conciliate the chiefs by payment of blackmail or revenue, presents or offer of employment ; even if an Assistant in an outlying factory made himself disagreeable to the tribe, he was invariably replaced by somebody else. His proximity to the Nagas was therefore not a source of embarrassment to the government.<sup>4</sup>

Since the sixties the number of tea-estates were on the increase. Several planters extended their operations beyond the old bund known as Ladoigarh which the Nagas treated as the northern boundary of their territory. The Nagas could not but consider these developments with serious concern. Unless these foreigners were called to a halt, they instinctly felt, that within a few years they would be driven out of their hearths and homes. There had also occurred a perceptible change in the attitude of the planters. Although the latter

by no means wishes to affront the Nagas...challenge their right of way through his garden and stands upon his own rights...and claims to be as well protected in his grant against the hillmen as he would be against gipsies, vagrants or poachers, if it be occupied a slice of Epping forest.<sup>5</sup>

Inevitably, the earlier relations between the planters and the Nagas deteriorated and friction arose not infrequently 'regarding the boundary, rent or tribute'. In 1863, a Naga chief rented out a salt-spring supposed to be his possession to one Vanquin, a tea-planter, in the district of Sibsagar. In the next year when a dispute arose over it, Lieutenant Sconce, the Deputy Commissioner, referred the matter to Henry Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam. In a subsequent note, the Deputy Commissioner explained with reference to the adjoining *mouzas* that the spring was located south of the Ladoigarh, and that the hill areas beyond that *garh* had always been considered as the territory of the Nagas. Forwarding the case to the Government of Bengal, Hopkinson held the view that the

4. BJP, 1871 ; September, No. 30 ; Hopkinson 20 May.

5. *Ibid.*, see Barpujari, S. K., 'The Planters and the Nagas : Their Early Relations', *Journal of the University of Gauhati*, xx, pp. 58 ff.

southern boundary of Assam had always been held to be coterminous with the northern boundary of Burma and Manipur along the centre of the Patkai hills and that this line had brought the tribes bordering Sibsagar and Lakhimpur within the jurisdiction of the government. He, of course, admitted that no revenue had been collected from these tribes, and the planters and other speculators had taken up lands on 'arrangement' of their own with the Nagas. George Campbell, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, concurred with the Commissioner that the watershed of the Patkails must be maintained as the boundary between the Burmese and the British territory. Since the arrangements with the Nagas had already become a source of considerable embarrassment, he felt that the time had arrived for ascertaining the limits north of that line within which the various tribes of the Nagas claim rights of property on the soil and the nature of these rights whether vested in individuals or communities.<sup>6</sup>

While investigations were in progress, in November 1867 the police outpost at Galeki, south-east of the district of Sibsagar, was attacked by the Nagas supposed to be Tamaloos or Tangcho clan, killing several including women and children. Forcible seizure of spears or weapons of the Nagas had been attributed by the local Superintendent of Police to be the cause of the outrage.<sup>7</sup> Disarming of the Nagas, Captain Clarke, the Deputy Commissioner Sibsagar, rightly pointed out was not a new thing. Under the Ahom rulers, the Nagas entering into the plains for trade invariably left their spears at the *kotoky chokey\** ; and the latter had to accompany them lest they might commit offence to any one. He traced the origin of the raid to the 'encroachments' on their territory either by demarcation of surveys or by grants of lands or by other means than through the Nagas themselves of lands by planters in the so-called

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6. *Ibid.*, No. 25.

7. BJP, 1867 ; December, Nos. 60-2.

\*Outpost of a *kotoky* who was the middleman between the Nagas and the people of the plains.

Naga country.<sup>8</sup> Hopkinson maintained that such encroachments were only 'fancied ; no Naga had been disturbed in possession of any land nor have the British authority or *ryots* occupied any location to which they pretended a claim'.<sup>9</sup> Hopkinson's contention was not supported by facts as stated above.

In March 1869, the Assam Company lodged a complaint to the Deputy Commissioner that the Changnoi Nagas had abducted from the Towkak garden three Assamese labourers.<sup>10</sup> In course of his investigation the Deputy Commissioner was told by the Nagas that the labourers left on their own accord since they remained unpaid after termination of their agreement. On receipt of the report the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal enquired of the Commissioner as to the extent of the civil and criminal jurisdiction of the Deputy Commissioner towards the Naga frontier. In reply he was informed that the Ladoigarh used to form the boundary between the Naga hills and the plains as far as the river Jhanji, but he could not definitely state as to the limits of his jurisdiction.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, in his forwarding note Hopkinson remarked : 'There seems to be no recognised limits of Deputy Commissioner's jurisdiction (over) ... (the) Nagas'. In view of these uncertainties the Commissioner was directed by the Government of Bengal, in September 1869, to make no further grant beyond Ladoigarh and at the same time the order was extended to lands in other parts of Assam beyond the limits of the recognised revenue jurisdiction.<sup>12</sup>

The change in attitude of the planters, their indiscretion, hot-headedness and bold assertion of legal rights increased the tension with the Nagas endangering thereby the security of the

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8. BJP, 1868 ; February, Nos. 16-8.

9. BJP, 1871 ; September, No. 25 ; see *Disputes between the Planters and the Nagas*.

10. BJP, 1869 ; April, Nos. 274-6 ; July, Nos. 31-3 ; August, Nos. 41-2 ; 137-8.

11. *Ibid.*

12. BJP, 1869 ; October, Nos. 171-3 and November, No. 138.

frontier. In early 1871, in a quarrel between the Nagas and Mr Eades, the Manager Sepon Tea-factory, their chiefs demanded that Eades should be made over to them. The situation became so alarming that a section of the European planters in the neighbourhood thought of arriving at a settlement by any means and even advising Eades to tender his resignation.<sup>13</sup> On representation made by A. E. Campbell, the Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar, the Government of Bengal sanctioned a police outpost at Khowang ; but the Lieutenant Governor considered the augmentation of police force neither possible nor desirable. 'Any considerable increase in force', he remarked, 'causing the planters and others to rely more on protection of police and less on diplomatic arts...might only lead to fresh complications.' 'Security and prosperity of the gardens should be ensured', he concluded, 'by cultivating friendly relations with the Nagas rather than to vindicating the dignity of the British name by severe measures.'<sup>14</sup>

Campbell rightly felt that the policy of conciliation which had hitherto been the watchword towards the Nagas was not practicable so long the boundary remained unsettled. He wrote : 'The Nagas will tell you (that) the Ladoigarh is the boundary, and there is no doubt that they are most jealous of any encroachment on their territory.' 'In some places', he continued, 'we do not go beyond the *ghur* ; in other places we have sold grants of land south of it ; therefore showing that we do not recognise the Naga territory at all.' Under these circumstances, he was afraid, 'any one of the numerous European settlers living in the frontier might any moment be the cause of a frontier war'.<sup>15</sup> Hopkinson, who recognised no frontier between the Nagas and the settled districts, saw neither urgency nor the necessity in laying down a boundary as desired by

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13. BJP, 1871 ; March, Nos. 273-4 ; April, Nos. 1-3, 39-41, 194-6 ; September, Nos. 30-9.

14. *Ibid.*, No. 39 ; Bayley to Jenkins, 18 August.

15. *Ibid.*, No. 33.

Campbell. He thought that the protection of the government would extend as far as existing gardens and not beyond. 'Settlement of a boundary', he argued, 'would provoke rather the ill-will of, than satisfy the Nagas, for that would mean rejection of claims on certain quantities of land over which they have no real right.' In his view under the powerful Ahom kings, the Nagas of the lower hills were tributary of the paramount power, and with the vicissitudes of the monarchy, the Nagas advanced or retreated from the plains in turn.<sup>16</sup>

The question naturally arises whether Ladoigarh ever formed the northern limit of the Naga territory? The term *garh* implies a rampart or fortification. Erected by the Ahom rulers these served not as boundaries but highways and mainly lines of defence against potential enemies within and outside the State.<sup>17</sup> Ladoigrah, correctly speaking the Naga bund, formed a second line of defence and there is no positive evidence to show that it was the southern boundary of the Ahoms. Prior to 1860s there is no reference whatever of Ladoigarh as a boundary line. As Hopkinson says, 'I have been unable to discover the origin of the...Ladoighaur boundary or to trace its existence further back than...26 April 1869.'<sup>18</sup>

16. *Ibid.*, No. 25, also September, No. 43. Hopkinson made it clear that 'Beyond the Jhanji up to Dhansiri river (i.e. for the larger half of the district) foot of the hills being the boundary of the *mouzas* which follow their sinuities advancing or retreating as they advance or retreat and taking up the valleys so that in some cases the *mouzas* extend to the hills themselves.' In a similar strain Campbell says: 'Soon after crossing the Jhanzi and up to Dhansiri river, there is no Ladoigarh, the foot of the hills being the boundary of the *mouzas*.' *Ibid.*, No. 44, Campbell, 5 July.

17. Speaking of the Chintamani *garh*, Prime Minister Atan Buragohain (1662-79) says: 'We do not see any place for defending our country if we once slip our hands at Gauhati...I propose to construct a rampart linking Tulsijan and Dihing.' Bhuyan, S. K., *Atan Buragohain and His Time*, p. 273.

18. *Op. cit.*, Hopkinson, 20 July.



Reference has already been made that the policy of Ahom rulers towards these tribes varied from time to time according to the exigencies of the political situation.<sup>19</sup> In its early phase the 'proud conquerers' followed a policy of slow but steady penetration. When an opportunity presented itself the rulers of the low lands were not slow to assert their sovereign rights on the hillmen on the south. Even Purandar Singha, the last Ahom ruler, effectively interfered in the inter-tribal feuds of the Nagas of Namsang and Borduar.<sup>20</sup> The forward policy of the earlier years had to be replaced by one of conciliation during the period of Mughal wars demanding cooperation and in any case neutrality of the neighbouring chiefs and tribes. To secure the adhesion of the Nagas, like those of the northern tribes, King Pratap Singha (1603-41) granted the chiefs and communities specified areas, commonly known as *khats*, to supply their requirement of grain and other necessaries.<sup>21</sup> Civil wars and foreign invasions towards the close of the Ahom rule afforded the neighbouring tribes opportunities to fish in the troubled waters. During this period the Khamtis in the east settled themselves in and around Sadiya, and the Singphos, who had hitherto occupied the lowlands on this side of the Patkais, advanced as far as the Buridibing.<sup>22</sup> It was unlikely that the Nagas were silent spectators of the whole scene; they took full advantage of the situation and forcibly occupied areas as far as Ladoigarh. Whatever lands the Nagas were in possession in the plains on the eve of British occupation were either *khats* or unauthorised occupation during the period of internal dissensions and Burmese invasions.

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19. See Barpujari, i, pp. 15 ff.

20. Bronson wrote: 'Poorander before his days were numbered, had the Nagas much those under his control than the Government now have ...he made them to look to him in all important matters and when they did wrong he chastised them.' FPP, 1840, 9 November, No. 82; Bronson to Jenkins 22 July.

21. Barpujari, i, pp. 16-7.

22. Bhuyan, S. K. (ed.), *Tungkhungla Buranji*, pp. 120, 150 and 207; FPP, 1844; 23 March, No. 90.

In spite of changes in fortune the entire territory up to the hills and in certain cases even beyond were under the jurisdiction of the Ahom rulers. The territory of Raja Purandar Singha, for instance, extended in the south-east up to the river Namsang, a tributary of the Buridibing.<sup>23</sup> The list of *khats* which captain Brodie forwarded to the Government of Bengal soon after the resumption of Upper Assam clearly shows that even the last Ahom ruler had jurisdiction and control over areas which the Nagas later claimed as their own.<sup>24</sup> The assignment of the *khats*, it must be remembered, granted no permanent but usufructuary right resumable at the pleasure of the government. These were later renewed by the British government as 'life-grant renewable at discretion'.<sup>25</sup> The overall supervision of *khats* were entrusted, as under the former government, to *kotokies* appointed and controlled by the paramount power. In case of aggression or contumacy on the part of the *khat-holder* the *duar* leading to the *khat* remained closed until the culprits were surrendered and brought to book.<sup>26</sup>

The conflicts in jurisdiction brought to the forefront the question of the extension of Act 33 which provides the executive power of summary legislation for backward areas.<sup>27</sup>

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23. When the Raja laid claim over areas east of that river, he was told by the Commissioner that 'Namsang had been considered the boundary ...that he could have no right to the country beyond it.' There existed over eighty salt-springs which were worked until the rule of Purandar and from which the Raja derived a revenue of Rs 3,000 a year. FPP, 1838 ; 4 April, No. 121, paras 127-8.

24. See Barpujari, ii, *Appendix-B*.

25. BJP, 1871 ; September, No. 42.

26. Moreover the *khats* were granted not without return. With his intimate knowledge of the affairs of these tribes Brodie reported : 'It was usual for most of the chiefs to come down once a year and render a kind of submission to the king. Slaves, elephant's teeth, spears, shafts, cotton, etc., were presented by the Nagas.' FPP, 1841 , 25 October, No. 74.

27. FPA, 1872 ; May, Nos. 16-34.

William Grey, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, being called upon to give his opinion on the subject, suggested extension of the provision of the Act to portions of Assam and Cachar which were beyond revenue settlement, but not to areas 'where so many Europeans resided'. His successor George Campbell sought to apply the Act to all the districts not excluding areas occupied by the Europeans under operation of the Act. Referring to the conflicts between the Nagas and the planters, he brought home to the Government of India that an indiscreet European settler might involve the government on any day on a frontier war. The peculiar situation of many of the grants and the altered temper of the planters towards the tribes and the government made it necessary, Campbell thought, that the aforesaid Act should be applied to Assam and Cachar. C. U. Aitchison, Secretary Government of India, felt that 'limits of Revenue Survey' was 'exceedingly indefinite' description of boundary between different jurisdictions. Survey was not coterminous either with boundaries of the *mouzas* or of the villages which composed them. The districts within the survey were partly occupied by frontier tribes while large tracts then unsurveyed formed parts of British jurisdiction. Many of the waste lands occupied by Europeans were located beyond settled districts. Campbell was right, Aitchison thought, in holding that lands could not be excluded from the operation of the Act merely because they were held by Europeans, and that the planters and the frontier tribes were so intermixed that it was necessary that there should be law and tribunals to cover them.<sup>28</sup> Concurring with his views, John Strachey, the officiating Viceroy, remarked :

What is required in the wild districts is not no law but suitable law...that ordinary law, with slight modification, will be found to be suitable, if the officer concerned will also make proper use of it.<sup>29</sup>

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28. *Ibid.*, Aitchison, 16 December 1871.

29. *Ibid.*, Strachey, 1 January 1872.

Campbell's views received the concurrence of the Governor-General in Council. It was resolved to extend the application of this Act to areas which were beyond revenue settlement. As a preliminary, however, it was considered essential to define some line beyond which the jurisdiction under the Act should not be extended. Such a line had already been defined in Cachar and the same need be done for Assam including within it all existing grants. This line commonly known as the *Inner Line*, it was greatly hoped, 'would put an end to that indefinite, slow but certain advance to dangerous and exposed position which has been the source of difficulties'. The district officers need not necessarily extend their effective jurisdiction up to that boundary and

beyond the line the tribes...should be left to manage their own affairs with only such interference politically on the part of our officers as may be considered calculated to establish a personal influence for good among the chiefs, and tribes. Any attempt to bring the country between our settled districts and Burmah under our direct administration even in the lowest way...or to govern it as British territory, should be steadily and sternly resisted.<sup>30</sup>

The *Inner Line* indicated the limits of the administrative area and no way defined the actual boundary of British possessions. In early 1873, a dispute arose between the Namsang Nagas and Minto, a tea-planter, over rights on certain lands which were outside the fiscal jurisdiction of the district of Lakhimpur. A compromise was effected on the advice of the Government of Bengal under which compensation had to be paid to the Nagas on condition that latter's right on land, if any, would cease hereafter, and the Governor-General in Council desired that all lands held by the tea-planters should be brought within the limits of British jurisdiction.<sup>31</sup> In the district of Sibsagar, tea-grants had been made and taken up outside the limits of revenue settlement and south of the Ladoigarh. In September 1873,

30. *Ibid.*, Aitchison to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 30 January.

31. FPA, 1873 ; June, No. 205 ; also BJP (P), June 1873, Nos. 56-9, November, 73-6.

the Commissioner was directed by the Government of Bengal to extend the survey operations beyond the limits of revenue paying areas so as to take in any grant south of the *garh* without, of course, raising any suspicion in the minds of the Nagas and offering compensations for claims made by them over lands brought under the jurisdiction of the government.<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly survey of the south of Ladoigarh commenced. It was soon evident that these could not remove the causes of friction with the Nagas since the operations did not determine finally the district boundary or the limits of British jurisdiction. The question was mooted in the middle of 1873 when within two miles of an European garden a party of Borlongae Nagas committed an outrage on the Kamsingias in which twenty-three women and children were killed. In forwarding the case to the Governor-General on 8 September Campbell solicited the orders of the Government of India regarding the settlement of the boundary of the Sibsagar district. He proposed, as recommended by the Commissioner of Assam, that the line of civil jurisdiction of the Sibsagar frontier should be laid down, as far as possible, on the principles on which the northern line of Kamrup and Darrang frontier had already been settled by taking the natural line so as to divide the hills occupied by the Nagas from the plains under occupation of the British subjects.<sup>33</sup>

Everywhere else possession will be respected and in special cases exchanges will be arranged. In some cases Assamese hold land under the Nagas and in other cases the Nagas under us. In these cases, distinction between property and jurisdiction will be maintained ; property being assured to Naga holder in the country though within our jurisdiction and if it be found they held revenue from the arrangement will be allowed to continue.<sup>34</sup>

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32. *Ibid.*

33. FPA, 1873 ; July, No. 469 ; Mackenzie 14 June ; BJP (P) 1873, May, Nos. 22-35 ; June, Nos. 25-33.

34. *Ibid.*

As a corollary to it, Campbell desired that the Government of India should have a second thought over the mode of dealing with the Nagas on the trans-frontier areas. Since Naga Hills had been made a British colony and large interests were involved therein, it would be highly inexpedient, indeed impossible, he thought, to leave pockets of Naga territory absolutely independent or to permit the Nagas 'to continue their raiding, throat-cutting or slave dealing pursuits'. The best way of dealing with these tribes would be

to establish a political police amongst them, and to become familiar with them. We then stop raids as we have stopped those of the Garrows, the Angamis, the Kbasis, and it is to be hoped the Lushais. While we leave them unknown in their obscure hills and jungles, there is no security whatever against the raids which continually occur. Once we know them, we find them very amenable to our authority.<sup>35</sup>

Already Captain Butler, Political Officer Naga Hills, who had persistently advocated a forward policy towards the Nagas, had acquired considerable influence over the Nagas. During November-April 1871-2, after visiting the Kacharis, the Meekirs and the Rengma Nagas on the West of Samaguting (Chimakudi), he toured the watershed of the Dhansiri and the Doyang wherein he was accorded a cordial reception by the Rengmas who had hitherto never seen a European. He was also well received by the Angamis of Kohima, Jotsomah, and Khonomah, many of whom were then beginning to take service as porters and were entering into trade with the Assamese and Manipuris in tea-seeds and ponies.<sup>35a</sup> To carry on his mission effectively, Campbell proposed that the headquarters of the Political Officer should move forward from Samaguting to a higher and more convenient spot where he might control the Angamis, the Lhotas and other tribes that he could bring under his control. He should impress the Nagas that by setting up boundary pillars the British would guarantee their territorial rights, but

35. *Ibid.*

35a. BJP, (General-A) 1872, September, Nos. 35-6; *Annual General Administration Report of the Naga Hills for the year ending 30 April.*

they would not allow them to cut throats of British subjects nor of one another and that they must maintain peace. In their inter-tribal feuds, he hoped, one tribe or village would constantly approach him and thereby he would gradually establish his authority over them.<sup>36</sup> Lord Northbrook accorded his approval to the demarcation of the Sibsagar-Naga boundary on the principles recommended by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. But the general policy towards the Nagas—establishment of political control without any assertion of actual government—remained unaltered. The proposal to move Butler's headquarters was considered by the Governor-General in Council 'too indefinite' to admit of consideration.<sup>37</sup>

Towards the close of 1872, Major Godwin-Austen commenced exploration of the Naga-Manipur boundary up to the Patkai hills. He surveyed a considerable part of the line ; but the boundary actually demarcated extended from the ridge Khunnho at the head of the Zullo river to the Tellizo peak. At both these points as well as across the spur between the Zullo and Sijo rivers boundary pillars had been set up. Difficulties of procuring labour and non-cooperation, if not hostile attitude, on the part of the Manipur government rendered it difficult for the party to advance beyond the Tellizo. Nonetheless, the operations resulted a large tract of above 2500 square miles 'what was a *terra incognita* carefully surveyed and mapped'.<sup>38</sup> Captains John Butler (Junior) and W. F. Badgley followed up the work in the winter of 1873-4, and succeeded in surveying about two thousand square miles after repulsing the Nagas who attempted twice to impede the progress of operations. Major Lance who was engaged in the meantime in the demarcation of the boundary south of the Sibsagar district could make little progress ; he succeeded in determining only

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36. *Op. cit.*

37. FPA, 1874 ; January, Nos. 69-75 , Secretary, Government of India, 17 October 1873.

38. *Ibid.*, see Godwin-Austen, H. H., *Report on the Survey Operations in the Naga Hills and Manipur during the Field Season 1872-3.*

ten miles of a boundary of one hundred and twenty miles. The operations in the unexplored areas were to be continued in the next winter from two directions : one party under Badgley and Holcombe, Assistant Commissioner Lakhimpur, to advance in a south-easterly direction from Jaypur ; and the other under Lieutenant R. G. Woodthorpe and Captain Butler from Samaguting eastward through Lhota and Ao country.<sup>39</sup>

The survey parties had to confront with the opposition of the Nagas from the very beginning. Not unoften demonstrations were made and 'shots had to be fired' and villages destroyed, 'to keep the Nagas at bay'. 'It is impossible to make the Nagas understand', explains the *Friend of India*, 'what surveying is or by what means it can be carried out' ; and 'although at the first visit they were quite satisfied with the explanation that we have come to see the country and receive us as welcome guests ; (but) our coming again and again excites their suspicion'. Some of the Nagas were under the impression that the Englishmen belonged to a famine-stricken country and they had come to their villages in search of food. In fact queries were made : 'Have you no rice in your village that you travel about to eat ?' Not only the Nagas were to aid the survey parties in building huts, clearing roads and carrying baggages, but not unoften they were required to supply their requirement of rice. Some of these demands were indeed irritating to the hillmen many of whom subsisted on herbs and roots of trees.<sup>40</sup>

Collision with the Nagas was unavoidable. On 2 February, without opposition Holcombe's party reached Ninu or Nibang, a Banfera Naga village ; and on the next day a body of Nagas arrived at the camp ostensibly to sell provisions. Suddenly the Nagas 'threw off the shawls under which each had a *dao*' and cut down Holcombe and eighty sepoy. Badgley offered a gallant resistance, but was severely wounded with the loss of

39. Badgley, W.F., *Extract from the Narrative Report on the Topographical Survey of India for the Season, 1873-4*, pp. 47 ff.

40. *The Friend of India*, 15 April 1876.



fifty-one men. A punitive expedition under Brigadier General Nuthall burnt the offending village and recovered seventy-one heads of the massacred men.<sup>41</sup> In the meantime Butler and Woodthorpe with a detachment of 43 Native Infantry and 8 Frontier Police left Samaguting for the territory of the Lhotas. On 4 January 1875, nearabout Wokha while the party was encamping a war-cry was heard and before long the enemies surrounded the camp and a number of non-combatants were killed. The Nagas were repulsed with heavy loss. At dawn leaving a strong guard at the camp Butler with a party of forty men attacked Wokha ; the village was destroyed and forty Lhotas were killed.<sup>42</sup>

The incident at Nibang gave a rude shock to Colonel Keatinge who had in the meantime assumed charge of the Chief Commissionership of the newly-constituted province of Assam. He was so much disheartened that he suggested to the Government of India to stop survey in these hills and in any case to conduct the operations 'more slowly' than had been done during the last three years. The proposal was unacceptable to the Viceroy who shared the views of C. U. Aitchison, Secretary Foreign Department, that it was highly desirable to show the Nagas that treacherous attacks as that made at Nibang would not deter the British government from any course which it had determined to carry out. 'If we leave off this survey', the latter feared, 'the safety of future survey parties will probably be much more imperilled.' Since the offending Nagas had been meted out 'swift and severe retribution', he strongly held the view, that no time was so opportune as the present for prosecuting the survey without much risk.<sup>43</sup>

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41. FPA, 1875 ; February. Nos. 439, 450, 482, 489-91.

42. See 'Extract from the Narrative Report of the Lt. R. G. Woodthorpe', *General Report on the Topographical Surveys of India for the Season, 1874-5, Appendix*, pp. 53-63.

43. FPA, 1875 ; August, Nos. 401-3 ; Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 3 March 1875 ; Aitchison, 29 July 1875.

Aitchison miscalculated the temper of the Nagas. In December 1875, the survey was resumed under Butler and Woodthorpe, and to their aid a detachment under Colonel Tulloch reached Wokha on 19th. After two days while approaching the village Pangti beyond the river Doyang, the party was ambuscaded and Butler mortally wounded. He was carried to Golaghat where he died.<sup>44</sup> Despite misfortunes one after another Woodthorpe succeeded in surveying 1100 square miles of topography and 2500 miles of triangulation. The party passed through thinly villages and thereby extended knowledge of areas hitherto unvisited by Europeans.<sup>45</sup>

On 28 July 1875, Keatinge reiterated Campbell's proposal of the necessity of shifting the headquarters of the Political Agent to a more convenient location. The main object with which Samaguting\* was established, he felt, the protection of the lowlands of Nowgong had been achieved ; but the tea-gardens at the foot of the hills of the district of Sibsagar were subjected to the frequent raids of the Nagas. He proposed, on the suggestions of Butler, that the headquarters should be moved to Wokha which was admirably situated for the political control and influence over the Nagas of the hills north of Manipur and those in the Sibsagar border. Pending completion of the survey during ensuing cold weather, the Government of India considered it inexpedient to shift the headquarters. When the result of the surveys were known, it

44. FPA, 1876 ; April, No. 326 ; see also Woodthorpe, R. G., The Death of Captain Butler, in a letter to Captain W. F. Badgley, Shillong, 15 June 1876, *General Report of the Topographical Surveys, 1875-6*, pp. 56-8.

45. FPA, 1876 ; February, Nos. 12-7 ; January 1877, Nos. 77-8.

\*Place names and names of tribes in both the Naga and Lushai Hills are baffling. This is mainly due to the fact that, as J.P. Mills rightly explains, 'at each advance (*into these areas*) officers tended to adopt the names of villages or tribes used by the interpreters hailing from the area on which the advance was based'. (*Reid*, p. 100). The writer has generally followed in this volume original names adding in some cases modern ones when it first occurs within brackets.

was felt, government would be in a better position to estimate the temper of the tribes and to understand the precautions which would be advisable to take in the establishment of a new post.<sup>46</sup>

Within the district, the Angamis were reported to be 'well behaved at least no longer dangerous'. Reviewing the achievements of the past six years, in his annual report of 1872, Butler remarks : 'much, very much has already been done by our most just and patient government to induce these savages to amend their ways, to convert their spears into plough-shares and to live in peace and harmony with all men'.<sup>47</sup> His successor Colonel Johnstone soon after his assumption of office also opined that these hillmen were 'decidedly friendly', but beyond the frontier, 'tribal feuds go on, houses are burnt and women and children massacred within hearing of Samogoodting'.<sup>48</sup> He wrote :

Blood feuds were common among all the hill tribes, but the system was carried on to excess among the Angamis. Life for life was the rule and until each of the opposite parties had lost an equal number, peace was impossible, and when the member of one village meet any belonging to the other, hostilities were sure to result... Mozuma and Sephema might be at war and Mozuma killed five, whereas Sephema killed only four. Sephema says, 'I must kill one more to make the balance'...so war continues.<sup>49</sup>

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to kill a boy in arms or a woman was accounted a (*sic*) greatest feat than killing a man as it implied having penetrated to the innermost recesses of an enemy's country whereas a man might be killed anywhere by a successful ambush.

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46. FPA, 1877 ; August, Nos. 120-2, K.W. 1, *Proposed Removal of the Headquarters in the Naga Hills District*.

47. Butler, J. (Junior), 'Rough notes on the Angami Nagas' *JAS*, xliv, pp. 307-27 ; see Elwin, V., *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 291 ff.

48. FPA, 1877 ; August, No. 127 ; see *Office Precis*, 1875.

49. Johnstone, J., *My Experiences in Manipur and Naga Hills*, pp. 27-36.

Johnstone was not a silent observer of the scene. In early 1874, he had brought under his protection two Naga villages—Mezephmah and Sitekemah—then under threat of attack by their neighbours on condition of their fealty and payment of house-tax to the government. Since the declared policy of the government was not to incur ‘further responsibility or expense beyond offer of advice and remonstrances’, Keatinge was well aware that the action of the Political Agent would lead to complications. ‘We shall first become the champions of the weak and the champions of the weak will entail on us the restraint on the strong.’ Nonetheless ‘we are bound by our duties as a civilized power by considerations for our prestige... and even by our own interests, to accept the protectorate and all its responsibilities’.<sup>50</sup> The action of the local authorities incurred the displeasure of the Governor-General in Council. In their view

Captain Johnstone ought not to have taken this step without consulting superior authority... And so far as the step, if approved, may involve us in the reduction of the country by degrees to a regular system of Government regardless of expense, to that extent it certainly expresses a policy to which His Excellency in Council does not assent.

Since raids of the Nagas grew out of turbulence and disorganisation across the frontiers, it was however considered essential to maintain peace within the sphere of Political Agent’s influence on both sides of the frontier, and that such influence could not be established without some action or exercise of material authority. Keatinge was, therefore, advised to ascertain whether such an authority was necessary for the maintenance of order in the frontier and whether it was exercised without greater risk than the object was worth. If these villages were worth protecting in the interest of the British territory and they could also be conveniently protected, Johnstone’s action need be approved. On the other hand, if the cost and consequences

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50. FPA, 1874; July, No. 40; also FPA, 1875; Nos. 68-70, K.W., *Proposed Extension of British Protectorate in the Naga Hills.*

had been miscalculated and no adequate advantage be gained, he was to retrace his steps forthwith.<sup>51</sup>

Beyond the frontier inter-tribal feuds were on the increase. Since January 1874, as reported by the Chief Commissioner, the Angamis had been committing outrages on smaller communities and villages beyond Manipur frontier and the Naga Hills district ; 6 villages were plundered, 9 wholly or partially destroyed and killed 334 persons ; of these as many as 262 by the two villages of Mozomah and Khonomah.<sup>52</sup> During 1875-6, in his Administration Report R. Brown,<sup>53</sup> the Political Agent, Manipur, writes that the Angamis had sacked five villages of Manipur, killed 106 persons and carried off 6 men and 14 women. P. T. Carnegy, the new Political Officer, Naga Hills, was directed to proceed against the offending villages and to concert measures with Brown. The operations however had to be postponed on the sudden death of the Political Agent. Pending Lieutenant Colonel Johnstone, the newly-appointed Political Agent, had assumed charge of his duties and acquired some knowledge and experience of the people and the country, Carnegy was directed to exert his influence over the villages near his headquarters to prevent recurrence of raids and outrages and pushing vigorously lines of communication without which the task of controlling the Nagas was considered 'hazardous and extremely difficult'.<sup>54</sup> In February 1877, the Mozomabs attacked Goomaigojo which was so long free from raids killing several men and carrying off some guns.<sup>55</sup> In July, even Samaguting was threatened requiring reinforcement of forty men of the 44th Native Infantry from Golaghat. In August, to avenge a previous murder a war

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51. *Ibid.*, No. 45 ; Secretary, Government of India, 30 June ; also 1878 ; October, Nos. 7-51, K. W., pp. 7-8.

52. FPA, 1878 ; February, Nos. 7-78, K. W. 3 ; *The Naga Hills Expedition* ; also December 1876, Nos. 150-7.

53. *Ibid.*, also April 1877, Nos. 280-1 ; August, Nos. 135-6.

54. *Ibid.*, also December 1876, No. 173.

55. FPA, 1877 ; January, Nos. 147-8.

party of Kohima and Khonomah fell on Purobani killing fifteen, mostly women and children.<sup>56</sup> The most outrageous atrocity occurred in the following month when Suchamah and others arrived at Themokedimah, a Rengma village, and persuaded the latter to take the lead in the attack on Kokhata-mah. Hardly had the Rengmas left their village, when Mozomamen shut the gates of their allies and slaughtered women and children, numbering about one hundred and sixty, on whom they could lay their hands on. On hearing this, Themokedimahs hurriedly returned and slew sixty of the attacking party.<sup>57</sup>

The recurrence of outrages, particularly on Manipur, had been the subject of frequent complaint of the Maharaja of Manipur and was considered by the Secretary of State as not creditable to the British government. He was not satisfied in the delay in taking necessary action against the aggressors. The Governor-General was advised that no time should be lost in taking such steps as might be necessary to prevent repetition of such horrible crimes.<sup>58</sup> Considering further delay in operation would drift matters from bad to worse, already the Governor-General in Council had directed the Chief Commissioner to adopt necessary measures in consultation with the political Agents, Manipur and Naga Hills for preventing raids and exacting reparations for the past outrages. The season being advanced the operations had to be postponed till December 1877 when Carnegy accompanied by Captain Bryden with 196 men of the Native Infantry and fifty Frontier Police marched against the Mozomahs. Despite firing of the enemy the village was taken by assault and burnt to the ground. Taking shelter in the neighbouring hills and jungles, the Nagas continued to harass the troops by intermittent firing, night attacks and cutting off communications with Dimapur and Golaghat. On the

56. FPA, 1877 ; August, No. 136 ; November, Nos. 55-6.

57. FPA, 1878 ; February, Nos. 7-78 ; K. W. 1, *Raid on Rengmah Naga Village Themokedimah.*

58. FPA, 1877 ; August, Nos. 135-6.

arrival of additional troops under command of Lieutenant Macgregor and Captain Williamson, Inspector General of Police, the resistance of the Nagas broke down.<sup>59</sup> On the accidental death of Carnegie, about this time, the duties of the Political Officer fell on Williamson. The Mozomahs tendered their submission and agreed to pay a fine of rupees fifty besides surrender of arms and accoutrements in their possession.<sup>60</sup>

The inter-tribal feuds and outrages inevitably increased the process of extending British protectorate over the independent Nagas. In 1874, Government of India grudgingly accepted the submission of Mezephemah which was located at a distance of nine miles from Samaguting. Even before the receipt of formal approval of his earlier action, Johnstone had taken another village, Pherimah, under protection ; and of the several other applicants, the Chief Commissioner on his own responsibility accepted four to be brought under his control. Northbrook agreed to these recommendation with the explanation that 'advantage to be gained by the measure outweigh the objection to it'. By the end of 1877, over a dozen of villages more or less distant from the headquarters brought under protection<sup>61</sup> and the 'reluctant approval' of the Government of India gave way to 'distinct approval'.<sup>62</sup> This meant a reversal of the policy hitherto followed and virtually bringing under direct control extensive areas eastwards of the Naga Hills. 'We allowed our promises of protection', remarks C. U. Aitchison, Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department, 'far beyond our power, under ordinary circumstances to strike.' He argued that such a movement would proceed indefinitely

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59. *Ibid.*

60. FPA, 18 February, No. 59.

61. Protection extended to Mezephemah, Sitekhemah, Pherimah, Tesephemah, Jalukemah, Phuimah, Intu or Zowna, Nidzumah, Henimah, Thesamah, Injao (?) or Inzaoma, Insang and Meramah. FPA, 1877 ; January, Nos. 80-8, K.W. 3 ; August, Nos. 142, 144, 146, 159, 166 and 168.

62. FPA, 1878 ; October, Nos. 7-51, K.W. 1, pp. 5-10.

'at an enormous expense, in a country, yielding no revenue, with no roads, covered with dense jungles...until Government would be made responsible for the protection of the country as far as the frontier of Burma'. 'If the Government is to undertake the responsibility', he concluded, 'it should do with eyes open. If it is to be adopted, we should adopt it deliberately, after weighing reasons for and against it, and should not be blindly drawn into it by insensible degrees.'<sup>63</sup>

Such a policy was not long in coming. The internecine strife amongst the Nagas, their attacks on survey parties and murder of British officers convinced the authorities in England and India the necessity of 'a more active policy' towards these tribes. Keatinge found the Nagas 'keen traders' when they had an opportunity for trading. In fact those living in the borders used to come freely into the plains all through the winter and were seen bartering commodities in every market. But they were

so far superior to the Assamese in physique and energy, that, under any centralised government, but our own, they would make the occupation of the valley south of the Brahmaputra impossible...*(moreover)* we ought not, from moral considerations, to allow them to remain in their present condition of barbarity; and we certainly cannot permit it without great danger to our own districts which lie at the foot of the hills.<sup>64</sup>

While advocating in early 1875 a gradual and more survey of these areas, the Chief Commissioner wanted these operations should be on a different principle—a continuation of the political occupation of the hills, the process that had already begun at Samaguting. He admitted that the measure would be attended with serious consequences; but there were only two alternatives—'a gradual advance now and spasmodic movement hereafter'. With the addition of a police force of two hundred under a military officer, he was confident that he would be able, by

63. *Ibid.*, also December 1877, No. 133; Aitchison, 19 December.

64. FPA, 1877; August, Nos. 401-3; Secretary Chief Commissioner, 3 March; also *Office Precis* 1875, No. 127.



degrees, to subdue all the tribes and bring under effective control all the hills up to 94° 25'. To Steuart Bailey (1878-81), who succeeded Keatinge in early 1878, the problem was no longer one of protection of the settled districts or even of those villages in the hills that had voluntarily acknowledged the authority of the government, but of extension of political control village by village preventing them from joining the raids and enforcing on trans-frontier villages the recognition of the fact that any raid committed within those definite boundaries would be punished. 'The real issue is' the Chief Commissioner pointed out

whether in this one range of hills, situated between two fertile and settled valleys, we should allow these savage tribes to continue slaughtering year by year hundred of their fellow savages in the hills and of the unoffending subjects of the neighbouring Raja of Manipur or whether we should step in and stop it.<sup>65</sup>

The second alternative involved more time and punitive expeditions. From the financial point of view, Bailey was afraid, that it would not be a sound proposition. Even if all the villagers up to 96°E were made to pay a house-tax of rupees two the revenue would not pay for the additional cost of roads, buildings of the rank and file of the police establishment. Notwithstanding, the Chief Commissioner was not prepared to retrace his steps, because

We have gone too far to retreat, and I think we are bound, as the paramount power, as the head of the policemen of the country, to undertake such a control over these tribes and such protection to life and property, as our position permits, even though it be at the cost of the general tax-payer of India.<sup>66</sup>

The rapid strides made by the Russians in the Afghan frontier, growing hostility of the North-West Frontier tribes and the consequent financial crisis forced upon the Government of

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65. *Op. cit.*; see K.W. 1, *Future Policy in Respect to Naga Hills Tribes*, pp. 5-10.

66. *Ibid.*

India to adhere so long to non-interference in feuds of the Nagas and other tribes. The Governor-General in Council, therefore, turned down the proposals repeatedly made by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and the local authorities for a change in policy authorising the Political Officer to act as an arbiter in the inter-tribal feuds of the Nagas and thereby put an end to the anarchy and bloodshed prevalent amongst these tribes. Northbrook agreed with Keatinge that the authority of the British government would be extended over the Nagas in due course, but the establishment of direct rule at the moment would be 'most mischievous and suicidal'.<sup>67</sup> With the arrival of Lord Lytton (1876-80) as the Viceroy of India the views of the Government of India underwent a radical change. In fact the Viceroy carried out the mandates of Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State, of the new Cabinet under Disraeli, who desired that 'no time should be lost in taking vigorous steps to prevent a repetition of the outrages of the Nagas'. Lytton found that since 1866 Government of India had consistently followed the policy of establishing 'political control and influence' over these tribes only to that extent as would maintain peace on the British frontier and to prevent raids into the plains of settled districts. So far as its immediate objectives were concerned, it was on the whole successful; but experience showed that it had utterly failed to repress feuds or establish peace and order on the border where 'internal feuds with all the horrors are rife now as ever'. Advocating a departure from policy so long followed Lytton wrote to Salisbury :

After a careful consideration of opinions (of the local authorities) and the events of the past three years, we are induced to take a wider view of the interests and obligations of the British Government. We concur with your Lordship in the opinion 'that the British Government is bound in its own interests as well as those of common humanity to prevent the recurrence of horrible events'.<sup>68</sup>

67. FPA, 1877 ; August, Nos. 401-3.

68. *Ibid.*, No. 128, Governor-General to Secretary of State, 18 June.

For securing 'control and influence' over the Nagas, the Viceroy felt that the present headquarters of the Naga Hills was too far from the heart of the Angami country, particularly from the Eastern Nagas over whom in view of rapid extension of tea-cultivation in Sibsagar district it was 'imperative' that effective control and influence should be exercised. He was well aware that the power accorded to the district officer to acquire 'political control and influence' was extremely limited ; even if he was vested with adequate powers, overburdened as he was with heavy civil works in addition to political duties, he would not be in a position to devote time and attention necessary to establish real influence over these tribes. In consideration of these facts, the Viceroy considered it indispensable that the headquarters of the Political Officer should be removed to a locality in the interior of the hills and that his powers should be increased. That a European Officer should be located in the east as well as west of the Naga Hills, police and ministerial establishment need be augmented and adequate funds provided for improvement of communications.<sup>69</sup> The forward policy so strongly advocated by Lord Lytton received the concurrence of the authorities in England. In his reply on 23 August 1877 Salisbury wrote :

In the opinion of His Majesty's Government an attitude of indifference to the internal feuds amongst the Nagas, which result in wholesale massacre of women and children, would no longer be maintained without discredit to the British Government. The facts now reported show that both the interests of our own subjects and for the sake of the Nagas themselves, a more active policy than has hitherto been pursued should be adopted towards the tribes inhabiting the south-east corner of Assam.<sup>70</sup>

In anticipation of the approval of the India Office, the administrative arrangements for the Naga Hills received the sanction of the Governor-General in Council.<sup>71</sup> The survey

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69. *Ibid.*, Nos. 122 and 125-6.

70. *Ibid.*, October, No. 468 ; Secretary of State, 23 August 1877.

71. FPA, 1877 ; March, Nos. 125-6.

operations in the meantime being terminated, the Government of India had concurred in the desirability of shifting of the headquarters from Samaguting. The Chief Commissioner proposed in consultation with Woodthorpe that it should be located in the neighbourhood of Wokha, and Samaguting be maintained as an outstation and police post being visited at intervals by the Political Agent or his Assistant. Colonel Johnstone, who was then officiating as Political Agent at Samaguting, with his intimate knowledge of the locality, on the other hand, advocated the location of the headquarters at Kohima which lay in the Angami trade route and on the road between Samaguting and Manipur besides being within reasonable distance from the Lhota Nagas. In consideration of conflicting views the Commissioner was advised to determine the site in consultation with the Political Agents of Naga Hills as well as Manipur. With respect to the policy to be followed towards these tribes, Bailey was informed on 18 July

that our system of administration in the Naga Hills District is at present indefinite. We administer only those villages which have placed themselves under us, to the extent of protecting them from raids, receiving some taxes and we keep out the Manipoories from the whole district. And the consequence is that the present boundary has no special or intelligible meaning in an administrative sense, while neither for defensive purposes nor for protection of our settled borders, has it an advantage over the further boundary over which Colonel Keatinge desires to extend our influence.

Therefore, the Governor-General in Council considered the policy proposed by Keatinge as not only 'expedient' but, 'practicable and unavoidable'. Past experience in dealing with these tribes had already shown that no serious difficulty would be anticipated in the execution of the scheme. If it could be carried out by degrees *without unreasonable risk or any disproportionate expense*, the Governor-General was disposed to accord his approval to the measure and to decide that in future it should be systematically pursued.<sup>72</sup> This gradual extension of

72. FPA, 1878 ; October, No. 41 ; Lyall to Chief Commissioner, 20 July.

British authority 'over all independent tribes' received confirmation of the Secretary of State in his subsequent despatch on 5 December 1878. Such extension, it was explained, though involved considerable increase in responsibility without proportionate fiscal advantage, as 'unavoidable'<sup>73</sup> ; because

the continuance in immediate proximity to settled British district of a system of internecine warfare conducted principally against women and children cannot be tolerated, while the result of the punitive expedition... was not such as to encourage the expectation that measures of that kind will either suffice to prevent periodical attacks on our own village or conducive to the civilization of the tribes beyond the border.<sup>74</sup>

The frontier, inevitably, moved forward.

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73. FPA, 1879 ; December, No. 533 ; Secretary of State, 5 December 1878.

74. *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER II

### *South and South-West Frontier*

Edgar's mission in the land of the Eastern Lushais, it may be recalled,<sup>1</sup> was on the whole successful. With his wonderful tact, 'judicious treatment' and 'conscientious acts' he had succeeded in bringing under the British influence the tribes who had long been the terror of peaceful subjects in the plains. George Campbell was however not prepared to admit that 'positive good result' had yet been established ; he doubted much about the peaceful behaviour of these tribes without a show of force when necessary. Nevertheless he was in favour of giving a fair trial to the policy just begun by deputing the Deputy Commissioner once again in the next cold weather to the hills.<sup>2</sup> Edgar, accordingly, left his headquarters on 11 December 1871 and went by the Dhaleswari to Changsil. The Lushais, who had hitherto been in a state of great apprehension, came in and bartered their India-rubber for goods they required.

One of the principal objects of Edgar's visit of the Lushai country was to settle with Sukpilal and his followers the boundary line where British jurisdiction would cease and the tribes would be responsible for the peace of the districts beyond it. After final settlement it was proposed to clear such tracts as might be necessary for defence ; and at suitable intervals posts would be established and held by sufficient force. The boundary between the posts would be constantly patrolled. By this means, it was hoped, renewal of raids would be prevented and in any case the force in charge of the outposts would be

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1. See Barpujari, ii, pp. 142-3.

2. FPA, 1870 ; July, No. 260.

enabled to inflict on the offenders severe chastisement.<sup>3</sup> The *sunnud* which Edgar proposed to grant to the chiefs indicated the boundary 'from Chutturchoora to Tipai Mookh, through Bhyrubi Mookh, Bhyrubi Tilla, Kolosip, Nungrai and Koolicherra Mukh'. The chiefs were required, amongst others, to guarantee security of all merchants and woodcutters in the hills and to refer to the Deputy Commissioner disputes that might arise between the Lushais and the people of Cachar and Sylhet or those of Tipperah and Manipur. The proposed line would have a large chunk of territory in Cachar well suited to tea-cultivation and the tract beyond it would not be independent, but remain under political control of the British government. Sukpial was placed in an extremely embarrassing situation; for British friendship he could not barter away the political freedom of the Lushai chiefs. On his arrival on 14 January he accepted the *sunnud* with reservation that he would be responsible for the security of the traders from the Chutter Chura range to the Sonai as he had no authority on the east of that river. With respect to the boundary the chief showed no inclination to have any land north of the Bhyrubi Chura.<sup>4</sup>

While negotiations were in progress with Sukpial intelligence arrived of the attacks on two villages in the south-east of Manipur by followers of Vonolel, Poiboi and Vompilal where twenty people were killed, fifty men, women and children carried off. Outrages were renewed on 22-4 January 1871 east of Sylhet and even police outpost at Chargola was not spared. Simultaneously another body of Lushais raided the village Ainerkhal in Hailakandi sub-division and the factory at Alexandrapur where they murdered tea-planter Mr Winchester with twenty-four coolies and carried off several captives including his little child. The raiders, thereafter, made an

3. FPA, 1871; March, No. 131; see Government's reply to the representation of Landholders' Association, Calcutta.

4. FPA, 1871; October, Nos. 145-97.

attack on Katlichera tea-garden in which they killed five and carried off three coolies. Careful preparations had been made, as reported, for the attacks on the gardens ; 'a war-path having been cut through the forest, a look-out having been made, a proper route having been marked on the already existing path along the hill range that came from the south.' Three days afterwards attacks were made on the village Nugdigram and on the factories at Monierkhal and Dharmakhal. After a lull for about a month on 24 February an abortive attempt was made on Jalnachera tea-estate in the south-east of Hailakandi subdivision. On 27th, a body of raiders from Hill Tipperah attacked a village north-east of Alinagar police outpost, Sylhet, and killed nine men and took off several women and children.<sup>5</sup>

The Landholder's Association, Calcutta, in a memorial brought home to Lord Mayo, the Viceroy of India, the character of the outrages which had not only caused much damage to the property and life, but had given rise to a feeling of insecurity and that the planters experienced great difficulty in keeping the labourers in gardens. It represented that

One European has been killed and others have been to fly for their lives, a large number of coolies and villagers with their women and children have been murdered and others carried into captivity. Those who have escaped have been subjected to great peril, and such a state of panic that the managers from motives of humanity have been obliged...to remove them to gardens remote from the scenes of massacre.

Bungalows, tea-houses and coolie lines have been burnt, and your Memorialists fear that, especially in outlying gardens, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to induce the labourers to return.<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime under the escort of a detachment Edgar returned to his headquarters. 'The raids could have been averted' he remarked, 'if we had been less ignorant of the Lushais and taken more trouble to find out their grievances.'<sup>7</sup>

5. FPA, 1871 ; March, Nos. 471-576 ; May, Nos. 576-653.

6. FPA, 1871 ; May, Nos. 237-9 ; Davidson to Earl of Mayo 9 May.

7. FPA, 1872 ; August, 70 in Nos. 61-113, Edgar to Commissioner of Circuit, Dacca Division, 3 April.



The successive raids on the factories made it clear that the Lushais, like the Nagas in the north, looked upon the extension of the tea-gardens as encroachments upon tracts which they claimed as their own. Amongst these frontier tribes, as Edgar says, 'there is a strong feeling about boundaries'. The Government of Manipur, too, was indifferent to the grievances of the Eastern Lushais 'real or fancied' and made no attempt to define the boundaries between these tribes and those under the authority of Manipur; on the contrary, the Raja and his officers were alleged to have embarked on a policy of subjugation of these tribes which resulted in retaliatory raids on villages in Manipur. Edgar admitted that he had entirely failed to do anything so far as the Eastern Lushais were concerned and, therefore, they could carry on their raids without any let or hindrance. Vonolel and his men were confident that they were more than a match for British troops and they looked upon the presents which 'we give the headmen a tribute'; 'if Sukpial had slain his tens', Howlongs were sanguine, that 'they would slay scores. If Sukpial had butchered defenceless peasants, they would have heads of police of sepoy and of *sahibs*.' 'Far from pacifying the frontier', the *Observer* rightly remarks, 'the result of Mr Edgar's negotiations was to hold out direct incentives to scores of warlike people to come and do as Sukpial had fared.'<sup>8</sup>

The Government of India in its communication on 12 May 1871 requested George Campbell, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, to give his views, amongst others, (i) the tribes who were actually guilty of the outrages (ii) whether an armed expedition into the Lushai country was absolutely necessary and (iii) if the answer was in the affirmative, what should be the nature and extent of punishment that might be inflicted on the raiders as would deter them from renewing similar attacks.<sup>9</sup>

8. *Observer*, 25 February 1871; see Mackenzie, A., *History of the Relations of the Government ...* p. 572.

9. FPA, 1871; August, Nos. 574-92; see *Measures for Dealing with the Looshai Raiders*.

With respect to the first, the general opinion was that many people from the Sylos and Howlong country of Savonga were concerned in the western raids and Edgar believed that eastern outrages were committed by the chiefs who succeeded Vonolel—his sons Savonga, Lalburah, Thoilal, Poiboi, Lengkham and Lal Savola, son of Lal Poitang, Saipuiya, brother of Vendola. Campbell was not inclined to trace particular raids definitely to particular tribes, Howlongs or others. These expeditions, he thought, were at best ‘great dacoities’ and though they might be used by well known Lushai chiefs ; they were not exclusively composed of their respective followers, but recruited from all the country through which they passed.<sup>10</sup>

In regard to the second question Edgar thought there were three possible alternatives : *firstly* non-intervention consisting in confining to a series of police outposts and endeavouring by a system of roads to render it impossible for the Lushais to make incursions into the territory behind ; *secondly* permanent occupation of the Lushai country and *thirdly* conciliation : ‘humanising by the extension of trade and introduction of articles of barter and future by education’. He ruled out the first as it would be impossible to establish in such a country of swamps and forests along the entire frontier a cordon of posts. Neither did he favour the second alternative ; it would be highly expensive apart from pushing the frontier further interior and so into collisions with those tribes more powerful and different to deal with. He therefore advocated conciliation ; but this would be ‘futile and fruitless’ if not accompanied by punishment for past outrages or in other words he considered it imperative to despatch an expedition to bring home to offending tribes the power of the British to punish for all acts of aggressions.<sup>11</sup> The Commissioners of Dacca and Chittagong were also unanimous in their views that ‘condign punishment’ should be meted out to the raiders in the shape of

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10. *Ibid.*, Note by the Secretary on Looshai Raids, 1870-1.

11. *Ibid.*, Minute by George Campbell, 18 May 1871.

military occupation of their villages and that such occupation should be 'gradual, systematic and relentless'. The chances of their fighting being small, every endeavour should be made to seize their livestock and crops before they had been reaped and to occupy the country so long as to prevent them from sowing the next crops. By this process, if the chiefs came in demand should be made to surrender the captives and to make them to work on the roads along the frontier.<sup>12</sup> 'Visitation of some of these people by armed force', Campbell was fully convinced, 'absolutely necessary', for the security of the British subjects particularly in the interest of the tea-gardens in Cachar.<sup>13</sup> But he stoutly opposed any measure of past retaliation.

Let us go to certain points. If the people submit, let us treat with them and demand surrender of our captives, and if we obtain fair amount of success in that way, let us enter into friendly relations with them ; if they resist, let us use force and compel respect.<sup>14</sup>

#### On the termination of the expedition

we could establish military posts in such positions that they should be visible to, and felt by, those who are now remote ; we might succeed in cultivating friendly relations with the whole people, recovering our captives, checking future raids, and bringing the Looshais to cultivate India-rubber, cotton and tea in preference to murder, robbery and man stealing.<sup>15</sup>

While adhering strictly to the policy of non-intervention the Foreign Department admitted that circumstances might arise which would render necessary the despatch of an armed expedition against the refractory tribes. The events of the last season

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12. *Ibid.*

13. 'It seems to be', the Lieutenant Governor continued, 'that such a terror established in all the tea-estates within reach of the Looshais that no coolie will be willingly remain in them and although all those who are bound by their contractors may be forced to stay for the time, they will never renew their contracts or work as free labourers under present circumstances.'

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

were sufficient to force on the government to adopt measures of deterrent punishment. 'The cruel raids', the Viceroy remarks,

that have been made for some years upon various parts of our territory more specially on the tea-gardens in the Cachar district, and the very unsuccessful and inefficient measure which have been hitherto taken for the protection of our frontier—have doubtless imparted to these savages the impression that we are either unable or unwilling to take active measures and to punish the perpetrators of these crimes.<sup>16</sup>

Concurring in the views of all the authorities, the Governor-General in Council resolved on 11 July 1871 the despatch of another expedition into the Lushai country with the object of preventing the recurrence of outrages on British territory. There was little or no doubt, it was believed, that most of the 'prominent offenders' belonged to the Howlongs and the Sylos ; but information was lacking as to the actual offenders and therefore it was expected that 'much discrimination' be shown in dealing with different tribes. Apart from restoration of the captives, demands should be made to surrender of leading chiefs and others who were known to have taken part in the outrages, to give hostages as pledge of good behaviour, infliction of punishments on villages whose inhabitants took part in the raids and immediate destruction of any village with its crops which offered resistance to the advancing troops. The main object of the expedition would be, of course,

to establish friendly relations of a permanent character with these (tribes) to make them to promise to receive in their villages from time to time Native Agents of our own, to make the travelling in their districts safe to all ; to show them advantages of trade and commerce ; and to demonstrate to them effectively that they have nothing to gain and everything to lose by placing themselves in a hostile position towards us.<sup>17</sup>

The Military Department was authorised to determine the strength and composition of the force, arms and equipment and other details. The Governor-General in Council considered

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16. *Ibid.*, Memorandum by Lord Mayo.

17. *Ibid.*

in the light of the last expedition the employment of a larger force as objectionable both from the political and military point of view. Whatever might be the force, it was desired, that larger part of the troops should advance from Chittagong. Not only were the routes from Chittagong to Silchar were better known than the north, river Karnafuli provided excellent water communication by which supplies could be forwarded within a day's march to the Syioo villages. Simultaneously, a smaller body to be accompanied by Edgar should march from Cachar and two forces should endeavour to reach on a particular day positions from which they would be able to maintain communication with each other. The Raja of Manipur, whose territory was also subjected to frequent raids, should be directed to cooperate with British troops. To make a complete survey of the tracts some officers of the Survey Department should accompany the troops from both sides and finally advantage should be taken to acquire necessary information for the establishment of a line of frontier outposts on the Chittagong frontier.<sup>18</sup>

Towards the end of 1871 two columns of troops were organised ; one from Silchar to march to the village of Lalburah, Vonolel besides those of Lenkom and Poiboi ; and the other from Chittagong to punish the Sylos and the Howlongs in whose hands were many captives including little Child Mary Winchester. The former or Left Column was under General Bouchier who was accompanied by J. W. Edgar in Civil capacity ; the latter or the Right Column was placed under General Brownlow with T. H. Lewin, Deputy Commissioner Chittagong Hill Tracts, as Civil Officer. In early December 1871, the troops consisting each of 500 sepoy of the 22nd Punjab Infantry and 42nd and 44th Native Infantry besides Artillery assembled at Silchar. On 23rd, despite repeated attacks of the enemy, the column advanced towards Vompilal's

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18. FPA, 1872 ; September, No. 249 : Edgar 5 June ; also Shakespear, L.W., *History of the Assam Rifles*, pp. 68-71.

village which submitted after some resistance on 29th. The troops trudged through a terrain of extreme difficulty ; beyond Mainadhar, the last garden on the Barak ; 'every bit of road had to be cut and cleared, entailing endless labour while in addition much bridging work had to be carried on.' On 18 January 1872, smaller villages like Tingridong came in and tendered their submission. At Kungnung the Lushais made a bold stand, but they were repulsed with heavy loss. The main column, which was delayed by difficulties of transport and provisions, in the meantime, arrived and advanced against Chellum, Poiboi's stronghold. On 2 February the stockade fell after severe fighting leaving several casualties. Intelligence arrived that Vonolel had died and Lalburah fled to the east. Without resistance the column advanced towards Champai, Lalburah's village, and arrived there on 17th and found it deserted. Later at Chumsin, the village of Vonolel's widow, terms of peace were dictated to the tribes of Vonolel, Poiboi and Vonpilal.<sup>19</sup>

The Chittagong column consisting of 2nd and 4th Gurkhas and a party of 27th Punjab Infantry assembled at Kassalong in the middle of November 1871. 'Never perhaps', remarks Lewin, 'has an English force advanced into enemy's country with less knowledge of what was before it or with more uncertainty as to obtaining in any way the desired information.' The adhesion of Ratan Poea at this stage came as a Godsend. Imposing display of British troops assembling near his village probably induced the chief to throw his lot with the British government. Ratan Poea accompanied the troops as a guide with a contingent of his own. Brownlow commenced his move initially against the Sylos *en route* to the country of Benkuiya and Savonga (Sangbunga), the north Howlong chiefs, who were mainly concerned in the raids of Cachar and at whose hands were kept innumerable captives.

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19. FPA, 1872 ; June, 128 in Nos. 125-36, Lewin to Secretary, Government of Bengal, 26 March ; Shakespear, *op. cit.* pp. 72-6.

Taking river route, as far as practicable, the troops marched through intricate jungles in a north-easterly direction and on 9 December there occurred the first encounter with Lengura, a Syloo chief, whose village was occupied and burnt. The villages of Vanlula, Lalhira and Vanhnoya were also attacked and destroyed. The Syloo chiefs showed no sign of submission and on 21 January 1872 the strongly defended village Savonga was shelled and burnt down. Negotiations which had in the meantime been carried out with Benkuiya through Ratan Poëa and Muhammad Azim, the Inspector of Police, had resulted in the release of several captives including Mary Winchester. To obviate the entry of British troops the chiefs made over the captives, but none of them came in. The long distance and high ranges of hills which intervened rendered it difficult for the troops to have communication with the Cachar column as was originally planned. Leaving a part of the troops at Savonga, on 12 January 1872, Brownlow continued his march beyond upper Dhaleswari against the northern Howlongs and Ratan Poëa being sent again in advance to induce the chiefs to come to terms. The mission was successful.<sup>20</sup>

On 16 January, Benkuiya and Savonga, both of them, submitted agreeing to surrender the captives, to be in friendly terms with British subjects and to allow them free passage through their villages. The surrender of these two powerful chiefs hastened submission of Lalburah, Jahuta and other Howlongs as well as Lalgura, Laljeeka, son of Savonga, Vanhnoya, Vanlula and remaining Syloo chiefs. Later a flying column from Demagiri succeeded in bringing to terms Saipuiya and Vendula, the Howlong chiefs, in the south.

From the military point of view the expedition was a success. The Lushais were made to recognise the superiority of the British 'able alike both to reward and punish'. The ground was prepared for future relation with these tribes whether political or commercial. If these tribes ever thought that their

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20. *Ibid.*

hills were inaccessible they were disillusioned. Severe retribution visited on Poiboi, Lalburah and others of the eastern clans ; but their kinsmen on the west, namely the Sylos and the Howlongs, got scot-free. Even hostages were not demanded of the Sylos by Lewin for fear of illness or death if they were removed from their hill country ; and any death might give rise to future complications. Nor did he punish any way the Howlong chiefs who were concerned in the raids for the simple reason he was not in a position to inflict any. Rightly the contemporary *observer* queried : 'Is it to be supposed that even in the prospect of losing of few young warriors in the field will deter the Howlongs and the Sylos from repeating their invasion ?' 'We must teach these savages', it asserted, 'that we are strong as well as conciliatory ; they must learn to know that lives of our subjects were not to be taken with impunity.'<sup>21</sup>

The local authorities were also convinced that unless the successes were followed up by a judicious policy towards these tribes, the effects would be 'transient and will speedily pass away'. Edgar reiterated in his lengthy memorandum on 5 June the policy he advocated earlier : that the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, in concert with that of Chittagong Hill Tracts and Political Agents Manipur and Tipperah should have personal communication with the Lushai tribes ; that he should induce them to settle in uninhabited tracts and encourage trade at marts convenient to them. Endeavours should also be made to encourage their young men to enrol themselves in a levy composed exclusively of the hillmen of the frontier, to impart elementary education particularly handicrafts for which they have great aptitude and finally to explore the possibilities of making a road from Demagiri to Bepari Bazar to facilitate trade between the Howlongs, Sylos and the people of Cachar.<sup>22</sup> In fact, intercourse with these tribes had been confined so long

21. *Ibid.*, *Observer*, 11 March 1871 ; see Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 573-4.

22. *Op. cit.*, No. 249, Edgar 5 June 1872.



to an annual meeting at Kassalong when the chiefs or their representatives came to receive present and to occasional visit of some persons to purchase salt or dried fish at nearby market. Under these circumstances, both the civil and military authorities were convinced, that it was impossible to gain any influence or acquaintance with them or their language without which no real ascendancy could be exercised over these primitive races. Brownlow sought to establish a strong post at a convenient point within the Kuki country as a 'standing menace' to the frontier tribes.<sup>23</sup> Inroad of these, he believed, had been prompted by the notion that the British were powerless to punish. Agreeing with him H. Hankey, officiating Commissioner of Chittagong, observed :

we do not desire annexation. We do not wish to extend our boundary line...but what we do insist upon is that there shall be peace within these limits that our (subjects) shall be able to enjoy property and follow avocations of trade or agriculture from fresh apprehension of raids of savage tribes.

He was however sceptical of any system of pure defence being by itself sufficient to prevent raiding. 'The most vigilant guards will occasionally slumber and along a long line of country at some point or other raiders could slip through and escape detection.'<sup>24</sup> Development of trade and frequent contacts would lead to eventual pacification of these tribes ; and such a result would be possible, Hankey thought, by the establishment of the proposed post. T. H. Lewin, the Civil Officer Right Column, on the other hand, proposed a bolder policy—that of complete subjugation. He brought home to the Government of Bengal that the policy which the government had hitherto followed—the establishment of a line of defence coincident with that of effective jurisdiction—might be a 'wise and necessary measure' in the North-West Frontier where in the midst of hostile tribes the location of an officer, civil or military, beyond the reach of

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23. FPA, 1872 ; April, No. 170 ; Brownlow to Secretary, Government of Bengal, 22 December 1871.

24. BJP (P), 1872 ; August, No. 210 ; Hankey 1 April.

support would be a dangerous one. But such a policy would be inexpedient with the Lushais whose racial character and social habits were different ; 'they were not a nation but a collection of republics having no cohesion'. Permanent pacification of the frontier would be impossible unless these tribes were brought under the control of the government. 'It would be a great error', he thought, 'to retire to our former position, we have put forth our foot, where we have planted it, it should remain.'<sup>25</sup> To begin with, Lewin stressed the need for establishing an advanced post under a European Officer on the Demagiri range. He was also well aware that the services rendered by Ratan Poea and his tribe to the British troops in hunting out the enemies had incurred the wrath nay enmity of his neighbours and at no distant future they would be subjected to the cruel vengeance of the Howlongs and the Sylos. The establishment of a post in their midst would afford protection to Ratan Poea besides increasing contacts and thereby enable the officer in-charge of the post to exert his personal influence over these tribes.<sup>26</sup>

Lewin's proposal did not receive the support of C. U. Aitchison, the Secretary, Government of India in the Foreign Department. The latter felt that the establishment of an advanced post really meant permanent annexation of the country up to that limit. If the government was prepared to annex and govern it, he argued, well and good ; and in that case posts were to be located on the best line of defence ; otherwise, permanent occupation of advanced post would lead, inevitably, to the very course which Government of India were then not prepared. He disagreed with the view that the government was under an obligation to protect the tribe in question for they aided the government during the expedition. 'We may find ourselves', he explained, 'protecting those very men who committed or were concerned in the raids which it was one of the objects of the expedition to punish.'<sup>27</sup> In spite of these forceful arguments,

25. *Op. cit.*, Lewin to Secretary, Government of Bengal, 26 March.

26. *Ibid.*

27. FPA, 1872 ; April 1, K.W. Nos. 169-97 ; Aitchison 2 February.

in recognition of the services rendered by Ratan Poea and generally to promote friendly intercourse with the Lushais, the Government of India ultimately sanctioned the establishment of a post near Ratan Poea's village in the Demagiri range on the distinct understanding that the government was not prepared to locate any permanent post in advance of what would eventually be adopted as line of defence. On the broad policy, the civil officers were instructed

to leave the tribes as far as possible to manage their own affairs, to cultivate trade and friendly relations with them, to endeavour to establish personal influence over the chiefs and to maintain such vigilance along the line of defence as to deter the tribes from committing raids or cut off the parties that may attempt them.<sup>28</sup>

In carrying out these measures the Governor-General in Council desired that existing marts be maintained and opportunity might be taken to run a road from Demagiri to Bepari Bazar which would provide two outlets to Lushai trade : one by water to Cachar and the other by land to Chittagong. The road should be merely a trade route and no attempt be made to exercise jurisdiction over it though the Deputy Commissioner, Chittagong, should endeavour to get the Lushais themselves to maintain it.

In January 1875, 'to preserve and consolidate' the moral effects of the expedition, Richard Temple, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, proposed the erection of an administrative unit under a Political Officer over the areas occupied by the Howlongs, Sylos and other tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and to make over to him the control of the territory under Sukpial and the tribes of the Hill Tipperah.<sup>29</sup> The scheme did not find favour with the Commissioner of Burma who thought that a highly paid officer with nothing to do but to control the frontier would be under strong temptation to constantly to extend his jurisdiction and advance his posts

28. FPA, 1872 ; September, 269 in Nos. 247-75, Aitchison 4 September.

29. BJP (P), 1875 ; February, Nos. 11-2 ; Minute by Richard Temple, 17 January.

which would certainly be contrary to the policy of the government for years to come.<sup>30</sup> Colonel Keatinge, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, too, considered the proposal as inexpedient inasmuch as it would cut off the connection between Sukpilal's territory and British district of Cachar.

Neither politically, geographically nor commercially has the tract in question had much connection with Chittagong Hill Tracts ; its connection has always with Cachar and Sylhet. This connection is a natural one arising partly from the position of the tract to the north of the watershed which flow into Surma from those flow into Fenny, Karnafuli and partly from the fact that the people inhabiting it are continually pressed northward and westward by hostile tribes to the south and east of them and are brought into contact with border population of Cachar, Manipur and Sylhet.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover the controlling authority over Sukpilal and other tribes should be located in Cachar while the Howlongs and the Sylos could not be effectively controlled other than from a base in Chittagong. These cogent and convincing arguments dissuaded the Government of India from making any change in the existing arrangements.<sup>32</sup>

Opinions also differed between the Civil and Military authorities with respect to the defence of the Cachar and Chittagong frontier. Brigadier Bouchier recommended to keep the route open by the expeditionary force from Luckipore to Chipooee leading to the tribes of Vonpilal, Poiboi and Vonolel and to connect it with Chittagong. He admitted the difficulties of constructing a road east to west across the ridges, but he thought that this would outweigh the advantages to be derived from opening the route to Chittagong frontier. He further suggested to continue the present outposts, replace those of the Chutter Chura and Rangti Hills and clear after

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30. *Ibid.*, November, Nos. 24-30, Duncan, H. T., (Officiating Chief Secretary Burma), 3 April 1875.

31. *Ibid.*, Luttman-Johnson, H., (Secretary, Chief Commissioner Assam), 19 April.

32. *Ibid.*, Aitchison to Secretary Government of Bengal, 31 May.

each rainy season the connecting lines between the posts of Moneirkhal, Duwarbund, Jalenchera and Chutter Chura.<sup>33</sup>

The security of the Chittagong Hill Tracts hitherto depended on six outposts each garrisoned by about fifty patrols. The difficulties of the terrain and ineffective supervision from the headquarters prevented these posts from keeping out raiders ; on the contrary, they had been objects of surprise and attack. Brigadier-General Brownlow recommended to replace these by three advanced posts at Guturmukh, south of Cachar, one near Demagiri on the Sirthay Klang and another on Ooephoom range about forty miles north of Talukme, the outpost on the Arakan Hill Tract.<sup>34</sup> Posts should be placed under selected officers representating districts of Cachar, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Arakan. These posts with garrisons of not less than two hundred men should be in touch with each other and occupy the most elevated sites for intercommunication and nearest to the navigable rivers Dhaleswari, Karnafuli and Koladyne.

Edgar had misgivings about these recommendations. The expediency of keeping the road as far as Chipooee, he thought, depended on the decision *firstly* of having a road between Cachar and Chittagong and *secondly* taking such a road through the Champhai Valley. If the road to Chittagong was to be negatived or an alternative route to be adopted for the purpose, the necessity of a road to Chipooee did not arise. If the road was to be maintained, it would involve a huge expenditure and 'even after all the money had been spent upon it, the road would still be a bad one, scarcely fit to be called a bridle path'. In his subsequent Memorandum on 5 June, he made it clear that the tract recommended by Bouchier to Champhai would be useless without military occupation of the country. Likewise he considered Brownlow's suggestion of having a post

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33. FPA, 1872 ; September 253 in Nos. 247-75 ; Bouchier to Quarter-Master General, Calcutta, 17 April.

34. *Ibid.*, No. 256, Brownlow to Quarter-Master General, 1 May.

near at Guturmukh as unsuitable for the purpose of defending Cachar. Posts located further west on the Hachik range might serve for the defence of Hill Tipperah which should, of course, be a responsibility of the Raja of that State. Edgar proposed that the boundary of the Hill Tipperah to the east should be defined and the opportunity should be taken to survey the country drained by the Gudur and Dhaleswari. Finally he wanted the retention of the posts mentioned by Bouchier and that not only the tracts between the posts should be kept open but they should be connected with good roads with Silchar.<sup>35</sup>

Concurring on the main lines with the arguments made by Edgar, the Lieutenant Governor held the view that until the territory in question was explored it would be impossible to form any definite plan as regards either advanced posts or roads. He however agreed on the propriety of rendering the road from Cachar to various frontier posts as good as possible and hoped that neither money nor labour be spared for developing necessary arrangements and communications.<sup>36</sup> The Foreign Department in its communication on 4 September 1872 concurred in the objections raised by the Civil authorities in opening out and maintaining a line of communication through Champhai to Chittagong. District Officers were however advised to give every encouragement to the Lushais to maintain a passable road to Tipaimukh where a mart to be eventually established to meet the traders from British districts. With respect to the defence of the southern boundary of Cachar, it was agreed that the existing posts should be maintained and new posts selected at better situations and that these should be connected with each other and with the settled districts. For effective protection posts should be located not in valleys but on commanding positions. The Lieutenant Governor was directed

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35. *Ibid.*, Nos. 255 and 260 ; see Extract of a letter of Edgar, 3 April and also 5 June 1872.

36. *Ibid.*, No. 259 ;<sup>o</sup> Mackenzie to Secretary Military Department, Government of India, 18 June.

that opportunity be taken in the ensuing winter to have an accurate survey of the whole country between Cachar and Chittagong. Subject to the results of the exploration, eastern boundary of Tipperah should be defined and whatever might eventually be decided upon, the Governor-General opined that the responsibility for the defence of Tipperah must rest with the Raja under the advice and guidance of the Political Agent.<sup>37</sup>

Accordingly, in early 1873, the survey of the eastern frontier of Tipperah and the territory between western Cachar and Chittagong was conducted by Captain Badgley and A. W. B. Power, Political Agent Tipperah.<sup>38</sup> By exploring a tract hitherto little known, they had increased the knowledge and facilitated communication with the Lushais between the districts of Cachar and Chittagong. It was ascertained that the western part of Hill Tipperah quite uninhabited and there were no unknown tribe who could commit raid from which Sylhet and West Cachar had in former years suffered. 'We have to guard against raids by tribes', the Lieutenant Governor remarked, 'that we now fairly know.'<sup>39</sup> It was also revealed that the line of posts on the Hachik or any parallel range would be both useless since the tract which was full of jungles was absolutely uninhabited through which raiders would slip between the posts. For the same it would be highly expensive and beyond the means of the Raja of Tipperah to maintain these.<sup>40</sup> The

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37. *Ibid.*, No. 269 ; Aitchison to Officiating Secretary, Government of Bengal, 4 September. In fact the Lieutenant Governor was already told that the Raja should be required to entertain a small body of picked and drilled men who should be located in such posts in the frontier as might be selected by the government, and whose supervision distribution, duties and efficiency should be the duty of the Political Agent to look into. FPA, 1871 ; May, No. 335.

38. FPA, 1874 ; August, No. 13 ; for details see Political Agent Hill Tipperah, 26 May and Surveyor General of India, 15 July 1873.

39. FPA, 1874 ; March 13 in Nos. 10-51, Mackenzie, 19 August 1873.

40. Power estimated that posts held by 67,900 men with 400 in reserve would cost at least Rs 5 lakhs and, as such, a properly organised system of defence along the line would prove beyond Raja's means. *Ibid.*

Lieutenant Governor therefore proposed in his letter on 19 August 1873 to exert some political control over the western Lushais as Butler had done with success over the Nagas in the north. The surveyors had also reported that Sukpilal, the most powerful chief of the western Lushais, has moved his village nearer to Laljeeka in Chittagong district wherein the previous year a police outpost was sanctioned at the request of the Sylos. Nothing would be more agreeable to the Syloo chiefs, he added, than the establishment of a permanent post in their midst. 'It would be better to place ourselves at once in communication with those whom we seek to influence.' He did not mean thereby to govern or control them, but to take up a position near them with a view to exercise political influence over them or in other words to bring them under the sphere of British influence.<sup>41</sup>

In his *Memorandum on Lushai Policy and Frontier Defence* Lieutenant Colonel Roberts, Deputy Quarter-Master General, proposed in the meantime a line of posts on the ridges along the southern frontier of Cachar and Sylhet, and these were to be linked up with one another and with Silchar by roads with the object of intercepting the raiders from the south.<sup>42</sup> There were so much gap between them and tea-gardens occupied by virgin forests and swamps that they would not serve the purpose of preventing the raids. These posts were 'admirably suited', in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor, during the period of campaign to frighten the chiefs and people, but the expense would be out of proportion of the advantage which could be derived from them in peace. The best way to overawe the Lushais, he strongly felt, would be 'to place posts in such positions as would do so'. This could be better done in Chittagong than Cachar side and by the location of a permanent post in

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41. *Op. cit.*, Mackenzie 19 August.

42. These posts were to be located at Mainadhar, Babuns, Moneirkhal, Bongkong, Rookni, Kolosib, Kokichera, Byrabe Jela, Jalnacera and Chutter Choor. FPA, 1872; September, No. 268; Roberts to Deputy Quarter-Master General, 30 July.



Laljeeka's village already suggested.<sup>43</sup> Colonel Robert's proposal was not acceptable to the Military Department on the ground that nothing occurred since the termination of the expedition as to warrant the necessity of throwing forward line of posts which would involve additional expenditure. Moreover, existing force in the Eastern Frontier would be inadequate to garrison such an advance line still less to provide a proper reserve from such posts.<sup>44</sup> Foreign Department considered the adoption of the advanced posts as 'inadvisable' and accorded its approval to the suggestion already made by the Civil authorities. The establishment of a permanent post in advance of the frontier line of defence in Laljeeka's village also did not find favour with the Government of India as it would run counter to the policy of the government. The Lieutenant Governor was however required to report whether frontier defence of Cachar would be affected by the non-establishment of the proposed post.<sup>45</sup> In reply the Government of India was informed on 24 January 1874 that personally the Lieutenant Governor knew very little of Cachar frontier and therefore he recommended the question need be referred to the newly-appointed Chief Commissioner of Assam and in the meanwhile, he hoped, that the Government of India would not object to posting temporarily a small party of frontier police at Laljeeka's village inasmuch as 'by this means we give confidence to our friends there'.<sup>46</sup> This received the approval of the Governor-General in Council on condition that sanction of the government should in each case be obtained before such a step was taken.<sup>47</sup>

With respect to the eastern boundary of Hill Tipperah Power suggested it along the river Pakwa as its eastern and south-eastern boundary. In view of the preference of the

43. FPA, 1874 ; March, Nos. 10-51 ; Mackenzie 7 May 1873.

44. *Ibid.*, No. 39.

45. *Ibid.*, No. 44, Aitchison 2 January 1874.

46. FPA, 1874 ; March, Nos. 412-8 ; Mackenzie 24 January.

47. *Ibid.*, Aitchison 23 February.

Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to a river to a boundary along the ridges, the boundary which the latter proposed and ultimately received sanction of the Government of India however ran along the river Lungai between Hachik and Jumpai ranges to its source and then across the Dolajeri peak and thereafter by the recognised southern boundary to the Fenny. In spite of the adverse report of the Political Agent, the Government of India held the view that the Raja of Tipperah should be called upon to 'cooperate effectively' defence of the frontier and in any case Sylhet portion of the boundary line.<sup>48</sup>

The survey made it clear that neither Ooephoom nor Saichul range was suitable throughout its length as a line of posts.<sup>49</sup> The northern part of the Ooephoom and the southern part of Saichul being well defined ridges found to be fit for patrol and to which supplies could be made without difficulty. Lieutenant Governor agreed to the proposal made by the local authorities that the patrol with headquarters at Demagiri should run down Ooephoom to some extent and then across the Saichul as far as the Arakan post. This received the approval of the Foreign Department and posts were accordingly located at Demagiri 150 men, Sirthay 50, Ooephoom (2) 50, Saichul 50, Sangu valley 100 and Poleetye, 40.<sup>50</sup> As regards the line of jurisdiction in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Lewin suggested that it should be 'coterminus and identical' with the line of posts which would be strictly in conformity with the policy laid down by the government. The Lieutenant Governor desired that as in case of Hill Tipperah, instead of crest of hill to take rivers in the valley as the boundary jurisdiction, and accordingly he suggested the line running along with river Tulempui to its junction with Karnafuli and then up to the

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48. *Op. cit.*, Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, 2 January 1874.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

valley of Tuichong on the Arakan frontier. This received the sanction of Foreign Department on 2 January 1874.<sup>51</sup>

This had, inevitably, raised the problem of relationship with Ratan Poea, the friendly chief of the tribe of the same name. As a channel of communication with the Sylos, Howlongs and the Shendus, he furnished information as to movement and dealings of these trans-frontier tribes and for which he received an annual allowance of rupees five hundred from the government. Whatever might be the line it would pass through the territory which the chief claimed for *jhumming* and leaving a part of it to the west under the British. This would be in direct contravention to the declared policy of the government under which beyond the line 'we are not to be considered as responsible for the protection of life and property'.<sup>52</sup> The Lieutenant Governor preferred to have 'no line of jurisdiction at all'.<sup>53</sup> Lewin, on the other hand, found no valid objection to the arrangement inasmuch as Chittagong Hill Tract, had been administered on the non-regulated system wherein the spirit not the law was observed. He did not believe that the chief claimed any specific tract of territory, 'the limit which he indicated as constituting his boundary denoted a certain tract over which he and his tribe had the right to *joom*'. In fact, 'he bows to the right of the strongest, reserving to himself the alternative...of removing himself altogether from British territory'.<sup>54</sup> Concurring in these views the Governor-General in Council raised no objection to the suggestion and the chief being assured that so long as he continued to be faithful his *jhumming* lands within the boundary would receive same protection as extended to other territories west of the line and within the line every possible consideration would be shown to him.<sup>55</sup> This was a step forward towards British paramountcy in these hills.

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51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*, see K. W. No. 1, Nos. 39-43.

53. *Ibid.*, Mackenzie 11 September 1873.

