

AKSAICHIN  
AND  
SINO-INDIAN CONFLICT

JOHN LALL

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To

MAJOR SHAITAN SINGH,  
Param Vir Chakra (Posthumous),

and his gallant Company of the Kumaon Regiment,  
who gave their lives on 18 November 1962 when attacked  
in overwhelming strength on the heights of Rezang La.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Those who have assisted me in various ways in the research, writing and preparation of this book are too numerous to be mentioned individually. I hope I shall not be taken to be lacking in gratitude if I express it in general terms to the Director and staff of the India Office Library and Records and the Public Records Office in London where much of the basic research was done in 1984 and again in 1985. The pre-1914 records are still available in the National Archives of India in Delhi. The Director and staff were unfailingly helpful; and I should particularly like to recall the assistance of one who is known to all simply as Panditji. The Indian Council for Historical Research provided me with a senior fellowship for two years.

The views presented are, throughout, my own, but I recall with profound gratitude the prolonged discussions I had with Lt.-General J. S. Dhillon, who officiated as Chief of General Staff, Major General D. K. Palit and Major General Niranjana Prasad, as well as numerous others, some of whose names appear in the book itself. Although I was in the Ministry of Defence during the critical years 1958 to 1963, I did not ask to see the various papers with which I was associated, knowing that they would not be available. To Ambassador Rikhi Jaipal who read every word my debt is immeasurable. Mr. A. P. Venkateswaran read most of it, with, for me, highly stimulating results. General Palit, who was Director of Military Operations most of the time, pulled me up on details as generals do. The account of the war would have been difficult to get together but for his help. Professor Galbraith, who was US Ambassador during the war, urged me to cover this episode in the first place.

My publishers responded heroically to my tendency to panic. I can only hope that, between us, we have achieved a reasonably presentable volume.



## PREFACE

In one way or other the Himalayas have been an obsession with me all my life, the form changing with occupation and the passing years. An enthusiastic trekker to start with, I was fortunate to be asked to become the first Dewan of Sikkim in pre-integration days from 1949 to 1954. Service in the Defence Ministry from 1958 to the end of 1963 spanned the souring of relations with China, the war of 1962 and the subsequent effort to learn lessons and acquire a little more of the will and capacity to wage war, should it ever become necessary.

It was a war which should never have taken place. The reasons for this view will be found in the book. In it I am concerned with the causes—the competing interests of India and China which took the form of sharp differences over the border. They were most acute in the western and eastern extremities of the Himalayas, separated by over a thousand miles. The border dispute was the immediate cause of the war; it is therefore necessary to understand how it arose.

Both India and China maintained that there was a traditional boundary, but it remained undefined until the British attempted to define it. As a matter of fact, they were anticipated by the Chinese who, in 1892, declared that the Karakoram range was the boundary in the north-west. The British did not object; nor did the Chinese in turn when, seven years later, the British suggested a continuation of this line as far as Demchok. In 1913-14, British, Chinese and Tibetan plenipotentiaries worked out a boundary in the eastern sector, which the Chinese declined to ratify.

In a Note of 22 March 1962 the Chinese government remarked: 'The Sino-Indian question is a question left over by history.' This is true, but only up to a point. It was as much a problem created by events which took place after the signing of

the Agreement of 1954 on Tibet, and more particularly after the flight of the Dalai Lama to India in 1959. In other words, the main actors of the time were living with as well as creating the Sino-Indian problem as it evolved.

But there were also deep-seated differences. Two totally divergent systems—one democratic, the other authoritarian—were attempting to demonstrate their viability. One was open, the other closed; one was widely accepted in the world, the other suspect; one had won independence through non-violence, the other through bitter and prolonged conflict. Moreover, one offered refuge to a great religious leader, the other drove him out, along with thousands of his countrymen who refused to accept a totalitarian and repressive regime. To suggest, as has often been done, that there was much in common between these two Asian giants is to gravely misunderstand the essential differences between them.

Nevertheless, the border problem was not beyond resolution. Those who incline to the conspiracy theory of history profess to see the seeds of disagreement being sown by the Chinese as early as 1954. Others insist that Nehru committed himself to armed action in the summer of 1962. On the other hand suggestions were made by the Chinese Premier, at least up to 1960, of processes which could have created a time for cooling of relations. The last such opportunity was the meeting of the two Prime Ministers in Delhi in April 1960. Regrettably, arguments hardened into rigidly held positions; negotiations became parry and thrust; when it was over the door to reconciliation of national interests was all but closed. By publishing the report of officials of the two sides, who had intensive discussions following the meeting of the prime ministers, the government of India, perhaps unintentionally, put a seal on the border question. After that the dispute escalated, each side insisting it was right, till the duel was transferred to the battlefield.

In the twenty-five years that have elapsed since then, world forces are set in a different pattern, though for how long no one can confidently estimate. Reconciliation of national interests on the Sino-Indian border is possible if the two countries are convinced that genuine negotiation is the only way out. Neither intimidation nor rigidity can succeed. An agreed boundary must be established. What is sacred is not some far-off stretch of land

which Nehru once described as barren and uninhabited, but peace and a way of life. A boundary should not be conceived as a line on the ground where forces of both sides confront each other eye-ball to eye-ball. In 1965, mines laid by one side slipped over in the snow to the other. It called for skill and daring to recover them. Not long afterwards there was a bloody exchange at the same place, which nature itself had defined by a high altitude pass. A situation of this kind would make a mockery of reconciliation. A stable and peaceful border would be an area where shepherds and travellers pursue their avocations, and where the only sound is that of the prayer, *hum mani padme hum*, being blown to the heavens. The sound of gunfire is alien to the deeper beliefs of the peoples on either side.

The arrangement of the book follows the pattern of the events described. It starts in the north-west, where the British tried to interpose the Manchu empire between their own empire in India and that of the Russians, spreading like an oil slick through Asia. The so-called McMahon line in the north-east was the last. That is the order adopted. The emphasis is on the north-west because it was the most critical of the points in dispute between India and China, though not necessarily the area which occupied most attention in the exchanges. It is also an area about which there was little authentic information. I had thought I could end without dealing with the war itself, but was persuaded by the weight of Professor Galbraith's opinion that the war it was that, in a sense, is the *raison d'être* of the book. He was the US Ambassador at the time, and a very considerable figure during the most critical period.

I will be asked whether there is enough evidence to go on. My answer is an emphatic yes. Documents relating to the period since Indian independence have not been released yet, nor are they likely to be. That is one reason why I thought it important to get down what was available before even that was lost through the ineluctable process of mortality. The documentation up to 1914 is available in the National Archives of India, with some minor restrictions which are not a serious handicap. Nothing very much happened about the McMahon line after that. The British waited in vain for Chinese acceptance, and published the maps twenty years later. Sources in England remain a mine of information, as I found for myself.

The Government of India, who are generally extremely cautious in the matter of maps, were generous beyond belief. In addition to official Indian maps, I have drawn upon the skill of graphic artists for sketches of critical areas; the most amateur of these efforts are my own. The intention is to enable the reader to find his way about distant places, through some of which I have trodden, seeing others from the air or at a great distance.

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xi		Hum	Om
1	after Quotation	Lord Roseberry	Lord Rosebery
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34	15	Lord Roseberry	Lord Rosebery
44	26	Lord Roseberry	Lord Rosebery
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2. Raskam (*facing p. 84*)
3. Hung Tajen's Map 1893: Main Features (*facing p. 100*)
4. Three Boundaries compared (*facing p. 138*)
5. Drew's Map of Aksaichin and Lingzithang (*facing p. 150*)
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7. Sino-Indian Border: Eastern Sector (*facing p. 222*)
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9. Details of Simla Convention Map, Article 9, showing the Indo-Tibet Boundary (*between pp. 226 and 227*)
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\*The boundaries shown in the maps may not be considered authentic.

The assistance of the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs is gratefully acknowledged for reproduction of Maps numbered 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12.

## CHAPTER I

# The Pamirs—A Jostling of Empires

The Pamirs indeed are, from their situation and climate, a sort of no-man's land. They form a vast table-land, elevated at its lowest from 12,000 to 16,000 feet, and rising in places to over 25,000 feet above the level of the sea. . . .

Mere isolation and severity of climate do not, however, of themselves constitute a territory so derelict that the first-comer may take possession of it. The adjacent Powers, China and Great Britain, both in her own right and that of Afghanistan, have a geographical, political and strategical interest in this region, to say nothing of a natural anxiety that the iron commercial wall of the Russian Empire shall not be too far extended. . . .

The preservation of a common action with the Chinese Government, and, of course, with that of Afghanistan, is a matter of vital moment in the conduct of this transaction, for we then represent the two frontier Powers most immediately concerned.

—Lord Roseberry\*

### 1. *Where Three Empires Met*

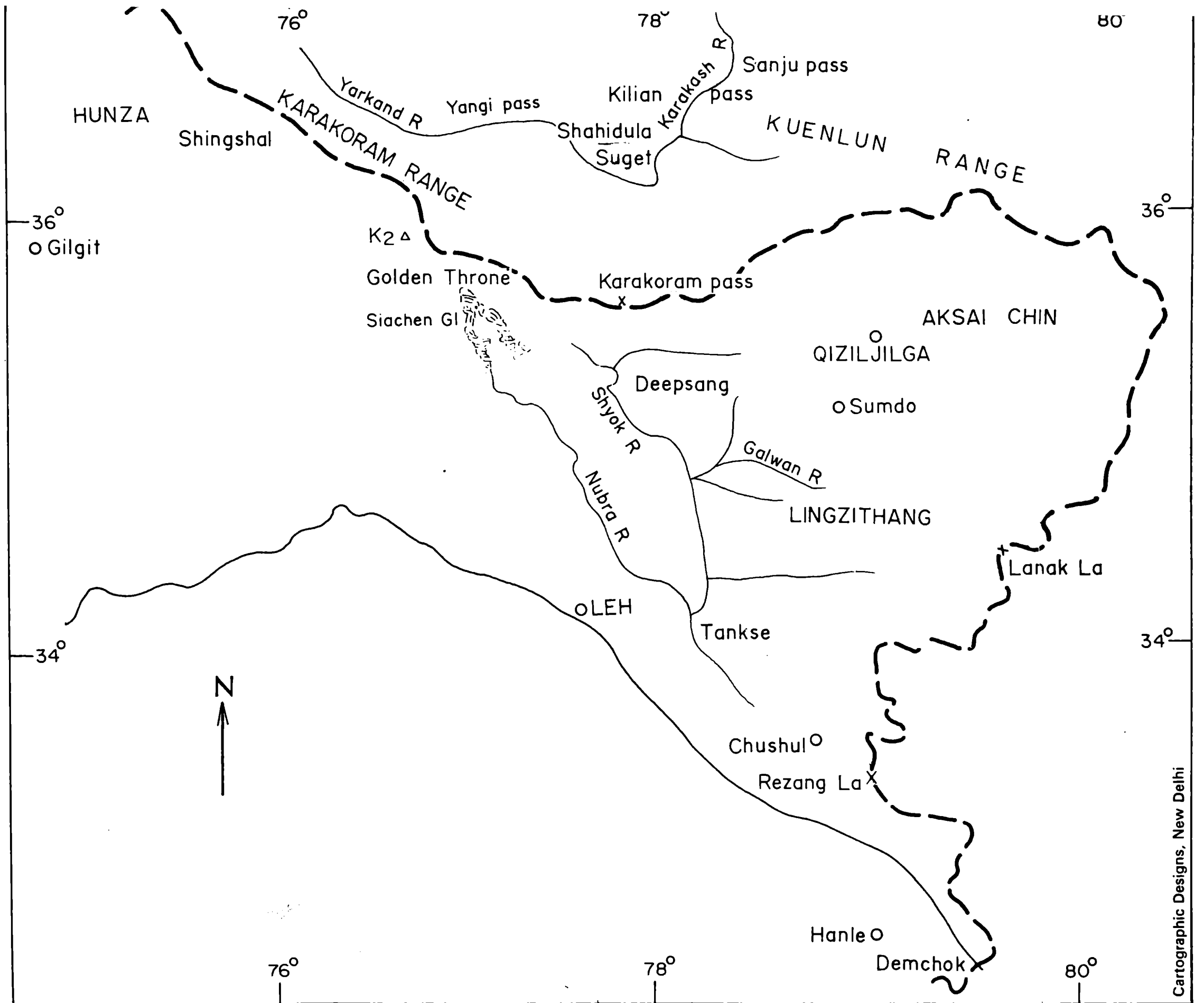
In the closing decades of the nineteenth century British and Russian imperial interests in Central Asia met in unremitting competition in the relatively small area of the Pamir knot joining together the Hindu Kush and Karakoram mountains. The ramifications of this competition did indeed spread westwards and eastwards; but it was in the bleak highlands so

\*Lord Roseberry, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Her Majesty's Government, to Sir R. Morier, British Ambassador at the Court of St. Petersburg (No. 157 A. Secret. 6 September 1892).

aptly described by Lord Roseberry that the confrontation was most intense and unyielding. Such celebrated British agents as F. E. Younghusband fanned out from imperial outposts to explore the lie of this forbiddingly difficult land, to establish frontiers and head off their competitors. It was here that they confronted equally intrepid Russian agents, such as Grombchevsky and Yonoff, with remarkably little in the way of manpower in the face of their squadrons of Cossacks. This was the whole essence and high drama of 'the great game'.

There was also a third party, the sprawling Manchu Empire, whose frontiers marched along the line where the great Russian thrust of the nineteenth century had come to rest. The British were convinced it was only a pause, a time of preparation for the final breakthrough to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. Fear of Russian expansion had haunted them ever since Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I had met on a raft in the river Niemen and dreamt a grand design dividing the Euro-Asian landmass between their two empires. Dormant for some decades thereafter, British fears were revived by the sudden onrush of Russian expansion in Central Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century. The weak Khanates of the former Turkish Empire fell easily under their control. By the 1870s, the Russian Empire had become conterminous with Afghanistan, on the north-western frontier of India, and eastern Turkestan, or the Chinese province Xinjiang or the New Dominion, to the east of the Pamirs.

What chance forces of history had compelled the three empires to aim at the Pamirs, as at a target? The first to penetrate their eastern approaches were the Chinese in the great period of the Emperor Chien Lung (1735-1796). How they got there across thousands of miles of warring tribes and unending deserts must be deemed one of the most extraordinary feats of imperial expansion. Less dramatic certainly than the electrifying speed of the destructive Mongol conquests across the face of Asia and into Europe, it was yet sustained in its pressure and civilizing in its influence. 'Without doubt,' says Richardson, 'other nations of Asia were impressed by the ancient prestige of Chinese civilization and the grandeur of the court with its ceremonial carefully stage-managed to enhance the awfulness of the imperial presence.'<sup>1</sup> The emperor in the palaces of Peking was



Cartographic Designs, New Delhi

MAP 1. The North-Western Border

the Son of Heaven, the ruler of the Celestial Empire. Little wonder, then, that the weak and divided States that lay in the path of Chinese expansion of eastern Turkestan should submit to his power and majesty.

Though the Chinese were extremely successful in creating one of the most durable myths in history, on occasions they were able to give it substance by the exercise of telling military power. In 1792, for instance, an army despatched by Chien Lung all the way from distant Peking to Lhasa sent the Nepali invaders scuttling back to the lush valley of Kathmandu and to submit to terms which the Chinese had no difficulty in interpreting as tributary status. By protecting the authority of the Dalai Lama, the Chinese were able to claim that their imperial umbrella overshadowed Tibet's theocracy.

In India, the Raj was a poor imitator. Yet, what today would be called public relations assiduously practised invested British rule with an aura which, in the end, proved to be less rooted, and more quickly forgotten, than that of the Middle Kingdom.

The Chinese conquest of Xinjiang in the 18th century could be seen as a revival of Han domination in the 2nd century, followed by a Tang period in the 7th and 8th. A long period of intermittent rule by Turkish tribes, such as the Uighurs, followed. Chinese authority during the rule of Chien Lung's Manchu successors was so insecure that a sudden spurt of resistance reduced it to confusion and defeat in 1863.

Russian expansion in Central Asia had actually started before the middle of the 18th century. It resembled a spill-over into the power vacuum stretching thousands of miles into Siberia. By 1853 military commanders had carried the frontier of imperial Russia as far as the Syr Daria. Moving southward from their Siberian bases further east, they closed the remaining gap by occupying Kokand in 1864. Displaced from there, the Kokandi military adventurer, Yakub Kush Begi, led his forces southward into eastern Turkestan. The four western cities which had thrown off the Chinese yoke fell easily to him, and in 1867 he assumed the title of Atalik Ghazi, or Great Teacher. It seemed to the British that it might be politic to take account of these dramatic changes in a country immediately bordering the territory of their subordinate, the Maharaja of Kashmir. The reality of the threat to their Indian empire acquired further

menace when the Russians captured Tashkent in 1865 and Samarkand in 1868. They had come uncomfortably close to the Hindu Kush, the last mountain barrier protecting British dominion in the subcontinent.

The eclipse of Chinese power in their former New Dominion was very short-lived. Though the Atalik forcibly converted as many as 20,000 Chinese to Islam, and enforced religious observances with great severity, his regime withered quickly in the hands of incompetent successors. The Chinese regained control in 1878. This time they made no mistake. In 1883 Xinjiang was incorporated as a province in the Manchu Empire, and such repression as they resorted to in re-establishing their authority was soon relaxed.

The British were comparative late-comers to the region of the Hindu Kush. Though their empire in India had been firmly established early in the 19th century, they gave a free hand in the extreme north to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, surely one of the most remarkable rulers to appear in the subcontinent since the decline of the Mughal empire. It was in concert with Ranjit Singh that the British devised a policy of containing the Russian advance. The Tripartite Treaty of 1838 had as its objective the installation of Shah Shuja as Amir of Afghanistan, in the hope that the traditional invasion route, over the Hindu Kush and through Afghanistan, would thus be blocked. Britain's Afghan policy led to a succession of disasters. The death in 1839 of the redoubtable Ranjit Singh deprived them of the guardian of the northern marches. Thenceforth they were on their own.

What is relevant in the context of the Sino-Indian border was the help given by Gulab Singh, the chieftain of Jammu, in making it possible for General Pollock's column to march through a Punjab weakened by factional strife to pull out from the British commitment to Afghanistan. In gratitude the Government of India made Gulab Singh an offer of Jalalabad, but the canny Dogra ruler had set his eyes on Kashmir. He finally got it in 1846 under the terms of peace imposed by the British on Lahore after the last Sikh war, and another treaty signed a week later with Gulab Singh himself.\* The combined effect was to exclude Kashmir from the territories of the minor

\*See Appendices I and II.

Dalip Singh and to transfer it to Gulab Singh on his paying the stipulated indemnity of £1,500,000 imposed on Lahore. Three years later the British finished this unsavoury business by annexing Punjab.

For the present it is sufficient to stress that as the supreme authority responsible for the defence and foreign relations of the State of Jammu and Kashmir the Government of India's border had become conterminous with Chinese Xinjiang to the north and Tibet to the east. Most of the border territory so acquired lay in the province of Ladakh. Article 2 of the Treaty of Amritsar provided that the eastern boundary would be laid down by commissioners appointed by the British and the Maharaja, as he had now become. Under Article 4 the limits of the Maharaja's territory were not to be changed at any time without the British Government's concurrence.

These enlarged responsibilities did nothing to reduce the forebodings of the Government of India. It was only a question of time, they feared, that the Chinese hold on their far-flung territories would loosen, and the New Dominion would fall into Russian hands. The British Indian empire then would be deprived of its northern buffer and lie directly exposed to Russian expansion. Paradoxically, however, it was the same over-extended Chinese empire that the British sought to prop up between themselves and the Russians. The contradictions of this policy were brilliantly exploited by the imperial mandarins. When the British put pressure on them, they pleaded inability to comply because the Russians accused them of complaisance, reversing the argument, no doubt, when the pressure was from the other side. Their formal claims remained undiminished even when the empire was at its lowest ebb. When the moment came, and its arms possessed striking power, pretension was converted into reality. There was remarkably little change in object and method after the fall of the Manchus. Till the Romanoffs were swept away by the flood of revolution, there were thus three empires in competition, jostling for positions in the highlands to the north of the Hindu Kush. And no place was a more intense focus of this competition than the lofted valleys and snow-crowned summits of the Pamirs.



## 2. *The Case of Hunza*

Nowhere was the triangular imperial competition more clearly exemplified than in the towering arc where the Mustagh-Karakoram and Hindu Kush ranges meet, just south of the Pamirs. Here nestle the tiny principalities of Hunza and Nagar. The Hunza river and its confluents race down the tangled mass of mountains to meet the Gilgit river at a point just below the distant outpost of Gilgit in the State of Kashmir. From this eyrie, a British Agent kept watch on the movements of Russians, Afghans and the Chinese, and the sometimes wavering loyalty of Kashmir's two feudatories. It was both look-out and watch-tower in support of British agents engaged in 'the great game' beyond. A favourite blind was to apply to the Chinese for travel and shooting permits. It was the easiest thing in the world for the British to find recruits, and if they had a smattering of survey, their reports were all the more welcome to the Directorate of Intelligence in the Quartermaster-General's Branch in Calcutta and Simla. The Tsungli Yamen in Peking granted these requests with surprising liberality, making only one invariable stipulation, that the visitor should not cross boundaries without permission.

But what were these boundaries? It turned out that the Chinese themselves had only an approximate idea. They started making some rudimentary inquiries in the field at the very end of the nineteenth century. It was this uncertainty which plagued the case of Hunza. What made it even more confusing was China's claim that Hunza was feudatory to the Khakan, while, for its part, Hunza enjoyed the traditional right to collect taxes in Taghdumbash Pamir and to cultivate extensive areas in Raskam in the valley of the Yarkand river, both claimed by China. To complicate matters still further, the Kashmir Maharaja reduced Hunza and Nagar to a state of subjection which was not, as in the case of Ladakh, immediately incorporated in a treaty. Hunza was too tiny, isolated and seemingly unimportant. It was not until 1869 that the relationship between Hunza and the ruler of Kashmir came to be expressed in the form of annual tribute tendered by the Mir, who, in turn, was paid a yearly subsidy by the Maharaja. While tribute and subsidy continued regularly thereafter, a customary tribute of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of gold dust was sent

every year by the Mir to the Taotai of Kashgar for submission to the Chinese Emperor.

Situated as it was, the ambivalence of Hunza's position created problems for the ruler's two masters, the Chinese and the British. The latter had assumed responsibility for the security of Jammu and Kashmir State under Article 9 of the Treaty of Amritsar. It was no less confusing to the Mir, the principality's ruler. If he turned his face towards whichever power he saw as the rising sun he could hardly be blamed. In the end this ambivalence did little to help him.

The Russians, too, cast a line in these turbid waters. One of their leading frontiersmen, Colonel Grombchevsky, was quite as persistent an explorer of the Pamirs and its environs as his British counterpart, F. E. Younghusband. He first visited Hunza in 1885, and the British firmly believed that the Mir signed a treaty with him. During the Hunza-Nagar operations in December 1891, stacks of papers were recovered after the flight of Mir Safdar Ali Khan. Nothing resembling a Russian treaty was found amongst them, but the belief in its existence died hard. On the other hand Grombchevsky went away convinced that the British had taken over the State. Walsham, British Minister at Peking, wrote on 22 November 1886 to the Viceroy of India, Lord Dufferin, that the *Journal de St. Petersbourg*, in its issue of 3-15 September, reported that when Grombchevsky went there, he found that the ruler had placed himself under the dominion of the Empress of India and expelled a Chinese envoy.<sup>2</sup>

Differences of understanding between the British and Chinese Governments about the allegiance of this tiny principality, and the conflicting pressures to which the ruler was subject, imposed strains on Sino-British relations in the two succeeding decades. The British attempted to resolve these differences as well as they could in the larger interest of protecting their Indian empire against a possible Russian thrust through the Hindu Kush into Hunza. Three distinct questions were involved: firstly, that of suzerainty over Hunza; secondly, Hunza's rights in the Chinese-claimed Taghdumbash Pamir; and, lastly, its customary cultivation of an extensive tract in Raskam. Each of these must be considered in greater detail.

### 3. *Hunza: Rival Claims to Suzerainty*

Baltit, the capital of Hunza\*, if the small fortified palace surrounded by village homes and groves of apricot and walnut trees can be so described, is a bare 48 miles from Gilgit. In 1889, the British set up an Agency at Gilgit, from where their representative was admirably placed to observe what passed in the remote principality. Kashmir's outpost at Chaprot on the Hunza river was 28 miles north of Gilgit, and only 20 miles away from Baltit. Even before the rise of Sikh and Dogra power in Kashmir, Hunza paid what Colonel Durand, the first British Agent at Gilgit, described as a 'nominal allegiance' to the Trakhane rulers of Gilgit.<sup>3</sup>

This allegiance, he had ascertained, was continued to the Sikh and Dogra successors of the ancient Gilgit chiefs; but it was doubtful, he went on, if it was ever enforced. ' . . . The actual relations between Kashmir and Hunza appear to have been uninterruptedly hostile, until the year 1869, when the late Chief Ghazan Khan consented to yield allegiance to Kashmir, and to pay a yearly tribute of two horses, two hounds and twenty ounces of gold dust, in return for which Kashmir engaged to pay an annual subsidy.' Nevertheless, Hunza's attitude was always one of 'veiled contumacy', a situation which the British could not regard as anything but highly unsatisfactory.

Crushed between the upper and nether millstones, the Mir's position was hardly enviable. The British Agent at Gilgit was the nearest representative of the two powers, China and Britain. Till George Macartney was posted at Kashgar in 1890, as Special Assistant for Chinese Affairs to the British Resident in Kashmir, the British had no means of feeling the Chinese pulse in the New Dominion. This unusual man was the son of Sir Halliday Macartney, who was English Secretary to the Chinese Legation at London. Sir Halliday's wife was Chinese. His son was bi-lingual; and by the time he left eighteen years later he was presumably conversant with Turki as well. Lacking the official status of Consul, Macartney was placed at a distinct disadvantage in coping with the intrigues of the Russian Consul, Petrovski. When the question of obtaining Chinese recognition for his appointment as Consul was raised, successive British Ministers at Peking were uniformly lukewarm, until Sir Ernest

\*Also called Kanjut.

Satow succeeded Sir Claude MacDonald. Unlike the Russians, the British had no special treaty providing for the appointment by the Crown of a Consul at Kashgar. Even Satow was hesitant, though at one stage a royal warrant for Macartney's appointment was actually issued. It was then the turn of the Tsungli Yamen to refuse recognition, and the unfortunate Macartney had to be instructed by his own government to discontinue use of the designation. The Chinese finally agreed only when his successor was appointed in 1908.

Despite this official handicap, and his own disappointed expectations, Macartney performed invaluable service at Kashgar. He was able to protect the interests of Indian traders, many of whom unblushingly fleeced the local poor by lending money and charging the 'Indian' rate of 200 per cent on unspecified principals. He assiduously cultivated the official notables, and his Chinese *munshi* was adept at picking up gossip, which often proved to be true, in the Taotai's Yamen. Consequently, for the British, Kashgar was a listening post of priceless value. This was in no way diminished by the Chinese practice of making known formal communications to their officials which were then nullified by secret instructions. The Amban (district magistrate) at Yarkand, for example, was particularly skilful at flouting orders supposed to have been sent to him by Huang Tajen, the Taotai at Kashgar. The pair took obvious delight in their little game. It made Macartney's position no easier, and, indeed, immeasurably increased the value of such authentic information as he could pick up. Moreover, when it suited them, the Chinese made use of him to convey hints, suggestions and claims of a more definite sort which the Tsungli Yamen, or the Governor of the New Dominion at Urumtsi, might have thought it politic to avoid making directly to the British Minister at Peking.

One such question was the status of Hunza. In 1893 Macartney called at the Yamen. Li, who was then Taotai (a term denoting Civil and Military Charge and directing Foreign Commerce), told him that Kanjut had been paying tribute to China ever since the time of the Emperor Chien Lung (1736-1796), when the Chinese first occupied eastern Turkestan.<sup>4</sup> On the face of it, it would seem improbable that the Mir rushed to Kashgar the moment the Chinese appeared. Ney Elias, in his

report on the Kashgar Mission, thought it was probable that 'tribute, or homage of some kind' was paid by the Khans of Hunza before the expulsion of the Chinese in 1865 by a local uprising led by Yakub Beg. At all events such payments were resumed after they reoccupied the New Dominion in 1878.

Major Biddulph was on special duty at Gilgit at the time when news of the reconquest of the four western districts of the New Dominion was received. In an apparent effort to create goodwill, the Chinese promised Mir Ghazan Khan an increased subsidy. 'The tribute', says Biddulph, 'sent by Ghazan Khan consists of nine gold miskals, equal to about £3 sterling; and he expects in return to receive five yamboos (ingots of silver in the form of shoes), eighteen pieces of silk, and three horses, being an increase of three yamboos, nine pieces of silk, and one horse. The Jagir in Yarkand, that was held by him in former times, is also to be restored to him.'<sup>5</sup> Biddulph did not allow the opportunity to slip to make a point about the question of suzerainty. 'I have had two conversations with Fazal Khan, the Hunza vakil . . . in which I pointed out that the Mir of Hunza is no longer at liberty to give tribute to China as in old times. He at first tried to make me believe that it was not tribute, but only a friendly present; but afterwards allowed that it was tribute.'

Biddulph was typical of the skilled diplomats seconded from the Army to the Foreign and Political Service of the Government of India. His letter of 12 April 1878 on the subject to the Mir was a fair sample. '. . . It is true that when the Chinese ruled formerly in Yarkand, you were in the habit of paying tribute to them. There was no fault in it, because at that time you were not dependent on the Maharaja. Now for eight and a half years (since 1869) you have eaten the salt of the Maharaja, and whoever is a dependent of the Maharaja is *ipso facto* a dependent of the English Government. . . . To send a token of friendship is no fault; but if only a blade of grass is sent as customary tribute, that is a sign of obedience. . . . It is hoped that that friend (the Mir) will quickly send me news of a pacifying nature that I may write it to the Sircar.'

Biddulph could hardly have been 'pacified' by Mir Ghazan Khan's reply. While protesting that he was neither 'a dependent nor tributary of the Khakan of China, as I am on the bestower of dignities, the Sircar', he nevertheless insisted that he would

continue 'sending tokens of friendship to the Amban, because also the customary (friendship) to me of the Khakan is very great'.<sup>6</sup> Thus the tribute of gold dust continued to be sent to the Taotai who in return sent the Mir the usual two rolls of satin, and often very much more, 'as proof of His Imperial Majesty's graciousness towards a tributary state'.<sup>7</sup> Although Ghazan Khan had transferred his loyalty to the Kashmir Maharaja after the Chinese were driven out of the New Dominion in 1865, its reconquest thirteen years later, accompanied as it was by ruthless slaughter, must have convinced him that it would be wise to play safe.

Though they were neighbours, and perhaps because of it, there was smouldering hostility between the rulers of Hunza and Nagar. In 1876 the Khan of Nagar decided that the best way of preventing the Mir from taking Chaprot, which was then in his possession, was to offer it to the Kashmir Durbar. Chaprot, on the Hunza river, was a position of some importance. From there the Kashmir Durbar could control the southern approach to Hunza. However, in 1888 the two rulers joined forces and expelled the Kashmir garrison, and advanced on Nomal, a bare 15 miles from Gilgit. Reinforcements were sent up and the two positions retaken.

This eruption of hostilities prompted the Government of India to examine their responsibilities in this remote quarter of the empire. In a despatch to Lord Cross, Secretary of State for India, they reviewed the disturbing developments of the last few years.<sup>8</sup> It had been found, they said, that Safdar Ali Khan, who had seized power in Hunza in 1886 after murdering his father Ghazan Khan, was in correspondence with the Chinese, and that the Russian agent, Grombchevsky, had visited the State in 1885. It was rumoured that the Mir had actually signed a treaty with the Russians. Because of the State's strategic importance, the Government of India declared, 'we cannot recognize Chinese rights in Hunza. It is imperative that in this quarter we should keep the Chinese and every other power to the north of the barrier formed by the line of the Himalayas and Hindu Kush; and though it may be inexpedient at this moment to enter into any discussion with the Chinese Government upon the question, we must in practice maintain our right to deal with Hunza

direct, notwithstanding its nominal suzerainty to China.'

This was as clear a statement as could be expected at the time of the aims of the Government of India in this quarter. The response was everything they could have hoped for. Sir John Walsham, the British Minister at Peking, had been summoned to the Tsungli Yamen, to be told that an Indian tribe had ingressed into Hunza territory. The Yamen also sent him a copy of a letter from the Governor of the New Dominion. 'It is', wrote the Governor, 'some years since Kanjut tendered its allegiance to China (literally, turned towards civilization) and its duty being to submit to our control, it must not be allowed by any reckless conduct to give rise to feuds on the frontier. . . .'<sup>9</sup>

Walsham by then had been fully briefed by Calcutta and Whitehall. He decided to take the bull by the horns. Referring to notices in the Peking Gazette in 1885, 1886 and 1887 of the payment of tribute by Hunza, he pointed out that it was 'probably on this ground that the Governor speaks of Kanjut owing allegiance to China; but whatever may be the foundation for the claim, I am convinced that the possibility of embarrassing questions arising will be best avoided by my notifying to Your Highness and Your Excellencies that the Chief of Kanjut has also long been a feudatory of Kashmir, receiving a yearly pension and paying tribute. It would be impossible therefore for the Indian Government to allow this petty border Chieftain to create disturbances on Indian soil with impunity, and in reliance on his pretension to be a tributary State of the Chinese Empire.'<sup>10</sup>

Walsham's letter to the Tsungli Yamen was an unambiguous statement of the British position on the rival claims to suzerainty of the tiny State of Hunza, locked in the Hindu Kush mountains south of the Pamirs. Its isolation had been its only strength. Once it became of vital strategic importance to their Empire, the British could not allow it to become a pawn in the power game between the three empires of Great Britain, Russia and China. The issue was mainly one between China and Great Britain, and the British resolved it in the only way they found compatible with their interests. Whatever formal gestures the Kanjut ruler may have made to China in the past, and continued to make, in Britain's knowledge, not to put too fine a point on the matter, Her Majesty's Government ruled out any interpretation of the

position than that Hunza was within the orbit of the Indian Empire and no other. From this there could be no retreat. Yet, even after Walsham's emphatic assertion of British imperial responsibility, the Chinese government, never wholly at a loss for a move in the game, found other ways of playing it.

An occasion for display of their nimble-footed diplomacy arose only three years later in the wake of the Hunza-Nagar operations of December 1891. Durand, the British agent at Gilgit, resolved upon improving communications, to start with, up to the Hunza river. Initially, the work was undertaken by the Kashmir Durbar. The Kashmir Imperial Service troops occupied Nomal and Chalt, and went on to Chaprot, three miles beyond, where the Hunza river had to be bridged. Road-building had little appeal for the Dogras. Durand wrote that they left their work and smoked when they wanted in disregard of the orders of General Suram Chand of the State Forces. Soldiering was more to their taste. Road construction was eventually entrusted to Spedding, a British timber contractor.<sup>11</sup> Spedding rushed through with the work, and the bridge was expected to be ready by 9 December.