54. *Ibid.*, Lewin 11 August 1873.

55. *Ibid.*, Aitchison 2 January 1874.

## CHAPTER III

### *The Siege of Kohima*

In July 1878, G. H. Damant assumed charge of the office of the Political Officer (PO), Naga Hills, which was temporarily held by Maxwell on the death of Carnegy. A philologist of repute, Damant was held in highest esteem in Manipur where he officiated as the Political Agent for a few months. On him devolved the task of bringing under control the vast tract of the country from Jaypur to the borders of Manipur partly unsurveyed, destitute of roads and inhabited by tribes who were perpetually at war and to whom 'the slaughter of women and child' was a deed of highest merit. To ensure a strong government Damant was vested with extensive powers with authority to have communications direct with the Foreign Department. It was believed that 'Fear of responsibility is detrimental to all progress in a wild country and amidst a wild race ; prompt measures save live, peace and prestige ; the reverse may be said of vacillating ones'.<sup>1</sup>

After a careful inspection of the alternative sites, Steuart Bailey, the Chief Commissioner Assam, had decided Kohima the headquarters of the district maintaining Wokha as a subdivisional post. The Political Officer was however advised not to move to the new station until the completion of the road to it from Golaghat. In addition to 200 Naga Hills Police detachments of fifty was located at each station.<sup>2</sup> Damant divided the tract under his

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1. FPA, 1880 ; January, Nos. 498-511 ; Damant to Secretary, Chief Commissioner, *Wokha*, 21 February 1879 ; February, No. 328, Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 10 December 1879.
  2. FPA, 1878 ; October, Nos. 27-8 ; Ridsdale, S. O. (Secretary, Chief Commissioner), 1 March.

jurisdiction into three divisions<sup>3</sup> ; the westernmost part, from Khonomah to Samaguting and to Borpathar, inhabited by the peaceful Kukis, Mikirs, Kacharis, Kacha and Rengma Nagas had already been brought under taxation ; the central tract lying as far as 94°25' E occupied by the Angamis, Semas, Rengmas, Lhotas and other tribes were virtually independent and paid no revenue ; while the easternmost tract held by the Hatigorias, Naked, Tangkhul and other Nagas were beyond the reach of direct administration. Of these, the Angamis were the most formidable 'possessing a fair amount of fire-arms and inhabiting large and most instance well-fortified villages while from their frequent contact with the people of the plains...they have not the same dread of our soldiers as other less enterprising tribes'.<sup>4</sup> They used to collect revenue and other dues from their weaker neighbours and Damant was well aware that they would not pay revenue in place of receiving it ; yet he aimed at bringing the Angamis and tribes in the east under control without delay and to make some of them pay revenue even during the next cold weather 'not so much for a fiscal as a political point of view'.<sup>5</sup> He had the obsession that 'a savage who pays revenue considers himself a British subject, bound to carry out all orders given to him, while a savage who does not pay revenue considers himself independent'. Next priority in his programme was construction of roads ; one from Golaghat *via* Kohima to Manipur and the other from the headquarters to Wokha. The process of civilizing the Nagas should not be neglected ; dispensaries and schools to be started, and these primitive tribes be encouraged to resort to these in large number.<sup>6</sup>

It was too much to expect of the Angamis that they would allow the intrusion of the English without a challenge. Isolated

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3. FPA, 1880 ; February, No. 328 ; Ridsdale to Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, 10 December 1879.

4. *Op. cit.*, Damant to Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 21 February 1879.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

murders at Nerhamah, Mimah, Kerumah, Tophema and Mozomah not only hastened the shifting of the headquarters to Kohima before the completion of roads, but demanded the despatch of an expedition under Maxwell against the offending tribes.<sup>7</sup> The attitude of Khonomah, the largest and most powerful of the Angamis, was at one time 'sulky hostility' at another of 'treacherous acquiescence'.<sup>8</sup> In the neighbourhood, Jotsomah, too, was inclined to throw its lot with the Khonomahs. Traffic in arms was on the increase ; intelligence arrived that the Khonomahs were importing fire-arms through Cachar including Enfield Rifles.<sup>9</sup> Within Kohima itself, of its seven *khels*, Dakutsamah and Chetonomah were reported to have assumed an attitude of defiance refusing work in the roads or to serve as porters for transport of goods.<sup>10</sup>

Damant saw nothing but *couleur de rose*. Considering his relations with the Angamis settled and satisfactory, he proposed making an extensive tour in next winter among the Eastern Nagas to enquire into inter-tribal raids occurring among the Hatigorias. No objection was raised by the Chief Commissioner to the proposed tour, but he doubted the expediency of any 'active interference' on the part of the PO with distant tribes until his own position among the Angamis was on a more 'secure and accepted footing'.<sup>11</sup> In a demi-official letter on 11 October 1879 the Chief Commissioner was told : 'I intend starting on Monday for Jotsomah, Konemah and Mozemah, as I want to find out what disposition they are in before starting for the Hatigorias.'<sup>12</sup> It was suggested that the Political Officer had three objectives in view : to ascertain the general

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7. FPA, 1880 ; January, No. 508 ; Damant 24 April 1879.

8. FPA, 1880 ; February, No. 328 ; Secretary Chief Commissioner, 10 December 1879.

9. FPA, 1879 ; March, No. 493 ; *Extract from Political Diary of Manipur Agency for the Week Ending Thursday*, 6 November 1879.

10. *Op. cit.*, Secretary Chief Commissioner, 10 December 1879.

11. FPA, 1880 ; March, Nos. 499-500 ; Ridsdale 1 October 1879.

12. *Op. cit.* , Ridsdale 10 December 1879.

disposition of the villages, to arrange for payment of revenue and to demand the surrender of arms and ammunition.<sup>13</sup> The Chief Commissioner considered the first objective to have been the real one. He ruled out the presumption that he had gone there with the intention of seizing the arms of the Khonomahs ; otherwise he would have taken a larger force and would not have neglected precautionary reconnaissance.<sup>14</sup> To H. M. Hinde, the officer in-charge Wokha, the visit was 'merely to impress the Nagas of the two villages (Jotsoma and Konoma) the necessity of complying with the demands of the Government that they should pay revenue and give labour for the carriage of supplies'.<sup>15</sup> Damant firmly believed that time had arrived for demanding regular payment of revenue from the Angamis and other tribes within British jurisdiction. In the absence of any directive<sup>16</sup> from the government he took the initiative which is borne out by his communication to the Chief Commissioner on 21 February 1879 when he wrote :

I would demand revenue from Khonoma and Jotsoma in the coming cold weather, and in case of refusal, realise it by force of arms ; I believe...the struggle must come sooner or later, and it is clearly to the interests of the whole district that the matter should not be deferred.<sup>17</sup>

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13. FPA, 1880 ; March, Nos. 331-95 ; K. W. No. 2, para 21.
  14. *Ibid.*, para 28. This might be a second thought of the Chief Commissioner inasmuch as he informed Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, in his telegram on 20 October that Damant went to Khonomah with 80 men to seize some ammunition. FPA, 1880 ; February, No. 252.
  15. *Op. cit.*, K. W. No. 2, para 20.
  16. In his despatch to Secretary of State, the Viceroy wrote : 'no sanction had been given either by the Chief Commissioner (*so far as we are aware*) or by the Government of India to any such movement on the part of the Deputy Commissioner ; and indeed address were on the point of issuing to check any action against the Naga tribes at the present time.' FPA, 1880 ; February, No. 260 ; Lytton to Viscount Cranbrook, Simla, 23 October 1879.
  17. FPA, 1880 ; January, No. 509 ; Damant 21 February 1879.

As scheduled on 13 October Damant left Kohima accompanied by an escort of military and Frontier Police and halted the night at Jotsomah. The Angamis were alarmed and rumour was afloat that the PO had arrived to collect the firearms so dear to the Nagas. He met no opposition at Jotsomah ; rather the villagers provided him with labour to carry his baggages. On 14th, when he was about to move towards Khonomah he was warned by Chatta, an interpreter, that the Khonomamen meant mischief and implored him not to proceed and under no circumstances by the western gate occupied by the Meremakhel. Damant heeded not and advanced on his own way to the foot of the hills on the summit of which stood the well-fortified village Khonomah. Leaving half of his escort in the foot of the hills, he moved up with the rest by a path having a precipice on one side and high wall on the other. Without opposition he reached the gateway which was closed against him. In his endeavour to force his way through the stockade, he was shot dead and instantly showers of bullets fell upon the escort and those left behind. Many of them were killed, several wounded and the rest took to flight. The Jotsomamen joined the Khonomahs and the Chetonomah *khel* of Kohima lay in wait to intercept the survivors from reaching the stockade.<sup>18</sup>

The comparative ease with which Damant moved his headquarters from Samaguting to Kohima emboldened him to bring the Angamis and other tribes in the east under his authority. Despite previous warnings he was overconfident and blind even to the most common and obvious precautions before his advance into the hostile villages. In reality the influence of the Political Officer over the powerful Angamis had yet to be established and the force at his

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18. FPA, 1880 ; February, Nos. 249 and 252, telegrams from Chief Commissioner to Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, 18 and 20 October 1879. March, Nos. 331-95 ; K. W. No. 2, paras 21-2 ; Mrs. Cawley, 'The Siege of Kohima 1879', See Elwin, V., *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 563 ff.



command was utterly inadequate for the double task of furnishing a strong escort in extending his authority over the warlike Nagas and securely holding at the same time the headquarters and the outposts on the lines of communication. 'The lesson to be learnt from Khonomah is', remarks the Viceroy,

that the local authorities underestimated the force required to carry out the policy of even gradually imposing British authority upon the Nagas and that the work was begun too soon, before our position at Kohima had been established, with reserves, communications and all precautions necessary to...support our operations.<sup>19</sup>

The Chief Commissioner was at the same time warned that in future all means for the subjugation of these tracts ought not to be undertaken without careful and previous enquiry and full consideration of all contingencies. It was brought home to him that the advantages, so far as the protection of the settled districts were concerned, to be gained by the extension by political jurisdiction over these tribes were questionable and in any case not commensurate with the trouble, expense and loss of human life occasioned by any miscarriage or check in the course of operations.

British position at Kohima was extremely vulnerable. The two stockades at this station consisted of rough wooden palisades eight to ten feet high with no proper flanking defences and loopholes every few feet. With exception of a ditch round a portion of the eastern stockade, nothing had been done to ensure security of the place in the event of enemy's attack. Even these could have been held out for sometime, but this was rendered impossible for the paucity of troops. The garrison consisted of about 64 men of the 43rd Assam Light Infantry under Captain G. O. Reich and 72 Frontier Police under G. J. Cawley, Assistant Political Officer, and of the latter 32 were raw recruits. The stockades were encumbered by about 300 non-combatants for whom there were not more than three

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19. *Ibid.*, K. W. No. 1 ; also Bailey to Lyall, D. O., 11 December 1879 ; Secretary, Government of India to Chief Commissioner, 3 February 1880.

maunds of rice and no other article except Naga *dal* a coarse bean meant for cattle. To make matters worse, there was acute scarcity of water which was supplied by an open channel from a distance over two miles liable to be cut off at any moment.<sup>20</sup>

The news of the disaster reached the headquarters in the same afternoon. Despite confusion and panic in the stockade Cawley made preparations for defence. He dismantled the western stockade concentrating the defending force and non-combatants in the other. 'Every one who could hold a gun was hastily instructed to the use of it, but in more than one case the bullet was found to have been put in the wrong way.'<sup>21</sup> Urgent messages for troops were sent to Wokha, Shillong and Manipur. H. M. Hinde, Officer-in-charge Wokha, with all his disposable men marching at night reached Kohima on the 19th.<sup>22</sup> The Khonomāmen, being sure of their early victory over the garrison, busied themselves on the 15th in 'burying their dead, feasting and rejoicing, and dividing the spoil'.<sup>23</sup> In fact for the next few days they were neither vigorous nor determined in their operations. The arrival of reinforcement under Hinde alarmed the Nagas whose number had in the meantime augmented. On 21 December the post was attacked, but they were repulsed with heavy loss. The stockade was surrounded by dense jungles behind which the Nagas had raised stockades from which they were constantly firing into the other camp. No regular assault was made, but every expedient was resorted to set ablaze the exposed building on the other side. Mrs Cawley, an eye-witness, writes :

The Nagas advanced slowly and surely, trenching as they advanced. They did this so cleverly, erecting barricades

20. *Op. cit.*, pp. 568-9 ; FPA, 1880 ; February, Nos. 308-35 ; March, Nos. 331-95 ; *op. cit.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. Partly by avoiding hostile villages, partly by marching past their stockades and finally by influencing the friendly *khels* of Kohima to assist him 'he succeeded in bringing his small party safely into Kohima where...the timely succour...enabled him to hold on till their final relief.' *Ibid.*, Nos. 337-8 ; Hinde, *Wokha*, 1 November 1879.

23. Mrs Cawley, *op. cit.*, p. 570.

from the trenches, that they never exposed themselves in the least. It was like an invisible, but by no means noiseless, enemy creeping on step by step. The howls and war cries of the thousands of Nagas who surrounded the stockade were truly awful and were not without their effect on the nerves of the enfeebled garrison.<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, the position of the besieged became

most critical owing to the proximity of the enemy's fire and the weakness of the fortifications... Household articles and domestic furniture were brought into requisition to strengthen the defences. The sick and the wounded were laid out behind a small rising ground within the enclosure which afforded some protection from the enemy's fire.<sup>25</sup>

'At that time', as reported by the Assistant Political Officer, 'there was at least 4000 men surrounding us and of these about 300 had guns.'<sup>26</sup> Not the Khonomahs alone, Viswemah, Chedumah, Jakhamah, Jotsomah and Chetonomah *khel* of Kohima, nay 'the whole country was rising to annihilate us'. To the Nagas it was a war of liberation against the English who had advanced into the heart of their territory, meddled into their inter-tribal feuds, subjected them to taxation and forced labour so hateful to them. On the night of 24 October, as reported by Cawley, a Naga shouted in Hindustani behind one of the barricades: 'We (English) had come here and occupied lands, we had cut their trees, bamboos and grass, we wanted revenue from them and made them coolies.' The harangue ended with a query—'what will happen now' ?<sup>27</sup>

By 23rd, provision ran short in Cawley's camp and the position became extremely critical when the Nagas poisoned water supply by throwing a human head into it. Completely exhausted and without any hope of succour, Cawley was about to accept the terms unexpectedly offered by the Nagas on the 24th—that the garrison with their women and children, sick and wounded should be safely escorted to Samaguting on

24. *Ibid.*, p. 576.

25. FPA, 1880 ; March, K. W. 2, 331-41, para 24.

26. FPA, 1880 ; February, No. 330 ; Cawley to Johnstone.

27. *Ibid.*

condition of the stockade being given up.<sup>28</sup> This turn of events was due to rumours, which had also reached the garrison, that the Political Agent, Manipur, was approaching with a huge force. Had this arrangement been agreed upon and carried out, Johnstone feared

545 headless and naked bodies would have been lying outside the blockade. Five hundred stands of arms, and 250,000 rounds of ammunition would have been in possession of the enemy, enough to keep the hills in a blaze for three years, and to give employment to half-a-dozen regiments during all the time, and to oblige an expenditure, of a million sterling, to say nothing of valuable lives.<sup>29</sup>

On 27 October the arrival of the Political Agent, Manipur, altered the whole situation.<sup>30</sup> The Nagas dispersed and the garrison was relieved. Johnstone had an escort of 34 Native Infantry, a party of Cachar Frontier Police besides a contingent of 2000 supplied by the Maharaja of Manipur. He made preparations for attack on Khonomah by clearing jungles and strengthening the stockades. Friendly *khels* volunteered their services and Mozomah, which had so long been vacillating, followed suit. From Dibrugarh, Major Evans with a party of 200 men of the 43rd Assam Light Infantry accompanied by Lieutenant Maxwell arrived at Kohima by forced marches on the 30th. Considering the situation serious, Brigadier-General Nation proceeded into the hills and the troops assembled under his command on 21 November at the advanced base Suchemah, lower end of Khonomah, consisted of a wing each of 43rd Assam Light Infantry and 44th Sylhet Light Infantry, 100 Naga Hills Frontier Police with two mountain-guns and a battery<sup>31</sup>.

Khonomah, which stands on a high conical hill, was joined to the main ranges by a low saddle. The Nagas erected

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28. Johnstone, J., *My Experiences in Manipur and Naga Hills*, see Elwin, *op. cit.*, p. 562.

29. *Ibid.*

30. FPA, 1880 ; March No. 336.

31. For details see Shakespear, L. W., *History of the Assam Rifles*, pp. 148 ff.

defensive forts, the *Chakka* forts ; and in the higher ranges in the south, still further up in inaccessible hills they sheltered their women and children. Early in the morning of 22 November Captain Williamson, Inspector General of Police, who had adequate information of enemy's positions commenced operations. To prevent their retreat, Major Evans occupied the saddle while Lieutenants Ridgeway and Henderson, and Captain Nuthall, commanding 44th Sylhet Light Infantry, fought their way up over the steep hill covered with *panjis* and sangers and towards the evening the lower defences fell into their hands. The next target was the upper defence then strongly held by the Nagas who were constantly showering bullets, spears and rocks. The front assault made by General Nation, Johnstone, Walker and Roban ended in failure. Ridgeway and Forbes in the right advanced up to the gateway ; and in their attempt to force into it both of them were wounded and driven back with several casualties. During the night the troops encamped in the lower ranges to renew the assault early in the morning. 'The night was bitterly cold and it was impossible then to get the wounded back to the base ; in fact medical matters...entirely broke down and several wounded men died of gangrene<sup>32</sup>.' At dawn it was found that the Nagas abandoned the upper defences and retreated to the *Chakka* high up the hills.

Khonomah fell, but at a heavy cost. Two officers were killed in action. Captain Nuthall and Lieutenant Ridgeway were severely wounded besides forty-four rank and file killed or wounded. The losses sustained and the number of sick under his command made it impossible for General Nation to follow up the enemy to the *Chakka* or to complete subjugation of the hostile villages.<sup>33</sup> The task was rendered all the more difficult by the deficiency of men and partly by the lack of roads, adequate supply of labour and reserves of food at

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32. *Ibid*, p. 153.

33. FPA, 1880 ; March, No. 348, Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 30 January ; also No. 348 A, *Note on Present State of Affairs in Naga Hills* by the Chief Commissioner, 21 January 1880.

different locations. He had however occupied Khonomah in full force to prevent the land for cultivation.<sup>34</sup> To stop cultivation meant starvation which would compel the enemy to come to terms.

Until the middle of January 1880, however, there was no sign of submission. From their impregnable position, the enemy—numbering about 1000 fighting men, more than 200 of them had fire-arms—sent out parties east and west—to Kacha Naga and smaller villages to requisition supplies while their women and children found refuge in the neighbouring villages—Jotsomah, Mozomah and Poplongmai.<sup>35</sup> British troops could do little to cut off enemy's supplies and much less to dislodge them from their fortified positions. The latter had the advantage of knowing every path or waterways in a country of inaccessible hills and impenetrable forests. No wonder therefore they succeeded in shooting at sentries, watering parties or escorts, and invariably escaped uninjured and even unseen. They trusted on surprises and ambushes and in no case did they attack large bodies. In 1880, they followed up and ambuscaded a party under Captain Macgregor on its way to Poplongmai causing death of several men and the flight of the careers.<sup>36</sup> This was followed in the same month by a surprise night attack on Baladhan tea-estate in Cachar slaying Mr. Blynthe, the Manager, sixteen coolies, plundering and burning everything on the way.<sup>37</sup> In February, a party of Khonomah and Sephemah Nagas made three night attacks on the outpost at Nichuguard, near Dimapur. The attacks though

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34. The Angamis did not practise *jhumming* or shifting cultivation, but cultivated irrigated terraced fields demanding considerable number of labourers. To keep the people away from the field meant they must either starve or leave the country.

35. *Op. cit.*, Ridsdale to Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, 30 January; also April 1880, No. 219, *Note on Naga Hills Affaris* by Chief Commissioner, Assam.

36. *Ibid.*

37. FPA, 1880; March, Nos. 363-6; August 1881, Nos. 616-40, Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 17 June 1880.

not serious created apprehension in regard to the safety of the post and transport of supplies to the headquarters.<sup>38</sup>

Towards the close of December 1879, on the arrival of a wing of 42nd Native Infantry, a party under Colonel Robertson accompanied by Williamson, the Political Officer, was sent against Cheswejuma which had sheltered the Chetonomah *khel* of Kohima. On 3 January 1880, the village was attacked and burnt without resistance. The villages of Thenijumah, Kekumah, Kedimah and Viswemah, which had actively aided the Khonomahs, were reduced to submission compelling each to supply labour and pay fines of grain.<sup>39</sup> On 13-14 January, on return of the expeditionary force, representatives of Suchemah, Merimah and Phesamah surrendered to Williamson; on 25th two of the hostile clans of Jotsomah came in and surrendered their fire-arms.<sup>40</sup> A party was detached toward the end of January under Savi to the Kuki territory and North Cachar to cut down enemy's supplies from that quarter. The expedition under Lieutenant Macgregor against Kenomah or Poplongmai which had been harbouring and assisting the Khonomahs ended in failure. Though Captain Abbot occupied Poplongmai on 9 March, on the next day a detachment under Lieutenant Henderson which was escorting the porters with supplies to Poplongmai was ambuscaded causing loss of three men and a good deal of *rasud* compelling the party to return to Khonomah.<sup>41</sup>

In early March 1880, when the Chief Commissioner arrived at Kohima from Manipur the situation underwent a radical change. He found only a few villages in open hostility against the government. The remaining *khels* of Jotsomah already

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38. *Ibid.*, also April 1880; No. 265, telegram 13 March, General Nation to Quarter-Master General, Calcutta.

39. FPA, 1880; March, No. 348; *op. cit.*

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, Nos. 350-3; April 1880, No. 265; *op. cit.*

submitted and surrendered their fire-arms.<sup>42</sup> Sephamah, Semnamah *khel* of Khonomah and even Chetonomah *khel* of Kohima were negotiating for terms. 'The only village', remarked the Chief Commissioner, 'whose hostility we have seriously to consider is Khonomah.'<sup>43</sup> The cultivation season was at hand. Without a speedy submission even the Khonomamen were well aware that they could cultivate neither their own nor elsewhere. Prospect of procuring supplies too became extremely bleak with the arrival of a detachment of 18th Native Infantry from Golaghat which had enabled General Nation to tighten the cordon of blockade and cutting off the enemy from the villages from which they drew their supplies. There were two alternatives before them: submission or starvation. Hardly had the General made preparations for the final blow when on 27 March the Khonomamen came in and tendered their submission. The *Chakka* forts passed under the control of the British troops.<sup>44</sup>

Retribution followed soon. The hostiles were required to surrender without compensation the fire-arms they possessed. Those who were in arms till the end were punished by demolition of their villages; and in some cases by removal of the site from a fortified and inaccessible crest to a position easily accessible. The Khonomahs were punished in addition by the confiscation of their terraced cultivation and dispersion of the *khels* among other villages at a distance. The two individuals who were said to be responsible for the murder of Damant were excluded from the general amnesty and a reward of Rs 250 for each was offered for their apprehension.<sup>45</sup> Villagers

42. *Ibid.*, Nos. 356 and 361.

43. FPA, 1880; April, No. 219, *Note on Naga Hills Affairs*.

44. FPA, 1881; August, Nos. 616-40; Officiating Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 17 June 1880; April 1880, No. 264; Deputy Adjutant-General to Military Secretary, Calcutta, 30 March 1880.

45. *Ibid.*, This measure could not be enforced in absence of any recognised head of the village while the whole community could not be held responsible for the action of a few young men without the sanction of the council of elders or representative of the village.



who aided the Khonomamen were required to pay a fine of a rupee per house and one maund of rice besides 15 days personal labour.

The impregnable position which they occupied in inaccessible hills and the arms and ammunitions in their possession, made the Khonomamen the most feared and powerful amongst minor Angami villages from which they demanded supplies and labour at pleasure. In fact their very name was a terror to the Nagas in Manipur and North Cachar. Not only did they take whatever they wanted, but the mere appearance of two or three of them in a village was the signal for attendance and services of the most abject kind, 'such as neither the British Officer nor Manipur Minister would receive from them'.<sup>46</sup> This was now all over. The Khonomahs were not only deprived of their fire-arms, so indispensable for their self-defence, but their fortified village was occupied by British troops. Their clans dispersed, cultivated lands confiscated and their leadership in hills gone forever. In fact they were reduced to the condition of 'homeless wanderers depending on the charity of their neighbours and living in temporary huts and in jungles'. This resulted in great sickness and mortality amongst them putting a severe strain on the resources of those who had to supply them with their requirements.<sup>47</sup>

It was no small compliment to the local authorities that they realised their mistakes that the dispersal policy was a failure and that the assessment made on the hostiles was 'too high'. John Michell, the Political Officer, reported that it was impossible to induce them to settle elsewhere and equally impossible to induce others for fear of future retribution to take up confiscated land; and that wholesale coercion, from the nature of the case, was

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46. *Ibid.*

47. The Chief Commissioner wanted the Meremah *khel*, alleged to be responsible for the murder of Damant, deported to Manipur where the Maharaja sought to establish them as a Military colony. Without coercion, the Political Officer found, that none was prepared to quit the village and as such the idea of deportation had to be abandoned.

impossible.<sup>48</sup> Stuart Bailey thought it impolitic to leave them 'in the position of homeless wanderers...actuated of necessity by feeling of bitter hostility, and with nothing to lose, but everything to gain in the prospect of fresh disturbances'.<sup>49</sup> He was convinced that severity of the measure would not be conducive to the peaceful habits of the Nagas. They must be given the only means of their livelihood, the land, the loss of which they would not again likely to risk. The dispossessed *khels* were allowed to reoccupy their confiscated lands on condition that there should be no disturbance either in British or Manipur territory. With respect to the Khonomahs, of course, on no account the old village site would be restored to them ; the *khels* were to build their houses on separate sites earmarked for them by the local authorities.<sup>50</sup>

Michell felt that the demand of grain fell pressingly on the Nagas when they had more mouths to feed and much land, particularly in and around Kohima, remained fallow. They had, of course, more money than usual since payment of labour and rice had increased circulation of money in the hills. The Chief Commissioner raised no objection when the Political Officer revised the assessment from rupee one plus a maund of rice to rupees two. He looked upon the demand more of political than fiscal importance ; it alone would make the Nagas to acknowledge subjection and reciprocal claim to protection under the government. In case of fines, too, Michell was authorised not to make any demand when he had reason to think that it could not be paid without much hardship. Forced labour had to be maintained ; it was construed as a disciplinary measure 'the first step towards substituting organised government for the predatory habits' of the Naga tribes.<sup>51</sup>

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48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*, also *Memorandum by the Chief Commissioner in Naga Hills Affairs*, 29 January 1881.

51. *Ibid.*, also *op. cit.*, *Note on Present State of Affairs in Naga Hills*.

Unlike the Garos and the Khasis, the Angamis had no recognised territorial or tribal chieftain. The authority of the *Gaoburah*, who represented to some extent the village, was not only limited but uncertain ; villages were always at war by the action of young men aspiring after distinction whom the elders were powerless to control.<sup>52</sup> It became therefore the primary duty of the PO to select a *Gaoburah* or two and to secure their authority being acknowledged. They would be the channel of communication with the authorities and responsible for collection of revenue, maintenance of roads and general peace in the village.<sup>53</sup>

Though at a heavy cost the expedition against the Angamis, so far as its immediate objective was concerned, was successful. Punishments had been meted out adequately to Damant's murderers and the villages that had joined the siege of Kohima had been reduced to submission. The question then arose whether the operations were conducive to the primary objective of the government—to ensure security from the raids and apprehension of raids to the exposed villages and flourishing tea-gardens in the settled districts ? Bailey's answer was in the negative. British districts were yet to be free from the raids of the Nagas. In his letter on 17 June 1880 to the Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, he pointed out that under the very nose of the Political Officer at Samaguting, the Mozomahs had attacked North Cachar and cut up Gomaigojo. The destruction of Baladhan tea-estate, so near to Silchar, and repeated attacks on Nichuguard on the border clearly demonstrated that unless pacified and controlled the Nagas would never cease raiding upon settled districts.<sup>54</sup>

Bailey discussed at length the difficulties to be faced in bringing the Nagas under effective control. To carry on their raids, he pointed out, the Angamis were 'admirably' located ;

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52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*, Officiating Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 17 June 1880.

'they have unwarlike neighbours on three sides while their own position in the hills is so secure that to pursue them or attack them there is a matter involving enormous cost and protracted preparation.' In any case to hold it by military force must be a troublesome and expensive business. On the other hand, from a revenue point of view, it would never pay for its occupation. 'No one', Bailey thought, 'should meddle it, if it could possibly be avoided'. If absolute security could be ensured to the British frontier, he was prepared 'to relinquish the task of controlling and civilizing the Nagas involving a 'disproportionate burden' on the tax-payers. A cordon of posts might be erected to confine the Nagas to their hills and to make their descent upon the plains impossible. Such a solution, Bailey rightly thought, would be impracticable in a country 'where every hill stream furnishes them with sufficiently practicable paths and where what are insuperable obstacle to our soldiers are facilities and protection to them'. He also ruled out the idea of a return to the occupation of Samaguting and to exercise therefrom a political control over the Nagas. Apart from the post being too far from the powerful tribes over which effective control need be exercised, a return to Samaguting would be tantamount 'to a withdrawal to the plains' and would require to be supplemented by a cordon of posts to prevent raid. The only possible solution lay, in the opinion of the Chief Commissioner, in the permanent retention of a dominating position in the heart of the Angami country. Therefore he proposed the occupation of Kohima or some other site near it by a strong military force and the systematic repression of internal disorders and external raids by prompt action against the offending tribes. By this process, Bailey hoped, in course of a generation, their fighting spirit would die out and like the Garos and the Khasis they would acquire peaceful and quiet habits.<sup>55</sup>

The Army Commission had already recommended that the military force in Assam should be reduced and outpost

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55. *Ibid.*

duties should be taken up by the Frontier Police.<sup>56</sup> Bailey also believed that except in actual fighting in open, the policemen in these hills were more useful than the sepoys. Compared to the Sikhs and the Hindusthanese who would not cut jungles, build stockades and their own huts, the Assam Police had the marked superiority in fighting enemies adept in ambushes and surprises. In anticipation of the approval of the government, the Chief Commissioner had already added to the sanctioned strength of 232 Naga Hills Police an addition of 200 men. This increase in Frontier Police, he hoped, would relieve the military much of the harassing and demoralising duties in road and frontier outposts. Without increasing the total force in Assam it was also decided that one of the regiments in Shillong should be moved to Kohima and at least two Companies to be located at Golaghat.<sup>57</sup>

Effective control of the Angamis depended on the strength of the garrison, but no less on the efficiency of arrangements for supply and transport in the hills. The garrison at Kohima, it may be remembered, were living from hand to mouth ; for several months not having more than two or three days ration brought from depots at foot hills—Dimapur and Nichuguard. Though supplies were carried up in an emergency by forced labour, actual transport train in the hills was utterly inadequate. At one stage, Michell's difficulties had been increased by the discontentment of the establishment and their intense desire to get away from Kohima which gave rise to unfounded rumours and created injurious effects on the Nagas. Bailey emphasised the urgency of cart-roads to ensure supplies at all times and to facilitate trade and to make the headquarters tolerable to the troops and civil servants.<sup>58</sup>

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56. Barpujari, ii, pp. 131-3.

57. FPA, 1880 ; April 219 ; Secretary Chief Commissioner 10 March ; March 1880, No. 661 ; General Nation to Quarter-Master General, 27 January 1880.

58. FPA, 1881 ; August, Nos. 616-40 : *op. cit.*

Bailey desired that the jurisdiction of the Political Officer should not extend, as earlier proposed by Keatinge, beyond 94° 25' E. This line would run roughly from Manipur through the Kapamedza hills and northward along the lofty spur to the meeting point of Sijoo and Zillo, and thereafter the Doyang would form the political boundary to the plains. This would include the Lhotas and the Angamis, none of which was more than two days march from Kohima, excluding of course the Eastern Angamis, the Semas and allied tribes. Within this limit, the Political Officer would carry on administration in a rough and simple system and punish external raids with 'swift severity' and repress gradually inter-tribal feuds. Beyond the line he was forbidden to accept any revenue or to interfere in tribal disputes except in preventing the Nagas under his jurisdiction from raiding trans-frontier tribes.<sup>59</sup>

During his visit to Calcutta in early 1881 Bailey discussed with the authorities in Calcutta the basic problem—whether the policy hitherto followed towards the Nagas to be maintained or modified. The Governor-General in Council after careful consideration concurred with his views that no defensive measure as such on British border would be efficient, and that a return to the occupation of Samaguting 'would be worse than useless'. They were, of course, well aware of the difficulties and drawback attended with the extension of British influence into the interior of the hills.

If there were any reasonable ground of anticipating, that by relinquishing hold upon the country recently taken over jurisdiction, and by returning to the settled border...we should be able to guard our district against fresh raids...or to put an end to the state of insecurity that prevails in the neighbouring district, we should much prefer a system of defence that would preclude the necessity of advancing our administrative frontier.<sup>60</sup>

But experience showed that 'withdrawal would increase instead of diminishing the difficulties and that this course

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59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*, Government of India to Secretary of State, 17 April 1881.

have been tried and failed'. There was no alternative left for the Governor-General in Council but to accept the proposal offered by the Chief Commissioner—that the policy already entered upon must now be steadily pursued.<sup>61</sup> This would alone ensure permanent protection of the settled districts and pacification of the country that had given never-ending trouble and anxiety.

*Paramountcy in the Hills*

In February 1881 Naga Hills ceased to be an area under political control. It became a settled district under the Deputy Commissioner (DC) administered in accordance with well defined rules. Sir Charles Elliot (1881-85), who had in the meantime succeeded Bailey as the Chief Commissioner, not only aimed to tighten up his hold over the Nagas but also to adopt measures for material and moral improvement of these backward tribes. He was confronted with too many difficulties.

There have been numberless disquieting rumours and terrible difficulties to contend with in the matter of transport and supply, there have been cholera on the line of communications...great mortality and desertions in the transport train, bridges and roads washed away, with no local labour to fall back on repairs.<sup>1</sup>

Elliot's immediate task was to decide whether the civil and military headquarters should be retained at Kohima or to be moved elsewhere. The committee appointed for the purpose by the Chief Commissioner recommended unhesitatingly in favour of Kohima. Michell in a memorandum opposed the location of the entire regiment at a particular place in the Angami country. He argued that the sepoy and the police could not be permanently separated from their families; and that the presence of a large number of women and children would be highly tempting to the head-hunting propensities of the Nagas.<sup>2</sup> He opined that the country would not be safe for years to come and therefore recommended that the headquarters of the regiment to be located at Wokha, and only a force of 300 men

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1. FPA, 1881; August, No. 626; see *Memorandum by the Chief Commissioner on Naga Hills Affairs*, 29 January.
  2. FPA, 1882; January, No. 122, Officiating Secretary, Chief Commissioner, *Nerhama*, 23 March 1881.



and some police be left with the Political Officer at Kohima. After a visit of the several sites Elliot accepted the recommendations made by the committee. In his view, too, Kohima was 'decidedly superior' from all points of view—climate, spaciousness, accessibility from the plains and nearness to the quarters in which disturbances might be expected.<sup>3</sup>

In the same month, a Kohimaman was murdered at Cheswajuma, a village on the other side of the border.<sup>4</sup> The *Gaoburah* when summoned denied that the murderers belonged to his village and he was allowed to go back to collect evidence in support of his statement. He did not return as promised, whereupon Michell with a detachment followed by innumerable Kohima and Khonomamen reached the offending village to arrest the culprits. A flourishing village, Cheswajuma had over four hundred well-built houses, granaries and gardens. On refusal of the headmen to appear before the Deputy Commissioner the village was attacked by the troops, plundered by the Nagas and burnt to the ground. In carrying out these operations Michell acted on his own responsibility. He believed that this was not a departure from the earlier policy ; he acted in accordance with precedents set by his predecessors. The action of the Deputy Commissioner and the manner of punishment inflicted incurred the displeasure of the Chief Commissioner. Although his proceedings were not officially recorded, the Deputy Commissioner was strictly forbidden to lead any military expedition or to inflict high-handed and arbitrary punishment on any person or village without prior approval. He was further told that burning of the village was the most 'harsh and barbarous course of action' which could be justified only as the last resort when all other expedients had failed ; and that an officer who issue such orders should

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3. *Ibid.*

4. FPA, 1881 ; June, No. 423 ; Officiating Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 26 May.

understand that he was taking on himself a grave responsibility and would be liable to incur the severe displeasure of the government unless he could justify such punishment as absolutely necessary.<sup>5</sup>

The incident raised the question what should be the course of action for the Deputy Commissioner in case a trans-frontier village raided into the settled district or if British subjects crossing the frontier were murdered by the villagers on the other side of the border? As to the first, Elliot advocated that any raid made across the border by the outside village should be treated 'as an act of war' and needed to be punished by an expedition to attack and destroy that village. Endeavours should, of course, be made initially to seize the offender or the headman who could be retained as a hostage until offenders were given up. The second case was one of extreme difficulty. The Naga villages on either side of the border had always been in frequent contact with each other and this could not be prevented by an order making it penal to cross the frontier. Intimation might of course be given that any one who crossed the frontier would do it at his peril: therefore, if he was murdered there no action would be taken against the culprits. Elliot doubted much whether the Nagas with their tradition of shedding blood were prepared for a rule of this kind. Hence murderers had to be punished either by the Nagas themselves or by the Deputy Commissioner. No government worth the name would permit the Nagas to take law into their own hands. Reluctantly, the Chief Commissioner had to admit the necessity of the Deputy Commissioner to undertake an expedition against the offending village. He must, of course, be fully satisfied that a murder had been committed without provocation and that the resentment caused by the murder, if not avenged, would endanger the security of the frontier.<sup>6</sup> The object of the

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5. *Ibid.*, No. 433; Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department, to Chief Commissioner, 24 June 1881.

6. *Ibid.*

expedition should be to apprehend the actual offender or some hostages, and that adequate time be given for submission and that he should proceed to destroy the village only as the last resort when all other means of coercion had failed. The measures proposed by the Chief Commissioner received the approval of the Governor-General in Council.<sup>7</sup>

Within the settled district there occurred 'no crime, no outbreak, no necessity to employ force'.<sup>8</sup> The Nagas gracefully submitted to the inevitable and ungrudgingly fulfilled the obligations imposed upon them. Officers were reported to have safely gone about shooting unattended and the sepoy's visited villages as freely as in Khasi Hills. By 1883 it was considered safe to lift the embargo against the residence of women and children at Kohima ; the sepoy's of the regiment were allowed to take their families with them on transfer to that station. This was followed by

the development of trade, the cessation of inter-village wars, an extension of cultivation, and marked improvement in the condition of poorer classes... The great demand for labour has caused a large sum of money to pass into the possession of the inhabitants of the district, and this has been invested in cattle, and in the opening out of land, all tending to the increase of general prosperity.<sup>9</sup>

What was more significant, hitherto, as might was right, no

poor man could rest secure, even in possession of his small property. The slightest pretext was sufficient and the weaker party found himself deprived of his land and reduced to a condition of little superior to that of a slave. The knowledge that this state of affairs has been relegated to the past is now well known even to the inhabitants of the most remote villages and no Angami hesitates to lodge a formal complaint at Kohima wherever he has been victim of aggression.<sup>10</sup>

Developments notwithstanding, outrages never ceased

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7. *Ibid.*

8. FEA, 1885 ; September, No. 37 ; *Report of the Administration of Naga Hills*, 1884-5.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

amongst the Nagas beyond the border of the settled district in the form of attacks on each other, on British subjects beyond the border and feuds in the vicinity of the boundary. In early 1884, in retaliation for an earlier outrage, a band of Banferas killed three Jabakas within British territory. The opposition of the offending village made it difficult for the Deputy Commissioner to punish the culprits.<sup>11</sup> The Nagas of Salachu murdered two Nagas of Molong within the *Inner Line*. On refusal of the headman to come down and answer for the crime an expedition had to be sent out against the offending tribe which compelled the villagers to come to terms.<sup>12</sup> In the middle of the same year R. B. McCabe, who had then assumed charge of the district, led another expedition against the Hatigoria Nagas of Ratami consequent upon the murder of two Lhota boys within the British territory. Actual murderers were not surrendered and the attitude of Ratamimen left no alternative for the Deputy Commissioner but to resort to the extreme measure—the burning of the village, destroying granaries and taking away the properties of the inhabitants.<sup>13</sup> Despite severe punishment inflicted on the nearby village, the Hatigorias of Nungtung murdered a man of Koio, a Lhota village under British protection. McCabe marched against the village ; the offenders were not given up,

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11. FEA, 1884 ; June, No. 113 ; Secretary Chief Commissioner, 6 May.
  12. FEA, 1884 ; 6 October, No. 389 ; Secretary Chief Commissioner, 22 August 1884.
  13. McCabe was convinced that no other punishment than the burning of the village would deter the people of Ratami from repeating similar atrocities. Speaking of the effects of this measure he says, 'The Burning of the Ratami could be seen by all the villages within a radius of fifty miles and for many years to come, I believe, that none of these villages will dare attempt to raid against any of those under British protection. Unless immunity of this nature can be guaranteed, the work of civilizing these tribes under our protection will be of very slow progress'. (McCabe to the Assistant Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 29 September 1883). That the Deputy Commissioner was belied in his expectation was borne out by the attack of the Hatigorias on the Lhota villages.

whereupon the village was burnt to the ground. Beyond the frontier, the feud between the Borduarias and the Namsangias, which had been suspended for some years through the mediation of their *Gosain* or spiritual head, was renewed and the Deputy Commissioner, held the view that these would not speedily end.<sup>14</sup> The Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar, in his annual report refers to as many as eleven 'little wars'; in a few he succeeded in mediating, but in the majority he had failed.<sup>15</sup>

The increase in the number of outrages and decrease in the influence of the British officers convinced Elliot the necessity of a further change in the policy towards the trans-frontier tribes. Hitherto, British officers were to punish any violation of border or aggression on British subject, but to remain unconcerned with feuds beyond the border.<sup>16</sup> Punitive expeditions had to be sent out, the Chief Commissioner thought, not infrequently against offending tribes involving in each considerable expenditure, harassment and risk when a single expedition might have greater effect if the troops marched through the country to overawe the tribes 'as a preventive than a punishment for the crime'.<sup>17</sup> He held the view that this policy had utterly failed and 'a more extensive and vigorous policy' similar to that adopted by Brodie between 1840-4 was

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14. FEA, 1884 ; August, Nos. 184-7 ; also 1885, September, No. 37 ; October, No. 389 ; *op. cit.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. Elliot could not justify a policy in which a murder committed half a mile north of the line was punished, half a mile south was ignored. When the Nagas came down so frequently to the plains for trade and work, he felt, government ought not treat their action beyond the border as a matter with which it had no concern. Like Hopkinson, he believed, the border that was spoken of was not the absolute limit up to which need be administered in as much as government professed to have sovereign rights over the whole triangle block of territory inhabited by the Nagas up to Burma in the east and Manipur in south.

17. FEA, 1884 ; October, No. 389, *op. cit.*

necessary ;<sup>18</sup> that nothing would be more conducive to keep these primitive tribes in peace 'as a conviction of our power and that power has to be shown to them every twenty or thirty years when a new generation has grown up which has forgotten former events'.

In his letter on 22 August 1884, Elliot proposed a Military promenade along the border of the districts of Naga Hills, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur ; that a party of 150 Frontier Police under the Commandant, McCabe should march villages beyond Lakhuti towards Bura Haimong and should be met at Molong (Molungyimchen) or Deka Haimong by similar party under the Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar. They should continue their march along the border through Kamsing, Jabaka, Banfera and other villages up to Jaypur where they would be joined by another party of Frontier Police with the Commandant and the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur. Political charge of Naga Hills as far as the river Jhanji or Bura Haimong to be placed under Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, and further east should remain under the Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. They should take engagements from the chiefs of important Naga villages outside and near the border. Each should be bound to pay an annual visit to the Deputy Commissioner concerned bringing a small present and receiving one in return and also to come when summoned to answer any charge of murder. A list would be prepared of the villages thus brought under control and these would be placed in charge of the Deputy Commissioner of these districts. The Deputy Commissioner should not interfere in offences committed beyond the *Inner Line* excepting murder and his protection would be restricted to villages that entered into engagement. The penalty for disobedience or failing to fulfil the engagement by the chief would involve in the first instance prohibition from visiting the plains, and if necessary a punitive expedition.<sup>19</sup>

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18. See Barpujari, ii, p. 24.

19. *Op. cit.*

Lord Ripon was well aware that of late the number of outrages was on the increase. He concurred with the Chief Commissioner that demonstration of the might of the British would be 'useful' to some extent, but that would involve a departure from the existing policy to which the Governor-General in Council would adhere unless 'imperative necessity' demanded its abandonment. Nor was he agreeable to enter into engagement with these tribes as suggested by the Chief Commissioner. They would 'no doubt, enter into engagements; but experience showed that different villages or clans would act independently of all engagement contracted by their representatives when it suited them to do so'. The subjection or obedience on the part of the tribes would also imply protection on the part of the government. A village attacked by another would appeal for aid, and if engagement had been taken from it, the right of protection would follow which would inevitably lead to punitive expedition and extension of jurisdiction over all the areas between the *Inner Line*, on the one hand, Manipur and Burmese frontier on the other. After careful consideration of these facts, Ripon was not inclined to make a departure from the policy so long followed though the Chief Commissioner was advised to follow the existing methods of checking and punishing border offences, if necessary, with 'increased energy and promptitude'. Political control over the Nagas to the east of the Naga country as far as the river Jhanji or any other point selected was to be made over to the Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills. Interference in inter-tribal feuds to be limited only to those cases involving

- ( i ) outrages on British subjects ;
- ( ii ) violation of *Inner Line* ;
- ( iii ) danger to the interests of people dwelling inside the borders by reason of the proximity of disturbance outside.<sup>20</sup>

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20. *Ibid.*, 394 in Nos. 389-94, Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department to Chief Commissioner, 20 October 1884.

Consequently Elliot had to abandon his scheme of Military promenade. To extend the sphere of political influence he directed in early 1885 the Deputy Commissioners Naga Hills and Sibsagar to undertake two expeditions strictly on friendly terms through the Naga villages outside their respective districts. They were warned not to enforce their way into any village unwilling to receive them except in case of the Sema village Nungtung (Litami) which had been accused of the murder of a British subject. McCabe was advised to enquire into the charge and to inflict punishment to the offender if necessary.<sup>21</sup>

The reports which the Deputy Commissioners submitted after their respective expeditions showed that there were no opposition ; they were received by the Nagas with friendship and cordiality ; labour and supplies were obtained without difficulty and that the British rule over the Nagas had attracted admiration of the Nagas beyond the *Inner Line*. Colonel W. S. Clarke, Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, in course of his tours confined himself to making general enquiries into the origin of the inter-tribal feuds and made attempts to arbitrate upon them.<sup>22</sup> McCabe, on the other hand, adopted a bolder policy. Not only did he punish Nungtung for the murder of a British subject and warned the villages generally of the intention of the government in the event of their subsequent outrages, but enquired into the charges brought against the villages Longsa and Salachu and brought the offenders to book. Evidently, the Deputy Commissioner exceeded the limit of his instructions ; neither of the cases affected British subjects nor was there any violation of the British border. He thought that the Government of India desired to extend political influence over trans-frontier tribes effectively and to do this there were two alternatives : either to make an annual promenade during winter when punishment

21. FEA, 1886 ; March, No. 15 ; Secretary Chief Commissioner, 11 June 1885.

22. *Ibid.*, Clarke to Secretary Chief Commissioner, 22 February 1885.



might be inflicted on all villages that had disobeyed government orders or to establish an outpost in the heart of the Ao country with the object of exercising the same control as in the case of the Angamis and the Lhotas. As to the first he had misgivings of his own ; that the punishment would follow too long after the offence was committed. The motives of the action might be misconstrued and the tribes would regard the British troops 'as a class of looters and murderers'.<sup>23</sup>

For effective control of the Nagas beyond the frontier, McCabe recommended the scheme suggested by Captain Plowden, Commandant of the Naga Hills Frontier Police. It sought to bring under political control the entire tract lying west of the Dikhow, Zela or Nonga from its entry into the plains above Bihubar police outpost and up to Chesami, a Sema village ; after which the boundary would follow a well-marked ridge until its junction with the existing boundary. To control the tract, Plowden proposed to have outposts at Chesami, in the Sema country, Nogaon or Merangkong in the north and Ungong in the central tract, each under a Military Commandant. The outposts would be garrisoned by 120 men then constituted the Sibsagar Frontier Police supplemented by the transfer of a part of Naga Hills Frontier Police located at Kohima. The cost of the scheme was estimated at Rs 14,500 which could be met, Plowden thought, by an assessment of rupees two a house on all Nagas proposed to be brought under political control.<sup>24</sup>

While forwarding the reports of the expeditions on 11 June 1885, W. E. Ward (1885-7), the officiating Chief Commissioner, commented on the proposal of McCabe as premature, uncalled for and contrary to the policy laid down by the Government of India. Such a policy, he thought, would be tantamount to the annexation and administration of the new tract in addition to the Naga Hills.<sup>25</sup> Curiously enough, in a subsequent note on

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23. *Ibid.*, No. 20 ; McCabe 16 March 1885.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

8 October, not only did he agree to extend political control over areas defined by McCabe, but also to make necessary deviation in boundary as to include the Eastern Angamis as well as the tract inhabited by the Aos or the Hatigorias. The entire tract, the Chief Commissioner proposed to place under the exclusive political control of the Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, on the ground that he had better facilities of access to all parts of it at all times of the year besides he possessed a military force at Kohima and a strong body of Frontier Police at his disposal for dealing more promptly and effectively with the turbulent villages.<sup>26</sup> Within this tract, the Chief Commissioner earlier proposed that the Deputy Commissioner would march with a party of Frontier Police and in course of which he would enquire, whether invited or not, all cases of murder committed and punish the villages to which the murderers belonged. The punishment should be normally a fine. If it was not paid an equivalent in cattle or grain seized ; failing which the village should be debarred from intercourse with the plains. Under no circumstances destruction of any village to be resorted to and in no case other than the murder should the Deputy Commissioner interfere in inter-tribal disputes ; that did not of course prevent him exerting his influence in inducing the parties concerned to settle their disputes amicably. Finally in no case should the Deputy Commissioner interfere in the disputes of the tribes residing within and those outside the area of control even though such disputes might result in murder either within or outside the area of control.<sup>27</sup>

The proposal submitted by the Chief Commissioner was a step forward towards the amalgamation of a considerable tract of territory within the British dominion. Nevertheless, the recurrence of inter-tribal feuds beyond the border and their repercussions on villages under protection convinced the

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26. FEA, 1886 ; March, No. 24 ; Officiating Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 8 October 1885.

27. *Op. cit.*, Secretary Chief Commissioner, 11 June 1885.

Government of India the necessity of some modifications in the policy already laid down. The measures proposed by Ward received the approval of Dufferin's government as 'sound and correct' and 'well adopted to meet the circumstances'.<sup>28</sup> The Government of India went a step further. It desired that these measures to be treated as 'guidelines rather than fixed rules' which the Deputy Commissioner had no power to overstep. In its view there could hardly be any reason of preventing the Deputy Commissioner of enquiring into and punishing cases of murder before the annual promenade if he could do so conveniently. Nor should he be absolutely debarred from settling cases other than murder if he could usefully and efficiently do so. Likewise of a village outside the area of control raiding upon a village within, if it could be conveniently punished, government saw no reason why this should not be done. In short it desired that ample discretion need be given to the Deputy Commissioner and that he should not be absolutely prohibited from interfering in the disputes between villages outside and those within the area of control. 'Control implied protection, though the measure of protection upon proximity and convenience.'<sup>29</sup>

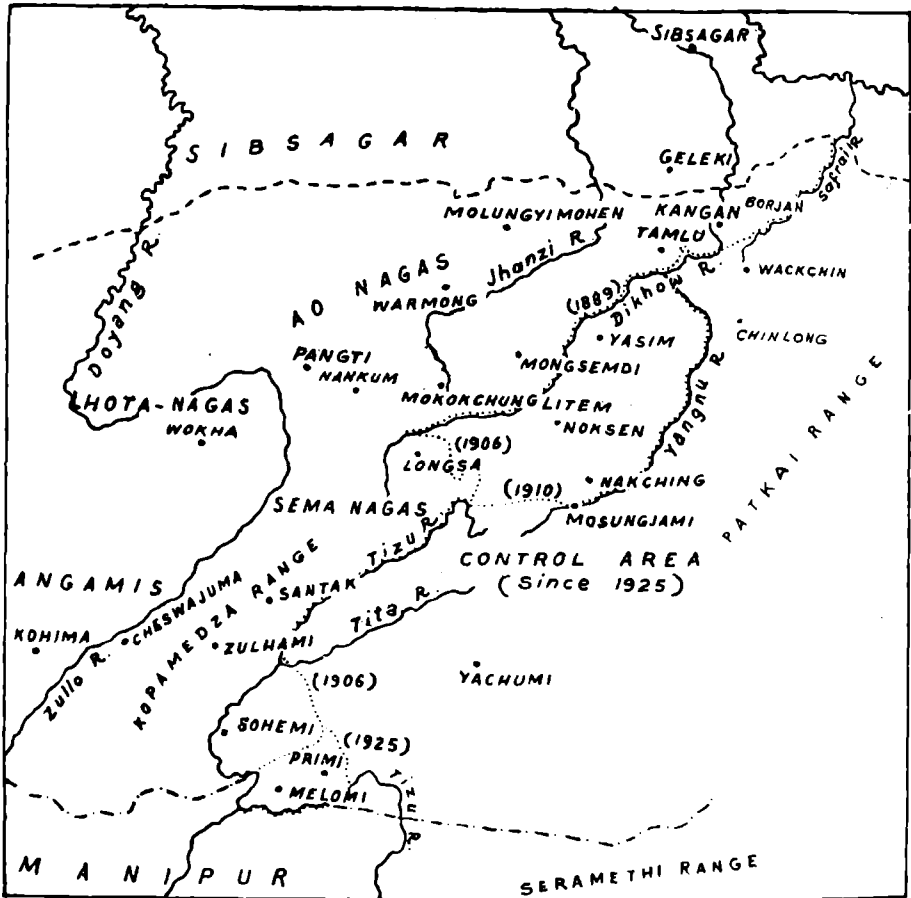
Thus a tract of territory west of the Dikhow north and east of Naga Hills came under the control of the government. The outrages committed by trans-Doyang and trans-Dikhow Nagas demanded, before long, the despatch of a series of expeditions. In March 1887, an expedition had to be sent out under A. Porteous, the Deputy Commissioner, accompanied by Lieutenant D. Macintyre, then Commandant Naga Hills Frontier Police, against the Mezamis who raided Eastern Angami village Zulhami and Phuima where several persons were killed.<sup>30</sup> Against the same village complaints of outrages were

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28. *Ibid.* No. 25 ; Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department, 3 February 1886.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, October 1887, Nos. 1-6.



*Trans-Doyang and Trans-Dikhow areas*

made by Chipokitami and Tirehphima which were outside the political control. The Chief of Sakai who was held responsible for most of the outrages was seized and fined, but permanent peace, the Deputy Commissioner felt, would be impossible unless an outpost was placed in advance of the village outside political control. In June, another expedition had to be sent out across the Doyang against the Aos and the Semas and Porteous wanted to locate an outpost at Nankum (Lungkam) which was not acceptable to the Government of India.<sup>31</sup> To punish outrages, in March 1888 Macintyre with a party of hundred men accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner reached

31. FEA, 1887; November, No. 64; Secretary Government of India, 25 October.

Waromong through the northeast of the Ao Country. After punishing Nagas of Tamlu, Kanching, the village Kangan was totally destroyed for its attack on the troops. Macintyre advanced to Jaktung and thereafter returned to Tamlu and made an unsuccessful attack on Yasim, an offending but independent village, which was strongly defended by deep ditches, bristling with *panjis* and strong stockades. The nearby villages of Chihu, Noksen and Litem were burnt and in early May the troops returned to the headquarters.<sup>32</sup>

Already several trans-Dikhow villages represented to the Deputy Commissioner to take them under the control of the government which would, they hoped, protect them from attacks of their neighbours. McCabe was told by the headmen of Nankum that 'when we cut up any Lhotas they complain to you and we are punisned, but when the Lhotas take our heads, we have no one to whom we can complain.'<sup>33</sup> The *Gaoburohs* expressed their willingness even to pay revenue to the Government. In his letter on 16 March 1885, McCabe wanted to take a few villages under protection of the government. Proteous thought that the triangular tract—consisting of Lhota villages Are, Are yanthano, Oktso and Pangti, Ao villages Nankum and Munghung and few Sema villages—would be attended with no administrative inconvenience, rather bring in a small revenue apart from increasing influence of the government on the Ao and Sema Naga tribes.<sup>34</sup> The proposal did not receive serious consideration of the government until July 1888 when Reverend Clarke, the missionary, reported the startling news—the attack made by the trans-Dikhow Nagas on Ao village Mongsemdi (Mongsemyinti) and Lunglung where two hundred people were massacred. Denis Fitzpatrick, the Chief Commissioner, in his letter on 14 November solicited the Government of India the

32. See Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, pp. 166 ff.

33. FEA, 1884 ; October, No. 27.

34. FEA, 1887 ; November, No. 64 ; Officiating Deputy Commissioner to Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 17 August.

permission to despatch an expedition against the offending villages and to incorporate the Ao territory forming the northern part of the area of control.<sup>35</sup>

In December Porteous with of party of 130 Frontier Police under Macintyre accompanied by Lieutenant Maxwell arrived at Mongsem-di where he learnt that several villages eastward were also concerned in the atrocity. Amidst volleys of arrows and spears, he marched through villages Noksen, Litem, Santak and reached on 12 January 1890 Mazung-jami at the head of the Young valley, but found it completely deserted. For participation in the outrage at Mongsem-di, the village was totally destroyed. No punishment could be inflicted on the ring leaders—all of them had already escaped. In its letter on 24 December 1888 the Foreign Department, Government of India, accorded its approval incorporation of the Ao country to the Naga Hills as a sub-division with headquarters at Mokokchung (Mokoktsu). No fresh area of political control was to be formed beyond the Dikhow which was made for the present the boundary in the 'strictest sense'.<sup>36</sup>

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Every endeavour was made after the Second Lushai expedition to bring the tribes into closer intercourse with the government by sending officers to their principal chiefs and by encouraging trade at centres convenient to them. In early 1873, in his exploratory tour Lewin succeeded in establishing intimate relations with the Sylos and converting them into a friendly and subservient race. To protect them against the attacks of their powerful neighbours, namely the Howlongs, a guard of fifty men was despatched to their hills. Towards the end of 1875 in a *darbar* held at Demagiri A. W. B. Power, Deputy Commissioner Chittagong Hill Tracts, made an attempt

35. FEA, 1889 ; January, Nos. 76-88.

36. *Ibid.*, also February 1889, Nos. 155-67.

to reconcile the ill-feelings between the Sylos and the Howlongs. In his trip to Changsil (Bepari Bazar) in early 1874, McWilliam, officiating Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, persuaded Sukpikal not to levy impost on trade and to induce others to do so. Markets sprang up beyond the borders at Sonaimukh and Tipaimukh wherein exchange of India-rubber, their staple produce, the Lushais procured salt, rice and other necessaries of their daily life. In January 1877, the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, accompanied by H. C. Sarmah, Extra Assistant Commissioner, visited several villages and everywhere the party was cordially received.<sup>1</sup>

Friendly intercourse notwithstanding, the feuds which had been temporarily suspended during the period of expedition were renewed and, in fact, the history of the Lushais for the next twenty years was a series of raids and counter-raids. In October 1874, Lalgura, the friendly Syloo chief, was threatened with an attack by the Howlong Benkuiya. 'If the Sylos are broken up', Power thought, 'we shall have a dangerous enemy on our immediate frontier instead of an ally.' He promised Lalgura a police guard at his village and warned the Howlongs that any attack on that chief would not be tolerated. The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal found that the Deputy Commissioner had exceeded his limits ; it was not the wish of the government to accept the responsibility of defending the Sylos. If that chief desired British protection, the Deputy Commissioner was told, he should shift as his brother Laljeeka had already done to British territory.<sup>2</sup> True to its policy, when in the middle of 1877 Vanhnoya, the Syloo chief, residing within British territory solicited permission to go out and fight some raiders who had threatened him, Mr. Anderson, Deputy Commissioner Chittagong, was instructed by the Government of Bengal to take utmost care not to mix up quarrels of these

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1. BJP(P), 1875 ; June, No. 374 ; Power 13 May ; FPA, 1874 ; June, Nos. 197-200 ; *Military Report of the Chin-Lushai Country*, p. 33.

2. *Ibid.*, FPA, 1874 ; November, No. 145.

tribes with those outside the frontier.<sup>3</sup> In September 1881, Laljeeka, Lalgura and other friendly chiefs were again threatened by the Eastern Lushais ; thereupon the Lieutenant Governor agreed to despatch one hundred twenty men to Demagiri to the protection of the chiefs on the specific condition that no police force should be sent beyond the frontier except in pursuit of the aggressors.<sup>4</sup>

In July 1877, hostilities arising out of *jhum* land had broken out between eastern Lengkham, Lalburah and Chengliena and the Western chiefs Sukpial, Khalkom and Liengpunga. The parties appealed for aid to the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, who refused forthwith advising both the parties to come to terms. In October, Sukpial through his *mantries* again solicited mediation of the Deputy Commissioner in his quarrel with Bungteya, Lalburah and Lengkham ; the latter after killing fifteen men assumed such an attitude of hostility that Sukpial and his followers dared not to come out of their village. He was also advised to settle the dispute by arbitration.<sup>5</sup> The growing hostility with the Eastern chiefs compelled Sukpial to maintain at any cost friendly relations with the British Government. The chief and his followers regularly visited Cachar and paid *nazars* to the local authorities. Not only did he punish offenders in British territory but authorised the Deputy Commissioner to arrest and penalise the Lushais who in any way interfered with the affairs of the British subjects.

Sukpial, who was growing old and ailing for sometime, died in early 1881. The local authorities had now to deal with several of his descendants-Khalkom (Kalkhama), Liengpunga (Lianphunga), Sailenpui (Sailianpuia), Thanruma, Lenkhunga, Rankupa, Lalrhima, Thangula, Lalsavota, Thalien, Lalluia,

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3. FPA, 1877 ; August, K. W. Nos. 297-302.

4. *Ibid.*, 1881 ; October, Nos. 375-7.

5. FPA, 1878 ; May, Nos. 132-3 ; BJP(P), 1877 ; December, Nos. 24-6 ; *Military Report of the Chin-Lushal Country*, p. 34.



Mintang, Lenkhai, Thanpong and Tulera. Of these, some were minors while a few dependent on the family and, as such, the government had to deal mainly with Khalkom, Liengpunga, Sailenpui, Thanruma and Thangula. The death of Sukpial was the signal for renewal of feuds with the Eastern chiefs. Soon a party from Poiboi, Lalburah and Chengliena surrounded the village of Thangula, but on latter's submission no bloodshed occurred. In April same year Lengkham, Darkuma and Chengliena attached Thenglena, cousin of Khalkom, obtained heads of forty men, women and children and carried off thirty-nine captives.<sup>6</sup> Six days later Lengkham attacked and burnt the village of Darkung compelling the chief along with others to seek asylum elsewhere. Hostilities however ceased early next year when a famine broke out from the depredation of rats who multiplied enormously on account of the ample food they received from seeding of the bamboos.<sup>7</sup>

On the annexation of Burma in 1885, the British Government came in contact with the wild tribes who occupied the Chin Hills in the east. To protect the Burmese villages against their raids, a permanent post was located at Fort White. To effect combined operation against the Lushais and their neighbours in the east in the event of any uprising, the Military authorities considered it necessary to collect information as to the line of approach and for which it was decided in 1887 to despatch a reconnaissance party to that region. Accordingly in January 1888 two parties commenced operations : one under Lieutenant J. F. Stewart with a small escort of Chittagong Frontier Police

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6. The heads were arranged in a row and an earthen vessel filled with rice, curry, boiled eggs, chicken and a bamboo *chunga* containing liquor were placed by the side of each head while the victors drank and danced round them. This was offered in order that spirits might not haunt them, but travel in peace to the city of the dead that lay in the far south. FPA, 1881 ; June, No. 121.
  7. *Ibid.*, Nos. 118-21 ; October, No. 357 ; 1882, January, No. 794 ; August, Nos. 188-91 ; *Military Report of the Chin-Lushai Country*, p. 35.

along the Belaisari range and the other under Lieutenant Baird accompanied by J. Shakespear with a similar escort southward from Demagiri along the Ooephoom range. Shortly after the parties commenced operations intelligence arrived from Saipuiya, a friendly chief, that Houseata, Vantura and Dakola of the Pois in the southeast were meditating an attack on the British party. Stewart heeded not the warning and continued his advance along the Saichul range. On the morning of 3 February, armed with *daos*, spears and muskets the enemy made a sudden attack on the party and killed two corporals and several sepoys. Stewart while retreating was also shot dead. C. S. Murray, Deputy Commissioner Police, immediately on receipt of the news, hurried to the spot but found the enemy already left carrying officers' heads, arms and ammunitions. This was followed by another atrocity on 15 February when the Shendus fell upon Roazo Prekhyn Mro, a village in Chema valley, wherein six persons were killed, two wounded and twenty-three carried off as captives.<sup>8</sup>

Referring to the adverse effect of these outrages, D. R. Lyall, the Commissioner Chittagong Division, in his letter on 4 March 1888, urged on the Government of Bengal in strongest terms the despatch of an expedition against the aggressors. He thought that the British Government was bound to protect those who were within declared boundaries and not to avenge the offenders would be tantamount to breach of faith. If they were allowed to carry the heads of three Englishmen with impunity, what was the guarantee that more atrocious raids would not be repeated in near future? A certain amount of force, he was convinced, was absolutely necessary to the offending tribe who considered that they were beyond the power of the British to punish. He proposed a pincer movement; that a column from Burma and another from Demagiri should meet near the easterly branch of Koladyne and that a third should

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8. FEA., 1888; March, Nos. 332-7; Lyall 11 February; Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, pp. 82-5.

effect a junction from the south. To J. W. Edgar, then Chief Secretary Government of Bengal, punitive measures were 'imperatively called for', and the only question to be decided was how it should be organised. He also emphasised concerted action by the Governments of Assam, Bengal and Burma.<sup>9</sup>

No mistake can be greater than for each of these Governments to deal separately with the adjoining villages its own frontier without reference to those in the vicinity of the other two Governments....because the effect of these would be merely to divert attacks from one portion of the frontier to another, while doing nothing to remedy the real source of the evil which I take to be the belief of the inhabitants of higher central hills in the inaccessibility of their country and their safety from the danger of punishment.<sup>10</sup>

The proposal received the support of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, but it was turned down by the Supreme Government on the ground that their position in the Chindwin Valley was yet to be consolidated as to admit of 'a full and permanent development of the object which a joint expedition from Chittagong and Burma might be expected to secure.'<sup>11</sup> Despite warnings of Lyall that 'our inaction will be misunderstood by the trans-frontier tribes', and 'those now inclined to be friendly would almost certainly desert us', the Government of India expressed its reluctance to make any alteration in their earlier decision. Nonetheless to prevent recurrence of raids, 50 sepoy of the 9th Bengal Infantry under Major Woodhouse was hurried to the frontier. The Frontier Police moved forward to occupy the line of posts near the border and the detachments of the Bengal Infantry replaced those at Rangamati and Demagiri.<sup>12</sup>

While these arrangements were in progress, in early morning of 13 December 1888, the Kukis under Lelya, Langlena and Kairuma, sons of Bhuta, and others made a sudden attack and

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9. BJP (P), 1891 ; June, 42 in Nos. 1-139 ; *Reid*, pp. 1-5

10. *Ibid.*, Edgar 17 December 1888.

11. *Ibid.*

12. FEA, 1889 ; March, Nos, 1-85 ; *Reid*, p. 5.

burnt the village of Pakuma Rani, then under the protection of the government, killing the queen, forty people and carrying off fifteen others as prisoners. Widdicombe, the Commandant at Demagiri, with an escort rushed to the village, but the raiders had already penetrated into the hills. A still more horrible atrocity followed on 8-10 January, 1889 in the Chengri Valley on the Chittagong frontier wherein about six hundred Lushais attacked and burnt to the ground twenty-four villages killing 101 people and carrying off 91 prisoners. Of the latter were several young children taken with their mothers and these were murdered on the following day in cold blood since they were unable to walk. The aggressors were supposed to be Zarok (Zahrawka) and Liengpunga (Lianphunga), sons of Sukpial.<sup>13</sup>

The recurrence of these outrages following the incorporation of Upper Burma brought about a radical change in the policy of the Government of India. Hitherto, the territory occupied by the Lushai tribes formed the 'real frontier' extending up to the border of Burma and the occupation of these hills would have brought the British into immediate contact with the tribes then under 'the imperfect control' of the Burmese government. The annexation of Upper Burma materially altered the situation in regard to this wild region which was then surrounded on all sides by settled districts or States under control of the British government. 'We cannot permit' remarked the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal,

the continuance in our midst of groups of headhunting savages without responsible chiefs, without organisations and not amenable to political control, who yet from their geographical position are enabled to commit outrages with practical impunity upon our territory on all sides of them ; while we are put to great and constantly increasing expense to maintain lines of defence which prove ineffectual to protect our peaceful people.<sup>14</sup>

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13. *Ibid* ; also October 1888, No. 39.

14. *Ibid*.

Concurring with this view the Governor-General in Council accorded their approval on 19 December, 1888 to despatch another expedition against the raiders. The season being advanced, it was decided that only one expedition was to be sent to punish Howseata and his associates. Colonel F.V.W. Tregear of the 9th Bengal Infantry was directed again to advance into the hills with orders to make a road from Demagiri to the Chin Hills, to establish a permanent post on some healthy spot and to advance in the direction of the villages of the offenders.<sup>15</sup> After necessary reconnaissance under C. S. Murray and J. Shakespear, from early January, 1889 construction of roads progressed through dense bamboo-covered low hills taking a heavy toll of labourers and of elephants by landslides. By mid-March, the road practicable for mule and elephants was opened up to Lungleh, forty-seven miles from Demagiri, where a strong post was erected manned by two hundred Chittagong Frontier Police. A flying column latter advanced upon the village of Howseata which was burnt to the ground. Positive proof was obtained in the complicity of the inhabitants in the murder of Stewart whose gun was unearthed from the grave of the chief who had in the meantime died. Information was obtained that all the heads had been sent to Paona, a chief in Chin hills in the east. After destroying neighbouring village of Jahuta troops returned to Lungleh. On 3 April in a *darbar* the officer commanding the troops was attended by principal Howlong chiefs—Saipuiya, Lal Thangbunga, Launga, Sangliena and Lalruma. The latter assured loyalty to the government and promised to assist him in further operation in the hills.<sup>16</sup>

The attitude of the Shendus continued to cause serious anxiety in the minds of the local authorities. They had been preparing hostile measures ; and it was feared that they would attack the garrison at Lungleh at the earliest opportunity.

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15. *Ibid.*, Secretary Government of India, 19 December 1888.

16. FEA, 1889 ; October, Nos. 29-66 ; *Reid*. p. 7.

The Government of Bengal also learnt from the tea-planters that the disturbed state of the frontier had not only brought down the income of the government from Rs 80,000 to Rs 5,000 but demoralised the labourers so much that it had become increasingly difficult to induce them to work in the gardens. After a meeting on 3 September 1889, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal with the authorities in Assam brought home to the Government of India the urgency of defending Cachar from the attack of the invaders. They suggested to occupy Changsil and to move towards Liengpunga's country from Cachar as the Chittagong column, it was feared, would not be able to punish them effectively.<sup>17</sup> The Government of India being advised by the Military authorities ruled out the cooperating column from Cachar and directed that the Chittagong column should advance *via* Lungleh to meet a Burmese force from Gangaw *via* Yokwa. Both the columns would thereafter move northward to punish the raiders on Chengri Valley and Pakuma Rani's village.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the object of the expedition was (i) to subjugate the tribes as yet neutral, (ii) to explore and open out, as far as practicable, partially known country between Chittagong and Burma and (iii) to establish semi-permanent posts in the tract so as to ensure complete pacification and recognition of British power by the tribes.<sup>19</sup>

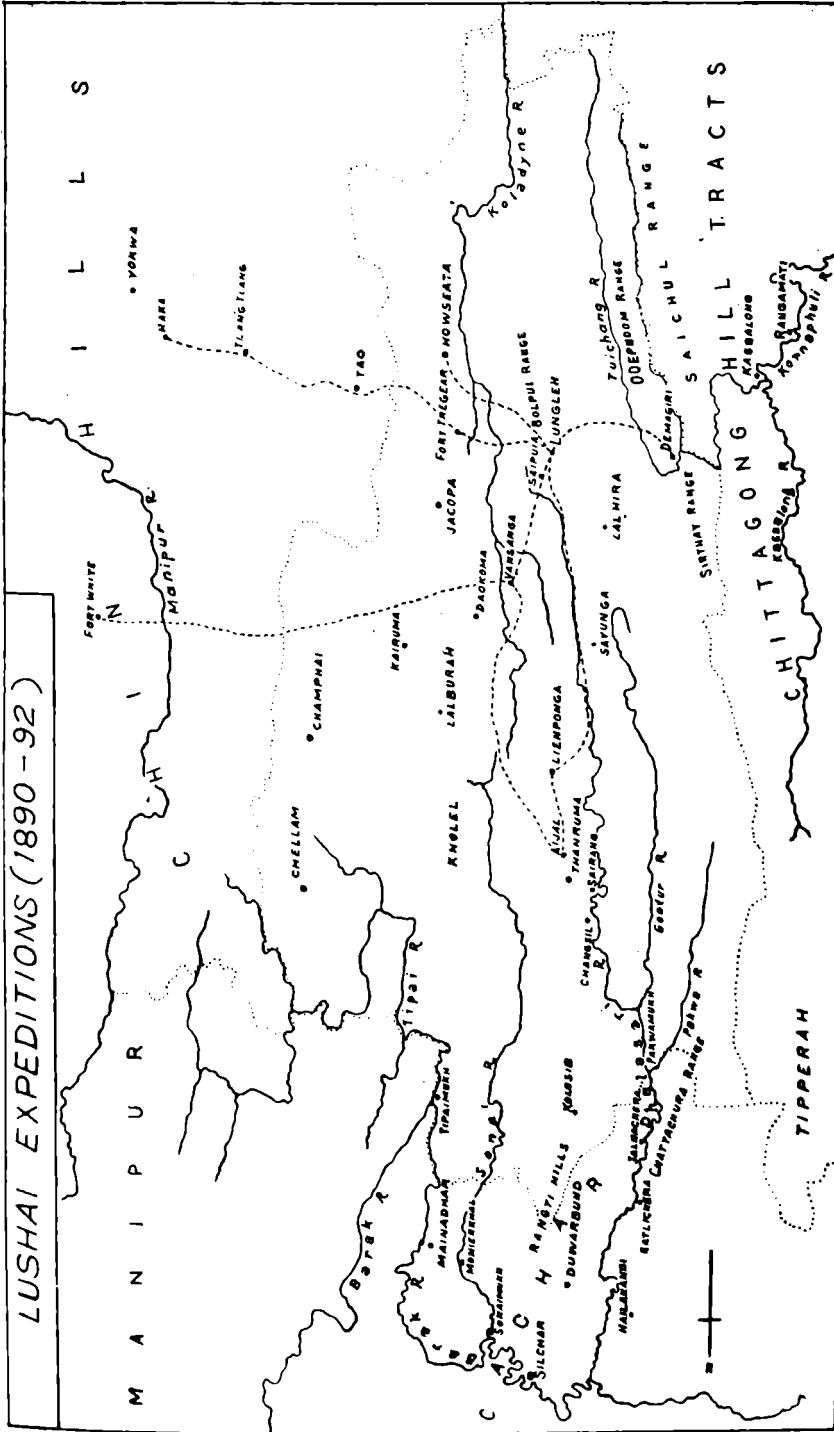
Accordingly, in November 1889, Tregear commanding a force of 3400 of the 3rd Bengal Infantry and the Gurkhas advanced into the south Lushai hills to cooperate with a Burmese force under General Penn Symonds. To punish the offenders in the Chengri Valley raids, he despatched under G. I. Skinner accompanied by C. S. Murray a column of 800 strong, the 'Northern Column', to concert action with another force under W. W. Daly, a police officer from Cachar. Out-

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17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Reid*, p. 10.



break of Cholera at Rangamati delayed the assembly of troops at Lungleh till January, 1890. Here the 'Northern Column' under Skinner marched against Liengunga and others concerned in the Chengri Valley raids. Advancing along the upper course of the Dhaleswari about the middle of February Skinner met Daly's force near Liengunga's village. From the neighbouring hills the Lushais commenced firing, but they were beaten back ; the village was burnt, livestocks were seized and granaries destroyed. Retribution followed on Lungliena and Nikuma for their attack on Pakuma Rani. Skinner selected Aijal (Aizawl) as the permanent post in the north Lushais hills. Leaving there a garrison of two hundred and another of fifty at Changsil the troops retired from the hills.<sup>20</sup>

In the meantime along the Bolpui range General Tregear's main force moved eastward in the direction of Darjow Klang where a defensive fort was erected. In March, 1890, a flying column under Captains L. M. Hall and J. Shakespear started for Haka to meet the Burmese force with the object of recovering the heads and loot carried off from Stewart's camp. After an 'arduous march', the party reached Tao village on the frontier of the Chin hills. Herein they were joined by a detachment of the Burmese under Captain Rundall and Lieutenant Stevenson. Both of them, it was learnt, had passed the previous night on Paona's village being ignorant of the fact that the latter held Stewart's head. The chief tendered his submission and surrendered several heads including Stewart's beside articles carried off by the raiders.<sup>21</sup>

Evidently, the Chittagong column had no fighting ; it was engaged in completion of the line of communication beyond Haka. On the Darjow Klang, a new post was established with a garrison of two hundred Gurkhas under Captains Hutchinson and Shakespear, of course, the latter in the capacity of a Political Officer. As the result of expedition, commonly known

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20. *Ibid.*

21. Shakespear, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-3.



as the Chin-Lushai expedition, as reviewed by the Adjutant-General of the Army,

not only has the communication between Bengal and Burma been established...but all the principal tribes inhabiting the country have been brought under subjugation, a large number of captives who had been in the hands of these tribes restored to their own homes and military posts at certain places for the preservation of order, and as evidence of British supremacy, established.<sup>22</sup>

The primary object of the expedition was achieved. But the troops could not be withdrawn from the hills until the chiefs were made to obey the commands of the government nor the establishment of a few outposts would bring under the influence of the government the chiefs who were at war till very recently. An officer possessing both experience and judgment need be appointed. He was to exert influence amongst these peoples and gradually to accustom them to the British control. The Government of India agreed with J. W. Quinton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, that the areas occupied by these tribes should constitute a separate charge ; for it was difficult for the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, in addition to his normal duties to have constant contact with the chiefs so essential for extension of British influence over these tribes.<sup>23</sup> On 3 July 1890, H. R. Browne, the officiating Assistant Commissioner, was appointed Political Officer North Lushai Hills district with headquarters at Aijal. His jurisdiction was limited to areas held by the descendants of Lalul—the tract lying between Cachar frontier on the north, Hill Tipperah on the west, river Manipur in the east and an imaginary line east-west through the Darlung Peak.<sup>24</sup>

Browne was directed by the Chief Commissioner to come in frequent contact with the chiefs with the object of establishing political influence and control over them and

22. *Reid*, p. 12.

23. FEA, August 1890 ; Nos. 221-77.

24. *Ibid.*, No. 269 ; Secretary Government of India, 3 July.

preventing raids to protect the chiefs friendly to the British and punishing those who injured them. He was not to introduce criminal administration, but to leave the inhabitants to settle their disputes amongst themselves. In regard to taxation he was advised to receive, subject to the approval of the Chief Commissioner, any revenue in cash or kind voluntarily offered by the chiefs, but no attempt should be made to exact revenue from the tribes unwilling to pay it. Pending final orders he was also instructed not to accept in lieu of any tribute or revenue obligations of a nature which rendered their fulfilment a matter of difficulty.<sup>25</sup>

Browne committed blunders one after another. Considering any leniency on the part of the government would be treated by the Lushais as a sign of weakness, in a meeting of the principal chiefs he announced Liengpunga and his brother Zarok deposed for a period of four years besides a fine of fifteen guns each for their past outrages.<sup>26</sup> He banned inter-tribal feuds demanding the aggrieved to approach the Political Officer, in place of his principal chief to which he was accustomed hitherto, for redress of grievances. The chiefs were further required to guarantee within their limits absolute security of the life and property and free access to traders and travellers of the British districts. Contrary to the guidelines, as a token of acknowledgement of the authority of the government, the Lushais were made to pay a house-tax besides a fixed quota of labour whenever needed.<sup>27</sup> 'I wonder', McCabe later remarked, 'Whether (we) were wise (in) imposing tribute, however nominal' : for it was extremely irritating to a tribe who were hitherto independent and who saw no gain in paying to 'a small extortionist working in his own interest.'<sup>28</sup> The Lushais loath to serve as labourers. Thadien, brother of Thanruma, told the deputies of Browne,

25. *Ibid.*, No. 255, Quinton 22 April 1890.