Vakils promptly presented themselves at Gilgit with defiant letters for Durand from the chiefs of Hunza and Nagar. 'The Nagar Raja in his letter stated that any attempt to build a bridge at Chalt would lead to war. . . . Their troops are collecting at Mayun and Nilt; and both places are being strengthened. Dadu, the Hunza Wazir, is in Nagar, and both States will act as one.'<sup>12</sup> In a squalid "palace revolution", Uzr Khan deposed his father, Raja Jafar Khan of Nagar, and murdered his brothers. Mir Safdar Ali Khan of Hunza despatched Vakils to the Taotai at Kashgar with a complaint that his territory had been invaded and an appeal for help.

On 29 November, Durand sent the Chiefs an ultimatum. He made no secret of the inspiration for the moves he was making. They were well aware, he declared, that a Russian force had moved into the Pamirs and explored the passes leading to the Hindu Kush. 'Your State lies to the south of these mountains, which here form the boundary of the Indian Empire, and is within the borders of the Indian Empire.'<sup>13</sup> It was imperative, he went on, to have free access to their territories, without interference in their internal affairs, so that roads could be built which would



enable the Government 'to place troops rapidly in positions guarding the passes leading from the Pamirs'. He demanded that as feudatories of the British Government they should give all possible aid for this purpose, and 'no refusal on your part will be accepted'.

Durand had just over a thousand men under his command. About 700 were Kashmir Imperial Service troops, backed by 190 Gurkhas, two field guns, and a Gatling. This little force set out on 2 December and took Nilt the same day. There, however, they were halted for 17 days by the Hunza-Nagar forces who had entrenched themselves in *sangars* on the heights above. Dogras under Manners-Smith and Taylor scaled the cliffs and took these formidable positions in hand-to-hand fighting, in which they killed 70 men in the *sangars* and took 180 prisoners, for only three of their own killed. Manners-Smith won a well-deserved Victoria Cross, but the Dogras were fobbed off with sentiments of appreciation. They literally charged up the last 23 miles to Hunza, occupying it on the night of the 22nd under Captain Colin Mackenzie. Durand was severely wounded in the first action at Nilt, and was deprived of an active role in the rest of this feat of arms. Uzr Khan was deposed, and his harmless father, Jafar Khan, restored as the chief of Nagar. Safdar Ali Khan made off to the Chinese Taghdumbash as fast as he could. His half-brother, Humayun, was appointed Wazir as a temporary measure, but Muhammad Nazim Khan, Safdar's son, was eventually chosen to take his father's place.

It must have been perfectly clear to the Tsungli Yamen at Peking that practical counter-measures were out of the question, but they exploited every opportunity to make political capital out of what they must have realized was a significant military operation in an extremely difficult terrain. The Taotai at Kashgar was the first to express pained surprise. Why had British forces entered Kanjut, he asked the Viceroy, 'Kanjut being, from olden times, a dependency of the Chinese Empire; and this circumstance is known to all the Powers, and the friendship of your illustrious Empire with the Chinese Empire being well known to all the people.' The Tsungli Yamen were much more specific. A telegram to their Minister at London was read to Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on 22 February 1892: 'The Governor (of the New Dominion)

considers that, in view of Kanjut having been a tributary of China ever since the time of the emperor Chien Lung, now more than 100 years, the Government of India ought not to have invaded the country without previously communicating with the Chinese Government.<sup>14</sup> The collapse of Chinese Rule in 1865, and the arrival on the scene of Powers who had, it could be said, stolen a march on them, were apparently considered non-events. Chinese memories went back to a time which had been overlaid by more recent events, conveniently forgetting also that the Manchu Empire itself was an imposition on indigenous Turki rulers.

They also seized upon arrangements for the ensuing installation of Muhammad Nazim Khan as Mir for endless arguments over protocol, at which the mandarins were acknowledged masters. Sieh Tajen, their Minister at London, saw Lord Salisbury on 17 February 1892, and secured concessions which caused some embarrassment to the Government of India. His view that a Chinese representative should be invited, they said, could lead to trouble, 'but we defer to Lord Salisbury's wish.'<sup>15</sup> The Viceroy was quite definite that the Mir would be installed by the British under a *sanad* of the Maharaja of Kashmir; however, the Chinese insisted that they should both be present and take an active part in the ceremony. Mere presence, wrote Walsham from Peking, enclosing a record of discussion on 18th March at the Tsungli Yamen, scarcely seemed to them sufficient. '. . . . As it would be their duty to memorialise the throne on the subject, they wished to know if they could make use of the expression "hui li" (jointly installing) or "hui t'ung pan li" (conjoint action) with reference to the part to be assigned to their representative.' Walsham pointed out that both these expressions went far beyond the Government of India's wishes in the matter. Walsham had explained to the Minister and Their Excellencies that the Chinese delegate could attend as an honoured spectator, without taking any active part in the ceremony. More than that would not be possible. Deeply distrustful of the Government of India's attitude to such matters, they instructed their Minister at London to suggest that details of the ceremony should be settled in London. (At a critical stage of the Simla Conference of 1913-14, they made a similar suggestion, with equally little success. Her Majesty's

Government could scarcely so plainly demonstrate an amenability to be influenced by a foreign Power to the disadvantage of the Government of India's authority.) Salisbury wrote to Sieh Tajen, the Chinese Minister, on 11th July: 'It is not proposed that the Chinese envoy should take any active part in the ceremony. His position will be that of an honoured spectator, and care will be taken to assign him a fitting place, and to treat him with all the respect due to the Envoy of a great and friendly Empire specially invited to be present on the occasion.'<sup>16</sup>

In keeping with the importance of the occasion, Sieh Tajen informed Salisbury that Colonel and Brevet Brigadier General Chang Hang Tao would represent the Chinese Government at the installation. He was to be accompanied by a junior official. Macartney reported that they were carrying a sealed address to be presented to the Mir, along with the feathered hat of a mandarin of the third degree. Such symbols of Chinese authority were anathema to the Government of India. The instructions sent by the Foreign Secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand, to the Kashmir Resident firmly ruled out speeches, and presentation of documents and presents. If he agreed, the principal envoy would be seated on the British Agent's right, while his companions would sit together with the Kashmir guests. If they did not agree, the ceremony would go ahead without them. In the end, presumably to mark their dissatisfaction with these arrangements, a sub-prefect was substituted for the Brevet Brigadier General. Before the installation, which had to be put off to 15th September because of the enormous attention to detail by the Chinese authorities, the Taotai of Kashgar had managed to send Muhammad Nazim Khan what purported to be a letter of appointment. 'I therefore give this letter to you and you should take charge of the good of Kanjut . . . that you may do the work of Mansabdar (official) of Kanjut. You, Muhammad Nazim, should act in a proper manner in accordance with my order.'<sup>17</sup> Honour had somehow to be retrieved, and the Chinese had not run out of stratagems.

Sieh Tajen preferred to deal directly with Lord Salisbury who was far more accommodating than such highly experienced diplomats as Walsham and O'Connor. That the Tsungli Yamen were allergic to the Government of India was apparent from

their attempt to get arrangements for the installation ceremonies transferred to London. The Embassy's English Secretary, Sir Halliday Macartney, was an invaluable go-between. A point of entry was found in the alleged delay in submission by the Mir of Hunza of the customary tribute. On 17 February 1892 the Chinese Minister had extracted a commitment from Lord Salisbury that Her Majesty's Government 'had no wish to interfere in any way with the yearly payment of 1½ ozs of gold, which had hitherto been customary, or with any rights over Hunza which China might be found to possess'.<sup>18</sup> Lord Salisbury's successor, Lord Roseberry, reaffirmed this commitment in a letter dated 22 December 1893 to Sieh Tajen.<sup>19</sup>

Muhammad Nazim Khan, the newly installed Mir, was at a loss to know what he should do. He could not serve two masters, and appealed to the British Agent for 'orders'. Moreover Safdar Ali Khan had decamped with all the gold. Somewhat fazed on being presented with this conundrum, the Foreign Secretary Sir Mortimer Durand's view was that the less the Government knew about it the better.<sup>20</sup> However, something had to be done. They hit upon a solution which would have recommended itself to practitioners of 'hikmat amali', or the art of getting things done with the minimum fuss. The gold was procured and surreptitiously made over to the Mir. Both his honour and Chinese face were saved. To London, they put it this way: the Government of India preferred 'to avoid any formal recognition of the *present* (my italics) given annually by Hunza to Kashgar. The present is said to have been given in connection with the *jagir* held by Hunza in Yarkand, and it was apparently met by a present in return of greater value.'<sup>21</sup>

Salisbury's commitment had actually gone much further. Hunza, he had conceded, would not be annexed, and China, 'whilst still preserving her ancient rights to tribute and any other which she might have possessed in the past, should not in any way endeavour to accentuate her position in the country'. But this is precisely what the Chinese proceeded to do.

Taking cover of this ambiguously worded clause, Sieh Tajen came back with an entirely new proposal to position a Chinese envoy at Hunza. He conceded that there had not been one in the past, and his argument that the new situation necessitated an arrangement of this sort was easily shot down by the British

government. It would have violated British supremacy, a position they were not prepared to compromise.<sup>22</sup>

For the time being, at any rate, the issue of suzerainty over Hunza had been settled, though not very tidily or even with the appearance of finality. The Chinese got their tribute which they regularly notified in the Peking Gazette,\* and with it the assumed right of the Kashgar Taotai to lecture the Mir on his duty to his subjects and the graciousness of the Emperor. For their part the British chose to view the proceeding as an exchange of presents, the Mir getting the better of the bargain in terms of value. At its best it was an innocuous courtesy; at its worst a tribute by the Mir for the *jagir* granted to his ancestor in two villages in Yarkand district, and renewed on the return of the Chinese in 1878. Less familiar with diplomatic sophistry, the least comfortable of the three parties involved was the new Mir, Muhammad Nazim Khan, who saw it as service to two masters at the same time. If his political master, the British government, encouraged him to continue the practice, his mind could be at rest. For that was the essence of the situation. Hunza was a feudatory of the State of Kashmir, and therefore an integral, though not annexed, part of the Indian empire. Of that there was no longer any doubt. That was the message of the Hunza-Nagar operations of December 1891, and their aftermath. If the Chinese understood it, the question remained whether the message had gone home to the Russians.

In his last despairing weeks, Safdar Ali Khan had thrown a challenge to Durand in Gilgit that if he wanted war, he could count on being opposed by the Khakan, his Chinese liege lord. His Vakils had ridden post-haste to Kashgar where they had also established contact with the Russian Consul, Petrovski. On 17 December 1891, at the height of the crisis in the Hunza valley, Macartney wrote to Durand that the Vakils had been assured by Petrovski that the Mir would be succoured by the Russians in a couple of months. The English, the Vakils told him, were building a road to Hunza solely for the purpose of taking military measures against Russia. Petrovski did not need to be egged on.<sup>23</sup>

\*See Appendix III, Peking Gazette of 14 May 1885, which shows that for the Chinese nothing had changed.

His despatches were soon being carried post-haste to the Russian outpost in Tashkent. The Foreign Minister, de Giers, lost no time in summoning the British Ambassador, Sir Robert Morier, to receive a protest. The apparent British intention, de Giers argued, was to force a passage through Kanjut to the Pamirs, in violation of the arrangements on Afghanistan arrived at in 1873.<sup>24</sup>

Unwittingly, de Giers had opened his guard and was forced to take an immediate riposte. The action taken by the Government of India in Hunza, he was told, was a direct result of Colonel Yonoff's "promenade militaire" the previous summer, and they would have a perfect right to push on to the Pamirs.<sup>25</sup> In his despatch to Salisbury of 6th January, Morier made the perceptive observation that de Giers' note was 'an expression of fear at the unexpected success of Her Majesty's arms. . . . They were perfectly aware that we can bring at very short notice more troops from Gilgit to the scene of action than anything they could send from Fergana.' The Russian line of communication was snow- and ice-bound far longer than the southern face of the Pamirs, with which the British would have to contend. Unfortunately, as we shall see, the obvious lesson of their military success was lost on the strategists in faraway Calcutta. They put their faith in what they knew to be a porous buffer, the shambling Manchu empire.

Apart from the question of suzerainty over Hunza, two other questions remained—that State's rights in Taghdumbash and Raskam. What had given them urgency was Russian pressure in the Pamirs. This hip-joint of Asia's principal mountain ranges was the strategic focus of the three empires jostling for positions in the hub of Central Asia. However, the reference to Yonoff's "Promenade militaire" entails a brief excursion into the Pamirs, the "no-man's land" where the interests of all three clashed, with ominous potential for peace in Asia. Hunza's rights in Taghdumbash and Raskam were subsumed in this larger question.

#### 4. *Kirghiz Land*

Although the three questions identified in the previous section directly concerned only the British and Chinese governments, in

reality they arose from the all-pervading threat, as the British saw it, of a Russian thrust into their security zone. While the 1873 Agreement with Russia on the Afgho-Bukharan boundary was a satisfactory resolution of the problems of the time, it did nothing to stiffen the Chinese empire against Russian expansion eastwards of Wakhan. The case of Hunza was only a part of the matter. Urgent steps were even more necessary to connect Afghan and Chinese territories, to define the limits of the two European empires. Lord Roseberry's 'iron wall of the Russian Empire' had to be matched by another, capable of resisting the thrust from the north. This was the pervasive setting of the questions involving the minute principality of Kanjut in the valley of the Hunza river. Was the intervening space 'a sort of no-man's land', as Roseberry conceived it?

In fact, it could well have been called "Kirghiz land". This isolated region of High Asia had remained virtually unscathed by the havoc caused by Mongol invasions in Central Asia; nor had it been touched by the matchless civilizations of the East. It had provided a refuge to ancient pastoralist communities admirably suited to the bleak environment. Here the Kirghiz had found a lodgement. No one particularly envied their presence in Roseberry's "no-man's land", stretching from the Pamirs to the valley of the Karakash, skirting the Hindu Kush, Mustagh and Karakoram ranges to the south. Western writers, such as Robert Shaw, who probably knew more about them than most, have referred to them as nomads; and indeed they were. Pastures, which were the only resource available for the herds on which they depended for most of the necessities of life, were scanty and widely scattered. They moved from one grazing ground to the other. The Chinese treated them, as they did the Tibetans, with the contempt reserved for lesser breeds. Closely organized in groups of *yurts* (felt tents) under their own *begs* the extended tribe was tied to a cycle of movement governed by the iron law of a limited natural resource. When the grass gave out, they rounded up their herds, folded their *yurts* and made for the next pasture, the next *marg*, or up into a distant *pamir*, or high-altitude valley.

These widely dispersed nomadic groups were largely self-sufficient, and laid only the shadowiest claims to territorial permanence. And yet, by tradition, they stayed out of each

other's way, and thus were associated with loosely defined areas, becoming known as the Shahidula Kirghiz, the Sarikolis, the Taghdumbash and Khokandi Kirghiz, and so on. They had their uses for more settled communities—as carriers, suppliers of meat and animals, wool, felt, and creators of the legends of the remote highlands where only they could roam. In the “no-man's land” there were no other takers, that is, until the empire builders, the distant claimants of territory, seeking known and secure boundaries, carved it up in complete disregard of the only people who had a traditional right to call it their own.

Something was stirring in the last two and a half decades of the nineteenth century, and even afterwards; some unknown force of which they had only the faintest comprehension. How, for instance, was Turdi Kol to have known?

In 1888 the Kanjuts struck, coveting, of all things, their meagre possessions. The Chinese, whose help they sought, in effect told them they were on their own. The nomads did the sensible thing: most of them simply vanished. When, in 1889, Younghusband crossed the Karakoram into their valley, more than half had slipped away to Sarikol and Taghdumbash. Turdi Kol, whose understanding of the power game was limited to the immediate experience of authority, saw in this lone representative of the Lord Sahib in Calcutta and Empress of lands in five continents, the hope of the Kirghiz of Shahidula. After the Chinese had let them down they were ready for another protector. A durbar was assembled. Younghusband lined up his escort of six Gurkhas, emerged from his tent in full uniform and ordered a volley that sent the kyang, the hares, kestrel hawks and orange-beaked choughs streaking away in alarm. It was magnificent theatre, and it had an immediate effect. The headmen tendered their allegiance to the Sircar. Though he was not empowered to accept it, Younghusband explained, he was sure the Sircar would protect them; and he went on his way to Taghdumbash with their assistance. It was the trans-Karakoram version of the Indian Raj; it had style, though remarkably little substance. Turdi Kol was to learn the bitter truth when the Chinese threw him into prison for having truck with the English. Effective authority, as he must have realized, was a little more than a *feu de joie*. Three years later Younghusband was still pleading for his release, and begging the



British Minister at Peking to intercede on behalf of the hapless *beg*. He was eventually released in 1894.

After centuries of being left to themselves, the Kirghiz were beginning to feel the vice-like grip of empires closing in on their domain. Normally, the Chinese, with whom they were mostly concerned, left them to their own devices, as long as they provided free labour when required. Then, too, the empire had need of funds to recover from the disastrous wars imposed on them by Japan on the Eastern seaboard. The Governor of the New Dominion fixed district targets, and the unfortunate Kirghiz were expected to contribute their share to the war fund. The British in India, during the Second World War, were unconscious imitators. Once again, the Kirghiz organized a quiet exodus. In the Taghdumbash, they were vulnerable to the demands of the Kanjuts, and bought immunity by paying "taxes" in kind—of felt, tent ropes and felt shoes in lieu of customary grazing rights.