26. FEA, 1890 ; October, K. W. 2, Nos. 126-44 ; Quinton to Cunningham, 25 August.

27. *Ibid.*

28. FEA, 1892 ; September, Nos. 9-62 K. W. 3.

Few of the Lushais did anything, but cultivate; a few collected wax and rubber and got money in that way, but the majority had no money, or means of getting it. They will not do coolie work...It is not their custom and the chiefs being afraid of losing their power won't let them.<sup>29</sup>

The Lushais instinctly felt that their territory had been annexed, chiefs deposed, liberties of hunting the forest and raidings for heads gone forever. They were not devoid of political wisdom nor incapable of political combination. All chiefs of the west of Dhaleswari-Liengpunga, Rangkupa (Hrangkhupa) Mintang—were commanded by Sailenpui, and those between Dhaleswari and Sonai-Lengkhunga, Thangula (Thanghula), Tulera, Lalrhima and Thanruma—acted under the orders of Khalkom and Liengpunga.<sup>30</sup> On 1 September 1890, in a meeting at the *Jolbuk*\* of Khalkom, the representatives of Thangula, Thanruma, Lengkunga and Lalrhima resolved to rise up in arms against the English. The opportunity was taken on 9 September when the Political Officer with a small escort was on his way from his headquarters to Changsil. The party was ambuscaded by Thanruma's tribe killing seventeen men; Browne was mortally wounded and later died at Changsil.<sup>31</sup> Simultaneously an attack was made on the sepoys near Sairang after which the Lushais under Khalkom and Liengpunga besieged the posts at Aijal and Changsil. To their relief, a force of two hundred men of the Surma Valley Military Police under A. C. Tytler accompanied by R. R. Swinton of the 44th Bengal Infantry advanced up the Dhaleswari on 26 September. The party was attacked on the river and several sepoys including Swinton were killed.<sup>32</sup> R. B. McCabe, who had already

29. FEA, 1890; see diary of Browne, 15 June.

30. *Ibid.*, K. W. 2, Browne 4 August 1890.

\* It was a large hall built principally of timber in proximity to the chief's residence wherein the whole male population of the village met to deliberate and take decisions on matters of general interest.

31. FEA, 1890; December, 63 in Nos. 55-84; Duke to the Secretary Government of Bengal, 2 October.

32. *Ibid.*

distinguished himself in suppressing the Nagas, was hurriedly despatched with a detachment to Changsil which was relieved in the meantime by a party of two hundred men of the 40th Bengal Infantry under Lieutenant Watson. In a 'short but vigorous campaign', 16-28 November, McCabe restored order and compelled unconditional surrender of as many as fifteen chiefs. Khalkom, Liengpunga and Thangula were deported to Hazaribagh and rest were released on payment of fines. Thanruma remained at large and Sailenpui who had surrendered was made responsible for the action of the villages under his control.<sup>33</sup>

On 24 December 1890, the Government of India accorded its approval to the proposal initiated by D. R. Lyall to constitute South Lushai hills territory together with Chittagong Hill Tracts a separate district under a Superintendent with headquarters at Lungleh subject to the Government of Bengal. Provisionally the district was placed under two Assistant Political Officers—C. S. Murray and Lieutenant J. Shakespear. It was to be governed through chiefs. No chief was to be recognised as paramount over others unless demanded by force of circumstances. The Superintendent was to confine his attention mainly to the preservation of peace leaving the chiefs absolutely free in their respective villages in matters administrative—criminal, civil and social. Raids were made penal; raiding or offending chief was liable to sentence of death. Absolute security of person and property and free access into every village must be ensured. The chiefs were made to understand: 'If life is taken, it should be life for life and if access is refused or a traveller robbed severe fines should be imposed.'<sup>34</sup>

In this district the Lushais were subjected to a house-tax of a rupee per house besides ten seers of rice and six days free

33. *Ibid.*, also Nos. 253-71; *Reid*, pp. 17-21.

34. BJP (P), 1891; April, Nos. 1-38; see *Note on the Future Management, of the Western Portion of the Country between Chittagong and Burmah* also *Reid*, pp. 27-8.

labour, and labour above was to be paid for. Labour was greatly needed not only for the carriage of supplies in a land full of jungles but for opening up of communications within and outside the district. Lyall emphasised,

Mandalay is only some 250 miles as the crow flies from Chittagong, and Chittagong will be within 20 to 22 hours journey from Calcutta when the railway is made. If, then, a feasible line for a cart road or a railway can be discovered from Chittagong to Mandalay, the land route to Burma will enable the surplus population of Bengal, who refuse to cross the sea, to spread into Upper Burma, benefiting both provinces. The trade of Burma will also gain much by possibility of communication between Calcutta and Mandalay.<sup>35</sup>

Each chief was made responsible for the collection of revenue and maintenance and making of roads. The Superintendent had the power of fining any chief not keeping up roads, and of compelling him and his people to do the work by force. The demand for labour, though limited to a few days a year, was exceedingly difficult to procure in a country sparsely populated. When there was a special call for large numbers men had to come many days march from their villages and the Lushais were a people, as Shakespear says, who did not like staying long from their homes.<sup>36</sup> In early February 1891 when Murray made a requisition for labourers on Jacopa (Zakapa), the Fanai or Mollienpui chief, the latter evaded by taking shelter at the village of his subordinate chief Lalchuma. On 10 February, the Assistant Political Officer accompanied by a party of fifty sepoy reached Lalchuma and threatened Jacopa that unless the required number of coolies were supplied with, he would seize his family members not sparing his wife. Stung by this insult, the Lushais prevented the chief from complying with the demand. In retaliation, Murray burnt

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35. *Ibid.*

36. FEA, 1893 ; January, No. 48 ; Oldham to Secretary Government of Bengal, 14 July 1892.

Jacopa's village and destroyed the granaries ; but on his return he was waylaid and compelled to flee for his life with loss of several men.<sup>37</sup> On 22 February, R. S. Hutchinson with one hundred and fifty sepoy arrived from Fort Tregar at Jacopa, but found no trace of the enemy. Murray's disgraceful conduct, the Lieutenant Governor was constrained to remark, 'had much to do with the attack of his party resulting in the loss of several lives'. Not only did he miserably fail in conducting 'delicate tribal negotiations', but caused 'immense amount of expenditure and sufferings'. He was tried, demoted and transferred to Rangamati, and Shakespear was placed in charge of the South Lushai Hills as Superintendent.<sup>38</sup>

Although the Eastern Lushais<sup>39</sup> afforded shelter to the refugees of the villages of Khalkom and Thanruma, and some of them even joined the investment of Aijal and Changsil, the tribes in general rendered no assistance to their western counterparts, with whom for years past they had been at feuds ; in fact they looked upon with equanimity the destruction of their formidable rivals.<sup>40</sup> They did not anticipate that the British would exercise any control over them or make them to pay tribute. The situation however took a new turn with the appointment of McCabe as the Political Officer, North Lushai Hills. In his promenade in January-March 1891, the Political Officer brought home to the Eastern Chiefs that they were

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37. FEA, 1896 ; Nos. 71-115 ; Edgar to Commissioner, Chittagong Division, 4 April 1896 ; BJP (P), 1896, June, Nos. 21-30.

38. *Ibid.*, No. 113 ; Cotton to Commissioner of Chittagong Division, 13 April.

All the officers in Chittagong and Lushai Hills in a confidential circular were warned that any such conduct as that of which Murray had been guilty would receive severe notice of the government.

39. 'Eastern Lushais' was applied to those tribes who lived east of the river Sonai with the jurisdiction of Assam. For geneological list of the chiefs see *Appendix-A*.

40. Bungteya, for instance, joined the raiding party, but he was compelled to return by his brother Lengkham and Lalburah who were reluctant to embroil themselves in a conflict with the British.

subjects of the British government and that they were to pay a house-tax besides three days free labour a year.<sup>41</sup> The Lushais apparently agreed ; some of them even paid the tax, but several others headed by Lalburah flatly refused and resolved on uprising on a large scale. Emissaries were sent to Kairuma and even to the Western Chiefs ; for fear of vengeance response came from no quarter. To reduce the recalcitrants on 29 February 1892, with an escort of one hundred Military Police McCabe reached the village of Lalburah. On the next day, the latter aided by contingents of Poiboi, Bungteya and Lengkham (Liankham) attacked the British party, but they were repulsed and a strong position was taken at the northern end of the village. On 4 April, the Lushais raided the Borcherra tea-estate to compel McCabe to abandon his advanced position. Foiled in their attempt the enemy confined themselves in ambuscading convoys carrying supplies to the camp.

On increase in the number of rebels, Shakespear with one hundred and fifty Military Police set out from Lungleh towards Aijal. He could not advance beyond Vansanga on the opposition of the Howlongs who then revolted in sympathy with the Eastern Lushais. With his limited force, Shakespear succeeded in keeping the chiefs engaged at Vansanga and prevented them from joining the enemy on the north. Intelligence arrived that Lungleh itself was threatened and the Lushais were shooting up porters and sepoys on the road. On the arrival of a Burmese column under Captain H. Ross from Fort White, Shakespear assumed offensive and destroyed Howlong villages Lalrhima, Lalkapglova, Tlongbuta, Rochungnunga and Daukhama (Daokama). Shortage of supplies prevented him to follow up his successes or to join hands with McCabe in the north. Nevertheless on the arrival of three hundred men of the 18th Bengal Infantry at Aijal from Silchar, McCabe made an advance from Lalburah against Poiboi which was taken on

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41. FEA, 1892 ; December, Nos. 42-6.

18 April. The village was burnt to the ground and its granaries destroyed. Lalruya, Lalhai, Bungteya and Maite fell in succession ; all chiefs surrendered except Lalburah who escaped to the Manipur frontier.<sup>42</sup>

In their operations the British troops had to confront with immense difficulties—unfavourable weather, sickness among the sepoys, want of roads, distance to be covered and above all the difficulties of transport. In the middle of 1893, Lalthuama and his aged mother Ropuilieni, daughter of Vonolel, were reported to be intriguing for a fresh outbreak with Daukhama, the northern chief. Unless matters were taken in hand, it was feared, infection might spread to Kairuma and other chiefs who were at large. Amidst incessant rain, Shakespear accompanied by a party of Military Police under Hutchinson made a surprise attack on Lalthuama's village. 'Through the night', writes Shakespear, 'the party waded up streams of the waist deep, and climbed with extreme difficulty through dense and dripping jungle alive with leeches'. In early morning the village was taken by surprise ; Ropuilieni and her son were seized and both of them deported to Chittagong. Daukhama escaped, but C.W.C. Plowden of the Military Police captured in early 1895 Vansanga who had kept alive the spirit of hostility amongst the Lushais.<sup>43</sup>

'I feel', Shakespear remarked in his Administration Report of 1895-6, 'the Lushais have accepted our rule and with it liability to pay tribute and supply coolies.'<sup>44</sup> The successes

42. FEA, 1892 ; February, Nos. 27-41, August, 1893, Nos. 175-81 ; see *Eastern Lushai Risings* ; also diaries of Shakespear, August, Nos. 88-97 and September, Nos. 243-8.

43. *Ibid.*, Reid, p. 35 ; Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, pp. 103-5.

44. *Report on the Administration of North Lushai Hills for 1895-6*.

A tax of a rupee per house continued to be levied throughout the district although in certain areas the Lushais were given the option of supplying rice in lieu of money at the rate of twelve seers a rupee. In addition, they were required to give 'tributary labour' in place of earlier 'free labour' at four annas a day not exceeding twelve days a year. FEA, 1890 ; September, Nos. 11-3 ; Gait 26 July.



had encouraged the local authorities to enforce the Arms Act XI of 1878 under which unlicensed guns must be surrendered and license secured for them ; for regular traffic in arms which had been going on in the hills emboldened the younger section of the Lushais to defy the authority of the government.<sup>45</sup> Police parties were seen, both in the north and the south, disarming village and enforcing payment of fines for offences against law and order. For fear of incurring the wrath of the *sarkar* the chiefs, the majority of them, meekly submitted to the demand ; however resistance came from the Kairuma group of villages in the south. In December 1895, troops from Aijal, Falam and Lungleh converged on Kairuma and his neighbours. Parties were reported to have been sent out to pillage the *jhums* and large quantities of livestock—goats, fowls, pigs, *mithans*—were brought to the camp. Of the grains some were burnt and others carried to the camp for use of troops.<sup>46</sup> Jacopa, who was at large, was captured ; he was tried, but kept under restraint at Lungleh for a year on the ground that he had already been ‘severely punished’.<sup>47</sup> After a feeble resistance, Kairuma and his associates tendered their submission agreeing to supply 16,550 days of unpaid labour and 265 guns in their possession.<sup>48</sup> ‘With the close of the operations against Kairuma’, remarks A. Porteous, then Superintendent of the North Lushai Hills, ‘the long series of Lushai expeditions had ended, and that no further operations on the scale which it was thought necessary to adopt against the descendants of Bhuta, can again be ever necessary’.<sup>49</sup>

The expeditions resulted in the incorporation of the territory of the Lushais and a considerable portion of the Chin hills.

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45. *Ibid.*, Shakespear, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-5.

46. BJP (P), 1896 ; Nos. 16-7 ; FEA, 1896 ; March, Nos. 46-62, October, Nos. 56-9.

47. FEA, 1896 ; Nos. 71-115 ; Cotton 13 April.

48. FEA, 1896 ; March, Nos. 46-62 ; September, Nos. 11-3, Gait 26 July.

49. Cited in *Reid*, p. 25.

These tracts had been so long administered partly from Bengal and partly from Assam and Burma according to the province to which portion was adjacent. This 'tripartite division' proved to be highly 'expensive and inexpedient'. The governments were occasionally at variance with each other in the policy to be adopted towards certain tribes which had enabled them to play off one against another with success.<sup>50</sup> For 'uniform and concerted action', it was considered imperative that the superintendence of the Chin-Lushai Hills should be vested under one administrative head. In its final despatch to the Secretary of State, on 14 July 1891, while recommending temporarily the sanction of heavy outlay proposed by the Government of Bengal for the administration of the South Lushai Hills, the Government of India anticipated that ultimately it would be found 'possible and desirable' to consolidate under one administration the whole of the territory in the occupation of the various tribes then separately controlled from Bengal, Burma and Assam.<sup>51</sup> The existing arrangements received the approval of the Secretary of State as a 'temporary expedient', but he hoped that the suggestions made by the Viceroy, that the entire area inhabited by the Lushais and cognate tribes would be consolidated under one authority would receive his serious consideration.<sup>52</sup> When this was reiterated by the Secretary of State in his subsequent despatch on 24 December, the Viceroy summoned a conference, known as the Chin-Lushai Conference, which met in Calcutta on

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50. Thus after the Fort Tregear column left Haka, Tlang Tlang chiefs requested General Symonds to allow some of them to be placed under the control of Haka and to which the latter agreed. This was regretted by Shakespear, Superintendent South Lushai Hills, who felt some of difficulties of exercising effective control over those chiefs and this soon proved to be true. The village had eventually been placed under Fort Tregear. FEA, 1892 ; September, Nos. 9-62, see K. W. No. 3.

51. *Ibid.*, No. 56.

52. CD, Political, 1891 ; 17 September, No. 61.

29 January 1892.<sup>53</sup> The object of the conference was 'to discuss civil and military matters' and it was attended, amongst others, by Charles Elliot, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Alexander Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner Burma, W. E. Ward, Chief Commissioner Assam and Mortimer Durand, Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department.

The concensus in the conference was that the whole tract of country known as the Chin-Lushai Hills should be brought under one administrative head.<sup>54</sup> The Chief Commissioner of Burma doubted much the expediency of the measure on the ground of 'insuperable difficulties'. 'It seems to me', he argued, 'that until the tribes which have hitherto had dealings only with Burma have been thoroughly subdued and compelled to acknowledge their dependence, it would be practically impossible to manage them either from Shillong or Calcutta.'<sup>55</sup> In support of his arguments he forwarded the opinions of Messrs Carey and MaCnabb, the Political Officers at Fort White and Haka. The former laid stress on the 'amazing difficulties of road and telegraphic communication' with the Chin country ; and that the Chins had nothing in common with the Lushais : 'their historical connection, tribal sympathies and practical interests are with Burma'. Apart from communications, McCnabb thought that it would not be possible on the part of the proposed administrative head to be 'thoroughly and personally conversant with all the tribes in the Chin-Lushai hills'.<sup>56</sup> In consideration of these facts, the Conference deferred final decision as regards the eastern part of the tract pending further information was obtained. It was agreed that North and South Lushai Hills with such portion of Arakan Hill Tracts, as may hereafter be determined, should be placed under Assam subject to the (i) completion of transport and commissariat equipment from Chittagong to South Lushai Hills and

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53. *Ibid*, Military, 24 December, 1891.

54. FEA, 1892 ; September, Nos. 9-62.

55. *Ibid.*, see Minute by Chief Commissioner Burma, 12 April 1892.

56. *Ibid.*

from Cachar to North Lushai Hills were provided and (ii) necessary funds earmarked for road and telegraphic communications from Aijal to Lungleh.<sup>57</sup> The recommendations received the approval of the Government of India on 25 July, 1892, but matters remained in abeyance on account of the difficulties of commissariat arrangements and mainly from the fact that supplies had to be continued to South Lushai Hills from Chittagong which would result in no financial saving as was expected from the transfer.<sup>58</sup> Pending amalgamation, North Lushai Hills district was formally placed under jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Assam on 6 September, 1895 while South Lushai Hills remained under the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.<sup>59</sup>

Towards the close of 1896 the Lushai country was at peace. There was hardly any chance of a rising on a large scale. Time had arrived, it was felt by the local authorities, to devise a scheme of administrative set-up for these hills so that successive officers might act under a definite plan which should not vary according to the ideas or temperament of an individual officer. In other words a decision had to be made whether the existing institutions were to be maintained or the government should assume direct responsibility in the administration of justice and collection of revenue. The Lushai chieftainship, in the words of Shakespear, was 'a democracy tempered with despotism'.<sup>60</sup> Generally, the right to rule was hereditary ; that did not mean that all the members of a family should be chiefs ; only those who were specially gifted and endowed with the capacity of drawing men to their fold were fitted to rule. The power of a chief, in fact, depended on the number of his followers who had the option of changing their allegiance at pleasure and consequently 'a chief's village becomes large and small as he is

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57. *Ibid.* Extract from the proceedings of the Government of India, Foreign Department, 25 July 1892.

58. FEA, 1894 ; May, No. 327, Cotton 10 March 1894.

59. FEA, 1896 ; August, Nos. 86-7.

60. FEA, 1898 ; February, No. 118 ; Shakespear 13 July 1897.

successful in war or reverse'.<sup>61</sup> They had a system of administration of justice which was well suited to the conditions under which they lived. In fact, as Lewin says,

Crime is rare among them. Theft in a man's own village is unknown, but they will sometime steal when visiting another clan. On such occasion the chief in whose village the theft has been committed sends a formal complaint to the chief under whom the thief is living. The goods stolen are, if discovered, given up, and offender fined.<sup>62</sup>

Profound were the changes on Lushai chieftainship since British intervention. In resisting the invaders, the chiefs particularly those in the north greatly suffered. Several of them were killed or wounded while others deported or lived as outlaws; their villages burnt, granaries destroyed and livestock confiscated. Out of the ruins, there had emerged a larger number of villages under control of men of little importance without much authority over their followers and, inevitably, feuds amongst them was the order of the day. The presence of a European Officer between the chief and his people no less contributed to the lowering of the status of the chief. It became increasingly difficult on the part of the chief to meet the demands of the government, whether of revenue or labour, for the general tendency of the people was to resent any authority being exercised over them.<sup>63</sup>

On the otherhand, assumption of direct responsibility involved considerable expense since the machinery of a regular district had to be introduced demanding staff in every department; for it would be impossible on the part of the officer at Aijal to cope with the magisterial and judicial business nor could it be expected that every person even from the most remote village would bring his case to the headquarters. People

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61. *Ibid.*

62. Lewin, T. H. *The Chittagong Hill Tract and the dwellers therein*, p. 100.

63. *Op. cit.* Shakespear, 13 July.

would prefer to put up with loss of their goods rather than take the journey to Aijal to complain and consequently petty thefts and other offences would increase. Appointment of outsiders, too, would not serve the purpose partly because of their lack of sympathy to the people and mainly because of ignorance of the customs, institutions and language. Above all, the district being unattractive for reasons more than one, unless highest salaries were offered the government would have to be content with inferior class of men.<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, the Political Officers had no alternative but to maintain the authority of the chiefs notwithstanding the fact that their influence was on the decline. On the eve of his departure from North Lushai Hills in 1894, Mr. Davis, the Political Officer remarks :

I always held the chiefs of villages responsible for the behaviour of their people, and upheld their authority to the best of my ability. I have repeatedly told them that this policy will be consistently followed, and that, as long as they behave themselves as they should, their orders will not be interfered with, even though the orders may appear to us at times a little high-handed, and not quite in accord with abstract ideas of justice.<sup>65</sup>

Shakespear frankly admitted that for the obvious reason 'we cannot do without them' 'we cannot get our revenue paid nor our demand for labour complied with except through the chiefs'. He considered it of paramount importance to maintain them and strengthen their hands, at the sametime, trying to educate them into using their power well.<sup>66</sup> He stood opposed to the fragmentation of villages ; a chief might allot hamlets within his limits to his several sons, but he would continue to be responsible for the collection of revenue and other demands of the government. Meddling into the internal affairs of a chief should be avoided by all means possible. Nothing undermined

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64. *Ibid.*

65. *Ibid.* No. 105 ; cited in Gait to Secretary, Government of India, 17 July 1897.

66. *Ibid.*

the authority of a chief so much than the interference of a superior authority in decisions of the chief.

The people are quite ready to run to an officer whenever the chief's decision does not suit them...there is a great tendency to appeal to the nearest *Sahib*, but this does not mean that a chief's rule is unpopular or that their decisions are always corrupt, and while admitting that in many cases the order passed may not be as just as we should like it to be, I am convinced, that it is better to uphold the government of the chief and to govern through them, rather than to govern without them.<sup>67</sup>

Concurring in these views Sir Henry Cotton, the Chief Commissioner Assam, strongly felt 'any deviation from this principle would be likely to lead to disastrous results'.<sup>68</sup> In his view the Political Officers should abstain themselves from avoidable interference with existing Lushai customs and traditions. While maintaining the patriarchal authority of the chiefs they should insist, at the sametime, on implicit compliance with their own orders in respect of matters of importance.<sup>69</sup>

The maintenance of supremacy of British rule, in such a manner as to admit of no misunderstanding amongst the Lushais affected by it, is quite consistent with this policy of working through chiefs, and not independently of them, and with the fullest recognition of the authority of the chiefs in their own village and over their own people.<sup>70</sup>

The problem of amalgamation was reopened in a conference held at Lungleh on 14 and 18 December, 1896 attended by the three Political Officers North and South Lushai Hills and Chin Hills. They were unanimous that the situation had considerably improved as to admit of the proposed union of the North and South Lushais Hills which would result in an annual saving of

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67. In fact, as Davis remarks 'no chief can very greatly misuse his power or oppress his people. Were he to do so, his village, and with it his own importance, would quickly diminish, as the people would migrate to their other villages.' Cited in *Reid* p. 41.

68. FEA, 1898 ; July Nos. 104-42 ; Gait 28 July 1897.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

two lakhs of rupees. On 27 January 1898, the Government of India accorded its approval to the proposal made by the Chief Commissioner Assam that the whole of the Lushai country should constitute one charge under the Administration of Assam. The district was to be placed in charge of an officer styled as Superintendent with headquarters at Aijal. This was formally announced by a proclamation on 1 April, 1898. By another proclamation on the same day announcing the Rules for the Administration of these hills, Sir Henry confirmed the basic principle so strongly advocated by the local authorities—the internal control of the villages by their respective chiefs.<sup>71</sup>

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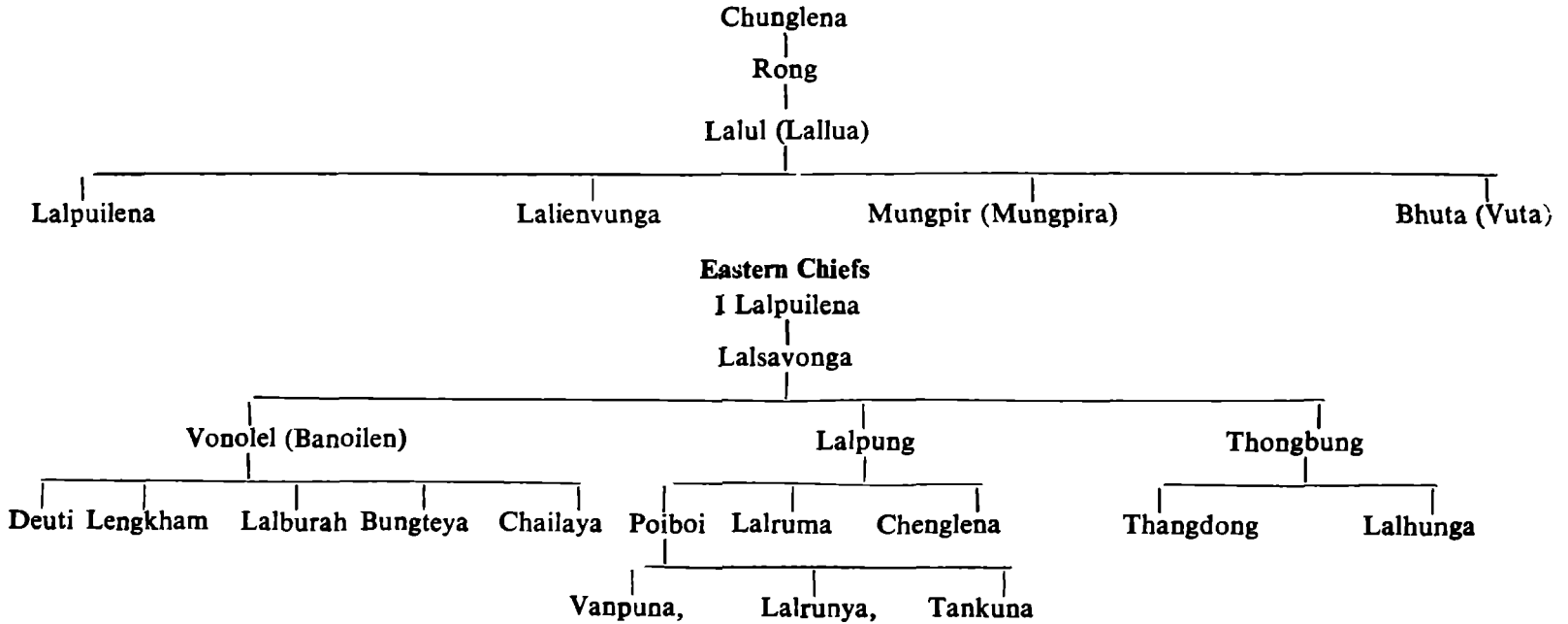
71. *Ibid.*, July, No. 52, proclamation 1 April 1898.



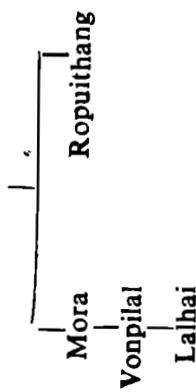
**Appendix—A**

**Geneological Table of the Lushai Chiefs**

*(FEA, 1892 ; December, No. 43 ; also BJP (P)—B, File No. 184, Serial No. 4.)*

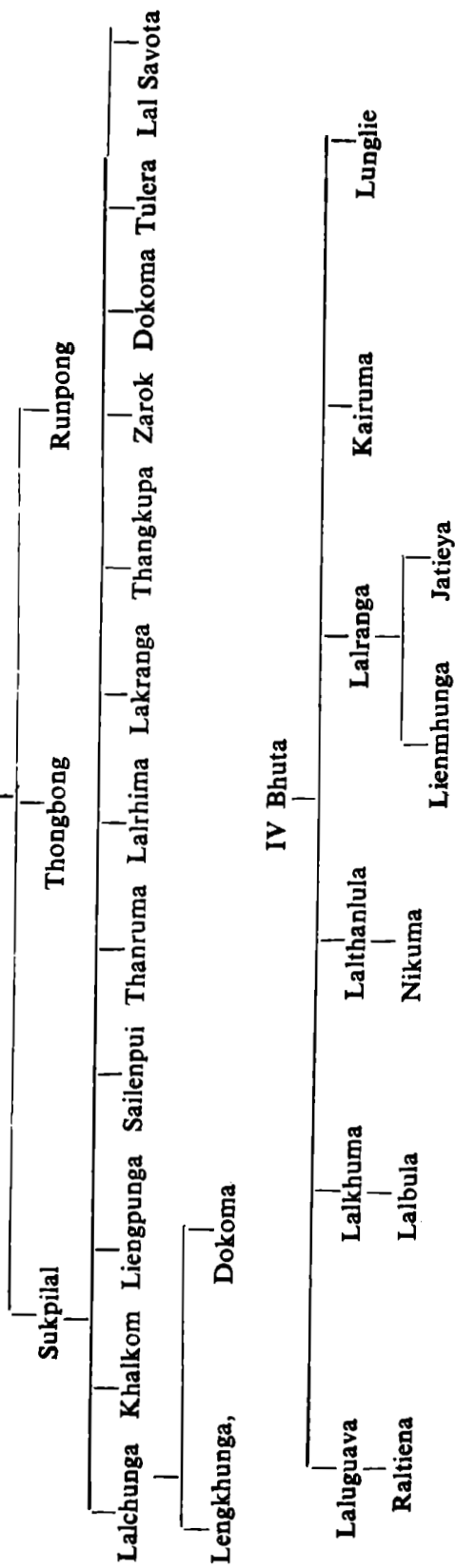


II Lalienvunga



Western Chiefs

III Mungpir



*Northern Frontier*

Ever since the treaty of Sinchula (1865) British policy towards Bhutan was one of conciliation but non-intervention. The payment of compensation in lieu of the *duars* had evoked much criticisms on the ground that this was uncalled for and the Bhutias might construe it as a sign of weakness on the part of the British government.<sup>1</sup> The *duars* yielded the main source of revenue to the government of Bhutan. To deprive this in entirety would weaken the central authority to be followed by anarchy and misrule at the capital and renewal of raids beyond the frontier which rendered necessary intervention on the part of the British government. 'By allowing the chiefs a part of the income', Lord Lawrence argued, 'we possess a powerful guarantee for their good behaviour'.<sup>2</sup> Concurring in this view Sir Charles Wood, the Secretary of State, also remarked :

The existence of a strong government in the neighbouring State and the prosperity of their subject are among the best securities for the permanent peace of our frontier. To deprive the government of a contiguous country of the means of enforcing its authority over the chiefs and functionaries and of compelling them to execute the engagements which it has entered into for maintenance of peace and security of our frontier can in no case be sound policy.<sup>3</sup>

Under the terms of the treaty, Assam-Bhutan boundary was to start from the foothills of the left bank of the river Jaldhaka to the extreme east of the frontier including no part of the hill

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1. For further study see Gupta, S. *British Relations with Bhutan*, pp. 90-2.

2. PP. No. 52, Lawrence to Charles Wood, 22 November 1865, Political, No. 162.

3. *Ibid.*, Charles Wood to Lawrence, 1 February 1866, Political, No. 4.

except what might be considered 'absolutely necessary' for the establishment of posts at Buxa and Dewangiri.<sup>4</sup> In the middle of 1870, the Deb Raja urged Colonel Haughton, the then Commissioner of Cooch Behar, that Dewangiri boundary should be clearly laid down. In fact, the Government of India already directed that permanent boundary mark should be created to define the Bhutan frontier wherever necessary. When the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal directed Major Agnew, the officiating Commissioner of Assam, to take necessary steps the latter strongly opposed on the ground that the boundary had already been settled and explained in 1866, and to mark again 'would be useless and cause irritation'. He proposed even to abandon the house-tax collected from the residence of Dewangiri who received no real protection from the government. The Lieutenant Governor concurred in the view of the Commissioner as to the demarcation of the boundary, but he ordered the collection of the house-tax as a token of allegiance of the Bhutias at Dewangiri to the British government.<sup>5</sup>

Friction arose between the British and Bhutia authorities over the right of cutting timber and collecting house-tax in the undefined tract. The power holding the plains, it was presumed by the local authorities, had also the right over extreme outer slopes of the low hills. 'The crest of the outer range is as much more certain and defined boundary than the foot of the hills which is generally uncertain.' In early 1872 when Major Lamb, the Deputy Commissioner Kamrup, went up in his annual tour to collect dues, the village headman politely refused on the ground that they received no protection though they were supposed to be British subjects ; that he would be punished by the Bhutia governor if he paid any tax to the British. He was also told by the Tongso Pilo 'that (*the British*) do not keep order in Dewangiri, there is nothing but misrule and he proposes

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4. FPA, 1872 ; June, No. 633 ; Mackenzie to Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department 6 April.

5. *Ibid.*

that he himself would take its possession'.<sup>6</sup> In these circumstances the Lieutenant Governor considered it 'absolutely necessary' that something should be done with respect to Dewangiri both as regards the possession of the village and the boundary of the hill tract to be held otherwise this might lead to serious consequence.<sup>7</sup> To prevent collision between the British and Bhutia authorities the Government of India also realised the urgency of demarcating the boundary on the Assam side and Major J. M. Graham, Deputy Commissioner Darrang, was appointed in early 1872 the Commissioner for the purpose.<sup>8</sup> The latter was directed that no more of the hill country should be taken up than was required for the security and permanence of the frontier and the avoidance of border dispute ; and the demarcation should be made with a generous consideration for the Bhutias so far as consistent with this object.<sup>9</sup>

The operations had to be conducted in presence of an agent of Bhutan. In spite of repeated requests when the authorities in Bhutan failed to send representatives to meet the Boundary Commission in the border, Graham commenced the work of demarcation strictly in conformity with the orders of the government. Dewangiri and all the lands lying between Deesa and Matunga rivers and cut off on the north by boundary pillars formed a part of the British territory and for the rest of the Assam frontier no part of the Bhutia territory was annexed. For the security and permanence of the frontier 'roots of the hills' were thus retained : it was considered inexpedient to impoverish the Bhutias by cutting them off from the valuable timbers on the southern slope of the hills, for that would sure

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6. *Ibid.*, No. 644, Haughton 13 March 1872 ; *also* letter from Tonso Penglo, 1st day of Moon.

7. *Op. cit.*, Mackenzie 6 April 1872.

8. *Op. cit.*, No. 664 ; *also* October, Nos. 371-3 ; Aitchison to Bayley, S.C. (Secretary, Bengal Government) 22 June.

9. FPA, 1873 ; November, Nos. 60-5

to be followed by frequent disputes and marauding raids beyond the frontier.<sup>10</sup>

The conciliatory policy towards Bhutan was dictated by reasons political and economic. Bhutan formed a barrier to the Indian frontier in the north. It was natural that the British Indian government sought to be in friendly terms with the ruler of Bhutan in view of the growing Russian and later Chinese menace in the north.<sup>11</sup> British policy of commercial penetration to Tibet and thence to Central Asia further demanded the command over the route which lay through Bhutan. W. S. Herschell, the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, remarked :

Our relation with Central Asia *via* Phari are beginning to take shape and must, before long, under the influence and of trade, become of great practical value...The trade of Bhutan with Tibet is by the Chumbi Valley through Phari, the route which we shall follow ourselves. Our attempt to enter on it has already attracted the attention of the Bhutias. They may either annoy us or go with us in our future efforts.<sup>12</sup>

The scramble for power which was suspended during the period of war was renewed after the resignation of the Deb in 1866. In 1869 the Tongso Pilo was elected the Deb ; he was driven out as the outcome of a revolution in 1873 by his brother Jigme Namgay. There occurred another outbreak in 1877 which Jigme ruthlessly suppressed ; Angdu-Forung Jungpen was killed, Tongso Pilo was imprisoned and Paro Pilo took refuge at Kalimpong.<sup>13</sup> In 1879, he had to face the revolution headed by Deb Jungpen. This was also suppressed soon after and Jigme established himself firmly in 1880. The British government remained a neutral observer in the internal

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10. FPA, 1873 ; June, 133 in Nos. 132-54, Mackenzie 13 March ; *also op. cit.*, No. 644.

1 *Infra* Ch. VI

12. Cited in Gupta, S., *op. cit.* p. 194 ; *also* FPA, 1874 ; October, Nos. 15-7 ; Herschell to Secretary Government of Bengal, 15 July 1874.

13. FPA, 1867 ; September, Nos. 270-4 ; October, No. 152 ; 1869, May, Nos. 37-40 ; October, Nos. 197-200.

dissensions of Bhutan. 'Experience showed', explained H. Bruce, Officiating Civil and Political Officer, 'when we consent to afford aid to a native government against its own subjects, the former loses power, becomes paralysed and tend to lean so much on the paramount power that what may be at first be intended temporary aid often grows into permanent support.'<sup>14</sup> Applications for aid by Angdu-Forung Jungpen in 1867, Deb and Timbo Jungpen in 1869 were turned down with the remark : 'It is contrary to British policy to interfere in the internal politics of a country except when our own interests are concerned.'<sup>15</sup> In 1885, on the outbreak of civil war in Bhutan, too, while expressing its friendly sentiments to the Deb, the Government of India refused arms and ammunitions applied for on the ground that it would be a departure from the policy of non-intervention so long followed in the internal affairs of Bhutan.<sup>16</sup>

The hill tract on the east of Bhutan, on the north of the valley of the Brahmaputra (91°35' to about 97°10'E) was occupied by the independent tribes of the Akas, Dufilas, Miris, Abors and Mishmis. Very little was known of these tribes or of the country beyond the outer ranges of the hills. Travelling was extremely difficult, supplies were scanty and the people not disposed to welcome strangers. In 1875, the *Inner Line* was laid down along the northern frontier of the districts of Darrang and Lakhimpur representing thereby 'the limits of the Deputy Commissioner's, ordinary as distinguished from his political jurisdiction'.<sup>16a</sup> The policy towards the tribes beyond

.14. FPA, 1865 ; December, No. 61 ; Bruce, 13 December.

15. FPA, 1869 ; May, Nos. 37-40 ; Haughton to Deb Zimpen, 16 February.

16. FIA, 1885 ; October, No. 238.

16a. Plainsmen were prohibited under the Bengal Frontier Regulation I of 1873 from entering beyond the *Inner Line*. 'They were not to obtain from the hill area any rubber, wax, ivory or other jungle produce nor hunt wild elephants beyond the *Inner Line* without special permission of the Government.' Apparently it was not so much political as economic reasons that acuated the Government of India to extend these Regulations into Darrang and Lakhimpur frontier. (See *Official's Report* pp. 201-2).

the line, as in the Naga Hills, was one of non-interference except in cases of (i) outrages on British subject (ii) violation of the *Inner Line* and (iii) danger to the interests of the people dwelling within the British border by reason of the proximity of disturbances outside. Beyond the *Inner Line* lay the *Outer Line*—‘external territorial frontier’ or the limits of the British territory. This was demarcated in 1875 as far as the river Burai (93°20’) and beyond which the boundary followed ‘a readily recognizable line along the foot of the hills as far as Nizamghat (95°40’) to be ‘throughout well recognised by usage’.<sup>17</sup> Beyond Nizamghat, evidently, there was no *Outer Line*. In the agreement with the British government on 8 November 1862 the Abors agreed that ‘the British territory which extends to the foot of the hills will be respected by the Abors’.<sup>18</sup> Noel Williamson, who visited Kebang in February 1909, reported that the tribesmen recognised all the country up to the foot of the hills as British territory.<sup>19</sup>

Immediately to the east of Bhutan, the ‘wedge-shaped’ territory of Towang was inhabited by the Monbas, an offshoot of the Bhutias, who used to come down every winter to the fair held at Odalguri in the district of Darrang where they bartered wool and ponies. A vassal of the authority at Lhasa, the Towang Raja had several feudatories, commonly known as the *Sat Rajas*<sup>20</sup>, with whom since the agreement of 1844 the relations with the British continued to be friendly.

Mention has already been made that the warlike Akas in the east were divided into two sections—the Hazarikhawas and the Kapachors (cotton thieves); ‘their strength lies in their position, which enables them to attack the British subject without difficulty, while punitive expeditions sent into the hills were costly and out of proportions to the damage inflicted on

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17. IOR, L & P/12/22/3 (*confidential*).

18. *Aitchison*, p. 157.

19. *Infra*, Ch. VII

20. Barpujari, i, p. 95.



the enemy.’<sup>21</sup> In March 1842, subject to their good behaviour, the Aka chiefs were granted pension of rupees twenty each. Representations had been made by the chiefs from time to time for an increase in pension or rent-free grants in lieu thereof; but these were generally turned down by the local authorities.<sup>22</sup> In early 1873 the Thagi Raja died; Medhi, his son and successor, came down to Tezpur and prayed for 82 *puras* of land in support of the Kachari *deoris* or priests who used to invoke spirits on their behalf to ward off smallpox and cholera when they came down to the plains.<sup>23</sup> There being ‘no better way of securing fealty of these hillmen’, the Lieutenant-Governor sanctioned the grant in spite of the opposition of Major Graham, the Deputy Commissioner Darrang.<sup>24</sup> Medhi’s subsequent prayer for raising his claims to two hundred *puras* was however refused on the ground that the earlier grant remained unutilised.<sup>25</sup>

Friction actually began with the Kapachors in 1873–4 when the Boundary Commission under Graham and Macdonald were prevented in their operations by the Akas including the Medhi Raja who claimed the entire tract as far as the junction of the river Bhoroli with Khari Dikrai as their domain.<sup>26</sup> Through the mediation of Lakhidhar, the *mouzadar* of Balipara, a settlement was effected; but the chiefs remained ‘sulky and discontent’ as they were prohibited to catch elephants or collect timber or lac in a tract which they claimed as their own. Matter came to a head in October, 1883 when under

21. *Eastern Bengal and Assam, Gazetteer*, p. 148.

22. AS, Letter issued to the Government, 21; Jenkins to Young, 13 August 1857.

23. FPB, 1873; May, Nos. 175-81.

24. *Ibid.*

25. FEA, 1884; October, 47 in Nos. 41-116; Geidt, B. G., (Private Secretary, Chief Commissioner) to Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department, 26 November 1883; see Enclosure No. 2, statement made by Ghumoroguti Koch of Balipara.

26. *Ibid.*

orders of the Deputy Commissioner Lakhidhar accompanied by several headmen (*Gaoburahs*) arrived at Medhi's village (*chang*) to collect specimens of agricultural and other implements and also to persuade a *raja* and a *rani* to come down for being modelled for the ethnological section of an exhibition to be held in Calcutta. Lakhidhar's mission was looked upon with suspicion by the Medhi Raja who thought that the *mela* or the exhibition was a false pretext, the *mouzadar* had an ulterior object in view. The party was detained for a few days ; after which in a meeting attended by several hundred Akas, Lakhidhar was reprimanded as being instrumental in depriving the Akas from their lands in the plains and that he had come with no other object than to collect information for ultimate annexation of the hills. On 10 November, 1883 under Chandi, brother of Medhi, about one hundred Akas raided a village near Balipara, plundered the forest office and abducted the ranger and a clerk on duty.<sup>27</sup>

The attack, though considered at first a drunken outburst, was in reality a premeditated one ; for the Akas vital interests were at stake. The erection of the boundary pillars and gradual restriction of the prescriptive rights over their forests and rivers led these simple-minded tribes to believe that their territories had been annexed and that they would be driven out soon from their hills. Lakhidhar's demand for the *raja* and *rani* added insult to the injury. The sentiment of the Akas had been eloquently expressed by Medhi when he told the Deputy Commissioner :

We may sell or may given (*sic*) our goods, but we can never sell a human being. To send a *Mouzadar* to buy a *Raja* and *Rani* was not a good thing to do on the part of the government. That caused great grief to our mind....<sup>28</sup>

Immediately on receipt of the news Mr. Murray, the Inspector General Police, hurried to Tezpur and despatched 190 Frontier Police to the frontier. Daimara was occupied

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27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, also *Appendix—B*.

and a small outpost was placed at Borjuli to keep open the lines of communication. Balipara was strongly garrisoned and a cart-road constructed to the north. A body of 100 Frontier Police stockaded under Lieutenant Molesworth at Bhalukpung with instructions to close the pass to the Akas, but he was advised not to cross the border nor to take the offensive unless attacked.<sup>29</sup> An ultimatum was sent to the chiefs by the Deputy Commissioner demanding within a fortnight release of the captives as well as the surrender of the leaders of the outrage. Medhi's reply being evasive, on 17 December, 1883 a punitive expedition was sent against the offending tribe under Major Beresford. On 23rd the Akas made a vigorous night attack, but they were beaten off. On 26th Beresford made an attempt to reach Medhi's village on the other side of the deep valley of the Tenga river at an altitude of 2500 feet ; the showers of poisoned arrows of the enemy posted on the cliff above compelled the officer commanding the troops to make a hasty retreat. The arrival of reinforcement under Brigadier-General Hill with mountain guns altered the situation.<sup>30</sup> On 8 January, 1884 the attack was renewed ; Medhi's village was burnt, granaries destroyed and the inhabitants driven to the north. The negotiations later made by Captain Maxwell with scattered parties of the Akas resulted in the surrender of two captives. Lakhidhar was reported dead and this was later confirmed. The hard core of the Akas continued to be 'haughty and independent'. They refused to come down and make unconditional surrender ; rather they determined to continue the war with the invaders. Complaining against British troops, in his petition to the Deputy Commissioner Medhi explained :

they did a great injustice by burning our houses, paddy, granaries and by shooting and killing our pigs, *methons*, cows...they took away the head of our old Raja's Rani

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, No 90 ; Geidt to Officiating Secretary, Government of India, 17 January 1884.

which had been kept buried...and also they took the head of Share Raja from the place where it had been buried. ...if the *Huzoor Bora sahib* after consideration give us some price of the things lost and give us some increase in our pension and give up the land within our boundary and return the above two heads of our Raja and Rani we shall come to terms, otherwise not.<sup>31</sup>

A blockade of the frontier followed. It was not until early 1888 the chiefs tendered their submission and entered into an agreement under which they bound themselves *inter alia* (i) to surrender their claims on lands south of the boundary pillars set up in 1873-5, (ii) to carry on communications through *kotokies* appointed by the government and (iii) to receive the *posa* personally from the Deputy Commissioner in lieu of all dues which they hitherto collected from the ryots.<sup>32</sup>

The Dufas in the east were equally tenacious in assertion of their rights. In 1852 they agreed, though reluctantly, to commute in lieu of a fixed payment in cash their right of collecting the *posa* from the ryots.<sup>33</sup> Since then the attitude of the Dufas was 'peaceful' and many of them settled as colonist from Gomiri to North Lakhimpur and even worked as labourers in the neighbouring tea-estates. In February 1873, it was reported that a part of Tagin Dufas carried out a serious raid on Dufia settlers at Amtola, close to police outpost Gohpur, killed two men and carried off fortyfour with their properties.<sup>34</sup> The object of the raid, as reported by Major Graham, the Deputy Commissioner, was to obtain captives as substitutes for those of the tribes who had died of the cholera which originated in adjacent areas of the plains, and for which these hillmen thought that the plainsmen were primarily responsible. The Dufas instinctively felt that they committed

31. FEA, 1884 ; December, 19 in Nos. 16-22 ; see translation of a petition by Limbu Aka Hazarikhowa Raja, 23 *Kartick*.

32. FEA, 1888 ; April, No. 203 ; *Aitchison*, p. 164.

33. BJP, 1852 ; 8 April, No. 171.

34. FPA, 1873 ; March, Nos. 177-89 ; Officiating *DC* Darrang, 24 February 1873.

no wrong in seizing those who were authors of the outbreak in the hills. The Deputy Commissioner demanded restoration of the captives who were after all British subjects. He was not inclined to offer any reward for the restoration of the captives as he was well aware that no Dufla would be tempted to do so which would subject him and his family to the cruel vengeance of his villagers. The payment of the *posa* was, of course, stopped and the passes leading to the hills in the east were closed.<sup>35</sup>

The blockade dragged on. It failed in its objectives. The hills nearest to the plains presented no difficulty to the Duflas who were in the habit of crossing them during the winter in all directions. Graham, in these circumstances, proposed to despatch an expedition to coerce the Duflas, and the Government of India ultimately found the expedition on a small-scale 'unavoidable'. The objective was limited to the restoration of the captives, infliction of moderate punishment to the tribe and the exhibition of force as would deter them from a repetition of raids.<sup>36</sup> The local authorities had an exaggerated notion about the numerical strength and fighting quality of the Duflas. It was feared that the British troops might encounter even an army from Tibet. Arrangements were made that one thousand men with two guns under Brigadier-General Stafford would advance into the hills while Captain H. J. Peet, Assistant Commissioner Lakhimpur, was to keep the lines of communication open between the hills and the river Brahmaputra. The opportunity would be taken to effect the exploration of the country as far as practicable and a survey party was to be attached for the purpose to the expedition.<sup>37</sup>

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35. *Ibid.*, also September 1874 ; 15 in Nos. 6-16, Government of India to Secretary of State, 1. 9. 74.

36. *Ibid.*, see *Extract from the Proceedings of the Government of India, Foreign Department*, 31 August 1874.

37. FPA, 1875 ; October, Nos. 260-1 ; Luttmann-Johnson (Secretary Chief Commissioner, Assam) to Aitchison, 13 April 1875 ; also officiating Quarter-Master General to Secretary Government of India, 15 July.

It is unnecessary to discuss the details of the expedition which was militarily not so important. It succeeded in bringing the leading chiefs to terms. The captives taken in the raid of Amtola had been released and the raiders were punished with heavy fines. 'The hillmen were shown', Graham remarked, 'that we can go anywhere we like, do what we like and stay as long as we chose.'<sup>38</sup> The survey party under Godwin-Austen mapped 1556 square miles, discovered several new peaks and triangulated about 2480 square miles. 'The discovery of the Ranga Valley', reported the Chief Commissioner, 'and the determination of the line which divides the tribes dependent on Thibet from the tribes dependent upon Assam are interesting results.' Far up the Ranga Nadi valley, the party noticed the Apa Tanis (Apa Tanung), a race dreaded by the Duflas, if not 'actually subordinate to Tibet' were at least 'under its influence'.<sup>39</sup>

As a security against aggression of their neighbours in the hills, already the Dufla settlers were directed to move themselves to the east of the river Subansiri and under no circumstances were they to reside within twenty miles from the hills.<sup>40</sup> The measure was however not rigidly enforced. In 1885 Tarang, a Dufla headman, came down from the hills and settled himself near Harmati tea-garden in the district of Lakhimpur. Later, he shifted to a site beyond the *Inner Line* and pursued therein the quarrel which caused him to quit the hills. Vindictive as he was, Tarang along with other colonists not infrequently offended the Duflas by detaining and plundering them in their visits to the plains. On 29 October 1887, a party of Duflas headed by two chiefs descended upon Tarang's settlement and carried off all the inhabitants. Tarang, his brother and wife were killed, two of the captives escaped, three released and the

38. *Ibid.*, Graham to Luttman-Johnson, 15 March.

39. *Op. cit.*, Luttman-Johnson, 23 April 1875.

40. FEA, 1888 ; June, 401 in Nos. 384-413 ; Lyall, C. J., (Secretary Chief Commissioner) to Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department, 4 May.

rest kept confined in the hills. When a demand was made by C. M. Kennedy, the Assistant Commissioner, North Lakhimpur, the chiefs refused and recounted a number of grievances which they sought to settle with the Duflas in the plains.<sup>41</sup>

Kennedy suggested an immediate advance into the hills by a party of fifty Frontier Police to surprise and capture the raiders and release the captives. Further he wanted to have the clearance of the *Rajgarh*\* as a frontier patrol path and absolute prohibition of the Duflas settling in plains crossing the frontier and immediate stoppage of the *posa* of those who settled in the plains ; he thought it to be degrading to the government to pay its own subjects blackmail. It was not a question, Kennedy thought, whether the outrage was committed on this or other side of the boundary. There was hardly any doubt that the persons raided believed themselves under protection of the government. It was therefore unnecessary on the part of the authorities concerned 'to split hairs' when called upon to protect those who came to them for protection.<sup>42</sup>

Denis Fitzpatric, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, doubted whether the inadequate force suggested by the Assistant Commissioner would effect the object in view ; with its advance, the raiders would remove themselves with their captives into the interior of the hills. Moreover, 'the quarrel is not one which we should make our own' inasmuch as territory raided was not within the *Inner Line*. Tarang, he argued, settled beyond the line knowing fully well that in that location he could not claim any protection from the government. He settled therein with the deliberate object of 'being free to harass the up-country Duflas, and at the sametime to have a place of refuge behind in the event of their attempting to retaliate'.<sup>43</sup>

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41. *Ibid.*

\* This was the remnant of the highway *Gohain-Kamal Ali* said to a have been constructed by the brother of Koch-King Nara Narayan (1534-84) from Cooch Behar to North Lakhimpur.

42. *Ibid.*, No. 391 ; Kennedy, 7 November 1887.

43. *Ibid.*, No. 405 ; Lyall to DC Lakhimpur, 30 November 1887.

That the raiders, too, understood the whole position ; this was evident from the reply they made to the *kotokies* whom Kennedy sent to the hills that they had always obeyed the *Maharani* and done no harm to her subjects, but that Tarang and his people were their own people living in Dufla country. How could the Chief Commissioner dispute when they argued 'we are avenging our quarrel against our own people on ground beyond the boundary which you have yourself fixed on the limits of your control'.<sup>44</sup> 'However excessive and cruel might be the retaliation', Fitzpatric concluded, the present case did not warrant 'deviation from the well understood policy which might carry us much further than we can see'. The Deputy Commissioner was advised to use his best efforts to procure the release of the captives and these be renewed, if necessary.<sup>45</sup>

As a corollary to the incident, the settlement of the Duflas directed the attention of the local authorities. Under orders of the Chief Commissioner, 13 March 1874, the Duflas were not allowed to settle within twenty miles from their hills. This was never enforced in the North Lakhimpur subdivision where the Duflas who came down prior to 1874 were directed by the district officers to move to a site east of the Subansiri which would afford them protection against the hill Duflas. The measure received the approval of the Chief Commissioner, but no action was taken for its enforcement. When the question was raised by J. J. S. Drieberg, Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, in his letter on 14 December 1887, the Chief Commissioner recommended, amongst others, (i) the prevention of any settlement of immigrant hillmen within a strip of five miles beyond the *Inner Line* ; (ii) the strict enforcement, specially in case of the Duflas, of the prohibition against the crossing of the above line without a pass ; (iii) the removal of existing settlers, located close to the *Inner Line* but inside it so far as might be found practicable, to the east of the Subansiri or to a safe distance from the hills and (iv) the appointment of

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44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*, No. 384, Lyall to Secretary Government of India, 4 May.



a special officer to supervise the settlers and report on new arrivals. On the approval of the measures by the Foreign Department, Government of India, on 10 June 1888, similar instructions were issued in regard to the settlement of the Dufas in the district of Darrang.<sup>46</sup>

The policy of the Government of India towards the Abors, too, continued to be conciliatory in spite of the threatening attitude exhibited from time to time by these tribes. The latter continued to claim all the lands down to the bank of the Brahmaputra between the Dibong on the east and Dikrai on the west. They had exclusive right, they thought, of fishing, hunting and of levying contributions from all those entering or residing in the tract. Defying the authority of the government they had commenced cultivation of opium\* between the rivers Dihong and Lali at a short distance from the Brahmaputra. On the whole, the general attitude of the Abors was anything but satisfactory; it was certain, as apprehended by Major Graham, the Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur, that in the event of government's asserting its claim to the plains lying on the north of the Brahmaputra, either by survey or otherwise, the result would be a collision with these tribes.<sup>47</sup> Graham's successor Major Clarke opined in his letter on 12 April 1877 that it would be of no use 'to assert our rights against the claims made by the Abors unless we are prepared to take possession of the tract and maintain our authority over it. The illicit cultivation of opium by these tribes, he added, had not injuriously affected the opium revenue of the district.'<sup>48</sup>

In May 1877, Keatinge proposed to despatch a military reconnaissance through the plains to the foothills with the

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46. FEA, 1888; June, No. 384 and 412-3; see D. Fitzpatric's note on *Dufas on the North Lakhimpur Frontier*, 25 December.

\* Opium cultivation was prohibited all over Assam with effect from 1 May 1860. BRC (Misc.), April, 1860, No. 82.

47. FPA, 1877; August, 312 in Nos. 310-8; Graham, J. M., (DC, Lakhimpur) to Secretary Chief Commissioner, 25 March.

48. *Ibid.*, No. 317; Thornton to Chief Commissioner, 18 July 1877.

double object of asserting the rights of the government and also of suppressing cultivation of poppy. T. H. Thornton, the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, deprecated the very idea of immediate occupation of the plains on the ground that it would involve considerable expense unattended with any sufficient advantage.<sup>49</sup> The Governor-General in Council considered it a questionable policy of claiming territory which they were then reluctant to hold or of undertaking military expedition without having any permanent mark behind it so that the result thereof would cease with the withdrawal of troops. Employment of force for the protection of opium trade was also considered to be objectionable ; all the more when opium revenue of the adjoining districts was not adversely affected. Cultivation, in the opinion of the Governor-General in Council, need to be encouraged on the part of these tribes inasmuch as 'it is conducive to their good behaviour, and a rich a tribe grows by agricultural industry, the more amenable to management, it must necessarily become.' Since there was hardly any overt act of hostility on the part of the Abors, Government of India could not justify warlike measures against these tribes at a time when a military expedition had to be sent out against the Nagas following the murder of Damant. It was considered sufficient for the time being to withhold the *posa* and also of taking every opportunity of making known to the Abors that the government had sovereign rights both with respect to cultivation of the poppy and the particular tract to which they laid claim, and that it would assert these rights, if necessary, at any time.<sup>50</sup> While approving the decision of the Government of India in the despatch of 4 October 1877, the Secretary of State also remarked that 'neither the assertion of the right of the British government to the tract of the country through which the expedition would pass nor the prevention within that tract

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49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

of the cultivation of opium were consideration of sufficient importance to justify the proposed measures.<sup>51</sup>

Notwithstanding the directives of the Government of India, Civil and Military authorities united in recommending a rearrangement of military posts as essential for effective defence of the frontier since the attitude of the Abors continued to be unfriendly, if not actually hostile. Under the terms of the treaty of 1862, they argued, although the whole tract between the Brahmaputra and the foothills was British territory, it was not safe for anyone, Englishmen or Indian, to encamp on the north bank even at the wateredge of the Brahmaputra. In 1878, some Mishmis inhabiting in the neighbourhood of Nizamghat, east of Dibong, committed raids on Assamese and Khamti villages. In consideration of this fact and for adequate protection of the tract, sanction was accorded by the government in October 1879 to the establishment of three advanced posts ; Rukong on the Dihong, Nizamghat on eastern bank of Dibong and Bishemnagar between Nizamghat and Diphu outpost. The measure remained unimplemented on the outbreak in the Naga Hills demanding punitive expeditions against the Angamis.<sup>52</sup>

The situation took a new turn in March 1881. Intelligence arrived that the Abors were about to establish themselves in a tract occupied by the Mishmis on the other side of the Dibong and to do so they would require to cross the British territory and that would mean not only an encroachment upon the territory of the friendly Mishmis, but interference on the frontier trade since the proposed settlement was located on the main trade route with Sadiya. 'It would be highly inexpedient', the Secretary of State also felt, 'to allow the frontier to be thrown into disorder by an irruption of the Abors into the territory of the friendly Mishmis'; but he was equally alive 'that any step taken to obviate the threatened complications

51. FPA, 1881 ; December, 146 in Nos. 127-47 ; Government of India to Secretary to State, 19 December 1881.

52. *Ibid.*

should not be of a character...(to) involve the British Government in extended military operation.'<sup>53</sup> The Government of India ruled out rearrangement of military and police posts earlier contemplated, but agreed to temporary occupation of Nizamghat with a post in support down the Dibong opposite to Bamjur which would lead, it was hoped, without application of actual force, to the withdrawal of the Abors to the westward of the river. Major G. W. Beresford, the Officer Commanding Nizamghat, was advised on 28 November 1881, to bring home to the Abors that the government would not allow them to cross the Dibong and to spread themselves out eastwards, but there would be no objection to their extending westward or southwards provided they settled as peaceful subjects of the British government. In any case, he was told, 'A war with the Abors is the last thing which the Government of India desires. Nothing should be done to precipitate it and everything that is reasonable and consistent with honour should be done to avoid it.'<sup>54</sup>

Beresford was placed on an extremely embarrassing situation. He was well aware that the Abors in a body considered the entire tract between the Dibong and Dihong, including bed of these rivers, their own territory. To them the *Inner Line* was extreme limit of the British territory and it was difficult to persuade them otherwise for the obvious reason that the British did not occupy or utilise it and British subjects were prohibited from crossing it. In his demi-official letter to O. G. R. McWilliam, Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur, on 5 January 1882, he suggested to make a fresh agreement with these tribes in substitution of the one in 1862 which 'majority of the Bor-Abors knew nothing...ignore it or do not consider themselves bound by it in the slightest degree'.<sup>55</sup> The proposal

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53. FPA, 1882; March, No. 8, Secretary of State to Governor-General, Political Despatch, No. 10.

54. FPA, 1881; Trotter, W. F. (*PA* Chief Commissioner) to Major Beresford, Commanding Nizamghat, 28 November 1881.

55. FPA, 1882; March, Nos. 168-9.

was unacceptable to Sir Charles Elliot, the Chief Commissioner, Assam, who feared that would serve only 'to reawaken all their suspicions and fears' which were then apparently lulled. They should be allowed, he thought, to go on gold-washing, fishing, hunting and even settling in debatable lands without any let or hindrance. 'There is no doubt,' he remarked, 'that our policy of the *Inner Line* or in other words our claiming sovereignty over lands which we do not profess to govern...is only a temporary makeshift...The time will come, no doubt, when population will increase round Dibrugarh and will tend to roll northward...we shall have (then) to advance our posts and protect them.' But it would be a question of time, ten to twenty years, and there was hardly any reason for anticipating it. Every endeavour need be made, in the meantime, to cultivate friendly relations with these tribes, encouraging them to trade with the British subjects and above all avoiding measures which might excite their anger or suspicion.<sup>56</sup>

To deal with the Abors and other frontier tribes, in September 1882, Jack Francis Needham of the Bengal Police was appointed Assistant Political Officer under the Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur with headquarters at Sadiya. He was to acquaint himself with the leading members of the various tribes, to learn their languages to obviate possible errors and intentional misinterpretation of the *kotokies*, to train his judgment to right and sound opinions in matters relating to Abor-Mishmi-Singpho-Khamti frontier.<sup>57</sup> A man of zeal and enthusiasm, Needham learnt soon tribal dialects, travelled and explored areas hitherto little known and 'laid the foundation of the modern North-east Frontier of Assam'. In December 1885, he travelled unescorted as far as Rima and confirmed that 'no river in any degree comparable to the Sanpo in size joins it,

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56. *Ibid.*, Elliot to Grant, D. O., 17 January 1882.

57. FEA, 1894 ; October, 117 in Nos. 96-151 ; *Report on the Operations against the Bor-Abors*, 1893-4 ; Needham to DC Lakhimpur, 11 April 1894.

between Sadiya and Rima, and consequently Sanpo must pass into Brahmaputra west of Sadiya...that it can be no other than the Dibong.' In his survey of the Hukwang in 1888 he explored the possibility of reaching the valley by two routes : by the Nongyong Lake and by way of Yogli, Phoong, Morang and Shangge. He revisited Hukwang three years later under the direction of the Burmese authorities to concert measures with the Burmese troops for reduction of the tribes between the Irrawadi and Hukwang.<sup>58</sup>

Needham failed, in spite of his earnest endeavours, to conciliate the Abors—his primary object in view. He visited most of their villages and exhausted his patience in bringing them to reason, but all in vain. They continued to be, as he remarked, 'not only rude and insolent' but 'swaggering and boastful as ever declaring that they were our equals every way'.<sup>59</sup> They became more and more vociferous in raising their demands. To the Abors the Assistant Political Officer was the author of all the ills. 'After he had learnt our language', they complained,

we hoped he would redress all our grievances, but he had not redressed any. We told him we were pushed for cultivable land, and so wished to cross the Dibong, but he refused to let us do so. We begged to return our slaves, as they cost us a lot of money and we cannot do without them ; but he refused to do so, and latterly he has insulted us by offering us about one-fourth of what they actually cost us as ransom money. We have told him our *posa* is too small, but he refuses to increase it.<sup>60</sup>

Most of the grievances were, undoubtedly, longstanding in nature and for which Needham was not directly responsible. The Assistant Political Officer however lacked in tact, sympathy and understanding so essential in dealing with these sensitive tribes. In April 1893, the Bor-Abors of Bomjur forcibly

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58. *Reid*, pp. 184 ff.

59. *Op. cit.*, *Report on the Operations against the Bor-Abors, 1893-4.*

60. *Ibid.*

carried off near Kerampanimukh three boats on the plea that the owners of these had accompanied the *sahibs* on fishing and hunting expeditions which the *gaums* persistently objected to. Without attempting an amicable settlement of the dispute and asserting the exclusive right of the government to the valley of the Dibong, Needham demanded compensation and fine from the culprits with an warning that in the event of repetition of such acts their *posa* would be stopped altogether.<sup>61</sup> On 18 November, when Needham arrived at Bomjur and invited the *gaums* for a dialogue, the latter flatly refused and categorically told him that they had no wish to be friendly with the *Maharani* any longer.

What do we care about the *posa* that is given to us ?  
When divided it is only a flea bite ! Our runaway slaves  
are detained, and we are insulted by being offered half what  
they cost us.

Finally they declared :

All right ! Now we will see who kill who (*sic*).<sup>62</sup>

The Abors were the first to strike. On 27 November they cut up three military sepoy's near a patrol party killing one and wounding two on duty. The murders were supposed at first to have been committed by the Chulikata Mishmis, but subsequently ascertained that the Abors of Bomjur, Dambuk, Silluk, Meybo and Padu were concerned.<sup>63</sup> Unless the offending villages were visited by a strong force, Needham felt, the infection might spread to the Mishmis and other tribes in the frontier. His recommendation, immediate occupation of Bomjur and Nizamghat, received the support of W. E. Ward, the Chief Commissioner of Assam ; the latter wired to the Foreign Secretary, Government of India, for sanction of the expedition ; for he felt that the failure and retreat of British troops in earlier expeditions had created a notion amongst these

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*, also No. 107, Needham to DC Lakhimpur, 8 December 1893.

63. FEA, 1894 ; April 84 in Nos. 72 to 86 ; Greenshields, R. S., (DC Lakhimpur) to PA, Chief Commissioner, 30 November 1893.

tribes, otherwise not formidable, that they were unconquerable. Ward was however not prepared to despatch a force exceeding 500 men of Frontier Police in view of the difficulties to be encountered in transporting supplies in a country like those of the Abors. Needham was, of course, to confine the operations to the punishment of the offending villages and those in neighbourhood he might find against British troops. The sanction of the Government of India was accorded on 27 December, 1883.<sup>64</sup>

The expeditionary force under the command of Captain R. M. Maxwell consisted of 400 men of Lakhimpur and Naga Hills Military Police, 100 men of 44th Gurkha Rifles and two seven-pounder Mountain guns. Needham accompanied the troops as Political Officer. Difficulties of procuring transport delayed the expedition. It started on 14 January, 1884 and after crossing the Dibong on the following day occupied Bomjur which though strongly fortified and *panjied* was abandoned by the Abors. Leaving there a force of one hundred men, the party advanced to Dambuk which was occupied after severe fighting with the loss of three killed and twenty-two wounded. Silluk offered but feeble resistance ; it was taken and burnt. On 10 February, Maybo was occupied without opposition and a week after the troops advanced to Padu. These two villages were left unpunished ; though powerful, they offered no opposition and heads of villages of both surrendered.<sup>65</sup>

By early February the operations practically came to a close. Needham felt that unless the Bor-Abors of Damroh in the north, 'the paramount power which control and guides the actions of all the villages' were punished the expedition would fail in its ultimate objective. He further represented to the Chief Commissioner that the Abors were so much beaten and demoralised that he apprehended no opposition from that

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64. FEA, 1894 ; May, Nos. 226-95, Ward to Elgin, *Sonamukhi*, 14 March.

65. *Ibid.*, also October 1894 ; Nos. 96-151 ; Drieberg, J. J. S., (*IGP Assam*) to Secretary Chief Commissioner, 24 April.



quarter. The proposed advance received the sanction of William Ward on 9 February on the distinct understanding that the expedition was 'quite safe' and that it would return not later than 10 March, well ahead of the rains.<sup>66</sup> Needham made Bordak at the junction of the Yamini and Dihong rivers his base of operations. Therein he placed the 'unneeded followers' and bulk of his rations in charge of a small guard of 15 to 20 sepoys. The Meybos and the Padus, then apparently friendly, volunteered to protect the guard and to give every assistance in forwarding supplies to the troops in its march to Damroh. The advance was made on 22 February. The progress was very slow. There were no roads but pathways flanked on either side by dense jungles in which enemy could easily hide itself and fire a volley to the passing officer or detachment without being seen. To make matter worse, during the absence of the force Bordak was attacked; the Abors who came into the camp in the guise of carriers suddenly 'whipped out their *daos* which each had concealed under his cloth... cutting down all in a short time'. In the meantime the march to Damroh had to be dragged on under extreme difficulties on account of incessant and heavy rainfall and eventually to be abandoned consequent upon failure in supply of rations following the massacre at Bordak. Emboldened thus the Abors erected stockades and threw up all possible obstacles on the retreating force under Maxwell. On return, the latter found the camp 'completely gutted, dead and headless bodies littering the ground, and stores mostly destroyed'. The Meybos and the Padus, alleged to have been concerned in the attack, were burnt and the expeditionary force returned to Sadiya on 14 March, 1884.<sup>67</sup>

The massacre at Bordak was due partly to the betrayal of the tribesmen on whom Needham solely depended for supplies and partly to the difficulties of transport and advance of the season in which the expedition was started. Despite too

66. *Op. cit.*, Ward to Elgin, 14 March.

67. *Ibid.*, see also Shakespear, L. W. *History of the Assam Rifles*, p. 121.

many odds, probably the advance would have been successful if Bordak, the base of supplies, had been properly guarded. This was rendered impossible since the Officer Commanding had to act under the orders of the Political Officer.<sup>68</sup> The assumption of undue control by the Political Officer and consequent disagreement and friction between the Civil and Military authorities was no less responsible for the disaster.

Needham thought that the massacre was 'carefully pre-meditated' by the Meybos and the Padus under instigation of the Bor-Abors of Damroh. To punish the culprits he strongly recommended the despatch of another expedition in the next cold weather and this received the approval of William Ward.<sup>69</sup>

So long the Damroh remains unpunished we shall never succeed in bringing the Abors who live in the territory immediately contiguous to our own to state of submission. They may...keep quiet for five years or so—possibly for ten years; but after that...imprudent demands and insolent behaviour will be repeated and will go on increasing year after year until under overt act of hostility is committed followed by another expedition and possibly annexation... which will bring us no revenue in return.

In his letter on 1 June 1894, the Chief Commissioner proposed to blockade all the tribes on the left bank of Dihong, to stop payment of the *posa* and to impose a fine varying from rupees five to two thousand on the Damrohs, Meybos and

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68. Speaking of the guards at Bordak, Maxwell says 'I asked Mr Needham what was to be done with all these weakly and spare men. He told me...to leave behind at Bordak, but were in no sense a guard (in the usual sense of the word) detailed to remain in charge of the rations. Had a guard been demanded, I could not have left less than 50 men stockaded. In an expedition normally the officer who held the military command ought to be responsible for the safety of the force. In this case Officer Commanding took orders from the Political Officer as to what was to be done with his men whether he was to leave a guard over the rations and whether he was to advance to Damroh and with what force.' *Ibid.*, see Needham's report, 11 April.
69. *Ibid.*, Nos. 96 and 117; Officiating Secretary Chief Commissioner, 1 June 1894; Needham, 11 April.

Padus. Lord Elgin agreed to the blockade and the withdrawal of the *posa*, but declined to sanction any other measure including imposition of a fine which 'would render the despatch of an expedition almost obligatory if the fines were not realised'.<sup>70</sup> The blockade against the Bor-Abors and their accomplices, the Mishmis, continued until 1900 when the tribe tendered their submission. Since then conduct of the Abors on the whole satisfactory ; some of the clans, the Pasi-Meyongs in particular, were allowed to settle in the neighbourhood of Lali, Remi and Pabha rivers, between the *Inner Line* and the foot of the hills, subject to their good behaviour and payment of a poll-tax to the government.

In the northeast, despite heavy retribution to Kai-ee-sha and his clan in 1855,<sup>71</sup> the Chulikata Mishmis committed repeated acts of aggression in and nearabout Sadiya. In 1854-7, no less than six outrages had been committed in which over twenty persons were killed and several carried off into captivity. In 1884, the tribe was placed under blockade for the murder of a British subject. On payment of a heavy fine in 1887-8 the blockade was removed<sup>72</sup> ; in 1893 they were found to be implicated again in the Abor outrage at Bomjur and were excluded from all intercourse with the plains. In May 1899, the Bebejia clan; Needham reported, committed an outrage at Mitigaon, a Khamti village, sixteen miles from Sadiya, in which three persons were killed and the same number carried off into captivity.<sup>73</sup>

Although expeditions had been sent out to the Mishmi country, from time to time, on no occasion did the expeditionary force succeed in getting more than three quarters of the road to Rima (97° 30'). In 1885-6 Needham reached, as has already

70. *Ibid.*, No. 143, Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department, 31 August 1894.

71. *See* Barpujari, ii, pp. 50-1.

72. FEA, 1888 ; April, Nos. 17-8.

73. FEA, 1900 ; January, Nos. 70-96 ; *also* October, 43-70 ; Officiating Secretary, Chief Commissioner, 17 April.

been mentioned, as far as Rima, but he was prevented from making further advance on account of the hostility of the Tibetans. In early 1900, to explore the country and to assert and punish the perpetrators of the Mitigaon outrage, Sir Henry Cotton, the Chief Commissioner, despatched an expedition under Lieutenant Colonel E. H. Molesworth and Needham accompanied as Political Officer.<sup>74</sup> 'Steep passes rising to 8000 feet in elevation, dense forests, cold, snow, sleet and rain were obstacles which prevented the advance of the troops and circumscribed the extent of the operation.' The expeditionary force was further handicapped by transport and very little was done 'to pierce the hills' by the flying columns. Nor was it possible to capture the murderers who escaped into the forest-clad hills. There was no fighting; the Mishmis offered in fact no resistance. Nevertheless the captives had been recovered and the offending villages were destroyed. Above all, the darkness which lay over the Mishmi country had been dissipated. The home of the Bebejias was no longer a *terra incognita*. The Bebejias who had hitherto been described 'as a fierce race of cannibals, a very savage, blood-thirsty, and dangerous race are now known to be no better nor worse than their neighbours.'<sup>75</sup>

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74. *Ibid.*

75. *Ibid.*, also *Reid*, p. 204; Lord Curzon was dissatisfied with the result of the expedition. To him it was an 'absolutely bootless costly excursion' for which 'we have sacrificed 34 unhappy coolies and an expenditure of about £ 16,000'.

## Appendix—B

Dated 26th November, 1883

FROM : MEDHI AKA RAJA AND 14 OTHER RAJAS  
TO : THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

The statement of the undersigned is as follows :

From former times we, Aka Rajas and the Rajas of Assam, have ruled over the Assam country, and formerly we had no dispute with the Assam Rajas. Afterwards the English Government taking possession of the Assam Raja's kingdom are governing it, but I have had no quarrel or dispute with the English Government. I do not know what so great fault I have committed that the Government are year by year going to take possession of our land. This has caused great grief to my mind. Be that as it may, I have no wish to make war with the Government. My present request is as follows :

The land of the Aka Maharajas, on the east of the Bor Dikrai, on the south the Brahmaputra, on the west the river Reta, and on the north Panipota ; if the land within these boundaries is given up to me, I will give up my claim to the yearly pension I receive from the *Maharani*. It is well-known that the money given me by the *Maharani* does not provide in the very least for my expenses.

Let the Government well understand that I have no mind to fight or make war. I merely request that I may get my land at the hands of Government, and I wish to have this settled amicably. The Government have been a long time in possession of the land within the above mentioned boundaries, and now to give up all that land may perhaps cause great grief to Government. Consequently if they do not give up all that land, then let them give me a lakh of rupees, it will be a very good thing. The money which I at present receive from Government is nothing at all to me (*FEA, October 1884, No. 56*).

## CHAPTER VI

### *Non-Intervention*

The declared policy of the Government of India towards the tribes in the South-East Frontier was non-intervention ; in reality it was one of slow but steady penetration. The Deputy Commissioner was authorised on 3 February 1886 to punish the Nagas beyond the area of political control for outrages committed in that area when it would be 'conveniently done'. It was not only found convenient to punish but also to make enquiries and settle disputes out of which such raids originated. The Deputy Commissioner was therefore required to pass through independent villages and halt at these with an armed force and required them to furnish transport, if not *rasud*, and thus was extended his influence over villages beyond the area of political control.

The frontier officials continued to urge, since the emergence of the Mokokchung subdivision (1890), the imperative necessity of exercising effective control over the tribes inhabiting the strip of land between the Naga Hills and Burma. 'We shall have no peace', wrote A. W. Davis, the Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, 'until we have absorbed the whole area between this and the Chindwin'.<sup>1</sup> To H. W. G. Cole, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, 'the existence of excluded areas defer the civilization and peaceful settlement of the adjoining administrative tracts and necessitate the maintenance of garrisons in excess of those required solely for keeping law and order among our own subjects...sooner we take over this whole area and start the civilization of the intervening tribes the cheaper it will be for

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1. FEA, 1908 ; July, Nos. 121-7. Milne, G ; (Officiating Secretary, *EBA*) to Secretary Government of India, 7 September 1907.

the tax-payers of India.’<sup>2</sup> J. C. Arbuthnott, the Commissioner of Hills districts, strongly advocated extension of control over areas ‘where the prevalence of head-hunting and atrocious barbarities on the immediate frontier retard pacification of the district and exercise a (sic) most prejudicial effect on the progress of civilization amongst our own subjects.’<sup>3</sup> ‘Fate seemed determined to prove it’, Alexander Mackenzie also remarked, ‘that there can be no rest for the English in India till they stand forth as the governors and advisers of each tribe or people in the land.’<sup>4</sup>

The forward policy so strongly advocated by the frontier officials was emphatically opposed by W. E. Ward (1891-96) and H. S. Cotton (1896-02). The latter did not agree with the view held by Fitzpatric that ‘additional area’ implied protection of that area from attacks of the area beyond. This would mean, ‘to protect properly we must annex and establish additional police outposts and establish political control of an area next beyond the area annexed and so on *ad infinitum*.’ The object of a political control area, Ward maintained, was to keep the people in trans-frontier areas from raiding on British borders. ‘If you want to take heads’, he would tell the Nagas

keep away from borders... We can’t protect you from the attacks of tribes beyond the political control area, and therefore won’t interfere with your marching into their country and retaliating upon them if they attack you.<sup>5</sup>

In January 1900, in his trans-Dikhow promenade when Captain Wood, the Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills, came in hostile contact with the villagers of Yachumi in the Tizu Valley resulting in the loss of several lives and burning of the entire village of about 500 houses, Cotton warned the Deputy Commissioner not to organise or conduct hereafter expeditions

2. *Ibid.*, No. 122, Cole 20 June 1907.

3. *Ibid.*, Arbuthnott. *Camp Mauphlong*, 26 September 1907.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Cited in *Reid*, p. 126.

or promenades beyond areas of political control without prior approval of the local government. Such proceedings on the part of the district officers, he feared, apart from risks of collision would lead to gradual extension of the area under administrative control involving political and financial implications of a serious nature.<sup>6</sup> Cotton's action received the approval of the Foreign Department, Government of India.<sup>7</sup> The latter continued to remind the frontier officials that it had 'no wish to incur unnecessary obligations in this frontier'; that the restrictions imposed upon the action of the local authorities in Assam was not exception but was observed both in Burma and North-West Frontier. With respect to the tribes in the Chin Hills, too, the Government of India adhered to its policy of accepting no responsibility for the protection of the life and property beyond the administrative line of the British territory and had no desire to hasten the process of bringing the tribes under administrative control.<sup>8</sup>

There occurred a definite change in policy with J. B. Fuller who succeeded Cotton as the Chief Commissioner (1902-5) and later Lieutenant Governor of newly-created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam (1905-6). The prohibitive order consequent on the Yachumi affair, in the words of the new Chief Commissioner, led to a 'deplorable amount of bloodshed and numerous outrages just across the frontier'.<sup>9</sup> Within a period of three years and a half

The total number of murders...amount to 454...it might not have been possible to prevent the murders across the Tizu which during 1904 and 1905 amount to 130. But all the other 324 murders, or an average of 90 a year, which

6. FEA, 1900 ; May, Nos. 152-3 ; Kershaw (Officiating Secretary) to DC Naga Hills, 11 April.

7. *Ibid.*, Daly (Secretary Government of India) to Chief Commissioner, 18 May.

8. FEA, 1884 ; October, No. 394 ; March 1886, No. 25 ; October 1895, No. 178 ; May 1900, No. 153 ; March 1904, No. 131 and September 1905, No. 73.

9. FEA, 1907 ; March, Nos. 103-5; *see* enclosures 1 and 2.



have all occurred in a portion of a frontier not much than 30 miles in length, could have been prevented without any increase to Military Police Battalion and without the expenditure of a single extra rupee.<sup>10</sup>

Fuller condemned the existing state of affairs as being 'discreditable to our administration and unintelligible to the people who are affected by it'. He proposed to absorb in the district the remainder of the area of control : area lying west of the Tizu including village of Yehim in the north as well as six villages inhabited by the Semas and the Angamis so as to secure the river instead of the crest of the hills as the boundary.<sup>11</sup> To ensure 'general peace and security' and 'with interest of humanity' he sought also to establish a fresh area of control along and beyond the eastern frontier of the Naga Hills to a distance of about two marches from the boundary. Nothing but continued intervention, he believed, would put an end to the raiding of one village by another. The altered policy, Fuller assured, would not involve any augmentation of military force nor increase in expenditure since the government would be required only to repress raiding within the area of control and to protect village under protection from being attacked by those beyond and for which anything more would be necessary than a mere show of force.<sup>12</sup>

On 28 September 1905, the Government of India agreed to the extension of boundary of the Naga Hills as recommended by the Chief Commissioner Assam.<sup>13</sup> To facilitate commercial exploitation, the coal-bearing areas east of the Dikhow, including Borjan, Wakching, Wanching and Longkhai, were

10. *Ibid.*, Williamson (*SDO*, Mokokchung), 11 July 1905.

11. *Op. cit.*, Reid, pp. 134 ff.

12. FEA, 1908 ; July, No. 122 ; Milne 7 December, 1907.

13. FEA, 1905 ; October, Nos. 37-40 ; Webster, J. E. (Secretary, *EBA*) 28 September. This was modified next year so as to include within the eastern boundary Sohomi and five Angami villages ; Nahotomi, Teshephema, Kutrobasa, Kuzkunona and Kotesimi. *Ibid.*, November 1906, Nos. 90-1 ; Webster to Secretary Government of India, 3 September.

incorporated in July 1908 ; and the boundary of Mokokchung subdivision, subsequently reached the Yangnyo Valley.<sup>13a</sup> In regard to Fuller's second proposal, the government held the view that the time was not ripe for a general change in the policy specially when the extension of control would still leave a large tribal belt free from such control in which outrages would be repeated just beyond the new frontier. The Governor-General also did not agree with the views of the Chief Commissioner that the policy proposed would confine simply to suppression of raiding within the area of control and to the protection of villages within this area from being raided by those beyond the line.<sup>14</sup> To him the latter obligation involved wider possibilities ; it would demand more than a mere show of strength. Even this show of force would involve expenditure which would fall on the tax-payer and which would for a long time to come produce no return. In fact tribal area did not pay for civil administration and much less for their military protection. Occasional expeditions, it was feared, would be inevitable and such expeditions would not only have to be conducted in the tract proposed to be taken under control, but even beyond leading to increased responsibilities and costly operations.<sup>15</sup>

The attitude of the Government of India remained unaltered when in June 1906 Lancelot Hare, the new Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (1906-11), reiterated the proposal of his predecessor to extend administrative control over tribes beyond the frontier. The Lieutenant Governor was however enquired by the Foreign Department on 12 February 1907 whether the circumstances in the Naga Hills were such as to demand an exception to the general rule and whether the new sphere proposed to be brought under control would likely to cover all the expenditure, direct and indirect, to be incurred in administration and protection.<sup>16</sup>

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13a. FPA, 1908 ; July Nos. 121-7 ; also *Reid*, p. 142.

14. FEA, 1907 ; March, No. 104 ; Holland (Assistant Secretary, Foreign Department) to Webster, 12 February.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

In his reply on 7 December the Lieutenant Governor informed that the Government of India had a special responsibility so far Naga Hills was concerned. Since law and order had been established in this district, 'continuance in its immediate proximity', as the Secretary of State once said, 'of a system of internecine warfare conducted principally against women and children cannot be tolerated'.<sup>17</sup> The formation of the proposed area of control, he assured, would entail no addition to staff of the district and that the taxes to be levied from the inhabitants would cover all expenditure of administration and protection. The cost of administering hill areas, he added, formed only a small fraction of the expenditure that would be necessary for effective protection of the plains in case the neighbouring hillmen remained unsubdued. The presence of predatory tribes in close proximity to settled districts demanded the presence of a huge military force. The security and peace of the hill districts could be maintained even with a much smaller force in the event the frontier of Assam reached those of Burma.<sup>18</sup>

The arguments put forward by the Lieutenant Governor convinced Lord Minto the desirability of a change in policy. In his view, Naga Hills was surrounded by British territory and as such, no foreign complication was possible. 'I cannot see', the Viceroy remarked, 'that any policy in respect to the political meaning of *forward* is involved'.<sup>19</sup> It would be an act of connivance if the government refrained from putting a stop to horrible barbarities 'with no expense and no political risk'. He

17. FPA, 1879 ; December No. 55.

18. The expenditure for the Naga Hills for 1906-7 was Rs. 5,29,685 against revenue of Rs. 99,075 leaving a deficit of Rs. 4,30,610, and that in the Lushai Hills for the same period of the revenue Rs. 1,39,400, expenditure Rs. 6,11,857 and deficit Rs. 4,72,457. The deficits were due mainly to heavy expenditure under military and public works. As regards Military Charges the Lieutenant Governor argued that these could be properly debited to the protection of the districts themselves ; 'if we did not occupy these districts, it would be necessary to spend more for the protection of the villages in the plains of Cachar, etc., and that even then such protection as had been shown, could not be effective'. FEA, 1908 ; July, Nos. 121-7.

19. *Ibid.*, see Minto's note on 18 June 1908.

believed that Secretary of State would take no exception to the proposal since the latter raised no objection rather favoured the British advance on Burma.<sup>20</sup> India Office was accordingly told in the Secret Despatch of 16 July

that we would be accepting a grave responsibility if in opposition to the advice of the successive Lieutenant Governors supported by the practically unanimous opinion of the local frontier officers, we declined to take steps to ensure the safety of our frontier villages and to put a stop to horrible barbarities when we have the power, more specially when this can be achieved without to our expenditure or increasing our political risk.<sup>21</sup>

India Office examined the whole issue with reference to 'wider consequences'. The logical outcome of the proposed extension of political control, it was feared, would lead ultimately to absorption and thereby increase the responsibilities to the entire tract between the Naga Hills and the territory subject to the Government of Burma. Such a process was considered inexpedient under existing circumstance even in the interest of British subjects. In his reply on 13 November 1908 therefore John Morley, the Secretary of State, expressed his reluctance to make any departure from the policy of non-interference so long followed in the South-East Frontier.<sup>22</sup>

The proposal was not raised for the next six years although outrages beyond the border never ceased demanding the despatch of punitive expeditions. Reviewing the 'melancholy record' of these outrages, in his letter on 3 April 1914, Sir Archdale Earle, the Chief Commissioner of newly-constituted Assam, brought home to the Government of India that if the Secretary of State had accepted the proposal of Lancelot Hare, most of expeditions would have been unnecessary.<sup>22a</sup> Experience proved, he added, the results were 'purely temporary'; 'when a village has been reduced to defenceless condition and it only too frequently an object of attack of its neighbours

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20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, Minto to Morley, 16 July.

22. *Ibid.*, Morley to Minto, 13 November.

22a. *Reid*, pp. 150-2.

and to the punishment meted out by the government are added to the horrors by organised attack by latter's enemies.' He had therefore no faith, like Bampfylde Fuller, in 'casual promenades', but in 'continuous intervention' which alone would prevent raiding of one village upon another; in other words, he too, strongly urged extension of the area of control beyond the present frontier of Naga Hills. The Chief Commissioner was not oblivious of the fact that if accepted this would be a step towards the inclusion of a further area of control and that at no distance future the process would have to be repeated until the whole territory between Assam and Burma would have to be taken over. Such an eventuality had been recognised by every one from the very beginning and the Secretary of State had already declared that he had no desire to hasten the process. Archdale Earle had assured, if the proposal was accepted 'the advance would be as gradual as may be desired'. 'On the score of humanity', he hoped, it would receive approval of the government. To the great disappointment of the Chief Commissioner, for several years, the proposal received but scant attention of the Foreign Department, Government of India.

Lancelot Hare held the view that *laissez-faire* which had been the watchword of the government towards the Abors, too, proved a failure. For over twenty years, he argued, these tribes continued to visit Sadiya, received presents and enjoyed festivities at the annual fair, but these were not reciprocated. The Abors never allowed the plainsmen other than the Miris access into their hills. Complaints were heard from the managers of the saw-mills that they were subjected to exaction of these tribes for collection of timbers in their hills.<sup>23</sup>

23. FEA, 1908 ; June, Nos. 33-8 ; Webster, 9 September 1907.

The Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam reported that the Pasi-Mayongs had repeatedly given trouble. In 1888 'the villages Yemsing and Ladum combined and murdered 4 Miris...levied blackmail on contractors cutting timber for saw-mill and in 1904-5 a new Military Police post had to protect the Meckla Nudi Saw-Mills. Subsequent years saw little improvement in their conduct. In 1906-7 (they) interfered with Sissi Saw-Mills, robbed an employee of all his property and constantly oppressed the Miris. In 1907-8, they again attempted to blackmail the Manager of Meckla Nudi Saw Mills'. Reid, pp. 223 ff.

Bampfylde Fuller, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, was not inclined to interfere since the tract in question was not in effective occupation of the government. He saw no reason why the saw-mills should not pay the royalty demanded by these tribes if they found it convenient to do so.<sup>24</sup> Lancelot Hare, on the otherhand, wanted to assert the right of the government on the forest particularly on *simul* timber beyond the *Inner Line*, so indispensable for making boxes in the growing tea-industry in Assam.<sup>25</sup> He sought to protect the trade and also the valuable timber by laying down certain rules in specific areas for guidance of the Assistant Political Officer. As a penalty for their broken pledge's and 'insolent claims', he also wanted to stop the *posa*<sup>26</sup> altogether which remained unpaid since the late expedition. Instead he wanted presents to be paid to the heads of the clans for good behaviour and for purchase of information from time to time.<sup>27</sup> Above all he proposed to the Government of India to impose only on the Abors settled between the *Inner* and *Outer Line*, a poll or

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24. *Ibid.*

25. That there was a steady increase in business in tea-box industry will be revealed from the following figures :

Year	Number of boxes	Royalty paid
1895-6	386,488	Rs. 20,917
1898-9	458,272	Rs. 24,340
1903-4	429,942	Rs. 24,241

Regular supply of *simul* wood was therefore a concern of both the mill-owners and the government. For preservation of valuable *simul* trees from being ruined by improvident felling, there was thus a need for conservation of forests beyond the *Inner Line*. FEA, 1908 ; June, Nos. 33-8.

26. *Ibid.* ; A distinction was made between the *posa* paid to the Abors with those levied by other frontier tribes. While the Bhutias and Duflas collected the *posa* or contributions from their respective areas in the plains, the Abors received it as a subsidy for their good behaviour as to ensure peace in the frontier. Lancelot Hare argued : 'By their exaction from the Miris, their obstruction of the survey and their assertion of territorial rights, the Abors have undoubtedly forfeited all claims to such a subsidy.' Payment, in fact, ceased when these villages were blockaded following the Abor expedition and these were not resumed on the raising of the blockade.

27. *Op. cit.*, Webster to Secretary Government of India, 9 September 1907.

house tax.<sup>28</sup> It would be inexpedient, he was well aware, to impose any tax unless the collection would be guaranteed. He was however not agreeable, as suggested by the local authorities, to control these tribes by occupying one or two strong posts in the hills dominating the villages. He proposed that the Assistant Political Officer should visit the principal Abor villages lying beyond the *Outer Line*. He would be given a strong escort and his principal duty would be to come to terms with these tribesmen and inform them of the 'orders and intentions' of the government. The Foreign Department was finally told that the reluctance of the British authorities to enforce their rights had been construed as weakness while the payment of the *posa* regarded as a tribute exacted by superior strength; 'that more than a half century of proximity to civilization had failed to redeem these tribes from their native savagery is in itself a condemnation of the policy of non-interference'.<sup>29</sup>

The proposal made by Lancelot Hare was tantamount to the imposition in a 'veiled form' of direct administration over the 'neutral tract'. Minto's government was not prepared to provoke the tribesmen by too sudden an extension of 'active control'.<sup>30</sup> It was however considered necessary to assert British authority between the *Inner* and the *Outer Line*. In its despatch on 11 June 1908 to the Secretary of State, it recommended that the Political Officer should be deputed to

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28. Since 1897, subject to their good behaviour and payment of taxes the Pasi-Meyongs were allowed to settle in villages of Bamjur, Lali, Dihong and Pabha, between the *Inner Line* and foot of the hills. After the withdrawal of blockade the Padam and Membo settled at Sibiyamukh and the Bor-Abors between the rivers Sesser and Dihong. Williamson found in 1905 that the Abors living in the hills cultivated in the plains throughout a tract three to nine miles wide. *Ibid.*, No. 33.

29. 'There is no reason to believe,' the Lieutenant Governor added, 'the Abor to be the hopelessly intractable savage that he was once imagined to be. He is less bloodthirsty than the Naga, has more aptitude for concerted action, and is probably no less amenable to civilizing influences.' *Ibid.*

30. FEA, 1908; June Nos. 33-8; Minto to Morley 11 June.

visit the chief Abor villages beyond the *Outer Line* with the object of coming to an agreement with the tribesmen in regard to the cessation of blackmail and the introduction of a tax on all settlers within the *Outer Line*. The Political Officer might also make such arrangement as might be practicable for the preservation of the forests ; but he was not to advance unless the local authorities were satisfied that it would be made with safety.<sup>31</sup> John Morley in his reply on 4 September raised no objection to the despatch of the mission with its limited objectives. He did not agree with contention that non-intervention had failed to a degree as to demand its reversal. Morley emphasised the dangers attended with a policy of 'active control' over the 'neutral tract' which meant, though indirectly, annexation to be followed 'by further progressive annexation' to which it would be difficult to set a limit.<sup>32</sup> If the 'order and intentions' of the government were not fulfilled, he was afraid, the Government of India would be either to remain a silent observer or to commit to a policy of punitive expedition till the tribes were subjugated and ending in occupation, and which would be in direct contravention to the declared policy of His Majesty's Government.<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime the rapid strides made by the Chinese troops in their south-west drive posed a serious problem to Minto's government. Since the early decades of the eighteenth century, in fact, Tibet was under the suzerainty of the Celestial Empire. Chinese military aid to the Tibetans to repel the Gurkha invaders in 1791 tightened Emperor's grip over Tibetan government. Tibetan officials including the Dalai Lama had to act under the orders of the Ambans or Chinese agent at Lhasa and the latter had much to do even in the selection of the high

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31. *Ibid.*

32. He feared that on the north of the Abor hills lies Tibet, and in between the Abor hills and Tibet proper there might be tribes who were more or less under Tibetan influence. The British Indian government could not act in a manner as to violate the provisions of Anglo-Chinese treaty of 1906. See *Infra* p. 151.

33. *Ibid.*, 1908 ; December ; Nos. 11-7, Morley to Minto 4 September.



dignitaries in the State. Chinese influence was however on the wane since the middle of the nineteenth century, and at the time when Curzon arrived in India there was as it were a power vacuum in the north. Rumours were afloat that the Chinese had surrendered their sovereign rights to the Russians and that Russian arms had already reached Lhasa.<sup>34</sup> Curzon was well aware that the Russians would not make Tibet a base of operations against India, but he could not rule out the possibility of Russian influence at the Tibetan capital which would inevitably have its repercussions in the Himalayan frontier.<sup>35</sup> To counteract Russian designs the Viceroy despatched Colonel Younghusband ostensibly on a peace mission, but in reality to establish British influence in Tibet. The mission was opposed *en route* by the Tibetans, but they were compelled to retreat and enter into the Lhasa Convention, 7 September 1904, under which British Trade Agents were to reside at Gyantse and Gartok besides Yatung which existed since 1893. The Chumbi Valley was to remain under occupation of the British troops pending payment of an indemnity of Rs 75,00,000 (£ 500,000) in seventy-five annual instalments. Article IX laid down *inter alia*

- (i) No portion of Tibetan territory shall be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise given for occupation to any foreign power ;
- (ii) No such power shall be permitted to interfere in Tibetan affairs ;
- (iii) No representatives or Agents, of any foreign power shall be admitted to Tibet.<sup>36</sup>

34. For details see Bell, C. A., *Tibet, Past and Present*, p. 62 ; Richardson, H. E., *Tibet and Its History*, p. 4 ; Alastair Lamb, *The Road to Lhasa, 1767-1905*, pp. 253-ff.

35. Lord Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief, remarks : 'Russia's predominance in Tibet would not be a direct military danger to India, but it would be a very serious disadvantage...we have had, and still have, quite enough trouble owing to Russia being so near us on the Northwest Frontier of India that we cannot avoid ; but we can, and ought to prevent her getting a position which would inevitably cause unrest all along the Northeast frontier.' Cited in Lamb, *Ibid.*, pp. 279-80.

36. Bell, *op. cit.*, Appendix IX, pp. 284-7.

This was construed by the Russian government tantamount to the establishment of a British Protectorate over Tibet. India Office was not prepared to accept an agreement which was offensive to the Russians with whom it was then anxious to arrive at a settlement of its disputes in Central Asia. Indian government was told that 'the course of affairs in Indian frontier cannot be decided without reference to imperial exigencies abroad'<sup>37</sup>. Under a revised agreement, the indemnity was reduced to Rupees 25,00,000, rendering thereby possible withdrawal of British troops from the Chumbi Valley at a much shorter time than originally stipulated. The British looked upon China 'more as an ally than a potential enemy'. As the price of China's 'adhesion' to the Lhasa Convention in 1906 the British not only reaffirmed China's control over Tibet but undertook 'not to encroach on Tibetan territory nor to interfere in the Government of Tibet'. Chinese rights in Tibet were thus recognised to an extent to which the Chinese had recently been wholly unable to exercise them.<sup>38</sup> Not that was all. Under Anglo-Russian Convention, 31 August 1907, the contracting parties agreed to respect the territorial integrity of Tibet and to abstain from all interference in its internal administration and 'to carry no political negotiation with Tibet except through intermediary of China'. By the new Trade Agreement of 1908, activities of the British Trade Agent was restricted even at Gyantse and Yatung. Not only the number of escorts at the marts was to be reduced and gradually replaced by the Chinese, but the telegraph line from the Indian frontier to Gyantse and the rest houses built by the British along the route were to be sold out to the Chinese at original cost.<sup>39</sup>

The Peking authorities were not slow to avail the opportunity to reassert their suzerainty over Tibet. The process begun in early 1908 soon after the evacuation of British troops from the

37. PP., 1905, C. 2370, p. 43 ; also *Cambridge Modern History*, vi, p. 428.

38. Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

39. For full text see Bell, *op. cit.*, pp. 289 ff ; also Mehra, P., *The North-East Frontier*, pp. 8 ff.

Chumbi Valley. The Chinese under Chao Erh-feng, the newly appointed Imperial Commissioner of Tibet, overran Eastern Tibet, advanced on Chamdo and the road to Lhasa lay open. By the end of 1909 Tibetan resistance completely collapsed and the Chinese troops entered into Lhasa.<sup>40</sup> The Dalai Lama entered into India and Lien-yu, the Chinese Amban, took over the Tibetan government. The Chinese aimed not merely to bring Tibet under its effective control but also 'to counter and ultimately push back British influence along the Indo-Tibetan frontier'.<sup>41</sup>

the appointment of Chao Erh-feng's brother to the Sezechuan Viceroyalty ... the occupation by Chinese troops of Chamdo and other portions of Eastern Tibet ... the increase of Lhasa garrison to 1,500 Chinese and 3,000 Tibetan troops, ... the import of rifles and ammunitions in large quantities ... the establishment of schools and creation of a police force all this ... point out unmistakably to the existence and steady accomplishment of a clearly defined policy.<sup>42</sup>

By the close of 1910, Chao after subjugating Pome, Pemako and Zayul, the southern part of Tibet, attempted to penetrate through Yunan to Upper Burma then under the British rule including Hpimaw, Ahkyang and Hkamti Lang. What was the guarantee that the Chinese would not make a further move in the south to incorporate the intervening tract between Tibet and the plains of Assam? Chang Yin-tang, the Chinese High Commissioner for Tibet, actually urged 'the blending of five colours, i.e., China, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan'; and had compared 'Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan to the molar teeth lying side by side in a man's mouth'.<sup>43</sup> Charles Bell, Political Officer Sikkim, believed that Nepal and Sikkim were 'beyond the reach of Chinese intrigue',<sup>44</sup> but the case was otherwise

40. See Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, Ch. 6, pp. 67 ff.

41. Maxwell, N., *India's China War*, p. 41.

42. FES, 1908; October 127 in Nos. 116-37; Minto to Morley, 1 October 1908.

43. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

44. FES, 1908; October No. 133 in 116-37; Bell 24 July (*Very confidential*).

with Bhutan. Blessed with a temperate climate and fertile soil, 'it offered a tempting field for Chinese penetration'. The deliberate attempt which Chang made to obtain recognition of Chinese suzerainty by Bhutan is borne out by two letters<sup>45</sup> which the Amban of Lhasa addressed to the authorities in Bhutan. In one the Deb was told

The Bhutanese are the subjects of the Emperor of China who is the lord of Heaven. You, Deb Raja and two Penlops, think that you are great, but you cannot continue without paying attention to the orders of your Ruler. Bhutan is the gate on the south which prevents entry (by the British). The Popon will inspect your climate, crops, etc. The Deb Raja should endeavour to improve the trade of the country and the condition of the peasants. If you want any assistance, let me know.<sup>46</sup>

In early April 1908, Ma Chi-fu, Popon of the Chumbi valley, was actually on the way to Bhutan accompanied by a guard of twenty Chinese soldiers; but he could not make further advance beyond Paro when the Maharaja informed the Amban that since the establishment of the present regime in Bhutan, about 240 years ago, 'there had been no record of any Chinese mission coming to Bhutan or of China claiming suzerainty on it'.<sup>47</sup> Thus ended the attempted assertion of sovereignty by the Chinese; but the fear was there that this would be renewed.

Even during the civil war of 1877-85, when the party in opposition to the Deb appealed for aid to the Amban at Lhasa, the latter, as the representative of the Chinese government, summoned the contending parties to a conference at Phari for a settlement. The Deb or the Maharaja of Bhutan not only refused to attend, but repudiated the authority of the Chinese over Bhutan. On the otherhand, he tilted gradually towards the British government. During the Anglo-Tibetan conflict over Sikkim, the Government of Bhutan maintained an attitude of neutrality while at the time of the Younghusband expedition

45. *Ibid.*, Minto to Morley 1 October 1908.

46. Cited in Bell. *op. cit.*, pp. 100-1.

47. *Op. cit.*

the Maharaja offered his mediation which was mainly instrumental in persuading the Tibetans to come to terms. As a price for these he was awarded the title of K.C.I.E. in 1905 on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales to Calcutta.<sup>48</sup> A Bhutanese wakil was later stationed at Darjeeling as the channel of communication with the British Indian government. To ward off the Chinese danger in the north, in 1906 James Claudius White, the Political Officer, Sikkim, sought to establish closer relations with Bhutan. He proposed to revise the treaty of Sinchula (1865) in order to bring the external relations of Bhutan under the control of the British government.<sup>49</sup> This was followed up by his able successor Charles Bell who in his despatch on 24 July 1908 to the Secretary, Government of India in the Foreign Department, laid stress on the urgency of a new treaty with Bhutan, 'to control her foreign relations' leaving, of course, 'absolutely free' in her internal affairs. 'This will enable us', Bell wrote, 'to keep the Chinese agents, Chinese troops and Chinese influence generally out of the country.'<sup>50</sup> The establishment of Chinese influence in Bhutan, Minto was also convinced, 'would not fail to raise complications'. This would demand in any case the location of a considerable force on the British border wherein so long two companies of Native Infantry afforded sufficient protection.<sup>51</sup> Time had come, he thought, to frustrate Chinese design in Bhutan and unhesitatingly he accepted Bell's proposal. The Maharaja, who was then friendly to the British, was in urgent need of money; he was greatly anxious to develop his country, open up communication and attract foreign capital into it. As the price of the new treaty the Viceroy agreed to raise the subsidy payable to Bhutan to rupees one lakh. He was also prepared to respect

48. *Ibid.*, also Bisheswar Prasad, *The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy, 1882-1947*, pp. 453-4.

49. *Ibid.*, also June 1906, Nos. 635-9 August 1908, Nos. 206-9, September, Nos. 281-3.

50. *Ibid.*, Bell 24 July.

51. *Ibid.*, Minto to Morley, 1 October.

the wishes of the Maharaja to open up his country for development by roads and by the investment of outside capital provided that the capital was of British or British Indian and that the process was gradual coming from the southern side.<sup>52</sup> When the proposal received the sanction of the Secretary of State, Bell quietly arrived at Punakha and entered into the treaty on 8 January 1910. The Government of Bhutan agreed to be guided by the advice of the British government in regard to its external relations and the British undertook not to interfere in the internal affairs of Bhutan and to raise the annual subsidy from rupees fifty thousand to one hundred thousand.<sup>53</sup> Thus was averted Chinese menace into an area considered to be the most vulnerable in the North-East Frontier.

The tract to the east of Bhutan, between Tibet and Assam frontier, was occupied by semi-Mongoloid tribes of the Towang, Charduar and Thebengia Bhutias ; Akas, Dufas, Miris, Abors and Mishmis. It bordered areas of vast potentialities of developing tea-industry, coal-beds and other economic interests. In retaliation for their raids punitive expeditions had been sent out from time to time against these tribes. Treaties and engagements existed with some of them under which they pledged themselves never to join but oppose the enemies of the British government. None of them however definitely engaged to have intercourse with foreign powers nor any attempt made so far to make them 'feudatories of the government'. The Tibetans believed that they were under the suzerainty of the British rather than on the Chinese and the Tibetans. Frontier officials like Bell doubted much whether the Chinese government would admit such a position inasmuch as 'China is making claims of suzerainty and sovereignty wherever possible'.<sup>54</sup> Actually in a telegram on 24 May 1910

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52. *Ibid.*

53. See Bell, *Tibet, Past and Present*, Appendix XI, p. 297.

54. FES, 1911 ; January, 223 in Nos. 211-40 ; Bell 20 August 1910.

the authorities in Calcutta were informed by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam that one thousand Chinese soldiers had arrived at Rima demanding taxes from the Tibetan governor and that Tungno, the Miju chief of Pangum (97° 30' E, 28° 15' Lat) was ordered 'to cut a tract from Tibet to Assam broad enough for two horsemen'.<sup>55</sup>

In July, intelligence arrived that the Chinese had established their firm control over Rima and erected a post at three miles off Walong (now in Arunachal Pradesh) as the southern extremity of the Empire.<sup>56</sup> Tungno declined to obey the orders of the Chinese declaring that he was a British subject which, as Lancelot Hare explained, 'without authority'.<sup>57</sup> In his letter on 26 May intimating the Foreign Secretary that the Mishmis were not subjects of the Tibetans and still less of the Chinese, the Lieutenant Governor maintained that the British government was entitled to hold that tribe under its protection and prevent the Chinese or the Tibetans to interfere in any way in their internal affairs.<sup>58</sup> From Sikkim Bell laid stress on the necessity of keeping the Chinese or any other power out of the narrow strip of territory between Tibet and the valley of the Brahmaputra.<sup>59</sup> He suggested extension of political control over the affairs of the tribes inhabiting in this tract as had lately been done in case of Bhutan. This would prevent forever the establishment of Chinese agents or stationing of Chinese troops in these territories. Before entering into new treaties or arrangements, Bell considered it necessary to ascertain in respect of each and neighbouring tribes (i) the extent of the tribal areas towards Tibetan border from the

55. *Ibid.*, No. 211, telegram p. 24 May 1910, Government of *EBA* to Secretary Government of India.

56. *Ibid.*, No. 222 statement by Halam Miju Mishmi to *APO* ; also *Reid*, p. 217.

57. *Ibid.*, No. 213, Allen, B. C., (Secretary *EBA*) to Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department.

58. *Ibid.*, No. 217

59. *Ibid.*, No. 223, Bell, *Camp Darjeeling*, 20 August 1910 (*Very confidential*).

Indian frontier, (ii) to what extent the tribal territory would act as a barrier to invaders, (iii) whether the tribes had in any way recognised the suzerainty of Tibet or China and (iv) the possibility of inducing the tribes to agree to the treaty.

The aforesaid events combined with the political activities of the Chinese along the entire frontier could not but force Minto's government to give serious thought on the line of action to be followed towards the Mishmis and other tribes inhabiting between the *Outer Line* and the Tibetan border. The problem was one of the extreme difficulty. Extension of control beyond the 'neutral zone' would entail collision with the tribes involving the government in commitments which the latter was then unprepared to assume. On the otherhand, unless the Chinese were called to a halt in their onward march the security of the frontier as a whole would be endangered. The external boundary was also not sound : it ran along the foothills excluding passes leading to the foothills and tracts of territory offering secure bases for operation against the rich but defenceless plains of Assam. The dearth of topographical and geographical data rendered it difficult for the government to determine a natural and secure boundary in the north. D. Haig, the Chief of the General Staff, when he was called upon to give his sentiments on the subject, brought home to the Government of India that a boundary between the two empires, Indian and Chinese, would have to be determined sooner or later.<sup>60</sup> In absence of adequate information geographical, ethnological and administrative about the tribes along the borders of Assam and Burma, Haig considered it 'unwise' to make any detailed recommendation of the line which would be of greatest strategical value. All that was known to him beyond Sadiya was that the country was mountainous.

From every point of view a mountain chain is an obstacle for the offensive in strategy and tactics and an advantage for the defensive...the defenders can menace the communication of the assailant and by an obstinate struggle can

60. *Ibid.*, See 'Notes' p. 3, Haig 2 June 1910.



sometimes compromise his position. The advantage passes to the assailant when he in turn controls the ranges and passes.<sup>61</sup>

'Our first concern would be', the Chief of the General Staff, pointed out in his Memorandum on 4 August 1910 to obtain such a frontier 'as will render an incursion into India of the Chinese as difficult as possible'. This should run, he suggested, approximately from the frontier of Bhutan (92° E) to Irrawaddy-Salwin divide. This would necessitate, extension of control over all the independent tribes and effective occupation of the Zayul-Chu valley as far as the Chinese outpost at Rima.<sup>62</sup> Any delay in action, he was afraid, would enable the Chinese to occupy gradually these valleys which were reported to be fertile and with the aid of their industrious population obtain in time a base of supplies on this side of the watershed which would greatly facilitate a further advance into India. It would be therefore necessary *firstly* to intimate the Chinese the approximate frontier line from Bhutan to Irrawaddy-Salwin divide and *secondly* to take all steps within the power of the government to make that line effective.<sup>63</sup>

While the proposal was under consideration, intelligence arrived that all trade between the Tibetans and the Miju Mishmis had been stopped by the Chinese ; and Lancelot Hare urged the desirability of taking the Mishmis immediately under the control of the government.<sup>64</sup> This was communicated to the Secretary of State by Minto's telegram on 23 October 1910. Subject to further informations Minto's government held the

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61. 'Frontiers are indeed the razor edge,' remarks Lord Curzon, 'on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life and death to nations.' He therefore advocated a 'Frontier which unites natural and strategical strength, and by placing both the entrance and exit of passes in the hands of the defending power, compels the enemy to conquer the approach before he can use the passage'; cited in Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, pp. 6-7.

62. *Ibid.*, Memorandum by the General Staff Regarding our Military Policy on the North-East Frontier.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*, No. 227, Allen to Secretary Government of India, 20 September 1910.

view that the best means of safeguarding the frontier from the Chinese aggression would be to push forward the *Outer Line* so as to obtain a good strategical boundary agreements being taken at the same time from the tribes within and beyond the line binding them to have no relation with foreign power other than the British.<sup>65</sup> The external boundary should run, he proposed, approximately from the east of Towang tract in a northeastern direction to lat. 29° long. 94° ; thence along lat. 29° to long. 96° and thereafter in a southeasterly direction to Zayul-Chu as far as near Rima as possible, thence across the Zayul-Chu valley to the Zayul-Chu Irrawaddy divide and thence along that division until it reaches the Irrawaddy-Salwin divide.<sup>66</sup> Prior to it, as advised by Bell, information were to be obtained from the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, *inter alia*

- ( i ) the nature and extent of the territory of each tribe ;
- ( ii ) how far, if at all, the tribes recognised the suzerainty of China or Tibet ; and
- ( iii ) the possibility of executing new agreements with the tribes and the probable cost.<sup>67</sup>

Paucity of information prevented Lancelot Hare from giving a definite opinion as to the merit of the boundary proposed by the Government of India. He, of course, agreed that a line somewhat of the nature proposed might be laid down as the limit beyond which the approach of any foreign power should not be allowed. The tribes within the proposed boundary were under the control neither of the Chinese nor of the Tibetan government.<sup>68</sup> They seldom evinced a desire to receive plainsmen into their hills and fear of 'complications' dissuaded the government from entering into their mountain fastnesses or of giving any encouragement to the exploration of the country. Apart from the difficulties of the terrain, any

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65. *Ibid.*, No. 230 telegram Minto to Crewe, 23 October.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*

officer engaged in such a task met with a reception which was far from favourable. If, on the otherhand, he was to be accompanied by an escort of sufficient strength to overcome opposition, 'the difficulties of transport would be enormously increased, the cost of expedition would be heavy and the suspicion of the motive itself serve to provoke hostilities'. Yet, the Lieutenant Governor stressed that the territory must be explored if the government desired to enter into relations with the tribes between 28°-9° latitude. Urgent action was required, finally he pointed out, on the frontier in the direction of Rima. To protect this part from encroachment no time should be lost in taking the Miju and Digaru Mishmis under the protection of the government.<sup>69</sup> Concurring fully with these views the Chief of the General Staff remarked :

From a Military point of view it was a pity ever to allow the Chinese to get to Rima. But how they are there, we ought to take immediate steps to prevent them from any closer to the Assam valley? Any further advance on their part will obviously make it more difficult for us to hold the salient Northeast of Khamti (between the Zayul-Chu and Irrawaddy Divide and the Irrawaddy-Salwin Divide) to which we are already committed in order to keep the Chinese from establishing a footing in the Irrawaddy valley.<sup>70</sup>

'British imperial policy was', as Dorothy Woodman remarks, 'ambivalent ; the Foreign Office always had to calculate its relations with Peking and the reaction on British investments concentrated in the Yangtse valley. Too sharp a reaction to Chinese activities in Himalayan areas might provoke reprisals'.<sup>71</sup> In any case, Earle of Crewe was not inclined to accept the proposal of a Viceroy who was about to leave India. The Government of India was told to put off the question of the Mishmis and the policy in general for consideration of Lord

69. *Ibid.*, Nos. 226, 234 and 239.

70. *Ibid.*, see 'Notes' on page 14, Chief of General Staff, 26 November 1910.

71. Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 143.

Hardinge.<sup>72</sup> An architect of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, the new Viceroy could hardly advocate a policy which was tantamount to territorial advance in the direction of Central Asia. In the discussions which he had with Lancelot Hare soon after his arrival in Calcutta Hardinge stood opposed to 'running the risks' or 'spending money' on attempts to create a strategical frontier beyond the *Outer Line* or to lend support to the Mishmis or any other tribe beyond the frontier who might appeal for help against the Chinese invaders. 'The Chinese aggression would be met', he remarked, 'not in tribal territory bordering Assam but by an attack on the coast of China.' The frontier officers were accordingly told to confine themselves to cultivating friendly relations with the border tribes and punishing them for outrages within administrative limits.<sup>73</sup>

Lancelot Hare continued to urge for a 'more active line'. In a demi-official letter he brought home to the Viceroy that in the event the Chinese occupy the entire area up to the *Outer Line*, the security of the frontier would be at stake, for the defensive position beyond the neutral zone was extremely weak. There was hardly any military post on the *Outer Line*; and such posts would be created only on the spur of the hills and above the malaria height; and that this could not be done without effective control and in any case without cooperation of the tribes who occupied these hills. He therefore proposed frequent visit of these areas, improvement of trade routes within the recognised border and even beyond, if unopposed, and friendly intercourse with the chiefs by offer of present or otherwise. While admitting that in the event of any trial of strength between England and China, the contest would not probably be decided on this frontier, the Lieutenant Governor reminded the Viceroy that the government was bound to defend the valuable tea-gardens and for which it must be in command of the strategic positions without which the task would be

72. *Ibid.*, No. 232, telegram from Secretary of State, 25 October 1910.

73. *Ibid.*, No. 239, Hardinge to Crewe, 22 December 1910.

exceedingly difficult ; 'we would be very easily greatly harassed and put to great expense and have to maintain an unduly large force in this frontier.'<sup>74</sup>

Hardinge remained as unbending as ever. He recognised that the action of the Chinese might ultimately compel the government to fix a line beyond which no further advance could be made, but for the present Governor-General in Council could not recommend a 'more active policy' as advocated by the Lieutenant Governor.<sup>75</sup> In the Secret Despatch of 22 December 1910 Earle of Crewe was informed

We see no necessity at present for incurring the risk and responsibilities by a forward movement into the tribal territory beyond our control ... Should it be possible to obtain further information about the country beyond 'outer line' without the risk of complication we should be prepared to authorise exploration 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 be given to the tribes that they rely on our support or protection in the event of Tibetan or Chinese aggression.<sup>76</sup>

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74. *Ibid.*

75. *Ibid.*

76. *Ibid.*

*Expeditions and Explorations*

Noel Williamson, who had in the meantime succeeded Needham as Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, was directed by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam to undertake a tour between the *Inner* and *Outer Line* with the object of establishing effective control over the tribes between the lines. For fear of 'dangerous collisions', the Government of India was not inclined to extend the tours initially beyond the *Outer Line*. No objection was, of course, raised if the Lieutenant Governor felt that Williamson could safely visit the Abor villages beyond the *Outer Line* without the use of force or the danger of future complications.<sup>1</sup>

Already in 1907-8, Williamson visited the Lohit valley with the object of acquainting himself with the people and the country and to collect information as to the practicability of opening up trade route towards south-eastern Tibet. Travelling by the right bank of the river Lohit he reached Sati, thirty-five miles south of Rima, on 27 December 1907. 'There is nothing to stand in the way of a trade route', he felt, for the people through whose country it would pass were 'peaceful and quiet'. For traders, Tibet was then a 'forbidden land'.

To the north she has no market ; to the south the country is mountainous and inhabited by savages ; to the east her nearest market is Batang, where however the demand for her industries has not been sufficiently great to create a supply ; and to the west at present she has to encounter a wild and tedious route inhabited by a people of whom the Tibetans stand in some dread.

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1. FEA, 1908 ; December, Nos. 1-7 ; *Reid*, 214.

Nonetheless, the Assistant Political Officer thought 'attainment of affluence is one of the principal objects of man, be he yellow, black or white, Pagan, Christian, or Buddhist'. If facilities are provided for export, industries would bound to develop. What the Tibetans essentially required was improved communication along the natural outlet namely the Lohit valley. 'Once the Tibetan learns that every hide and every pound of wool has a marketable value in Assam which can be reached quickly, comfortably and safely, and where in return he can purchase tea, clothing, etc., commercial intercourse are assured and the expenditure on the route justified.'<sup>2</sup>

In March 1908, without any escort Williamson started from Pasighat along the foothills to Ledum and thence through the Abor country to the Sesseri river at Dijmur. Despite warnings when he found some villages continued to exact blackmail from timber-cutters, Williamson sought to impose poll-tax on such villages so as to make them feel that they were under the government. In January 1909, as reported by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Williamson happened to meet a Kebang headman of influence who invited him to visit his village. In February, accompanied by Mr. Lumsden he paid a visit to Kebang beyond the *Outer Line* wherein he was not only well received, but extended an invitation by the Abors to visit their villages in the north.<sup>3</sup> The Assistant Political Officer was enabled to collect information about the route to be followed and the difficulties to overcome in his subsequent tours. It was evident to him that the attitude of these hillmen were on the whole friendly and that there was no Tibetan influence in that quarter; that Kebang exercised a sort of hegemony over these tribes with whom the government would have to arrive at a settlement in near future.<sup>4</sup>

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2. *Ibid.*, pp. 210-1

3. FEA, 1909; September, No. 299: Hughes-Buller (Officiating Secretary, *EBA*) to Secretary Government of India, 29 June.

4. *Ibid.*

Williamson's successful visit to Kebang and the friendly reception that was accorded to him on the occasion emboldened the Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam to authorise him to visit villages of Kebang, Padu, Membo, Silluk, Dambu and Ledum. The Secretary of State raised no objection to the recommendation subsequently made by the Foreign Department provided arrangement for settlement of difficulties in the areas between the *Inner* and *Outer Line* was the sole object of the tour beyond the *Outer Line*.<sup>5</sup> Kebang was located three marches from the British border ; others in between the *Inner* and *Outer Line* or a little beyond. Williamson was advised to explain 'clearly and distinctly' the Abors that under the treaty of 1862 they were neither to encroach upon British territory nor to extort blackmail from timber-cutters ; that the tribesmen settling in the plains must pay house or poll-tax and that in the event of their entering into the British territory they must obey the law and conduct themselves as subjects of the British government. If they evinced 'friendly and conciliatory spirit' the question of compensation for any loss sustained by them by the prohibition of royalty from the saw-mill companies and also the *posa* which remained unpaid need be settled.<sup>6</sup>

Early next year Williamson repeated his Lohit tour partly to construct the Digaru-Miju bridge path and partly to make further contact in that area. On 31 January 1910, he reached Walong wherein and even in and around Rima he found neither the Chinese nor the Tibetans let alone any collision between the troops of those two governments. Intelligence arrived in May that the Chinese had advanced to Rima and even ordered the Mishmi chief of Pangum to cut a

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5. *Ibid.*, telegram 1 September 1909 from IO to Foreign Secretary Government of India ; also Foreign Secretary to Secretary, *EBA*, 9 September.

6. *Ibid.*, also *FEA*, 1908 ; December, No. 15 ; see Draft Instructions for the guidance of the *APO* Sadiya.



road to Assam. In early next year when Williamson revisited Walong he saw Chinese flag actually fluttering at Menilkrai beyond the Tibetan territory.<sup>7</sup>

In the meantime the Burmese government was greatly alarmed by the rapid advance made by the Chinese in the direction of Upper Burma. To counter Chinese move an expedition was depatched under W. F. Hertz, Deputy Commissioner Myitkyina towards the end of 1910, and the latter succeeded in consolidating British jurisdiction as far as latitude 26°. No sooner had the expedition withdrawn when the Chinese attempted to assert their influence into the territory claimed by the British by the 'despatch of a party with the usual appointment orders and (other) tokens for issue to village headmen'. Reports poured in one after another that Chinese official accompanied by a military escort visited a Khamti village located in the north of the British boundary ; that in April a party of the Chinese appeared in the Aka country close to the administrative frontier of Assam. F. M. Bailey who had travelled from China to Sadiya *via* Rima and Mishmi country in the summer of 1911 reported that the Chinese officials from Zayul had summoned some Mishmi chiefs to appear before them ; failing which they were threatened with dire consequences. In September the Pangum chief was again called for ; the purpose of which would be, he was told, disclosed on arrival. It was intimated by him that during previous rainy season a party of the Chinese had visited the valley of Delei in the Taroan section of the Mishmi country. This received corroboration of Dundas during his Mishmi Mission when he reported that the Chinese had entered into the Mishmi country from the north *via* Glei Dakhru Pass and had made an attempt to assert Chinese authority in that area. The most

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7. This was confirmed by Haram Miju Mishmi who made a statement to the effect that the Chinese had established firm control over Rima and planted flags at the river Yepuk, 20 miles east of Rima. FSE, 1911 ; January, 222 in Nos. 211-40.

disturbing news was that in connection with the disturbance in Zayul and Pomed country in southeast Tibet, Peking authorities had decided to despatch troops down the river Dihong towards the Abor country which if carried out might lead to Chinese claims to tribal territory, if not 'serious complications' in the North-East Frontier.<sup>8</sup>

On 8 March 1911, to trace the extent of Tibetan influence Williamson left for the Abor country accompanied by a small party including J. D. Gregorson, a tea-garden doctor from Tinsukia. A. H. W. Bentinck, Deputy Commissioner Dibrugarh, who visited the area during Abor expedition (1912), reported that on the arrival of the party at Rotung, on 20 March, some ration and a case of liquor was stolen by Abor carriers whom Williamson threatened to punish on his return. This created a commotion amongst the villagers who in their council determined on murdering the Assistant Political Officer. 'Knowing the Abors to be stronger in council than in action', Williamson took no precautionary measures and continued his march. On the 30th, while taking his mid-day meal at the village Panggi, Gregorson was cut to pieces by the Meyongs and on the next day at Komsing Williamson shared the same fate followed by the massacre of forty-two men. Three men of the party managed to escape and arrived at Sadiya to narrate the tale of this tragedy.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Captain Hardcastle who had accompanied the mission recovered in the Delei valley fifteen Chinese passports issued in the name of Chao Erh-feng. He learnt that the tribesmen were told by a Chinese officer that he had not come to take any revenue from them, but in future they must obey the orders of the Chinese. He asked them to accept the passports which would be useful to them while trading in Tibet or to any British official who might enter tribal country, IOR, Political and Secret Memoranda, L/P&S/18/B. 189, see Mehra, P., *The North-Eastern Frontier, 1906-14*, pp. 35 ff. ; also FSE, 1911 ; October, No. 104 ; July, Nos. 598-680 ; Viceroy to Secretary of State, 1 June 1911.

9. FEA, 1911 ; May, Nos. 4-5 ; Part A, telegram from Secretary, EBA ; 5 April 1911 ; also Reid, pp. 218-9.

The incident at Rotung, there is every reason to believe, precipitated the crisis ; but the real cause lay deeper—the dissatisfaction and resentment of the Abors engendered by gradual loss of their much-cherished rights. Not only did the English built roads, erected outposts, advanced and absorbed their territory but deprived them of the *posa* which they enjoyed from early times. They considered it to be a legitimate grievance to be deprived of the royalty which they collected from the speculators for extracting timber from their hills. What was worse, they were now subjected to poll-tax in occupying lands which they considered as domain of their own. They were looking for an opportunity to drive the hated invaders from their hills. The humiliating retreat and ultimate disaster of the British troops at Bordak emboldened them to renew their attack on the British party under Williamson in which not the Pasi-Meyongs alone but the community as a whole was involved.

To exact punishment of the murderers, Lancelot Hare in his communication on 25 April 1911, urged the Government of India to despatch an expedition without which, he felt, 'our position in the frontier is impossible and our village and tea-gardens will not be safe'. The attack was considered to be a challenge to the British government which must be accepted and due reparation must be exacted.<sup>10</sup> The incident produced a radical change in the policy of Lord Hardinge. He concurred in the views of the Lieutenant Governor that security and peace demanded that the treacherous act of the Abors must be punished ; for which in his telegram on 29 June to the Secretary of State the Viceroy recommended the despatch of an expedition, the primary object of which was the 'exaction of reparation' and 'establishment of (British) superiority' in the estimation of the Abors.<sup>11</sup> Advantage should also be taken to

10. FSE, 1911 ; August, Nos. 436-51 ; Secretary *EBA*, 25 April 1911.

11. FSE, 1911 ; August, Nos. 5-17, Part A ; Viceroy to Secretary of State, telegram P. 29 June.

survey and explore the tribal areas, as far as practicable, and to obtain knowledge for the determination of the Indo-Chinese boundary in that quarter. Recent events in the Burmese frontier had shown the urgent necessity of coming to an understanding with the Chinese government 'about our mutual frontier' with object of 'preventing Chinese intrigues within our limits and keeping her as far as possible from our present administrative area'. Simultaneously a friendly mission under an escort need be sent into the Mishmi country with the double object of preventing the Mishmis acting in collaboration with the Abors and obtaining information as to the nature and extent of their territory. 'We do not propose', it was assured,

that the Mishmis should be given a guarantee of protection, but *we should leave them, as well as the Abors, in no manner of doubt as to their under us* or as to their having to look to us for future reward or punishment according to their conduct.<sup>12</sup>

The proposal received the approval of Marquis of Crewe, the Secretary of State, in his telegram of 24 July 1911.<sup>13</sup> The Viceroy was however requested to enlighten whether there existed an *Outer Line* in the Mishmi country and if so whether he wanted to push it forward or that the new frontier should lie outside it and in latter case what was the object of having three lines whether in Mishmi or Abor country. Agreeing with the Viceroy that the Mishmis should be given no formal guarantee of protection, Crewe contended that the change contemplated would make it incumbent on the government, specially if the boundary was laid down, to protect these tribesmen within that line from the aggression of the Chinese or of the Tibetans. The Viceroy was further requested to indicate the steps proposed to be adopted in order to prevent occurrence of frontier incidents and how he would deal with them if that eventually arise. 'Experience has shown', he remarked, 'that

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12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, Secretary of State to Viceroy, telegram P. 24 July.

to send an expedition to lay claim to a frontier and withdraw from it is worse than useless, that such procedure only invites an advance on the part of the Chinese.'

In his reply on 21 September Hardinge informed the Secretary of State that 'unusual political activity' of late displayed by the Chinese along the whole line of frontier left no alternative for his government but to revert to the proposal of his predecessor to make every endeavour to secure as soon as possible a sound strategical boundary between China *cum* Tibet and the tribal areas east of Bhutan up to and inclusive of Mishmi country. All the more because

We have on the administrative border of Assam some of the wealthiest districts of British India where large sums of private European capital have been invested and where the European population outnumbered that of any other district in India.<sup>14</sup>

As to the actual line, in view of the scantiness of information the Government of India had no other alternative than the one already defined by Minto on 23 October 1910 which represented roughly the limits of the tribal territory on the Assam frontier subject to modifications as might be necessary as a result of explorations to be conducted hereafter. That line should be the objective, Hardinge added, to which the *Outer Line* should be advanced.

We do not propose to have a third or intermediate line between the existing 'Inner Line' and the new external boundary; neither do we think it necessary for the latter to be regularly demarcated at present, but it will probably be necessary, to erect cairns<sup>15</sup> at suitable points...to indicate the limits of our control and to explain the tribesman the object of such marks.

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14. FSE, 1911; October, Nos. 52-123; Viceroy to Secretary of State, 21 September.

15. One such cairn would be required, for instance, in the neighbourhood of Menilkrai opposite to the flag erected by the Chinese from Rima. Site of other cairns to be determined after enquiring on the spot in conformity with the line already defined by Minto's despatch on 23 October 1910.

The policy to be pursued towards the tribes in between the administrative and the new boundary should be one of

loose political control having its object the minimum interference compatible with the necessity of protecting the tribesmen from unprovoked aggression...and preventing them from violating either our own or Chinese territory.<sup>16</sup>

Inevitably, the Viceroy admitted that it would be necessary to take effective steps to prevent the violation of the new external boundary by the Chinese after the withdrawal of the expedition or missions. The measures to be adopted however could not be determined until additional information were available of the country. Some of these might be in the form of outposts while others tribal agreements and arrangements and, in addition, it would be essential as the boundary had been roughly decided, a formal intimation should be made to Chinese government as to limits of the territory under control of the government.<sup>17</sup>

Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office had much misgivings as to Hardinge's proposal of a new frontier line though it received the concurrence of the Secretary of State. He saw no wisdom in 'sending expeditions into unadministered territory with a view to claiming a frontier and of subsequently withdrawing from it'—a policy which was deprecated by the Secretary of State in his telegram on 24 July. He was not agreeable to demarcate a new frontier unless the Government of India was prepared to protect any line which might eventually be selected from all reasonable risk of violation by the Chinese. With respect to formal intimation to the Chinese, Grey considered that such an action would increase the risk of an extension of Chinese action unless the claim was supported by the evidence of an intention, if need be, to protect and control the territory in question.<sup>18</sup> In his reply on 31 October 1911,

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16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. FSE, 1912 ; May Nos. 201-337 ; FO to IO, 26 October 1911.

Marquis of Crewe admitted, as explained by Hardinge, 'as a natural and inevitable consequence of the settlement of the external boundary...it will be necessary to take effective steps to prevent the violation of the new external boundary' by the Chinese or the Tibetans. He made it clear that the Government of India was prepared to take adequate measures to protect any line which might eventually be selected, and that the final decision as to the line should not be taken until His Majesty's Government were in full possession of all the facts. No formal intimation be made to the Chinese, he assured, until a final decision as to the frontier to be held on the basis of results of the expeditions and explorations.<sup>19</sup>

The expeditionary force which was organised on an elaborate scale consisted of 1/8 Gurkhas, 32 Sikh pioneers, a company of Bengal Sappers and Miners besides Police units drawn from Naga and Lushai Hills, Lakhimpur and Dacca Military Police Battalions. Major General H. Bower was in command and the Chief Political Officer while A. H. W. Bentinck, Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur and W. C. M. Dundas of the Police Department accompanied the troops as Assistant Political Officers.<sup>20</sup> Bower was directed, amongst others, to inflict severe punishment and exact reparation for murder of Williamson and his party, particularly to compel the Meyongs to surrender the chief instigators and perpetrators of the massacre, to survey and explore as much country as possible and to submit proposals for a suitable frontier between India and Tibet in conformity with the line indicated in Minto's despatch on 23 October 1910.<sup>21</sup>

The main column advanced on 28 October 1911. There was little fighting and the operation practically ended with the fall

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19. *Ibid.*, IO to FO, 31 October, 1911.

20. IOR, L/P&S/11/3, P 284/12; *Abor Expedition* 11/7, P. 77/12, see Diary of APO, 31 Dec, 1911 to Jan. 1912; FSE, 1912; November, Nos. 599-690, *Report on Abor Expedition*.

21. *Ibid.*

of Kebang on 9 December. Incapable of combination and unaccustomed to fire-arms the Abors could offer but feeble resistance against advancing British troops which outnumbered their own. The expedition exhibited to the hillmen the might of the British that their hills were not inaccessible, that their crops could be destroyed and villages burnt down whenever resistance offered. But it proved extremely difficult to ascertain the chief instigators and perpetrators, the main objective of the expedition ; for democratic habits of the Abors demanded all important action to be decided by the *Kebang*, the village assembly, wherein whatever course of action was taken all who took part were equally responsible.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless severe retribution visited on the Pasi-Meyongs who were reduced to submission while the power of Kebang, the terror of the north, was finally broken. They bound themselves to obey the commands of the government and to remove forthwith the 'trade blocks' in the north. 'The advent of the British...made it clear to all that weak and strong alike would be allowed to visit the plains and that no tribe would be prevented from doing so in future, while our ability to enforce this would no longer be questioned.'<sup>23</sup>

Politically the expedition was a successful one, but its geographical results were rather small. The difficulties of the terrain and also of the climate made it impossible for General Bower to determine accurately the natural frontier between the Abor country and the territory under the Tibetan government. Nonetheless, the valley of the Yamne was surveyed, the river Shimong was mapped, the Syom was partially traced and the valley of Dihong was visited as far as Singging (28°25' Lat.), about thirty miles of the northern-most Abor village.<sup>24</sup>

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22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*





Abor Expeditions and Explorations, 1911-2.

After termination of the expedition Bentinck with a party of 300 men toured Abor villages ; some of these had never been penetrated so far by Europeans. Besides Pangi and Komsing, he visited the villages of Riu, Geku, Rega and Shimong. In onward march northwards the party reached Singging on 31 January 1912. On its return in a meeting at Komkar attended by the headmen of villages Shimong, Damroh, Riu and Pangi, Bentinck explained the necessity of their loyalty and good behaviour to the government which would enable them to have

trading facilities wherever they desired. About the sametime two parties under Colonel D. C. F. McIntyre and Captain Molesworth had visited several Padam and Meyong (Minyong) villages. In their survey up the Shimong valley, the officers visited Dosing, Parong and Yingku and everywhere they were well received.<sup>25</sup>

Simultaneously a mission was sent under G. C. Kerwood, Sub-Divisional Officer, Lakhimpur, to the 'Hill Miri country' (the tribal areas between the river Dihong and Bhutan) to strengthen friendly relation with these tribes and also to explore the country to obtain information for a scientific frontier to be demarcated between India, Tibetan and Chinese territory. He was to take the route up the Subansiri to the Kamla river and then northward and westward as might be considered desirable. But he was to act in concert with General Bower, Commanding the Abor Expeditionary Force, who was entrusted with a similar work in the east of the river Dihong. Besides an escort of 150 men Kerwood was accompanied by G. A. Nevill and A. M. Graham of the fifth Gurkha Rifles.<sup>26</sup> Unforeseen difficulties forced Kerwood to retrace his steps hardly had he left his base camp at Dulungmukh on 11 November 1912. When a fresh start was made in the next month heavy sickness under inhospitable climate impeded the progress of the mission. On 13 January 1913, the party reached Chemir, the advance camp, to exploration of the Kamla valley. From there a small party explored the Khru valley while the main column advanced northwards. The mission had to be cautious throughout in avoiding a collision with 'ignorant and suspicious' tribesmen and, in fact, the camp at Tali was attacked on 11 February followed by the loss of several lives. On the otherhand, while passing through the Apa Tani plateau on his return journey he was greatly impressed by the beauty of the country and the

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25. *Ibid.*

26. IOR, L/P&S/11/9, P 908/12, *Miri Mission* ; FSE, 1912 ; November, Nos. 599-690 ; see Kerwood, *Report on Miri Mission*.

friendliness of the inhabitants. Kerwood found it extremely difficult to obtain definite materials for delimitation of the frontier though he succeeded in exploring an area about 1400 square miles. The course of the rivers Khru and Subansiri had been surveyed and the site of over one hundred villages were located. The existence of Tibetan sword, bell and beads which Kerwood found in almost all the villages showed clearly Tibetan influence in that region.<sup>27</sup>

The Mishmi Mission, an adjunct of the Abor expedition, was placed under W. C. M. Dundas with the object of collecting information for a suitable boundary besides tightening up the grip over the Mishmis to counteract Chinese influence in that quarter. If any Chinese officer or troops were met on this side of the Tibet-China boundary, Dundas was advised to ask them politely to withdraw and if necessary to compel them to do so. The Mishmis were to be told, *inter alia*, (i) that for the future they were under the control of the British government 'exclusively' and must accept no orders except for the present from the Political Officer, Mishmi Mission, and thereafter from Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya ; (ii) that in return for the protection afforded they must unhesitatingly obey order and provide coolies for work on the track ; (iii) that land up to the foothills was British and that all cultivators on it were liable to poll-tax ; and (iv) that all raidings in the plains must cease and inter-tribal feuds be referred to Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, for settlement and orders.<sup>28</sup>

The Mission was carried on under two directions : one along in Sesseri and Dihong valley and the other in the valley of the Lohit. The main column under Captain F. M. Bailey left Sadiya on 20 November 1911. It visited thirty villages wherein the party was well received by the inhabitants who were then in

27. *Ibid.*, also *Reid*, pp. 279-80.

28. IOR, L/P&S/11/2, P. 1114/12, *Mishmi Mission* ; *Ibid.*, 11/6, P 603/12, see *Diary of PO*, 15-31 December ; also *FSE*, 1912 ; May, 243 in Nos. 201-337.

need of protection against aggressions of the Abors at Damroh and Dambuk. The Chinese were reported to have four hundred soldiers at Alenpo, the first Tibetan village reached by the road up the Dihong ; but they had not ventured into Mishmi country though they were attempting to enter into relations with the Mishmis of the Dri valley.<sup>29</sup>

In early January 1912, Mr Dundas accompanied by a party of Military Police under Major C. Bliss and Captain J. Hardcastle advanced into the Lohit valley as far as the river Yepuk about a mile north of the flag set up by the Chinese at Menilkrai. The exploratory works of Needham and Williamson had made the task of Dundas easier. Not only did he find the tribesmen everywhere very friendly, but noticed a general tendency amongst them to favour British protection in spite of the endeavours made by the Chinese to win their friendship. To counteract Chinese activities Dundas recommended a road through the country and a post on the frontier at Walong ; a track from this to post Glei Dakru and Kue Dakru passes, he thought, would keep the movement of the Chinese under observation.<sup>30</sup>

The extension of political control, however loose it might be, called for administrative reorganisation of the tribal areas of the North-East Frontier. The Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur, aided by an Assistant Political Officer Sadiya, hitherto, controlled the affairs of the Khamtis and the Singphos, and to these were now added the Abors and the Mishmis. With his heavy responsibilities of a progressive district, it was too much to expect of the Deputy Commissioner to do adequate justice to the problems of the tribesmen in an extensive frontier demanding personal attention. In his 'Political Report' of the expedition Bentinck emphasised the need for an officer in exclusive charge of the tract inhabited by the Abors, the Dufas (including the Hill Miris) and the tribes westwards to Bhutan. This should be controlled from Geku which was accessible and within the

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29. *Op. cit.*, No. 619 ; Annexure C, *Report on the Work of Dibong Column* (1911-2).

30. *Ibid.*, Annexure E, *Report of W. C. M. Dundas*, 17 June 1912.

reach of different tribes. The plains areas from Dijmur-Sengajan path to the Dibong, so intimately connected with the plains on account of migrations, should fall under the same jurisdiction, of course, under a subordinate charge with headquarters at Pasighat. Bantinck wanted to have two other charges ; one for the area between the Siyom and the Subansiri and the other west of the Subansiri.<sup>31</sup> Concurring in this view General Bower in his letter on 12 January 1912 recommended to have in this belt three sections : (i) Abor or Central Section with headquarters at Rotung under two Political Officers ; one of whom should be in overall charge of the three sections, (ii) Mishmi and Khamti or Eastern Section under an Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya and (iii) Western Section with an Assistant Political Officer for the entire tract from Subansiri to Bhutan.<sup>32</sup>

Emphasising the significance of the Abor frontier, Sir C. S. Bayley, Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam (1911-2), in his letter on 22 February 1912, laid stress on the establishment of a permanent post in the Abor country. He brought home to the Government of India the impossibility of exercising effective control over these tribes from a post in the plains. The earlier policy of sending expeditions into the Abor country, inflicting punishments and then withdrawing the force invariably been misunderstood by these tribes. The failure of this policy and no less the emergence of an 'aggressive and intriguing' neighbour, whom it was absolutely necessary to prevent from exerting its influence over these tribes, made it essential to establish a post in the Abor country, preferably amongst the redoubtable Meyongs against whom the last expedition was directed. He suggested Rotung, as recognised by the local authorities, admirably situated for the purpose. 'It is in all respects well adapted to play the useful part played by

31. *Ibid.*, Appendix-A, Bantinck's Report on the Abor Expedition.

32. FSE, 1912 ; May, 263 in Nos. 201-337 ; General Officer Commanding Abor Expeditionary Force to EBA, 16 January.

Samaguting in the early days of the British connection with the Naga Hills.'<sup>33</sup>

Bayley agreed on the main lines the proposal made by General Bower though he wanted to have in Abor country one officer each at Rotung and Kobo, two officers at Sadiya and a post near Menilkrai to be linked with Sadiya by a few subsidiary posts. The Political Officer at Rotung acting directly under the orders of the Chief Commissioner should also exercise general supervision over the Eastern Section. On the west prior to the establishment of posts, the Lieutenant Governor laid stress on survey and exploration of the hills occupied by the Akas, the Dufas and the Miris connecting these with the work then in progress under Kerwood.<sup>34</sup>

Agreeing with the views of the Lieutenant Governor the Government of India recommended the proposal to the Secretary of State. The latter opposed on principle the establishment of permanent posts in the Abor country : for that would mean extension of control and consequent increase in responsibilities of the government. He was not inclined even to maintain such posts beyond the *Inner Line*.<sup>35</sup> Protesting against the decision, Foreign Department in its telegram on 2 March warned Whitehall that 'the result of the expedition will speedily vanish and fresh troubles may arise necessitating further operations unless posts are established in the tribal country beyond'.<sup>36</sup> What ultimately persuaded the Secretary of State to agree to the recommendations appears to have been the true significance of the Mishmi and Abor frontier as revealed by Sir Archdale Earle who had about this time assumed charge as the Chief Commissioner of Assam (1912-8).<sup>37</sup> On the

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33. *Ibid.*, No. 290, Secretary, *EBA* to Secretary Government of India, 22 February.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, Viceroy to Secretary of State, telegram 7 March ; Secretary of State to Viceroy, 14 March.

36. *Ibid.*, Viceroy to Secretary of State, telegram 2 March.

37. *FSE*, 1912 ; November, No. 619 ; Reid, W. J., (Chief Secretary Assam) to Secretary Government of India, 7 July 1912.

authority of the Chief of the General Staff, in his 'Confidential Note', 1 June 1912, the Chief Commissioner made it clear that

the Mishmi mountains impose a screen behind which progress of the policy and movement of the Chinese near our vulnerable northeast salient cannot be observed from within our administrative border and it is imperative that we should be able to watch this progress.

Over and above

the difficulties of future negotiations with China will be much enhanced by the apparent renunciation of the territory and our failure to set up boundary marks or occupy any position will be construed to mean that we are not justified in regarding the country as our own and acquiescing the Chinese demarcation.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, Mishmi country urgently called for further surveys and exploration in addition to the improvement of communication to its extreme limit and construction of a military outpost at Walong. To exercise political control over the territory, he proposed that the entire tribal area east of Subansiri-Siyom divide would be under an officer equal in status with the Deputy Commissioner who was to be aided in his duties by four Assistants at different headquarters.<sup>39</sup>

Garrisons were then maintained at Pasighat (75) Kobo (15) and Balek (100). The outpost at Rotung had been abandoned under orders of the Secretary of State on 25 April 1912.<sup>40</sup> Archale Earle felt that trading posts were no less important than Military outposts in the Abor frontier. 'Many of our past difficulties and misunderstandings', he remarked, 'with various Abor tribes have arisen from the fact that the privilege of trading with the plains was monopolised by a few sections of the community, to whose interest it was to misinterpret our motives and actions.' Kebang had assured under the terms of peace that they would not prevent other tribes from trading in

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38. *Ibid.*, also Mehra, P., *The North-Eastern Frontier* ; i, pp. 45 ff.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Op. cit.*, Nos. 325, 327 and 332.

the plains. This they did, Chief Commissioner thought, under duress. What was the guarantee that they would not violate the terms of peace if an opportunity presented itself? In the interest of the weaker tribes and to obviate the necessity of punitive expeditions, the Chief Commissioner strongly urged the establishment of a trading post in the Abor country temporarily occupied by a guard of a hundred rifles. He agreed with General Bower that future dealings with these tribes should be directed 'to keep in touch with the people and at the sametime pursue a policy that will tend to their material prosperity'. This would convert these hitherto troublesome tribes into peaceful neighbours.<sup>41</sup>

On the approval of the aforesaid measures by the Secretary of State, the Government of India communicated to the Chief Commissioner on 16 October 1912 the administrative arrangements and thus laid the foundation of North-East Frontier Agency. The entire tract was divided into three sectors: Eastern, Central and Western. In view of increasing importance of the Eastern Section, sanction was accorded for the construction of a properly bridged and cart-road from Sadiya to Menilkrai, establishment of a Military Post in the vicinity of Menilkrai and two intermediary posts on the completion of the road and the extension of telegraphic line from Sadiya to the advanced posts. In the Central Sector the posts at Balek, Pasighat and Kobo were to be kept up and a trading post to be established near Kebang under a guard of 100 rifles subject to the condition that the latter to be retained as long as the trading post remained open and its scope was limited to keeping in road open and undisturbed.<sup>42</sup>

The entire tract east of the Subansiri-Siyom divide was placed under W. C. M. Dundas with headquarters at Sadiya. Vested with the powers of a Deputy Commissioner he was to act under the orders of the Chief Commissioner. He was to be

41. *Op. cit.*, Reid to Secretary Government of India, 7 July 1912.

42. *Op. cit.*, No. 684 ; Grant, H., (Deputy Secretary, Government of India) to Secretary Government of Assam, 16 October 1912.



aided, as recommended by the Chief Commissioner, by four Assistants : W. J. H. Ballantine at headquarters, T. P. M. O.' Callaghan in the Lohit Valley, T. E. Furge in Abor Hills and a fourth to be nominated later to look after the Bebejia and Chulikata Mishmis. The area on the west of the Subansiri-Siyom was placed under Captain G. A. Nevill who was to work directly under the Chief Commissioner.<sup>43</sup> To enable the Political Officers to exercise in a 'regular manner' the measure of political control, on the approval of the Government of India in September 1914, the inner boundary of the North-East Frontier was defined and three new charges were set up : Central and Eastern Section, Lakhimpur Frontier Tract and Western Section.<sup>44</sup>

Emphasis was laid on survey and exploration on the one hand to the Doshung pass and headquarters of the Siyom and Siju rivers and, on the other, to the valley of Dibong and Sesserri in continuation of the work done in the previous year. On the west the local authorities were advised to make every endeavour to increase the knowledge of the tribes and to establish contact with them by promenades as preliminary to surveys and explorations.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, towards the close of 1911, Captain Nevill accompanied by a party of Military Police under Major Bliss conducted a survey *firstly* to trace the course of the river Dibong and *secondly* to fix the boundary along the main ranges of the Himalayas on the north of the valley. He was further advised to visit as many villages as possible over whom a loose political control was proposed to be established. From 30 November 1913 to 5 June 1914, they were surveyed the entire tract, but failed to determine the boundary line as it could not advance beyond Singging. They were however well received everywhere. Almost all the villages were visited

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43. *Ibid.*

44. *Reid*, pp. 248-9.

45. *Op. cit.*, Grant 16 October.

and excellent relations established with their respective headmen. The only grievance brought was, an universal one, that the lower villages closed the roads to upper ones preventing the latter coming to trade. In the interest of the government Nevill wanted the roads to be kept open. He ruled out Chinese infiltration into this region which was not easily accessible and remained closed by snow for the greater part of the year.<sup>46</sup>

Dibong exploration was followed up by the 'Walong promenade' under T. P. M. O'. Callaghan, Assistant Political Officer, Lohit Valley. Accompanied by Major C. Stansfeld and Lieutenant Harrington with an escort, the party left Sadiya on 1 January 1914, reached Minzang on 29th and arrived at Rima on 11 February. He found no Chinese troops in that quarter. Nevertheless he urged on the completion of the road to the frontier and opening of a post at Walong as soon as practicable. In the event of renewal of Chinese activities,

A small force, operating from Walong could occupy Rima and hold the Rong Tho and Zayul valleys in 24-30 hours, and *vice versa*...Should delay be made, it is not impossible that in the years to come it may take much more than the resources which the Local Administration will have at its immediate command, to assert our legitimate rights and claims, which the ready completion of the already sanctioned but incompleated scheme for the Lohit valley will confirm.

From the proposed post to Rima, he hoped, there would be no difficulty in road-making ; and the Lohit valley road already opened up to Mankum required only continuation for about twenty miles to make the opening and rationing of the posts.<sup>47</sup> On his return Callaghan removed the boundary pillars which the Chinese had erected three miles south of Walong. Justifying the action of the Assistant Political Officer in his letter on

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46. FSE, 1914 ; December, No. 156 ; Nevill to Chief Secretary Assam, 14 September 1913 ; also No. 170, *Report on Dehong Survey and Exploration Mission* (1912-3)

47. FSE, 1914 ; December, No. 174 ; Reid to Secretary Government of India, 6 May ; also Tour Diary of T. P. M. O'. Callaghan.

6 May the Chief Commissioner expressed the hope that the Government of India would also consider it impossible to recognise the Chinese boundary near Menilkrai, that the boundary should start from the junction of the Di Chu with the Lohit and that the road should be extended to that point. This would provide the route to Talok pass and thence to Burma. He agreed with Callaghan that the location of the post should be at Walong wherein he hoped in a few years the garrison would be rationed locally while the Mishmi porters would be available for carriage of stores and rations from Sadiya.<sup>48</sup>

On the termination of the Dibong survey, proposals were forwarded by Nevill for the formation of the Western Section of the Frontier Tract and on programme of work for the next open season. Nevill was appointed Political Officer without having any fixed headquarters on the west of the Subansiri-Siyom divide. He represented that his position as 'a roving commission' without any authority was an anomalous one. Agreeing with him Archdale Earle informed the Foreign Department that a certain amount of inconvenience had been experienced along the North Lakhimpur and Darrang borders, specially in the latter, on account of raids by the frontier tribes with which the authorities in the adjacent districts had alone to deal with. The control exercised by the latter officers, who were fully occupied with duties in their respective charges, had been far from satisfactory. Nevill was in a much better position to deal with the raids and punish the raiders ; and that he should be vested with powers to do so in order to enhance his prestige and influence in that quarter. The Chief Commissioner proposed that in the district of Darrang, initially, the boundary should run at some distance south of the *Inner Line* so as to include in Nevill's charge reserve forests, grazing fields and areas in foothills. Along the North Lakhimpur subdivision the boundary of the Western Section

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48. *Ibid.*

should likewise follow the *Inner Line*. The headquarters of the proposed charge should be located at a site about five miles from the terminus of the Tezpur-Balipara tramway.<sup>49</sup> With respect to the programme of work, Nevill was to visit in the next cold weather areas on the west of the Subansiri-Siyom divide 'not so much for the control of the Western Section' as to 'increase and consolidate' the knowledge of the tribes so as to settle the Indo-Tibetan boundary in that frontier.<sup>50</sup>

In the meantime the Chief of the General Staff in a 'Confidential Note' drew the attention of the Government of India to the 'dangerous wedge of the territory' known as Towang or Mon-yul between Bhutan and Miji, Aka country in the east. It was pointed out that

a comparative easy and much used trade route traverse this wedge from the north to south by which Chinese would be able to exercise influence on Bhutan, while we have no approach to this salient from a flank ... rectification of the boundary here is therefore imperative, and an ideal line would appear to be one from the knot of the mountain near Longitude 93° Latitude 28° 20', to the Bhutan border north of Chona Dzong in a direct east and west line with the northern frontier of Bhutan.<sup>51</sup>

Archdale Earle, though realised the significance of the frontier in the neighbourhood of Towang, hesitated to extend the survey of the Political Officer mainly because the information he possessed of the region was then extremely meagre. On the concurrence of the Secretary of State, Nevill's programme received the sanction of the Foreign Department ; he was, of course, not to visit Towang which was then considered 'unnecessary'.<sup>52</sup> A survey of the frontier west of the Dihong

49. FSE, 1914 ; February, 317 in Nos. 261-337 ; Kennedy, W. M., (Officiating Chief Secretary Assam) to Secretary Government of India, 23 September 1913.

50. *Ibid.*

51. FSE, 1972 ; November, Nos. 599-690 ; see *Note on the North-East Frontier*.

52. *Op. cit.*, telegram 11 November 1913, Secretary of State to Government of India, and telegram 19 November, Secretary Government of India to Chief Commissioner, Assam.

had been completed about this time by F. M. Bailey and H. T. Moreshead under instruction of the Secretary of State as conveyed in his despatch on 3 October 1912.<sup>53</sup> Since Tibetan villages on the branches of Subansiri had already been explored and the local Tibetans made no claim of the uninhabited areas, the Chief Commissioner saw no urgency in having another survey of the region. Nevill might, he thought, with advantage work on the west from the Aka country and try to clear up 'some of the mystery' attached to the Tibetan country in the direction of Odalguri. In his telegraphic message on 2 January 1914 he even desired that Nevill might advance into Towang which would be 'attended with no risk'.<sup>54</sup> This was felt not only 'unobjectionable' but highly 'desirable' by the Foreign Department; but Chief Commissioner was advised to direct the Political Officer to refrain from 'any discussion' or 'expression of opinion' about Indo-Tibetan frontier in that quarter.<sup>55</sup>

Accordingly, Nevill was to visit not only the country of the Akas, the Mijis and other tribes in the north but also to enter into Towang in order to see (i) the route and to find out the ways and means to 'furthering and increasing' the existing trade, (ii) to collect information about the inhabitants and (iii) to ascertain the nature and extent of Tibetan rule and influence in that region.<sup>56</sup> The expedition was organised on a large scale comprising over thousand men and six officers besides Captain Nevill in command. The party left Peine or Peinjulie, the base camp, on 31 December 1913, reached Rupa *via* Jamiri on 12 January 1914. On 27th Nevill and his party arrived at the Bichom valley, the territory of the Mijis, where he was accorded a

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53. FSE, 1916; October, 76 in Nos. 76-83.

54. FSE-B, 1914; Nos. 84-92; Reid to Secretary Government of India, Foreign Department, 10 and 19 December, 1913; 2 January 1914.

55. *Ibid.*, Foreign to Assam, telegram 2 and 7 January 1914.

56. FSE, 1915; April, Nos. 64-6; Nevill to Chief Commissioner, 2 July 1914; *see* enclosures.

friendly reception. After visiting several Monba and Aka villages, endeavours were made to enter into friendly relations with the Duflas on upper Bhoroli without success and in fact the party was treacherously attacked at Riang which was repulsed without much loss. The Duflas were taught that 'they were not so powerful as they think', and that 'they cannot interfere with us with impunity'.<sup>57</sup>

Nevill surveyed an area over four thousand square miles and came in contact with several heads of Aka clans. He suggested the establishment of a trading post and dispensary in the Aka country with a guard of fifty rifles. Apart from establishing a loose control over these tribes the proposed post would check the Miris from raiding their neighbours, particularly the people of Towang. The Akas had been, hitherto, 'a thorn in Assam Administration'. With a little supervision and the introduction of improved method of cultivation, Nevill was confident, 'their material prosperity would very rapidly improve, and a great step towards the control of the frontier would be achieved'.<sup>58</sup>

Accompanied by Captain Kennedy of the Indian Medical Service Nevill left for Jamiri in the district of Darrang *en route* to Towang on 18 March 1914. He reached Dirang dzong, the chief Monba village on this side of SeLa range, on 23rd, crossed the pass (14,450 ft) on 31st and arrived on the first day of April at Towang where he was given 'a most overwhelming welcome'. Therein he found

...a large monastery containing 500 monks ... Below this monastery is the village of Tawang... North of the Sela range is the magnificent open valley of the Tawang chu ... The country between Tawang and Jang is thickly populated, numerous villages are dotted over the valley and the inhabitants appeared prosperous. South of the Sela is the valley of the Dirangchu, a fine open country and well populated... although a very large area is brought under cultivation the inhabitants did not strike me as being so prosperous as their

57. *Ibid.*, see *Aka-Report*.

58. *Ibid.*

neighbours north of Sela. This is due to the fact that the country south of Sela as far as Assam border is controlled entirely by the monks of Tawang ... The people are ground down by excessive taxation, they are only left barely enough to live upon ; also they are greatly harassed by the Lobas\* who levy blackmail in most oppressive manner.<sup>59</sup>

Nevill reported that the condition of the Monbas, the inhabitants in the south of the SeLa range, was deplorable. Subjected to the frequent raids of the Lobas and excessive demands of the monastery, they were reduced to abject poverty and in fact on the verge of starvation. Simple, hard working and 'easy to deal with', these unsophisticated hillmen were crying for a change in government ; that they would welcome the British rule under which, Nevill strongly felt, their lot would be 'infinitely improved'. There were two difficulties to deal with : the monastic control and the blackmailing raids of the Lobas. For over a century Towang was under the direct control of its monastery which was again an offshoot of the Drepang monastery at Lhasa.<sup>60</sup> The territory south of SeLa formed a monastic property, an endowment, on which the monastery had to depend for its sustenance. It was unlikely that the monastery with the backing of the authorities at Lhasa would yield without a struggle. The monastery could be subsidised, Nevill suggested, on the basis of a fair assessment of the values of the supplies made to the monastery. The amount of rupees five thousand annually paid as *posa* might also be adjusted on this account. The so-called rights of the Lobas should be totally stopped and a number of police posts be established for its enforcement. Freed from exactions of the raiding tribes and oppression of the monastic orders, Nevill was convinced, before long this fertile valley would make rapid advance in its prosperity. He strongly urged the extension of

\* The Akas, the Mijis and other tribes in the east were called by the Tibetans as *Lobas*.

59. *Ibid.*, see *Short Memoranda on the Odalguri-Tawang trade route of the adjoining Momba country*.

60. *Ibid.*

control and establishment of a simple form of government over these areas at a 'psychological moment' when 'we are popular with the Monpas, we are fresh in the minds of the Akas and the Mijis and we could more easily introduce changes now with less friction than later on'.<sup>61</sup>

Archdale Earle was no less desirous of having a forward move towards the north. In early 1914 when he found, during his visit of the Abor country, British influence extended only to a fringe of the territory, he was convinced that no influence not to speak of loose political control could be exercised over these areas unless a further advance made into the territory. The process, he admitted, must be gradual on grounds both of the expediency and economy. In the next open season, he proposed to remove the trading post to Yembang from Rotung which was established in early 1913 and to which the existing road was to be extended and beyond that another stage to Rega.<sup>62</sup> The proposal did not find favour with the Government of India and the Chief Commissioner was told in a belated reply that no action could be taken in the matter until grave preoccupation of the war was over.<sup>63</sup> No wonder, therefore, although Archdale Earle had much gratification to learn from Captain Nevill that the tribesmen in the north, majority of them, were well disposed towards the British and the country inhabited by them possessed immense potentialities, he was not inclined even to forward the report for consideration of the Government of India ; for he was well aware that New Delhi was then averse to anything in the shape of a forward movement.<sup>64</sup> The outbreak of the World War I, evidently, overshadowed the problem of the North-East Frontier.

61. *Ibid.*

62. FSE, 1914 ; December, 175 in Nos. 156-84 ; Reid to Secretary Government of India, 7 May.

63. *Ibid.*, Secretary Government of India to Chief Commissioner Assam, 12 November.

64. FSE, 1915 ; April, No. 64 ; Allen (Chief Secretary Assam) to Secretary Government of India, 7 November 1914.



*The Simla Convention*

Tibet was temporarily saved from its complete dismemberment by the outbreak of the October Revolution (1911) and consequent collapse of the three-century old Manchu dynasty in China. This was followed by the erection of the 'ramshackle' Republic of China and the expulsion of the Chinese troops from Lhasa and greater part of Tibet. The Dalai Lama, so long an exile in India, made his reentry in the middle of 1912.<sup>1</sup> Prior to it Mongolia, a part of the Chinese Empire, with the backing of the Russian government set-up an autonomous regime at Urga. That the Dalai Lama asserted his complete independence is borne out by the Tibet-Mongolia treaty which was negotiated through Aguan Dorjeiff, a Mongol Buryat, towards the close of 1912.<sup>2</sup> Failing in his endeavours to arrive at a settlement with the Dalai Lama by offer of former titles and position,<sup>3</sup> Yuan Shih-kai, the Chinese President, decreed that

the lands comprised within the confines of Mongolia, Tibet and Turkestan all become a part of the territory of the Republic of China and the races inhabiting in these lands are all equally citizens of China...For the future all administrative matters in connection with these territories will come within the sphere of internal administration.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Bell, C A., *Tibet, Past and Present*, p. 113 ; FSE, 1912 ; July, 355 in Nos. 70-386.
  2. Mehra, P., 'The Mongol-Tibetan Treaty of January 11, 1913', *Journal of Asian History*, 3, pp. 1-22.
  3. *Richardson, H. E., Tibet and its History*, p. 105 ; Bell. *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, p. 135.
  4. FSE, 1912 ; October, No. 36 see enclosure 3, Presidential order 21 April.