Free to wander in the "no-man's land", the Kirghiz had a ready answer for these unwelcome incidents of life. They melted away, or paid up and departed, or paid up and stayed. In a demi-official letter of 14 August 1891 to Cuningham from Bozai Gumbaz, Younghusband was nearest the truth when he said the Kirghiz were ready to pay taxes, which were in reality blackmail, to anyone who was in a position to intimidate them, whether they were Central Asian Khanates, Afghans, Russians or Chinese. On the whole, however, he thought they were happier under the Chinese, with whom they had lived longest.<sup>26</sup> Writing about the Shahidula Kirghiz, Younghusband once observed that while the territory which they occupied was Kashmir's, the people belonged to China. In this respect he was no more correct than General Chapman, Director of Military Intelligence in London, who held them to be Russian subjects. Chapman had questioned the well-informed traveller Captain Picot, who had explored this area with Prince Galitzine—de-briefed him, so to speak—and sent his impressions to Sir Mortimer Durand. 'I make out that he realized fully when crossing the Dipsang Plain, that the whole of the Kirghiz, on that side, recognized that they were Russian subjects.' The Kirghiz all the way from Merv, 'if not subjects of Russia, at any rate recognize her as the power which dominates the countries (meaning, surely, areas) in which

they move'. But his general conclusion was much nearer the mark: '. . . All these Kirghiz have means of communication and are, to a certain extent, under no direction.'<sup>27</sup> The Kirghiz nomads were indeed their own people whether they hailed from Khokand in Russian Turkestan, or Wakhan in Afghanistan, or the rest of the Pamirs, which were loosely recognized as Chinese.

### 5. *Moves and Counter-Moves*

While he was encamped at the distant outpost of Bozai Gumbaz in the summer of 1891, Younghusband was supremely unaware that it had not, as he thought, fallen to Afghanistan under the 1873 Agreement. On the way from Tash Qurghan and the Mintaka pass, he had come upon Kirghiz fleeing from the Russians. The immediate provocation of this sudden exodus soon appeared in the person of Colonel Yonoff with a detachment of 40 Cossacks and 60 infantry, and more to follow. With punctilious military courtesy Yonoff informed Younghusband that he had been ordered by the Governor-General of Turkestan to escort him out of Russian territory, and to arrest him if he refused to comply. But of course such a proceeding was entirely unnecessary; Younghusband, he felt sure, would dispense with the escort so courteously offered. The British officer glanced at his minuscule escort, protested vigorously that he was in Afghanistan, and went his way. He was also asked to sign a document not to return over any of a number of passes thoughtfully listed in the document itself. Another protest accompanied his signature.

Davidson, a young subaltern, who had been sent by Younghusband to the Alichur Pamir, was subjected to the indignity of actual arrest. His release was eventually procured, and he returned to duty undeterred by his unusual experience. In due course both these instances of extreme high-handedness were to form the subject of a vigorous protest by the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, and tardy amends by the Foreign Minister, de Giers.

Before he left, Younghusband was shown a map in which a large area of the Pamirs was shown as Russian. Their claims covered Shignan, already occupied by the Afghans, and Roshan, as well as Rangkul and Aksu valley. Tash Qurghan was

obligingly left as Chinese, but the future of Taghdumbash was undecided. Once again, Younghusband pointed out the errors of Russia's territorial pretensions. This blatant Russian attempt to claim territory beyond the accepted limits of their empire got no further than Bozai Gumbaz. Younghusband's report eventually reached Calcutta, from where the Viceroy telegraphed the Secretary of State for India: 'It is, however, clear that Russia's attempt to occupy the northern part of Afghanistan or any part of the Great Pamir lying south of the Oxus is clearly opposed to the 1873 Agreement and to subsequent undertakings. We regard with serious apprehension Russia's attempt to encroach upon territory in the vicinity of the Pamirs, hitherto regarded as Chinese, especially in the Hunza direction.'<sup>28</sup>

It was subsequently found that Bozai Gumbaz was a few miles beyond the Afghan border of Wakhan, in what the Government of India preferred to call "no-man's land". Younghusband's reaction to this discovery has not been disclosed by the records of the *contretemps*. The irrepressible Manners-Smith, who was officiating for Durand at Gilgit, sent off a letter by *dak* to Younghusband, who by then was somewhere in the Chinese Pamirs, advising him to break parole and deliberately violate the undertaking he had given to Yonoff not to cross certain passes. General Lockhart and the Foreign Secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand, could not conceal their extreme annoyance. Such a proceeding would have been thoroughly un-British, and they were confident that Younghusband would be impervious to the young man's unwise suggestion. Characteristic of the Raj was the decision not to make a reference to it in the despatch to Whitehall, so that he was saved from official disapprobation. He was soon to win the Victoria Cross for his exceptionally courageous action in the operations against Hunza and Nagar. Ten years later Curzon castigated Manners-Smith for stupidity, but not so long after that he was sending despatches of a more sober character from the Residency at Kathmandu.

Younghusband's despatches from "no-man's land" touched off alarms in Calcutta and London. Plenipotentiaries at St. Petersburg and Peking made urgent calls at the foreign offices to which they were accredited. The humble Macartney, ploughing a lonely furrow at Kashgar, activated his Chinese *munshi*, his news writer in Sarikul, a horde of paid informers and local gossips.

His Kashgar Diaries and News Reports bulged as never before with disturbing titbits and dire predictions. Captain Francis Younghusband, already a celebrity honoured as a Commander of the Indian Empire, lent the great weight of his authority to the deepening conviction that Russia's moves portended a direct thrust aimed at the marches of the Indian empire, over the Kilik and Mintaka passes, and down the Hunza valley. In the Foreign Department, these forebodings were transmuted into a firm resolve to frustrate 'their knavish tricks' and to erect impenetrable diplomatic and military barriers around the empire. The Kirghiz, fleeing from the northern Pamirs, had sounded the alarm just as ominously as barking deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*) jinking away from the prowling leopard.

There was an immediate flurry of telegrams. To the empire builders it was clear that the era of exploration had given way to imperial expansion in the Kirghiz "no-man's land". British policy at this juncture can best be described as one of consolidation. It had three distinct elements: firstly, an unambiguous reassertion of British authority in Hunza; secondly, an attempt to interpose the Chinese between their Indian dominions and the Russian Empire; and thirdly, opposition to Russian expansion by demarcating a boundary line through the Pamirs from Afghan Wakhan to the western limits of Chinese territory.

Once again it was Younghusband's opinion that carried weight with Calcutta and Whitehall. In the "no-man's land" he had been the explorer and empire builder par excellence. Petrovski had told him during his stay at Kashgar that the Chinese claimed both the Pamirs and Kanjut. 'But on the other hand if we (the British) definitely annex Hunza to Kashmir, as he is very fond of telling me we should do, a favourable excuse would be at hand for the Russians to annex the Pamirs. 'For', they would argue, 'the Chinese have just as much right to Kanjut as they have to the Pamirs, and if the English take the former, why should not we take the latter.'<sup>29</sup>

Younghusband reasoned that the Afghan-Chinese boundary in the Pamirs should be fixed, so that Russia's advance through the Pamirs was checked, before the British involved themselves in a determination of the Sino-Kashmir boundary. "Then afterwards, when we have got the Afgho-Chinese boundary fixed and have

done all that we well can do towards keeping the Russians off the Hindu Kush, we can, if necessary, take up the Hunza question.<sup>30</sup> The latter would necessarily involve consideration of the boundary between Kashmir and China's New Dominion to the north.

The Government of India readily agreed. They proposed a Russo-Chinese boundary line in the Pamirs based on Younghusband's explorations and findings. The India Office as well as the Foreign Office agreed without demur, and approved a Memorandum proposed to be sent to the Chinese government. The origins of the Pamir Delimitation Commission of 1895 between the British and the Russians can perhaps be traced back to the contretemps at Bozai Gumbaz and the promptings of the British frontiersman who was its unintended victim.

As for the Chinese buffer, that proved much more elusive. The Chinese initiated some moves of their own. Younghusband reported that they had sent an official to assert their authority in the Pamirs, and to build a fort, or a boundary pillar, at Somatash on the Alichur Pamir.<sup>31</sup> However, these measures proved as fragile as a bamboo curtain. General Chang, who was registering a presence there, could do no more than protest when a column of 200 men, commanded by Yonoff himself, swept through, with half going on to the Alichur Pamir and the rest to the Little Pamir. With just ten soldiers to back him, and 20 somewhere on the Pamirs, there was little else Chang Titai could do.<sup>32</sup>

But British diplomacy rose to the occasion, making a vigorous attempt to stiffen the bamboo curtain. In a despatch to the Foreign Office from Peking, Walsham urged that the Chinese government should be persuaded to occupy the Alichur Pamir. If the Russians found no indication of Chinese authority there, they could claim it as "no-man's land",<sup>33</sup> and therefore, up for grabs. Walsham's telegram is dated 29th July. Whitehall was able to send him instructions almost at once. The Secretary of State for India telegraphed the Viceroy on 31st August: 'With reference to your secret telegrams of the 26th, 28th and 29th instant respecting the Pamirs . . . Sir J. Walsham has been instructed to impress again on the Chinese Government the importance of effectively occupying the position it claims.' The telegram added something less likely to appeal to the Chinese. Their Legation in

London 'has been informed that Kanjut is held to be within the sphere of influence of the British Government'.<sup>34</sup> Welcome or not, Whitehall could not afford to leave any loophole unplugged.

A start had been made with the first two prongs of British policy. In respect of Hunza the assertion of exclusive British interest was calculated to remove all uncertainty about that State's position. The second of these, activating an effective Chinese presence in the Pamirs, proved to be long-drawn-out, intractable, and, in the end, inconclusive. As for the third, many more moves and counter-moves would have to be made before the threat of Russian expansion towards India was satisfactorily contained. The biggest threat of all was the feared collapse of Chinese authority in the New Dominion, and with it the removal of the buffer on which the British had pinned their hopes.

#### 6. *August 1891: A Mini-Crisis*

That India was deeply embedded in the Russian psyche was unquestionable. If Younghusband could arrange a magnificent piece of theatre to impress the Shahidula Kirghiz, Grombchevsky was not lacking in the arts of presentation. He had once said to Younghusband: 'You English perhaps don't believe that we really want to advance on India, but I can tell you that this is the ambition of every officer and man in the Russian Army'; and then, calling up his Cossacks, he asked them if they would like to march on India, and of course they all shouted 'Yes'.<sup>35</sup> Policies admittedly were formulated in chancelleries, but very often these sedate institutions were driven on by such celebrated protagonists as Grombchevsky and Younghusband.

Wherever he happened to be, Younghusband had regularly reported his conversations with Grombchevsky, Yonoff and Petrovski, who might be described as extreme proponents of Russia's forward policy in the Pamirs. These were equally regularly forwarded by the Foreign Department in Calcutta to his own Intelligence Directorate in the Quartermaster-General's Branch, to the Secretary of State in London and from thence across the way to the Foreign Office. Younghusband had formed tentative estimates of Russian forces and the weakness of the bamboo curtain through which they tore at will. Further details had been provided by Macartney in Kashgar. Though there had

been no clear indication so far of the scale of a possible Russian intervention, or anything like a definite Russian design on the British sphere of influence south of the Hindu Kush, by August 1891 Whitehall was convinced that they meant business.

Whitehall had its own sources too. On 16th July the Secretary of State telegraphed the Viceroy that information, 'believed to be worthy of credit', had been received that a force of 600 Russian cavalry and infantry, probably under Grombchevsky, 'are engaged in an expedition, with a view to seizing the Pamir plateau, in order to take possession of half a dozen of the forts which command the passes into the mountains'.<sup>36</sup> De Giers, the Russian Ambassador at the Court of St. James, tried to allay British fears by revealing that 80 infantry had left for the Pamirs to observe Afghan and Chinese moves there, and for 'shooting game for rifle practice'. In an area that was virtually uninhabited and totally lacking in communications other than *dak* runners, who could tell the difference between baseless rumour and clever camouflage? Shooting game was a conventional ruse; and somewhere, not very far behind, were others for whom no plausible disguise was possible. The Russian Ambassador at London consistently maintained that there were well under 1,000 men involved, though the Afghans, who came across the Russians in the Pamirs, put their strength at 2,000 men with 12 guns. Lord Roseberry's pithy comment sums it up: 'The difference is not very material, as for purposes of exploration 1,000 men with 2 guns are no more requisite than 2,000 men with 12.' In subsequent correspondence, Morier's elegant phrase of "*promende militaire*" became the accepted description of the Russian probe in the Pamirs in the summer of 1891.

Initially, Younghusband's reading of the situation was more realistic. On 22 January 1891 he wrote to Cuningham, in Calcutta's Foreign Department, that though Russia had made great progress in Central Asia, he was convinced that they were far from being as strong as was generally supposed. He advised that the British should adhere to the 1873 Agreement and adopt what he called 'a high tone' with Russia, and 'show a front' if they attempted to make further demands in the Pamir region.<sup>37</sup> The bear might growl, but it would turn back. In August itself, at the height of the "crisis" he conceded that though it looked as if the Russians meant to annex the Pamirs, 'it is possible that the

whole thing may be a piece of brag which the winter will soon chill down'.<sup>38</sup> A shrewd judgement, as it transpired; but, at the time, it was difficult to be certain.

The mini-crisis reached a peak in the last week of August. There was an unusual flurry of telegrams between Calcutta, London, St. Petersburg and Peking. The first shot was called by the Viceroy on the 26th. He informed the Secretary of State that instructions had been given to the Kashmir Resident that if parties of what was now described as the Russian expedition in the Pamirs should attempt to cross the Hindu Kush into Chitral or Hunza, they were to be told to withdraw. If they persisted in forcing their way down any valley south of the range, they were to be opposed, 'in any way that may be possible'.<sup>39</sup> A threat to resist such parties by force was clearly implied.

In Whitehall there was a striking degree of unanimity. Lord Cross, the Secretary of State for India, immediately sought the Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury's approval. It was of the utmost importance, he said, 'that any attempt on the part of Russian armed, so-called exploring parties to penetrate into these districts should be in the last resort resisted by force, if all other means fail to induce them to retire, and His Lordship proposes, with the concurrence of Lord Salisbury, to inform the Marquis of Lansdowne that the instructions which have been issued for this purpose are approved by Her Majesty's Government'.<sup>40</sup> (Lansdowne was then the Viceroy.) Lord Salisbury's concurrence was available the same day, on 31st August. With it was enclosed a copy of a telegram of the 30th which had been sent to Walsham in Peking. According to reports received from Younghusband, the telegram informed him, Russian parties had been marching through territory claimed by China. Moreover, the Commanding Officer told Younghusband that he had instructions from the Governor of Russian Turkestan to annex it. Walsham was accordingly instructed to impress on the Chinese Government the importance of effectively occupying the positions which they claimed.<sup>41</sup>

Before the day was out, the Secretary of State for India had telegraphed the Viceroy approving his instructions to the Kashmir Resident. The telegram included information of the instructions sent to Walsham confirming the Government of India's position on Kanjut.<sup>42</sup> Simultaneously, Salisbury wrote to



Sieh Tajen, Chinese Minister at London: 'The territories of the State (of Kanjut) lie entirely to the south of the line of the Hindu Kush which forms the British frontier in that direction, and the State is held by Her Majesty's Government to lie within the sphere of their influence'.<sup>43</sup>

What was so remarkable was, firstly, the speed of the British reaction; secondly, the resolve to oppose 'Russian armed so-called exploring parties' by force if it came to that; and thirdly, the insistent advice given to the Chinese Government that they should effectively occupy the areas they claimed in the Pamirs, and on the other hand to take heed that Kanjut was in the British sphere of influence to the exclusion of any other. By any standard, it had been an unusually busy day, but the question remained whether it would be equally fruitful in terms of results.

At St. Petersburg, the British Ambassador, Sir Robert Morier, attacked Yonoff, the main culprit of the "promenade militaire", with the pertinacity of a terrier. The indignities which Younghusband and Davidson had suffered at his hands called for an official apology. De Giers, then Russian Foreign Minister, was divided by his sense of propriety and loyalty to his colleagues in the War Ministry. They would have none of it. Eventually, he agreed to a draft suggested by Morier for communication to Her Majesty's Government. But the expected storm in Parliament, which Morier thought would have to be cooled by an official Russian apology, never blew up. Salisbury decided to let the matter drop; honour was satisfied on both sides. There was still plenty of scope for Yonoff's military ardour. It looked as if the mini-crisis had blown over. There was now an opportunity to consider more deeply the two important questions of delimiting boundaries in the no-man's land eastwards of Wakhan; the second was the adoption of a defensive strategy against further penetration by Russia into Chinese territory and through that into the Indian perimeter.

During one of his visits to the Foreign Office in London, when the British were chafing over the incident at Bozai Gumbaz, the Russian Ambassador, de Staal, threw out a suggestion that such misunderstandings would be avoided if the frontier were to be properly marked out. Salisbury was not immediately enthusiastic; but, on reflection, recognized the need for what he

called a Joint Pamir Topographical Commission which would include historical and ethnographical matters. The Secretary of State for India telegraphed the Viceroy that on 5th March Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg had proposed to the Russian Minister for Foreign affairs the appointment of a Joint Topographical Commission, for delimitation of the frontier and collection of ethnographic and historical data. De Giers said he would send the proposal to the Minister of War with a strong recommendation.<sup>44</sup>

Morier had warned that delimitation could not be conducted successfully unless the principles on which territory would be assigned to either side had previously been agreed between the two Governments. It was on this unexceptionable principle that negotiations became involved in seemingly intractable argument.