The order of the President followed by renewed military activities of the Chinese troops in Eastern Tibet alarmed the authorities in England.<sup>5</sup> The successors of the Manchus, it was obvious to them, were determined to make Tibet an integral part of China which would endanger the security of India's Himalayan frontier.<sup>6</sup> This was in direct contravention to the Adhesion Treaty, 1906, under which the British guaranteed Tibetan autonomy under the Chinese suzerainty. In a Memorandum on 17 August 1912 to Wai-chiao-pu (Chinese Foreign Office), John Jordan, British Minister at Peking, declared, *Inter alia*,

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, ...to take such steps as may be necessary to secure in due fulfilment of the Treaty stipulations.<sup>7</sup>

Pending 'written agreement' Jordan made it clear that it would neither extend diplomatic recognition of the new Republic nor keep open the line of communication with Tibet through Indian frontier so essential to the Chinese government in view of the continued insecurity of the route through Kham and Eastern Tibet.<sup>8</sup> Peking remained unbending as ever. British manoeuvre however succeeded in making the Chinese agree to discuss the whole issue in a tripartite conference to be held in

5. *Ibid.*

6. For, as Bell remarked : 'The Tibetan Government might well wish to follow the Mongolian lead, and would certainly prefer the suzerainty of Russia to the domination of China. This was what we had to fear, if we stood aloof. But if we helped Tibet now, she would prefer to deal with us, for we were, near and Russia far away.' Bell, *op. cit.* pp. 148 ff.

7. FSE, 1913; February, 184 in Nos 170-509; also Mehra, P. *The North-Eastern Frontier*, i, pp. 66-8.

8. *Ibid.*

India. The latter also yielded, though grudgingly, that Chen I-fan *alias* Ivan Chen would proceed to India 'to open negotiations for a treaty jointly with Tibetan Plenipotentiary and the Plenipotentiary appointed by the British Government and to sign articles which may be agreed upon for the purpose of removing all difficulties which have existed hitherto in regard to Tibet.'<sup>9</sup>

To discuss in details the Tripartite Conference is beyond our purview. It was formally opened on 6 October 1913 at Simla under the Chairmanship of Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, Foreign Secretary, Government of India.<sup>10</sup> Having started his career in Indian Staff Corps and Sikh Frontier Force he had served as Political Agent Gigit, Chitral and Baluchistan. He accompanied Sir Mortimar Durand in his mission to Kabul and demarcated the boundary between Afghanistan and Baluchistan (1899-1900). This hard-headed frontier official was the guiding spirit in the formulation of the North-East Frontier policy since he was made the Foreign Secretary in 1911. He was ably aided at the Simla Conference by Charles Bell, Political Officer Sikkim, who was mainly instrumental in negotiating the treaty with Bhutan (1910). With his intimate knowledge of the affairs of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim and personal friendship with the Dalai Lama, Bell not only played a significant role in the boundary agreement with Tibet but in moulding the Tibetan policy of the British Indian Government.

At the conference the Tibetans sought acknowledgement of its independence, repudiation of the Anglo-Chinese Convention, 1906, and the revision of the trade regulations. They wanted to have a frontier with China which would include all Tibetan people. The Chinese, on the other hand, claimed sovereignty over Tibet resting on its conquest by the Mongols under

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9. FSE, 1913 ; September, 259 in Nos. 170-509.

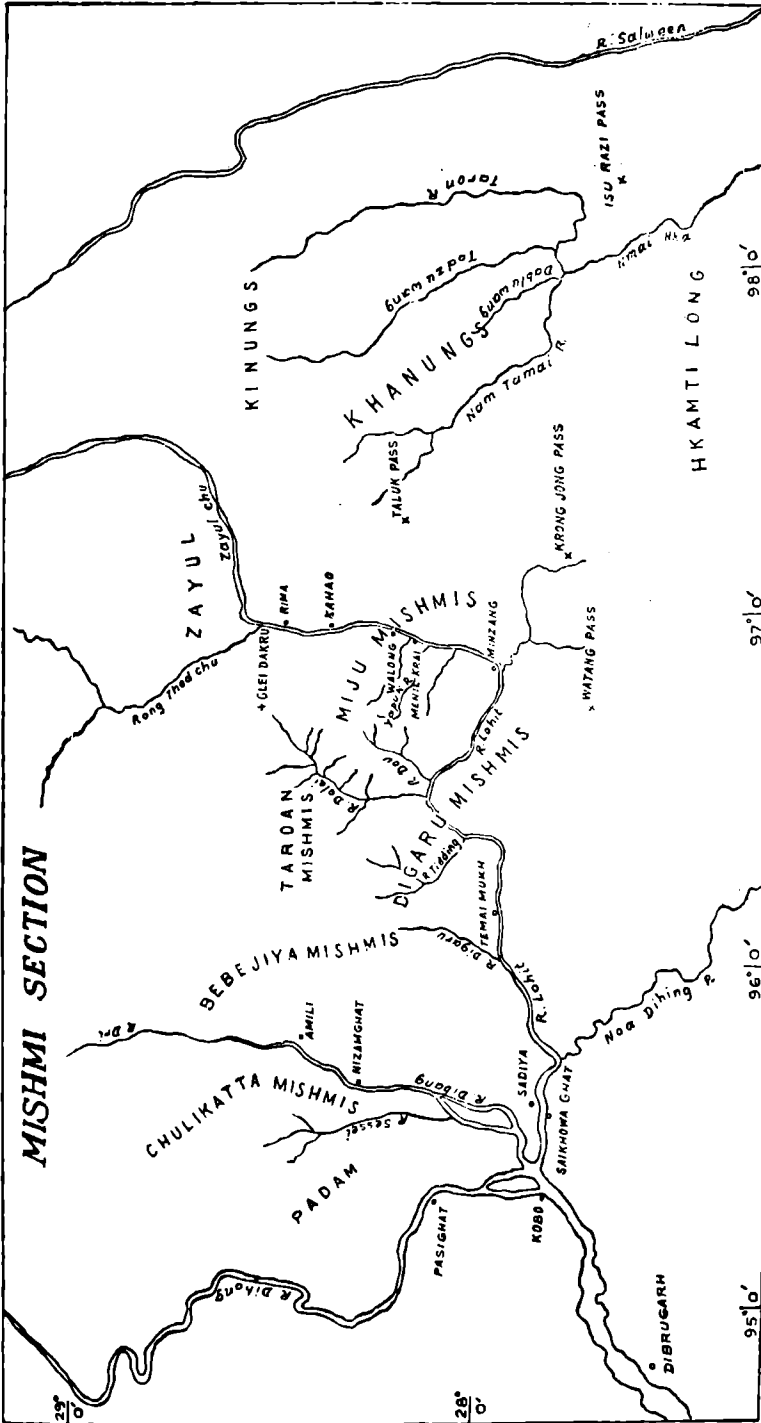
10. *Ibid.*, 37, 128-9 ; 238 and 252 in Nos. 1-271 ; see Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, Chs. III and IV ; Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, i, Chs. XXIII-V.

Chengis Khan. What they wanted was a declaration that 'Tibet was an integral part of China—their right to control foreign and military affairs of the country; in any case, a restoration of the status under Anglo-Russian Convention, 1907. Primarily interested in Indo-Tibetan border British wanted to restore the position prior to 1904 so as to ensure a stable Tibetan government free from outside influence but closer ties with the government. After several formal and informal sessions, both at Simla and New Delhi extending over six months, the Plenipotentiaries initialled a Convention on 27 April 1914 under which Tibet was to be divided into two zones, 'Outer Tibet' and 'Inner Tibet'<sup>11</sup>. Chinese suzerainty over the whole of Tibet was recognised; 'Outer Tibet' was declared as autonomous and the Chinese agreed to abstain from interference in its administration. In 'Inner Tibet', the central government at Lhasa were to retain their existing rights although China was not forbidden to send troops or officials or plant colonies there. In place of earlier Trade Regulations the Convention arranged a fresh treaty to govern commercial relations between India and 'Outer Tibet'.

The British authorities were not slow to take advantage of the Tripartite Conference to settle the unsettled Indo-Tibetan boundary on the north. 'It is desirable', remarked Henry McMahon, 'to come to an early decision in general terms regarding the boundary line we require in order to enable us to come to an understanding on the subject with China-Tibet before the Tibetan Conference closes.'<sup>12</sup> To that end, ground had already been prepared by the surveys and explorations following the Abor expedition and particularly the '*Confidential Note*' by the Chief of General Staff, June 1912, and the subsequent note by the Army Department on *The Military Frontier in the Northeast*. In determining the frontier the Military authorities suggested that the line

11. Bell, *op. cit.* pp. 154-5; FSE, 1914; October, 257 in Nos. 134-396, see Annexure II, *Proceedings of the 7th Meeting*.

12. FSE, 1915; September, Nos. 76-101; Office Note, McMahon 24 October.



should follow some prominent geographical features, preferably the main watershed of the mountain system and, also that, to facilitate effective occupation...the communication up to the frontier should be such as to afford reasonable access to the line selected. A lateral communication running parallel to and a short distance in rear of the frontier is also a considerable asset.<sup>13</sup>

The frontier was divided in both the notes according to tribes and river basins, into Hkamti Long\*, Mishmi, Abor and Miri or Subansiri sections as given below.

During the surveys of 1912-3, it was discovered that the Dibong (*Nagong Chu*) basin lies south of the main watershed of the Brahmaputra and tributaries of the Tsangpo and Rong Thod Chu. Thus the range bordering the basin formed a natural barrier between India and Tibet, and excepting a few Tibetan settlements at the headquarter of the two tributaries, it also served an ethnic barrier. To the Chief of General Staff, the Lohit Valley was exceedingly sensitive 'wherein the Chinese were reported to be increasing their garrison and building more barracks'. That in 1911 the Chinese made 'a determined effort' to bring the Taroans of the Delei and the Dou valleys under their sovereignty.<sup>14</sup> Frontier line in this sector in the opinion of the Army Department 'should not be at Menilkrai where the Chinese planted a dragon flag, but on the north of Walong since several passes, including the strategically important Talok pass, lead from the valley to the Hkamti Long and as such it was essential to deny access to these to the Chinese. Frontier on this sector

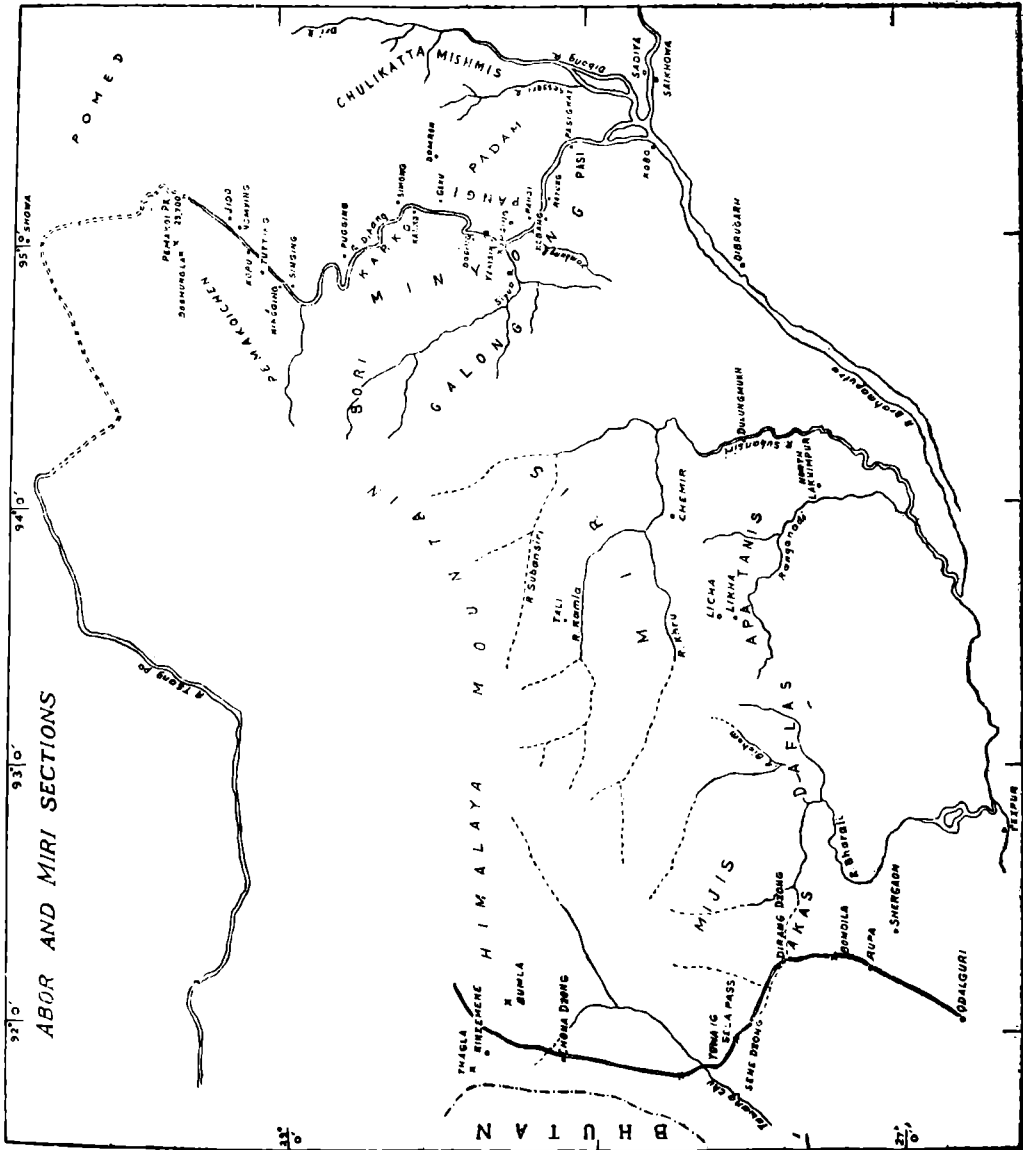
Leaving the Lohit-Irrawaddy watershed at some point north of the Talok pass...should descent by a spur north of the Di chu to the Lohit river. Crossing that river at a point at the foot of this spur and north of the Kahao village, it should mount to the Delei and Dou-Rong Thod

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13. *Ibid.*, see *The Military Frontier on the North-East ; The N. E. Salient.*

\* This is not within the purview of this volume.

14. FSE, 1912 ; November, Nos. 599-690, see *Note on the North-East Frontier.*



Chu watershed by a spur...and continue along this watershed till it reaches the range bounding the Dibang basin on the north. It should follow the latter range including all the drainage area in the Dibang in the British territory<sup>15</sup> to some point...whence the frontier in the Abor section should strike off to cross the Dihang to Tsangpo.

The Abor section was bounded on the west by Dihong-Dibong watershed and on the north-west by the main chain of Himalayas. The Tsangpo cuts through the main range by a tremendous gorge and flows with the same name as far as Kopu after which it is known as Dihong. The basin of Dihong and its tributaries was the habitat of the various Abor clans. Tsangpo Valley south of the gorge on its right bank as far as the river Yangsang Chu on the left was known as Pemakoichen under the rule of PO Khanam, a Tibetan official, with headquarters at Showa. He had under him subordinate officials for collection of taxes at Pangshing, Rinchenpung and Nyerang. The last one had jurisdiction over Abor villages of Panggo, Ningging and Tutting on the right bank of Tsangpo and Kuging, Nomying, Jido and Korbo on the left bank. The natural frontier in this section would be one including Pemakoichen within British sphere and following main watershed. It should run from the range bounding the Dibong basin (Lat. 29°, Long. 95° 15' E) to the spur

forming the watershed between Yangsang Chu and Trikong river (tributaries of the Dihong) cross the Dihong just east of Kapangla and thence rise by the spur parting the waters of the Nugong river on the north from the Sitam and Ringong river of the south of the main Himalayan range. It would then follow the later in a southwesterly direction.<sup>16</sup>

Miri or Subansiri section included the drainage area of the Subansiri with its tributaries—the Kamla (*Nai chu*) and the Khru—extending up to the eastern frontier of Bhutan. Although the Miri Mission (1911-2) did not furnish definitely geographical information, yet they were able to obtain positive

15. *Op. cit.*, see *The Military Frontier on the North-East*.

16. *Ibid.*



conclusions regarding the existence of continuous range of snow-capped mountains which would serve as a suitable frontier line. This should follow, as suggested by the Army Department,

in a southwesterly direction along the main Himalayan range to about Lat. 28° 35' Long. 93° 15', whence it will strike off southwest and flow the snowy range, in which the Kamla, the Khru, Bhoroli and Dirang rivers take their rise, as far as the Bhutan border near Lat. 27° 25', Long 91° 50'<sup>17</sup>.

The Chief of General Staff wanted to have, reference has already been made, a 'rectification' of the boundary line<sup>18</sup> at Tawang which was totally excluded in Minto's proposal on 23 October 1910. The Chief Commissioner of Assam was not agreeable to the suggestion as it was in direct contravention to Art. II of the Anglo-Chinese Convention (1906).<sup>19</sup> The Foreign Department had also grave doubts whether it could make out a case for its inclusion. 'Any attempt to define more definitely', remarked McMahan,

the limits of Tibetan possession round Tawang is under present condition impossible... It followed that the question of the investigation and determination of the actual boundary between Tibet and Indian occupation in this section must be left to subsequent opportunity.<sup>20</sup>

This received the endorsement of Lord Hardinge on 20 November 1912.<sup>21</sup> Eventually it was decided that the boundary should pass through the SeLa pass, twenty miles southeast of Tawang, and the Red Line ultimately pushed the boundary several miles north of Tawang. It was not unlikely, as explained by Alastair Lamb, 'that in the late 1913 McMahan had at his disposal accurate and up-to-date information from

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Supra*, Ch. VII.

19. FSE, 1912; November, 620 in No. 599-690; *Memoranda of Papers Forwarded to India Office, Section III; The New Frontier.*

20. *Ibid.*, see McMahan's note on 12 November.

21. *Ibid.*

Bailey and Morshead who came down through Tawang...and who arrived to report McMahon on 23 November 1913.<sup>22</sup>

Preliminary to a bilateral agreement Bell had a number of informal discussions with Lonchen Shatra in Delhi from 15 January to 17 March 1914. The dialogue began over the proposed boundary line which Bell showed in a map of Survey of India. He was well aware

Tawang Monastery is clearly Tibetan...we should...insist in getting the Tawang area south of the red line and the adjoining Bhutan though this seems undoubtedly Tibetan territory, as otherwise Tibet and Assam will adjoin each other and, if Tibet should again come under Chinese control, it would be a dangerous position for us.<sup>23</sup>

As anticipated the Minister raised objection to the alignment on the western part of the Subansiri section in and around Tawang which had in the meantime been shown in the British territory. He referred that in some places the Lopas or Lobas (i.e., the Abors, Miri and the Mishmis) used to pay taxes to the Tibetan Government or to individual Tibetans, viz., PO Kanam Deba, the Chief of the PO country, the Lhalu family and certain landlords of Chamdo, Sanga Changa Cho dzong who were in possession of lands in Pemakoichen. Lonchen disputed further that the Tibetan frontier extended five stages beyond Menkong and in the map it was shown much less. Bell replied that the boundary line shown was based on reports of British officers and surveyors who made careful surveys of the areas and that the proposed line represented 'an equitable frontier' between Tibet and India. As regards Menkong, he added, that it might be that 'the road from it to the frontier was circuitous and difficult'. Convinced of these arguments, Shatra accepted the boundary subject to the condition that 'if it were subsequently found that any Lopas under direct control of the Tibetan

22. For Morshead-Bailey see *Report on the Exploration of the North-East Frontier, 1913*; FSE, October 1916, Nos. 76-83; Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, ii, p. 532.

23. Bell Papers cited in Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 179

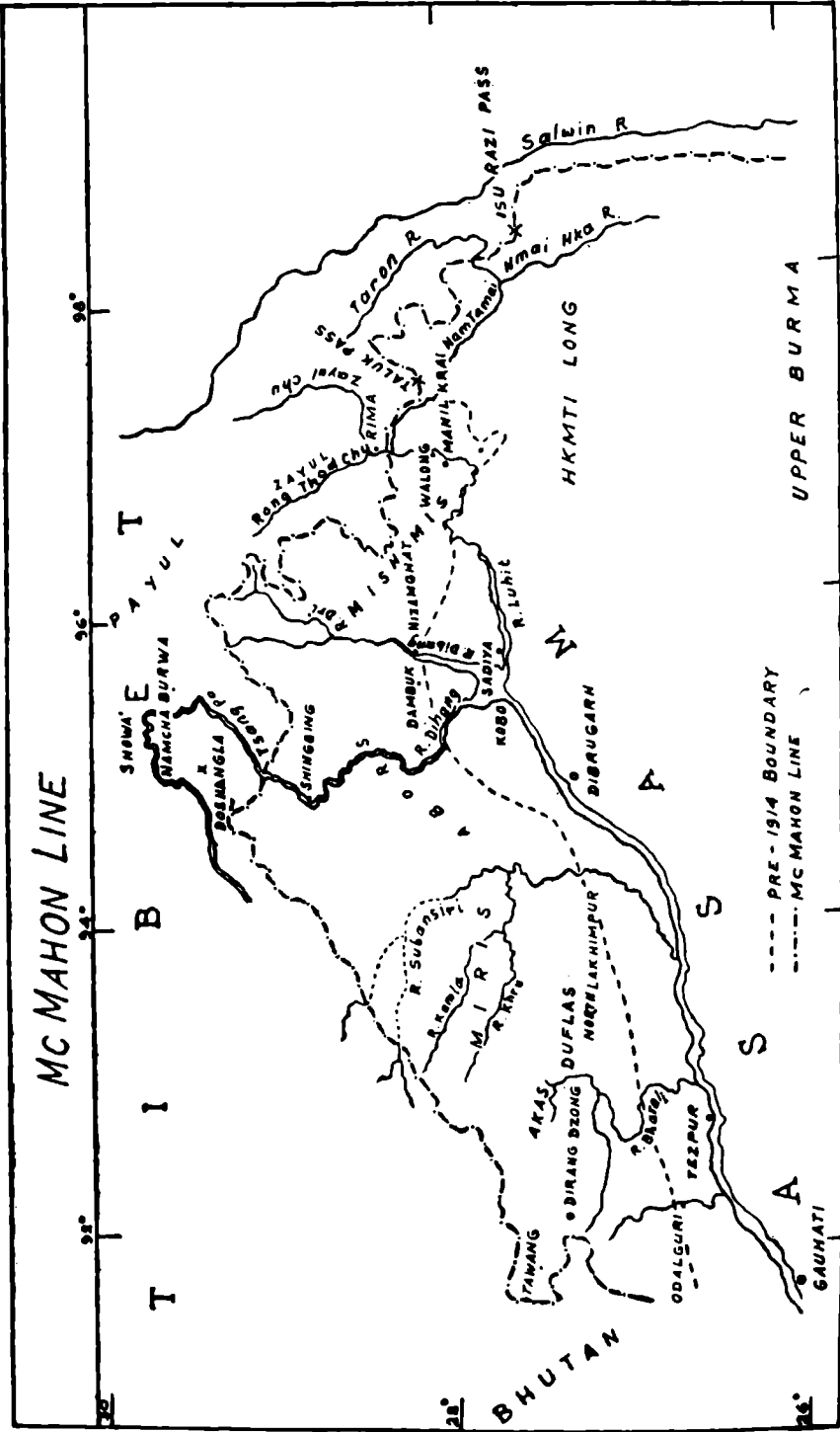
Government had been transferred to the British Government, the former Government would waive all claims in respect of these'. Bell likewise agreed to waive claims in respect of lands of the Lopas in the Tibetan side of the frontier. He also raised no objection to draw the line near Mankong to give the Tibetans the territory they claimed as their own.<sup>24</sup>

Problem arose in the next meeting on 28 January over Tibetan pilgrim routes on this side of the frontier.<sup>25</sup> In Tsari and Kongbu there were three places of pilgrimage Tsari Nyingpa, Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa. In both Tso Karpa and Tsari Sarpa there existed monasteries each having ten to fifteen monks. In the large monastery at Nyingpa on average forty monks. At different stages of the routes there were alms houses. Thousands of pilgrims from Tibet, Mongolia and Kham visited these places every year. The Tibetans attached higher importance to these sacred places and, as such, to insist on those as were in Tibetan occupation, Bell thought, 'would not only be unjustifiable, but would put the priestly power, specially three state monasteries against British Government'. On 30th, when Bell learnt that Tsari Sarpa and Tsari Karpo both located on or near the high mountain range which had been taken as frontier, he assured Shatra that any land which these pilgrim routes might be on the British side of the frontier and not more than one days' march from the present line would be included in the Tibetan territory and the frontier adjusted accordingly. On the next day Bell forwarded to Shatra maps showing the modified boundary. Earlier the Minister told Bell that he had no 'accurate knowledge of the Indo-Tibetan boundary nor did he receive any instruction from Lhasa to that effect'. He would therefore send the map with a report explaining the circumstances in full detail for necessary orders. He had

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24. FSE, 1915 ; September, 96 in Nos. 76-101, Bell to McMahon, 17 January 1914.

25. *Ibid.*, Bell to McMahon, 30 January.



every reason to hope that there would not be any difficulty to coming to a 'satisfactory settlement' on the boundary line.<sup>26</sup>

In February 1914 there had been exchange of notes between Bell and Shatra to record the main thread of discussions.<sup>27</sup> On receipt of a communication from Lhasa on 17 March Lonchen informed that the Tibetan government had agreed, amongst others, to surrender all revenue from lands of the British side of the frontier, but he requested that the income and estates of private individuals and monasteries might be left to them ; that he had despatched messengers to obtain fuller information about the revenue and expenditure of lands in which they were interested in the south of the frontier and these would be forwarded when received. On 20th, Bell assured that all property rights of individual Tibetans on this side of the frontier would be retained by those who had then enjoyed and that the British government would consider all cases favourably on receipt of fuller information from the Tibetan government. Prior to it he expressed his satisfaction that the Tibetan government had definitely agreed to the boundary between India and Tibet as was shown in the map which would obviate the causes of friction in future between the British and Tibetan government.<sup>28</sup>

These informal discussions were finalised in the exchange of letters between the Plenipotentiaries of Tibet and the British government on 24-5 March 1914.<sup>29</sup> These notes in original together with the copy of a map in two sheets (General Staff India, North-East Frontier, Provisional Issue, Scale 1"=8 miles) were forwarded to the Secretary of State by McMahan in his memorandum on 28 March 1914.<sup>30</sup> The boundary line, therein, as shown in the Red Line\*

26. *Ibid.*, also 23 January.

27. *Appendix-C*

28. *Op. cit.* Bell to McMahan, 21 March.

29. *Appendix-C*

30. *Ibid.*, see *Memorandum*.

\* In fact the boundary was indicated in the map as follows : Red line for the *Inner Line*, Blue Line for the *Outer Line* and Dotted Line for the extension of the *Outer Line*.

follows, except where it crosses the valleys of the Taron, Lohit, Tsangpo, Subansiri and Njamjang rivers for a short distance near Tsari, the northern watershed of the Irrawaddy and the Brahmaputra rivers.

On the west, it follows the west of the mountain range

which runs from peak 21431 through Tu Lung La and Menlakathong La to the Bhutan border. This is the highest mountain range in this tract of country. To the north of it are people of Tibetan descent; to the south the inhabitants are of Bhutanese and Aka extraction.<sup>31</sup>

The object of this detailed mutual agreement, McMahon explained, 'was to minimise as far as possible the chances of future mis-understanding and dispute on the subject'. Indo-Tibetan boundary had hitherto been 'absolutely undefined'. The map showing the boundaries of Tibet as a whole which was proposed to be attached to the Tibetan Convention was on a too small-scale to show in detail this sector of the frontier. Moreover the country through which it runs was imperfectly known to the Tibetans. It was therefore essential to define the boundary in any agreement thereto in as much detail as possible. This was done in the map on which the agreement was made. British Plenipotentiary was gratified that the Tibetan government had appreciated the significance of the frontier question and had shown throughout the discussions 'a reasonable and just attitude'.

should it be found desirable in the light of the more detailed knowledge which the Tibetan Government and ourselves may acquire in the future to modify the course of the boundary line at any place, we shall doubtless endeavour to show a similar attitude in regard to the Tibetan interests, although no obligation to do so has been mentioned in the agreement.<sup>32</sup>

Evidently, force of circumstances compelled Tibet to surrender Tawang and along with it private rights and religious privileges which the monastic orders had enjoyed for ages past on this side of the frontier. 'We rely entirely upon British Government', Lonchen explained, 'for aid and protection to enable us to defend our territory and our freedom from foreign

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

yoke.’<sup>33</sup> The Tibetans greatly hoped that the British would secure for them their territorial integrity and rightful place *vis-à-vis* China ; but their expectations were belied.<sup>34</sup> The Chinese government disavowed the action of their own representative and refused to be a party in an agreement in which Tibet was to be divided into two zones. Chen was telegraphically informed on 28 April 1914 :

The Central Government disapproved the action you have taken under the pressure of circumstances in initialing the draft Convention, and you are instructed to inform your British colleague to that effect and that your action in initialing this draft is null and void.<sup>35</sup>

The Chinese wanted to have the whole of Tibet as ‘an integral part of China’. ‘The successors of the Manchus’, Alastair Lamb rightly remarks, ‘showed themselves to be as tenacious of Chinese territory...as ever.’<sup>36</sup>

McMahon in his memorandum on 23 June informed Peking that unless the Convention was signed before the expiry of the month the British government would sign with Tibetan government and in that case they would lose ‘all the advantages and privileges’ of the Tripartite Convention.<sup>37</sup> The Chinese

33. FSE, 1915 ; Nos. 135-220 , see Office Note, pp. 1-3 ; also Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*. pp. 206-7.

34. That Shatra incurred the displeasure of the Tibetan government is borne out by the following comment made by Bell to the Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, on 9 December 1915 ; ‘Lonchen Shatra after working for a brief period in the Council has again taken sick leave. He is...*blamed for the results of the Simla Conference* and has lost power and to this his retirement is due’. FSE, 1916 ; July, 101 in Nos. 39-163.

35. FSE, 1914 ; October, 263 in Nos. 134-396 ; telegram 28 April, Wai-chiao-pu to Ivan Chen. Peking argued that Chen initialled ‘entirely in his own initiative...being compelled by circumstances.’ The latter, on the otherhand, explained, ‘if I did not initial the document to-day (27 April), then article 2 and 4 of the draft Convention would be made with Tibet and no further negotiation’. *Ibid.* Nos. 337 and 354.

36. Alastair Lamb, *The Road to Lhasa*, p. 332.

37. *Op. cit.*, No. 377, enclosure No. 2.

government replied that with the exception of the boundary question, she was willing to accept the Convention in all respects and that negotiations being opened between three countries, 'it is still more impossible to recognise signature of the Convention by Great Britain and Tibet without the concurrence of the Chinese Government'.<sup>38</sup> When there remained no other alternative, Tibet and India signed the Convention with slight modification on 3 July 1914. This was accompanied by a 'Declaration' to the effect that the contracting parties

acknowledged the annexed Convention as initialled to be binding on the Government of Great Britain and Tibet and both agreed that so long as the Government of China withholds signature to the aforesaid Convention she was to be debarred from the enjoyment of all privileges accruing therefrom.<sup>39</sup>

Regretting the failure of the Chinese representative to sign the Convention, McMahon greatly hoped that Peking would recognise before long the necessity of 'an amicable settlement' in which all the three countries would participate and which would establish their mutual relations on a 'new and solid foundation'.<sup>40</sup> In any case he was gratified that the boundary line along the whole of the North-East Frontier had been defined and this would prove the 'most valuable asset' in British India's relations with their neighbours.

So long as the frontier was unknown and undefined constant friction with China was inevitable...The frontier work of the past three years and the negotiation of Tibet Conference at Simla have served to make clear the mutual rights and responsibilities of Great Britain, China and Tibet and it may be hoped that the North-East Frontier will now be removed from the anxiety which beset the Indian Government during the last few years.<sup>41</sup>

38. *Ibid.*, No. 378, Jordan to Grey, 7 July.

39. *Ibid.*, No. 346, *Proceedings of the 8th Meeting Annexure I*, 'Declaration'.

40. FSE, 1914 ; October, 337 in Nos. 134-396.

41. IOR, L/P & S/10/857 ; enclosure 5, *Confidential*, McMahon's Final Memorandum on Tibetan Conference, 8 July 1914.



McMahon's hopes were doomed to bitter disappointment. The Indo-Tibetan boundary was delimited but not demarcated on the ground which was, in fact, not possible since much of it ran above the snow line. Moreover it continued to plague the relations between the Chinese and the Indian government. The boundary line as delineated in the Simla Conference 1914 was unacceptable to the Chinese government to whom the Convention itself was invalid.<sup>42</sup> In their view the conference discussed only the boundary between Tibet and China, between Inner and Outer Tibet ; it never discussed the boundary between India and China. McMahon Line, it was argued, was the result of exchange of letters at Delhi, 'behind the back of the Chinese Central Government', between the representatives of Tibet and British Indian government. A section of the red-line made on the map attached to the Convention, it was added, corresponds to the McMahon Line, but it represented boundary between Tibet and the rest of China and it was never stated that part of this line was the boundary between India and China.<sup>43</sup> On 26 September 1959, the Chinese Premier was told by the Indian Prime Minister that

arrangements for the Simla Conference was made with full consent and knowledge of the Government of China. Not only were the frontier of India with Tibet was discussed at the conference but also the boundary between Tibet and China, and Inner and Outer Tibet. At no stage, in either then or subsequently did the Chinese Government object to the discussions on the boundary between India and Tibet at the Conference. In the circumstances, the agreement which resulted from the Conference in regard to McMahon Line, must in accordance with accepted international practices, be regarded as binding on both Tibet and China.<sup>44</sup>

McMahon Line, it cannot be denied, was not in the agenda ; it was a 'by product' of the Simla Conference. But as Nehru

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42. *WP, iii*, Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs China, 26 December 1959, pp. 61-2.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *WP, ii*, Prime Minister of India, 26 September 1959.

said it was neither 'secret' nor was there anything clandestine' about it. That the Simla Conference met to discuss not only relations between China and Tibet but also those between Tibet and India which is borne out by the proceedings of the Conference. The Dalai Lama made it clear :

I hereby authorise Srid Dzin (Ruler) Shatra Palijor Doji to decide *all matters* that may be beneficial to Tibet.<sup>45</sup>

British Plenipotentiary explained that the negotiations being held

for the conclusion of a Convention to remove *all such causes of difference* and to regulate the relations between the several government.<sup>46</sup>

Even Wai-chiao-pu stated

Ch'en I-fen (Ivan Chen) is hereby appointed special Plenipotentiary for Tibetan *negotiations*.<sup>47</sup>

The agreement was signed on 24-5 March after discussions in Delhi between 15-31 January 1914 during which the venue of the Simla Conference was also in Delhi. Critics like Neville Maxwell has to admit that 'while the subject of the boundary between India and Tibet was never included in the tripartite discussions ...it was at last and indirectly introduced into the proceedings by what might be called a piece of cartographic legerdemain.'<sup>48</sup> At the fourth meeting on 17 February, McMahon defined the 'historic Tibetan frontier', McMahon Line inclusive, in a map for acceptance. Indo-Tibetan boundary as confirmed on 24-5 March was shown on the draft Convention and submitted at the seventh meeting, 22 April 1914. Therein, McMahon explained that the Draft Convention

would inaugurate such a status for the whole of the Tibetan territories, as would offer the best hope of restitution of

45. FSE, 1913 ; September, 238 in Nos. 1-271 ; *Shakabapa*, p. 251.

46. *Official's Report, India*, p. 111.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Maxwell, N., *India's China War*, p. 52.

peace and prosperity to the inhabitants of the extensive area adjoining the frontiers of China and British India.<sup>49</sup>

'If the Chinese delegate had wanted', rightly argues Mehra, 'to question either the actual delineation of the boundary, or its legality, there certainly was no dearth of opportunity for so doing.'<sup>50</sup> Ivan Chen raised no objection, whatever, and on 27 April along with British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries initialled the map and the Convention.

The Chinese government even asserted that Tibetan local government had no right to conclude treaty with foreign country unless 'authorised and consented' by the Chinese Central government.<sup>51</sup> This was untenable to the Indian government. The latter maintained that the Tibetan government had enjoyed power to sign treaties and to deal directly with neighbouring States in matters relating to boundary. By a treaty on 24 March 1856, Tibet granted extra-territorial rights to Nepal in Tibet. The Chinese contended that the Amban assisted in its conclusion. This strengthens all the more that Peking recognised treaty-making powers of Tibet. Again the Tibetan government protested against the Anglo-Chinese Convention on 17 March 1890 delimiting the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet. In 1904 Great Britain however entered into an agreement with Tibet. Far from objecting to the direct negotiation, the Amban at Lhasa assisted in its conclusion and this was confirmed in 1906 by the Chinese Central government in its agreement with Great Britain.<sup>52</sup>

Whatever sovereign rights the Chinese Central government might possess, these were practically terminated with the declaration of independence by Tibet following the October

49. *Op. cit.*, p. 112.

50. Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier*, i, pp. XLI-IV.

51. *Official's Report*, CR-25.

52. *Ibid.*, India, p. 246; also Dhyani, S. N. *Contemporary Tibet: Its Status in International Law*, Lucknow, 1961; *Sino-Indian Boundary*, Indian Society International Law, 1962.

Revolutions, 1912. International Commission of Jurists in its report observes :

Tibet's position on the expulsion of the Chinese in 1912 can be fairly described as one of *de facto* independence and there are, as explained, strong legal grounds for taking that of any form of local subservience to China had vanished... 1911-12 marked the re-emergence of Tibet as a fully sovereign State, independent, in fact, and in law of Chinese control.<sup>53</sup>

Ever eager to reestablish earlier connections with Tibet, Wai-chiao-pu, readily agreed not only to the Tripartite Conference but also to depute Ivan Chen to attend jointly with Tibetan Plenipotentiary to negotiate with him and British Plenipotentiary on *equal* terms. During the Second World War Tibet remained strictly neutral and in its early phase when the Chinese being hard pressed by the Japanese and having lost all the outlets to the sea wanted to open up communication with Assam through Tibet, the Kashag flatly refused<sup>54</sup> and the British, though in alliance with China, could not come to her aid; and this speaks of Tibetan independence. Finally, in its note to the Government of India in November 1947 when the

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53. A. Appadorai rightly points out that hitherto there was some sort of feudal relationship between Tibet and China—personal allegiance of the Dalai Lama to the Manchu Emperor. The end of the Manchu dynasty, however, 'amounted to the dissolution, of every bond between Tibet and China'. This was 'in effect' conceded by the Chinese, i.e., as an independent State from 1912-51—which is borne out from the 17 Point Agreement, 1951, which records *inter alia* 'The Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the motherland—The People's Republic of China'. Treaty-making right of the Tibetan government, he opines, 'was recognised or at any rate acquiesced in' by the Chinese government. Appadorai, A., 'Chinese Aggression and India : An Introduction.' *International Studies*, v, 1963; also *The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law*, International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, 1959, p. 85; van Eekelen, W. F., *Indian Foreign Policy and the Border Dispute with China*, pp. 134 ff.

54. Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

Government of China enquired whether after transfer of power Government of India had assumed the treaty rights and obligations existing between India and Tibet, the Department of External Affairs, Government of India, replied in the affirmative. This reference 'to the treaty rights obligation between India and Tibet, as distinct from India and China, was the strongest possible proof of the validity of the McMahon Line agreement and its recognition by the Chinese Government'.<sup>55</sup>

Great Britain was the greatest beneficiary of the bilateral agreement. British policy of making Tibet a 'buffer' was immensely successful. They secured the right of having direct negotiation with the Tibetan government and also of sending representatives to visit Lhasa. Besides having a properly defined Indo-Tibetan frontier along the crest of the Himalayas they gained extra-territorial rights under new Trade Regulations, 3 July 1914, between the two governments. These envisaged *inter alia* 'the right to maintain trade agents at Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok with small military escorts, to try cases occurring in trade marts between the British subjects and joint enquiries with Tibetan authorities into disputes between British subjects and Tibetans and other nationals.' Further they retained the right to maintain telegraph line from the Indian frontier to the marts and the earlier regulation as to handing over the rest houses to the Chinese was cancelled.<sup>56</sup>

In his final memorandum McMahon recommended consolidation of British position in areas south of the Line. This could be effectively done, he felt, by roads; 'for roads serve the immediate purpose of opening the country to our influence and trade, of facilitating our administration and of giving access to the frontier.' Of the main routes, topmost priority need be given to the completion of the Sadiya-Rima road which

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55. *Official's Report, India*, 248-9.

56. FSE, 1914; October 346 in Nos. 134-396, Enclosure 5, Annexure II.

was then in progress. This was essential in the interest of trade and opening up of contact with eastern Tibet. Two other roads demanded proper maintenance one up the Dihong as far as Yembung, headquarters of General Bower during the Abor expedition, and the other up the Dibong extending one stage north of Nizamghat. On the West the development of trade route from Odalguri into Tibet, McMahan thought, would repay initial expenditure.<sup>57</sup>

The acceptance of the clearly defined frontier line by the Tibetan government, McMahan greatly hoped, would enable the Assam government to leave the tribes to themselves, 'intervening as little as possible in their internal affairs, ...demanding only such an obedience and allegiance as will demonstrate our control and free the country from any danger of foreign absorption.' He nonetheless emphasised the strategical importance of the territory of Tawang which had been included in British boundary and which had provided the government access to the shortest route into Tibet and control of the monastery of Tawang which had blockaded the trade by this route by undue exaction and oppression. McMahan never failed to realise that this sensitive area demanded due 'care and tact' on the part of local officials in order to obviate the chances of friction with the Tibetan government to keep open the road and to prevent raids from the neighbouring tribes. To begin with, he recommended that a British officer of experience with tribal administration should be stationed for a period at Tawang and that administrative arrangements of the area should be decided after his thorough investigation of the local conditions.<sup>58</sup>

Pious hopes notwithstanding, McMahan could not feel with equanimity the uncompromising attitude of the Chinese Foreign Office to arrive at the settlement. His was a timely warning that the North-East Frontier should not be left 'to take care of

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57. *Op. cit.*, *McMahan's Final Memorandum*, 8 July, 1914.

58. *Ibid.*

itself' on the assumption that the new rulers of China were not expansionists. The Japanese were equally unaggressive, he argued, until economic forces made expansion inevitable. The same economic forces were now in operation in China and, inevitably, the Chinese would expand along the least line of resistance-across the sea to the coasts of Canada, the United States and Australia and overland to Burma. Consequently

Russia has already found it necessary to guard against Chinese colonisation...along an extended and exposed line, where her Asiatic territories march with Mongolia. Tibet stands in much the same relation to our North-East Frontier as does Mongolian to Russia in Asia, and the recent campaigns of China against Tibet, and her military activity in the Yunan border, have served as a forceful reminder that we must protect the country...against any possibility of Chinese penetration.<sup>59</sup>

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59. *Ibid.*

**Appendix—C**

***THE McMAHON LINE : EXCHANGE OF NOTES***

**BETWEEN THE TIBETAN PLENIPOTENTIARY  
AND MR. BELL : 6 FEBRUARY 1914**

**(Letter from Mr. Bell, Assistant to the British Plenipotentiary in regard to Tibet to the address of Lonchen Shatra Tibetan Plenipotentiary)**

You accepted the India-Tibet frontier from Isu Razi Pass to Peak 16,834 as is given in the revised map (two sheets) sent to you on the 31st January last, subjected to the condition that, if any estate belonging to individual Tibetans, e.g. the PO Kanam Deba, has been included in British Territory, questions in respect thereof will be settled direct by the Tibetan Government with the British Government. You added that you anticipated no difficulty in settling such matters and that, if it were found subsequently that any Lopas under the direct control of the Tibetan Government had been transferred to the British Government, the Tibetan Government would surrender these.

2. As regards the frontier between Peak 16,834 and the Bhutan-Tibet Frontier, it was agreed that (1) the sacred places of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa, if falling within a day's march of the British side of the frontier should be included in Tibetan territory and the frontier modified accordingly, (2) that the Tibetan ownership in private estates on the British side of the frontier should not be disturbed.

You intimated that in respect of this Western section of the frontier it would be necessary for you to refer the matter to the Tibetan Government, but that you felt sure that there would not be much difficulty in coming to satisfactory settlement on the lines proposed.

3. I have reported accordingly to the British Plenipotentiary who approves of this settlement.

I trust that your messenger has left for Lhasa with your report.

C. A. BELL 6.2.14



**TO MR. BELL, Assistant to the British Plenipotentiary  
for the China-Tibet Conference.**

Reference your letter, received on the 12th day (7th February 1914) regarding the boundary between India and Tibet. You know what conversation took place between ourselves. As I have no accurate knowledge of the boundaries, besides having received no such instructions, I was unable to decide this question of the boundary, but I said that I would refer the matter to the Tibetan Government and that in view of the kindly help rendered by the British Government, I expected no difficulty in settling the matter satisfactorily. The Nyen-dron Khen-chung left here on the 7th of the 12th month (2nd February 1914) with full instructions and with a letter urging that, in view of the great help rendered by the British Government in this China-Tibet Conference for the present and for the future welfare of Tibet, the Tibetan Government should consider this question of the boundary favourably. So please bear this in mind.

Sent by Lonchen Shashtra, Tibetan Plenipotentiary, on the 14th day of the 12th month of the Water-Bull year (9th February 1914).

Seal of Lonchen Shatra

**BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND TIBETAN  
PLENIPOTENTIARIES**

**TO LONCHEN SHATRA, Tibetan Plenipotentiary**

In February last you accepted the India-Tibet frontier from the Isu Razi Pass to the Bhutan frontier, as given in the map (two sheets), of which two copies are herewith attached. Subject to the confirmation of your Government and the following conditions :

- (a) The Tibetan ownership in private estates on the British side of the frontier will not be disturbed.
- (b) If the sacred places of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa fall within a day's march of the British side of the frontier,

they will be included in Tibetan territory and the frontier modified accordingly.

I understand that your Government have now agreed to this frontier subject to the above two conditions. I shall be glad to learn definitely from you that this is the case.

You wished to know whether certain dues now collected by the Tibetan Government at Tsona Jong and in Kongbu and Kham from the Monpas and Lopas for articles sold may still be collected. Mr. Bell has informed you that such details will be settled in a friendly spirit, when you have furnished to him the further information, which you have promised.

The final settlement of this India-Tibet frontier will help to prevent causes of future dispute and thus cannot fail to be of great advantage to both Governments.

Delhi

24th March 1914

British Plenipotentiary

A. H. McMahon

*Translation*

TO SIR HENERY McMAHON : British Plenipotentiary  
to the China-Tibet Conference

As it was feared that there might be friction in future, unless the boundary between India and Tibet is clearly defined, I submitted the map, which you sent to me in February last, to the Tibetan Government at Lhasa for orders. I have now received orders from Lhasa, and I accordingly agree to the boundary as marked in red in the two copies of the maps signed by you, subject to the conditions mentioned in your letter, dated the 24th March, sent to me through Mr. Bell. I have signed and sealed the two copies of the maps. I have kept one copy here and return herewith the other.

(Sent on the 29th day of the 1st month of the Wood-Tiger year (25th March 1914) by Lonchen Shatra, the Tibetan Plenipotentiary.)

Seal of Lonchen Shatra

*The World War I and Tribal Areas*

To the war efforts of Great Britain the contribution made by the hill tribes, North-East Frontier, both in men and money, was not inconsiderable. In spite of their limited means, the hillmen subscribed to the war-loan over rupees twenty-six thousand in 1917-8, and thirty-nine thousand in 1918-9.<sup>1</sup> In January 1917, when the Secretary of State called for a labour force from Assam for services in France, the government agreed to supply a contingent of eight thousand : two thousand each from Manipur, Lushai, Naga, Khasi and Garo Hills. Of the Nagas, the contribution made by the Semas was the highest, one thousand men ; followed by four hundred Lhotas, two hundred each of the Aos and Rengmas. What was most significant, two hundred trans-frontier Nagas volunteered their services abroad. The considerable amount of money which they brought resulted soaring in prices. Nonetheless 'the Semas paid their debts. Lhotas purchased land. The smiths of Wanching and Wakching and ornament-makers of Seromi made fortunes'.<sup>2</sup>

The Angamis, Kacha Nagas and Kukis made no response to the call for labour by the government. In 1917 when a demand was made on the Thado-Kukis, the latter flatly refused. The endeavours that were made by the Political Agent Manipur at a *darbar* produced but 'angry refusals'. He was told by the principal chiefs 'if we (British) used force to compel them to do what they had no intention of doing, they would also use force'.<sup>3</sup> By nature the Kukis were a people 'who never left

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1. *Reid*, pp. 162-3.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Shakespeare, History of the Assam Rifle*, p. 210.

homes' ; yet they responded previously to the call of the government. They were alarmed by the rumours of further recruitment and coercion and no less by the grim picture presented by interested parties of the difficulties and dangers of journey to Europe and of the services abroad. The situation would not have drifted from bad to worse, but for the lack of contact between the government and the tribes. The latter were placed in charge of a single European functionary who had to depend on the Lambas, the intermediaries, whose extortion and oppression, contributed in no small degree to the rebellion.<sup>4</sup> Remarks Reid :

There is no doubt that the administration had been seriously out of touch with their hill subjects, that the latter were not always well treated, and that there were genuine grievances and genuine abuses behind the immediate cause.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the activities of the revolutionaries of Bengal, it was suspected that the German spies had a secret hand in fomenting the rebellion. Shakespear writes :

at Tammo in May 1918...the Medical Officer going through the sepoy's huts found some Sikhs tearing up papers which they told the officer they would not want any more. He looked at the papers torn and whole, and found photos of one or two white men *obviously Germans*, one being in uniform, and on there was written in Hindustani ; 'If you fall into the rebels' hands show these and they will not harm you'. The sepoys could only state that when they were leaving Bhamo for the scene of disturbances a *sahib* had given them these papers.<sup>6</sup>

In December 1917 the Kukis broke into open rebellion, and started raiding southern end of Manipur. The rebels scattered over an area about six thousand square miles of the hill terrain around Manipur and even extended to the unadministered Somra Tract.<sup>7</sup> In early 1918, they raided repeatedly on Kabui

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4. Reid, pp. 79-80.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Shakespear, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

7. FSE, 1919 ; October, No. 7, part B ; *Assam Administration Report*, 1918-9.

and Tangkhul Nagas destroying several villages and carrying off no less than two hundred heads. From Kohima and Imphal detachments of Assam Rifles were despatched against the rebels, but early operations yielded no permanent result. In the northwest though a few chiefs surrendered, the majority remained unsubdued. Operation against the rebels, in fact, proved extremely difficult. Their village might be destroyed, but,

owing to the nomadic habits of the tribe and the flimsy nature of their houses, the loss sustained was small...Owing to their method of fighting, in ambushes and stockades...the Kukis had sustained very few casualties; fewer, in fact, than they had inflicted. They were able to supplement their supplies from their Naga neighbours who...were afraid to refuse the demands of the more ruthless Kukis, better armed than themselves and living in their midst.<sup>8</sup>

Small wonder that majority of the leading chiefs were not averse from continuing to fight while the minor ones, though inclined to yield, followed suit for fear of reprisals.

In July 1918, the Military authorities decided in a conference at Shillong that operation against the rebels could be renewed in winter of 1918-9. This was opposed by the Government of India in consideration of extensive commitment of the Indian Armed Forces in the Great War.<sup>9</sup> Lenient terms had to be offered to the rebel chiefs assuring their life and a fair trial, and that no further recruitment would take place hereafter. Several chiefs came in. Negotiations however broke down on the outbreak of hostilities between the rebels and the Kabui tribes. In retaliation for an earlier outrage by the Kabuis on a Kuki hamlet, the headman of the Kukis with his followers destroyed twenty villages and took off seventy-six heads. In November 1918, therefore, military operations became unavoidable under the direction of Brigadier-General C. E. Macquoid and Lieutenant-General Henry Keary, Commanding Burma. The

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8. *Reid*, p. 80.

9. *Op. cit.*, Keary to Chief of the General Staff, June 1919.

hostile territory was divided into a number of sectors : each with well-equipped bases and chains of outposts from which mobile detachments were sent out against the rebels. Friendly Chins in the south-east and Lushais in south-west were armed and employed as scouts and irregulars. Hemmed in from all quarters, the chiefs found no alternative but to come to terms with surrender of their guns.<sup>10</sup>

In April 1919, on the restoration of peace, an Advisory Tribunal was set up under W. J. Reid and W.C.M. Dundas for the trial of the chiefs. In forwarding the recommendations when the Governor of Assam opined that there was 'much to be said for the point of view of the Kuki chiefs' and that they were 'more sinned than sinning' the Government of India came to the conclusion that a 'clemency was called for and justified'. No chiefs was severely punished nor even sent to the jail though some of them were kept as internee nearabout Sadiya under the supervision of the Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract. To remedy the existing defects in administration, three Sub-divisional Officers, initially European, were located in different parts of the hills subject to the control of the Political Agent, Manipur. Schemes were at the sametime approved by the Government of India for opening of roads, spread of education and bringing medical relief within the reach of people of these hills.<sup>11</sup>

Relation with the trans-frontier Nagas had in the meanwhile underwent a radical change. The labour force which went for services abroad from villages of independent Nagas returned 'Greatly, impressed with the might of the *Sarkar*'.<sup>12</sup> Steps had been taken to bring the Kukis and other hill tribes of Manipur State under control of European Officers and the Somra Tract adjoining the trans-frontier Nagas had since been brought under the Government of Burma. The area of control

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10. *Ibid.*, Macquoid to Keary, 27 April 1918 ; also Shakespear, *op. cit.*

11. *Ibid.*, Nos. 7-12 ; also *Reid*, p. 83.

12. *Ibid.* p. 163

thus bordered on the north by administrative tract and on the South by areas fully administered either by the Government of Burma or of Manipur. Relations between the administrative areas and the tract in question became 'more closer' and the boundary in fact 'an arbitrary line'.

Villages on either side have land, cattle, cousins and relations-in-law on the other. Feuds, alliances, trade, cultivation—all the interests in life in fact except the payment of revenue and the freedom to hunt heads run counter to frontier line and not parallel to it. Under these circumstances no one could administer the district without being perpetually brought up against the question of interference beyond the frontier.<sup>13</sup>

Notwithstanding these developments, the attitude of the Government of India towards the trans-frontier Nagas continued to be one of indifference. Referring to the recent operations against the Kukis when, on 4 February 1919, the Chief Commissioner of Assam reiterated the proposal of Archdale Earle, no response whatever was made from New Delhi.<sup>14</sup> When a reminder was made following outrages beyond the border, the Foreign Department, reluctant as ever, left the matter for examination to Sir William Marris who was soon to assume the office of the Governor of Assam (1921-2).<sup>15</sup> After assumption of office, the new Governor studied and having discussed the problem with officers of ripe experience like J. H. Hutton, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, came to the conclusion that there was no alternative for the government but to accept the proposal put forward in 1914. Advocating the same, he remarked :

We cannot hope to civilize our own half savage peoples so long as they see raiding and head-hunting practised by their brothers and sisters just across the borders. In order to complete our mission of civilization within our own borders we must gradually extend the area which we control.

13. Cited in *Reid*, p. 155.

14. FEA, 1921 ; September, Nos. 1-17 ; Webster to Deny Bray (Foreign Secretary), 4 February 1919.

15. *Ibid.*, Botham to Secretary Government of India, 4 October 1920.

This could be done, Sir William agreed as his predecessors, without asking for our force of Assam Rifles to be increased by a single man or for our ultimate expenditure on the Naga Hills to become greater than it is at present as we extend our control the risk that punitive expeditions will be necessary steadily diminishes inasmuch as complications on this frontier occur not in controlled, but in uncontrolled areas.<sup>16</sup>

He made it clear to the Government of India that it would be better to recognise the situation 'frankly' and to exercise gradually the same measure of political control which had already been permitted to exercise through Political Officer Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tract and which to a great extent exercised on the Naga Hills frontier. The proposal submitted by the Governor of Assam was substantially the same which was rejected by the India Office in November 1908. Nonetheless, after much 'reluctance and hesitation', it was forwarded by the Foreign and Political Department for consideration of the Secretary of State. In explanation it was stated that

the steps proposed are called for' on humanitarian grounds and will be justified further by the beneficial effect which we expect them to have upon our own border villages. They involve no strategic danger, and no movement of troops, and we do not anticipate that they will lead to any charge upon central revenues or to any appreciable increase of expenditure defrayed from normal provincial revenues.<sup>17</sup>

On this occasion, the proposal received the approval of the Secretary of State and the decision was communicated to the Governor of Assam in December 1923.<sup>18</sup> The control area was determined on the basis of recommendations made by the Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, after a tour of the areas East of Tamlu, between river Yangnyu and the Patkais wherein tribesmen 'had never even heard of the plains of Assam or had

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16. FSE, file No. 534 X, 1923 ; No. 3, Botham to Secretary Government of India, 3 September 1921.

17. *Ibid.*, No. 13, Despatch to Secretary of State, 2 November 1922.

18. *Ibid.*, telegram from Secretary of State, 19 December 1922.



seen an European'. A revised notification covering all the boundaries of Naga Hills was issued on 25 November 1925.<sup>19</sup>

In the controlled area, tribes rather than natural features, were selected as boundaries. It formed a part of the Tribal Area not of the province of Assam nor was it administered 'in any sense'. No taxes were levied though the Deputy Commissioner was expected to decide disputes obtaining, wherever possible, assent of the parties concerned for his arbitration. What was most significant, a general order prohibiting war and even head-hunting was considered undesirable : such an order was impossible to enforce without expedition, 'a remedy worse than disease'. Moreover, as J. P. Mills says,

a few villages are sure to let their defences into disrepair and to lose their alertness. Then a sudden raid by a watchful neighbour results in a massacre, no punishment of which can bring dead back to life. On the other hand, a properly defended alert Naga village is impregnable against Naga weapons and attacks against such villages are rarely made and are infinitely more rarely successful.<sup>20</sup>

The policy of minimum interference however proved unworkable. The normal penalty of a *mithan* for a head taken was refused by the aggrieved who would be waiting till he got a head in exchange. In 1936 when Pangsha, a Kalo Kenyo village outside the area of control, repeatedly raided villages under control and carried off over two hundred heads and many captives as slaves, not only an expedition had to be sent against the offending village but the area of control was extended to include Pangsha, Sanglao, Nokluk and a few other villages near Burmese border in which slave raiding survived. Yet, until 1947, both sides of the Indo-Burmese border continued to be disturbed and innumerable heads taken in raids in which modern weapons were used. With the exception of

19. *Ibid.*, Botham to Secretary Government of India ; also Hutton to the DC Naga Hills, 7 December 1923.

20. *Reid*, pp. 161, 175 ff.

the 'Young braves', however, people in general were tired of head-hunting. Representations were made in early 1947 by the chiefs and heads of villages to extend area of control over the whole country otherwise they were afraid there would neither be security of life nor peace in the unadministered areas.<sup>20a</sup>

The intensification of the Indian National Movement in the wake of the World War I had its repercussions even in the inaccessible hills. In early 1931, intelligence arrived that Jadonang, a Kabui Naga, had started at Kambiron in Manipur border, a 'semi-religious, semi-martial movement affecting the Kabui and the Kacha Nagas—the belief being prevalent that the new cult would eventuate in a *Naga Raj* over all the tribes in the hills'.<sup>21</sup> Not only would Jadonang, the Messiah King,<sup>22</sup> overthrow the British, but take revenge upon the 'hated Kukis' who made repeated raids on the Kabui villages in 1918. Apprehending severe retribution, the Kukis had taken refuge at Imphal. Reports came that Jadonang had collected fire-arms and declared, as reported by Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills, that revenues were to be paid to him and not to the British government.<sup>23</sup>

In February, to make an armed demonstration the Political Agent, Manipur, accompanied by a detachment of the Assam Rifles proceeded to Kambiron and destroyed the idols and the temple of the new cult. Jadonang escaped to Cachar where he

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20a. IOR, L/P&S/12/22/4 ; *Annual Report on the Frontier Tribes in Assam*, 1935-6 and 1936-7 ; also 12/22/8, *Fortnightly Report on the Assam Tribal Areas* ; 7601/46, first half of December 1946 ; 5913/47, second half of January 1947.

21. IOR, L/P & S/12/22/4 ; *Extract from General Administration Report of the Sadiya Frontier Tract for the Year 1931*.

22. Hutton writes : 'There is a belief in Khonoma and other Angami villages in the return of a king who will drive out the British and rule over all who eat from the wooden platter, i.e., all Nagas. The King is believed to be sleeping...in the cave in the Kacha Naga country.' Hutton, J. H., *The Angami Nagas*, p. 252.

23. *Reid*, p. 167

was arrested with his followers and made over to Manipur government. As reported by the Assam government on 16 May

Normal condition now prevail again and the idea of a *Naga Raj* has been dissipated. Jadonang, the instigator of all the troubles, is now under trial in the court of the Political Agent in Manipur...for the murder of four Manipuri traders who disappeared about March 1930... If he is acquitted in the murder case the question of his internment as a State prisoner...will be considered.<sup>24</sup>

Jadonang was thus implicated in the murder of the Manipuris 'probably as sacrifice' in 1929. He was found guilty, sentenced to death and was hanged on 29 August 1931. In absence of positive evidence a verdict cannot be passed that the case was proved beyond all reasonable doubt. The alleged murder of the Manipuris afforded the government the much-desired pretext to nip the movement in its bud. The establishment of the independent *Naga Raj* in the problem-ridden frontier would endanger the British Indian government.

The mantle of Jadonang fell on Gaidiliu. The 'spiritual successor', a girl of seventeen, successfully carried the message of her master beyond the borders of Manipur into the plains of Cachar, North Cachar and the Naga Hills. She had in 'Maibas' or 'Medicine men' a band of dedicated workers who never ceased to propagate amongst unsophisticated hillmen that the new cult would bring in benefits, material and spiritual. To the British the continued unrest amongst the Kabuis and the Kacha Nagas posed a serious problem. 'The real danger', as J. P. Mills explains, 'is the spirit of defiance; now Nagas who are ordinarily truthful and friendly have been taught that officials are to be lied and deprived of information.'<sup>25</sup> The general belief was that 'Messiah King' was again with them and it was to him that the Kabui owed allegiance. The early endeavours that had been made by the Deputy Commissioner,

24. *Ibid.*, cited in pp. 169-70.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Naga Hills, to arrest Gaidiliu proved a failure ; 'for every man and woman in disaffected villages (was her) active supporter'. The whole tribe of the Kacha Naga, according to official sources, 'has been transformed from a collection of quarreling and mutually independent villages into a united and defiant whole. Such a thing is unique in Naga History'.<sup>26</sup>

Unless Gaidiliu and her confederates were rounded up, New Delhi feared that 'there is grave danger of a serious outbreak'. Organised operations were to be conducted by the Deputy Commissioner who was authorised to draw from the Assam Rifles as many men as were considered necessary. Hardly had the operation started in March 1932, when a detachment 'close in her heels' was attacked by a large body of Nagas at Hangrum and in the same month the Kacha Naga village Bopungwemi was burnt to the ground. The combing operations under Captain N. Macdonald made the position of Gaidiliu extremely 'desperate'. She took her bold stand at Pulomi where she erected an 'amazing' palisade which ran all the way round the village. Against overwhelming odds her army 'melted away'. On 17 October 1932, she was captured with her followers and awarded life sentence for abetment of murder.<sup>27</sup>

The country of the Kacha Naga continued to be in ferment despite the seizure and conviction of Gaidiliu. Through her associates, some of them even managed to have access to her in jail, Gaidiliu kept alive the movement to the great embarrassment of the local government. Reports poured in of dances and semi-religious celebrations in disaffected Naga villages which made the Kuki settlers apprehensive of what might not happen to them at any moment. The Civil Disobedience

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26. *Op. cit.*, Extract from the General Administration Report of Saliya Frontier Tract for the Year 1931-2 and 1932-3.

27. *Ibid.*, also Home Political 18/1/33 ; *Fortnightly Report*, first half, January 1933.

Movement under Gandhiji with its emphasis on no-tax campaign appealed to the Nagas. In May 1933, from Leng, the centre of the movement in the Manipur border, parties were sent out to the Kacha Nagas urging them not to pay taxes nor to cultivate their lands inasmuch as the government was about to collapse and the villages would soon be at war. 'The rumour of fall of the Government was associated with the name of Gandhi who was described as the son of Jadonang.' Until 1940s the activities of Gaidiliu's associates and the alarm thereof continued to cause serious anxiety of the Assam government though the movement never reached the same dimension as it did earlier.<sup>28</sup>

Not the World War alone, military commitments in the North-West Frontier affected the Assam frontier. On 24 November 1918, a sepoy was murdered by three Mishmis of the Elapoin village. In retaliation for the imprisonment of one Pongon Mishmi during the expedition of 1900, three British subjects were killed near Dikrong by two Bebejia Mishmis ; Pongon and Taji Mideron of Elapoin of the Ithone valley. In 1917 Taji was arrested, tried and hanged. The murderer of the sepoy was supposed by Dundas, the Political Officer, to be Pongon and his associates in retaliation for hanging of Taji Mideron. Apart from the arrest of the culprit, the Chief Commissioner proposed to prevent recurrence of such outrages by the establishment of an outpost at Amili, three days' march from Nizamghat. He further desired the Political Officer to make a promenade through the Sesseri valley to put a stop to the seizure of British subjects as slaves.<sup>29</sup> In view of the uprisings of the tribesmen in the North-West Frontier the Government of India was not inclined to run the risk of further

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28. *Reid.*, p. 173.

29. IOR, L/P&S/22/3 ; PZ, 999/1920 Webster, to Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 10 September 1919.

complications and the Chief Commissioner was advised to defer the proposed measures until better times.<sup>30</sup>

On the recommendation made by Henry McMahon, in May 1914, the Government of Assam sought to carry out certain measures with the object of making possible a loose political control over the Abor tribes. These envisaged the extension of bridle path northward through their hills and gradually to move forward from Yembung in the direction of Rega (95° 5' E), shifting of the Balek outpost to Yemshing and the construction of a road through the foothills to the West of Pasighat. The Government of Assam was however advised by the Foreign Department not to take further action until the 'grave preoccupation' of the War had passed.<sup>31</sup>

On the termination of the War the situation altered. The Abor country was then quiet, but the Mishmis had raised their heads and committed outrages demanding the despatch of an expedition and the erection of a temporary post at Amili which, though negived earlier, received the sanction of the Government of India in December 1919. To consolidate the results of the expedition A. W. Botham, the Chief Secretary Assam, in modification of the earlier proposal sought to convert in early December 1921 the track from Nizamghat to Amili a bridle path and to construct an additional post at Mrambon. In the Lohit Valley, he proposed to repair the bridges over rivers Delei and Dou to maintain the Lohit Valley road between Tidding

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30. The Government of India however agreed when in December 1919 Chief Commissioner assured that the operations would entail no risk whatever and that he was already directed under Secretary of State's despatch of 21 September 1911 to exercise loose political control over these areas. The advance of the season delayed the operations till the arrival of Callaghan who relieved Dundas in December 1920. The Chief Commissioner later reported that the expedition had 'gone far to reestablish the authority of the government under the enforced non-intervention of the last few years'. *Ibid.*, Foreign Secretary to Chief Commissioner, telegram p. 6 October 1919. *Reid*, p. 254.

31. IOR, L/P&S/12/22/3 ; P. 1381/22, Botham to Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 1 December 1921.

and Dou rivers and to construct an outpost in the neighbourhood of Delei river. The projects, estimated at Rs. 1,65,000 were essential for the maintenance 'even of the loosest control' over the Taroan and Miju Mishmis. However urgent, the proposal was turned down by New Delhi 'owing to grave financial stingency'.<sup>32</sup>

India Office viewed the question from a different angle. While appreciating fully the objections to incurring then any avoidable expenditure, L. D. Wakely, Secretary Political Department, felt that the proposals for expenditure to serve useful purpose from falling into decay should be dealt on a different footing. The Government of India was suggested on 20 July 1922 to reconsider the proposal in so far as they related to the repair of bridges and maintenance of roads in a strategic frontier. The matter need be examined, it was added, with reference to the question of making a forward move in that direction.<sup>33</sup> The Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, stuck to its earlier policy. In its reply on 4 October, Wakely was informed that even if financial stringency was less acute the expenditure in question could not be justified on political grounds. It was stated in explanation that on account of the Chinese pressure on the tribes on the Assam frontier that a forward policy was inaugurated in 1911 by the creation of a frontier tract in which a measure of loose political control was maintained. With the disappearance of the Chinese activities in that quarter the chief justification for that policy no longer existed. Government of India had therefore no desire to make any move in that region which would involve increase outlay nor did it believe that local political and administrative consideration warrant heavy expenditure.<sup>34</sup>

Whatever might be the contention of the Foreign Department 'financial stringency' following the World War prevented

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.* Wakely to Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 20 July 1922.

34. *Ibid.*, P. 4265/22; Howell, E. B., (Deputy Secretary) Foreign Department, to Wakely 4 October.

it from continuing the programme of consolidation in the 'buffer zone' which was redesignated in 1919 as Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts. Though Assam Government considered it necessary that security of the plains itself demanded certain amount of control over the hill country, the idea of establishing a loose control up to the tribal external frontier was apparently abandoned. Nor was that all. In January 1922, Government of Assam was informed that the Retrenchment Committee wanted to ascertain the total amount of expenditure from Central Government incurred on Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts and the amount of saving likely to be effected by withdrawal, if withdrawal should be possible.<sup>35</sup> In its telegram on 3 February Assam Secretariat furnished the figures of savings, but failed to submit the considered views of the extent to which a withdrawal from the tract was possible or desirable. It simply stated that

Assam Government believe that relaxation of control to the extent stated above could be effected without risk, but there should be greater objection to any further withdrawal from the frontier tracts and it is certain that such measures would justly evoke very strong protests from the inhabitants of the province and from the tea-industry which would be seriously menaced.<sup>36</sup>

In fact the case was not properly examined. It was discussed through circulation since the Governor and other members of the Council were then on tour in different parts of the province. As regards Sadiya Frontier Tract, of course, the matter was discussed by the Governor and the latter agreed with his Councillors that savings reported was possible and could be made 'without undue risk' to the security of the settled districts. The case was otherwise with the Balipara Frontier; the Political Officer believed that he was simply to report on the possible savings which would be effected by a reversion to the condition

35. *Ibid.*, P. 2091/23, Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 17 May.

36. *Ibid.*, P. 3710/23, Botham to Secretary Foreign Department, 27 August.



prior to 1912 ; and that he was not called upon to give his verdict on the change of the policy involved.<sup>37</sup>

In his communication to the Foreign Secretary on 27 August 1923 Botham pointed out that there had been some misunderstanding in the whole question. This had in the meantime been examined by the Governor in Council with officers experienced in the frontier and it was realised that the abolition of the Balipara Frontier Tract would be attended with considerable risks. The rude tribes, particularly the Dufas, inhabiting in northern hills were within reach of the districts of Darrang and Lakhimpur. A number of the Dufas on account of their disputes with their neighbours in the hills, not unoften settled in the plains ; yet there were possibilities of raids by the hillmen on the settlers<sup>38</sup> or on the plainsmen.<sup>39</sup> With his intimate knowledge of the affairs of both of the settlers in the plains and the hillmen, Political Officer, Balipara, was in a position to prevent such raids or to exact retributions from the offenders with promptitude and without much expense. The Deputy Commissioner, Darrang, on whom would devolve the responsibilities in the event of dealing with these tribes, could not be expected in addition to his normal duties to keep in close touch with the Dufas settlers in the plains or to be known to the hill Dufas. Above all, he concluded, the abolition of Political Officer would be followed by frequent raids and by a marked loss of security on the plains areas bordering the Dufas hills. In dealing with these tribes, the policy of the Government of Assam had been so long to enforce respect for the

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37. *Ibid.*

38. *Supra.* p. 124.

39. Thus in September 1919 hill Dufas took part with Dufas in plains in looting Marwari shop and killing the manager, Singlijan tea-estate, Darrang. In December, they raided the village Dubia in the same district alleged to be at the instigation of the plains Dufas and killed one of the villagers. In August 1922, hill Dufas raided Kathani Dufas village in North Lakhimpur killing a woman and carrying off five others. In each of these the *PO* visited the offending villages, secured release of the captives and inflicted adequate punishments.

sanctity of British territory and to ignore one or two instances of violation of border would inevitably lead to trouble which could be quelled only by costly military operations<sup>40</sup>. In the face of these cogent and forceful arguments, New Delhi could not insist on the proposed relaxation of control and the Secretary of State, too, agreed that *status quo* be maintained so far as Balipara Frontier was concerned.<sup>41</sup>

In December 1924, the Akas represented to the Political Officer, Balipara, soliciting protection and the establishment of a dispensary in their hills. They suffered severely from an influenza epidemic which caused great mortality, and as a result their numbers had so much dwindled and the death rate so far exceeded birth rate, that the race was believed to be on the verge of extinction. Taking advantage of that or also of the fact that the Akas had then no chief of any power and authority, the Mijis and other neighbouring tribes were harassing them and threatening them with raids. Unless the British government afforded protection or assistance, the petitioners made it clear that they had no alternative but to leave their hills and settle in the plains<sup>42</sup>. The extinction of the Akas or their migration to the plains posed a serious problem to the Government of Assam. Not only would they not be desirable settlers in the plains, it was feared, their hills would inevitably be occupied by the redoubtable Dufilas, and from their new and more favourable position they would raid British territory in the plains. What was the guarantee that they would not attack the Monbas and the Tibetans on the Odalguri-Lhasa trade route? The Tibetans who regarded the Dufilas as under British control, naturally, expected the government to control them. Any failure to do so might

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40. *Op. cit.* Botham to Secretary Foreign Department, 27 August.

41. *Ibid.*, P. 3710/23, Deputy Secretary Government of India to Chief Secretary Assam, 13 September.

42. IOR, L/P&S/12/36/29 ; P. 3763/25, Soames, G. E., (Officiating Chief Secretary Assam), 6 October 1925.

adversely affect friendly relations with Tibet.<sup>43</sup> On the recommendations of Captain Nevill, Political Officer Balipara, Chief Secretary Assam, urged the Government of India to establish an outpost of Assam Rifles and dispensary at Jamiri in Aka Country. Emphasising the importance of the post, Nevill pointed out that it would dominate the Mijis and the Dufas in the North and East of the Akas. It would also be closer to Tawang and the Tibetan trade route from Odalguri to Lhasa. 'There is no doubt', he added,

that as soon as China settles down, this Tibetan frontier will become of great importance. (Inasmuch as) China has still eyes on Tibet and on Lhasa ; the pro-Chinese party is growing in influence and should China get control of Tibet the Tawang country is particularly adopted for a secret and easy entrance to India.<sup>44</sup>

Arguments notwithstanding, the proposal failed to receive attention of the Foreign Department since it was a distinct departure from the declared policy of the government—retrenchment and withdrawal.

In fact, the outbreak of the World War I and the departure of Henry McMahon on a new assignment as the High Commissioner in Egypt made the Indo-Tibetan frontier 'a remote concern' to the authorities in New Delhi and London. Lord Hardinge, in forwarding a copy of the Final Memorandum on 23 July 1914, informed India Office : 'We recognise that a consideration of the eastern or Indo-Chinese portion of the North-East Frontier did not form a part of functions of the conference'.<sup>45</sup> In any case, pending a revised agreement or understanding with Russia, New Delhi was well aware any bilateral agreement with Tibet which under suzerainty of China would be invalid. E. S. Montagu, Secretary of State, was also

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43. *Ibid.*

44. *Reid*, pp. 292-3.

45. IOR, L/P&S/10/344 ; Political and Secret Memo B 206, Hardinge to Caroe, 23 July 1914.

not inclined to publish the text of the Simla Convention of 3 July 'so long as there remains any prospect of final settlement of Tibetan question by negotiation with the Chinese Government'.<sup>46</sup> The decision of the Whitehall

to delay the publication of the Simla Convention and connected agreements was dictated originally by the position *vis-a-vis* the Russian Government resulting from the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907<sup>47</sup>... latterly it was occasioned by 'the desire to avoid attracting the notice of the Chinese Government to the thorny question of our relations with Tibet'.<sup>48</sup>

In early 1925 when the India Office referred to the Foreign Office that the publication of the Trade Regulation of 1914 might arouse China's 'renewed interest in Tibet and anti-British comments', the latter raised no objection to the proposal if the Government of India 'think it desirable'.<sup>49</sup> The Foreign Department however decided on 24 September 1925 not to publish the Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulation of 1914 on the ground that publication

now of the facts of the Declaration of 3 July 1914 (though it seems unlikely that China is still unaware of its existence) may force her to take overt notice of it and so afford a fresh handle for anti-British propaganda, the Government of India think that it is on the whole most prudent to treat the matter as has been done in the draft narrative.<sup>50</sup>

No wonder therefore in the original Aitchison's *Treaties* Vol. XIV (1929 edition) no mention was made of the Convention and the Joint Declaration made by Great Britain and Tibet

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46. FSE, B 1920 ; May 1920, No. 135 ; IO to FO, 8 March.

47. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was considered as not binding by the Foreign Office when the Bolsheviks repudiated the treaties and engagements made by the Czarist Regime. This was formally cancelled by the Anglo-Russian Treaty, 7 August 1924.

48. IOR, L/P&S/12/36/23, i, PZ 2788/1936, *Confidential*, Caroe to Walton, J. C., (Under Secretary of State), 9 April.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

nor of the New Trade Regulation. No reference whatever was made of the Indo-Tibetan Frontier. It merely stated :

In 1913 a Conference of Tibetan, Chinese and British Plenipotentiaries met in India to try and bring out a settlement in regard to matters on the Sino-Tibetan Frontier ; and a tri-partite Convention was drawn up and initiated in 1914. The Chinese Government, however, refused to permit their Plenipotentiary to proceed to full signature.<sup>51</sup>

Consequently, although a summary of the Simla Convention as well as the Boundary Agreement was made in Charles Bell's *Tibet, Past and Present*, published in 1924, reputed publication like *Times 'India number, 1937'* continued to show the frontier of India along the administrative border of the province of Assam.<sup>52</sup> While the Government of Burma was informed of this frontier, the Government of Assam and the Political Officer, Sikkim, were 'apparently forgotten' and were ignorant of the position of the frontier.<sup>53</sup> F. Williamson at Gangtak thought that the Assam sector of the International frontier ran along the foot hills and was identical with the frontier of the administrative district of the province of Assam.<sup>54</sup>

51. See Gupta, K. K., *The Hidden History of Sino-Indian Frontier*, p. 62.

52. IOR, L/P&S/12/36/23 (ii), PZ 2788/36 ; Caroe to Walton, 9 April 1836.

In its 'Note' on 26 December 1959, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs contended not without reason that even Indian and British government 'questioned' the validity of the McMahon Line. This is borne out by the fact that this line 'was not adopted in the official map *Tibet and Adjacent Countries* published by the Survey of India in the sixth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Atlas*, 1940, compiled by John Bartholomew, Cartographer to the King of Britain. Neither was the so-called McMahon Line followed in drawing the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian boundary on the map of *India 1945* attached to in 1951, 3rd edition of *The Discovery of India* written by Prime Minister Nehru himself and first published in 1946'. *WP*, iii, p. 63.

53. No wonder therefore in the *Report of the Administration of Assam for the Year 1935-6* the International frontier between Assam and Tibet was not shown. When the attention of the Foreign Department was drawn to this fact by the Indian Office, Government of Assam was advised to show this frontier in maps attached to future reports of this nature. The latter was also informed that a map entitled 'Tibet and Surrounding Region' was then under preparation which would correctly show the International frontier between Tibet and India. Menon (Foreign Department) to Dawson (Chief Secretary Assam) 25 March 1837 in IOR, L/P&S/12/22/4.

54. *Op. cit.*

*The McMahon Line : Forward Move*

In his *Many Worlds* K. P. S. Menon has credited Olaf Caroe, Deputy Secretary, Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, with the 'discovery of the McMahon Line after a lapse of more than twenty years'.<sup>1</sup> In reality the Government of India was roused from its torpor by F. Kingdon-Ward, British explorer and botanist, who made an unauthorised entry into Monyul (Tawang) in 1934-5. Even in 1928, as mentioned already, Captain Nevill, Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract, informed New Delhi that in the event of China got hold of Tibet, Tawang country would provide a 'secret and easy entrance to India'<sup>2</sup>. Still more disquieting was the revelation made by Kingdon-Ward

that the Indian government had for a long time been paying an annual subsidy to the *de facto* rulers of Monyul (Tawang) under the impression that they were independent chiefs. Possibly they were at the beginning. But it has lately come to light that most of the subsidy went into the purses of the power at Tsona-Dzong and thence to Lhasa ...this established practice dilutes the Indian claim to Monyul...a deal was effected in 1914; Monyul was to become a part of the Balipara Frontier Tract.<sup>3</sup>

For all these, he felt, Indian government was responsible. 'Had India been able to take up possession in 1914 no more could have been heard about the matter.' To him there was one solution : 'effective occupation by 1939 or at the latest

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1. Menon, K. P. S., *Many Worlds*, pp. 139-40.

2. *Supra*, p. 233.

3. Kingdon-Ward, F. W., 'The Assam Himalaya, Travels in Balipara', *JRCAS*, xxv, pp. 610-9; xxvii, pp. 210-20.

1940. The alternative is complete retreat—not only from all claim to Tawang, but whole of the Momba country where the Tibetan church dominates.’ He prophesised sooner or later India must stand face to face with a potential enemy...with Monyul a Tibetan province, the enemy would already be within her gates.