Furthermore, although the Chinese government was not intended to be represented on the Commission, its boundaries were necessarily involved. As it turned out they themselves were not perfectly sure. The British kept closely in touch with them throughout, but the question remained whether the British could build a sound defence policy premised on Chinese friendship or even tacit cooperation. During the tortuous negotiations with Russia which eventually led, in 1895, to the establishment of a Joint Delimitation Commission, they made repeated approaches to the Chinese government to suggest a common stand in dealing with Russia's territorial demands. The Tsungli Yamen professed to be impressed. Tching Tchang, an experienced Chinese diplomat at their Paris Embassy who was specially deputed to St. Petersburg for the negotiations, was even more forthcoming, but they never really came off the fence. For them 'softly, softly catchee monkey' seemed the operative principle throughout. If the Russians were reluctant in the last analysis to embroil themselves with a neighbour with whom they had a common frontier of 4,000 miles, the Chinese walked as warily as pathfinders in a minefield. In the end the British attempt to enlist Chinese support foundered on the rocks of the Sikkim Raja's unreliability and the Lhasa expedition of 1904.

### 7. *Boundary-Marking in the Pamirs\**

The boundary talks that had been initiated at London and St. Petersburg after Yonoff's "promenade militaire" had to take two relatively recent precursors into account. These were the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1873 on the Afghan boundary with Bokhara and the Sino-Russian Agreement of 1884 regarding their common frontier in Turkestan. The need for a definitive settlement of a boundary in the Pamirs had arisen because these two agreements had been arrived at when information about the 'no-man's land' was incomplete. Younghusband's and Grombchevsky's explorations had done much to dispel ignorance. Both had produced maps. The Chinese too, though much later, in 1893, deputed one of their officials, Hai Ta-lao-yieh, to prospect the area. He was apparently assisted by a German surveyor.

Russian military activity in the Pamirs, in 1891 and 1892, was essentially an attempt to pre-empt other claimants of territory which they required to promote their own imperial interests. To the British government it was a transparent attempt to take possession of as many forts and commanding positions as they could so as to establish a *fait accompli*. Simultaneously, the Russians resorted to pressure as well as inducement to obtain concessions from the Chinese. Macartney reported from Kashgar that they wanted Tagharma and Yegin as a set-off against Kanjut's customary rights of cultivation in Raskam, and even threatened to occupy them if these claims were not conceded. In Peking, O'Connor, the British Minister, heard in diplomatic circles that the Russian government was offering China territorial compensation for a free hand in the Pamirs.<sup>45</sup> This compensation was assumed to be that part of Yakub Beg's possessions which was retained by Russia after his overthrow.

In his despatch of 12 June 1893 to Roseberry, O'Connor added: 'A desultory conversation on the subject of the Pamirs ensued (at the Tsungli Yamen), during which I endeavoured to impress Their Excellencies with the importance of the two countries acting loyally and firmly together in view of our common

\*To simplify presentation of this section references other than those conveying decisions or indicative of policy considerations have been deleted.

interest. . . . Their Excellencies expressed approval of this policy. . . . ' Such joint action might have been easier if the Pamir negotiations had been tripartite, as the British Government wished. Although it was assumed that this would suit the Chinese, the latter were under pressure by the Russians to settle with them bilaterally.<sup>46</sup> It transpired, too, that the Chinese were not disinclined to go along with the Russians, while maintaining private contacts with the British.

This delicate role had been assigned to Tching Tchang. At St. Petersburg he sought out Howard, who had succeeded Morier, binding him to confidentiality. The Russians, he said, were not prepared to accept the line adopted in the 1884 Sino-Russian protocol; and he asked Howard whether Sino-British delimitation of the southern portion of the Pamirs would be acceptable to the British government.<sup>47</sup> Colonel Elles, Deputy Quartermaster-General, had analysed the Sino-Russian Agreement of 1884 for the benefit of the Foreign Department in Calcutta. He pointed out that Article 3 delineated the boundary in the form of a triangle with its apex at the Uzbek pass. From there the Chinese line went due south while the Russian boundary extended south-westwards. Within the angle thus formed was an area which was neither Russian nor Chinese. From the wording of the Protocol itself it was apparent that the frontier was not conterminous south of Uzbek valley.<sup>48</sup> Drawing a line acceptable to both Russians and the Chinese was to become one of the major sticking points in the negotiations that followed.

Tching Tchang's suggestion about Sino-British delineation of the southern Pamirs tied in with information reported by Macartney from Kashgar. Hai Ta-lao-Yieh, the Chinese "expert", had been instructed to ascertain the boundaries of Kanjut, since that State was under the 'joint protection of the two Powers'.<sup>49</sup> What clearer indication that the Chinese would never cease harping on their suzerainty over Kanjut whatever the political realities of its being in the British empire?

An even clearer indication of the way the Chinese were moving appeared in December 1892. The Wazir Wazarat of Ladakh reported to the Kashmir Durbar that the Chinese had put up a large board on the Karakoram pass, facing south, with the Turki inscription: *Khan gha toba takhta*, which meant: This Board is under the sway of the Khakan. This was believed by the

British to have been done at the instance of the Russians; which, if true, illustrated that running with the hare while hunting with the hounds was actually the name of the game. Nevertheless, the British unswervingly held to their belief in the firm loyalty of the Chinese in what they saw as the common goal of resisting Russian expansion.

Their supposed loyal ally, Amir Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan, was causing them some anxiety on the other side. He had given the Russians an indication that as far as he was concerned the eastern tip of Wakhan was an open question. And this after a clash at Somatash with Yonoff's detachment in August 1892 in which 9 Afghans were killed. Controlling a political four-in-hand was proving a far more difficult business than the British had bargained for. It was possibly a sense of frustration, bordering on despair, that induced Roseberry to hold the view, as late as October 1893, that 'the waste, or common, of the Pamirs, if I may so express myself should be constituted as a neutral zone. 'Her Majesty's Government believe that this neutralized region would offer the best solution of the question, and that most likely to conduce to permanent peace.'<sup>50</sup> A kind of Pamir Switzerland was an attractive idea, though wholly unviable in practice.

Howard at St. Petersburg, to whom Roseberry's despatch was addressed, must have been well aware that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had been beguiled by a will-o'-the-wisp. As early as June 1892, Sir Halliday Macartney informed the Foreign Office in London that the Russians had rejected neutralization as impracticable. The Tsungli Yamen, he told them, had therefore withdrawn the proposal for neutralization which they had made earlier, and that partition had emerged as the only feasible solution.<sup>51</sup> It became evident, too, in the ensuing negotiations at London, St. Petersburg and Peking, that Russia meant to drive as hard a bargain as possible.

The intricate course of the negotiations is beyond our immediate purpose. Notice need only be taken of some of the highlights. What, to start with, were the aims of the three main parties, Russia, Britain and China? The Amir of Afghanistan's interventions, sometimes embarrassingly maladroit, were ultimately subsumed in the British role.

As the British understood the situation in the Pamirs, the areas in which the nomads roamed in a broad sense constituted a "no-man's land". Further, areas not specifically under the control of Russia, by virtue of conquest or annexation, or allotted to Afghanistan under the 1873 Agreement, belonged to China, as a kind of residuary legatee. Operating the strict logic of this conception, they ruled themselves out of such areas as Shahidula which, by the exercise of certain distinct acts of sovereignty, arguably belonged to the Kashmir State, whose territories they had bound themselves to protect under Article IX of the Treaty of Amritsar.

Basically, Russian claims derived from the annexation of Bokhara and Khokand. Unlike Younghusband, who had drawn a distinction between territory and people, the Russians viewed the area which had been occupied by the Kirghiz from Khokand as Russian territory. This in turn led to claims to a part of Badakshan, which brought them into conflict with the Afghans. So far as areas assumed to be under Chinese control were concerned, the Russian attempt was to tear down as much of the bamboo curtain as they could and to pressurize or induce the Chinese into a bilateral agreement on division of territory.

As has been noticed, the British reading of the purpose of Russia's militaristic ventures in the Pamirs was to grab as much as they could. The air was thick with rumours of impending conflict between Russian and Chinese forces. Were the Chinese making a stand at last? In a despatch of 4 August 1892, the Viceroy informed the Secretary of State that they were believed to be sending as many as 2,000 men to Tash Qurghan and Greater Karakul, while the Russians had actually despatched a force of 700 to Punea after taking Chinese-claimed Aktash. Yonoff was said to be marching with 500 men to Taghdumbash, and the unprecedented step had been taken to enlist the Kirghiz. Money, at any rate, was being distributed to them liberally. At St. Petersburg, Morier saw through their plans. 'The scheme accordingly gets clearer and clearer every day; the Khanate of Kanjut, well inside the Hindu Kush, has been designed as the "*tête-de-pont*" of Russian central Asian power in the far east.' It was precisely to nullify these Russian aims that the British had moved swiftly into Hunza in December 1891.

At last the Chinese seemed to be responding to the Russian

threat. Macartney reported that 200 men were being sent to Somatash and another 400 to Rangkul and Alichur Pamirs. Perhaps taking a cue from the Russians, they were said to be planning to raise a Kirghiz force. Speaking softly having proved of no avail, their local commanders were exchanging heated messages with the Russians. Macartney was convinced that a clash was imminent. The fat was dangerously close to the fire.

At this point, on 5 March 1892, Morier saw de Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister. Lord Salisbury, he told de Giers, had given careful consideration to the suggestion made by de Staal on 14 February regarding delimitation of the Pamir region. 'His Lordship has now instructed me to state that he entirely concurs with the suggestion, and is desirous to at once take steps for appointment of the British members of the Commission', which, he added, should be organized without delay.

In the diplomatic *pourparlers* that followed two further points were accepted. The first of these was that the Joint Commission should extend its inquiries to include ethnographic and historical data. The second had been settled earlier. Salisbury had informed Morier that the Russian Ambassador, de Staal, had agreed to a suggestion made by Morier himself, that there was little purpose in sending officers on the spot to carry out delimitation until the principles on which territory would be assigned to either side had previously been agreed upon between the two governments.<sup>52</sup> De Giers responded that he would send the proposal to the Minister of War with 'a strong recommendation'. The Viceroy was informed by telegram on 30 March. From then on the Government of India were very much in the act.

The Russian Ministry of War quite evidently had a will of its own. This had been demonstrated plainly enough by the activities of its agents in the Pamirs. The Governor-General of Turkestan seemed to be more responsive to the generals than to the soft-speaking diplomats in the Russian foreign office. Could credence be given to the assurances of the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs that instructions had been sent to Yonoff 'not to attack either the Afghans or the Chinese, not to enter Roshan or Shignan, and, especially, not to approach the passes of the Hindu Kush'?<sup>53</sup> It was soon apparent that if the dogs of war were being held on leash there was some pretty audible growling

on the spot. Allegations by both Russians and Chinese that the other side was sending in ever-growing forces continued to be made. There was even a clash between their Kirghiz subsidiaries, which, fortunately, did not boil over.

To the Chinese it seemed that the Russian object was clear. O'Connor reported to Roseberry on 6 July 1893 that when he called earlier in the day at the Tsungli Yamen, the Ministers had laughed at the numbers which according to the Russians the Chinese had put in the field. They had deployed nothing like that number. They added that the Russian Minister, Count Cassini, had frequently tried to dissuade them from entering into tripartite negotiations. China, he had assured them, would find it more to her advantage to deal separately with Russia. The Yamen pointed out that Russian complaints of Chinese troops being despatched to the Pamirs were merely a pretext to thwart the British proposal for tripartite negotiations and joint delimitation of the disputed areas.<sup>54</sup>

In London and St. Petersburg, British and Russian diplomats engaged in a trial of strength in the long-drawn-out negotiations. The Amir of Afghanistan found it difficult to restrain his curiosity. When he wanted to be posted, however, the Government of India told him that the discussions were at too delicate a stage for premature revelations. The British suggested a line eastward from Lake Victoria (Sarikul), in the same latitude, to the Chinese frontier at Aktash. The Russians pleaded inability to give a definite reply because of the Emperor's absence at Tsarkoe Selo. They were making good use of delay to intimidate, or entice, the Chinese into a separate agreement which would have thwarted the British purpose of closing the gap. A line was suggested by de Stall, on behalf of his soft-speaking Minister de Giers, which was totally unacceptable to the British government. More time was gained. The Chinese reading of the situation was characteristically realistic. On 6th July the Ministers at the Tsungli Yamen had told O'Connor that the line suggested by the British was unlikely to be accepted by the Russians 'as their object clearly was to get down to the Hindu Kush'.<sup>55</sup> It was not until the summer of 1894 that London was able to reveal to the Government of India the likely outcome of the Pamir negotiations. The main outlines were:



- (i) British and Russian spheres of influence to be divided by a line running east from Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier;
- (ii) the area to the north of the line to be assigned to the Murghab and administered by a Khan of Shignan under Russian influence;
- (iii) the area to the south, up to the Hindu Kush, to be assigned to Wakhan under the Amir of Afghanistan's superintendence;
- (iv) no military expeditions by the Russians and the British would be permitted in the intervening zone;
- (v) there would be no question of Wakhan, or any part of it, being assigned to China.<sup>56</sup>

Seeing the way the Pamir negotiations were being delayed, the British decided that no time should be lost in coming to a settlement with the Amir of Afghanistan on the Indo-Afghan boundary. With the home government's approval, Sir Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, was deputed to Kabul at the end of 1893. His small party won the Amir's confidence by travelling unescorted, recalling Younghusband's explorations in Kashgaria and the loneliest corners of the Pamirs accompanied by just six Gurkhas. Young Davidson, too, was unescorted when he was arrested by Yonoff. The superb confidence of these and other men in the borderlands, helped to bolster the prestige of the British empire in the years before the long sunset that followed the First World War. Immediately afterwards, Durand was posted as Minister at Tehran. He had left a mark on Indian frontier history that was not limited to the line bearing his name in the Indo-Afghan boundary settlement. The concept of a tribal territory, between the administrative boundary of the province (of Punjab) and the international political boundary, exercised a profound influence on subsequent British border policy, though it was itself foreshadowed by the Bengal Frontier Regulations of 1873.

Durand's concluding despatch covered twenty pages. The Russians, he recalled, had insisted on "literal fulfilment" of the 1873 Agreement. This involved:

- (i) surrender by the Amir of trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan, and

- (ii) surrender to Afghanistan of the portion of cis-Oxus Darwaza then in possession of the Amir of Bokhara.

He had been instructed by his government to assure the Amir that the effect of his withdrawal would be to give him a definite frontier on the north-east formed by the Upper Oxus, and that this part of the frontier would then be as secure as that formed by the Lower Oxus.

As far as it concerned the Pamir negotiations, the Indo-Afghan boundary settled at Kabul in December 1893, ran as follows:

Starting from Lake Victoria the line runs up the Oxus to its source, and thence southwards to the crest of the Hindu Kush range which forms the boundary between Wakhan and Chitral. The line follows the crest of the range as far as the Mandal Pass. It then leaves the Hindu Kush and is carried down to Chandak on the Kunar (Kashkar or Chitral) river along the waterparting between the Arnawai or Bashgal and the Almgai and Waigal valleys so as to leave within the Afghan sphere of influence all country inhabited by Kafirs except Arnawai of Bashgal valley which remains to Chitral.

With the Indo-Afghan boundary safely out of the way, the Pamir negotiations once again became of central importance. It was not like drawing a line on a blank sheet of paper. The imperial interests of the two Western Powers had to be reconciled with those of the Chinese, and these were far from clear. During the negotiations they reacted to moves by the two other parties rather than formulating a positive position of their own. Demilitarization of the area intervening between the Russian and British spheres of influence also nearly became a sticking point when the Russians attempted to interpret this as applicable to Wakhan.

The Government of India reacted with perceptible heat. In a despatch of 3 May 1894 to the Secretary of State, the Viceroy insisted on the right of military occupation up to the crests of the Hindu Kush and the right to send troops into Afghanistan. Her Majesty's Government were urged to insist on the Amir being free from Russian dictation as to how he might hold any part of his country. Thus the palpable Russian threat to Afghanistan was sought to be countered and British primacy in that country reaffirmed.

For some months in 1894, the bilateral though parallel

negotiations between Russia and China were threatened with stalemate. Both were agreed that the line would have to run eastwards from Lake Victoria, but wide differences soon appeared about the point where it should end and by what route it should get there. The Russian proposal produced a crazy zig-zag which the Chinese pronounced to be totally unacceptable. Evidently to bring pressure, the Russians alarmed the Chinese by informing them that they were about to sign an agreement with the British. At one stage Howard suspected some 'devilry' on the part of the Russian military to prolong things. This would give them an opportunity for more 'picnics' in the Pamirs in the summer.

The British Government endeavoured both to stiffen the Chinese and simultaneously urge on them the importance of an early settlement. The Foreign Office telegraphed O'Connor on 17th April instructing him to assure them of support in the negotiations, provided they were reasonable and were guided by British advice. They were told that it was an indispensable condition of British support that China should not bargain away her rights in the Pamirs to Russia for any consideration elsewhere. 'In our view the important point is that our frontier should meet that of China somewhere near the latitude of Lake Victoria or not much further south *without any intervening gap*.'<sup>57</sup> (My italics.) O'Connor had already attempted to convince them that Sino-British interests were 'absolutely identical'; both were equally anxious 'to block the possibility of access to the Yarkand Valley, from whence Russia could threaten India as well as the New Dominion'.<sup>58</sup>

At St. Petersburg, Tching Tchang was in despair. Howard reported that he was terrified lest later the Tsungli Yamen should pillory him for yielding to Russian pressure. The lot of Chinese plenipotentiaries at the best of times was no easy one. Ivan Chen's difficulties during the Tripartite Conference at Simla in 1913-14 resembled Tching Tchang's. There seemed no early prospect of agreement with the Russians. He was able to obtain a written assurance from them that their troops in the Pamirs would remain in existing positions pending conclusion of an agreement. He then left for Paris with evident relief.

Blocking the gap was precisely what the Russians tried every conceivable stratagem to prevent. They suggested a line from

Sarikul (Lake Victoria) to Bayik. The Government of India saw through this at once. In two successive telegrams of 3rd May, they pointed out that a line to Bayik would give Russia command of the roads running to Hunza, Wakhan and Sarikul, with access to Taghdumbash. As Russia had defined it, the British sphere of actual military occupation touched the Hindu Kush at Kanjut only, receding southwards from the range to go through Yasin, Mastuj and Chitral. It was not until 11th July that Russia accepted the British proposals, and this they did not in a note but through a verbal representation by de Staal when he called on Kimberley, who had succeeded Roseberry at the Foreign Office.

Kimberley set these terms out in a despatch to Howard the same day and sent de Staal a confirmatory note on the 18th. De Staal had accepted the dividing line between the Russian and British spheres of influence proposed by the British and withdrew the stipulation regarding military zones they had made earlier. The Russian government, de Staal had stressed, attached the greatest importance to the neutrality of the strip between the line running east from Lake Victoria and the Hindu Kush. 'It would', he had said, 'prevent immediate contact between the two Empires, and the Neutral Zone thus constituted would serve as a sort of large glacis to the Hindu Kush range, behind which the Indian Empire was protected.'<sup>59</sup>

This professed solicitude for the security of the Indian empire had not been strikingly in evidence in the protracted Pamir negotiations. Nevertheless, these were moving towards an agreement on the principles of a demarcation to be carried out by a purely technical bilateral commission. Salisbury's initial hopes that ethnographic and historical data would also be collected proved impracticable. The negotiations had been difficult enough without introducing additional elements that would have unconscionably delayed actual demarcation. In any case, as O'Connor reported in July, there had been no progress in the negotiations between China and Russia. Russian bluster and Chinese hesitations reduced the tripartite negotiations to a strained duet of the two Western Powers.

'As a result of the negotiations which have taken place between our two Governments,' Kimberley wrote to de Staal, 'in regard to the spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia in

the country east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul), the following points have been agreed between us' (encapsulated below):

1. the spheres of influence were to be divided by a line running from the eastern extremity of the lake, in an easterly direction, to meet the Chinese frontier;
2. the line would be marked by a purely technical Joint Commission;
3. the Commission would endeavour to ascertain 'the limits of Chinese territory in the vicinity of the line';
4. the two Governments would not exercise 'any political influence or control—the former (the British) to the north, the latter (the Russian) to the south—of the above line of demarcation';
5. the territory within the British sphere of influence between the Hindu Kush and the line would form part of the territory of the Amir of Afghanistan and not be annexed by the British Government.
6. the agreement was contingent on the evacuation by the Amir of all territories then occupied by him on the right bank of the Panja, and on the evacuation by the Amir of Bokhara of the portion of Darwaza to the south of the Oxus.<sup>60</sup>

Points of difference between the Russians and the British were finally cleared in March 1895. The composition of the two teams and the strength of their escorts were agreed. Allowing for about a month to get to their starting point, it was decided that they would meet on 22nd July. Major-General Povalov-Schveikovski led the Russians and Major-General M.G. Gerard, the British. He was assisted by Colonel Holdich, a highly experienced officer of the Survey of India, and Major Wahab. Characteristically, the Russians insisted on meeting at Bozai Gumbaz, but eventually yielded to British insistence on a meadow near Lake Victoria. The rigours of the journey of the British party from Gilgit may be judged from the death of 13 ponies on the Darkot pass and 52 cases of snow-blindness; but these casualties strongly suggest faulty planning.

It was thought that the actual demarcation would take a month and that the teams would be out before the first snows. They had been told categorically that they could not go outside the agreement, based on Lord Kimberley's letter of 11 March to

de Staal. Even before he joined his Russian opposite number at the meadow where the assignation was to take place, Gerard made an ill-advised attempt to raise a political question, which Cuninghame, then Foreign Secretary, firmly put down, dismissing it as a mare's nest. Characteristically, too, British and Russian names were given to some natural features. Zorkul, the most striking of all, was confirmed in the name of Lake Victoria. One of the peaks was named after Lord Salisbury, presumably in recognition of his having picked up de Staal's suggestion to constitute a commission, while the peak nearest the last demarcation pillar (the 12th) at the eastern end of the line was named after the Russian commissioner.\* Peak Povalo-Schveikovski, as we shall see, was to become one of the main points of reference in the subsequent British proposal of a Sino-Indian boundary. Empire builders feel entitled to such vanities. Gerard was feted in Russia on his way to England, and both sides parted in a spirit of camaraderie, stimulated by generous intake of vodka to celebrate an agreement that had settled precious little.<sup>61</sup>

Almost immediately thereafter, Russia, through her agents in Turkestan, started stirring up provocative incidents and making complaints against the Amir's officers based in Wakhan with the patent intention of justifying possible reprisals. The Russians also made plans to extend their railway system towards Herat. It was perhaps judged that pressures of this kind would make the Amir more receptive to suggestions for closer Afgho-Russian relations which were conveyed through a high-ranking Russian emissary. Could it be that there was much more than mere speculation in Grombchevsky's address at the Academy of the General Staff at St. Petersburg in 1891? The division of the Pamirs between China and Afghanistan, he had said, would inevitably affect Russia's interests; and though it would be impossible to quarrel with millions of Chinese, after delimitation with China 'there would be no difficulty in driving the English from the Pamirs', meaning, of course, their surrogate, the Amir of Afghanistan.<sup>62</sup>

That guardian of India's north-western frontier, for his part, got busy with something quite different. The two boundary settlements, in the Pamirs and along India, created an opportunity for which the Amir seems to have been waiting with some impatience. Before the year 1895 was out, Sipah Salar

\*See Appendices IVa and IVb.

(commander-in-Chief) Ghulam Haidar Khan was despatched to the valleys bordering the British protected state of Chitral with a mandate to convert the heathen Kafirs to Islam. The Kafirs\* resisted fiercely, but were put to the sword in their remote valleys. Those who sought refuge in Chitral were turned back. Driven to the wall, most of them submitted. An Indian Hospital Assistant at the Kabul Agency reported that 10,000 had been killed, and 'His Highness has been highly delighted at the prospect of the Kafirs embracing Islam'.

In Britain there was an outcry, and questions were raised in Parliament. Kafiristan had been transferred to Afghanistan under the Durand Agreement, but the Amir, the House was told, could not control the right of the Government of India to offer asylum to fugitive Kafirs in Chitral, so long as 'they do not violate the usual conditions attached to their reception'.<sup>63</sup> Parliamentary answers traditionally excel in the art of throwing a questioner off the scent. Kafiristan was soon forgotten. The boundaries were secure; that was the British government's prime concern.

The Russians and the Chinese, on the other hand, were nowhere nearer agreement than they had been at the start. Howard had kept Tching Tchang posted at St. Petersburg, as long as he was there, and O'Connor had tried his best to take the Tsungli Yamen along with the British. At one stage Howard optimistically reported that Tching Tchang had expressed 'his high approval' of the proposal so carefully pieced together by Lord Roseberry in his discussions with de Staal.<sup>64</sup> The effort had been in vain. The Chinese could not be induced to commit themselves; nor could they be pressured into yielding positions at a time when their political weakness after their losses in the Sino-Japanese War must have encouraged the Russians to believe that they could press home their advantage. Once again the Chinese proved their skill at preserving their gains for better days.

When Gerard was being feted in St. Petersburg, and Russians and British were all jolly good fellows together. General Kuropatkin, Minister for War, confided that during his governor-generalship of Turkestan he had recommended to his government the occupation of Chinese Turkestan, and nothing

\*Subsequently more considerately called Nuristanis.

could have prevented him. Though the British had succeeded in imposing a limit on Russian expansion in the Pamirs by stretching a line from Lake Zorkul eastwards to a point on the Chinese border near Aktash, British support for Kanjuti rights in Taghdumbash and Raskam gave the Russians a handle for making territorial demands on the Chinese in Xinjiang. Although these rights were of immediate concern only to the Chinese and the Kanjuts, they became the subject of intense controversy and prolonged exchanges between the British and the Russians. These issues were still unresolved when, a few years later, the far more complex problem of the Indo-Chinese boundary was taken up, and this at a time when Chinese authority had sunk to its nadir.

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## CHAPTER II

# Pamirs to Karakash

### A. BETWEEN THE KARAKORAM AND KUENLUN RANGES

#### 1. *A Highland Valley*

South-east of the Little Pamir, the pamir of Taghdumbash slopes away through the district of Sarikol and on to Raskam in the valley of the Yarkand river. Shaw translated Taghdumbash as 'the head of mountains', though in physical terms the valley is more like the tail of one of the thousands of fat-tailed sheep reared by its Tadzic and Kirghiz nomads. At the eastern end it meets the valley of the Karakash river, separated from it by an easily negotiable watershed. The entire drainage of the two rivers flows away northward into Xinjiang's Tarim basin. It is thus completely distinct from the Indus drainage. The latter originates at the foot of mount Kailash, from where it flows through Demchok to become Kashmir's river until it debouches into the plains.

As if to emphasize this long bean-shaped valley's distinctiveness, it is bounded on both the north and the south by great mountain ranges. To the south is the massive Mustagh range. Further along this becomes the Karakoram range, which is essentially a continuation of the same formation. The two together form the watershed dividing the two river basins. A far more complex mountain system faces the Mustagh-Karakoram on the northern side of the two intervening valleys, starting with offshoots of the Pamirs. Towards the east these join up with the Tien Shan or Celestial Mountains which lie between the Soviet Union and Chinese Xinjiang. The more modest Sarikol range falls away south-eastwards from the Pamirs, to

meet the other great range, the Kuenlun, which stretches away to 90° east longitude and beyond.

Two gigantic peaks, K2 (8,610 m) and Gasherbrum (7,821 m), form a conspicuous massif approximately half-way down the length of the Mustagh-Karakoram range. K2 has probably taken more lives of climbers than any other mountain in the world, but the saga goes on. From the Pamirs to the massif, the range is crossed by four difficult passes. The first two, the Kilik and Mintaka (4,703 m) lead into Hunza. This was the British Achilles' heel, which they sought to strengthen by blocking the Russians to the north of the Pamir delimitation line. Further east are the Khunjerab (4,700 m) and Shimshal (4,486 m) passes, the former now crossed by the Karakoram Highway. The range takes a distinct quarter turn to the east after the great massif and the Golden Throne north-west of Siachen glacier, and then leads on to the Karakoram pass. At 5,645 metres this is the highest of the passes across the range, though not the most difficult, despite the scarcity of fuel and pasture. In the summer this pass was the one that was most frequently used for the Indo-Yarkand trade.

Major Montgomerie, who was one of the pioneers of the survey of Kashmir's borderlands, described Sarikol at the head of the valley as 'a hole difficult to be got at from any side'.<sup>1</sup> All the approaches were extremely difficult, and strategically he considered it more of an obstacle than a feasible line of access to India. The British description of the valley between the ranges as a no-man's land, and Younghusband's remark that it belonged to no one in particular, were superficially apt. What they overlooked, however, was that this enclosed valley was the free-ranging ground of the nomads who had roamed there at will until the shadow of encircling imperialisms fell across its pamirs, river valleys and high arid desert.

The British in India viewed the return of the Chinese to Xinjiang in 1878 almost with a sense of relief. The inter-regional trade was resumed very much as before. The northern valley from the Pamirs to the Karakash did not lie on the direct invasion route from Russian Turkestan. British hopes rested on the Chinese, but there was always a nagging doubt about the ability of the Chinese to resist Russian pressure. In 1878, however, the evil day when Chinese rule in Xinjiang would collapse seemed far away.

## 2. *Shahidula—the Strategic Pivot*

In 1869 G. W. Hayward gave the coordinates of Shahidula as 36° 21' 11" north latitude and 78° 18' east longitude, and the height as 11,745 feet. It was situated in the valley where the Karakash broadened out and was thus relatively plentifully stocked with fuel, water and pasture. Shahidula was unquestionably the most important stage on the traditional trade route between Leh and Yarkand: a kind of marshalling yard where all the summer and winter routes met and bifurcated. It was pre-eminently an extended camping ground where man and beast, both wearied by their exertions, could be refreshed before they ventured further, whether to the north or to the south. It controlled the northern approaches to the routes across Changchenmo where traders would be forced to subsist on brackish water and only occasional pasture. If they took the old route they descended from the Karakoram pass into what Shaw called 'an ocean of ice far more worthy of the name than the Mer de Glace of Chamonix', and then had to make repeated crossings of the Shyok river.<sup>2</sup>

Though Shahidula occupied a roughly central position between the two ranges, it was much closer to the Kuenlun, and virtually on its southern flanks. The Chinese *Karawal*,\* or outpost, of Sanju was at the northern base of the Kuenlun, three stages from the pass of that name. The distance from Shahidula to the outpost was just 65 miles and the intervening pass was relatively easy. The Karakoram pass, on the other hand, was two thousand feet higher, and 79 miles to the south across an uninhabited and arid high desert. Most of the Kirghiz encampments were in the valley near the river or on slopes of the Kuenlun.

Politically and strategically, therefore, Shahidula was an area of vital importance. Any power, either from the north or from the south of the two mountain ranges, would have had to establish undisputed control of the extended camping ground to be assured of holding the territory between the ranges. Neither the British nor the Chinese had missed its importance, though the Chinese did nothing to occupy it until 1890, and that only

\* *Chatze* to the Chinese.

after it had been visited by Grombchevsky and, close on his heels, by Younghusband. Till then the enclosed valley between the Karakoram and Kuenlun ranges served as a natural buffer between Chinese Xinjiang to the north and Ladakh in Kashmir State to the south. With no one to stop them the Kanjuts from Hunza looked upon it as an easy raiding ground in which they could harass and rob the only occupants, the nomadic Kirghiz, at will.

The comparative logistics of holding Shahidula were brought out by Shaw during his journey to Kashgar in 1868, then by Ney Elias, and later by both Macartney and Younghusband. All of them agreed that the 240 miles from Leh to Shahidula were quite the severest continuous stretch of the route from the trading centres in India and Kashmir to Yarkand. Tankse, which was the last village in Ladakh where supplies were available, was 70 miles from Leh, and Shahidula another 170 miles beyond. Macartney noted that at some of the camps there was not a nibble to be had for his starving animals, while brushwood, locally known as *burtsi* (eurotia), was also extremely scarce.\* It was usually pulled out by the roots, which burned steadily, giving out intense heat. The country beyond the Karakoram pass was desolate beyond description, changing only in the neighbourhood of Shahidula in the valley of the Karakash.

According to Shaw, the high desert from the Karakoram pass to Shahidula was so inhospitable that the approach to the pass, though relatively easy from both sides, was littered with the bones of animals that had succumbed to the rigours of the journey.<sup>3</sup> From the north the Karakoram range itself was not a formidable obstacle. It stood out, he said, like the rim of a basin. The actual water-parting was further north from the pass, and the ascent to it quite easy and gradual. Travelling south over the pass, the route ran into difficulties of a very different sort. It crossed and re-crossed the Shyok river, skirted the snout of the Siachen glacier and made for the Khardung la before the exhausted animals staggered into Leh. There was of course a choice of the all-weather route to Tankse by way of Suget,

\*Called wild lavender by Shaw and Forsyth, though one would assume from their accounts that the resemblance was to the colour of the flower rather than the scent, if it had any.

Deepsang, the Changlang la and thence to Leh.

Indian traders, who for the most part used mules, had to let their animals out to graze when they reached camp. For them pasture was essential. Conditions were a good deal easier for the Yarkandis. Their pack animals were horses, for whom they carried grain. Even for them, however, a pause at the well-stocked camp of Shahidula was specially welcome before they set off on the next 79 miles to the Karakoram pass.

The logistics of trade applied with much greater force to considerations of defence. When, therefore, the British heard of a migration by the Shahidula Kirghiz after a heavy attack in 1888 by the Kanjuts from Hunza, they decided that the matter required investigation. What made it even more unusual was the report that the Kirghiz had appealed to the Chinese at Sanju for help, but had been told to fend for themselves. Captain F. E. Younghusband was sent by the Quartermaster-General's Branch for what was called geographical and political exploration. According to information given to him when he got there in 1889, many families had folded their *yurts*, packed their modest belongings and driven their herds of *dumbas*,\* yaks and camels back to the security of Sarikol. Only forty *yurts* remained.

During his travels in 1889 and 1890 Younghusband found that though the Chinese collected grazing fees from the Kirghiz and decided the few cases that arose in their own courts at Yarkand, their administrative presence did not extend to the south of Kuenlun range. In a letter of 26 August 1889 to the Kashmir Resident he wrote: 'In the former Chinese occupation the Kuenlun mountains (that is, the branch of them over which are the Kilian and Sanju passes) were always recognized as the frontier, and the country to the south belonged to no one in particular.'<sup>4</sup>

As in many other border areas, local administration was conducted through the traditional *begs*. Grazing fees were apparently paid by them when they went to Kargalik or Yarkand with their produce, which they exchanged for the minimal range of "consumer goods" they needed in their encampments. These would have included tea, cotton cloth, and perhaps the sustaining warmth of the friendly weed, *charas* (hemp). This form of

\*Fat-tailed sheep.

community organization still prevails in border communities where tradition has not been overlaid by the officious inroads of so-called reforms. It seems that an actual official presence was not considered a *sine qua non* by the Chinese rulers of Xinjiang. The symbol was enough.

The Dogras of Kashmir, on the other hand, were much more venturesome. According to Ney Elias, who was British Joint Commissioner in Leh from the end of the 1870s to 1885, officials of the Kashmir Durbar occupied Shahidula for twenty years after their capture of Ladakh in 1842. He did not cite specific evidence, but there is positive information that in 1864, after the collapse of Chinese authority in Xinjiang, the Wazir of Ladakh, Mehta Mangal, had a small fort built there. A Ladakhi named Ahmad, who was assisted by 34 others, built it of mud and the round pebbles found there in abundance.<sup>5</sup> The 'fort' was no more than an outpost or *chauki*. Though badly in need of repair, it was still in existence when Younghusband visited the valley. He paid the Kirghiz to get it repaired, and it was on one of its doorposts, as we shall see, that the Chinese put up a notice in 1890 proclaiming it to be their property. Soon afterwards they built a more imposing fort at nearby Suget.