The illegal entry of Kingdon-Ward into Tibet incurred the displeasure of the Tibetan government. Not only the British explorer was arrested but a protest was lodged to Williamson then on tour to Lhasa. On enquiry it was known that Kingdon-Ward had verbal permission from one of the *Jungpens* of Tawang.<sup>4</sup> Foreign Department was informed by Captain Battye, the temporary successor of Williamson, on 24 November 1935 :

Tibetan government allege that Kingdon-Ward went far beyond the Red Line even to Kongbo, Pome and Poyul north of Tsangpo. They maintain that the *Red Line has not been modified*...Kingdon-Ward had been sent back to India and the Tibetan government are willing to regard (the) incident as closed.<sup>5</sup>

Olaf Caroe heaved a sigh of relief when he learnt that the Tibetan government had ‘just reaffirmed the line’ and that ‘it has not been modified’. To ascertain actual state of affairs, he addressed a letter to the Chief Secretary Assam on 6 February 1936 enquiring whether any measure of political control had been extended up to that line in the course of the last twenty years, and in particular whether the Tibetan government honour the frontier by refraining from administrative measures such as the collection of revenue on the Indian side of the frontier, more specially of the Tawang area.<sup>6</sup> In a confidential note on 9 April he also drew the attention of J. C. Walton, Secretary Political Department, India Office, to the fact that

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4. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/2, PZ 7569/35 Secretary, Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, 28 September.

5. *Ibid.*, 36/29, telegram R. No. 5, Battye to Foreign.

6. *Ibid.*, 36/23, i, *Confidential*, Caroe to Dawson, 6 February.

Indo-Tibetan frontier from eastern border of Bhutan to the Isu Razi Pass—Salwin waterparting was clearly defined under 1914 Convention ; yet the international position of the North-East Frontier was known only to a very limited frontier officials. As a result

there is a real danger that important matters of this kind may go wrong if we refrain from any longer from publishing our agreements with Tibet... Their absence from such a publication as Aitchison's *Treaties* if it becomes known to the Chinese government...might well be used by them in support of the argument that no ratified agreement between India and Tibet is in existence.<sup>7</sup>

He, therefore, strongly urged that 'no time should be lost in inserting in Aitchison's *Treaties* the text of the 1914 Anglo-Tibetan Convention together with the exchange of notes regarding the boundary and the Trade Regulations under the Convention'. Steps should also be taken, he concluded, without further delay to show this boundary in the Survey of India maps. 'Omission to do so has already led to the delineation of the frontier between India and Tibet in the Assam sector (in, e.g., *Time Atlas*) along in foot of the hills to correspond with the boundary of the Assam province.'<sup>8</sup>

To Walton the proposal was 'unconvincing', and 'by no means free from doubt'.<sup>9</sup> The argument—if the agreement remained unpublished these would be ignored by the frontier officers—was untenable inasmuch as these were on record and might be brought to the notice of the officer concerned. Nor was there much force in the contention about defining the tribal areas in the North-East. The Government of Burma and Assam

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7. 'Further reasons', it was added, 'for reaffirming our engagement with Tibet on this frontier are supplied by the necessity of defining the connection with the new Constitution of the tribal areas on the North-East, which it is proposed will be under the political control of the Governor of Assam.' *Ibid.*, PZ 2788/36, *Confidential*, Caroe to Walton, 9 April.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, Minute by Walton, 4 June.



could take under their respective political control areas which appertained to them without any publication of the McMahon Line. Apparently India Office was not inclined to publication if it was avoidable. When it was realised that non-publication of the agreement might be construed by the Chinese 'to indicate that we doubt their validity' and the Foreign Office, too, raised no objection to it, the Secretary of State accorded his approval to the proposal. In his despatch on 16 July 1936 the latter emphasised 'the desirability of not drawing the attention of the Press and news agencies to the publication of these Agreements and of avoiding unnecessary publicity'. It was feared that the publication of the Declaration of 3 July 1914 by the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain and Tibet accepting the Simla Convention as binding on their respective governments might be 'irritating' to the Chinese government. Caroe was therefore advised not to publish the Declaration, but to insert a note in Aitchison's *Treaties* to the effect that 'whereas the Simla Convention itself after being initiated by the Chinese Plenipotentiary was not signed or ratified by the Chinese government, it was accepted as binding by the two other parties as between themselves'. In any case the Survey of India should show the frontier correctly forthwith.<sup>10</sup>

In early 1936, under direction of the Government of Assam, Captain G. S. Lightfoot, then Political Officer Balipara, toured extreme West of the tribal areas and visited Tawang. He reported that Tawang consisted of a village and a monastery with about five hundred monks.<sup>11</sup> For the collection of revenue and administration of justice, the monastic Council appointed four *Jungpens* (*Dzongpons*) two each at Dirang dzong and Kalaktang; the former responsible for collecting revenue on behalf of the monasteries from an area North of a line West to East through Momda La and Bomdi La. The Kalaktang

10. *Ibid.*, Walton to FO, PZ 2905/36, 13 June; Walton to Caroe, PZ 4911/36, 16 July.

11. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/29, DO Dawson 29 May 1936.

*Jungpens* collected revenue in an undefined area between that line and the *Inner Line*. The revenue consisted mainly of red pepper, chillies, ponies, and rice. In addition, collections were also made for maintenance of the *Guru* of the monastery by the Chanzu of Tawang while *Jungpens*, locally known as *Tsona Jungpens*, appointed by the Tibetan government collected revenue and decided disputes round Tawang and to the North of the Momda La and Bomdi La.

The people round Tawang-dzong especially, definitely consider themselves as being under the Tibetan government and there is no doubt whatever that the Tibetan government definitely rule the Tawang area and collected revenue from as far as South as Dirang-dzong.

Apart from these, Rs 5,000 was paid annually in *posa* to the Kalaktang *Jungpens* or the *Sat Rajas*.<sup>12</sup> Of this amount Rs 1,122 was sent by the Tawang monastery to Lhasa where Rs 600 was paid to the Drepang and other monasteries and Rs 622 retained by the Tibetan government. The balance was divided amongst in *Jungpens* of Tawang and Tsona-dzong. As to the political control exercised by the Assam government Lightfoot reported that

the policy of the Government in the tribal area (up to the McMahon Line) has always been to interfere as little as possible in internal administration. Friendly tours are made every cold weather in different sections of the tribal area but these only extend (to) a comparatively short distance from the *Inner Line*...In the course of these tours the Political Officer tries to settle any local disputes which the tribesmen brings before him...There are also occasional expeditions... Those who live in the extreme West of the tribal area where Tibetan influence is exercised are very peaceful and there has never been any cause for our interference in that quarter.<sup>13</sup>

In forwarding the report in his despatch of 17 August 1936 the Foreign Secretary, brought home to the Secretary of State that not only two forms of revenues raised in these

12. Barpujari, i, pp. 6, 17, 163-4 and 189.

13. *Op. cit.*

areas were paid to the Lhasa government, but the latter had actually maintained officials in and around Tawang and the people considered themselves as subjects of the Tibetan government.<sup>14</sup> What was worse, the latest Chinese atlases like *Shen Pao* showed almost the whole of the tribal area south of the McMahon Line up to administrative border of British India in Assam as included in China.<sup>15</sup> His Majesty's government had, of course, recently agreed that the 1914 Convention with Tibet and connected agreement should be published and that the boundary as then laid down should be shown on maps published by the Survey of India. This action alone, Government of India felt, would not suffice 'to correct the impression which had already gained ground and may present greater embarrassment in future'. To counteract Chinese designs, the Government of India strongly urged to instruct Basil Gould, the newly-appointed Political Officer Sikkim, to obtain from the Tibetan government 'a definite re-affirmation' by exchange of notes acknowledging the McMahon Line as the frontier between India and Tibet; and at the same time to demand that the collection of revenue for the Lhasa government in Tawang should be discontinued. This did not mean that the Foreign Department had any intention of interfering with the monastic collection for the Tawang monastery. As regards China, the Government of India maintained that Tibet was autonomous both in internal and external affairs and as such they were competent to conclude a treaty with Tibet and to reaffirm the provisions of such a treaty if and when necessary without the intervention of the Chinese government.<sup>16</sup> British Ambassador at Peking, Government of India, finally recommended, should be advised to lodge a protest to the Chinese government against the usurpation of

14. *Ibid.*, PZ 6153/36, *Confidential*, Foreign Secretary, Government of India to IO, 17 August.

15. *Ibid.*, PZ 5813/36, Metcalf to Walton, (?) August.

16. *Op. cit.*

Indian territory on Chinese maps and to inform Peking that the boundaries of the Sikiang province in so far as they infringed India were a breach of the 1914 Convention and were not recognised by the British government.<sup>17</sup>

India Office was placed again in an embarrassing situation. Gould had a 'delicate business to transact'. It was felt undesirable to encourage him to be 'aggressive' with the Tibetan government over a frontier question as to which 'they were eye to eye with us'.<sup>18</sup> The Secretary of State agreed that unless Gould anticipated serious difficulties, he should make 'friendly representations' in such a manner as appeared to him the best regarding the collection of civil as distinct from monastic revenue from Tawang.<sup>19</sup> Neither India nor Foreign Office was agreeable to make a protest against China's cartographical aggressions. This would likely lead 'to undesirable discussions' as to the validity of the 1914 Agreements and possibly 'to an increased Chinese interest' in the northern border of Assam.<sup>20</sup> This apart *Shen Pao* atlas was not an official publication. Peking authorities might therefore reply that they were not responsible for activities of private cartographers. In the event of the Chinese government asserting their claim to Indian territory on the border of Assam by means other than the publication of maps, it was concluded, the question of representation to them might require reconsideration.<sup>21</sup>

Gould arrived at Lhasa in September 1936. When he raised the question of Tawang before the Kashag or the Tibetan Cabinet, the latter asserted in unambiguous terms that the tract in question was 'undoubtedly' Tibetan until 1914; and that they regarded the adjustment of India-Tibetan boundary as 'part

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17. *Ibid.*

18. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/23, i, Minute by Clauson, 31 August 1936.

19. *Ibid.*, 36/29, PZ 6153/36, cypher telegram, IO, 15 September.

20. *Ibid.*, 36/23, i, PZ 6154/36, Walton to Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 15 October.

21. For further discussions see Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After*, Ch. 37.

and parcel of the general adjustment and determination of boundaries contemplated in 1914 Convention'. They would, of course, be glad to observe the Indo-Tibetan boundary provided they could with British help secure 'a definitive Sino-Tibetan boundary'.<sup>22</sup> This was considered 'wholly untenable' to the Foreign and Political Department. Gould was told to inform the Tibetan government that Indo-Tibetan frontier was separately agreed to by exchange of Notes on 24-5 March 1914, and the Tibetan government indicated its adherence in connection with the Kingdon-Ward case even in November 1935. That on neither occasion was there any suggestion that Tibetan government's observance of the McMahon Line was dependent on securing definite Sino-Tibetan boundary.<sup>23</sup>

Gould could offend neither Indian nor Tibetan government. Main problem before him was—'how best to secure what is essential in Tawang area without prejudice to our interests in other matters'? While admitting that the attitude of the Kashag was 'untenable', he brought home to the Foreign Department that the Tibetan had enjoyed 'uninterrupted *de facto* possession' of the area in question and that 'only now such possession has been definitely challenged'. He considered it improbable that Kashag made any useful admission on the occasion of interview with Battye on Kingdon-Ward case.<sup>24</sup> 'I apprehend', he remarked,

if at the present stage I were to suggest written reaffirmation, my action would tend to create impression that we ourselves feel that engagement of 1914 stand in need of reaffirmation ; and it is practically certain that Tibetan government would decline to reaffirm especially in writing except after reference to Regent, Prime Minister, National Assembly and Monastery who were signatories to declaration of 3 July 1914.

Over and above

China would one way or another be likely to make capital out of such requirements and opportunity would be given to

22. *Op. cit.*, 36/29, PZ 3850/36, Gould 15 November.

23. *Ibid.*, telegram xx, Foreign to Gould, 8 December 1936.

24. *Ibid.*, telegram xx, Gould to Foreign, 12 December 1936.

Tibetan government to attempt to attach to negotiations for reaffirmation all sorts of requests *vis-à-vis* China.<sup>25</sup>

Instead of raising the question of reaffirmation, Gould proposed 'definite action' backed by 'reiteration of oral explanation' of indubitable rights of the British government over Tawang.

Mention may be made in this connection that the League of Nations Slavery Convention sought to abolish slavery in all the territorial jurisdiction of its members. On representation of the British Indian government in August 1936 an exception was made with regard to the unadministered areas of the Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts. 'Admission made in reservations', the Secretary of State apprehended, 'that the areas are unadministered might be used to support the Chinese claims, and from this point of view it is desirable to avoid the further advertisement of lack of control which is involved in the maintenance of reservation.'<sup>26</sup> The Government of India reviewed the whole question and in its despatch on 16 February 1938 the Secretary-General of the League was informed that the Government of India had decided for obvious reasons to withdraw the reservations and that steps were being taken to extend necessary control over Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts.<sup>27</sup>

Already in March 1937, the Surveyor General of India, who had been advised to indicate the Indo-Tibetan frontier on the basis of the Red Line in the Simla Convention, forwarded to the Foreign Secretary the map entitled *High Lands of Tibet and Surrounding Regions* indicating therein the McMahon Line.<sup>28</sup>

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25. *Ibid.*

26. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/23, E & O 4284/37, IO to EAD, 26 July 1937.

27. The process actually begun when the Government of India on the recommendation of Assam government agreed on 13 January 1938 to the formation of an area of political control in the unadministered Abor country in the Sadiya Frontier Tract. *Ibid.*, E & O 944/38, Secretary EAD, 16 February 1938, and *Ibid.*, 36/41, PZ 678/38, EAD, 13 January.

28. *Op. cit.*, Surveyor-General to Secretary EAD, 23 March 1937.

Copies of the map were circulated to *The Times*, Royal Geographical Society, London, etc., to show correctly Indo-Tibetan Frontier in this region.<sup>29</sup> In the following year the revised edition of Aitchison's, *Treaties*, Vol. XIV (with the imprint of 1929) saw the light of the day.<sup>30</sup> 'Definite action' proposed by Gould was also not long in coming. D. H. Dennehy, Chief Secretary Assam, in his DO on 16 October 1936 informed K. P. S. Menon of the Foreign Department that the Governor contemplated to depute the Political Officer Balipara to Dirang dzong and Kalaktang in the next spring to come to closer touch with the Monbas in the eastern border of Bhutan and the Sherchokpas and Sherdukpens of the villages of Shergaon and Rupa whose allegiance to Tawang was only nominal.<sup>31</sup> The Political Officer was to ascertain whether revenues could be collected from some of the tribes and whether a lump sum should be assessed on the whole of the lower area and collected through the *Jungpens* as a token of allegiance to the British government. Tours in Tawang could be made in alternate years and in southern area each year since these were easily accessible than the areas around Tawang demanding crossing of the high range Tse-La-pass. Menon, in his reply on 2 December though considered it 'highly desirable' to have 'some arrangement for emphasising *vis-à-vis* our interest in Tawang by actual tours or by collecting the revenue by ourselves', the proposal was unacceptable to the Foreign Department on Gould's advice from Lhasa to the contrary.<sup>32</sup> The latter apprehended that 'unambitious programme' contemplated by the Assam government

While it may raise suspicions and cause irritations and no doubt provoke protest and argument is likely to be

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29. *Ibid.*, 36/23, ii, PZ 4055/38, Peel, R. T., (Political Secretary, IO) to editor *The Times*, Royal Geographical Society, John Bartholomew and Sons Ltd. London, etc., 28 August.
30. *Ibid.*, 36/23, i, PZ 6382/38, Secretary EAD, 25 August.
31. *Ibid.*, 36/29, PZ 291/37, Dennehy to Menon, 16 October 1936.
32. *Ibid.*, 36/23, i, Menon to Dawson, 2 December 1936 ; 36/29, Foreign to Gould, 7 February 1937.

insufficiently impressive and decisive. Tawang is the nerve centre of the area and it is for serious consideration whether it would be wiser to tackle Tawang *direct* even if this involve some postponment of local activity.<sup>33</sup>

On 27 May 1936, Sir Michael Keane, the Governor of Assam (1935-7), in consultation with Gould forwarded to the Department of External Affairs the 'definite proposal'. He abandoned earlier ideas of 'occasional tours' as 'half-hearted measures' 'worse than useless' to make good British footing in Tawang. He stressed on 'more impressive and permanent action' if Tawang was to be effectively occupied and possible intrusion of China into that quarter forestalled.<sup>34</sup> Time had come, he represented, that the policy advocated by McMahon in 1914 which was held in abeyance so long should be given effect to. He proposed that a European officer of Indian Police with experience of frontier diplomacy should be posted as Assistant Political Officer at Balipara ; and the latter should visit Tawang and stay there during summer and that this should be repeated year after year for the present. Apart from establishing British position up to the McMahon Line at the western end, such a policy, the Governor hoped, would bring under control the tribes between Tawang and the Balipara Frontier Tract. Moreover, the occupation of Tawang and the pacification of the wild tribes in the 'neutral zone' would open up trade route from the Tibetan plateau increasing thereby not only 'circulation of goods and money, but tapping an important new source of information of the progress of affairs in Central Asia'.<sup>35</sup>

Government of India decided that Captain Lightfoot, was to proceed to Tawang on an exploratory mission. He was 'to examine the country, get into touch with the inhabitants and form some estimate of its revenue possibilities'.<sup>36</sup> Gould was at the same time directed 'to secure the acquiescence and active

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33. *Ibid.*, telegram xx, Gould to Foreign, 12 December 1936.

34. *Ibid.*, PZ 4744/37, Secretary Governor of Assam, 27 May ; *Reid*, p. 295.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*, Deputy Secretary, Government of India, 1 July 1937.



goodwill' of the Tibetan authorities in the measures proposed by the Government of Assam.<sup>37</sup> When this was referred to Norbu Dhondup, Assistant Political Officer Sikkim, then at Lhasa, the latter was reluctant to tackle the question of Tawang prior to the arrival of Lightfoot ; he was almost certain that the Tibetans would raise the earlier argument of first settling Chinese-Tibetan long standing question before annexing Tawang.<sup>38</sup> In his reply, on 15 February 1938, Gould also desired that action on the part of Assam government 'should precede conversation at Lhasa'.<sup>39</sup>

The task before Lightfoot was an extremely delicate one. He was to assert the authority of the British over an area in which at no time since 1914 had the Indian government taken steps 'to question the Tibetan or assert British authority' ; on the other hand, he was not to act in a manner as to calculate to cause 'least shock to the Tibetan susceptibilities'. He was 'to explore facts rather than to issue orders and make decisions'.<sup>40</sup> Hardly had Lightfoot arrived in Tawang on 30 April 1938, Lhasa lodged a protest to the Political Officer Sikkim who, of course, replied point-blank that the Assam government usually send their officer to tour round their frontier and as Tawang was ceded to government by 1914 Treaty, it was not advisable to return. The Tibetan officials defied his authority and continued to collect revenue in his very presence. The representation of the Governor of Assam that the Tibetan government be requested to withdraw their officials to their side of the International line was turned down by the Government of India ; the latter was averse to 'any action which would commit them to permanent occupation and further expenditure'.<sup>41</sup> Lightfoot was advised to

inform all concerned that Tawang by treaty Indian not Tibetan territory and should impress this on all Tibetan

37. *Ibid.*, DO to Gould, 1 February 1938.

38. *Ibid.*, Norbu to Gould, 12 February 1938.

39. *Ibid.*, Gould to Savidge, (Under Secretary *EAD*), 15 February 1938.

40. *Reid*, pp. 296-7.

41. *Op. cit.*, Minute by Harrison, 13 June 1938.

officials. He should not demand their withdrawal and should give no assurance to local inhabitants, but should inform them that he has been sent to make enquiries into local conditions and the government will decide after his return whether to take further interest in them or not.<sup>42</sup>

Norbu had in the meantime discussed the problem of Tawang with the Kashag and explained to them the whole position. Subsequently under the direction of the Government of India he protested officially against the collection of taxes and the embarrassment of the expedition by the Tibetan officials within Indian territory. The reply made by the Cabinet was to be effect that Tawang was Tibetan territory and the collection of taxes therein was normal. Norbu referred to the 1914 Treaty and they promised to discuss the matter again.<sup>43</sup> Later Gould was told

so far as I have seen the Kashag not less than nine times and the Regent three times about Tawang. All of them are afraid to come to a decision in the matter and the explanation given by them regarding the possible delay in going through the question is merely a pretence ... I am afraid ... the matter will be delayed for many months or years ...<sup>44</sup>

'I know of no Tibetan', Gould later remarked, 'who understands or is capable of understanding the treaty position as a whole or the detail.'<sup>45</sup> The Tibetan version of the 1914 Convention was not intelligible and it became all the more complicated by the omission of what the Tibetans most valued the clause which protected Tibetan interests *vis-a-vis* China. It was also difficult for them to make out from the map annexed to the treaty whether the Red Line runs on the north or south of Tawang. Therefore no person in authority in Tibet was willing owing to fear of penalties for himself and his family to agree to any territorial adjustments unfavourable to Tibet which

42. *Ibid.*, also PZ 3854/38, Secretary EAD, 16 May.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*, Norbu to Gould, 26 August 1938.

45. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/49, Ext. 3228/45, Gould 19 June.

were not effected during the life time of the 13th Dalai Lama since dead.

The report submitted by Lightfoot, *Report of the Tawang Expedition 1938*, is an invaluable document of the affairs of Tawang and its people.<sup>46</sup> Apart from a detailed account of the country and the Monbas, it provides a glimpse into their administrative, social and religious institutions and specially the role played by the monastery. Earlier he brought to the notice of the Government of Assam that the condition of people were deplorable.

There is almost a panic in the district. Traders (are) selling goods as they are afraid (that) Tibetan government might send troops who would loot all their possession ... fear everywhere that retaliatory action by Tibetan Government (will take place) after our departure.<sup>47</sup>

He recommended, amongst others, the withdrawal of the *Tsona Jungpens* and their assistants ; this would be the 'biggest boon' that could be conferred on the people. With them would automatically disappear their exaction of tribute. It would be also of utmost advantage if the Tibetan officials could be replaced by the Monbas. Payment in cash should replace tribute in kind. The monopolies of salt and rice should also be abolished. After removal of the *Tsona Jungpens* two agents were to be appointed ; one in Tawang and the other in Dirang dzong. Assistant by *panchayats* they should be empowered to deal with all cases subject to the right of appeal to the Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract.<sup>48</sup> Sir Gilbert Hogg, the officiating Governor, thought that the situation in Tawang was 'intolerable'. On 7 September 1938, in forwarding the report to the Department of External Affairs, he recommended that 'a control area' around Tawang should be declared and the Tibetan government should be requested to withdraw their officials from that area. Endeavour should be made for

46. *Ibid.*, 12/36/29 ; *Reid*, pp. 297-9.

47. *Ibid.*, Lightfoot 16 May 1938.

48. *Ibid.*

the substitution of Monba for Tibetan officials in the Tawang monastery. A tribute of rupees five a house should be levied in cash and monopolies of rice and salt to be abolished. The administrative staff recommended by the Political Officer should be approved.<sup>49</sup>

New Delhi was rather sceptical to the recommendations. India Office, of course, thought that in the last resort, it might be necessary to occupy Tawang, and the proposal was therefore 'on the right lines'.<sup>50</sup> Apprehending that the Tibetan officials would soon revert to their 'previous practices', Shillong suggested a second expedition, 'if permanent occupation was not immediately practicable'.<sup>51</sup> Reitering the same on 3 January 1939 Sir Robert Niel Reid, the Governor of Assam (1939-42), informed Lord Linlithgow in a 'confidential' note that there were three alternatives :

The *first* is to wash the hands of the whole thing in spite of the fact we told the local people that they were our subjects and not subjects of Tibet ...The *second* alternative is the permanent occupation of Tawang with consequential expenses ...The *third* alternative is a further visit on a small scale this spring, but ... such a visit, if it is to be worthwhile would have to be repeated periodically.<sup>52</sup>

The proposal was unacceptable to the Government of India on the ground that 'it would effect nothing permanent and would merely create expectations of protection amongst the inhabitants which would not be fulfilled'. In their letter on 20 April to the Assam government they went so far as to state that they did not feel justified at that time in undertaking any commitment in that quarter.<sup>53</sup>

H. J. Twynum, who had officiated for a few months as the Governor of Assam, viewed the question from a different angle.

49. *Ibid.*, Governor of Assam, 7 September 1938.

50. *Ibid.*, also Minute by Peel, 23 November 1938.

51. *Ibid.*, PZ 2976/39, Governor of Assam, 10 December.

52. *Ibid.*, Reid 3 January 1939.

53. *Ibid.*, Hay to Rhodes, 27 December 1938 ; also Minute by Crombie, 23 June 1939.

To him occupation of Tawang was unnecessary inasmuch as Chinese aggression in that area had decreased. He had doubts whether the British government was on an 'absolutely firm ground' in regard to its rights under the Convention of 1914. In his DO to Linlithgow on 17 March he pointed out that the map attached to the Convention was on such a small scale that the Red Line was superimposed on Tawang. The actual boundary claimed was therefore based upon notes which were exchanged on 24-5 March between the Plenipotentiary of Great Britain and Tibet which were accompanied by two maps which placed Tawang on the British side of the Red Line. He questioned whether the British based their claims on these notes which were lacking in the formalities associated with a treaty or on Article 9 of the Convention which did not refer to the maps accompanying the notes but only to the small-scale map attached to the Convention which was not ratified by China.<sup>54</sup>

The object of the government was, he added, to maintain friendly relations with Tibet. In that case it would be undesirable to press for the inclusion of the Tawang salient in British India when the object could be achieved by fixing the boundary further south at the Digien river. This would involve limitation of ultimate occupation to one or two out of three areas Kalaktang, Dirang dzong, but not Tawang itself. The object of including Tawang was *firstly* to secure a natural watershed frontier and *secondly* an access to the shortest trade route into Tibet and monastery of Tawang which had blockaded the trade of this route by undue exaction and oppression. The former could be secured by a frontier south of Tawang and the latter by negotiation. Humanitarian ground alone, he asserted, would not justify a forward policy as similar grounds could be urged for the occupation of other areas of Tibet. Lightfoot's expedition, admittedly, raised hopes in the minds of the inhabitants, but much could be done, Twynum hoped, 'to fulfil

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54. *Ibid.*, Ext. 2029/39, Twynum to Linlithgow, 17 March.

expectations without going so far as to occupy an area which has always been oriented towards Tibet ethnically, politically and in religion'. In his view there were three alternatives before the government : (i) the establishment of a control area to include Dirang dzong and Kalaktang preferably the latter area ; (ii) posting of a native trade agent at Tawang and (iii) the establishment of a frontier post to safeguard the inhabitants of the control area from the Akas and the Dufias.<sup>55</sup>

In his reply on 17 April the Viceroy disagreed with Twynum that the government was not on secure ground so far as treaty rights were concerned though he concurred with his views that 'there is no advantage but considerable risk' in pressing the matter further with Tibet. For financial reasons and deteriorating international situation, the Viceroy thought that he could not agree even to the moderate proposal made by the Officiating Governor for the establishment of a control area up to Tawang-Digien river in order to protect the Monbas or allow Lightfoot to undertake a tour in Dirang dzong area with a small escort of Assam Rifle.<sup>56</sup>

The World War II had in the meantime altered the whole situation. The strategic and political dangers which were hitherto brought forward in asserting treaty rights in the Tawang area were overshadowed by other more pressing threats to India's external and internal security. In its express letter to the Secretary of State on 4 May 1939 the Government of India expressed its reluctance to incur additional financial and military commitments whether on grounds of financial stringency or military point of view. The cost of control measures was estimated at no less than a lakh of rupees annually. Doubts were entertained whether this amount would suffice to secure effective control and it was feared that it would inevitably lead to greater financial commitments. It was also felt that McMahon Line would not at all be satisfactory defensive line

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55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*, Linlithgow to Twynum, 17 April.

owing to the difficulties of access during the greater part of the year.<sup>57</sup>

New Delhi was at the same time apprehensive of incurring enmity with the Tibetan government. Since endeavours that had been made at Lhasa for the last two years to secure formal acknowledgement of British right in Tawang ended in nothing, it was felt that the occupation of the area would be resented by the Tibetans. The only advantage to be expected was the improvement of the condition of the inhabitants and their release from the Tibetan oppression as described by Lightfoot. Whatever the latter might say, it was argued, the condition in Tawang was no worse than those prevailed in Tibet in general and were accepted by the Tibetans as 'tolerable'.<sup>58</sup> In any case, it was greatly doubted whether the very limited control proposed would be sufficient to eradicate Tibetan and monastic influence or to contribute materially to the prosperity and well being of the people. The Government of India was therefore not inclined to take any action to clarify the position *vis-à-vis* Tibet; all the more because the Tibetan government was unwilling to make any definite answer to the subject. This position, therefore, did not warrant any further action on the part of the Foreign Department or the Political Officer Sikkim, to pursue schemes for establishment of control over Tawang.<sup>59</sup>

The reaction at Whitehall was a mixed one. To Robert Peel, Secretary Political Department, the attitude of the Government of India was 'rather disappointing', for that would throw away the fruits of Lightfoot's expedition. The lot of the Monbas, who spent most of the times in jungle to escape raiding of the Akas, would be deplorable. On the other hand, he realised that the Foreign Department had been forced to undertake no further commitments that were avoidable by

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57. *Ibid.*, Ext. 2947/39, Secretary EAD to Secretary of State, 4 May.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

financial difficulties and international complications. They were no less influenced by Gould's opinion that it was doubtful whether in the long run it would prove to be feasible to assert domination over Tawang except at considerable cost. Peel, therefore, wanted to let the whole position 'simmer for the time being' unless the Tibetan government forced his hands.<sup>60</sup>

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60. *Ibid.*, Minute by Crombie, 23 June 1939.



*The McMahon Line : Establishment of Control*

Robert Reid continued to emphasise the strategic importance of the tribal belt of the North-East Frontier despite the remarks made by the Department of External Affairs on the McMahon Line. He brought home to the Government of India that over the areas beyond the Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts and outside the administered boundary of the Naga Hills and Burma the control exercised by the government was only a 'shadowy' one.<sup>1</sup> 'Their ultimate fate,' he remarked, 'must be bound up with that of the Excluded Areas', and ... the identity of the countries with which they march and their importance from the point of view of strategy and international politics are factors which cannot be overlooked.' This was in fact borne out in their relations with Tibet, China, Burma and Japan during the World War II. In the early phase of the war, namely the Sino-Japanese war, the presence of the Japanese navy in the Pacific virtually cut off China's supply line by the sea. The Burma-Yunan road which provided to some extent an alternative route was also severed after Japanese occupation of Burma in 1941. Chiang Kai-shek, the

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1. IOR, L/P & S/12/22/6, *Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas of Assam : Constitutional Position, 1936-47*, July 16.
  2. Under Constitution Act 1935, the tribal areas were divided into two categories : (i) *Excluded Areas* consisting of the North-East Frontier (Sadiya, Balipara and Lakhimpur) Tracts, Naga Hills, Lushai Hills and North Cachar Hills sub-division of the Cachar District. (ii) *Partially Excluded Areas* with Garo Hills, Mikir Hills (Nowgong and Sibsagar District) of the British portion of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills ; see Reid, R., 'The Excluded Areas of Assam', *The Geographical Journal*, January-February 1944, pp. 18-29.

Chinese Generalissimo, thereupon sought to link up southwest Szechuan with the valley of the Brahmaputra *via* Lohit Valley, and a survey party actually reached the Tibetan border. The Tibetan government, through whose territory the road would pass,

determined to resist. Both sides were urged by the British government to come to an agreement, failing which cooperation in India could not be forthcoming; but the Chinese without further argument tried to enter the country; it was turned back by the Tibetan troops. In spite of a visit by a Chinese official from Chinghai, who mixed persuasion and threats, the Tibetan refused to yield.<sup>3</sup>

Reports poured in about this time of Tibetan encroachments south of the McMahon Line at several sectors. In the upper waters of Lohit, the Tibetans were reported to have exercised control and levied taxes and transit duties south of Rima, one and half marches north of the Line.<sup>4</sup> On the west in the Tsangpo valley, Tibetan influence extended about seventy miles south of the international boundary as far as Karko on the right and Simong on the left bank of the Siang, a tributary of the Brahmaputra. The penetration was followed by 'continued oppression, levy of taxes and by threat of force'.<sup>5</sup> This was aided by the fact that Simong, Karko and other villages on the north were prevented from coming south to Assam by 'trade-blocks' and were therefore compelled to remain on good terms with the Tibetans on whom they depended for their necessaries. In a belated report of the Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract, reference had been made of disaffection and resentment

3. Richardson, H. E., *Tibet and its History*, p. 159.

4. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/29; PZ 5515/1940; see Note on a discussion held at Government House, Shillong, 1 August 1940.

5. *Ibid.*, 36/41; PZ 5154/39; Note for Registry; T. A. K. Harrison, 1 September 1939; Mills to Secretary, *EAD*, 24 October. The preponderance of Tibetan influence has been attributed by Mills to the fact that this area was visited by the British only twice; the first being that of Dundas in 1913 and Godfrey in 1939. Minor Officials of Pemako visited it regularly each year.

in Tawang and Dirang dzong areas ; and that consequent on an incident in June 1938 between the villagers and local Tibetan officials, Tibetan government had deputed several *Jungpens* with troops on a punitive expedition.<sup>6</sup>

Events as mentioned above, it was clear to the local authorities, would continue to occur until some settlement was arrived at on the common frontier. The subject was discussed at a meeting of high officials in Shillong, on 1 August 1940, which was attended amongst others by B.J. Gould, Political Officer Sikkim. In his forwarding note of the proceedings to the Department of External Affairs, Gould traced 'present complications' mainly to two factors : *firstly* to the neglect of the Indian government for many years to the question of vindication of the McMahon Line and *secondly* of the concern of the British representative in 1914 in obtaining a frontier which would look well on a map ... than with the establishment of a convenient ethnic and political boundary. As a result, they included

In the Tawang, Dirang-Dzong and Kalaktang area ... a region which is as Tibetan in character as the Chumbi valley ; in the Siang valley they cut in half the territories of the then king of PO ; and in the Zayul-Chu (Lohit) valley while leaving Rima in Tibet they ran the frontier line through an area which appears naturally to come within the orbit of Rima.<sup>7</sup>

In his opinion, the practical scheme with least disturbance to Anglo-Tibetan relations would be 'to get well ahead in the Siang and Lohit areas before disturbing the *status quo* in the Tawang Dirang-Dzong and Kalaktang area'. Neither Whitehall nor New Delhi was prepared during the period of war to precipitate a crisis in the Indo-Tibetan border.

Tibetan encroachments apart, 'the possibility of the Chinese establishing effective sovereignty over Tibet' at the end of the war or 'using Tibet as stooge' to encroach on Indian territory

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6. *Ibid.*, 36/29 ; PZ 2907/40, Notes for Registry ; C. Roefe, 10 June.

7. *Ibid.*, PZ 5515/40 ; Gould to Secretary EAD, Simla 2 August.

made it imperative on the Government of India before the termination of the war to render the McMahon Line the effective frontier by permanent occupation of the 'focal points'. This would involve, it was felt, considerable initial and recurring expenditure and dependent on the availability of forces which in turn on progress of operations against the Japanese on Assam-Burma frontier. In proposing this forward move, on 11 March 1943, the Department of External Affairs brought home to the Secretary of State that the Chinese ambitions to absorb Tibet had recently been publicly stated as one of their post-war desiderata ; and that there was every likelihood that this would receive considerable support from the United States. Since Chinese cartographer's conception of this frontier differed fundamentally from that of India, Tibetan encroachments, if allowed to remain, would bring in after the war embittered relations between China and India. As to the actual measures

we do not mean ... action designed to assert our rights under McMahon agreement should be preceded by any discussion with, or notification to, the Chinese Government. Indeed we should not consider it necessary to give prior notice even in Lhasa of our intention to reoccupy Tawang for example. Tibetan feelings may be hurt, but we have clear warrant for our action and Tibetan resentment will no doubt be diminished by the recollection of their dependence economic, and to some extent political, on India.<sup>8</sup>

Peel at the India Office considered the proposal as 'somewhat unexpected'. Government of India was prompted, he thought, by the Chinese designs after the war, but he was unaware if the Chinese had ever made a public statement to absorb Tibet as one of their post-war aims. In that eventuality, he admitted, it would be of great advantage to the British government if it could establish before hand a satisfactory frontier in agreement with the Tibetans. Peel was however not

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8. *Ibid.*, 36/23, i, Ext. 1240/43 ; EAD to Secretary of State, Cypher telegram 11 March.

prepared to disturb friendly relations then existed between the British and the Tibetan government. He was well aware that the Tibetans were sensitive over the Tawang area and that there would be practical difficulties in enforcing British authority over an area where located the most important monastery of the Tibetans. He therefore advised the Government of India 'to move with caution' so far this area was concerned and, in fact, he doubted much whether it would be desirable to proceed up to the McMahon Line 'straightway'.<sup>9</sup> In any case, India Office agreed on principle 'to get the situation straightened now rather than after the Chinese conquest of Tibet'.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, in its telegram of 15 July, Indian government was advised to go ahead with the scheme provided that from the military point of view there was no objection to making the necessary forces available, and that special consideration be given to the Tawang area, wherein it would be advisable 'to go slow' to respect the susceptibilities of the Tibetans.<sup>11</sup>

A hurdle arose when the Foreign Office opposed the proposal 'not on the merits', but on account of its apprehension that action on aforesaid lines might have 'wider repercussions'. What worried the Foreign Office was that the possibilities of the dispute with the Tibetans over the McMahon Line reaching the Chinese, particularly if a clash with Tibetan forces should result at any point when British forces moved up to occupy bases. That would enable the Chinese to carry out a damaging propaganda not only in their own press but also in American popular press that 'we were up to an old Imperialistic game and instead of getting on with the war were diverting our energies to grabbing territory that did not belong to us, at the expense of unfortunate Tibetans'.<sup>12</sup> The dangers were exaggerated to some extent ; yet the India Office could not refute

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9. *Ibid.*, 1240/43, see Peel's Minute 30 March.

10. *Ibid.*, see Minute 29 March 1943.

11. *Ibid.*, Ext. 1840/43 ; Peel to Caroe, 22 April.

12. *Ibid.*

their views on the wider aspect of the matter in respect to war efforts as a whole. The fears were allayed when in a meeting of the Foreign Office representatives on a higher level, the Secretary of State explained that the current diplomatic exchanges with the Tibetan government were unlikely to reach the ears of the Chinese ; that no part of the Tibetan territory in question was peopled by the Tibetan race and except in Tawang, the infiltration of Tibetan tax-collectors had been unauthorised even by the Lhasa government.<sup>13</sup> To satisfy the Foreign Office the original draft to the Government of India was revised emphasising therein the importance of avoiding any action which lent support to the Chinese to carry on mischievous propaganda against the British government.

The forward move proposed by the Government of India thus received the approval of the Secretary of State subject to the condition that necessary forces would be available and maintained without any adverse effect on the prosecution of the war against Japan ; if possible, a clash with Tibetan troops should be avoided and that every precaution should be taken against publicity which would give materials for use as propaganda in China and the USA that 'we are following our old Imperialistic ways'.<sup>14</sup> The Department of External Affairs, therefore, sought to stabilise the frontier by permanent occupation of some forward points from east to west and for the present the advance to Tawang was postponed. The tribal areas, which were then under the control of the Central government, were to be dealt with by the Governor of Assam as the Agent to the Governor General. He was to be aided by an Adviser with the headquarters at Shillong. The latter would work through Political Officers in the Frontier Tracts which were hereafter designated as Agencies. For the occupation of advanced posts, a battalion and five platoons of Assam

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13. *Ibid.*, FO to IO 14 March.

14. *Ibid.*, Ext. 4366/43, Minute by Roefe, 11 August.

Rifles were placed at the disposal of the Governor of Assam.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly J. P. Mills, Secretary Government of Assam, was appointed Adviser to the Governor for Tribal Affairs and States. He was directed (i) to occupy a post as near Rima as possible and to examine in its vicinity a site for aerodrome, (ii) to reoccupy Siang Valley cold-weather outposts and to carry on explorations up to the McMahon Line, (iii) reconnaissance by a Special Officer Subansiri Valley and (iv) to examine the possibilities of re-establishing the posts of Shergaon and Rupa in the Se La Sub-Agency.<sup>16</sup>

Anthropologist, scholar and administrator of long repute, Mills was well aware of the problems and difficulties to be confronted in operations on the south of the McMahon Line, one of the least explored regions of the world. Locomotion was extremely difficult in this terrain of trackless and precipitous ranges flanking rivers which are 'too swift to be fordable or navigable' for the gradient on this side of the frontier exceeds thousand feet a mile. 'Yet', in the words of Haimendorf, who visited these areas, 'without a net-work of bridle paths, linked by iron suspension bridges spanning unfordable rivers it would be impossible to extend effective political control over the hills.'<sup>17</sup> Porterage was (even now) essential. Porter corps had to carry their ration which was not available in a country where there was no surplus food for sale. This, naturally, restricted their movements within a comparatively short distance from their base of operations. Tribal porters, though not rationed, were not easily procurable. This was loathsome to them partly because they were called upon at times where their labour was greatly needed in fields and partly because it brought no gain to them. In return for his labour if someone gave a rupee to a tribesman 'he might accept it, bore a hole through it and wear this round his neck ; he could not spend it'. Commodities like

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15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. Haimendorf, C. V. F., *Himalayan Barbary*, pp. 231-2.

salt which were greatly in demand were acceptable, but these would have to be carried up demanding additional porter making thereby the problem all the more difficult. Air droppings could have eased to some extent the problem of supplying advanced outposts ; this was also handicapped by the difficult terrain which provides limited scope for convenient landing strips. Apart from physical there were psychological difficulties. Of these, Mills says,

the main one which confronts India is that the tribes to be incorporated belong naturally more to Tibet than to India. In race and in language they are Mongoloid ; they all speak Tibeto-Burman language which have nothing in common with the Assamese or the Aryans of the plains. It follows, therefore, ... the cultural and social pull is towards Tibet.<sup>18</sup>

Despite overwhelming odds, Mills had to go ahead with the programme of work as laid down by the Department of External Affairs. The occupation of a forward point in the Lohit Valley was the first in order of priority. From Sadiya movement of rations started on 16 November 1943 by Motor transport up to Denning and beyond next twelve stages by Mishmi porters. On 16 January 1944, a post was established at Walong near Rima by F. P. Mainprice, Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya.<sup>19</sup> The construction of an all-weather post being found impossible the post was withdrawn in the later half of February. The local Tibetan officials, ignorant as they were of the correct position of the international boundary, not only continued collection of taxes on the Indian side, but punished the villagers from assisting the British government. They were told by Mainprice

our frontier ran just north of the Tho Chu and Dichu and that as this included within our frontier the hamlets of Walong, Tinai, Dong and Kahao ... they were subject only to

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18. Mills, J. P., 'Problem of the Assam-Tibet Frontier', *JRCAS* 1950, pp. 154-8.

19. IOR, L/P & S/12/22/4, *A brief General Report of the North-East Frontier Agency, October, 23 1943 to June 30, 1944.*



to the jurisdiction of Sadiya and would no more render tribute or begar (contract labour) to the Rima officials.<sup>20</sup>

In his telegram of 3 July the Political Officer informed the Government of Assam that the Tibetans had destroyed the post at Walong and punished the local inhabitants with double taxation for assisting the British government.<sup>21</sup> Gould was advised by the Government of India to refer the matter to the Tibetant government, and at the same time it was decided to establish the post in the ensuing winter on an all-weather basis. Improvements were planned for air and land communication. Foods were to be grown locally as much as possible and every endeavour be made to consolidate British influence amongst the Mishmis.<sup>22</sup>

Mainprice was directed to advance and reoccupy the post and in case he found the site under occupation of the Tibetans he was not to take further action without orders from the Government of India.<sup>23</sup> Claf Caroe, then Secretary Department of External Affairs, did not relish the idea that the hands of the Political Officer should be 'unduly tied'.<sup>24</sup> The latter should not wait, he thought, for special instruction from New Delhi nor should any attempt be made 'to coordinate local administration with diplomatic connection in Lhasa'. In establishing posts up to the Line the principle should be

that they should be occupied in our own time and not after discussion with the Tibetan government. The Political Officer should of course endeavour to avoid a clash with the local Tibetan authorities, if he could ; but his business was to occupy British territory and, if necessary, he might resort to force employing least degree of force that was required.<sup>25</sup>

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20. Cited in Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 208.

21. IOR, L/P&S/12/36/42, Ext. 3479/44, telegram 3 July, PO Sadiya to Governor of Assam.

22. *Ibid.*, telegram Foreign to Gould, Shillong.

23. IOR, L/P&S/36/42 ; Ext. 4343/44, EAD to Secretary of State 29 September.

24. *Ibid.*, Caroe to Secretary Governor of Assam, 15 Agust 1944.

25. *Ibid.*

Apparently, this was contrary to the directives of the Foreign Office. Peel, of course, thought that Indian government was on the 'right line' though he feared that the talk of force would alarm the Foreign Office. He told over phone Sterndale Bennett at the Foreign Office that 'this was a very small affair', and the Political Officer would probably have only one section of a platoon with him.<sup>26</sup> 'Just because it was a small matter', replied Bennett, 'it wasn't worth taking the risk of laying ourselves open to the damaging propaganda in China and the United States.' When the Foreign Office agreed to India's scheme for establishing posts along the McMahon Line, Peel was constrained to remark, 'it seems to me absurd to say now that it must not use force if necessary'. The attitude of the Foreign Office continued to be 'less yielding' despite a telegraphic message from the Department of External Affairs not to change the instructions of the Secretary.<sup>27</sup> Peel had no alternative but to cable to New Delhi that utmost effort should be made to avoid clash with the Tibetans.<sup>28</sup>

Much hullabaloo was unnecessarily made over this small affair. The Governor of Assam was informed by the Political Officer that Walong was occupied on 19 October without any incident, and that damage to the post was done by weather and not by the Tibetans.<sup>29</sup> The occupation of Walong enabled the British to have the command of the Dichu valley and thence the route to Burma through the Diphu or Talok Pass.

In the Tsangpo or Siang Valley, reference has already been made, that the Tibetan influence and oppression had extended seventy miles south of the McMahon Line. In early 1939, R. W. Godfrey, the APO, with a party of Assam Rifles

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26. *Ibid.*, Peel to Under Secretary of State, 19 September.

27. *Ibid.*, Ext. 4343/44, *op. cit.*

28. *Ibid.*, Ext. 4513/44, draft telegram, Secretary of State to EAD 13 October.

29. *Ibid.*, Cypher telegram, 28 October 1944; also Ext. 5900/44, R. W., Godfrey (Secretary Governor of Assam) 25 November 1944.

proceeded to the Tsangpo Valley to ascertain (i) the extent of Tibetan infiltration and oppression (ii) to remove the 'trade-blocks', and to settle certain inter-tribal disputes amongst Abor clans.<sup>30</sup> On the basis of that survey Mills recorded: 'Every year the Tibetans send down what they are pleased to call tax-collectors who are really just bandits armed many of them with antique Tibetan guns.'<sup>31</sup> On behalf of the Sera monastery, taxes were collected by officials stationed at Tambu and Chambla in the Tsangpo Valley in addition to tributes of rice and cloths, 10 to 60 pieces, from each village below the McMahon Line. Large quantities of salt were also sent down for forced sale at an exorbitant rate.<sup>32</sup> To afford protection to the inhabitants from reprisals of the Tibetans and to open up the trade routes from the north to the south, Mills proposed to establish two cold-weather outposts at Karko and Riga in addition to Pangin where existed a similar post.<sup>33</sup> This received the sanction of the Government of India on 30 August 1940. The Political Officer was authorised to tour with an escort as far as the McMahon Line for the purpose, amongst others, of establishing British control in that area so as to check yearly incursions of the Tibetan officials from the north.<sup>34</sup>

The Governor of Assam, during his tour of the border areas in 1941, learnt that the Political Officer would have to deal with (i) the non-Buddhist Abors to whom the revenue of the Sera Monastery had no concern, (ii) the Buddhist Bhutias at the corner of the control area who made contribution to the monastic revenue and (iii) the Tempo Officials on their tax collecting tour. The Government of India agreed with the

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30. *Reid*, p. 261.

31. Mills, 'Problem of the Assam-Tibet Frontier', *JRCAS* 1950, pp. 154-60.

32. IOR, L/P&S/12/36/47 ; copy of letter 1 August 1944 ; Secretary *EAD*, see *Note on Tax Collecting by Tibetan Agents in Siang Valley*.

33. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/41 ; Mills to Secretary *EAD*, 24 October 1939.

34. *Ibid.*, Ext. 8038/41 ; Notes for Registry, 16 December 1941.

Governor that the attitude of the Political Officer to each category should be 'slightly different'. He should inform the Abor villagers that they were under no obligation to pay anything to the Tempo Officials and in case the latter persisted in their demands, the Abors should refer the matter to the Political Officer. The same assurance was to be given to the Bhutias although the Political Officer was not to interfere in case the latter desired to subscribe to purely monastic funds in Tibet. Finally, the Tempo Officials were to be informed in case the Political Officer met them not to collect any tax from areas under control of the British government. In the event of their collecting monastic dues, the matter should be referred to the government, pending which no revenue should be collected. The Political Officer was further advised not to give any impression to the inhabitants of the control area that immediate and effective protection would be forthcoming. Protection must certainly come ; but delays in correspondence and distance involved would render it difficult to have that protection effective.<sup>35</sup> India Office considered these measures as 'cautious and reasonable'. It was however felt that the process of 'freezing out the Tibetans' would be slow, but unavoidable.

We have not established our influence in this valley hitherto and the Tibetan officers who oppress the villagers will not likely to give up an annual source of revenue.

Nonetheless

the gradual feeling of security and protection which should grow from our awakening interest there should be a moral strength to the villagers in resisting demands for tribute. It is hoped that it will be possible to settle the tiresome cause of friction locally without annoyance to the Tibetan government at Lhasa.<sup>36</sup>

In the same year, J. F. S. Williams, the APO accompanied by an escort of Assam Rifles, established the outposts at Karko

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35. *Ibid.*, see copy of letter from Secretary Governor of Assam, 9 September 1941 ; *Reid*, pp. 263-4.

36. *Ibid.*, Notes for Registry, *op. cit.*

and Riga. During his short tour the Governor impressed upon the tribesmen the necessity of refraining from slavery, *mithan* raiding and maintaining trade blocks. They were also told that they were under no obligation to meet the demands of the Tempo Officials.<sup>37</sup> The outposts were re-established in February 1944 only to be withdrawn after two months as the men of Assam Rifles were urgently needed elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> Karko was to be re-established on a permanent basis in case it was found inconvenient to replace it by a post higher up in valley near the junction of Sigong and Pango in order to extend British control and to block the road to the Tibetan agents coming down the valley to exact tribute from the Abor villages. Communication with Karko were also to be improved both by land and air.<sup>39</sup> In his tours, during 1943-4, the APO proceeded as far as Bomdo and effected the settlement of a serious inter-tribal feud of the Abors. In the following year, in his two long tours, he visited a number of Minyong and Padam Abor villages and extended British influence up to Tuting and Jido. Summarising the results, Mills reported that

raiding for slaves and cattle had ceased over a wide area and under the newly established conditions of peace men from villages far up the valley who had never visited plains before came down to Pasighat to trade ... Fewer Menbas than usual came down on tribute collecting forays and those who did found the Abors no longer willing to pay.<sup>40</sup>

The Subansiri area, on the west of the river of the same name, consists of the foothills bordering the valley of the Brahmaputra, a broad plateau intersected by deep valleys and the mountainous tract with snow-clad ranges of the Eastern

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37. Reid, *op. cit.*

38. IOR, L/P&S/12/22/4, *A brief General Report on the North-East Frontier Agency, October 23, 1943 to June 30, 1944.*

39. *Ibid.*, 22/8, i, Ext. 4059/44, *Reconnaisance in the North-East Frontier Tracts, 1944-5.*

40. *Op. cit.*, Mills, *Report on the Assam Tribal Areas for the Year ending June 30, 1945.*

Himalayas. Through this 'least explored tract' Tibetan goods swords, prayer-bells, woven cloths and ornaments studded with coral, turquoise and jade passed from hand to hand along the tribal trade routes.<sup>41</sup> It was suspected that there must be an area at the top held by the Tibetans well on the Indian side of the frontier. Surrounded by wooded hills at an elevation of five thousand feet lies the Apa Tani plateau, 'a miniature Manipur Valley'.

It is a remarkable sight. On the spurs round the level plain of rice land are the seven villages—the largest containing over a thousand houses. The whole valley is a marvel of neatness ; for only by such intensive cultivation could it support a population estimated at two thousand to the square mile. Every yard of suitable ground ... is cultivated, bamboos are all in orderly fenced plantations, and every path is ditched and drained. The people might well be called a tribe of market gardeners. They are industrious strongly individualistic and peace loving.<sup>42</sup>

On the south the country supposed to have been hitherto owned by the Apa Tanis are located the Dufla villages of Toku (Talo) Jorum and Mai. They cultivated rice in the irrigated fields at the bottom of the valley and acted as go-betweens between the Apa Tanis, with whom they carried on a brisk trade, and the Duflas of the Upper Panior (Ranga Nadi) and its tributaries.<sup>43</sup> Amongst these tribes, war was practically unknown ; raiding invariably was a private affair.

*A* Dafla has a claim, real or imaginary, against *B* in another village. There being no authority competent to force *B* to settle the matter *A* takes the only course he knows of and attempts to capture some of *B*'s *mithan* (domestic bison), or someone of *B*'s village whom he can hold to ransom.<sup>44</sup>

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41. Haimendorf, *op. cit.*, p. 157

42. IOR, L/P&S/12/36/47 ; *vide* Mills 'Report on a Tour in the Eastern Dafla and Apa Tani Country'. For further study see Haimendorf, *The Apa Tani and their Neighbours*, Chs. I and II.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

Despite such norms Likha and Licha, two groups of Dufilas of the valley of the Kiyng, a tributary of the Panior, had recently turned 'rougue'. 'For years ... Licha had robbed the Apa Tanis of cattle and captured their men, releasing them only on payment of enormous ransoms.'<sup>45</sup> The Apa Tanis, though outnumbered their enemies, 'would not dream of assisting in a counter-attack to avenge the losses of a few rich *mithan* owners'.<sup>46</sup>

To implement the programme of work of the Subansiri area, in early 1944, Government of India deputed C. V. Furer-Haimendorf, the scholar, explorer and anthropologist, as a Special Officer under Adviser to the Governor of Assam. He was assigned to the Balipara Tract with duties to 'establish friendly relations with the unadministered hill tribes, collect data on general conditions and tribal customs, and ultimately explore the upper reaches of the Subansiri River'.<sup>47</sup> Accompanied by his wife, a small staff and Dufila Interpreters Haimendorf arrived in March at the Apa Tani plateau which lies on the line of advance to the north and provided him a potential source of porters and supplies for further recess. An attempt at settlement of disputes between the Dufilas and the Apa Tanis by force by Captain A. E. Davy, Additional Political Officer, proved ineffective and resulted only in 'Dafila hostility and Apatani resentment' at the powerlessness of the local authorities.<sup>48</sup> Haimendorfs, on the other hand,

had a natural as well as a trained gift for making friends with tribal people ... . They studied tribal customs and when they met relatives of people killed by the Miri Mission they paid the right kind of compensation in kind-cloths, brass cups, beads and salt. ... Gift were exchanged in tribal fashion ; a mithan was sacrificed to the accompaniment of of priestly incantations ... . They saw that this was 'an

45. *Op. cit.*, *Himalayan Barbary*, p. 34.

46. *Op. cit.*, Mills, *Report on a Tour etc.*

47. *Op. cit.*, *Himalayan Barbary*, Intro. p. x.

48. IOR, L/P&S/12/36/47, Ext. 1255/46, see Notes for Registry, 4 March.

excellent means of spreading our influence in a peaceful way'.<sup>49</sup>

The Special Officer who moved freely with his wife amongst the tribesman unescorted did much to win confidence of the Apa Tanis ; but feuds of the Hill Miri villages prevented him in absence of troops from proceeding further north. Nevertheless he reached Goba on the upper Kamala and crossed over to Niloo in the Sippy Valley.<sup>50</sup> The reception accorded to the party dispelled the belief that strangers were liable to be killed at sight.\* Inevitably there was a reaction against the earlier practice of touring tribal areas with heavy escorts. It was felt in official circles that 'a moderate escort and tact' would be more effective than 'a hedge of bayonets', that the old practice of visiting only to punish could hardly be expected to make for a hearty welcome, and 'a more friendly policy will have to be followed in future'. Summarising actual results, Haimendorf writes :

At the beginning of 1944 the influence of the Government of India reached no further than a few miles beyond the *Inner Line* .... By May 1945...in a large area including the densely populated Apatani Valley, representatives of Government were on friendly terms with the tribesmen ; and hundreds of Apa Tanis, Daflas and Miris had worked for Government

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49. Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 211.

50. *Ibid.*, 22/4 ; Mills, *Report on the Assam Tribal Areas for the Year ending June 30, 1945*.

\* Mills reported that unlike the Naga head-hunters, who were apt to kill inoffensive strangers, the tribes of the North-East Frontier Agency only attack strangers in what they imagined to be in self-defence. In other words apart from their inter-tribal raids, they only fight if they are frightened. Later, Political Officer Balipara visited the Lamai (Miri), country unescorted and was accorded a most friendly welcome ; consequently, officer's visiting parts of the Mishmi country never visited before had either very small escorts or none at all. 'I would like to place on record the fact', remarked G. E. D. Walker, *APO*, 'that there are ... tremendous possibilities in the Konyak area, if people are properly handled, and provided the use of force to take over the area is kept to a minimum.'



as porters. A trade depot established at Pape had brought Indian goods into the heart of the Apa Tani country, whence they had found their way to many neighbouring villages, and the advantages of economic cooperation with the Government had impressed itself on a wide circle of tribesmen who had previously had little or no contact with the plains.<sup>51</sup>

Evidently, Haimendorf's reconnaissance established friendly relations with the Apa Tanis and opened up the prospect of having in their country friendly base for the extension of British influence in the neighbouring region. It confirmed that there was no 'apparent control' of the Tibetans in the upper waters of the Subansiri though via Lha-La there existed contacts for the purpose of trade 'in the form of tribesmen from India visiting Tibet rather than of any incursion of the Tibetans'.<sup>52</sup> Sir Andrew Clow, the Governor of Assam, (1942-6), was convinced that in the Subansiri Valley, further expedition of an essentially exploratory character should not be attempted during the period of war against Japan. This was bound to be difficult in a region 'unknown and unmapped' and hostility with tribesmen could not be ruled out. Pending an air survey, instead of extensive exploration he sought consolidation in nearer areas.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, for consideration of the Government of India Mills suggested three plans of operations during 1944-5. Of these, Plan I aimed at reaching Lha-La, the most important pass from Tibet to Subansiri catchment ; Plan II envisaged less deep penetration up to the main three rivers of the Subansiri catchment—Subansiri, Kamala and Khru ; and Plan III, which he laid stress, mainly on consolidation of British influence in the Apa Tani plateau, settlement of disputes with the Duflas, suppression of raiding for slavery and preparation of grounds for the establishment of a Dufla Sub-Agency under orders of the Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract. To control the

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51. Haimendorf, *op. cit.* p. 230.

52. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/47, Ext. 4059/44, Godfrey to Secretary EAD, 22 July.

53. *Ibid.*

troublesome Dufilas of Likha and Licha he suggested to establish a cold-weather post with its base at Duta on the Apa Tani plateau.<sup>54</sup> The Government of India accepted on principle the Plan III. At war time when costs were unnaturally inflated, the External Affairs Department could not but prefer a policy of consolidation of areas already explored to one of movement further forward. The post at Duta should be, it was suggested, maintained permanently as had been at Dirang dzong in the SeLa Sub-Agency.<sup>55</sup>

To follow up the work of Haimendorf the Adviser accompanied by Major C. R. Stoner, the Agricultural Officer, toured the Eastern Dufla and Apa Tani country during November-December 1945-6.<sup>56</sup> He was well aware that owing to his imperfect knowledge of the condition of the Dufilas, some of the actions of Captain Davy were not well conceived and left 'unfortunate results'. His primary duty was therefore 'to soothe the ruffled feeling' and induce the Dufilas at least to come in and explain their grievances. The Dufla interpreter Kop Twin, who was respected and universally trusted, was sent in advance, to make known Mill's intentions to his tribesmen. Accompanied by a minimum escort of half a section of Assam Rifles, he arrived at the Apa Tani plateau, renewed earlier contacts and established better understanding with the leading men who had 'turned sour and uncooperative'. At Duta, to his gratification, he met Toku Bat of Talo, a 'key Dufla', who had great reputation as a peacemaker. Last year, though he cooperated with the government, at the instigation of interested parties Davy made an unsuccessful attempt to arrest him which naturally drove him to enemy's camp. Instead of raking up the past, Mills accompanied him to his residence at Talo wherein he was

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54. *Ibid.*, see Plan III; also *Outline of Planes for the North-East Frontier Agencies, season 1944-5*.

55. *Ibid.*, EAD to the Governor of Assam, 23 August.

56. *Ibid.*, 12/36/47; Ext. 1255/46, Godfrey to Weightman, 7 January 1946; see Mills' *Tour note on the Eastern Dafla and Apa Tani country*.

greeted with 'smiling courtesy' by the Dufas of Likha and Licha including the 'wanted' men. The Adviser succeeded not only in establishing friendly relations with those who had previously displayed hostility but also in bringing home to them that the object of the government was 'to straighten out' the difficulties and to bring peace and prosperity to the tribesmen.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike other head-hunters, Mills reported, the Dufas do not kill for the sake of killing, yet he considered a post necessary in the Dufla country at Pilu not at Duta mainly because of its unhealthiness, shortage of land and fuel and its insignificance in regard to local communications. He wanted to have a landing ground at Yajali, half a day's march away, and a road on a new alignment up to the Panior Valley. Maintenance should be, of course, by air with base located at North Lakhimpur.<sup>58</sup>

C. R. Stoner noticed in the Jorum, Talo and Mai areas the Dufas practising both wet and dry cultivation. The wet cultivation the Dufas admitted to have learnt from the Apa Tani which indicated that they were by no means opposed to innovation or introduction of new crops and methods. In his view, the Apa Tanis had no agricultural problem; yet a great deal could be done to improve their crops, to introduce new ones, to try out commercial possibilities and to prepare for changes in the balance of their rural economy which would bring them in closer contact with the plains.<sup>59</sup> Amongst these tribes commercial organisation was primitive. It was unlikely, Mills thought, barter would be replaced soon by a monetary system. The importance of salt was so great in the local economy that the Adviser urged on the employment of air transport to reduce costs which would encourage these tribes to look to the British rather than Tibet for this essential commodity. Other imports would require, he thought, 'careful

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57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*, see C. R. Stoner's notes on possible lines of Agricultural development among the Dufas and Apa Tanis.

watching' to avoid disturbing the natural economy and balance of trade.<sup>60</sup>

Mills advocated a reversal of policy in the Subansiri area. The aim of the government should be one of gradual expansion of influence rather than exploratory expeditions. In explanation he stated

If a Political Officer is to establish himself at Pilu and tactfully lead his people to see that he was their friend, always ready with his good offices in disputes, he would certainly very soon get invitations to visit more and more distant villages, where he would be received as a honoured guest. In this way our influence and knowledge would increase, and the time would soon come for a step forward and the establishment of a temporary new headquarters yet further north.<sup>61</sup>

Andrew Clow was in full agreement with the policy proposed by Mills. In forwarding the tour report of the Adviser, on 7 January 1946, he explained to the Secretary External Affairs that earlier he agreed, 'with some reluctance' to exploratory expedition partly because at that stage there was a greater need for information regarding Tibet and partly because the talents of Fuhrer Haimendorf could not be very suitably used in any other way. The results of his visits, and of Davy and Mills had shown that there was no Tibetan influence in any area already or proposed to be penetrated. With the limitation of communication and resources, therefore, it would be expedient to aim at consolidation of British control over accessible areas which would gradually enlarge the sphere of influence and advance in future. Mill's report tend to show that the people were not so much in need of political administration as of 'positive benefits'. The latter should be in the form of economic help, medical aid and a beginning with education. 'The fact that the area has little political importance', he concluded, 'should not allow obscure Government's responsibilities for welfare of the people who live in it and the

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60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

need of equipping them to meet the inevitable contacts with the wider changing world.’<sup>62</sup>

In the operations of the Subansiri area, the main objective of the government was the stabilisation of the Indo-Tibetan frontier by occupying certain ‘focal points’. The occupation was to be permanent and the initial steps in this regard was the establishment of key points and reconnaissance and not of administration of areas under occupation. This was brought home to the Governor of Assam by H. Weightman, Secretary Department of External Affairs, in his reply on 26 January 1946.<sup>63</sup> He was reminded that in reply to the representation made by the Tibetan government, the latter was told in December 1944 that it was the intention of the Government of India to maintain their hold south of the McMahon Line and this was reiterated in reply to further representation from the Tibetan government.<sup>64</sup> In these circumstances, if no attempt was made to explore the territory between those already established and the McMahon Line, there would be the danger that the Tibetans would conclude that the representations that recently made had its results and that the Government of India no longer desired to extend its influence up to the McMahon Line. It would be therefore unwise, Weightman thought, to adopt a policy which would result in large areas in the north of the existing posts remaining untouched indefinitely ; and that it was essential to send expeditions into areas hitherto unvisited, if possible, up to the McMahon Line. He, of course, agreed that it would be inexpedient to attempt to establish those permanent posts further north until consolidation of areas already occupied. Exploratory expeditions sent to northern part of tribal areas need be based on posts already established and would return to them after having particular expedition which they were sent out to do.<sup>65</sup>

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62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*, *Intra*, p. 280

65. *Op. cit.*

In reply, Weightman was told by the Governor that his intention was not merely to concentrate on consolidation in more accessible areas or to abandon the idea of occupying further points. What he intended was to advance steadily as resources permit and not to stop on the line already reached. In his view the sending of exploratory expeditions which were not followed up by anything of a permanent character 'can do more harm than good'. Friendly relations with the Duflas, for instance, was essential prior to a forward move to the north ; for 'it would be hazardous to advance further with hostile population behind or on the flanks'.<sup>66</sup>

In early 1943, intelligence came that a high Tibetan Military Official with troops had arrived in Tawang. He had not only caused to appear before him inhabitants as far as Rupa, Shergaon and Kalaktang, but endeavoured to collect revenue from the villagers. This was construed by the Department of External Affairs as a challenge to the Convention of 1914.<sup>67</sup> When F. Ludlow, Additional Assistant Political Officer Sikkim, telegraphed the matter to the Tibetan authorities, the latter, of course, issued orders to the officers in-charge of Tsona areas 'not to call upon villagers or to endeavours to levy taxes' from Rupa, Shergaon and Kalaktang. In the communication Tawang and Dirang dzong were left out and this was explained by Ludlow as 'deliberate'.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, the strength of the post at Rupa had to be raised to one platoon and a permanent post was established at Dirang dzong.<sup>69</sup> During 1943-4, no step was taken in matters of tribute payable to the Drepang monastery. At Tawang itself, which was made the 'bargaining counter' by

66. *Ibid.*, Illegible to Weightman, D. O. 10 April 1946.

67. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/29, Ext. 3090/43, copy of telegram 20 March to Adtl. APO, Sikkim.

68. *Ibid.*, Ludlow to Gould, telegram xx, 12 April 1943 ; also Sherriff to Gould, 15 April.

69. IOR, L/P & S/12/22/4, *A brief General Report of the North-East Frontier Agency for the period from October 23rd 1943 to June 30 1944.*

Gould, no advance was made. The Tsona *Jungpens*, the Tibetan civil officers, not only continued collection of taxes without any consideration for the capacity of the villagers to pay, but also refused payment for transport or supplies.<sup>70</sup> At Dirang dzong they had, as Mills says, an unpleasant prison, 'a really horrible place', wherein not infrequently inflicted most brutal punishment. When the post was erected at Dirang dzong, he was told by the Monbas :

If you are going to stay permanently we will cooperate ; but if you are going to stay for a year or two and then withdraw we are not going to cooperate because there will be awful reprisals if we do.<sup>71</sup>

'We should stay' assured Mills to the tribesmen. During his visit of Se La Sub-Agency in early 1945, instructions were issued to the Tibetan agents at Dirang dzong to inform the *Jungpens* that no compulsory taxation or services including the tolls hitherto levied at Amrotola should be demanded. Payments should be made close to the *de facto* Tibetan frontier to put an end to the visits of the *Jungpens* to the plains concerning which serious misconceptions were current among the tribesmen and even among Tibetan officials.<sup>72</sup> The Monbas began to realise that the British meant to stay and they exhibited less readiness

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70. *Ibid.*, 22/8, i, Ext. 4059/44 ; *Reconnaissance in North-East Frontier*, 1944-5.

71. Mills, 'Problem of the Assam-Tibet Frontier', *JCARs*, 1950, pp.157-8.

72. When the Adviser had explained the position to the *Jungpens*, the latter pointed out that if their sources of income were cut off, they would be unable to 'straighten up their accounts' with the Tawang Monastery. That they were not even in a position to pay their portage which they had hitherto obtained free from the inhabitants. Government of India accepted Mills' suggestion that an immediate partial composition for revenue, not exceeding Rs 5,000, need be made on the distinct understanding that the payment was of a temporary nature pending a general agreement with Lhasa for composition of all monastic dues in the Se La Sub-Agency. IOR, L/P & S/12/36/29 ; Ext. 1245/45, see Notes for Registry, 26 March.

to comply with the demands of the Tibetans. As a result in the following year the monastic officials could collect only a fraction of the normal amount.<sup>73</sup> Not only the Tibetan influence in the Agency gradually diminished, the Monbas ungrudgingly paid the house-tax imposed on them by the British in September 1945 ; in fact this was considered by them as a guarantee of protection against Tibetan oppression.<sup>74</sup>

Towards the end of 1946-7, though the Tibetans by no way relaxed their claims south of the McMahon Line, their influence was steadily on the wane. Tours by the Assistant Political Officers in the Lohit and Siang Valleys had raised British prestige and emboldened the tribesmen to resist demands of the Tibetan officials. In the Se La Sub-Agency the Tibetan influence was so slight that orders from the Tawang monastery was ignored.<sup>75</sup> In retaliation the Tawang monastery officials had issued orders to the effect that 'if the Political Officer ever crossed Se La, he is to be refused all portage and supplies'.<sup>75a</sup>

It was to the lasting credit of Mills that he initiated the policy which was developed and carried out to its logical conclusion by his successors in the North-East Frontier Agency (present Arunachal Pradesh). With his eagle eyes Mills saw that ultimate success of vindicating the McMahon Line

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73. *Ibid.*, 22/4, Mills, *Report on the Assam Tribal Areas for the year ending 30 June 1945*.

74. *Ibid.*, June 30th 1946 ; also *Ibid.*, 36/29/ Ext. 1245/45, Secretary Governor of Assam to Secretary EAD, 20 August 1945.

75. Agents of Tsona dzong were told by Tibetan officials that their rights south of Se La had not relinquished and as such they were to collect revenue, as usual ; failing which they would be punished. The monastic authorities of Tawang also reasserted their claims and had sent orders to all headmen in Dirang dzong and Talung dzong to appear in Tawang 'to hear the orders received from a higher authority'. These were, as reported, ignored by all headmen. *Ibid.*, 22/8, *Fortnightly report on the Assam Tribal Areas*, Ext., 5233/45, Second half of August ; Ext. 5358/45, Second half of September 1945.

75a. *Ibid.*, 22/4, Notes for Registry, Ext. 5293/47, *Assam Tribal Areas, Report for the Year ending 30th June 1946*.



depended, by and large, on the relations with the tribes on the Indian side. Though a sufficiently large force at a great expense could 'hold down' the hillmen, no force of the world could compel loyalty. To win over the tribesmen, material benefits must be conferred on them ; and prior to it, they must be relieved of what was most irksome to them, namely portage. Therefore he repeatedly urged upon the improvement on methods of transport and communication ; and until jeep and motor tracts were constructed he suggested air dropping in areas where landing strips were available.<sup>76</sup> From the beginning Mills laid stress on medical aid and to his gratification 'not only did the figures for out-patients in little dispensaries rise rapidly, but such was the confidence the doctors inspired that tribesmen soon began to call them in to treat serious cases in their own homes'. He was greatly handicapped by dearth of medical personnel ; plainman whether Assamese and Bengalee, loathed the lonely life in hills and none could be induced unless forced by circumstances to do so.<sup>77</sup> Scarcity in certain areas drew the attention of the Adviser to the extension and improvements in methods of agriculture. Initially information had to be collected on agricultural problems which were intricate in communities where they affected every aspect of life. In 1945-6, when the nucleus of a Department of Agriculture was set up with C. R. Stonor, an officer of considerable experience, Mills greatly hoped that the problem of food shortage would receive an appropriate solution in near future. In regard to the educational needs Mills' policy was a cautious one. The existing system of education, he felt, would be highly injurious to these primitive tribes ; for

it tends to affect the individual rather than the community and, instead of making the individual more-fitted for his community, to separate him from it ... with result that such

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76. *Ibid.*, 22/4, Mills, *Report on the Assam Tribal Areas for the year ending June 30, 1945.*

77. *Ibid.*, also *A brief report...from October 23rd 1943 to 30 June 1944.*

good as he may have received is not passed on by example to his fellow villagers.<sup>78</sup>

He agreed with the Colonial Office that 'however good the content of mass education plan and its technique, it cannot hope to be successful unless it is carried out by people who know their society, and its significant sociological forms and how they are changing under modern conditions'. To collect information questionnaires were issued to the Political Officers. He considered it essential to have exact knowledge of what could be removed or added, and without that knowledge 'any attempt to introduce education on stereo-typed lines may well do more harm than good'. 'We have a clean slate before us', he observed, 'and our aims should be, not to follow the old methods for the sake of quick paper results, but to achieve something better than has ever been achieved before, even if the process, is slow and unspectacular.'<sup>79</sup>

The authorities at Lhasa were not silent spectators of the developments south of the Line. In November 1944, the Tibetan government questioned Assam's proposal, to the great embarrassment of New Delhi, to despatch vaccine to Tawang villages. To maintain its position through Major Sherriff, then British representative at Lhasa, the External Affairs reminded the Tibetan government on 31 December that Tawang lies south of the Indo-Tibetan frontier, on which there was no dispute and that Government of India had the right to take action there, if necessary, but would keep the Tibetan government informed, of course, as a matter of courtesy of its action at that quarter.<sup>80</sup> The proposal of the Government of Assam was dropped.

Tibet, the greater part of it, is a barren country at a high altitude. During the last thirty years the Tibetans had realised

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78. *Ibid.*, also Mills, *op. cit.* for the year ending 30 June 1946.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*, 36/23, i, Ext. 2620/45, Express letter, Caroe to Zenodotia, London, 17 May 1945.

that if they had possession at least a part of the McMahon areas they would be able to produce within boundaries of their own rice and tea which they were then required to import from abroad. The Sera and other monasteries had considerable interests south of the Line, particularly in Tawang and Dirang dzong areas. The Tibetan government, therefore, could not look upon with equanimity the message conveyed by Sherriff. Through the Kashag it was referred to the National Assembly <sup>80a</sup> which passed a resolution for communication to the Government of India as follows :

The Indo-Tibetan boundary which is marked with a red line in the map shows all the areas below TAWANG as within British territory. Occupation has also been effected south of SELA. We look upon the British with confidence and for assistance, but the British Government have occupied indisputable Tibetan territory by posting British Officers and troops, and have said that they could not withdraw them from these areas. The Sino-Tibetan question, which is being negotiated with the British Government as the intermediary, has not yet been settled, and the areas mentioned above have not been shown in the treaty as included within Indian territory. This question has never been raised since the Wood Tiger Year (1914) ... we cannot agree with the Government of India's action in taking these Tibetan areas within the British territory. If the officers and troops that are posted at KALAKTANG and WALONG are not withdrawn immediately, it will appear like a big insect eating up small one and the bad name of the British Government will spread like the wind.<sup>81</sup>

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80a. The Dalai Lama was the head both of the Tibetan Church and State. A High Lama was appointed as the Regent during the minority of a successor or intervening period from the death of the Dalai Lama and the assumption of office by his successor. He was aided in his duties by a Chief Minister and the Kashag, a Council of four Ministers. The National Assembly, the popular element in the State, was summoned, if and when necessary, to advise in matters of general interest.

81. *Ibid.*, Ext. 2622/45, translation of a Tibetan letter 7th of 3rd Tibetan month Wood-Bird year ( 18 April 1945 ) to Officer British Mission, Lhasa.

In its forwarding note on 18 April 1946, Tibetan Foreign Bureau wanted the boundary to be left as it was before to avoid breaking of Indo-Tibetan relations. Commenting on the resolution, Gould in his letter on 19 June referred to the inexpert action of the Assam government in the McMahon area and urged the Department of External Affairs 'the integration of the policy and action on the North-East Frontier including Tibet, under one control'. The Tibetan government, he felt, was not disputing the McMahon Line, but 'the action and intention' of the British south of it. The Tibetans had protested mainly because (i) they were afraid of yielding, anything for which they might be called to account in future, (ii) inactivity of the British for nearly thirty years, (iii) their doubts whether Indian government were in earnest there and (iv) whether the British would support them adequately against China. The only course left for the government was, therefore, to make the Tibetan government realise clearly that we mean

to have and to hold the McMahon areas ; and I do not think that anything short of extensive, effective and beneficent occupation will remove from their minds doubts which have been engendered by a somewhat wavery start, or lead them to appreciate at its value the offer of the Tawang area.

Otherwise,

they will ... continue at least to flirt with the idea of diverting us from our purpose and even to debate the comparative attractions of closer associations with the Chinese government.<sup>82</sup>

Olaf Caroe, then Secretary External Affairs, was not in agreement with the views held by the Political Officer Sikkim. He believed that action south of the McMahon Line was bound to produce opposition 'whenever and however' initiated ; that minor lapses on the part of Assam officials due to inexperience in dealing with the Tibetan could not be considered solely responsible for the latest developments. He ruled out the idea

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82. *Ibid.*, 36/49, Ext. 3228/45, Gould to Secretary *EAD* 19 June.

of integration of activities of the Political Officer Sikkim, and the pioneering administrative work then carried on under the direction of the Adviser, Governor of Assam. 'Integration under Sikkim would entrust administration of a part of India to a Political authority whose functions are essentially diplomatic.'<sup>83</sup>

From the tenor of Tibetan letter Caroe found it difficult to concur with the argument that the National Assembly was not disputing the McMahon Line as International boundary. He, of course, agreed with Gould's points (i) and (ii) as to the causes of Tibetan protests. With respect to (iii), he thought that present protest was due to Tibetan's realisation that the Indian government was earnest in tribal areas while (iv) was an old standing doubt and all that was possible to all as was done by Gould in 1944.<sup>84</sup> Under direction of the Department of External Affairs, a reply was sent to the Tibetan Foreign Bureau by Gould assuring therein that the British government had no designs on Tibetan territory and that all territory to the south of the Red Line on 1914 map was, by treaty, British territory. Even therein, British government was willing to act as defined in para 9 of the enclosed *aide-memoire*.<sup>85</sup> From the same it would also be seen the policy of the British Indian government in regard to the Sino-Tibetan issue.<sup>86</sup>

On transfer of power to India, 15 August 1947, the British Mission at Lhasa became the Indian Mission. The services of the existing staff, including Hugh Richardson, then British Representative, was retained in entirety. Prior to it, Tibetan government was assured by the British government that they 'would continue to take a friendly interest in the welfare and autonomy of their country and expressed the hope that contact might be maintained by visits to Tibet from

83. *Op. cit.*, Caroe to Zenodotia, 17 May 1945.

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Vide Appendix—D.*

86. *Op. cit.* see draft reply to Tibetan Foreign British Mission by Political Officer Sikkim.

British Representative in India'.<sup>87</sup> The Tibetan government thought of entering into a new treaty with the Indian government; ultimately they abandoned the idea for fear of renewed Chinese pressure on Tibet at a time when the Government of India was yet, 'to establish securely on the saddle'. Nonetheless to ascertain India's reaction, the Tibetan Bureau sent a telegram on 16 October 1947 demanding return of Tibetan territories 'such as Sayul, Lonag, Lopa, Mon, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and others ... on this side of the river Ganges'.<sup>88</sup> This was construed by Richardson as 'an attempt to test the Indian attitude to border region where their British predecessor had by a series of agreements established the frontier of India'. In reply the Tibetan government was told that the Government of India 'would be glad to have an assurance that it is the intention of the Tibetan Government to continue relations on the existing basis until new agreements are reached on matters that either party may wish to take up'.<sup>89</sup> Eventually, the Tibetan government announced their acceptance of 'the continuance of the former relationship'.<sup>90</sup>

Towards the end of 1949 the Kuomintang government of Chiang Kai-shek was replaced by the Peoples Republic of China under Mao Tse-tung. Mashal Chu Teh, Vice-President of the new Republic, declared in January 1950 the 'liberation of Tibet' as one of the 'basic' tasks of the Peoples Liberation Army and in October same year the Chinese troops actually marched into Tibet. 'We were quite sure', writes B. N. Mullik, Director Intelligence Bureau, 'that the Chinese would soon

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87. Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-4.

88. Later when Chou En-lai reminded these claims Nehru told him: 'The Government of India could not possibly have entertained such fantastic claims. If they had the faintest idea that this telegram would be made the basis of a subsequent claim to large areas of Indian territory, they would of course have immediately and unequivocally, rejected the claim.' *Ibid.*, also *WP*, ii, Prime Minister of India, 26 September 1959.

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid.*

militarily overrun the whole of Tibet and come right up to the borders of India and also claim those parts of northern India, Bhutan, northern Burma, etc., which had been shown in Chinese maps as coming under the jurisdiction of the Chinese Emperors.<sup>91</sup> In its note on *New Problems of Internal Security*, 3 November 1950, IB drew the attention of the Government of India that

International communism till then had not given up the idea of drawing India into the communist fold ... (that) armed guerilla warfare of the type the Chinese had conducted both against Chiang Kai-shek regime and the Japanese invaders was prescribed as the method which the Indian communists should follow... In fact, such armed struggle was being conducted with great ruthlessness in the Telengana area of Hyderabad State, in the Circars and the Ceded districts of Andhra ... riverine areas of West Bengal and Assam ... tribal areas of Tripura and Manipur.