### 3. *Shahidula during the Kokandi Interregnum*

A local dignitary who first expelled the Chinese from the city of Khotan in 1863 sent envoys to the Punjab government in Lahore and also to the Maharaja of Kashmir in an apparent attempt to win friends. But his hold on power remained precarious and he was ousted by the Atalik Ghazi hardly three years later. Soon after the Atalik Ghazi established his authority in the cities of eastern Turkestan he too sent envoys to India. On 28 March 1870, his envoy, Mirza Muhammad Shadi, was received by the Viceroy in Calcutta, to whom he 'preferred a request. . . that a British officer might be sent back with him, on a friendly visit to the court of the Atalik Ghazi, as an evidence of the friendship existing between the two Governments, and with a view to strengthen and cement it'.<sup>6</sup> The Mirza had with him a letter which he was anxious personally to present to the Queen, and also a request for the supply of arms. The Viceroy undertook to have the letter delivered; and, as for arms, the envoy was advised

to make such purchases as he could from local dealers.

The Government of India's response to the request for despatch of an envoy was very restrained. They did not wish to miss the opportunity to establish contacts with the new ruler, but were disinclined to elevate them to formal status. T. D. Forsyth, a senior official, was entrusted with this somewhat ambiguous task, and he was instructed to enter the Atalik's dominions only if conditions were peaceful and the ruler was there to receive him. He was joined in Ladakh by Shaw, and then began a series of misadventures which were to rob the visit of success.

For reasons which never became clear, the Kashmir Durbar's arrangements were a failure from the start. Fourteen days were wasted in the Changchenmo valley as pony-men, by paying bribes, according to Forsyth, kept slipping away. When the party left they were desperately short of supplies. Before they reached the Karakash valley, however, they were greeted by cheering news from the Amir's emissary, 'telling us that some 200 yaks, horses, sheep, besides fruits, melons and other good things were on the way to us'.<sup>7</sup> The Kashmir Durbar belatedly salved its conscience by sacking the Wazir, sending him to jail for a year and banishing him from the State.

From then on the journey became very agreeable, except in one important respect—there was no news of the whereabouts of the Atalik Ghazi. It transpired that he was campaigning in the east against the Tungans and that there was no prospect of meeting him. Forsyth stood firmly by his instructions and insisted on leaving. This he was able to do with the help of Tara Singh, a trader from Rawalpindi, who was well in with the Yarkandis. The party was soon back at Shahidula and returned to Leh by the most westerly of the routes across the Deepsang Plain.

Although Forsyth did not gain the principal object of his visit in 1870, the Atalik pressingly renewed his request in 1872 and again in 1873, through Syed Yakub Khan Toorah. This time meticulous preparations were made. A letter dated 18th July was obtained from the Queen which dwelt almost mystically on the advantages of trade. 'Your Highness', it said, 'had, doubtless, learnt that the prosecution of commercial intercourse with all parts of the world, by which civilization is so greatly promoted, is one of the most cherished objects of the British Government and



the British people'.<sup>8</sup> The Atalik could hardly demur, though it was evident that his anxieties were altogether different. The Russians had occupied Kuldja in the Ili valley, and the Tungans had not been pacified. His object in seeking British friendship was primarily political; he needed security, and the British had no apparent axe to grind.

But the Russians, always a jump ahead of the British, had quickly sized up the Atalik's situation and concluded a commercial treaty with him. Putting as good a face on this development as possible, the British envoy was instructed to assure the Atalik Ghazi 'that the conclusion of the Commercial Treaty with Russia is a satisfactory arrangement; and that the best guarantee for the peace and security of Yarkand lies in the cultivation of trade and peaceful intercourse with its powerful neighbour'.<sup>9</sup>

There was no doubt that this time the delegation to be sent would be given the status of a Mission. Forsyth, who was then Commissioner of the Fyzabad Division in Oudh, was appointed leader. Other members were: Lt.-Col. Gordon and Dr. Bellew, both Persian scholars, Capt. Chapman, Capt. Trotter of the Survey of India, Capt. Biddulph and Dr. Stoliczka of the Geological Survey. The intention was to survey the routes and carry out geological investigations as they went along.

Forsyth was given detailed instructions in the preparation of which the Foreign Department excelled. Nothing of importance was omitted. The mission's principal object was 'the conclusion of a Commercial Treaty with Yarkand, and the settlement of other measures proposed to the Government of India by the Atalik Ghazi through his Envoy and Plenipotentiary for the development of trade and the maintenance of friendly relations with that country'.<sup>10</sup>

Forsyth's instructions contained another important provision. He was to obtain, with the Ruler's permission, 'the fullest and most accurate information regarding the actual boundaries of the whole of the Atalik Ghazi's dominions, the state of affairs in the North-East provinces of Yarkand, and the territories bordering thereon, more especially the Ili valley'.<sup>11</sup> The Government of India's concern was attributable to Russia's known interest in that area. If conditions permitted, Forsyth was to return by way of the Pamirs and Badakshan. Shaw, who was the Joint

Commissioner in Leh, was to accompany the Mission, and to be installed as the British representative at the Ruler's capital, Kashgar, if this could be arranged in response to a suggestion by the ruler himself. Because of the onset of winter Forsyth had to return via the Karakoram pass and thus missed one of the most important duties of his assignment: the investigation of the northern borders of the Atalik's dominions.

The treaty was concluded on 2 ~~February~~ 1874 with only minor emendations of the draft. There was the usual secretariat nit-picking but the Foreign Secretary, Le Poer Wynne, and the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, considered the Persian version, which was the operative one so far as the Atalik was concerned, to be satisfactory. The appointment of a British representative at the Atalik's court had to be dropped and Shaw also returned to his post at Leh.

In deciding to negotiate a treaty for the promotion of trade and friendly relations with the Atalik, the Government of India, it must be presumed, were convinced that Kokandi rule would last. At the time they could not have guessed that the Chinese would be back in just four years. The British attempt came to naught, but had they not made it, they might have missed one of those chances which are rarely offered by the historical process. The Atalik's rule in Turkestan will be remembered as a tragically brief flicker of Uighur resurgence under rulers from Kokand.

To a large extent the inter-regional trade was independent of such changes in political fortunes. It was indeed affected by economic conditions and such fiscal measures as imposition of duty and a later temporary ban on export of hemp, to say nothing of the congenital rapaciousness of Kashmiri officials. Trade was in the blood of the Yarkandi merchants and the intrepid Indian traders of Kulu, Nurpur, Amritsar and Hoshiarpur. The profits were well worth the risk. Forsyth noted that trade had increased in the last three years before his first visit, and he attributed this to the various measures taken by the British and pressure by them on the Kashmir Durbar to check exactions by their officials. The Durbar's transit dues were abolished by the Maharaja in 1870. These encouraging measures were reflected in the figures of the value of trade in the last three

years of the decade:

1867	Rs. 5,54,945
1868	Rs. 10,38,401
1869	Rs. 12,91,587

The main exports from Yarkand were hemp, silk, shawl wool of the finest quality from Oosh and Turfan, followed by felt rugs (numdahs), carpets, ponies and even gold dust.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. *Early British Uncertainty about Shahidula*

The Chinese completed the reconquest of their former New Dominion in 1878. They had been deprived of it by the Kokandi revolt for a bare fifteen years. Before they lost it in 1863, their practical authority, as Ney Elias and Younghusband consistently maintained, had not extended south of their outposts at Sanju and Kilian along the northern foothills of the Kuenlun range. Nor did they establish a known presence to the south of the line of outposts in the twelve years immediately following their return.

Attempts to determine whether there was any kind of Indo-Yarkandi boundary, traditional or otherwise, were beset with a variety of difficulties. One was primarily political. Putting it in the simplest terms, in the absence of mutual agreement, a boundary could be said to exist between the known and conterminous limits of two neighbouring countries. The Chinese boundary was a presumptive one, and the official view in Calcutta was that the northern boundaries of Kashmir had never been defined. Aitchison, Foreign Secretary, clarified the Government's position in his minute of 7 June 1871: 'In paragraph 7 of our letter to the Punjab Government, dated 8th February 1870, we directed that, as the boundaries of the Maharaja's territories to the north and east have never been accurately defined, Government was in no way to be committed as to the boundaries of the Maharaja's possessions in any direction.'<sup>13</sup>

The question had arisen in connection with measures to promote trade with Yarkand under the Indo-Kashmir Treaty of 1870. This treaty had been negotiated by Forsyth shortly before his first visit to Yarkand. It sought to improve the trade routes, particular mention being made of the one through Changchenmo. A British Joint Commissioner, acting with the

Wazir of Ladakh, was made responsible for settling trade disputes and arranging for other matters arising within a two-mile zone on either side. It was specifically provided that this jurisdiction was without prejudice to the sovereignty of the Maharaja in the zone itself.\*

Major Montgomerie, whose knowledge of the border areas was unrivalled, was consulted about supplies en route. He suggested that a depot at Shahidula was 'no doubt a great desideratum, but as the Maharaja has abandoned his guard-house there, I do not see how it is to be carried out'.<sup>14</sup> Aitchison heavily underlined the point. The instructions to the Punjab government 'were framed with the deliberate object of avoiding questions like this, which, it was clearly foreseen, would be the immediate result of the survey of the (trade) routes. Any attempt to establish such a depot would at once raise the whole question of the boundary between Kashmir and Yarkand and give us a pretty kettle of fish to boil.'<sup>15</sup> But doing nothing about it did not mean that there was no frontier of any kind, or even perhaps a distinct boundary. Lord Northbrook's government merely wished to avoid getting involved. It suited the British to regard the entire belt of territory between the Kuenlun and Karakoram ranges as a no-man's land. Aitchison appears to have been amongst the first to have given currency to this expression. Thereafter it became an axiom of official folklore, being trotted out on every conceivable occasion by British officials disinclined to boil a kettle of fish.

Before the Indo-Kashmir trade treaty of 1870 came into force, the Maharaja's officials were unrestricted by British control and the north was open ground. There is substantial contemporary evidence that the Wazir of Ladakh stationed officials at the Shahidula outpost after it was built in 1864. The writer retained by the Government of India at Leh kept the Kashmir Resident regularly informed about happenings in the border area. On 24 July 1866 he reported that there were 'ten soldiers of the Maharaja stationed at Shahidula *on the border* of Khotan and Ladakh. (*Italics mine*). What is more, the Hajis and merchants from Yarkand complain loudly against the exactions levied from them by the Maharaja's men stationed at the posts of Shahidula

\*For text, see Appendix V.

and Nubra'.<sup>16</sup> Later in the year, when the Durbar's officials could not be maintained from their bases in Ladakh because of heavy snow, they were obliged to go to Khotan, where they were kindly treated by the Khan. On 14 November, the writer reported that heavy snow ultimately forced them to retire to Nubra in Ladakh.

Forsyth, who had the advantage, of being able to see things for himself on his way to Yarkand in 1870, came to a conclusion rather different from Montgomerie's. 'It would be very unsafe', he conceded, 'to define the boundary of Kashmir in the direction of the Karakoram. . . . Between the Karakoram and Karakash the high plateau is perhaps rightly described as rather a no-man's land, but I should say with a tendency to become Kashmir property.' He described Shahidula as the point where the new route via Changchenmo joined the old Karakoram route. '*Being the boundary of the Yarkand territory* (italics mine) we discharged all our Ladakhi carriers and porters.' Their baggage was transferred to animals provided by the Atalik's envoy; and 'on 7th August we commenced our march as guests of the Atalik Ghazi in Yarkand territory'. Nothing could have been clearer. Shahidula was the boundary during the period of indigenous rule in the former Chinese New Dominion. As they went along they passed, on the left bank of the Karakash, the *chauki* 'built of stone some years ago and manned by Kashmiri soldiers, but now entirely deserted. . . .'<sup>17</sup>

Two stages beyond Shahidula, as the route headed for Sanju, Forsyth's party crossed the Tughra Su and passed by an outpost called Nazr Qurghan (literally, look-out fort). 'This is manned by soldiers from Yarkand.'<sup>18</sup> Here we have an early example of co-existence. The Kashmiri and Yarkandi outposts were only two stages apart on either side of the Karakash river, the accepted boundary between the two States.

### 5. *The Return of the Chinese*

After their return to Xinjiang in 1878 the Chinese showed no inclination to extend their practical authority south of their outposts along the northern foothills of the Kuenlun. Ney Elias, who had been Joint Commissioner in Ladakh for several years, noted on 21 September 1889 that he had met the Chinese in 1879 and 1880 when he visited Kashgar. 'They told me that they

considered their line of "*chatze*", or posts, as their frontier—viz., Kugiar, Kilian, Sanju, Kiria, etc.—and that they had no concern with what lay beyond the mountains' (i.e., the Kuenlun).<sup>19</sup>

Elias qualified this by adding: 'Shortly afterwards, however, about 1881, they began to tax the Karakash Kirghiz, who live chiefly to the south of the Kuenlun, and thus showed that they did not adhere to the line at the northern foot of the range as marked by the above mentioned posts.' For all his ability, Elias does not seem to have perceived the difference between "taxation" of nomads and territorial possessions. As suggested earlier, the Kirghiz seem to have made payments of a sort when their *begs* visited the cities in Xinjiang. Elias' British background could find no other term for these payments than taxes.

Youngusband, who was unquestionably a more perceptive analyst of the borderlands, wrote in a memorandum on the northern frontier that though India had preferable claims to the territory, the people were subject to China.<sup>20</sup> He was expressing the dilemma of the Government of India in their dealings with border communities who had few clear ideas about nationality, allegiance and the like. Their principal concern was with their own security. They were quite ready to render to any Caesar who demonstrated a capacity to provide them with it. Turdi Kol, the Kirghiz *beg*, whom we have met earlier, assured Youngusband that the Chinese Amban at Kargalik had told him that 'Shahidula was beyond the Chinese *karawal*\* and belonged to the English, but refused to put this in writing'.<sup>21</sup> (Youngusband's italics.) Perhaps Turdi Kol was overdoing the point, but the information he gave was heavily underlined by the Chinese refusal or inability to protect the Kirghiz when the Kanjuts attacked them in 1888.

Youngusband brought out the distinction between possession of territory and the limits of authority in a letter of 26 August 1889 to Nisbet, the Kashmir Resident: 'In the former Chinese occupation, the Kuenlun mountains (that is, the branch of them over which are the Kilian and Sanju passes) were always recognized as the frontier, and the country to the south belonged to no one in particular.' After the Chinese reoccupation of Yarkand, 'no Chinese official or soldier has ever come across the

\*The Turkish word for outpost.

Kilian or Sanju passes, but a small merchant came about four years ago to examine the jade mines.\* The Chinese have frontier posts (karawals) on the northern side of the Kilian and Sanju passes, and these have always practically been considered the frontier'.<sup>22</sup>

If it served the British purpose to treat the territory between the two northern ranges as a no-man's land, the Chinese attitude to it was not strikingly dissimilar. This cosy arrangement was unexpectedly disturbed in 1885 by the Wazir of Ladakh, Pandit Radha Kishen. He started making plans to reoccupy the old Kashmiri outpost at Shahidula, but ran into an unexpected obstacle. Ney Elias, who was in Ladakh as British Joint Commissioner, raised objections. 'This very energetic officer', he wrote to the Resident, who duly forwarded the letter to the Government of India, 'wants the Maharaja to reoccupy Shahidula in the Karakash valley. . . . I see indications of his preparing to carry it out, and, in my opinion, he should be restrained, or an awkward boundary question may be raised with the Chinese without any compensating advantage.'<sup>23</sup>

In the circumstances, since Elias represented the Supreme Government, it was a relatively simple matter for him to ensure that the plans were dropped. He told the Wazir that he had reported against the scheme to the Resident, and pretty soon the Wazir assured him that he did not intend to implement it. Elias was also promptly backed up by the Government of India. A letter dated 1st September was sent to the Officer on Special Duty (as the Resident was called before 1885) instructing him 'to take a suitable opportunity of advising His Highness the Maharaja not to occupy Shahidula'.<sup>24</sup> Elias had already killed the proposal.

It was a kind of stalemate. The Kashmir Maharaja had been prevented from reoccupying Shahidula, while the Chinese, to all intents, had washed their hands of it. This remained the situation throughout the decade of the 1880s. But if the Chinese were disinclined to extend their practical authority, any dilution of its symbols was anathema. Turdi Kol, who had gathered the other *begs* and offered allegiance to the British through their chance emissary, Younghusband, had thereby committed the

\*These were near Gulbashar on the southern slopes of the Kuenlun.

unpardonable offence of flouting the sovereignty of the Khakan. He was seized and taken away in custody to Yarkand.\*

### 6. *The Boundary—Preliminary British Ideas*

Meanwhile, far away from the borderlands, a controversy raged in the Foreign Department in Calcutta about the northern border of Kashmir. Ney Elias' despatch of 26 July 1885 opposing Wazir Radha Kishen's plans to reoccupy Shahidula, went on: 'As to the boundary, I have often pointed out that, if the watershed of the Indus system be recognised as the limit of the Raja's territory, it will be sufficient for all practical purposes for years to come, and no demarcation is necessary.'<sup>25</sup> What Elias was suggesting was a natural boundary based on the water-parting, not the boundary tacitly accepted by the Andijanis as well as the Chinese up to 1890.