At such a crisis, on the south of the McMahon Line

The tribals had been left very much to themselves...they would become an easy prey to the Chinese, who would promise them independence of action and thus easily incite them into rebellion against the Government of India and allow firm bases to build in these most difficult and inaccessible areas for conducting armed struggle against the government. Even the administration in such tribal areas as the Naga Hills and the Mizo Hills was very weak and we visualised that ... the Chinese would even start inciting the Nagas, the Mizos and the Chinese to demand secession of their territory from India.<sup>92</sup>

To ensure security of the frontier IB suggested, amongst others, extension of administrative control up to the frontier, increase in the strength of the Assam Rifles, opening up of new administrative units and also of schools where Assamese and Hindi be taught to forge cultural link with the people of the plain. Above all, economic needs of the tribesmen need be

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91. Mullik, B. N., *My Years With Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal*, pp. 109-11.

92. *Ibid.*

looked into so that they could be 'economically tied to India and not to Tibet'; Manipur, Naga and Lushai Hills, it recommended, should be brought under direct control of the Government of India.<sup>93</sup> Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel, Deputy Prime Minister of India, being alive to the impending danger, not only accorded his approval to aforesaid measures, but made additional recommendations in a private letter addressed to the Prime Minister dated 7 November 1950.<sup>94</sup> Whatever might be the reaction of Nehru or his Cabinet, a high-powered committee was constituted by the Government of India under Major General Himmatsinghji with representatives of Defence, Communication, Home, External Affairs and the Intelligence Bureau 'to study the problems created by the Chinese aggression in Tibet and to make recommendations ... to improve administration, defence, communication, etc., of all the frontier areas'.<sup>95</sup>

To begin with, the Ministry of External Affairs decided to extend administrative control right up to the Line which did not reach hitherto beyond a few miles from the foothills. In March 1951, Tibetan local government was informed by the Indian Trade Agent at Yatung that 'a representative of the Indian government had been despatched to Mon Tawang, near Tsona to take over Tawang'. This was stoutly opposed by the Tibetan government with the remark that the Indian government 'had adopted an approach of seizing as its own what did not belong to it'. The representative was told to inform New Delhi to withdraw immediately the officers and men who have arrived in Tawang.<sup>96</sup> The protest was of no avail; on the contrary, the Ministry of External Affairs sought to tighten up the grip over the entire tribal belt south of the McMahon Line. Apart from extension of administrative

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93. *Ibid.*

94. See *Appendix—E*.

95. *Op. cit.* p. 122.

96. *Official's Report*, CR-107.



units, the proposals made by the Himmatsinghji-Committee envisaged 'reorganisation of the Assam Rifles ... development of intelligence network along the border, development of civil armed police, development of communication and check-posts'. Nehru informed the Rajya Sabha in December 1959 that 'nearly all the recommendations were accepted and implemented'.<sup>97</sup> Already the number of administrative divisions were raised from two to five—Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit and Tirap—each under Political Officer, later Deputy Commissioner, with headquarters in their respective division. They were to be aided by a number of Additional *APO*'s, Assistant *APO*'s and Base Superintendents. A cadre of Frontier Service (*IFAS*) was created besides raising strength of the Assam Rifles to five battalions.<sup>98</sup> In 1954, Intelligence Service was strengthened by recruiting candidates from fourteen different Tribes who fulfilled minimum educational qualifications.<sup>99</sup> Air droppings had been arranged at Walong, Hayuliang, Karko, Riga, Rupa and Dirang dzong besides having a body of professional porters to minimise irksome local labourers which was prejudicial to the extension of Indian influence.<sup>100</sup> To win over the tribesmen, welfare activities were undertaken on a war footing which was borne out by tremendous increase in medical facilities and multiplication of educational institutions at all levels. Every endeavour was thus made 'to improving the standard of agriculture and animal husbandry, promoting community development and cooperation, extraction of forest wealth ... and improving cottage industries and arranging for their sale'.<sup>101</sup> In a meeting at Pasighat in early October 1952

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97. *PMSIR*, II, pp. 251-2 and 385.

98. *Op. cit.*, pp. 138-9.

99. Kavic, L. J., *India's Quest for Security, Defence Policies*, p. 48.

100. IOR, L/P & S/12/22/8, i, Ext. 5689/45, *EAD* 17 October 1945; *ibid.*, 22/8; *Fortnightly Report, First half of November, 1945*.

101. *Op. cit.*

Nehru made the public announcement that these tribesmen 'are a part of India and have an honoured place in it'.<sup>102</sup>

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102. *The Statesman*, 2 October 1952. With much gratification Nehru also told the Lok Sabha on 22 December 1959 : 'We have done a rather good piece of work in the NEFA area, the area in which the British failed to do anything for decades and decades. They just failed completely. We have done a good piece of work not only in spreading our administration there, but in communication, in schools, hospitals, agriculture, etc., amongst the people who are very difficult to handle.' *PMSIR* II, p. 282.

## Appendix—D

### *AIDE-MEMOIRE TO TIBETAN FOREIGN BUREAU BY B. J. GOULD.*

1. I informed my Government of all that you and your Foreign Office told me. My Government direct me to inform you as follows :

2. My Government earnestly desire that the autonomy of Tibet including the right of Tibet to be in direct relations with the Government of India, should be preserved. You may feel quite certain that my Government would be ready to do all they can to help to secure these results by diplomatic means.

3. I am not authorised to guarantee military support. For this there are three reasons. (a) It would, as you can see, be difficult for my Government to give such a guarantee in a matter which affects a country which is an ally of His Majesty's Government in the present great war (b) My Government trust that neither Tibet nor China will allow an occasion for the use of force to arise (c) My Government think that a satisfactory solution can be reached by peaceful means.

4. My Government point out that, because China is their ally in the war, His Majesty's Government are in a very favourable position to use their influence to bring about a peaceful settlement.

5. The presence of a Tibetan representative at the Peace Conference would not be appropriate because Tibet has not taken part in the war : and in any case it may be a long time before any formal Peace Conference takes place.

6. If Mr. Shen should wish to discuss future relations between Tibet and China, my Government would advise the Tibetan Government to try to reach a settlement on the lines of the 1914 Simla Convention. My Government would expect to be kept in close touch with any such discussions. I assure you that my Government would do all they can to help Tibet to secure a suitable settlement.

7. Besides what the Tibetan Foreign Office said to me about relations between Tibet and China, they also mentioned

matters relating to the areas south of the Indo-Tibetan frontier as defined in 1914. I reported what they said to my Government.

8. My Government have no designs on Tibetan territory. But my Government do intend to maintain their rights : and they are glad to observe that the Tibetan Government do not dispute these rights.

9. With regard to matters of detail, and in order to meet the wishes of the Tibetan Government to the greatest extent possible, (i) My Government would be willing to alter the frontier so as to run from the Se La, not to the north of Tawang but to the south of Tawang. (ii) They will not for the present object to voluntary contributions for monasteries being collected even south of the Se La—but they would prefer instead to make an annual or lump-sum contribution to the monastery or monasteries affected in this area (iii) Private Tibetan ownership of land south of the 1914 frontier line will not be interfered with. (iv) If it is found that the holy places, TSO KARPO and TSARI SARPA, are on the British side of the frontier, but within one day's march of the frontier, the frontier in this area will be adjusted as was promised in 1914. There is no record of any other promises having been made in 1914 : and items (i) and (iii) above are new offers.

10. On the other hand my Government request that officials of the Tibetan Government may be directed not to attempt to exercise authority south of the Se La : and posts which the Government of India have established cannot be withdrawn.

11. Reference paragraph No. 5 above. I have already informed you that, if the question of Tibet were to be raised in any international discussions, His Majesty's Government would feel bound to support the claims of Tibet to full practical autonomy under Chinese suzerainty.

Sd/ B. J. Gould.  
Political Officer in Sikkim

## Appendix—E

### *EXCERPTS FROM SARDAR BALLABHBHAI PATEL'S LETTER TO SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, 7 NOVEMBER 1950*

Throughout history, we have seldom been worried about our north-east frontier. The Himalayas had been regarded as an impenetrable barrier against any threat from the north. We had a friendly Tibet which gave us no trouble. The Chinese were divided. They had their own domestic problems and never bothered us about our frontiers. In 1914, we entered into a Convention with Tibet which was not endorsed by the Chinese. We seem to have regarded Tibetan autonomy as extending to independent treaty relationships. Presumably, all that we required was Chinese counter-signature. The Chinese interpretation of suzerainty seems to be different. We can, therefore, safely assume that very soon they will disown all the stipulations which Tibet has entered into with us in the past. That throws into the melting pot all frontier and commercial settlements with Tibet on which we have been functioning and acting during the last half a century. China is no longer divided. It is united and strong. All along the Himalayas in the north and northeast, we have, on our side of the frontier, a population ethnologically and culturally not different from Tibetans or Mongoloids. The undefined state of the frontier and the existence on our side of a population with its affinities to Tibetans or Chinese have all the elements of potential trouble between China and ourselves. Recent and bitter history also tells us that Communism is no shield against imperialism and that Communists are as good or as bad imperialists as any other. Chinese ambitions in this respect not only cover the Himalayan slopes on our side but also include important parts of Assam. They have their ambitions in Burma also. Burma has the added difficulty that it has no McMahon Line round which to build up even the semblance of an agreement. Chinese irredentism and Communist imperialism are different

from the expansionism or imperialism of the Western Powers. The former has a cloak of ideology which makes it ten times more dangerous. In the guise of ideological expansion lie concealed racial, national and historical claims. The danger from the north and northeast, therefore, becomes both Communist and Imperialist. While our western and north-western threats to security are still as prominent as before, a new threat has developed from the north and northeast. Thus, for the first time, after centuries, India's defence has to concentrate itself on two fronts simultaneously. Our defence measures have so far been based on the calculations of a superiority over Pakistan. In our calculations we shall now have to reckon with Communist China in the north and northeast—Communist China which has definite ambitions and aims and which does not, in any way, seem friendly disposed towards us.

Let me also consider the political considerations on this potentially troublesome frontier. Our northern or northeastern approaches consist of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and the tribal areas in Assam. From the point of view of communications they are weak spots. Continuous defensive lines do not exist. There is almost an unlimited scope for infiltration. Police protection is limited to a very small number of passes. There, too, our outposts do not seem to be fully manned. The contact of these areas with us is, by no means, close and intimate. The people inhabiting these portions have no established loyalty or devotion to India. Even Darjeeling and Kalimpong areas are not free from pro-Mongoloid prejudices. During the last three years, we have not been able to make any appreciable approaches to the Nagas and other hill tribes in Assam. European missionaries and other visitors had been in touch with them, but their influence was, in no way friendly to India or Indians. In Sikkim, there was political ferment some time ago. It is quite possible that discontent is smouldering there. Bhutan is comparatively quiet, but its affinity with Tibetans would be a handicap. Nepal has a weak

oligarchic regime based almost entirely on force ; it is in conflict with a turbulent element of the population as well as with enlightened ideas of the modern age. In the circumstances, to make people alive to the new danger or to make them defensively strong is a very difficult task indeed, and that difficulty can be got over only by enlightened firmness, strength and a clear line of policy. I am sure the Chinese and their source of inspiration, Soviet Russia, would not miss any opportunity of exploiting these weak spots, partly in support of their ideology and partly in support of their ambitions. In my judgment, therefore, the situation is one in which we cannot afford either to be complacent or to be vacillating. We must have a clear idea of what we wish to achieve and also of the methods by which we should achieve it. Any faltering or lack of decisiveness in formulating our objectives or in pursuing our policy to attain those objectives is bound to weaken us and increase the threats which are so evident.

Side by side with these external dangers we shall now have to face serious internal problems as well, I have already asked Iengar to send to the External Affairs Ministry a copy of the Intelligence Bureau's appreciation of these matters. Hitherto, the Communist Party of India has found some difficulty in contacting Communists abroad, or in getting supplies of arms, literature, etc., from them. They had to contend with difficult Burmese and Pakistan frontiers on the east or with the long sea-board. They shall now have a comparatively easy means of access to Chinese Communists and through them to other foreign Communists. Infiltration of spies, fifth columnists and Communists would now be easier. Instead of having to deal with isolated Communist pockets in Telengana and Warangal we may have to deal with Communist threats to our security along our northern and north-eastern frontiers where, for supplies of arms and ammunition, they can safely depend on Communist arsenals in China. The whole situation thus raises a number of problems on which we must come to an early decision so that we can, as said earlier,

formulate the objectives of our policy and decide the methods by which those actions will have to be fairly comprehensive involving not only our defence strategy and state of preparation but also problems of internal security to deal with which we have not a moment to lose. We shall also have to deal with administrative and political problems in the weak spots along the frontier to which I have already referred.

It is, of course, impossible for me to be exhaustive in setting out all these problems. I am, however, giving below some of the problems, which, in my opinion, require early solution and round which we have to build our administrative or military policies and measures to implement them :

- (a) A military and intelligence appreciation of the Chinese threat to India on the frontier and to internal security.
- (b) An examination of our military position and such redistribution of our forces as might be necessary, particularly with the idea of guarding important routes or areas which are likely to be the subject of dispute.
- (c) An appraisal of the strength of our forces and, if necessary, reconsideration of our retrenchment plans for the Army in the light of these new threats.

(d) A long-term consideration of our defence needs. My own feeling is that, unless we assure our supplies of arms, ammunition and armour, we would be making our defence position perpetually weak and we would not be able to stand up to the double threat of difficulties both from the west and northwest and north and northeast.

(e) The question of Chinese entry into UNO. In view of the rebuff which China has given us and the method which it has followed in dealing with Tibet, I am doubtful whether we can advocate its claims any longer. There would probably be a threat in the UNO virtually to outlaw China, in view of its active participation in the Korean War. We must determine our attitude on this question also.

(f) The political and administrative steps which we would take to strengthen our northern and north-eastern frontiers.



This would include the whole of the border, i.e., Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and the Tribal territory in Assam.

(g) Measures of internal security in the border areas as well as the States flanking those areas such as UP, Bihar, Bengal and Assam.

(h) Improvement of our communications, road, rail, air and wireless in these areas, and with the frontier outposts.

(i) Policing and intelligence of frontier posts.

(j) The future of our mission at Lhasa and the trade posts at Gyantse and Yatung and the forces which we have in operation in Tibet to guard the trade routes.

(k) The policy in regard to the McMahon Line.\*

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\*Vide *Bhavan's Journal*, xiii, No. 16, 26 February 1967 ; Kuldip Nayar, *Between the Lines* ; pp. 217 ff.

## CHAPTER XII

### *The Border War*

The extension of administrative control over the tribal belt, including Tawang, transferred the McMahon Line from the map to the ground. The border dispute nonetheless continued : rather it entered into a new dimension with the entry of the Chinese into the field. During the Second World War China could not divert her attention towards Tibet since she was engaged in the war for her very survival. After termination of the war, the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-shek sent several notes protesting against British intrusion into Tibetan territory. In 1948, to corner Indian government when KMT proposed that trade Regulations of 1908 need be revised, New Delhi replied that it recognised the Agreement which revised 1908 Regulations. Lo Chia-lun, Ambassador to China of the Kuomintang government which maintained its relations with India, sent a protest note to the Ministry of External Affairs repudiating the Simla Convention which the Government of India held to be valid.<sup>1</sup>

Sino-Indian friendship had been the corner-stone of the foreign policy of the Indian government. The Prime Minister Nehru sincerely believed that India and China freed from foreign domination 'had to work hand in hand, towards an enlightened Asianism'.<sup>2</sup> During his visit to China in August 1939, Nehru conveyed to the Chinese people and their leaders 'India's love and her appreciation of the brave and united struggle they were carrying on against a cruel and wanton aggression of an imperialist power'.<sup>3</sup> Earlier in April 1937

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1. *Official's Report*, CR-24-5.

2. Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, p. 217.

3. *Indian Annual Register*, ii, 1939, p. 229.

inaugurating the Chinese Hall of the Viswa-Bharati, Nehru greeted

the great ceremony, great in the memories of long past that it evoked, great also in the promise of future comradeship and forging of new links to bring India and China nearer to each other. What a long past that has been of friendly contacts and mutual influences, untroubled by political conflict and aggressions ! We have traded in ideas, in art, in culture and grown richer in our inheritance by the other offerings.<sup>4</sup>

No less solicitous was Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh on Sino-Indian cooperation when they expressed

The great Indian people and the Chinese have a common destiny... we are two peoples who have been suffering longer imperial oppression and slavery ; and we both have the glorious tradition of fighting for liberty and freedom. Our emancipation of the Indian and the Chinese will be signal of the emancipation of all down-trodden and oppressed.<sup>5</sup>

Soon there occurred a rift in the lute. The continuance of British policy by the Indian government towards Tibet and the retention of the services of Hugh Richardson who advocated independence of the Tibetans and in any case exclusion of the Chinese from Tibetan affairs could not but incur the displeasure of the Chinese People's government. In their view

Anglo-American imperialist design for annexation of Tibet are being carried out through the hands of Nehru... Furthermore, Nehru to carry favours to his masters...is placing himself fully at their disposal and shamelessly holds as the pillar of the anti-communists movements in Asia.<sup>6</sup>

Anxious to maintain its friendly relations Nehru's government took the earliest opportunity to recognise the new government in China. It represented about the sametime through its newly-appointed Ambassador K. M. Panikkar that New Delhi was greatly concerned at the possibility of unsettled condition beyond the border and strongly urged that this

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4. *China's Betrayal of India—Background to the Invasion*, p. 6.

5. Prasad, Bimla, *The Origins of Indian Foreign Policy*, pp. 171-2

6. *World Culture*, 16 September 1949, 'India and Anglo-American Imperialism', cited in Jain, Girilal, *Pancheela and After*, p. 8.

matter should be stabilised through peaceful negotiations. The People's Government of China in its reply on 21 August announced its desire to stabilise the China-Indian border and also its willingness to solve the problem of Tibet by 'negotiations' and not by military action.<sup>7</sup> Assurance notwithstanding, on 7 October 1950, the Chinese troops marched into Tibet. Peking paid but scant regard to the Memorandum of the Indian Ambassador on 21 October wherein he pointed out that the military measures in Tibet would be detrimental to the People's government's entry into the United Nations and the Security Council. In a subsequent note Indian government expressed their deep regret that 'in spite of friendly and disinterested advice repeatedly tendered by them the Chinese Government should have decided to seek, a solution to the problem...by force instead of by the slower and more enduring method of peaceful approach'.<sup>8</sup> In its reply on 30 October Peoples Republic of China made it clear :

Tibet is an integral part of the Chinese Territory and the problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China. The Chinese People, Liberation Army must enter Tibet, liberate the Tibetan people and defend the frontier of China...no foreign intervention shall be tolerated.<sup>9</sup>

In its 17-point Agreement on 23 May 1951, it was announced that the 'Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the Motherland—the People's Republic of China', that the Tibetan army should be reorganised and integrated to the People's Liberations Army and that the Tibetan government should surrender to the People's government all matters on

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7. *PMSIR, Ji*, p. 184, Chou assured Panikkar that the liberation of Tibet was 'sacred duty' of the Chinese People's government ; his government would secure these ends by 'negotiations and not by military action'. Panikkar, K. M., *In Two Chinas*, p. 105.
  8. Carlyle, Margaret, *Documents on International Affairs*, 1949-50, pp. 550-4.
  9. *Ibid.*

External Affairs.<sup>10</sup> Tibet was thus converted into a Chinese province. She lost her independence. 'It was a slap in the face of India,' rightly observes B. N. Mullik,

the country next to China which had the largest interest in Tibet, the irony of it is that all this time India was working hard ... to seat China in the United Nations, to get Americans to withdraw their protection over Taiwan and to negotiate peace in Korea which would be also helpful to the Chinese.<sup>11</sup>

Dissenting voices were also heard in the Parliament and amongst those who commented severely the Tibetan policy of the government, mention may be made of N. C. Ranga, S. P. Mukherjee, M. R. Masani, H. N. Kunzru and J. B. Kripalani. It was a terrible shock to Nehru who vainly hoped that the Tibetan affairs would receive a peaceful solution. To assuage the feelings of the House on 8 December he assured that

the McMahon Line is our boundary, map or no map, and that is our boundary. That fact remains and we stand by that boundary, and we will not allow anybody to come across that boundary.<sup>12</sup>

There were two alternatives before Nehru : Tibetan autonomy and Sino-Indian friendship, and the choice was easy for the Indian Prime Minister who wanted above all security of the Himalayan frontier. He was well aware that military intervention in Tibet was unthinkable. In 1950, India had to confront enmity with Pakistan besides problems arising out of the Kashmir issue, disturbances in East Pakistan, communist activities in Telengana and other areas demanding the services of the army in several quarters. The Indian Army which was then reduced nearly to its earlier half<sup>13</sup> was neither equipped

10. See Mehra, P., 'India, China and Tibet, 1950-4'. *Indian Quarterly*, xii, 1956, pp. 3-22.

11. Mullik, B. N., *My Years with Nehru : The Chinese Betrayal*, pp. 69-70.

12. Parliamentary Debates, Lok Sabha, v, 20 November 1950, Cols., 155-6.

13. For post-partition Indian Army, see Kavics, L. J., *India's Quest for Security*, pp. 82ff.

nor trained for operations in difficult terrain. When the issue was raised in a meeting in the Foreign Department, General Cariappa, then Chief of the Army Staff, expressed his inability to 'spare any troops or could spare no more than a battalion' and that too, 'would be at a serious disadvantage against the Chinese army which had much better training and experiences in fighting in extremely cold (Tibetan) plateau'.<sup>14</sup> Even if a few divisions could be spared a military intervention on behalf of Tibet would have endangered undefended McMahon areas let alone international repercussions. Mullik remarks :

If in 1950 India had started on a military expedition on the scale that she was forced to undertake in 1962...Chinese might have even been able to extend their frontiers up to the foothills of NEFA and might have even been able to detach Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal from India's sphere of influence ... On the other hand, to keep a friendly posture would help to continue the dialogue and allow time to firmly consolidate India's hold on these previously unadministered areas.<sup>15</sup>

India's disavowal of the political interests in Tibet, persistent support to the entry of the People's Republic of China into the United Nations and opposition to the United States sponsored resolution in the General Assembly declaring China as guilty of aggression in Korea could not but be appreciated by the Chinese People's government. The process of 'courting and wooing' was accelerated when in an informal discussion with K. M. Panikkar, the Indian Ambassador, Chou En-lai expressed his anxiety to safeguard in every way India's interest in Tibet on which 'there was no territorial dispute or controversy' and

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14. *Op. cit.*, pp. 80-1.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 83. B. N. Mullik, Director Intelligence Bureau, was well acquainted with security and defence problems of the Northern and North-Eastern Frontier apart from his having frequent and intimate contact with authorities, Civil and Military, at the top during the crucial period of the Sino-Indian border disputes. Subject to scrutiny of the discerning eye, the materials embodied in his *My Years with Nehru : The Chinese Betrayal* are of unique importance in interpretation or reinterpretation of the events of a controversial period.

that 'question of stabilising of the Tibetan frontier was a matter of common interest to India, Nepal and China and could be done by discussion between three countries'. Nehru was persuaded by Panikkar to 'give up gracefully all that was untenable and to insist on cultural and economic right, which were of a more fundamental nature and not based on treaties'.<sup>16</sup> The Indian Prime Minister accordingly told the Lok Sabha : 'We had no territorial or political ambition in regard to Tibet, that we had trade and cultural relations which naturally we would like to preserve.'<sup>17</sup> Hence followed the Sino-Indian Agreement on 29 April 1954, an agreement of 'Trade and Intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India'. India relinquished under the agreement extra-territorial rights she inherited by the Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations of 1914 and above all she recognised Tibet as an integral part of China by referring it as 'Tibet Region of China'. In return Chinese People's government had accepted the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' or *Panch Sheel*\* embodied in the preamble of the agreement and given a 'solemn undertaking to respect territorial integrity and sovereignty of India'.<sup>18</sup> *Hindi Chini bhai bhai* reached its highest pitch when the Chinese Premier paid a visit to India in June 1954.

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16. *PMSIR, II*, p. 184, Nehru in Lok Sabha on 25 November 1959, K. M. Panikkar, the main architect of Indo-Chinese Policy, saw 'the only area where our interest overlapped was Tibet and knowing the importance that every Chinese government, including Kuomintang had attached to exclusive Chinese authority to that area, I had even before started for Peking, come to the conclusion that British policy of looking upon Tibet as an area in which we had special political right could not be maintained'. Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p. 102.

17. *Parliamentary Debates*, vi, No. 17, ii, cols 1267 and 1384.

\* *Viz.* (i) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty (ii) Mutual non-aggression (iii) Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs (iv) Equality and mutual benefit (v) Peaceful coexistence.

18. *WP*, i, pp. 98-107.

At the Sino-Indian or *Panch Sheel* Agreement neither party was willing to raise the boundary question. Nehru believed 'since our frontier was clear there was no question of raising it by us in the negotiations'.<sup>19</sup> Chou was disposed to discuss only those questions which were 'ripe for settlement' arising out of India's inherited rights and assets in Tibet.<sup>20</sup> With his diplomatic acumen Nehru was well aware, China's position in Tibet was then far from being secure ; but as soon as she could consolidate her position she would try to extend her influence into those areas which had been claimed by the Chinese in their maps as their own.<sup>21</sup> It was essential, Nehru thought, to be in friendly terms with China and on the otherhand to stabilise India's northern frontier. Already by a treaty with Bhutan on 8 August 1949 India was enabled to control external relations of Bhutan in return for an annual subsidy of Rs. 5 lakhs.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Indo-Nepalese Treaty of 31 July 1950 strengthened the 'neighbourly friendship' between the two countries providing that 'the two Governments undertook to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring State.' Sikkim also agreed by a treaty on 5 December 1950 to be a protectorate of India enjoying, of course, autonomy in regard to its internal affairs. India undertook the responsibility for defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim and secured the right to quarter troops anywhere within the territory.<sup>23</sup>

D. R. Mankekar and others have referred that the Prime Minister issued a circular in July 1954 to Ministries concerned

19. *PMSIR, II*, 134-5.

20. Mullik, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

21. Nehru said : 'The fact of a huge elephant of a country sitting near our border is itself a fact that we could not ignore and a country which has a different policy, and a country whose apart from communism, past-history has been, whenever strong, are of expansion ... so we were not at all complacent about China's presence near our border.' *PMSIR, II*, p. 71.

22. *Foreign Policy of India, Text of Documents*, December 1959, pp. 17-9.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-3 and 37-40.



directing them to set up a system of check-posts along the northern frontier, 'specially in such areas as might be considered disputed areas'.<sup>24</sup> The Intelligence Bureau (IB), which had since been made responsible for foreign strategic intelligence, pushed up check-posts up to the McMahon Line and to the entire frontier whether delimited or not.<sup>25</sup> But no action was taken in the northern and north-eastern areas of Ladak-Lingzi Tang, Aksai Chin, Soda and Depsang Plains. IB Chief explains :

These places were at an average elevation over 15,000 feet... The Army in those days had only a militia battalion in Leh...Supplies could be received in Leh only by air and had to be transported to distance of more than 150 miles to reach these areas.... In any case, communication for over six months in a year...over the passes was impossible. The only way these posts could be properly maintained by use of helicopters...and these were not yet available and only way communication could be maintained was by using proper wireless sets which we could not get. So opening permanent posts in these uninhabited high lands of Aksai Chin, Soda Plains, etc., ... was very difficult for us even as late as 1958.<sup>26</sup>

Under the treaty of Amritsar (1846), mention may be made in this connection, the Dogra chief Golab Singh was made the ruler of Kashmir and Jammu under suzerainty of the British government. Already in 1834 the Dogras brought under their control kingdom of Ladak in the valley of Upper Indus and carried on in 1841 a policy of expansion in Tibet as far as

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24. Mankekar, D. R., *The Guilty Men of 1962*, p. 168 ; Khera, S. S., *India's Defence Problems*, p. 155 ; Gupta, K. K., *The Hidden History of the Sino-Indian Frontier*, pp. 18-9.

25. Kavics on the basis of a Nehru's statement in the Parliament refers that within a year of Chinese invasion of Tibet the government increased the check-posts in NEFA from three to twenty-five covering 'most' of the important routes and that a 'little later' this number was increased all along NEFA border and the middle sector and that in 1954 these check-posts were moved closer to the actual border. Kavics, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

26. *Op. cit.*, pp. 190-1.

Manasarovar. Fearing that ambitious scheme of the chief might embarrass friendly relations with China, the British sought to set a limit to his territory by demarcating the boundary between Ladak and Tibet. When the Chinese and the Tibetans were invited to join a boundary commission, none of them participated ; thereupon the British unilaterally set a commission which in 1846-7 defined the line from north of the Pangong lake to the river Spiti and this was later modified by W. H. Johnson, Civil Assistant Trigonometrical Survey of India, who included Aksai Chin and the extensive tract on the north of the Karakoram pass.<sup>27</sup>

Lord Lansdowne (1888-94), despite Russo-phobia then dominated British policy in Central Asia, felt that the country between the Karakoram and the Kuenlun ranges was of 'no value' and 'not likely to be coveted by the Russians...we might ...encourage the Chinese to take it if they showed any inclination to do so'.<sup>28</sup> He raised no objection when in 1892 the Chinese proclaimed Karakoram range as Sino-Indian boundary by erecting boundary pillars. In 1896 they disputed the Johnson Line and George Macartney, British Representatives Kashghar, opined that a part of Aksai Chin was Chinese and part in British territory. In the meantime, in anticipation of Russian advance in the direction of Indian frontier, Sir John Ardagh, Director Military Intelligence, proposed inclusion in the boundary not only Aksai Chin but the three river basins—Danga Bash, Yarkand and Karakash. He wanted to have an agreement with China under which, 'any part of those basins which may be eventually be found to lie outside our frontier, shall not be ceded to any country but Great Britain'.<sup>29</sup> This was opposed by Lord Elgin (1894-99) who thought that an advance 'would

27. For further study see Alastair Lamb, *The China-India Border : The origins of disputed Boundaries*, Chaps., 5-7 ; also *Sino-Indian Border In Ladak* ; Dorothy Woodman, *op. cit.*, Chaps. 2-5 ; Mullik, *op. cit.*, pp. 83 ff.

28. Cited in van Eckelen, W. F., *Indian Foreign policy and the Border dispute with China*, p. 161.

29. Dorothy Woodman ; *op. cit.*, Appendix-5 ; pp. 360 ff.

interpose between ourselves and our outposts a belt of most difficult and impracticable country (which) would unduly extend and weaken our military position without, in our opinion, securing any corresponding advantage'.<sup>30</sup> The Viceroy accepted Macartney's suggestion that Aksai Chin should be divided between India and China. This division should follow along a line of hills running roughly east-west under which almost all of Aksai Chin proper and the Karakash Valley would be left to the Chinese while Lingzi Tang, Salt Plains, the whole of the Chang Chemno Valley and the Chip Chap river further north would pass under control of the Indian side.<sup>31</sup> This received the approval of India Office. The Chinese government remained silent over the proposal when it was communicated by Claude Macdonald, British Minister in Peking, in March 1899. Had the compromise formula or the Macartney-Macdonald Line been accepted by the Chinese in time, the problem of Aksai Chin would not have arisen in 1958.

The Aksai Chin, the no-man's land, is extremely difficult to reach from India through the Karakoram range. It is accessible to the Chinese who had exercised control over it, according to their version, by erecting check-posts and guarding it by Chinese troops. Through this area in 1950 the People's Liberation Army entered into Tibet and since then essential supplies had been conveyed from Sinkiang to Tibet.<sup>32</sup> It is vitally important

30. *Ibid.*, Appendix-6 pp. 364 ff.

31. MacDonal to the Tsang-li-Yamen, 14 March 1899, vide Dorothy Woodman, *op.cit.*, Appendix-7, pp. 366-7. In the east of Karakoram Pass the line runs from 'the Karakoram Pass the crests of the range run east for about half a degree (100 li), and then turn south to a little below the thirty-fifth parallel of north latitude. Rounding then what in our maps is shown as the source of the Karakash, the line of hills to be followed runs north-east to a point east of Kizil Gilga, from there in a south-eastern direction follows the Lake Tsung Range until that meets the spur running south from the K'un-lun Range, which has hitherto shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° east longitude.'

32. *WP*, iii, Chinese Note 26 December 1959; *Official's Report*, CR-83.

to the Chinese to defend and control Tibet. During 1956-7 along the old caravan route a motorable road had been built from Yenchang (in Sikiang) to Gartok, of which a considerable portion runs through this area. Though belatedly, New Delhi was roused from its torpor in October 1958, when it was brought home to the Chinese Ambassador that it was 'a matter of surprise and regret that the Chinese should construct a road through indisputably Indian territory without prior permission of the Indian government'.<sup>33</sup> India was told in reply that not the Chinese but the Indian troops had 'unlawfully intruded' into Chinese territory 'which is contrary to the five principles of peaceful coexistence'. In a subsequent note the Chinese government asserted that Aksai Chin 'had always been under Chinese jurisdiction. It had been continually patrolled by Chinese guards and the Sino-Tibetan highway ran through it'.<sup>34</sup>

Aksai Chin apart, border disputes at Bora Hoti (called Wu Je by the Chinese) Khurnak Fort and the Lohit Valley<sup>35</sup> already dampened to a great extent *Hindi Chini bhai bhai*. To make matters worse Chinese atlas, *The China Pictorial* (July 1958), showed parts of Indian territory, of NEFA, Uttar Pradesh and areas of Ladak, in Chinese territory. During his return visit to Peking in October 1954, Nehru drew the attention of the Chinese Premier to the fact that maps recently published in China had some incorrect boundary alignment between the

33. *WP, I*, pp. 26-7.

S. S. Khera, Defence Secretary, Government of India, writes : 'Information about the activities of the Chinese on the Indo-Tibetan border, particularly on Aksai Chin region had began to come in by about 1952 or even earlier. Subsequent events have shown that much of the activity was connected with the opening up of the road through Aksai Chin ... However no great significance appear to have been attached to the earliest of these movements, from China into Western Tibet.' Khera, *op. cit.*, p. 157, also Mullik, *op. cit.*, 196-9.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 28 and 53.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 1 ff ; Nehru in Lok Sabha 25 November 1959 ; Note to Chinese Counsellor in India, 2 July 1958 and 17 January 1959, pp. 22 and 33.

two countries—incorporation within China about 50,000 square miles of Indian territory in NEFA. Chou En-lai replied that these were 'merely reproduction of old Kuomintang maps'. In 1956 Nehru was further told by the Chinese Premier that though he objected to the McMahon Line imposed on China by the British imperialists, he had 'accepted the Line on the border between China and Burma and intended to accept it in case of India too, and that he would consult, the Tibetan authorities in this regard'. Yet the Chinese maps remained unrectified and were kept in circulation. Matters came to a head in August 1958 when the Government of India sent a protest note to the Chinese Counsellor in India on the publication of the map referred to the above. Nehru further wrote on 14 December, *inter alia*,

A few months ago, our attention was drawn again to a map of China in the magazine *China Pictorial* which indicated the border with India. A large part of our North-East Frontier Agency as well as some other parts of India ... were shown to be Chinese territory. I could understand four years ago that the Chinese Government could not find time to revise old maps. But you will appreciate that nine years after the Chinese Republic came into power, the continued issue of these maps is embarrassing to us and others.<sup>36</sup>

Peaceful coexistence gave away to a cold war. In his reply on 23 January Chou made it clear that the Sino-Indian boundary had never been formally delimited.

Historically no treaty or agreement on Sino-Indian boundary has ever been concluded between the Chinese Central Government and the Indian Government. It is true that border questions was not raised in 1954 ... this was because conditions were not yet ripe for its settlement and the Chinese side, on its part, had no time to study the question.<sup>37</sup>

The rebellion of the Khampas in Tibet and the flight of the Dalai Lama and his entourage to India on 30 March introduced a new element in the Indo-Chinese relations. Whatever might

36. *Chinese Betrayal of India—Background to the Invasion*, pp. 7, 14-6, 18-9.

37. *WP*, i, Chou En-lai to Prime Minister of India, pp. 52-3.

be the reactions in Indian Press and in the Parliament, the reception accorded to the Dalai Lama by the Indian government incurred the displeasure of the People's government. Though this was considered as 'normal international practice' by Chou En-lai in a subsequent Press Conference in Delhi, the anti-Chinese activities alleged to have been carried on by the Tibetan dignitary within and outside India<sup>38</sup>, developed the cold war which had already begun, into hostilities in border areas. Intelligence came soon after Dalai Lama's arrival in regard to two intrusions of the Chinese detachments in the western region of Pangong lake and the establishment of a Chinese 'check-post at Spanggur, both claimed by India as her territory'.<sup>39</sup> In August it was reported that the Chinese patrol crossed Indian border at Khinzemane and also in intruded at Migyitun and Longju.<sup>40</sup> Clashes between the Chinese and Indian troops followed while to prevent flight of rebels the Chinese troops moved up to the border of the Indian outposts which had already been advanced up to and in places beyond the McMahon Line. It is very difficult to say who was the aggressor ;<sup>41</sup> Nehru, of course, admitted in the Lok Sabha 'in some parts ... it was not considered a good line and it was varied afterwards by us, by the Government of India' ;<sup>42</sup> and this was unacceptable to China to whom demarcation must be a joint process.

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38. The attention of the Counsellor of India was drawn by FO China on 10 July 1958 to the effect that from Kalimpong Chiang Kai-shek clique, Local agents and Tibetan reactionaries had recently stepped up their conspiratorial and disruptive activities in order to separate Tibet Region from People's Republic of China, *WP*, i, p. 61 ; also Dorothy Woodman, *op. cit.*, Appendix-15, pp. 401ff.

39. *Ibid.*, MEF New Delhi, to Counsellor of China, 30 July, p. 38.

40. *Ibid.*, FO China to Counsellor of India, 27 August ; Indian Ambassador to FO China 28 August ; also *WP*, ii, pp. 27ff.

41. Nehru told the Lok Sabha ; 'we have got one version from our people and they have no doubt got a version from their own people.' *PMSIR*, ii, p. 136.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 149 ; Nehru in Lok Sabha, 12 September 1959.

Chou En-lai's letter on 8 September 1959 sounded the death-knell of *Hindi Chini bhai bhai*. He categorically denied therein that Sino-Indian boundary was ever delimited by the representatives of the Chinese government, Tibetan government and the British Indian government at the Simla Conference in 1913-4. 'The so-called McMahon Line was a product of the British policy of aggression and has never been recognised by any Chinese Central government and is therefore illegal.' How could China accept, he queried, 'under coercion such an illegal line which would mean surrender of a part of its territory 'as big as ninety thousand square kilometres'.<sup>43</sup> The letter was interpreted by Nehru as 'a definite breach of faith' and the territorial claim made therein 'was impossible for India or any Indian ever to admit whatsoever the consequences'.<sup>44</sup> The Prime Minister argued in his reply on 26 September that the historical frontier claimed by India had been determined by 'history, geography, custom and tradition'. He maintained the validity of the treaties by the British Indian government and the Tibetan authorities and as such the boundary had been recognised for a long time. He, nonetheless, admitted that 'Sino-Indian boundary has not been formally delimited along the entire length' and in fact the terrain of Sino-Indian border in many places makes such physical demarcation on the ground impossible; that there might be minor disputes, but that did not mean that China had a claim over 40,000 square miles which had been for centuries an integral part of India.<sup>45</sup>

Indian public opinion was roused when on 20 October 1959 near the Kongka pass nine Indian soldiers on patrol were killed and ten taken prisoner. To prevent recurrence of similar incidents, on 7 November, as a provisional measure, Chou En-lai proposed that armed forces of India and China each should withdraw twenty kilometres at once from the McMahon

43. *WP, ii*, Prime Minister China to Prime Minister India, pp. 27ff.

44. *PMSIR, ii*, pp. 150 and 210; Lok Sabha 12 September and 27 November 1959.

45. *WP, ii*, Prime Minister India to Prime Minister China, pp. 34ff.

Line and from the line up to which each side exercised control on the west, and that the two sides should undertake to refrain from sending their armed personnel to the zones evacuated. Pending a meeting of the two Prime Ministers immediately to discuss boundary questions *status quo* be maintained in the border areas<sup>46</sup>. By this withdrawal of twenty kilometres, IB Chief feared, 'Indian side would lose a great deal whereas the Chinese would lose very little'.<sup>47</sup> Trouble also arose over the question of *status quo*. The Chinese meant, 'the situation obtaining at present' on 7 November 1959 whereas India wanted the situation 'as it was before China moved into Aksai Chin'.

In his reply on 16 November 1959 Nehru argued that since the Chinese Prime Minister based his claim on Indian territories in Ladak on the strength of recent Chinese intrusions 'the facts concerning *status quo* were themselves disputed' and as such any agreement as to its observance would be meaningless. He made an alternative proposal that India would 'withdraw all her personnel to the west of the line which the Chinese government have shown as the boundary in their 1956 maps'; and likewise 'Chinese Government should withdraw their personnel to the east of international boundary which had been described by the Government of India in their earlier notes and correspondence'.<sup>48</sup> This would mean 'evacuation of some hundreds

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46. *WP, III*, Prime Minister China to Prime Minister India, pp. 45-6.

47. In NEFA, he explains, this would mean 'our coming down from the heights of eight to ten thousand feet to three to four thousand feet, losing all our tactical locations and coming to areas where tracks and passes lost their significance, and in the dense forests it would be no longer possible to check infiltration even in larger numbers. The Chinese withdrawal ... would mean nothing to them ... they were not yet in occupation of so many posts on the frontier as we were and there were still large gaps which were not under their administrative control. Their withdrawal would not involve climbing down from the heights, because they would still remain at practically the same height as on the frontier.' Mullik, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-5.

48. *WP, III*, Nehru to Chou En-lai, 16 November 1959, pp. 47-51.



of square miles of Ladak in which the Chinese have asserted their claims' while India would have 'to quit only of fifty square mile strip in the south-east corner of disputed area.'<sup>49</sup> Leaving aside this Chou En-lai, presumably under Russian pressure, repeated his invitation to Indian Prime Minister on 17 December, 1959 to meet him either in Peking or Rangoon.<sup>50</sup> Nehru though agreed to meet the Chinese Premier anywhere pointed out the futility in a meeting 'when there is such complete disagreement about the facts'.<sup>51</sup>

The Chinese intrusion into Aksai Chin, border incidents and deterioration in Sino-Indian relationship were not brought to the notice of the Parliament until the middle of August 1959. Nehru believed, though confessed later as an error on his part, that it was easier for him to deal with the Chinese 'without too much publicity'.<sup>52</sup> As the news of the frontier trickled through the Press rumblings were heard in the Parliament. On 13 August, Assam MP Hem Barua queried: 'Is it a fact that the Chinese government had sent communications to the Government that the McMahon Line no longer prescribes or describes the international boundary as it was not ratified by the Chinese Government?'<sup>53</sup> 'No Sir', replied Nehru, 'we have received no such communication now or at any earlier stage.' 'So far we are concerned', he made it clear,

McMahon Line is the firm frontier, formed by treaty, formed by usage, formed by geography. Of course there are minor pockets small areas on the McMahon Line or elsewhere on the frontier where some arguments have occasionally arisen, where questions, sometimes of a mile or two this way or the other way have arisen in the past and discussions have taken place and will continue no doubt.<sup>54</sup>

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49. *The Times*, 23 November 1959.

50. *WP*, iii, Chou En-lai to Nehru, 17 December 1959, p. 53.

51. *Ibid.*, Nehru to Chou En-lai, 21 December 1959, p. 58.

52. *PMSIR*, II, Rajya Sabha, 10 September 1959, p. 135.

53. *Ibid.*, Lok Sabha, 13 August 1959, p. 66.

54. *Ibid.*

Though Nehru dominated the Congress Party which had then majority in both the Houses, he was assailed, from time to time, by the opposition leaders barring the Communists, on the Sino-Indian border dispute. After the Konka La incident, in fact, resentment against the Chinese took the form of personal attack on Nehru. 'In regard to the border dispute', said Hem Barua, 'the Prime Minister has a tendency to act like an umpire in a cricket match rather than one whose interests are involved.'<sup>55</sup> Demands were made by the opposition to throw out the Chinese, and if need be 'Indian should drop non-alignment, join military pact against China and rearm.'<sup>56</sup> Mournfully Nehru informed the Lok Sabha :

If the House thinks that the way our Government has carried on this particular work is not satisfactory, then it is open to this House to chose the most competent men on whom it has faith.<sup>57</sup>

Earlier he assured the House that

at no time since our independence, of course before it, were our defence forces in better condition and in finer fettle ... then they are today, and, therefore, I am quite confident that our defence forces are well capable of looking after our security.<sup>58</sup>

Nehru's counter-proposal in regard to Ladak was interpreted by Kripalani and others in opposition as Indian willingness 'to withdraw from what has always been in India in return for the Chinese withdrawing from areas which are also ours'. In their view negotiations could be possibly 'only on the basis of prior acceptance by Chinese of our frontiey and the immediate vacation of territories forcibly occupied by them'.<sup>59</sup> 'So far I am concerned', said Nehru, 'we will negotiate and negotiate and

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55. *PMSIR, Iii*, p. 37, Lok Sabha, 28 November 1961.

56. *Times of India*, 26 October 1959.

57. Lok Sabha Debate, 27 November 1959, Nehru on India-China Relations.

58. *PMSIR, Ii*, p. 189, Lok Sabha, 21 November 1959.

59. Lok Sabha Debate, November 1959, No. 8, Cols. 1711-2.

negotiate to the bitter end... . Negotiations will go on as long as the Government functions to the end'.<sup>60</sup> True to his utterances, after a second thought, Nehru invited the Chinese Prime Minister on 5 February 1960 for another dialogue 'to explore avenues which might lead to a peaceful settlement'.<sup>61</sup> This reversal of Policy had been considered by the opposition as a 'national humiliation'; that the Prime Minister 'had been unfair to the Parliament'; that 'he had not been quite honest'. Kripalani went so far as to say that 'India had been betrayed by the leaders of the present Government'. 'How can we do anything', he deplored, 'when our honour is in the hands of dishonourable men?'<sup>62</sup> Chou En-lai accepted Nehru's invitation, and accompanied by his Deputy, Marshal Chen-yi, arrived in New Delhi on 19 April 1960. Two days earlier under Jana Sangha leaders about five thousand demonstrators shouting Chou En-lai *hai hai* (death death), marched into Prime Minister's residence and procured from him an assurance that 'there will be no abdication of our claim over any part of Indian territory whether in our possession or under China's illegal occupation'.<sup>63</sup>

The Delhi summit after lasting about a week ended in deadlock. Neither side was willing to alter the stand so as to arrive at a settlement. In a joint statement it was agreed that officials of the two governments 'should meet and examine, check and study all historical documents, records ... and other materials relevant to the boundary question ... and draw up a report for submission to the two Governments'.<sup>64</sup> The Chinese side is said to have proposed 'reciprocal acceptance of the present actualities in both sectors', which would have meant,

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60. *Ibid.*, xxxvii, No. 26, Col. 6271.

61. *WP*, iii, p. 83, Nehru to Chou En-lai, 5 February 1960.

62. *PMSIR*, II, p. 300-1, Prime Minister in Lok Sabha, 22 February 1960; also *Times of India*, 23 February 1960.

63. *Ibid.*, 6 April 1960; Rowland, J.A., *History of Sino-Indian Relations*, p. 140.

64. *Official's Report*, p. i, see 'Joint Communiqué', 25 April 1960; *PMSIR*, II, pp. 330 ff.

as Neville Maxwell explains, 'that the Chinese accepted the McMahon alignment in the eastern sector, while India accepted the position then obtaining in the west' Nehru, too, indirectly hinted at this 'barter deal' when he said in the Lok Sabha soon after Chou left Delhi that 'the attempt was made to equate the eastern sector with the western sector'<sup>65</sup>—a condition unacceptable to the Indian Prime Minister in view of mounting criticisms, then raging both in the Press and in the Parliament.

The officials of the two governments met in Peking and New Delhi from mid-June to September 1960 and finalised their report in November. The *Official's Report*, though contained a mine of information to researchers in regard to Indo-Tibetan border, had no agreement on the basic issue excepting the 'joint statement' as to the background. Divergent were the views and interpretations in regard to the boundary line in the eastern and the western sector. While the Indian side insisted on the McMahon Line as its boundary, the Chinese claimed almost to the foot of the hills as their traditional boundary. In the western sector, the Chinese showed the boundary from the Karakoram pass southeast along the main chain of the Karakoram mountains and maintained this range as the watershed between the Tarim basin in the north and the Indus in the south. Indian side, on the otherhand, laid stress on the Kuenlun range 'which divided the greater part of the volume of waters of the two big systems in that area'.<sup>66</sup> The map which the Chinese produced during talks was not identical with 1956 map which Chou En-lai had said correctly represented the alignment in western sector.<sup>67</sup> Indian side considered '1960-claim line' as cartographic aggression inasmuch as it was drawn along a line 'which they had till then succeeded in bringing under their illegal occupation or they were hoping to occupy

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65. Neville Maxwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-60.

66. *Official's Report*, India, pp. 37-8.

67. *WP*, iii, p. 53 ; Chou En-lai to Nehru, 12 December 1959.

within the next year or two before Indian forces could be sent there.<sup>68</sup>

The *Official's Report*, which was presented in the Parliament in February 1961, was not followed up. Since then there had been charges and counter-charges of border conflicts, violation of air space, etc., which embittered the relationship between the two governments.<sup>69</sup> To strengthen her diplomatic position China settled her boundary with Burma in January 1960 on the basis of the McMahon alignment.<sup>70</sup> Sino-Nepalese Agreement in March paved the way for 'Chinese political and economic

68. Mullik, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

69. In a protest note on 12 August 1961 India was told by MFA Peking that 'China consistently maintaining *status quo* ... to facilitate peaceful settlement of boundary disputes and all the Chinese outposts for the purpose are continuing to desist from sending out patrol parties. India on the contrary, taking goodwill of the Chinese a sign of weakness has willfully carried out armed provocations and expanded its illegally occupied areas in Chinese border region.' (*WP*, v, p. 49). In a subsequent note China pointed out that 'it would be very erroneous and dangerous should Indian government take China's attitude of restraint and tolerance as an expression of weakness'. (*WP*, vi, p. 1) MEA New Delhi, in its reply on 9 December 1961 regretted 'that the Chinese government should question the propriety of certain defensive measures taken by Indian government of its own territory' and that such protests are 'not only a mockery of truth but unwarranted interference in Indian affairs'. (*WP*, vi, p. 8)

70. Text of the Agreement, *see* Ambekar-Divekar, *Documents on Chinese relations*, pp. 188 ff. The Sino-Burmese boundary agreement (October 1960) showed the western extremity of the boundary at the Diphu Pass following the McMahon Line strengthening, thereby, the validity of Indian alignment in the contiguous eastern sector of the Sino-Indian boundary. When India pointed out that the tri-junction lay not at the Diphu Pass but five miles north of it, Peking replied that this could not be determined pending negotiations amongst parties concerned. In any case, it was pointed out 'that the traditional tri-junction ... is not at a point five miles north of the Diphu Pass ... nor at the Diphu itself, but is obviously located far south of the Diphu Pass'. *WP*, v, pp. 24-6; MEA New Delhi, 30 March 1961, MFA Peking, 4 May 1961.

penetration into a region hitherto considered to be a Indian sphere of influence.'<sup>71</sup> To the great embarrassment of India, China entered into negotiations with Pakistan over the boundary between Sinkiang and Pakistan occupied portion of Kashmir. China heeded not the Indian protest 'that any change, provisional or otherwise, in the status of Jammu and Kashmir brought about by third party...will not be binding on the Government of India'.<sup>72</sup> On the contrary, Peking tauntingly queried: 'would it not be better (for India) to make some earnest effort towards a peaceful settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question, rather than wasting its strength in much fruitless quarrel?'<sup>73</sup> Pending settlement of the Kashmir dispute, Sino-Pakistani Agreement, 2 March 1963<sup>73a</sup>, delimited the boundary more or less on the line proposed by the British in 1899. This was 'a diplomatic reverse for India'. As Dorothy Woodman rightly remarks,

Pakistan had earned Peking's open support for her Kashmir policy, In 1963, trade and barter agreements helped Pakistan's economy, and in spite of Washington's disapproval, an air service was opened between Dacca, Canton and Shanghai. Increased communication by air followed by construction of modern highways on both sides of Sino-Pakistan border.<sup>74</sup>

In opposition lobbies in the Parliament there had developed in the meantime a war psychosis. 'To defend your own territory is not to wage war, said Minoo Masani; I have never known this suggestion before that if you throw out bandits from your territory you are engaged in an act of war...it is just a police action.' Ashok Mehta was hopeful that 'confronted by aggressive footsteps along our traditional ramparts the nation

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71. *Ibid.*, pp. 207-9; also Varma, S.P., *Struggle for the Himalayas*, pp. 263-4; Chou En-lai at Press Conference, Kathmandu, *Peking Review*, 3 May 1960.

72. *WP*, vi, MEA New Delhi to Chinese Embassy, 10 May 1962.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 99, MFA Peking to Indian Embassy, 31 May 1962.

73a. Ambekar-Divekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 218ff.

74. Dorothy Woodman, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-10.

will be willing to bear additional sacrifice.’<sup>75</sup> Nehru dreaded a war which he thought would not only swallow up India’s resources so vital for country’s Five-Year Plans, but afford opportunities to Pakistan to fish in troubled waters. A war with China ‘will be a tragedy of the deepest kind, a tragedy for us, a tragedy for China too, a tragedy for Asia and the world.’<sup>76</sup> He was at the same time unprepared to acquiesce to the *status quo* ‘a tacit acceptance of Chinese advance into Indian territory’. B. M. Kaul, then Chief of the General Staff, refers to a meeting sometime in autumn 1961 wherein the Prime Minister had said : ‘whoever succeeded in establishing (even symbolic) posts would establish a claim to that territory ... If the Chinese could set up posts, why couldn’t we ?’<sup>77</sup> What he wanted was that India should keep pace with the Chinese in maintaining a number of posts wherever possible in Indian territory. A proposal of this nature, Kaul adds, though recommended by the Ministry of External Affairs a few year’s back, was unacceptable to the Army Headquarters for difficulties numerical and logistic.<sup>78</sup> In NEFA, therefore, the army did not advance beyond the so-called ‘Thorat Line’—a few miles north of the foot hills. If the proposal was carried out, the Chinese could not have made much advance into the western sector. Nehru decided to beat the Chinese in their own game or to adopt a policy, ‘forward or

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75. Lok Sabha Debates, 25-6 November 1959.

In a secret meeting of opposition leaders, which was attended amongst others by B. M. Kaul, while Nehru was attempting to explain the difficulties of military operations in border areas, one of the leaders expressed : ‘There are two things precious to men land and women. You have already presented 12,000 square miles of our land to the Chinese. Do you now want to present our women to them also’ ? (*Insan ko do chiz piari hain : zamin aur istri. Chinion ko 12,000 square meel zamin to dedi, kia ab hamari istriyan bhi unko dene ka irada hai ?*). Kaul, B.M., *The Untold Story*, p. 279.

76. *PMSIR*, *li*, p. 204 ; *iii*, p. 62, Nehru in Lok Sabha, 6 December 1962.

77. *Op. cit.*, p. 278.

78. *Ibid.*

not', with the object of checking further advance of the Chinese into Indian territory. By the end of 1961, Kaul writes :

We have established over fifty outposts in Ladak and NEFA... These posts were set up not for administrative purpose...but to ensuring that the Chinese did not repeat the Aksai Chin story in NEFA or even in Ladak.<sup>79</sup>

The Chinese, inevitably, reacted violently. New Delhi was warned : 'Should Indian government refuse to withdraw its aggressive posts and continue to carry out provocations against Chinese posts, the Chinese frontier guards would be compelled to defend these. The Indian side will be wholly responsible for all the consequences arising therefrom.'<sup>80</sup> Apart from protests the Chinese pushed forward their '1960-claim Line' by constructing roads and erecting outposts. Towards the end of 1962 they had established seven new posts in Ladak, fourteen in the Punjab, Himachal and Uttar Pradesh and twenty-five in NEFA.<sup>81</sup> The Indian side refuted the allegations made by the Chinese and at the same time attempted to fill up the gaps by check posts and patrolling before occupation of these by Chinese troops. The outpost at the strategic Galawan river valley, though surrounded by the Chinese, was maintained against overwhelming odds.<sup>82</sup> In NEFA, the Assam Rifles pushed up and occupied several new positions ; some of these, particularly Dhola or Che Dong, south of the Thag La ridge was located a few miles north of the Line. The 'game of chess and battle of wits' came to a head on '8 September 1962 when the Chinese troops crossed the Thag La ridge and invested the Dhola post.<sup>83</sup>

It is unnecessary to discuss the events and analyse the circumstances leading to the NEFA debacle which have

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79. *Ibid.*, p. 281

80. *WP*, vi, p. 39, MFA Peking, 30 April 1960.

81. Mullik, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

82. *PMSIR*, lii, p. 98 ; *WP*, vi, pp. 78 and 82.

83. Mullik, *op. cit.*, p. 339.



already been covered by several writers.<sup>84</sup> Suffice it to say, that the massive attack which the Chinese began on 20 October compelled the detachment at the Dhola post to beat a hasty retreat and its commander was killed by the bullet of an enemy sniper. Khinzemane, Longju, Bom La and Jang, fell in rapid succession. On the Western front, too, with their strategic and logistic advantages the Chinese forced the Indian troops to withdraw from posts on the Galawan, Chip Chap valley and the Pangong lake areas and the Chinese advanced up to their '1960-claim Line'. On renewal of offensive in November, Tawang fell and in the Lohit Valley Indian troops evacuated Walong and the Chinese penetrated up to Hayuliang. About the same time Indian troops at Se La were surprised in the rear while a column of Chinese troops on the east cut off communication with Bomdi La which too passed under the control of the Chinese. Indian resistance totally collapsed, and on 20 November Nehru, in fact, bade farewell to the people of Assam when he made the broadcast :

Now what has happened is very serious and very saddening to us and I can well understand what our friends in Assam must be feeling, because all this is happening on their doorstep, as one might say, I want to tell them that we feel very much for them and we shall help them to the utmost of our ability.<sup>85</sup>

From early hours of 20th in fact, 'utter confusion' prevailed in Tezpur. IB Chief narrates :<sup>86</sup>

In such confusion, two Assam Ministers, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and Bhagwati, who were at Tezpur that day, met the Corps Commander to find out what the position was. The Corps Commander categorically told them that the Indian forces had been completely defeated and their morale

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84. For further studies in addition to Mullik, *op. cit.*, see Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, Chaps. IV-V, Dalvi, J. P., *Himalayan Blunder* ; Kaul B.M., *The Untold Story* and Nanporia, J.N., *The Sino-Indian Dispute*, pp. 9-24.

85. Cited the Neville Maxwell, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

86. Mullik, *op. cit.*, pp. 428-9.

shattered. The Chinese, he said, outnumbered the Indian forces several times and had better equipment and much superior fire power.... He also apprehended that even before the Chinese army from Kameng reached Tezpur, the Chinese would make a large-scale drop of paratroopers at Tezpur and Misamari airfields and capture them and then they would be able to land plane-loads of troops and stores at their will. The Indian army had no defence against this.

The general feeling was that the Chinese were heading headlong towards Tezpur. No wonder, therefore, then followed

the great civilian exodus from Tezpur. The treasury was emptied ; notes were burnt or sent across to Nowgong ; coins dumped in tanks ; hospitals and jails cleared of the inmates ; shops closed ; and the civilian staff and even the police started withdrawing from Tezpur following the footsteps of the army.

At such a crisis,

There were two villages near Tezpur town where Pakistani sympathisers had raised the cry of "*Pakistan Zindabad*" when they had heard of the withdrawal of civilian administration and they had looted some houses and shops.<sup>87</sup>

In utter despair and anguish Nehru appealed for military aid on 19 November to friendly powers particularly to the United States.<sup>88</sup> Before a cable was received from Washington

87. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

88. Nehru meant acceptance of military aid 'joining some military bloc' and becoming 'somebody else's dependent'. He stood opposed to it 'even if disaster ... comes to us on the frontier' ; (*PMSIR, Iii*, pp. 118-9). Force of circumstances compelled the 'Father of non-alignment' to appeal for American air-protection. When this was revealed in the budget session of the Parliament in March 1965 by MP Sudhir Ghosh, a violent reaction followed. This was denied by Lal Bahadur Sastri, then Prime Minister, but confirmed by the American Embassy. The Ambassador records in his Journal : 'Not one but two pleas for help are coming to us ... the second one of them still highly confidential ... they want our Air force to back them up so that they can employ their's tactically without leaving their cities unprotected.' 'These requests', as mentioned in footnote, which sought for full defensive intervention, were transmitted through Indian Embassy Washington.' Sudhir Ghosh, *Gandhi's Emissary*, pp. 327-9 ; Galbraith, J.K., *Ambassador's Journal*, p. 486.

unexpected had happened. About the midnight of 20 November India was told by the Chinese Premier that on the following day the Chinese frontier guards 'will cease-fire along the entire Sino-Indian frontier', and that from 21 December 1962 they 'will withdraw to positions 20 kilometres behind the lines of actual control which existed between India and China on 7 November 1959'. He wanted 'Indian forces to be removed to 20 kilometres from the line of actual control ; otherwise the Chinese government reserved the right to strike'.<sup>89</sup> What prompted Chou En-lai to announce the unilateral cease-fire ? May be the apprehension of 'winter and snow, and lengthening lines of communication and supply'. May be the presence of the American aircraft carrier near Calcutta as disclosed by Sudhir Ghosh in the Parliament.<sup>90</sup> May also be the danger of 'escalation of war'<sup>91</sup> which would weaken their position in areas into which they had penetrated and would make it difficult for Peking to maintain its hold on restive Tibetans upon whom they depended, by and large, for supplies. It cannot also be ignored that the Chinese had achieved their primary objective. They had reached the McMahon Line and Aksai Chin, the main bone of contention, was then within their firm grip. Before the next move they must spread their tentacles more effectively on both the wings of Pakistan and in any case over Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, the vital rampart of India's defence. They were yet to woo the tribesmen, particularly of NEFA, and if possible the plainsmen whose loyalty to New Delhi continued to be unshaken. Further advance beyond the Line at this stage would be a leap in the dark. Time was not ripe for the Chinese ; they voluntarily withdrew at the early dawn of victory.

In his cease-fire proposal Chou En-lai reiterated the offer he made to Nehru on 7 November 1959 also in the 'Three-points'

89. *WP*, vii, p. 24 ; viii, pp. 17-21 ; statement given by the Chinese government, 21 November 1962.

90. Karnik, V.B., *Chinese Invasion Background and Sequel*, p. 233.

91. Khera, S.S., *India's Defence Problems*, p. 192.

formula which he forwarded on 24 October immediately after the rout of the Indian army in NEFA in order to diffuse the situation to prepare the ground for an amicable settlement of the dispute. 'There is no sense or meaning', said Nehru,

in the Chinese offer to withdraw twenty kilometres from what they call 'line of actual control'... Is this line they have created by aggression since the beginnings of September? Advancing forty or sixty kilometres by blatant military aggression and offering to withdraw twenty kilometres provided both sides do this is a deceptive device which can fool nobody.<sup>92</sup>

Even if the line on November 1959 meant the entire McMahon Line, the proposed withdrawal 'would leave Chinese force in command of the passes leading into India while the Indian forces would be twenty kilometres to the south, leaving the entire Indian frontier defenceless and at the mercy of any fresh invasion'. On the west, the Chinese would be left in possession of the entire Aksai Chin through which ran Sinkiang-Tibet highway and its feeders.<sup>93</sup> This was rejected by the Indian

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92. *WP*, viii, p. 6, Annexure to letter from Nehru to Chou En-lai, 27 October 1962.

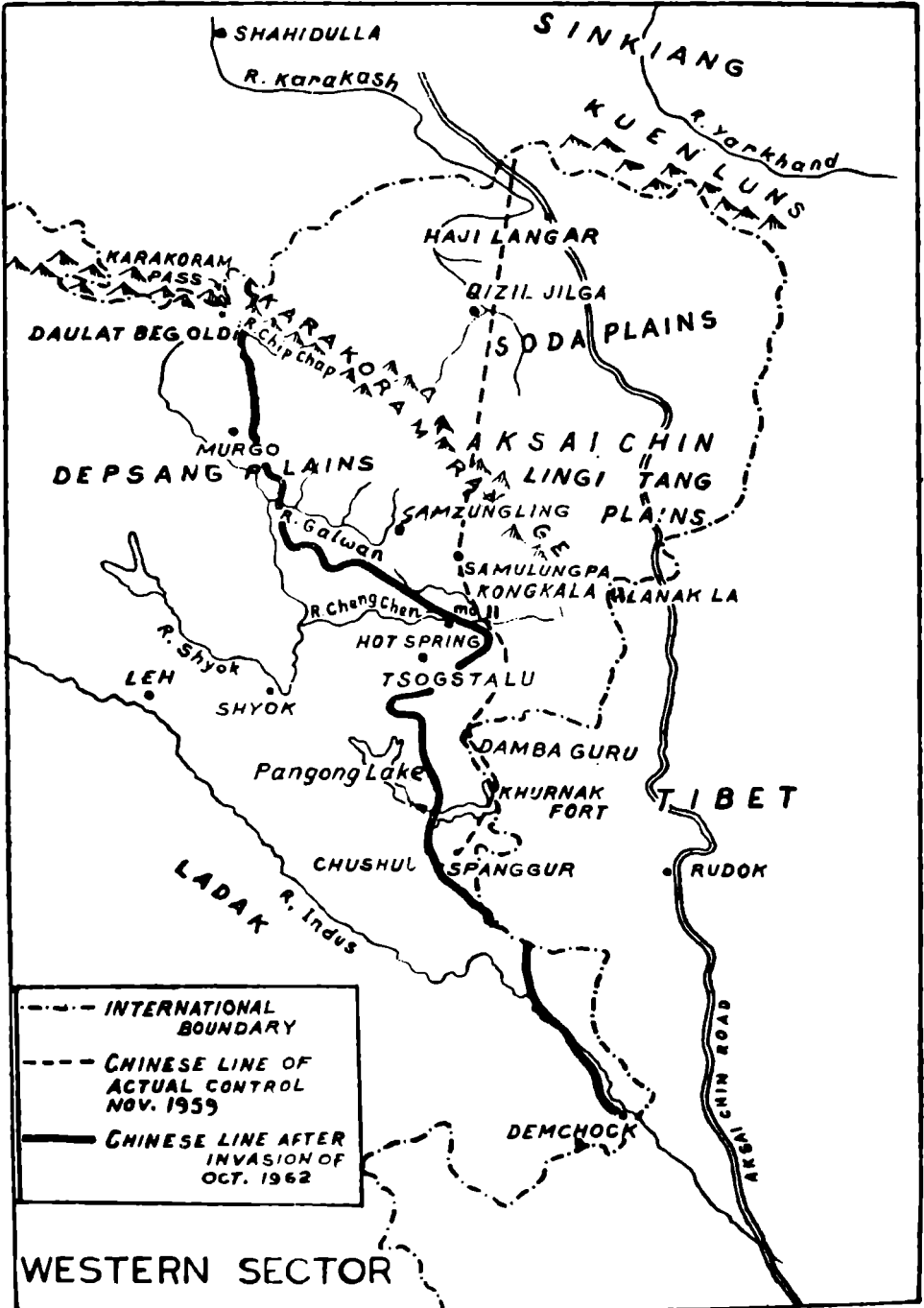
93. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-6; Annexure to Nehru's letter to Chou En-lai, 14 November 1962.

In western sector, 1959-line would link up Chinese position at Spanggur, Khurnak Fort, Konka La and Shamalungpa and then turns northward to join the Aksai Chin road. 'By process of gradual intrusion', according to Indian official report, 'they occupied by September 1962 more than 6,000 square miles of additional territory and as a result of their massive aggression since further 2,500 square miles till they finally reach the line which they now claim was their line of actual control in November 1959.' Acceptance of Chinese proposal would leave Chinese forces more than 100 kilometres within Indian territory. Moreover, the entire 'network of Chinese posts which existed in October 1962, and more would remain intact, while Indian posts claimed by the Chinese would be eliminated and even posts accepted as Indian ... would be dismantled and hauled'. *The Chinese Threat*, p. 17; (*Chinese Fraudulent Peace Offensive*, pp. 7-8; Publication Divisions, Government of India.)

CHINESE CLAIM LINE ... ———  
 LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL } - - -  
 20 SEPTEMBER 1962 (INDIAN) }  
 20 Km WITHDRAWAL LINES }  
 BY BOTH SIDES PROPOSED }  
 BY CHOU En-lai } - - -



EASTERN SECTOR



Prime Minister who wanted *status quo* of 8 September 1962 in all sectors as a condition preliminary to a mutually agreed cease-fire ; and failing which he was prepared to refer the boundary question to the International Court of Justice at the Hague. Chou En-lai turned down both the proposals.<sup>94</sup>

Endeavours were made by the six non-aligned countries in a meeting at Colombo, 10–12 December 1962, to evolve a compromise formula in order to bring the contending parties to the conference table. The proposal they made envisaged in the western sector withdrawal of Chinese troops twenty kilometres from the line of actual control as that of 7 November 1959. In the demilitarised zone, pending a final solution of the border issue civilian posts should be kept up by both sides 'without prejudice to the rights of the presence of both India and China in that area'. In the eastern sector, cease-fire line would be the line of actual control or the McMahon Line except the Thag La ridge and Longju which should be left for bilateral discussion.<sup>95</sup> India accepted the proposals after certain clarifications *in toto*. China accepted in principle though she insisted that Indian troops should stay in either sectors where they were and that Indians, civilian or military, should not be allowed to re-enter into the area under dispute while the Chinese would reciprocate within twenty kilometres on her side. Chou emphasised that the talks should not be delayed and differences, if any, would be sorted out in the discussions.<sup>96</sup> Nehru made it clear 'We cannot have any kind of talks, even preliminary talks, unless we are satisfied that the condition we had laid down, about 8 September position being restored, is met'.<sup>97</sup> In its note on 9 October 1963 Peking came to the conclusion that 'no result will be obtained even though

94. *Ibid.*, Annexure to Nehru's letter 27 October 1962 ; also *WP*, ix, pp. 6, 10-2.

95. Dorothy Woodman, *op. cit.*, Appendix-16, pp. 403-4 ; *WP*, ix, p. 4 ; see letter from Mrs Bandaranaike and enclosures, pp. 185-6.

96. *Ibid.*, Chou En-lai to Nehru, 3 March 1963.

97. Lok Sabha Debates, xii, No. 29, Col. 5996.

boundary negotiations are held'. New Delhi 'arbitrarily holds' the line it claimed as the fixed boundary'; that 'Indian-occupied Chinese territory is not negotiable', that 'the question of Indian-occupied Chinese territory is not negotiable either and that negotiations, if any, must be confined to China's withdrawal or Indian's entrance'.<sup>98</sup> In May 1964 Nehru passed away leaving the problem of North-East Frontier unresolved and more complicated as a legacy to his successors.

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A perusal of the White Papers would reveal to a sober student of Modern Indian history that the assertions and claims made by the contending parties in either sectors are neither convincing nor valid. Of their territorial claims, the Chinese officials have produced evidence only about a tenth of the tract under dispute, mainly the three pockets : Monba area, Layul (Tsangpo-Siang Valley) and Zay 1 (Lohit Valley). No reference whatever is made of the extensive tracts occupied by the Akas, Mijis, Duflas, Apa Tanis, Abors and the Mishmis. Some British officials were under the impression that the territory inhabited by the Monbas was held by chiefs known as the *Sat Rajas* who were feudatories of Tawang Deb who himself was a vassal of the authority at Lhasa.<sup>99</sup> The designation of the *Sat Rajas*, it appears, was not confined to seven headmen but to 'all the chiefs bordering upon the plains of Assam from the Dafia hills to Cooch Behar'. The *Sat Rajas* who held the Koreapara *duar* produced no credential from the Tibetan authorities when they concluded the treaty with the British on 5 March 1844.<sup>100</sup> In 1688, as recorded in an Assamese chronicle, when these chiefs refused payment of taxes of the *duar*, the Ahom Viceroy at Gauhati sent an army against the recalcitrant chief and

98. *WP*, x, p. 10 ; Note from MFA Peking, 9 October 1963.

99. *FPP*, 1844 ; 20 April, No. 127, Gordon to Jenkins 12 January.

100. *Aitchison* pp. 150-1. Likewise Thagi Raja and other chiefs and the Abors made no reference to their liege-lord in their agreements with the British.



compelled them to come to terms.<sup>101</sup> The fact that the *Sat Rajas* entered into agreement with the Assam and later British government clearly indicates that they were entirely independent of the control of the Tibetan government. Lonchen Shatra, the Tibetan Prime Minister, who was more authoritative than the Assam officials, acknowledged to the British Plenipotentiary at the Simla Conference that Tawang was not a part of Tibetan territory and that Tibetan interest in Tawang was confined to the income which the agents of the Drepang monastery were receiving from the Tawang monastery.<sup>102</sup>

The Chinese maintained that each of the aforesaid district was divided into a number of administrative units, *tsos* and *dins*, under *Jungpens* with duties to 'collect taxes, conduct census, exercise judicial authority and control personal movement, etc'.<sup>103</sup> Whatever authority these officials exercised was spiritual and not temporal. In March 1914, Lonchen Shatra had himself explained that

'Tawang was not a part of Tibetan territory, and that Tibetan interest in Tawang was confined to the income which Potala Trung-Yik Chenpo and Loseling College of the Drepung monastery were receiving in return for the services of the agents (the Tsona Dzung-pons) sent by them to manage the land of the Tawang monastery.'<sup>104</sup>

In regard to the collections made by the aforesaid officials even Ivan Chen, the Chinese Plenipotentiary, stated at the Simla Conference on 7 March 1914 that 'What is paid to the Tibetans is not in the shape of revenue, in the ordinary sense of the word, but merely contributions to the monastery. It is rather charity than a tax.'

The Chinese claimed that Zayul or the Lohit valley formed a part of the Tibetan territory and that a part of Layul area

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101. Naobaicha Phukan, P., *Assam Buranji*, transcript, DHAS, pp. 3-5., see L. Debi, *Ahom-Tribal Relations*, p. 206.

102. *Official's Report*, Eastern Sector, p. 220.

103. *Ibid.*, CR-171.

104. *Official's Report, India*, pp. 220 and 90.

had been originally under Pome or Pomekoi-Chen and therefore belonged to Tibet.<sup>105</sup> In absence of positive evidence to the contrary it cannot be rejected outright the statement made by their own representative Ivan Chen at the Simla Conference that Poyul (Pome and Pomekoi-Chen) and areas south of it never formed a part of Tibet or that Zayul was 'outside the pale of Tibetan control' and 'inhabited by independent and barbarous tribes.'<sup>106</sup> Exactions by free-booters or local Chieftains and even monastic collections, as explained by Indian officials, can by no means substantiate the extensive claims made by the Chinese government.

Evidently there is hardly any evidence to show that the Chinese Central government or their accredited agents had continuous and effective control over the areas south of the Line. Nor can it be admitted, pending explorations and archaeological excavations, that the tribal areas east of Bhutan and south of the McMahon Line was ever under the authority of the Varmans, Salastambhas, Palas or any other ruling dynasty of Kamarupa or ancient Assam till the advent of the Ahoms in the thirteenth century. Preoccupied throughout with the problem of consolidation, Mughal wars and foreign invasions, the Ahom rulers, too, could not extend their sway beyond the periphery of the northern hills and, in fact, they had to earn the goodwill and forbearance of some of the tribes by grant of certain rights in the plains. The British though followed a policy of slow but steady penetration in hill areas south of the valley of the Brahmaputra, *laissez faire* continued to be their watchword towards the hillmen of the north. Till recently, therefore, the tribal belt south of the Line remained a *terra incognita* or no-man's land. With exception of isolated and short punitive expeditions and explorations, neither European nor Indian dared to enter into this region of difficult terrain, of inhospitable climate and a people always suspicious

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105. *Ibid.*, 224 and 226.

106. *Ibid.*

of the entry of foreigners. In their agreements with the local authorities the tribal chiefs hardly acknowledged British suzerainty and the foot of the hills was invariably indicated as the limit of British territory.<sup>107</sup> 'An imaginary line—*Inner Line* was drawn between the Indian and independent territory and no European is allowed to cross the line without special permission.'<sup>108</sup>

The rapid strides made by the Chinese in their south-west drive and the impending threat to the North-East Frontier had forced on Minto's government to extend the sphere of British influence—the establishment of an area of loose political control—beyond the *Inner Line*. The *Outer Line*, inevitably, emerged and coincided with the international boundary. The undefined boundary was formally defined at the crest of the Himalayas, known as the McMahon Line, at the Simla Convention, 1914. The move towards this alignment and the establishment of control over the tribal areas have been covered at length in the preceding chapters. The process which began under Caroe was accelerated by Mills and reached its culmination under Nehru's government. Until 1947, evidently, the McMahon Line was not 'the firm frontier, firm by treaty (and) firm by usage' though it forms the natural division between the two countries, India and China.

Initially, Peking remained apparently unperturbed about India's forward move and extension of control over the McMahon areas ; New Delhi was equally unconcerned with the intrusions and activities of the Chinese in the Aksai areas. The latter was guided by Elgin's notion that 'No invader ever approached India from this direction where nature had placed... such formidable barriers'.<sup>109</sup> The Intelligence Bureau though brought to the notice of the External Affairs Ministry the

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107. See agreement with Thagi Raja, *Sat Rajas*, Mayong Abors, Medhi and Kapachor Akas ; *Aitchison*, pp. 149-51 ; 156-162 ; 164-5.

108. Kingdon Ward, *Geographical Journal*, lxxv, 1930, p. 424. *Official's Report*, CR-140.

109. Dorothy Woodman, *op. cit.*, see Appendix-6, p. 365.

activities of the Chinese, particularly the construction of the Sinkiang-Tibet highway, neither the Ministry nor the Army Headquarters paid any attention to it which they considered more of 'nuisance value' than 'one of that affected our security'.<sup>110</sup> In case India equated Aksai Chin with the McMahon Line and adopted adequate security measures in time, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, on the part of the Chinese to advance up to their '1960-claim Line'. The Western sector, what was worse, remained undefined and undelimited. Nehru admitted in the Lok Sabha that so far Ladak was concerned

the exact Line of the frontier is not at all clear as in the case of the McMahon Line ... It is a matter for argument as to what part of it belong to us and what part of it belongs to somebody else. It is not at all a dead clear matter. I have to be frank to the House... I cannot go about doing things in a matter which has been challenged not (only) to-day, but for a hundred years... It has been challenged all the time... The point is there has never been any delimitation there in that area and it has been a challenged area.<sup>111</sup>

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110. 'My suggestion', deplores Director Intelligence Bureau, 'to open posts at Tsogatsalu, Hot Springs, Kongka La ... was considered to be impracticable, and unnecessary in effect provocative.' When the IB moved again to spare a company of Central Reserve Police into the aforesaid areas to open posts, the Home Ministry questioned the need for opening posts in an area 'where not a blade of grass grew' and raised various administrative difficulties. Mullik, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-9 and 240.

111. *PMSIR, II*, Nehru in Lok Sabha, 12 September 1959, pp. 148-9.

It has been pointed out by some scholars that Nehru 'was misled by a group of officials in the External Affairs Ministry who distorted official records of the *Raj* to convince him, his cabinet and the Indian Parliament about the so-called 'sacrosanct', nature of India's border claims'. (Gupta, K., 'Sino-Indian Relations', *The Statesman*, 11 May 1981, Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, pp. 119-20). Indian Officials had asserted that 'the whole of the Aksai Chin area lay in Indian Territory' on the basis of MacDonal-Macartney Line that the northern boundary of Kashmir 'ran along the Kuen Lun range to a point east of 80° Longitude, where it met the eastern boundary of

It has been argued that the Permanent Court of International Justice had admitted 'that in a relatively backward territory it is not necessary to establish the same elaborate control and government as in more developed areas'.<sup>112</sup> To an impartial observer what is applicable to India is equally applicable to the Chinese. Whatever might be the force of Indian arguments and validity of its claims, the fact remains—the occupation of Aksai Chin by the Chinese is a *fait accompli*. Through it traverse the arterial and feeder roads to Tibet which is so vital to the Chinese as strategic base against their enemies on the north or of the south. It would be a forlorn hope that Peking, now Beijing, would concede to Indian demand in any talk the total evacuation from Aksai Chin though the possibilities of a barter or package deal continues to be bright, and for which feelers have been forthcoming from time to time.<sup>113</sup>

Chinese intrusions/aggressions apart, blunders committed by India one after another brought the matters to a head. Force

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Ladakh.' (*Official's Report, India*, p. 55). That this was wrongly quoted will be evident from the excerpt of MacDonalad's letter *supra* note No. 31. Challenging the assertion van Eekelen remarks: 'The proposal has often been misquoted to show that the frontier was intended to run along the Kuenlun mountains but, in fact, it did not follow this range at all. The proposed alignment conceded the headwaters of the Karakash to China and then ran generally south-east, following the Lok hung range 'until that meets a spur running-south from the Kuenlun range which had hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh'. (van Eekelen, *Indian Foreign Policy and the Border Dispute with China*, p. 162.) 'In researching this point' (Aksai Chin), remarks A. Rumbold, an official of the India Office, 'I found nothing in India Office records to justify the line on the Kuenlun range indicated on some maps and the (Simon) Commission's map accordingly adopted a line roughly along the crest ... of the Karakoram ranges.' Algernon Rumbold, 'Reviews on South Asia', *Asian Affairs*, viii, June 1977, p. 211; also Huttenback, R. A., 'A Historical Note on the Sino-Indian Dispute over the Aksai Chin', *The China Quarterly*, June 1964, 18, pp. 202-3.

112. Chakravarti, P. C., *The Evolution of India's Northern Borders*, p. 156.

113. *Supra*, pp. 313-4, *infra*, p. 345.

of circumstances, doubtless, compelled Nehru to allow the Chinese to swallow up Tibet, but his government could have refused and in any case deferred legal recognition of 'Chinese Region of Tibet', under Sino-Indian Agreement, 1954, pending a permanent settlement of the boundary disputes. The web of diplomacy so patiently and carefully woven by Curzon and developed by Bell thus came to an end, and along with it the Himalayas lost its significance as the most formidable rampart in the north. This had enabled the Chinese to advance to India's doorstep and had brought the plains of Assam, nay major cities of Northern India, within the range of the Tibetan-based Chinese bombers. Richardson rightly observes that the agreement amounted to counter signature by India the death-warrant of Tibetan independence and the Dalai Lama not without reason queried 'how could they (India) continue to claim the McMahon Line was valid?' The Tibetan head of the government might be warned by the Indian Prime Minister not to link up the Line with Tibetan independence ;<sup>114</sup> but by its own action Indian government had violated the very basis of the bilateral agreement and thereby emboldened the Chinese to assert that the Simla Convention is invalid. Finally, by according to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan refugees a cordial welcome, Nehru's government demonstrated India's proverbial generosity, but at what cost? 'Pandit Nehru incurred the ire of the Chinese who not only became hostile but actual enemy to the extent of invading India in 1962.'<sup>115</sup> Summarising the lapses one of India's eminent diplomate observes :

It was India not China that withdrew its Ambassador first as a protest against failure to settle the frontier problem. Government of India refused to renew the terms of Sino-Indian Agreement. When Chou En-lai came to India in 1960, we missed a golden opportunity to improve relations. Then there was a faint hope that a settlement could be reached under which the Chinese government would recognise the McMahon Line once for all in return for some

114. Richardson, H. E., *Tibet and its History*, pp. 197 and 231.

115. *Mullik, op. cit.*, p. 605.

recognition on our part of the Chinese claim in disputed Aksai area. Nehru seemed personally disposed to negotiate on the frontier problem, but gave up the idea and assumed an inflexible posture as a result of the opposition of some of his senior colleagues in the Cabinet and criticism in Parliament.<sup>116</sup>

Whatever may be the legal validity of the Simla Convention after the Sino-Indian Agreement (1954), it cannot be denied that there has been a genuine border dispute between the two countries born out of divergent opinions and interpretations of the treaties and agreements that India had inherited from the British government. Would it be therefore reasonable to take a rigid posture that the boundary line in either sectors have been firm and delimited or that 'the frontier is not open to discussion with anybody'? If the claims made by the Chinese are without any basis, those of India, too, are not on solid foundation. A solution of the problem lies not in confrontation, but in compromises—in a spirit of 'give and take'. There is not likely to be much controversy so far as the middle sector is concerned: but there will be 'hard bargaining' over Tawang which even the Tibetans wanted to have under their control and particularly Thag La and Longju which afforded the Chinese strategic bases on the north of the Line. The Chinese unilateral withdrawal behind the line of actual control has indirectly confirmed the alignment in this sector. It is not likely that they would insist their claim over the McMahan areas in case India concedes, even with adjustments, their demand over northeast Ladak in which already they have established control.<sup>117</sup> A package deal

116. Menon, K. P. S., *Twilight in China*, p. 260.

117. In this sector, the Chinese occupation of about 12,000 square miles appears to be the most formidable obstacle in the settlement of the Sino-Indian dispute. Pandit Nehru, who considered Sino-Indian friendship a *sine qua non* for Asian and world peace, would have perhaps come to a compromise on this issue even at a sacrifice but for misrepresentation or distortion of facts as stated in note 111 above. Indian officials had attempted to show on the basis of a number of documents and unofficial maps that Aksai Chin and Lingi Tang never formed a part of China. These were administered

'without compromising security' provides the only basis for future talk and ultimate settlement of the boundary dispute between the two governments.

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by the Government of Ladakh and Kashmir ; that police check-posts had been maintained by the Kashmir government in North Aksai areas as far as back in 1865 and there exist revenue and assessment records in areas now claimed by the Chinese. (*Official's Report, India*, p. 137.) But the fact is, prior to 1954, the boundary line in this sector remained 'undefined'. Karunakar Gupta has pointed out that in many official maps, 'including map of India attached to the Report of the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission, Vol. I, 1930) and the map of India submitted by the General Staff of the British Indian Army (marked 'Top secret') to the British Cabinet Mission in 1946, show the west of the Karakoram mountains as the approximate alignment of the Northern and Eastern Frontier of Kashmir'. But the new official maps published in 1954 showed this boundary line more or less the same as the Ardagh Line, including the Kuenluns as within Indian territory, which Elgin rejected on military grounds. 'How can the boundary line', the Chinese queried, 'which has appeared in Indian official maps only since 1954, suddenly become a well-known traditional boundary line.' *WP*, vi, p. 23, MFA Peking, 22 March 1962 ; Gupta, K., *op.cit.*



## *Epilogue*

While the Chinese menace continues to haunt the authorities in New Delhi, the insurgency of the Nagas and the Mizos posed before long a serious problem in the North-East Frontier.<sup>1</sup> That the foreign missionaries had a secret hand in these movements, as conceived even at responsible quarters,<sup>2</sup> is a misrepresentation of actual facts. Admittedly, the missionaries converted the animist tribes into Christianity and brought them into contact with the Western thought through the spread of English education. There is hardly any evidence to show, barring perhaps a few individual cases, that the Christian Fathers ever made any organised move to set up an independent State or instigated the tribesmen to unfurl the standard of revolt

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1. For security reasons archival materials on Naga and Mizo insurgency are not accessible to the researchers. This section is based, by and large, on contemporary literature, periodicals, newspaper reports, particularly two valued works of Nirmal Nibedon—*Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas* and *Mizoram: The Dagger Brigade*—which contain excerpts of underground documents not readily available. Grateful thanks are due to Lancers Publishers, New Delhi, for their kind permission to make use of these materials.
  2. Assam ex-Chief Minister Bishnuram Medhi said: 'I cannot think of any demand for Independent Sovereign Naga State raised by a few handful of leaders mostly Christians. And *probably* this demand was raised by interested foreign missionaries to keep them isolated from the rest of India.' Preoccupied as it was with 'weightier issues' in the wake of partition of India, Ministry of External Affairs in those days accepted as true whatever was transmitted from Shillong. No wonder therefore Nehru asserted, when a memorandum was presented to him by Phizo's men, that this was drafted by an 'outsider'. Nibedon, *Nagaland*, p. 54; Alamchiba, M., *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, p. 174; Anand, V. K., *Conflict in Nagaland*, p. 174.

against the established government.<sup>3</sup> The insurgents could not remain indifferent or unaffected by the insurrectionary movements beyond their borders—Burma, Malaya, Indonesia in the wake of Japanese invasions.<sup>4</sup> Their spirit of unrest and independence, which had been kept under restraint at the point of bayonet, reasserted itself the moment the British pull out of the hills.

In fact, as early as January 1929, the 'Naga Club' pleaded to the Statutory Commission under Sir John Simon not to 'thrust' them at the mercy of those who did not conquer them, but to leave them 'alone' to determine their destiny 'as in ancient times'.<sup>5</sup> The Naga National Council (NNC), which had developed by early 1946 as the political forum of the Nagas, maintained : 'Nagaland belongs to the Naga people and will be inalienable'. A section of the NNC, though favoured continuation of Nagaland as an integral part of India, the extremists wanted complete independence. Under the 'Nine-Point Agreement' in June 1947, Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam, effected a compromise with the NNC<sup>5a</sup> under which the latter was vested with 'increased administration authority' ; but the hurdle arose over the interpretation of the last clause which made the Governor responsible for due observation of

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3. No impartial observer can pass a verdict on the subject without a study of the correspondence that passed between the missions and their higher authorities in the USA and UK apart from the archival sources available in India. Without material and moral support of the authorities, the foreign missionaries were well aware that they could not carry on their main objective, namely proselytisation. Therefore they remained steadfastly loyal to the government, British and Indian. A perusal of the mission papers in original of the American Baptists has convinced the writer that they hardly dabbled in politics.
  4. Phizo is said have joined the INA under Subhas Bose and came in contact with Burmese nationalist Aung San and Communist Thakin Tan Tun and Thakin Zin. He carried the nationalist breeze which was blowing from other side of the frontier. Nibedon, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
  5. Alamchiba, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
  - 5a. Gundevia, Y. D., *War and Peace in Nagaland*, Appendix-I, pp. 220-2.

the agreement and inquiring the NNC after a period of ten years 'whether they require the above agreement to be extended or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people to be arrived at'. To the NNC leadership the new agreement implied the right of self-determination for complete independence whereas the official view was certain administrative rearrangements and not the right of secession.<sup>6</sup> The extremists under A. Z. Phizo threw the agreement into the winds and declared independence of Nagaland on 14 August 1947. The ceaseless propaganda which they carried on brought before long even the moderates to their fold to demand the right of self-determination. The NNC declared :

The Nagas are not Indians and do not want to become Indians. Nagaland was never conquered by India. The British conquered a part of Naga Hills and once the British left India it should revert to its original free status.<sup>7</sup>

'In the present context of affairs both in India and the world', asserted Nehru, 'it is impossible to consider, even for a moment, such an absurd demand for independence of the Nagas.'<sup>8</sup> Stubborn in the assertion of their rights, Phizo and his followers—Kughato Sema, Kaito Sema, Scato Sema, Isac Swu, Mowu—went underground and took the cult of violence. Under orders of the *Oking*, the underground government, intimidation, kidnapping, killing of officials became the order of the day. All those who opposed or proposed peaceful approach were liquidated or chopped off their heads.<sup>8a</sup> Besides a campaign of vilification, blocking of roads, blowing of

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6. Phizo of course admitted : 'This (clause number 9) was not a clear promise of self-determination ; it was an acceptable start.' But that very evening, Akbar Hydari is said to have warned several Naga delegates that 'if Naga Hills District in fact refused to join the Indian Union, India would use force against them'. This turned Phizo into a rebel. Nibedon, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

7. Alemchiba, *op. cit.*, p. 179

8. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

8a. See Gundevia, *op. cit.*, Ch. v.

bridges, seizure of arms paralysed the government. In March 1956 the insurgents established, 'Nagaland Federal Government' (NFG) with a Parliament (*Tartar Hoho*) and Council of Ministers (*Kilonsers*). The intensification of terrorism following the establishment of the NFG forced on the Government of Assam to declare Naga Hills a 'Disturbed Area' and the law and order of the district passed under the control of the Indian Armed Forces. Phizo, who had already made East Pakistan the training ground of his guerillas, flew to London *via* Karachi in search of aid. Despite attacks on convoys, assaults and ambushes, the attacks made by the Indian Security Forces (ISF), on the stronghold of the underground, the apprehension of the ring-leaders and the seizure of arms and ammunitions compelled many to escape beyond the borders to Burma and Manipur. The successful operations of the ISF and Village Guards (VG), which were raised in 1958 to relieve the ISF men, the endeavours made by the Baptist Council and the general desire for peace led the Naga Peoples Convention (NPC) under Dr. Imkongliba Ao to make overtures for a peaceful settlement with the Government of India. As an interim measure, Nagaland-Tuensang area came into being in December 1957 under the Ministry of External Affairs. In July 1960, the 16-point agreement between the Prime Minister and the NPC led to the birth of Nagaland as a separate State within the Indian Union.<sup>9</sup> The endeavours that had been made in the meantime to win over the underground bore little fruit. Branding the moderates as 'traitors', they clung fast to the cult of violence to achieve their goal—separation of Nagaland from India. Despite threats, forcible collections, occasional killings, including the President NPC, the urge for peace became steadily strong among the Nagas. The formal inauguration of the State on 1 December 1963 opened up the prospects of a new era of peace and prosperity in Nagaland.

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9. *Ibid.*, p. 190 ; *Ibid.*, Appendix-II, pp. 223-7.

Remained in isolation and in a state of utter neglect, the Lushais or the Mizos in the south, too, felt that their land had never been a part of India. Administered as an 'Excluded Area'<sup>10</sup> under the Act of 1935 by an all-powerful Superintendent with a number of puppet chiefs, they had representation neither in the Central nor Provincial legislature. An arrangement of this nature could hardly satisfy political aspirations of the few Mizo elite who voiced their feelings, from time to time, through the Mizo Union. Following the recommendation of the North-East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly, under the Sixth Schedule, an autonomous status was conferred on the district. The Deputy Commissioner in place of the Superintendent was to coordinate administration with the Executive Members of the District and the Regional Councils. The immediate task of the Mizo Union, which had bagged all the seats but one, in the District Council was to abolish the Chieftainship which had already become an anachronism and to rename the district as Mizoram. The official language issue and the ineffective, if not indifferent, relief measures of the Assam government to combat Lushai famine in 1959-60 opened the breach between the Union and the Assam government and brought into the forefront the Mizo National Front (MNF) as extremists in Mizo politics.<sup>11</sup> Obsessed with the idea that the Mizos 'are a distinct nation', Laldenga the MNF Chief, invoking the right of self-determination demanded

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10. For further study see Nibedon, *Mizoram: The Dagger Brigade*; Goswami, B., *Mizo Unrest*; Sareen, K. K., *Insurgency in North-East India*, Ch. 10.

11. Extermism developed according to Bawichhuaka, due to 'the seriousness of the famine and that the fact that we could not make an impact on the Government of Assam—our guardian and the treatment we received by way of relief was not even to our expectations... and there was another factor : it was some kind of alien treatment that the common people usually received from the people of Cachar'. Nibedon, p. 43.

'a sovereign independent State of Mizoram'. In a Memorandum to the Prime Minister Laldenga pointed out :

The Mizos from time immemorial lived in complete independence without foreign interference... Their territory had never been conquered or subjugated by the neighbouring States ... the Mizos ... was subsequently brought under the British political control in December 1895 (?) when a little more than half of the country was arbitrarily carved out and named Lushai Hills and the rest of their land was parcelled out of their hands to the adjoining people for the sole purpose of administrative convenience.... The Mizos stood a separate nation, even before the advent of the British government. In nutshell, they are a distinct nation, created, moulded and nurtured by God and nature.<sup>12</sup>

Though a group of intellectuals came under the spell of Laldenga, the Mizo Union stoutly opposed the idea of secession. This was considered as impossible by Bawichhuaka, a leading member of the Union, inasmuch as 'we did not have the strength, the wealth ; we did not have the capacity to force secession'.<sup>13</sup> Laldenga, on the other hand, matured plans for an insurrection on a large scale by carrying on anti-Indian propaganda, collecting funds and recruiting volunteers. Like the insurgent Nagas, the MNF found the rulers in neighbouring Pakistan their host that trained the rebels besides supplying arms and ammunitions. On 28 February 1966, the insurgents made simultaneous attacks on Aizawl and Lungleh after which they set up a parallel government with an army of their own. The MNF went underground when on 2 March the Government of Assam declared Mizoram a 'Disturbed Area' and the Indian Armed Force moved into the hills. Laldenga and his men escaped to East Pakistan wherefrom they carried on reprisals against their enemies whether the *Vais* (outsiders) or the Mizos. Branded as hostiles by the army, who could make no distinction between a loyal and a rebel, the Mizos were subjected to arrest, interrogation, incarceration and firing apart from kidnapping and brutal

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12. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

massacres, 'anvil and hammer', in the hands of the extremists in the event of being least suspected as informants or anti-MNF. Tired of two-fold tyrannies many left their hearths and homes and took shelter in Manipur, Cachar and Khasi Hills.

It has been suggested that the Chinese, who aimed at establishing their hegemony over these tribal areas, had been 'aiding the tribal groups to rise against their own authorities'.<sup>14</sup> Intervening Indian territory apart, insurgency in the Kachin-Chin areas and the long and difficult terrain to be traversed rendered it difficult for the guerillas to receive massive aid from China. In his quest for military aid, Laldenga is said to have been in Peking at least twice. He was assured of 'arms training' besides 'some arms, ammunitions and medicine'.<sup>15</sup> During his second visit, on 28 September 1970, the Chinese leaders made it clear that 'there was no question of recognition, not for the moment at least'. The Chinese connection, 'at best' gave the movement of the Mizos, as Nibedon rightly remarks, 'a psychological boost'.

Since early 1963 feelers had been sent from *Oking* to the Dragon. On refusal of the western powers to espouse Phizo's cause, NFG under Ato Kilonser Sukhai appealed to Peking 'to recognise the territorial rights of Nagaland, her people now and forever'.<sup>16</sup> The decisive blows dealt by the ISF men compelled the NFG to despatch a party of three hundred for military training under T. G. Muivah and M. K. Thinoselie. The Kedhage (President) brought home the Chinese authorities 'that it had become impossible for the NFG to resist unaided the might of Indian force' and therefore solicited 'any possible assistance in any forms'.<sup>17</sup> Muivah was told on arrival that they could have 'as much arms they could carry back to India'

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14. Anand, V.K., *Conflict in Nagaland*, p. 188.

15. Nibedon, *Mizoram : The Dagger Brigade*, pp. 154-5.

16. *Ibid.*, *Nagaland : The Night of the Guerrillas*, see letter Kughato Sukhai, 29 May 1963, p. 131.

17. *Ibid.*, letter Kedhage, 5 May 1966, p. 149.

and that the People's government would render help in their cause through their propaganda machinery.<sup>18</sup> Thinoselie and his men trekked back in batches and settled themselves at Chakesang and Angami areas wherefrom they made several attacks on ISF bases. The party under Muivah which was held back at Yunan received rigorous training of the Chinese guerillas. They were followed up by several batches under Isac Swu, Vedai Chakesang and others eluding the vigilance of Security Forces in the frontier.<sup>19</sup> Christian Nagas, it has been argued, viewed with serious concern the Peking connection. It was feared that their 'boys would be bringing the dreaded anti-religious views of Mao and Karl Marx'.<sup>20</sup> Even Phizo, though pinned his faith on communist tactics, wanted the Nagas 'to be a follower of Jesus Christ'. The guerillas found in the Dragon the only ally to lend political and moral support. They were unprepared to sever connection with China whose very name 'would send shock waves to New Delhi'.<sup>21</sup>

The lukewarm support received from the Chinese, the plugging of escape routes to Pakistan by the ISF men and the emergence in 1971 of Bangladesh friendly to India crippled the strength of the insurgents in both the hills. The altered situation and the massive urge for peace<sup>22</sup> left no alternative to

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 186-7 ; Gundevia, *op.cit.*, p. 190.

19. Anand, *op.cit.*, pp. 188-9.

20. Phizo expressed : 'If great Russia and mainland China are proud to feel that they follow the ideology of the German Karl Marx, tiny Nagaland is happy to be a follower of Jesus Christ whom we have come to believe in as our Saviour.' Cited in Nibedon, *op.cit.*, pp. 187 and 27.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

22. The general urge for peace is borne out by the participation of the Nagas in recent elections. In 1957, there were only three candidates to the three seats in the Assam Assembly while election of 1951 was totally boycotted by the Nagas. Even in the election of the first Nagaland Assembly in 1964 firing had to be resorted to on account of hostilities of the underground. The situation took a new turn in 1969 when in certain places over seventy percent voting was recorded and in some constituencies as many as six candidates contested.



the underground Nagas but to join hands with the moderates and to sign the Shillong Accord on 11 November 1975. They had renounced, thereby, their demand for 'sovereignty' and accepted Nagaland as an integral part of India ; and that discussion on other issues will be made with the Government of India within the framework of the Constitution. Since then, there is no major incident in Nagaland which is now apparently in peace ; but Phizo, the father of insurgency, is yet to reconcile to the present setup<sup>23</sup> while the Chinese-trained Muivah-Swu group, which was not a party to the Shillong Accord, is still at large and continuing acts of violence, from time to time, from the other side of the frontier.<sup>24</sup> In Mizoram there had occurred already a rift in Laldenga's camp ; a section of the MNF leadership—Manliana, Lalnunmawia, Lalmingthanga and others—having seen the writings on the wall, desired peace and return of normalcy. This had strengthened the hands of Mizo Union leaders to make overtures with New Delhi, and the result was the upgrading of Mizoram as an Union territory on 21 January 1972. Laldenga moved to Karachi wherefrom he carried on negotiations with foreign powers including China, and the MNF shifted their base to the jungles of Arakan. Disappointed in having adequate foreign aid and deserted by his own followers, Laldenga, too, wanted to come to terms with the government. Under the agreement with the Government of India, in February 1976, Laldenga renounced his demand for a sovereign State of Mizoram and

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23. The emissaries that had already contacted Phizo in London could make no change in his stand on 'sovereignty'. This was also evident in the talks he had with Prime Minister Morarji Desai during his visit to London in June 1977. Desai said : 'There was no change in him, and I don't think there will be any change in him. He will understand things only when he sees there is no support for him... that is going to happen soon.' Nibedon, *op.cit.*, 357-8.

24. Guru Dev, S. ; 'Significance of the Muivah Syndrome' *The Statesman*, News Letter, 31 May 1981.

accepted its status as an integral part of India.<sup>25</sup> He had also agreed to discuss its problems within the framework of the Constitution. This was considered a betrayal by the extremists under Biakchunga who stuck to the demand of 'sovereignty'. The successes of Brigadier Sailo's moderates in the Mizoram Assembly elections in 1978 and the prospect of his leadership in the Mizoram being extremely remote, Laldenga made another somersault and rejoined the Arakan-based MNF. This was followed by a spate violence since June 1979 in which several high officials, both civil and Military, had been killed. Emerging out of his hideouts, of late, Laldenga is again having negotiations with the South Block for a settlement within the framework of the Constitution. It is doubtful whether he has the backing of the hardliners. In any case the prospect of a settlement appears to be extremely bleak in view of the demands which Laldenga has made a few months back in a memorandum—the creation of a Greater Mizoram with adjoining areas of Assam, Tripura and Manipur and the establishment of an interim government with himself as its head in violation of the Constitution of India.<sup>26</sup>

Writers like B. N. Mullik held the view that even if India surrenders a part of the country 'China would still foster armed struggle in the tribal areas ... continue her armed assistance to Pakistan ... (and) support the national liberation movement of the Kashmiris'.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, India will have to be on her guard throughout on the northern frontier and there will be hardly any chance of reducing her military budget. In a similar strain, P. C. Chakravarti observes : 'The entire Chinese strategy towards India ... the chain of border intrusions, invasion of 1962, the open collusion with Pakistan ... clandestine assistance to hostile Nagas and the Mizos ... is designed not to

25. Nibedon, *Mizoram*, Appendix-I, see Text of the February, 1976 Agreement.

26. *The Assam Tribune*, editorial, 21 April 1981 ; *India Today*, August 16-31, 1980.

27. Mullik, *op. cit.*, pp. 628-9.

acquire a few thousands of square miles of barren territory but to ... re-establish China as the proud and powerful Middle Kingdom, surrounded by tribute paying barbarous, political satellites.<sup>28</sup> The answer to the Chinese would be, therefore, not the surrender of some part of Indian territory but 'rapid enhancement of India's internal strength and defence capability' and closer ties with powers unfriendly to China. Bordered by hostile countries and uncertain allies, admittedly, India will have to be vigilant and in military preparedness for years to come lest she might again be caught napping. Yet, a Sino-Indian *detente* will obviate the necessity of an armed race<sup>28a</sup> or ever-increasing defence budget at the cost of Five Year-Plans so essential, as Nehru said, even for the defence of the country,

the real strength of any country is the industrial background of the country. The whole question of defence has to be considered in all these various aspects—the basic aspect is the growth of industry, industrialisation not merely some kind of defence industry.<sup>29</sup>

In any case, a settlement with China will enable India to be flexible in her foreign policy options without tilting more and more to the orbit of a superpower or a particular power block.

In fact, the process of normalisation of Indo-Chinese relations had started with the reappointment of the Indian Ambassador and its reciprocal action by the People's government in 1976. A. B. Bajpai, Minister External Affairs during Janata rule, found in early 1979 that the border question had already 'unfrozen'. Deng Xiaoping, Vice-Chairman, Communist Party in China, publicly announced in June 1980 'that the border problem can be solved in a package deal...while we can recognise the present line of actual control in the eastern sector India should recognise the *status quo* in the western sector'. What is more significant,

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28. Chakravarti, P. C., *op. cit.*, pp. 163-7.

28a. For details see Dilip Bobb 'The New Arms Race' *India Today*, August 16-31, 1981, pp. 44 ff.

29. *PMSIR, II*, pp. 190-1, Nehru in Lok Sabha, 25 November 1959.

he made it clear that the problem of Kashmir 'should be settled amicably' between India and Pakistan—a distinct departure from earlier Chinese support to Pakistan stand that the Kashmiris should have the right of self-determination.<sup>30</sup> That the present Indian Prime Minister Srimati Indira Gandhi was no less keen on normalisation is borne out by the earlier talk she had with her counterpart Hua Guofeng in Belgrade and the Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua in Salisbury. The latter even expressed a desire to visit India as early as possible and Eric Gonsalves of the External Affairs Ministry arrived in Beijing to prepare the ground for the visit of the Chinese dignitary. Despite set-backs—the Chinese invasion of Vietnam (February 1979) and India's recognition of the Heng Samrin regime in Kampuchea—the process of normalisation never ceased. The People's government desired that the visit of the Foreign Minister should not be delayed and Huang Hua, accordingly, arrived in New Delhi in early hours of 26 June 1981 when he was accorded a rousing reception. After lapse of over two decades of embittered relations, distrust and suspicions, the presence of the Chinese Minister at the Indian capital was highly 'significant'. Huang Hua was hopeful that 'a compromise solution to the border dispute could be found in an atmosphere of sincerity and mutual confidence', and that arrangements to that end would be made at 'appropriate' level. He struck an 'optimistic note' at the end of the talks that difference between the two countries 'will eventually be solved and Sino-Indian relation will develop further'.<sup>31</sup>

Though belatedly, the Chinese have realised, as suggested by an eminent Indian journalist, that 'it was all very well to

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30. Deng was well aware that the solution of the border problem will be an intricate one ; but that should not stand in the way of normalisation of relations between the two countries. 'We can put it aside', said Deng, 'This problem should not hinder developments of relations between the two countries.' *The Statesman*, 21 June 1980.

31. *Ibid.*, 27 and 29 June 1981.

help train Naga and Mizo dissidents in the northeast and buttress Pakistan to harry India, but this offered no long-term policy option ; further, that by continuing to pursue this policy the Chinese would end up by driving India to Soviet arms'.<sup>32</sup> The Janata MP Subramaniam Swamy, who was supposed to have been sent by the South Block to 'probe' into the Chinese mind, was told by Deng :

Even if you were to take part of Tibet, that would not be a threat to China. It is not India by itself that could be a threat. What we consider a danger is that some other force may take a hand here. The real threat is from the North.<sup>33</sup>

Soviet south-west drive and the 'disturbing developments' in the Persian Gulf in the wake of the Iraq-Iran conflict have much to do in the latest move made by the Chinese leaders. Despite Sino-Pakistan arms deal and the completion of the Karakoram Highway Pakistan is vulnerable when the Soviet forces are firmly seated on her borders. The so-called Sino-Pakistan-USA Axis is on a broken reed if the statement made by the *Chinese News Agency* is to be believed that 'US relations with Taiwan, continued US arms sale to Taiwan in particular, constitutes, a stumbling block in the development of Sino-US relations'.<sup>34</sup> Pro-Soviet leanings notwithstanding, India is the only stabilising factor in the South and Southeast Asia. Sino-Indian *detente*, Beijing is likely to have felt, will diffuse the tension and reduce the chances of a nuclear war between the super powers, USA and USSR, which would inevitably have its repercussions on the Chinese soil.

Whatever may be the underlying motive behind the Chinese offer of olive branch, poverty of the Indians, persistent enmity with Pakistan and insecurity of the frontiers demand normalisation of relations with China. Despite successive Plans, appalling

32. Nihal Singh, S., 'Making up with China', *India Today*, August 1-15, 1980, p. 12.
33. 'We Face Common Problems', see Subramaniam Swamy's transcript of his meeting with Deng, *India Today*, May 1-15, 1981, p. 115.
34. See *The Statesman*, 20 June 1981.

poverty of the masses continues to be the enemy number one of the Indian government, to combat which the energies and resources of the country need be diverted. India cannot afford to have enemies at two fronts and Pakistan is determined to have her pound of flesh, despite frequent dialogues, over the Kashmir issue which Nehru regarded 'as a trial of secular concept of India'.<sup>35</sup> In the event of a *rapprochement* with China, Pakistan is likely to be less vociferous in her demands and may even be induced to come to a compromise along the existing cease-fire line. In any case the insurgents in the north-east will be greatly demoralised, for the flow of men and arms from Beijing which are even now said to be on the trickle, may be stopped altogether.

India has no reason to hasten the process, it may be argued, a delay in settlement will enable the country to exact better terms from the Chinese government. This will mean never-ending preparation for war and its crippling effect on Indian economy apart from throwing the country into the arms of a superpower in utter disregard of her professed non-alignment. Even then, would it be possible to unsettle a settled fact without war—may be devastating nuclear war on Indian soil? Statesmanship of Indian policy-makers will be revealed not in precipitating, but in easing the situation and averting such a crisis. This would be possible only by a correct assessment of the realities of the situation without any emotion or ill-will but with reason and mutual understanding. Indira Gandhi, India's Prime Minister, is in a advantageous position than her father who was cornered 'with little room for manoeuvre' by the opposition in the Parliament. Endowed with indomitable courage, sense of realism and astute diplomacy and having had the absolute majority in the Parliament and an opposition in complete

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35. MP Sudhir Ghosh was told by President Kennedy that 'if a Kashmir settlement means that Nehru has to handover the Kashmir Valley to Pakistan, then I would, as a politician, if I were in his shoes give up those barren mountains and keep the lush valley'. Sudhir Ghosh, *Gandhi's Emissary*, p. 311.

disarray, she is capable enough to arrive at a settlement based on mutual goodwill and accommodation. Time is highly opportune at present for making a move towards Sino-Indian *detente*. Even if it may not be possible to have a return to the *Hindi Chini bhai bhai*, a settlement of the boundary question will normalise the relations between the two neighbourly but unfriendly countries and tend to do much towards peace, stability and security of the North-East Frontier.

## GLOSSARY

*Amban*, A high Chinese Official at Lhasa.

*Ato*, Chief.

— *Kilonser*, Chief Minister.

*Chakka*, defensive forts at Khonomah.

*Chu*, a river.

*Dao*, a short sword of hillman.

*Duar*, a region adjoining hill, a mountain pass.

*Durbar*, an assembly.

*Dzong*, a fort, headquarters of a Tibetan district.

*Dzongpon* or *Jungpen*, governor of fort, a Tibetan official in-charge of a district.

*Gaoburah*, a village headman.

*Garh*, a rampart.

*Gosain*, a spiritual guide.

*Jhum*, forest land burnt and cleared for agriculture.

*Kashag*, administrative council of the Tibetan government consisting of four members.

*Kebang*, village assembly of the Abors.

*Kedhage*, president.

*Kham*, name of the eastern province of Tibet.

*Khat*, an estate.

— holder an officer in-charge of an estate.

*Khel*, an unit of a Naga village.

*Kilonser*, minister.

*Kotoky*, an agent, an envoy.

— *Chokey*, an outpost of a kotoky.

*La*, a mountain pass.

*Lal*, a chief.

*Maharani*, queen.

*Maiba*, medicine-man.

*Mithan* or *Methon*, an Indian bison.

*Mouza*, a small revenue unit.

*Mouzadar*, an officer in-charge of a *mouza*.



*Nazar*, present.

*Oking*, underground Naga government.

*Panjis*, spikes of hardened bamboo placed on ground to impede the passage of an enemy.

*Panchayat*, a council of elders.

*Posa*, personal service or produce payable to hillmen.

*Rasud*, provisions.

*Sarkar*, government.

*Sunnud*, a written authority.

*Tartar Hoho*, Naga parliament.

*Tso*, a lake.

*Vais*, outsiders.

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## INDEX

- Abbot, Captain, 61.
- Abors, policy towards, 127 ; British rights over territory of, 127-9 ; encroachments of 129 ; grievances, 132-3 ; outrages by, 133 ; levy of blackmail, 147n ; Abor *posa*, 148n ; character of, 149n ; expedition against, 134, 173-4 ; reduction of, 174.
- Act 33, extension of, 8.
- Adviser, *see* Mills.
- Agnew, Major, 114.
- Agreement (*also* Conventions, Treaties) Anglo-Tibetan, (1914) ; Nine Point (Hydari, 1947), 336 ; Sino-Tibetan (1951), 298 ; Sino-Indian (*Panch Sheel*, 1954) ; 301-2 ; Sino-Burmese (1960), 315n ; Sino-Nepalese (1960), 315-6 ; Sixteen Point (Naga People's Convention and Government of India, 1960), 336 ; Sino-Pakistan, (1963), 316.
- Aijal *now* Aizawl, siege of, 97 ; headquarters North Lushai Hills, 95 ; Lushai Hills, 110 ; surprise attack on, 340.
- Aitchison, C.U., Secretary Government of India, on surveys, 15 ; —extension of protectorates, 21-2 ; —operation of Act 33, 9 ; advanced posts opposed by, 40. —*Treaties*, no mention of Indo-Tibetan frontier, 224 ; revised edition, 245.
- Akas, policy towards, 17-8 ; representation made by, 119 ; expedition against, 121 ; submission of, 122 ; Chinese threat into the country of, 167.
- Aksai Chin, Johnson on, 304 ; Macartney's proposed division of, 305 ; MacDonald-Macartney proposal on, 305 ; Chinese claim on, 306 ; Indian protests, 306 ; India's indifference to, 329 ; official assertion of, 330 ; Chinese occupation, 331.
- Ali Ahmed, Fakhruddin, 319.
- Amban, takes over Tibetan administration, 153 ; summons Deb, 154 ; Anglo-Tibetan treaty aided by, 209.
- Anglo-Tibetan Trade Regulations (1908), 152. — — — (1914), 211 ; relinquishment of, 301.
- Ao, Dr. Imkongliba, 338.
- Appadorai, A., on treaty-making powers of Tibet, 210n.
- Apa Tani (Apa Tanaung), survey of, 124 ; territory of, 269 ; friction with Duffas, 260 ; Mills settled disputes of 273 ; development programme of, 273.
- Arbuthnott, J. C., 141.
- Ardagh, Sir John, 304.
- Army Act, enforcement in Lushai-hills, 113. —Commission, 66-7. —Department, on Lohit Valley, 196 ; —Miri Section, 199 ; —Sinkiang-Tibet highway, 330.
- Assam-Bhutan boundary, demarcation of, 113-6.
- Assam Government, on Jadonang, 225 ; —implementation of McMahon's recommendations, 228 ; —relaxation of control over Sadiya-Balipara Tract, 230 ; —political control over Tawang, 199. —Tea Company, grants to, 1 ; complaints made by, 4.
- Badgley, W. F., survey of Sibsagar-Naga Hills boundary, 134 ; —Cachar-Chittagong, 45.
- Bailey, F. M., on Chinese official's action, 167-8 ; mission of, 177-8, survey of Dihong Valley by 186-7. —Sir Steuart, Chief Commissioner, on forward policy, 23 ; policy towards Nagas intimated to, 26 ; headquarters decided by, 50 ; on Damant's objectives, 53 ; arrives at Kohima, 61 ; on demand on

- Nagas, 64 ;—policy towards Nagas, 65 ff ; Frontier Police augmented by, 67 ; on jurisdiction of Po, 68.
- Baird, Lieutenant, 88.
- Bajpai, A. B., Minister External Affairs, 345.
- Ballantine, W. J. H., APO, 183.
- Bar Abors *see* Abors.
- Barua, Hem, MP, questions on McMahon Line, 311 ; Nehru's policy commented by, 312.
- Battye, on Kingdon-Ward's entry, 237 ; Gould's report of, 243.
- Bawichhuaka, on rise of MNF, 339n ; —secession, 340.
- Bell, Sir Charles Alfred, on Chinese intrigues, 153 ;—a new treaty with Bhutan., 155 ;—Chinese threat south of Himalayas, 156 ;—extension of political control, 157-8 ; Tibetan support urged by, 192n ; estimate of, 193 ; dialogues with Shatra, 200 ; on Tawang, 200 : Tibetan rights to pilgrim routes, supported by, 201 ; exchange of letters, *App-C*.
- Benkuiya, Howlong chief, raided Cachar, 32 ; submission of, 37.
- Bentinck, A. H. W., DC, murder of Williamson reported by, 168 ; PO Abor expedition, 173 ; Abor Mission under, 175 ; on administrative arrangements, 178-9.
- Beresford, Major G. W., Commandant, directives to, 130 ; difficulties of, 130 : fresh agreement with Abors, suggested by, 130.
- Bhagwati, B. C., 319.
- Bhutan, friction with, 114 ; boundary demarcation of, 115-6 ; wars of succession, 116-7 ; conciliatory policy towards, 116-7 ; neutrality of, 154 ; treaty with, 155-6.
- Biakchhunga, on Laldenga's agreement, 344.
- Blinthe, manager Baldhan tea estate, murder of, 60.
- Bliss, Major, survey of, 173 ; accompanies Dundas. 178.
- Bomdi La, fall of, 319.
- Bora Hoti (Wu-je), border dispute at, 306.
- Bordak, base of operations at, 135 ; massacre of, 135-6.
- Botham, A. W., Chief Secretary, 228 ; modified proposal of, 230-1 ; on relaxation of control Sadiya-Balipara Tract, 230-1.
- Bourchier, General, Commands Left Lushai Column, 35 ; on defensive measures, 42.
- Bower, H., Major, directives to, 173 ; determination of natural frontier, difficulties of, 174 ; administrative measures, recommended by, 179.
- Bronson, Miles, 7n.
- Brown, R., PO Manipur, on Naga outrages, 19.
- Browne, H. R., PO North Lushai Hills, directives to, 95-6 ; blunders committed by, 96 ; death of, 97.
- Brownlow, General, Commands Right Column, 35 ; operations under, 36 ; on policy towards Lushais, 39 ;—frontier defence, 43.
- Bruce, H., 117.
- Butler, Captain John, PO Naga Hills, advocates forward policy, 12 ; visits Mikirs and Nagas, 12 ; survey conducted by, 13 ; destroys Lhota village, 15 ; death of, 16 ; on Angamis, 17 ;—removal of headquarters, 17.
- Callaghan, T. P. M. O'. APO, appointment of, 183 ; 'Walong Promenade' under, 184 ; removes Chinese pillars, 185.
- Campbell, A. E., DC, on Ladoigarh, 5-6 ; police outpost suggested by, 5
- George, Lieutenant Governor, on Indo-Burmese boundary, 3 ; on Act 33, 9 ; suggests demarcation of Sibsagar—Naga Hills boundary, 11 ; proposes shifting headquarters, Naga Hills, 12 ; on policy towards trans-frontier Nagas, 12 ;—Lushai raids, 32 ;—policy towards Lushais, 33.
- Carnegy, P. T., PO, measures against Nagas, 19 ; operation under, 20 ; death of, 21.

- Carey, PO Fort/White, 105.
- Cariappa, General, on military aid to Tibet, 300.
- Caroe, Sir Olaf, Secretary EAD, McMahon Line re-discovered by, 236; exchanges with Walton, 237-8; directives to, 239; on Tibetan resolution, 282-3; — occupation of advanced posts, 263.
- Cawley, G. J., APO, defensive measures by, 56; report of, 57.
- Mrs., Siege of Kohima reported by, 56-7.
- Chakka* forts, impregnability of, 59; British occupation of, 62.
- Chakravarti, P. C., on Chinese strategy, 344-5.
- Chaksang Vedai, 342.
- Chang Yin-tang, Chinese High Commissioner Tibet, assertions made by, 153; his letters to Deb, 154.
- Chao Erh-feng, overran Eastern Tibet, 153; south-east Tibet subjugated by, 153.
- Che Dong, *see* Dhola Post.
- Chen I-fen, *alias* Ivan Chen, Plenipotentiary, appointment of, 193; Convention initiated by, 194, 205n; action disapproved of, 205; on monastic collections, 327.
- Cheswejuma, rebels sheltered by, 61; punishment of, 71.
- Chiang Kai-shek, sought communication through Tibet, 256; overthrow of, 284; protest notes by, 296.
- China (*also* Peking, Chinese People's Government) Tibetan policy of, 150-1; activities Indo-Tibetan frontier, 153; stoppage of trade by, 159; penetrates into Upper Burma and Mishmi country, 167-8; deposes Ivan Chen, 193; repudiates Simla Agreement, 205-6; questions validity of McMahon Line, 207, 235n; North-East Frontier, entry of, 296; occupation of Tibet, 298; accepts *Panch Sheel*, 301; disputes Johnson's line, 304; Macartney-MacDonald line ignored by, 305; cartographic aggressions, 306; displeased at reception of Dalai Lama, 308; intrusions of, 308; claims on maps, 314; protests made by, 315, 318; massive attack by, 319; accepts Colombo proposals with pre-conditions, 323; territorial claims in NEFA, made by, 326ff; on futility of negotiations, 326; aid to insurgents, 341-2; normalisation of relations, overtures made by, 345-6.
- Chief of General Staff, on Chinese advance, 16; —Lohit valley, 196; —Indo-Tibetan boundary, 194-8; —rectification of the Line, 199.
- Chin-Lushai expedition, 92-5; administration, 104; —Conference, 104-5.
- China Pictorial*, cartographic aggressions, 306.
- Chip Chap Valley, Indian withdrawal from, 319.
- Chou En-lai, on Tibetan claims, 284n; Panikkar assured by, 298n; replies on cartographical aggressions, 307; delimitation of boundary line denied by, 307; on anti-Chinese activities of Dalai Lama and his party, 308n; asserts illegality of McMahon Line, 309; reciprocal withdrawal proposed by, 309-10; proposes meeting with Nehru, 311; arrival in New Delhi, 313; cease-fire announced by, 321; rejects Nehru's proposals, 323.
- Chumbi Valley, British control over, 151; withdrawal of troops from, 152-3.
- Clark, Rev., outrages at Mongsemdi, reported by, 83.
- W.S., DC Lakhimpur, on entry of Nagas into plains, 3; expedition against trans-frontier Nagas, represented by, 67,78; on claims over Abor country, 127.
- Clow, Sir Andrew, Governor, on forward move Subansiri Valley 274; —Mills proposals, 274.
- Cole, H.W.G., Superintendent Lushai Hills, advocates extension of control, 140-1.
- Colombo Powers, proposals made by, 322.

- Convention, Lhasa (1904), 151 ; Anglo-Chinese (1906), 152 ; Anglo-Russian (1907), 152 ; Simla (Britain, China and Tibet, 1914), 191 ff.
- Cotton, Sir H.J.S., Chief Commissioner, approves administrative arrangements, Lushai Hills, 109-10 ; Mishmi expedition despatched by, 138 ; opposes extension of political control, 141 ; directs DC Naga Hills, 141, 2.
- Crew, Earl of, Secretary of State, Minto's proposal rejected by, 161 ; approves Hardinge's measures, 170-1, clarifies Grey's misgivings, 173.
- Curzon, Baron (Marquess) of Kedleston, on Mishmi expedition, 138n ;—Russian advance, 151 ;—frontiers, 159n.
- Dalai Lama, enters India, 153 ; assertion of independence by, 191 ; Bells's friendship with, 193 ; on objects of Simla Conference, 208 ; flight of, 307 ; questions as to validity of McMahon Line, 332 ; effects of welcome to, 332.
- Damant, G. H., PO Naga Hills, appointment of, 50 ; his objectives, 50-1 ; visit to Eastern Nagas, proposed by, 52-3 ; murder of, 54.
- Damroh, expedition against, 134-5.
- Davis, A. W., PO Lushai Hills *also* DC Naga Hills, cause of Lushai Chiefs supported by, 108 ; on extension of control, Naga Hills, 140.
- Daukhama, 102.
- Deb Raja, on demarcation of boundary, 114 ; Chinese authority repudiated by, 154 ; mediation of, 155 ; treaty with, 156.
- Delhi Summit, 313.
- Deng Xiaoping, Vice-President, announcement of, 345-6 ; on normalisation of relations, 346n ;—Soviet threat, 347.
- Dennehy, D. H., Chief Secretary Assam, on measures of 'Definite Control', 245.
- Desai Morarji, ex-Prime Minister, on Phizo's intransigence, 343n.
- Dhola Post, Indian occupation, 318 ; Chinese investment, 318 ; retreat of Indian detachment from, 319.
- Dhondup Norbu, APO Sikkim, on Lightfoot's mission, 247 ;—discussions with Kashag, 248.
- Diphu Pass, 185, 196, 315n.
- Dirang dzong, problem of, 249, 257 ; post established at, 276.
- Dorjeiff, Aguan, 191.
- Dorothy Woodman, on British imperial policy, 161 ;—Sino-Pakistani Agreement, 316.
- Drieberg, J. J. S., DC Lakhimpur, on settlement of Dufas, 126-7.
- Dufas, *posa* commuted by, 122 ; raided Amtola, 122 ; blockade of, 123 ; expedition against, 123-4 ; settlement of, 126 ; outrages, 231n ; sub-agency proposed, 271.
- Dundas, W. C. M., PO, Mishmi mission under, 177-8 ; powers of DC vested on, 182 ; tribunal under, 220 ; on Mishmi outrages, 327.
- Durand, Sir Mortimar, Secretary Government of India, attends Chin-Lushai Conference, 104 ; boundary demarcated by, 193.
- Earle, Sir Archdale, on futility of non-intervention, 146-7 ;—strategical importance of Mishmi country, 181 ; trading post in Abor country, stressed by, 181 ; recommends Callaghan's proposals, 185 ; separate charge for Nevill, urged by, 185-6, approves PO's programme, 187 ; Nevill's report not forwarded by, 190.
- Eastern Bengal and Assam, Chinese arrival at Rima reported by, 157 ; data on strategic frontier called for, 160 ; directives to Williamson, 164.
- Eastern Lushais, quarrel with western chiefs, 86-7 ; uprisings of, 100-1 ; operations against, 101-2 ; reduction of, 102-3.
- Edgar, J. W., DC, Cachar *later* Chief Secretary Government of Bengal, mission to Lushai country, 28 ; delimits Sukpilal's territory, 29 ; on Lushai raids, 30-1 ; policy towards Lushais, suggested by, 32,

- 38; Civil Officer Left Column, appointment of, 35; on frontier outposts, 43-4; proposes concerted action against Shendus, 89.
- Elgin, Earl of, recommends punishment of Abors, 137; on Ardagh Line, 304-5; accepts Macartney's proposal, 305.
- Elliot, Sir Charles, problems and difficulties, 70-1, policy towards trans-frontier Nagas, 72ff; change in policy advocated, 75; proposes Military promenade, 76; measures suggested by, 78; pleads cautious policy towards Abors, 131.
- Excluded Areas*, 255.
- Fitzpatrick, Denis, Chief Commissioner, proposes incorporation of Ao country, 83-4; on expedition against Duflas, 125-6;—extension of political control, 141.
- Foreign Department (*also* Department of External Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs), on expedition against Lushais, 33;—roads and posts, 44, 47-9; forward policy, directives against, 142; enquires as to extension of control, 144; Abor policy, opposition to Whitehall, 180; on rectification of boundary, 199; extension of control, reluctance of, 222; approval, 223; on implementation of McMahon's recommendations, 228;—expedition against Mishmis, 227-8n; disapproves publication of Trade Regulations (1914), 234; measures against Chinese designs, 241-2; on Tibetan interpretation of Simla Conventions, 243; directives to Gould, 243; suggests occupation of 'focal points', 258; stabilisation of NEFA, measures proposed by, 260; on consolidation of Subansiri areas, 272; Tibetan troops at Tawang, reactions of, 276; policy towards Tawang, defended by, 280; extension of administrative control, 286-7; Chinese occupation of Tibet, regretted by, 296; protest notes to China 306; on Sino-Pakistani Agreement, 316.
- Foreign Missionary, role in insurgency in hills, 335-6.
- Friend of Indias*, on attitude of Nagas, 14.
- Fuller, Sir Bampfylde, Lieutenant Governor EBA, change in policy advocated by, 142; on increase in outrages, 142-3; fresh areas of control urged by, 143; on royalty levied by Abors, 139.
- Gaidiliu, activities of, 225ff; operations against, 226; life sentence on, 226; continuance of movement, 227.
- Galawan valley, maintenance of, 318; withdrawal from, 319.
- Galbraith, J. K., on military aid, 320n.
- Gandhi, Srimati Indira, Prime Minister, on normalisation of relations, 346, 349.
- Ghosh, Sudhir, MP, revelation of, 320; presence of American aircraft carrier, disclosed by, 321.
- Godfrey, R. W., APO, visits Siang valley, 265.
- Godwin-Austen, H. H., Naga-Manipur boundary surveyed by, 7; of Dufla country, 124.
- Gould (later Sir) Basil, PO Sikkim, re-affirmation of McMahon Line, proposed action by, 241; mission to Lhasa, 243-3; on Tawang, 243-4; on Lightfoot's mission, 247; Tibetan views on Convention, explained by, 248; on complications in McMahon areas, 257; Tibetan resolution, comments and recommendations, 282; Tibetan Foreign Bureau assured by, 293.
- Government of India (*also* Governor-General in Council), concurs extension of Act 33, 10; on jurisdiction over tea-planters, 10;—removal of headquarters, Naga Hills, 13, 16; extension of protectorate, incurred displeasures of, 18; measures against Naga raids, 20; forward policy opposed by, 24; approves administrative arrangements, 25; policy towards Nagas, 26; expedition against Lushais resolved by, 34-5; sanctions post at Ratan Poa's village, 40; on establishment of marts and roads, 41; turns down Richard

- Temple's scheme, 42 ; on defence of Tipperah, 45 ; —advanced post in Laljeeka's village, 47 ; forward policy Naga Hills approved by, 68-9 ; policy towards trans-frontiers Nagas modified, 81 ; approves incorporation of Ao country, 84 ; sanctions expedition against Lushai raiders, 91 ; —against Dufflas, 123 ; approves Dafla settlement, 127 ; rights in Abor territory, doubted by, 128 ; approves Bayley's recommendations, 180 ; on amalgamation of North and South Lushai Hills, 190 ; decides Light-foot's, Tawang exploration, 246 ; Reid's proposal unacceptable to, 250 ; assertion of rights over Tawang, reluctance of, 252-3 ; sanctions posts at Karko and Riga, 266 ; defines duties of PO in McMahon areas, 266 ; on Tibetan claims, 284.
- Graham, Major, J.M., DC, demarcation of boundary by, 115-6 ; opposes grants to Akas, 119 ; on Duffla raids, 122-3 ; Duffla expedition proposed by, 123 ; collision with Abors anticipated by, 127.
- Gregorson, Dr. J.D., murder of, 188.
- Grey, Wiillam, Lieutenant Governor, extension of Act 33 to Assam, proposed by, 9.
- Sir Edward, misgivings on Hardinge's proposal, 172.
- Gupta, K. K., on misrepresentation of facts, 330n ; —boundary line in official maps, 334n.
- Haig, D., Chief of General Staff, on Indo-Chinese border, 158-9.
- Haimendorf, C. V. F., on improvement in communication, 261 ; reconnaissance of, 269-71 ; —Tibetan influence, 271.
- Hankey, H., Officiating Commissioner, on policy towards Lushais, 39.
- Hardinge, Baron of Penshurst, on frontier beyond *Outer Line*, 162 ; opposes active policy, 163 ; radical change in policy, 169 ; expedition against Abors proposed by, 169-70 ; Secretary of State's queries replied by, 171 ; on rectification of boundary line, 199 ; —Indo-Chinese frontier, 223.
- Hardcastle, Captain, recovers Chinese passports, 168n ; accompanies Mishmi mission, 178.
- Hare, Sir Lancelot, Lieutenant Governor, reiterates policy of predecessor, 144 ; extension of political control, argued by, 145 ; on rights over Abors, 148-9 ; sought prevention of Chinese interference, 157 ; on Minto's line of frontier, 160 ; proposes extension of protectorate over Mishmis, 161 ; expedition against Abors, urged by, 169.
- Haughton, Colonel, Commissioner Coch Behar, 114.
- Herschell, W. S., Commissioner Coch Behar, on commercial importance of Bhutan, 116.
- Hertz, W. F., DC Myitkyina, 167.
- Himmatsinghji-Committee, appointment of, 286 ; acceptance of recommendations, 287.
- Hinde, H. M., on Damant's objectives, 53 ; arrival of, 56n.
- Hindl Chini bhai bhai*, see Sino-Indian relations.
- Hogg, Sir Gilbert, Governor, recommendations made by, 249-50.
- Holcombe, Assistant Commissioner, survey and murder of, 14.
- Hopkinson, Henry, Commissioner, on southern boundary of Assam, 3 ; —encroachment of Naga country, 4 ; —district jurisdiction, 4 ; settlement of boundary, opposed by, 6 ; on Ladoigarh, 6n.
- Howlongs, feelings of, 31 ; raids, 32 ; expedition against, 35 ; loyalty assured by, 99.
- Howseata, reconnaissance partly attacked by, 88 ; flying column against, 99.
- Hutchinson, Captain, R. H. Sneyd, Darjow Klang placed under, 94 ; operation against Jacopa, 100.
- Hua Guofeng, Prime Minister, 346.
- Huang Hua, Foreign Minister, talks with Indira Gandhi, 346 ; arrival in Delhi, 346 ; optimistic note of, 346.

- Hydari, Sir Akbar, Governor, agreement with NNC, 336; Phizo's comments on, 337n.
- Indian Office, *see* Secretary of State.
- Indian Security Force, operations in Naga Hills, 338;—Mizoram, 340.
- Indo-Tibetan boundary, 194, 207.
- Inner Line*, objects of, 10; policy outside 117-8; advance beyond, 329.
- Insurgency, Naga Hills, 337-8; Mizoram, 339-41.
- Intelligence Bureau, Chinese occupation of Tibet, effects analysed by, 285; measures recommended, 286; check-posts erected by, 303; on reciprocal withdrawal, 311n;—construction of Sinkiang—Tibetan highway, measures proposed by, 330.
- International Court of Justice, on status of Tibet, 210; proposal to refer boundary question to, 320; on backward areas 331.
- Inter-tribal feuds, Nagas, 17; tribes beyond Manipur, 19; effects of, 21.
- Jacopa (Zakapa), evades supply of labour, 99; Murray's occupation and destruction of village, 100.
- Jadonang, movement of, 224; apprehension of, 224-5; report on, 225; capital punishment on, 225.
- Jang, fall of, 319.
- Johnson, W. H., Ladak boundary defined by, 304.
- Johnstone, James, Colonel, on blood-feuds, 17; protectorates extended by, 18, 21; on headquarters, Naga Hills, 26;—fate of besieged, 58; preparation made by, 58.
- Jungpen*, duties of, 239-40, 327; Lightfoot's recommendations on, 249; on collections made by, 277; Ivan Chen on, 327.
- Angdu-Forung, murder of, 116.
- Deb, revolt of, 116.
- Jigme Namgay, authority established of, 116.
- Timbo, 117.
- Kai-ee-sha, punishment of, 137.
- Kairuma, murders Pakuma Rani, 90; emissaries to, 101; operation against and submission of, 103.
- Kapachors, tribe, 118; aggression of, 119-20.
- Kashag, communication through Tibet refused by, 210; discusses problem of Tawang, 248.
- Kaul, B. M., Chief General Staff, difficulties explained by, 317; on opposition leaders, 317 n;—out-posts, 318.
- Kavics, L. J., on check-posts in border areas, 303n.
- Kebang*, 174.
- Kedhage, appeals for aid, 341.
- Keary, Lieutenant-General Henry, 219.
- Keatinge, R. H., Colonel, Chief Commissioner, proposes stoppage of surveys, 15; on shifting of headquarters, Naga Hills, 16;—extension of protectorate, 18; advocates forward policy, 22; Richard Temple's administrative scheme opposed by, 42; desires reconnaissance of Abor country, 127-8.
- Keane, Sir Micheal, Governor, permanent action in Tawang stressed by, 246.
- Kennedy, J. F., President, on India's settlement with China, 348 n.
- Kerwood, G. C., SDO Lakhimpur, Hill Miri country surveyed by, 176-7; visits Apa Tanis, 177.
- Khalkom (Kalkhama), Aijal and Changsil besieged by, 97; deportation of, 98.
- Khampas, rebellion of, 307.
- Khat*, 7-8.
- Khel*, Chetonomah, 52, 54, 61.
- Meremah, 54; deportation of, 63n.
- Khera, S. S., Defence Secretary, an India's attitude towards Chinese activities, 306n.
- Khinzemane, intrusion of, 308; fall of, 319.
- Khurnak Fort, 306.

- Kingdon-Ward, F., entry into Tawang by, 236-7; revelation of, 236; Batty on, 237.
- Kohima, headquarters Naga Hills, 50, 71; difficulties of transport and supplies to, 67; vulnerability and siege of, 55-7; garrison relieved, 58; restoration of peace, 73.
- Konka Pass, incident at, 309.
- Kripalani, Acharjya J. B., MP, occupation of Tibet resented by, 299; on Nehru's counter-proposal, 312;—invitation of Chou En-lai, 313.
- Kukis (Thado), rebellion of, 217-8, operation against, 219-10; trial of rebels and administrative measures, 220.
- Kunzru, H. N., MP, 299.
- Kuominatang, overthrowal of, 284.
- Ladak, security measures ruled out, 303; demarcation of boundary, 304; unilateral delimitation, 304; Nehru on, 330; formidable obstacle in normalisation of relations, 333-4n.
- Ladoigarh, operation of planters beyond, 2; civil and criminal jurisdiction as far as, 4; not boundary but a line of defence, 6.
- Lakihdhar, *Mouzadar*, settlement with Akas effected by, 119; mission under, 120; death of, 121.
- Lalburah, outrages by, 32; expedition against, 35; surrender and punishment, 37-8; uprising and flight of, 101-2.
- Laldenga, memorial of, insurgency under, 340; Chinese aid received by, 341; agreement with, 343-4; somersault and renewal of negotiation with, 344.
- Laljeeka, post at, 47.
- Lalthuama, 102.
- Lamb, Alastair, on rectification of boundary, 199;—Chinese designs, 205.
- Major, DC Kamrup, 114.
- Land-holder's Association, memorial of, 30.
- Landsdowne, Marquess of, Karakoram boundary unopposed by, 304.
- Lawrence, Sir John, on compensation to Bhutan, 114.
- Lengkhram, quarrel with Sukpial, 86;—Thenglena, 87; attacks British party, 101.
- Lewin, T.H., DC Chittagong Hills Tracts, advocates bolder policy, 39-40;—closer relations with Sylos, 84; on Lushai Chiefs, 107.
- Liengpunga (Lianphunga), 87; Aijil besieged by, 97; deportation of, 98.
- Lien-yu, Amban, Tibetan Government assumed by, 153.
- Lieutenant Governor (*also* Government of Bengal), opposes restriction of tea-grants, 1; survey beyond revenue districts ordered by, 11; on advance posts and roads, 44;—posts recommended by Roberts, 46; Tipperah boundary, 48;—Lushai feuds, 85;—protection of friendly chiefs, 86;—demarcation of Assam-Bhutan boundary, 114-5; grants to Akas sanctioned by, 119.
- Lightfoot, G.S., PO Balipara, on Tawang, 239-40; mission to Tawang, 247-8; Report on Tawang, 249.
- Linlithgow, Marquess of, Twynum's views unacceptable to, 252.
- Lochia-lun, 296.
- Longju, Chinese intrusion of, 308; fall of, 319.
- Ludlow, F., APO Sikkim, on affairs of Tawang, 275.
- Lungleh, post established at, 91; attack on, 340.
- Lushais, raids, 29; expedition against, 35; renewal of feuds, 85; uprisings, 97; house-tax and demand of labour on, 98-9; chieftains, 106-7; administrative difficulties in territory of, 107.
- Hills, North, district formed, 95; administrative measures, 96; aggressions and punishment of chiefs, 97-8.
- South, district under Government of Bengal, 98; administrative measures, 98-9; amalgamation, 109-10.



- Lyll, D. R., Commissioner Chittagong division, expedition against offending tribes, urged by, 98, constitution of South Lushai Hills proposed, 98 ; on communication with Burma, 99.
- Lytton, Earl of, pleads forward policy, 24-5 ; on Damant's tour, 53n :—murder of Damant, 55.
- Macartney, George, on Aksai Chin, 304.
- MacDonald, Claude, Minister Peking, 304.
- Macartney line, Chinese silence over, 305 ; Indian officials on, 330 ; van Eekelon, 331n ; A., Rumbold, 331n.
- Macgregor, Captain, operation against Mozomahs, 21—Kenomah. 61 ; Nagas ambuscaded party under, 60.
- Ma Chi-fu, 154.
- Manchu dynasty, collapse of, 191.
- Macintyre, D., Commandant FP, expedition against Mezamis, 81 ;—Ao villages, 82-3.
- Mackenzie, A., advocates forward policy, 141.
- MacNabb, PO Haka, on unification Chin-Lushai hills, 105.
- Macquiod, Brig-General C. E., 219.
- Maharaja *see* Deb Raja.
- Mainprice, F. P., APO, occupation and re-occupation of Walong, 262-3.
- Manipur Raja, allegation against Nagas, made by, 20 ; indifference of, 31 ; expeditionary force to be aided by, 35.
- Mankekar, D. R., refers Nehru's circular, 302.
- Mao Tse-tung, President, replaces Chiang Kai-shek, 289 ; on Sino-Indian cooperation, 297.
- Marris, Sir William, Governor, on extension of political control, 221-2.
- Masani, M. R., MP, resentment of, 299 ; on protection of Indian territory, 316.
- Maxwell, Captain R. M., negotiations with Akas, 122 ; commanded expeditionary force, 134.
- Mayo, Earl of, on Lushai raids, 34.
- McCabe, R. B., DC Naga Hills, expedition against Hatigorias, 74 ; measures recommended, 79 ; trans-Dikhow areas, extension of protectorate suggested by, 83 ; on payment of tribute, 96 ; relieves Aijal and Changsil, 98 ; appointed PO, North Lushai Hills, 100 ; reduces Eastern Lushais, 101, requisition of labour and house-tax by, 101.
- McMahon, Sir Arthur Henry, sketch of, 193 ; on Indo-Tibetan boundary, 194 ;—rectification, 199 ; object of bilateral conference explained by, 204 ; ultimatum to China, 205 ; on objects of the Simla Conference, 208 ; Memorandum of, 211ff. policy towards NEFA tribes, 212 ; departure of, 223.
- Line, boundary agreement with Tibet, 206 ; observations on, 207ff ; occupation of 'focal points' south of, 258 ; Tibetan influence, decline of, 278 ; administrative control, decision to extend up to, 286 ; Indian out-posts beyond, 308 ; *Official's Report* on, 314 ; observations, 328-9.
- McWilliam, O. G. R., DC Lakhimpur, 130.
- Medhi, Bishnuram, on role of foreign missionaries, 335n.
- Raja, Aka Chief, claims made by, 119 ; grant refused to, 119 ; Lakhidhar's mission suspected by, 120 ; operation against, 121 ; grievances of, 121-2.
- Mehta, Ashok, MP, 316.
- Menon, K. P. S., Ambassador, on 're-discovery' of McMahon Line, 236 ;—'definite action', 245 ;—India's lapses, 332-3.
- Mezephemah, protectorate over, 18, 21.
- Migyitun, Chinese intrusion of 38.

- Mills, J. P., Secretary later Adviser Governor of Assam, on tribal names, 16n ; Nagas under political control, policy towards, 223 ; unrest among Kabuis, 225ff ;—Tibetan influence, 256, 265 ; Adviser Tribal Affairs, appointment of, 261 ; problems and difficulties, 261-2 ; posts in Siang Valley, proposed by, 265 ; on NEFA tribes, 270n ; operations in Subansiri areas, posts proposed by, 271-2 ; Eastern Duffla and Apa Tani areas, toured by, 272ff ; reversal of policy advocated, 274 ; effective control over McMahon areas, suggestions made by, 278 ff ; on educational needs of NEFA, 279-80.
- Michell, John, PO Naga Hills, on dispersal policy, 63-4 ;—demand of grain and money, 64 ; location of troops at headquarters, opposed by, 70 ; Cheswejuma punished by, 71.
- Minto, Earl of, on forward policy, 145-6 ; on authority over Abors, 149 ;—extension of Chinese influence 155 ; supports Bhutan, 155-6 ; policy towards Mishmis and others, 158 ; despatch on external boundary, 160.
- Miri Mission, 176-7.
- or Subansiri Section, 198-9.
- Mishmis, blockade of, 137 ; expedition against Bebejia, 137-8 ; stoppage of trade by Chinese, 159 ; proposed extension of protectorate over, 161 ; policy towards, 170 ; mission under Dundas, 177-8 ; survey and exploration, country of, 181 ; outrages, 228, 327.
- Mizo National Front (MNF), insurgency of, 339 ff.
- Union, activities of, 339 ; on secession, 340-1.
- Mizoram, 339.
- Molesworth, Lieutenant, directives to, 121 ; Mishmi expedition under, 138.
- Monbas. (Monpas). habitat of, 18 ; condition stated by Nevill, 189 ;—Lightfoot, 249 ;—Gilbert Hogg, 249, Whitehall on, 253 ; post at Dirang dzong, reactions of, 277 ; house-tax paid by, 278.
- Montagu, E. S., Secretary of State, 223.
- Morley, Sir John, Secretary of State, non-intervention adhered to by, 146 ; on dangers of 'active control', 150.
- Morshead, Captain H. T., survey of, 187.
- Mozung-jami, attacks Mongsem-di, 83 ; destruction of, 84.
- Mullik, B. N., on Chinese occupation of Tibet, 284-5 ; military intervention, 300 ;—Chinese aid to tribal insurgency, 344 ; indifference of Ministry, deplored by, 330n.
- Muivah, T. G., Chinese mission, 341 ; training of Nagas under, 342.
- Murray, C. S., Deputy Commissioner Police, 88 ; commands 'Northern Column', appointed APO South Lushai Hills, 98 ; indiscreet acts of, 99 ; disciplinary measures on, 100.
- Naga : Angamis, *see* Khonomah, Mozomah and Jotsomah.
- Aos (*also* Hatigorias), 51 ; outrages and punishment of, 74-5 ; extension of control proposed, 83 ; incorporation of, 84.
- Banferas, Holcombe killed by, 14 ; outrages, 74.
- Borduarias, feud with Namsangias, 75.
- Borlongae, outrage on Kamsingias, 11.
- Jotsomah, joins Khonomahs, 54 ; surrender of, 51-2.
- Khonomahs, feuds and outrages, 17, 19-20, 52 ; Damant killed by, 54 ; siege of Kohima by, 55-8 ; fall of, 59 ; attack Nichuguard and Baldhan tea-estate, 60 ; surrender and retribution on, 62 ff.
- Lhotas, Butler destroys village of, 151 ; attack on, 74 ; proposed extension of control over, 83.
- Mozomahs, outrages, 19 ; operation against, 20-1 ; volunteered services, 58.
- Namsangia, dispute with Minto, 10 ; feud with Borduarias, 75.

- Trans-Doyang, outrages, 81, expedition against, 83 ff.
- Trans-Dikhow, outrages, 81 ff; representations made by, 83.
- Trans-forntier, 217, 221.
- Club, 336.
- Nagaland, birth of, 338.
- Tuensang Area, 338.
- Naga National Council (NNC) on right of self-determination, 337.
- People's Convention (NPC), overtures for peaceful settlement, 338.
- Nation, Brigadier General, arrival of, 58, assault on Khonomah, made by, 59; difficulties of, 59; preparations for final attack, 62.
- Needham, J. F., APO, responsibilities of, 131, surveys and explorations of, 131-2; complaint against, 133; PO expeditionary force, 134; marches against Damroh, 135; on massacre at Bordak, 136.
- Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal, Prime Minister, on Tibetan claims, 218n; —recommendation of Himmat-singhji-Committee, 288; —Sino-Indian friendship, 296 ff; shocked at Chinese occupation of Tibet, 299; on McMahon boundary, 299; —Sino-Indian Agreement, 301; —Chinese menace, 302; told Chou En-lai of Chinese cartographical aggression, 306-7; on outposts beyond McMahon Line, 308; —validity of McMahon Line, 309; rejects reciprocal withdrawal and suggests alternatives, 310-1; replies queries on McMahon Line, 311; on defence preparedness, 312; invites Chou En-lai, 313; on barter deal, 314; dread of war by, 317; decides to meet Chinese in their own game, 318-9; bids farewell to Assam, 320; appeals for military aid, 320; cease-fire proposal rejected by, 322-3; condition for renewal of talks, 323; death of, 325; on delimitation of Ladak, 330; misrepresentation of facts to, 330n; on rôle of outside agents in Naga politics, 335n; —Naga demand for independence, 337.
- Neville, captain, G. H., PO Balipara, surveys Dibong Valley, 173; accompanies Miri Mission, 176; Subansiri-Siyom areas placed under, 183; visited territory of Akas, Mijis and Monbas, 187-8; on Tawang Monastery, 188-9; recommendations made by, 189-90; on strategic importance of Tawang, 223, 236.
- Neville Maxwell, on Simla Convention, 208; —'barter deal', 314.
- Nichuguard, attack on, 60.
- Nihal Singh, S., on Chinese aid to insurgents, 347.
- Nibang (Ninu), 14.
- Northbrook, Earl of, agrees demarcation of Sibsagar—Naga Hills boundary, 13; extension of protectorate approved by, 21; advocates cautious policy, 24.
- North-East Frontier, administrative arrangements, 178-9, 182-3.
- Nuthall, Brigadier, burnt Banfera village, 15; assault on Khonomah, 59; wounded in operations, 59.
- Observer*, on Lushai raids, 30; —punishment of Lushai chiefs, 38.
- Officials Reports*, 313-5.
- Outer Line*, definition of, 118; extension, Minto, 160; —Hardinge, 171; coincides with international boundary, 329.
- Tibet*, 194.
- Panch Sheel*, see Sino-Indian relations.
- Pangti, party under Butler ambuscaded at, 16.
- Pangong Lake area, Chinese intrusion of, 308; Indian withdrawal from, 319.
- Panikkar, K. M., Ambassador, representation made by, 297; Memorandum of, 298; discussion with Chou En-lai, 300-1; persuades Nehru, 316; Tibetan policy of, 301n.
- Partially Excluded Areas*, 55.
- Patel, Sardar Ballabhbai, Deputy Prime Minister, approves IB's proposal, 286; letter to Nehru by, *App—B*.

- People's Liberation Army, task of, 284 ; integration of Tibetan army, 298 ; crossed Aksai Chin, 305.
- Peel, Sir Robert, Political Secretary, 90, on Lightfoot's recommendations, 253-3 ;—forward move, 258-9.
- Pherimah, protectorate over, 21.
- Phizo, A. Z., foreign influence on, 336n ; on clause 9 of the Agreement, 337 ; declares independence of Nagaland, 337 ; cult of violence by, 337 ; faith in Christianity of, 342n ; remains unreconciled, 343.
- Plowden, C. W. C., commandant FP, extension of political control, measures suggested by, 79.
- Porteous, A., DC Naga Hills, operation against trans-Doyang Nagas, 81ff.
- Power, A. W. B., PA Tipperah, survey under, 45 ; on Tipperah Raja, 45n ;—boundary line, 47-8 ; reconciliation of Sylos and Howlongs, attempted by, 85 ; assures Sylos police protection, 85-6.
- Quinton, Mr J. W., Chief Commissioner, separate charge in Lushai Hills, proposed by, 95.
- Ranga, N. C., 299.
- Ratan Poa, adhesion of, 36-7 ; post erected for protection of, 40-1 ; option to, 49.
- Red Line *see* McMahon Line.
- Reid, Sir R. N., Governor, Tawang expedition proposed by, 250 ; North-East Frontier, strategical importance stressed by, 255.
- Ridgeway, Lieutenant, assault on Khonomah, 59
- Roberts, Colonel, posts proposed by, 46 ; unacceptable to government, 47.
- Ropuilieni, 102 ; intrigues and deportation of, 102.
- Richardson, Hugh, E., Representative Lhasa, retention of, 283 ; on Tibetan territorial demands, 284 ; exclusion of Chinese from Tibetan affairs, desired by, 297 ; on Sino-Indian Agreement, 332.
- Richard Temple, Sir, Lieutenant Governor, new administrative unit proposed by, 41.
- Sailo, Brigadier, T., 344.
- Saipuiya, intimation given by, 88.
- Shen Pao*, Chinese Atlas, 241-2.
- Sat Raja*, 118 ; officials views on, 326 ; independent status of, 327.
- Sastri, Lal Bahadur, Prime Minister, denial of, 320n.
- Secretary of State, on outrages of Nagas, 20 ; approves forward policy, 25, 27 ; on consolidation of Chin-Lushai territories, 104 ;—strengthening Government of Bhutan, 113 ;—assertion of rights over Abors, 128 ;—defensive measures, 130 ;—extension of political control over trans-frontier Nagas and Abors of neutral zone, 146 ; 150 and 222 ;—post in Abor country, 180 ;—implementation of McMahon recommendations, 229 ; reluctance on publication of Simla Convention, 234 ; on Caroe's proposals, 239 ;—*Shen Pao* and Gould's Mission, 242 ;—Lightfoot's recommendations, 250 ; disapproves measures in NEFA, 257 ; forward policy recommended by, 260 ; on 'freezing out' of Tibetans, 266 ; approves Macartney's proposal, 305.
- SeLa, Tibetan influence, decline of, 278 ; visited by Mills, 277 ; Chinese attack on, 319.
- Shakespeare, Major J., accompanies reconnaissance party, 88 ; flying column under, 94 ; post at Darjow Klang, erected by, 94 ; APO South Lushai Hills, appointment of, 98 ; offensive against Eastern Lushais and Howlongs, 101-2 ; on submission of the Lushais, 102 ;—house-tax, 102n ;—Lushai chieftainship, 106, 108-9.
- Shatra Lonchen, dialogues with Bell, 200 ; exchange of notes, 203n, *App-C* ; on bilateral agreement, 204-5 ; Tibetan government displeased with, 205 ; on status of Tawang, 327.
- Shendus, 88, 91.

- Sheriff Major, British representative Lhasa, 280.
- Shillong Accord, 343.
- Siang Valley, exclusion of Tibetan influence in, 265.
- Simla Convention (Conference), 191 ff.
- Simon, Sir John, 336.
- Singha, Purandar, ex-rajā, grants made by, 1; sovereign rights of, 7; extent of territory under, 8.
- Sinkiang-Tibet Highway, construction of, 306; Khera on, 306n. MEF on, 330; significance of, 331.
- Sino-Japanese War, on NEFA, 255.
- Indian relations, 296-7, highest pitch, 301; cooled off, 306; death-knell of, 309; towards normalisation, 345 ff.
- Skinner, G. I., marches against Chengri-Valley raiders, 93-4; selects Aijal permanent post, 94.
- Spanggur, check post at, 308.
- Stoner, Major, C. R., accompanies Mills, 272; on agricultural and commercial needs of Apa Tanis, 273; appointment of, 279.
- Stafford, Brig.-General, operation against Dufflas, 123.
- Stewart, J. F., reconnaissance party under, 187; murder of, 88, 91.
- Subansiri Valley, topography, 267-8; reconnaissance of, 269-71; proposals on, 274.
- Sukhai, Kughato, Ato Kilonser, Chinese aid appealed by, 341.
- Sukpial, accepts *sunnud* on boundary, 29; instruction to, 85-6; death, 86; descendants of, 86-7.
- Survey of, south Ladoigarh, 11; Naga-Manipur, 13; Cachar-Chittagong, 45; Abor country, 174-6; Siyom Valley, 183; Western Dihong, 187.
- Surveyer General, publication of map *Highlands of Tibet*, etc.; 244.
- Swamy, Subramaniam, mission to Beijing, 347.
- Swu Isac, 242.
- Sylos, raids 32; submission of, 37; leniency to, 38; protection of, 85.
- Talok Pass *see* Diphu Pass.
- Tarang, feud with Hill Dufflas, 124; murder of, 124 ff.
- Tawang (Mon-yul) 118; Chief of General Staff on, 186; Nevill's tour programme and report on, 188-90; rectification of boundary, 199; Kingdon-Ward on, 236-7; Lightfoot's report, 239-40; Kashag's attitude on, 242-3; Lightfoot's exploratory mission, 246-9; recommendations unacceptable, 250; Twynum's new approach, 251-2; Secretary of State on, 260; Tibetan order on 276; counter measures by Mills, 277-9; Tibetan influence on decline, 278; Tibetan resolution on, 280.
- Tea-box industry, growth of, 148n.
- Tea planters, friction with Nagas, 3ff; attack on, 29-30; on loss and demoralization of labourers, 92.
- Tezpur, confusion in, 319; Chinese advance towards, 320; evacuation of, 320; Pakistani agents, their activities near, 320.
- Thagi Raja, death of, 119; liege-lord not referred by, 326n; treaty with, 329.
- Thag La, 318.
- Themokedimah, slaughter of women and children at, 20.
- Thinoselie, M. K., 341-2.
- 'Thorat Line', 317.
- 'Three-point' formula, 321-2.
- Tibetan Foreign Bureau, on boundary question, 282; replies to; 283, Tibetan territory demanded by, 284.
- government, influence of Amban on, 151; Chao Erh-feng overran, 153; expulsion of Chinese troops from 191, Simla Conference, objectives of, 193; Indo-Tibetan boundary, agreed by, 203; on Lonchen Shatra, 205n; treaty-making powers, 209-10; status of, 210;—Kingdon-Ward, 237; protests Lightfoot's arrival at Tawang, 247; communication to Assam refused by, 256; encroachments of, 276; activities south of the

- Line resented by, 280 ; resolution on Tawang, 281 ; British assurance to ; 283 ; territorial claims made by, 284 ; extension of control over Tawang opposed by, 286, Chinese occupation of, 299.
- Times*, 'India number, 1937', frontier in, 235 ; Survey of India map forwarded to, 245.
- Trade blocks, assurance of Abors to remove, 74 ; final removal of, 256.
- Regulations ; 1908, 152 ;—1914, 211 ; relinquishment of, 301.
- Treaty, Tibet-Mongolia (1912), 191 ; Indo-Bhutanese (1949), 302 ; Indo-Nepalese (1950), 302 ; India-Sikkim (1950), 302 ; Amritsar (1846), 303.
- Tregear, Colonel, F. V. W., operation against Lushais, 91 ;—Chengri Valley raiders, 92 ; Darjow Klang erected by, 94.
- Tungno, Miju chief, Chinese orders to, 157 ; declares British subject, 157.
- Vonolel, Manipur raided by, 29 ; death of, 36.
- Wai-chiao-pu, memorandum to, 192 ; on objects of tripartite conference, 208 ;—deputation of Ivan Chen, 210.
- Walong, Chinese post at, 157 ; Archdale Earle and Callaghan on, 181, 184-5 ; occupation and re-occupation, 263-4 ; Indian evacuation of, 319.
- Walton, J. C., Secretary Political Department IO, on Caroe's proposal, 237-8.
- Ward, Sir W. E., Chief Commissioner, disapproval and subsequent support of McCabe's proposal, 79-80 ; attends Chin-Lushai Conference, 105 ; on operation against Abors, 133-4,—Damroh, 136 ; forward policy opposed by, 141.
- Weightmann, H., Secretary EAD, on change of policy in Subansiri areas, 275.
- Western Sector, *Official's Report* on, 314.
- White, James, Claudious, PO Sikkim, revision of treaty proposed by, 155.
- Williamson, Captain, IGP, 21 ; Khonomah operations started by, 59 ; marches against Cheswejuma, 61 ; subdues Merimah and Suchemah, 61.
- Noel, APO, on northern boundary, 118 ;—Tibetan Trade, 154-5 ; visits Lohit Valley, 164ff ; poll-tax on Abors, suggested by, 166 ; murder of, 168-9.
- Winchester, tea-planter, murder of, 29.
- Mary, capture of, 35 ; release, 37.
- Woodthorpe, R. G., surveys under, 14 ff.
- World War I, on Nevill's report, 190 ;—Nagas, 217 ;—implementation of McMahon recommendations, 228 ff.
- II, on NEFA, 255-6 ;—Twynum's proposals, 252 ; Chinese advance, 257 ff.
- Yachumi, punishment on, 141 ; effects of, 142.
- Younghusband, Colonel, mission of, 151.
- Yuan Shi-kai, President China, restores Dalai Lama's titles, 191 ; decrees of, 191.
- Zarok (Zahrawka) raided Chengri Valley, 90 ; deposition of, 96.
- Zayul, Chinese claims on, 327-8 ; Ivan Chen on, 328.

## ERRATA

On page	71	line	9	read	Cheswejuma	for	Cheswajuma
„ „	88	„	5	„	Howseata	„	Houseata
„ „	94	„	3, 6	„	Liengpunga	„	Liengunga
„ „	144	„	24	„	of Eastern Bengal and Assam	„	of Bengal
„ „	176	„	2	„	Macintyre	„	Mcintyre
„ „	183	„	15	„	headwaters	„	headwarters
„ „	184	„	10	„	Promenade	„	promenade
„ „	„	„	11	„	Valley	„	Velley
„ „	193	„	3	„	with Lonchen Shatra,	„	with
„ „	233	„	7	„	north and east	„	North and East
„ „	264	„	23	„	re-occupation	„	occupation
„ „	298	„	20	„	People's	„	People,
„ „	312	„	28	„	frontier	„	frontiey
„ „	324	„	map	„	Tsogatsalu	„	TSOGSTALU
„ „	326	„	18	„	impression	„	impressive
„ „	335	„	35	„	<i>Alemchiba</i>	„	<i>Alamchiba</i>
„ „	338	„	34	„	<i>Ibid.</i> ,	„	<i>Ibid</i> , p 190 ; <i>Ibid.</i> ,

In addition, Tawang has been mis-spelt as Towang in some pages which is deeply regretted—*Publisher*