Elias himself recalled that, following his mission to Kashgar in 1873-74, Forsyth 'recommended the Maharaja's boundary to be drawn to the north of the Karakash valley as shown in the map accompanying the mission report'. Elias' reasons for suggesting a boundary that went against the situation on the ground and the recommendations of Sir Douglas Forsyth, who had been directed by the Government of India to ascertain the boundaries of the Ruler of Yarkand, seem to have been prompted, at least partly, by his ill-concealed contempt for the Ladakh Wazir's plans. These had been motivated by the discovery of a lapis lazuli mine near Shahidula, by a Pathan from Bajaur, not a Kashmiri, as if the nationality of the finder had anything to do with rights to the territory. Lapis lazuli, he pointed out, had no value at the time. 'So the only reason for raising the question is a worthless one, and prompted only by the usual Kashmiri greed for everything they can lay hands upon.'<sup>26</sup>

At the time ~~Elias~~ made his proposal of a boundary of convenience he was perhaps the leading British authority on the trans-Karakoram territories. The arguments he adduced in support of his proposals, on strategic, political and economic grounds, were undeniably weighty. Shahidula, he argued, was much too far from Leh to be held effectively. The distance of 240

\*And not released until four years later.



miles included five major passes, which cut it off completely in winter. On the other hand the first Chinese outpost was only 65 miles to the north, with just one relatively easy pass between. And, finally, the attempt to occupy Shahidula would provoke a controversy with the Chinese, 'without any compensating advantage'. The simplicity of his proposal instantly appealed to officialdom in the Foreign Department. As one of them noted: 'A line painted along the water-parting in the official maps is all that would be required.'

But there were other problems as well. According to Trotter, who had surveyed the area intensively when he accompanied Forsyth's Mission in 1873-74, the most westerly of the routes northward from Changchenmo 'skirts the western border of the gently undulating Lingzithang plain, in traversing which the traveller crosses, almost without knowing it, the watershed between India and Central Asia'.<sup>27</sup> Evidently, therefore, there were other factors to be considered before the Karakoram range could be taken as the boundary. Nevertheless, Elias' view became accepted wisdom in government circles and was often cited as authority.

From Leh, Elias was posted to the Foreign Department itself where he was able to add a wrinkle or two to his thesis. His persuasiveness overcame any doubts which might have lingered in official circles, and he was able to rout his successor in Leh, Captain Ramsay, who vigorously advocated what might be called a forward policy. In a letter of 27 September 1886 to the Resident, Ramsay suggested that the frontier should be settled at Shahidula and not at the Karakoram pass. The territory between the two should be kept devoid of good communications, as a barrier against Russian aggression, thus giving the British possession of the entrance from the direction of Yarkand of the several Changchenmo routes towards India.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from strategic considerations, Ramsay was convinced that his proposal was justified on merits. He pointed out that though General Cunningham's map marked the frontier at the Karakoram watershed, the 6th edition of the map of Turkestan showed the frontier at Aktagh, midway between Shahidula and the Karakoram pass, while the Ladakh Gazetteer maintained that Shahidula lay on the frontier of the two territories of Ladakh and Yarkand. In support of this he cited the fact that the Forsyth

Mission to Kashgaria in 1873 had been met by the Atalik Ghazi's representative at Shahidula. It did not occur to Ramsay that a reception party would of necessity wait where it was possible to do so. They could not have camped at the top of the Karakoram pass or anywhere in the vicinity, cut off from supplies, until the British representative and his entourage made a possibly belated appearance.

While Ramsay's letter was being considered, the Government of India recalled the decision it took in 1885 negating the Ladakh Wazir's proposal to reoccupy Shahidula. This decision was reaffirmed and fresh instructions sent to the Kashmir Resident in a letter dated 9 April 1887.<sup>29</sup> The noting in the Government of India's file reveals the extent of Ney Elias' great influence:

As to the boundary of the Kashmir State on the Karakoram Range, it has been officially declared to be undefined, and, as Mr. Elias wrote in 1885, there can be no advantage in raking up a boundary dispute now with the Chinese. The order of 1875 and the orders of 1885 about Shahidula may be referred to, and the Resident may be informed that the Government of India do not desire to take up the Boundary question.

Ramsay evidently was a man of strong convictions. He returned to the attack in a letter forwarded by the Resident on 23 February 1888. His main argument was that the question of the northern frontier of Kashmir had ceased to be one that affected the Durbar alone; it was an imperial question. No time should be lost in demarcating the future frontier between England and Russia while the British had only China to deal with. Since British and Chinese interests were identical, it would be mutually advantageous for them to adopt a conterminous frontier whereby China would be made a party to resisting Russian aggression in this quarter.

The Foreign Department observed that Elias' arguments had lost none of their force. At some point, even if not now, it would be necessary to negotiate an agreed boundary with the Chinese. Entering debatable territory between the two northern ranges was not quite the best way of preparing the ground. When the matter was put in this way to the Foreign Secretary Sir Mortimer Durand, he minuted: 'It seems to me that it would not be

desirable to run the risk of a troublesome controversy with China in order to push a Kashmiri post beyond the Karakoram, with the object of forestalling Russia when she succeeds the Chinese in Yarkand. I would let the matter drop.' Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy, signed in token of assent.<sup>30</sup>

By any standard this was an extraordinary position for the Government of India to take. Their decision made sense only if the other side was equally restrained. And what guarantee could there be of that? What it amounted to was that, for the time being at any rate, the boundary question could be willed away simply by refusing to look at it. The Indo-Chinese border was officially recognized to be undefined; Russian agents were known to be prospecting the no-man's land between the northern ranges, and going on towards Tibet, and all the while the Government of India maintained that Britain and China had a mutual interest in resisting further Russian expansion. Without being excessively squeamish about it, the Chinese Empire was weak and vulnerable. It would seem in retrospect that such a favourable set of circumstances for negotiation of an Indo-Chinese boundary, along a mutually acceptable alignment, was unlikely to recur. Even if it was to be the Karakoram watershed, as Elias consistently advocated, there could hardly have been a better time. The question was simply brushed aside. Quite evidently, Ney Elias had been completely successful in winning over the Foreign Department to his view about the futility of raking up a boundary question with the Chinese when there need not have been any dispute.

### *7. Divided Counsels in Calcutta*

While Younghusband was prospecting trans-Karakoram territories during his first mission in 1889, he sent a despatch dated 26 August 1889, making mention of an English map which had reached the Chinese Governor-General at Urumtsi. A Yarkandi, who had picked up some knowledge from Indian surveyors, had translated the names into Chinese. According to this map, all the water on one side of the Karakoram mountains went to India, 'and all on the other side to Chinese Turkestan, and that therefore all the northern side of the Karakoram range belonged to China'.<sup>31</sup>

Elias had a ready explanation. He noted on 21 September that when he had been at Yarkand in 1880 he gave the Chinese Amban certain maps. Two years later, when Dalglish\* was there, the Amban got him to trace one of them, the Amban putting in the names in Chinese. 'I do not recollect that it contained any indication of our frontier. . . . The matter is not of much importance, but all I wish to show is that, as far as I am aware, we have never given the Chinese any special indication of what we regard as our frontier'.<sup>32</sup> He also fired another well-aimed shot in the controversy between forwardists and adherents of the less adventurous view that the Karakoram range, politically and strategically, was the only feasible boundary. 'What I have often suggested—and would again suggest—is that Government should adopt, once for all, the Indus water-parting from Hunza in the west to where it cuts the Independent Tibet frontier in the east.' Other questions, which Younghusband was very much concerned about, such as protection of the Kirghiz and the trade routes, could be dealt with separately.<sup>33</sup>

No one seems to have questioned Elias' judgement on what he regarded as separate issues. They were in fact completely integral to the central issue of the boundary. If the British withdrew to the Karakoram boundary, protection of the Karakash Kirghiz and security of the routes beyond the Karakoram would automatically pass out of their hands. Moreover, he did not specify the point where the line he suggested should cut the Tibet frontier in the east.

Ney Elias must have discussed this matter with his colleagues in the Foreign Department, for his note of 21 September 1889 went on confidently: 'The Secretary, I believe, agrees with this view, but we have not yet recorded it officially in any document or map. I have marked it in red chalk on the sheet of the Turkestan map in file, to show how it would run.'

The note was initialled on 28 September by Lansdowne, Dufferin's successor, who went on to record a minute which must be regarded as a masterpiece of equivocation for anyone who held the high office of Viceroy. He agreed that a decision would have to be taken 'as to the line which our frontier or the limit of our influence should follow in the region beyond

\*A British trader, thought to have been a secret agent.

Kashmir and Ladakh'. However, he felt that Younghusband's further reports should be awaited before the Government took any decisive step. He went on:

The agreement (meaning the consensus in the Foreign Department) certainly seems to be in favour of excluding foreign influence from the country south of the Karakoram range as far as (approximately) the 79th parallel. We might no doubt, if desirable, go further north without virtually encroaching on any other power, but we should gain nothing by pushing forward to Shahidula, even if no objections were to be raised on the spot. The country between the Karakoram and Kuenlun ranges is, I understand, of no value, very inaccessible and not likely to be coveted by Russia. We might, I should think, encourage the Chinese to take it, if they showed any inclination to do so. This might be better than leaving a no-man's land between our frontier and that of China. Moreover the stronger we can make China at this point, and the more we can induce her to hold her own over the whole Kashgar-Yarkand region, the more useful she will be to us as an obstacle to Russian advance along this line.<sup>34</sup>

But, the Viceroy concluded, it would be necessary to address the Secretary of State, 'when our policy has been decided'.

Lansdowne seems to have forgotten that according to the Secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand, it was only a question of time before Kashgaria fell into Russian hands. So much for his view that the trans-Karakoram area was unlikely to be coveted by Russia. Nor does he seem to have had any idea how China could be induced to hold her own over the whole Kashgar-Yarkand region. That, surely, was something only the Manchu empire could do. The most charitable interpretation to put on this piece of viceregal thinking is that its author was a recent arrival from the world of diplomacy to the custodianship of the jewel in the crown. He was new.

It was quite evident that the Government of India at the time was afflicted by the disease of divided counsel which affects bureaucracies all too frequently. Here we have a middle ranking officer, Ney Elias, claiming that the Foreign Secretary agreed with his view that the Karakoram range should be adopted as the northern frontier of Kashmir, while the Secretary and the Viceroy, though disposed to agree, preferred to temporize before making a final policy decision to submit to the Secretary of State.

They took the easier course of putting off the matter until further reports were received from Younghusband.

Meanwhile, Ney Elias, who never seems to have missed a trick, wrote to the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, Col. Ardagh, on 30 September 1890, strongly advocating the Indus water-parting boundary line. Whether or not his views reached the Viceroy through Ardagh is immaterial. Lansdowne was no forwardist himself.

Elias' letter can be reduced to a few simple propositions:

- (i) There was no inducement for the Russians to occupy the no-man's land between the two northern ranges. It was uninhabited and, except for narrow strips along the watercourse, quite uninhabitable.
- (ii) If the Government of India decided to take over the no-man's land beyond the Karakoram range, 'we should have to open regular negotiations with China (the most impractical nation), and have a formal delimitation Commission to determine an artificial frontier line'.
- (iii) Frontier posts would have had to be set up at certain points, for example along the Yarkand and Karakash rivers. The Kashmir troops on guard duty there, Elias pointed out, would have been cut off from their base in Ladakh for five months each year. Supporting and provisioning them, even during the remaining seven, would have been enormously difficult.<sup>35</sup>

As for Russian interest in the territory, Younghusband was to report just a month later that he had met Grombchevsky between the Yarkand river and Taghdumbash Pamir. The Russian agent, whose substantive assignment was Governor of Ferghana, had already visited Darwaza, the Alichur Pamir, as well as the Great and Little Pamirs, intending to go on to Shahidula, and from there to Leh and on to Tibet and Polu.<sup>36</sup> The Government of India denied Grombchevsky facilities for travel through Ladakh on the ground that they had no authority to permit travellers to visit Tibet. Elias could not have been unaware of the activities of Russian agents, including Grombchevsky, in the borderlands. They were anything but innocent sight-seers. Elias' judgement here was clearly at fault.

Elias was equally out of kilter in his views about the

interposition of Sarikol. It was far from being a barrier against the Russians, at least until the Pamir boundary was delineated in 1895. The Foreign Department's current view was that the New Dominion was destined to fall into Russian hands like a ripe plum. On the other hand, Elias was prophetically right about the difficulties likely to arise if boundary negotiations were opened with the Chinese. Their elusiveness during the Pamir negotiations was still in the future, but the British could scarcely have forgotten the failure of their attempts, after Punjab was annexed, to jointly demarcate the Indo-Tibet boundary. The Chinese failed even to make an appearance.

No one in the Foreign Department seems to have viewed the Shahidula sector in the context of the entire northern frontier of Kashmir. It did not necessarily follow that because the boundary had been officially declared to be undefined a claim could not be made to the line of the Karakash river. Indeed, such a claim would have linked up with Hunza's traditional rights in the Taghdumbash and Raskam, the latter in the valley of the Yarkand river. The Kashmir Durbar had at least a colourable claim to Shahidula. They had held it for twenty years while the Chinese ruled the New Dominion. The Chinese had never directly occupied it, though, since 1881, they had taxed the nomads. Younghusband's view that the territory was India's though the nomads were Chinese subjects suggests that there was enough room for manoeuvre and negotiation.

The real force of Elias' case was that the Yarkand and Karakash valleys would have been extremely difficult to hold from bases in Ladakh in the face of a determined enemy. Moreover, if the Chinese had raised objections to the well-based Kashmiri claim to the Karakash river boundary, British occupation of the territory up to that line would have been certain to topple the apple cart in other areas where British and Russian interests had not yet settled in a stable equilibrium. After years of negotiation the British and the Russians had agreed in 1873 to a boundary between Afghanistan and Bokhara.<sup>37</sup> Affairs in the Pamirs were still unsettled, and any apparent accession of territory in the Sino-British borderlands would undoubtedly have provoked similar claims by the Russians; possibly to the recently retroceded Ili valley.

It was precisely because the boundary was an imperial question

that the Government of India were reluctant to raise a possibly embarrassing issue with the Chinese. British imperial interests extended as well to the eastern seaboard of China where they conducted an enormously profitable trade. There was no compelling reason to force the pace in the Karakoram-Himalaya, thousands of miles from the trading centres on the east coast. Nor was there any urgency about taking up confrontational positions on the Kashmir-China border. The "no-man's land" had served well enough so far. Till the British awoke with alarm to the imminence of Russian expansion towards their empire, brought on particularly by the Hunza troubles of 1889 and 1891, the existing state of things suited them as much as it seemed to suit the Chinese.

#### 8. *Political Control of the Trans-Karakoram Territory*

In his minute of 28 September 1889, the Viceroy, Lord Landsowne, threw out two ideas: the line of frontier, and the limit of influence. Though they are distinct from each other, and indeed widely different, it seemed that he used them synonymously. The confusion deepened because he went on to say that the general view in the Foreign Department was 'in favour of excluding foreign influence from the country south of the Karakoram range as far east (approximately) as the 79th parallel'.<sup>38</sup>

When these weighty matters were being considered in the Foreign Department, Younghusband was well away on his first mission to the trans-Karakoram territories. It must be presumed that before he left he had carefully briefed himself on the object of his mission. This was stated to be geographical and political exploration, obviously within the broad parameters of government's preference for a Karakoram boundary. Nevertheless, Younghusband could not disguise the objective fact that the Chinese considered the Kilian and Sanju passes as the practical limit of their territory, although they 'do not like to go so far as to say that beyond the passes does *not* belong to them. . . .'<sup>39</sup>

Nor could Younghusband forget his old friends, the Karakash Kirghiz. With a little financial help they had repaired the old Kashmiri fort at his bidding, and given him invaluable help on



his way to the Taghdumbash Pamir. 'It would perhaps be better', he wrote to the Kashmir Resident on 30 December 1889, 'to take them under our influence', rather than let them fall a prey to the Russians. The object, he pointed out, was to 'gain a strong political control over the tribes on our northern frontier'. This could be achieved by stationing a British representative at Shahidula and by giving the Kirghiz a hundred Snider rifles and making them responsible for the protection of the Yarkand trade route from Kanjuti raids.

His ideas ranged even further. Freed from the fear under which they had suffered for years, the Kirghiz could be expected to reoccupy Raskam in the Yarkand valley, 'so that we should have a populated strip of country, where none now exists, beyond the Mustagh mountains and the Kuenlun range'. The Russians, he emphasized, were extending their influence in the Pamirs. The Kirghiz were 'very loose in their allegiance to the Chinese and could easily be taken over in a quiet way by the Russians. . . . It would therefore be necessary for us to take timely measures to prevent the Russians making any further encroachment towards our frontier.'<sup>40</sup>

Younghusband's highly ingenious proposal reconciled a number of different purposes:

- (i) creation of a British zone of influence through the border tribes;
- (ii) protection of the trade route through the agency of the Kirghiz who would be made self-reliant by judicious assistance;
- (iii) forestalling possible Russian expansion; and
- (iv) taking advantage of the absence of Chinese control south of the Kuenlun.

Younghusband had done no more than take a leaf from the Chinese book. They had been very successful in tying border peoples with the silken cord of suzerainty without imposing an imperial system as close and restrictive as the British Raj in India. The British themselves had introduced variations of what might be called the Younghusband model elsewhere along the northern and eastern borders of their Indian empire. However, Younghusband did not go into the question as to whether the British could have taken the trans-Karakoram tribes under their

control, "in a quiet way". He was, in fact, ten years too late. The period of Ney Elias' 'ascendancy' in the counsels of the Foreign Department had created virtually insurmountable mental blocks. The Kashmir Resident strongly supported Younghusband's recommendations. But with Lansdowne as Viceroy and Durand as Foreign Secretary, until he left on his mission to Kabul at the end of 1893, the Foreign Department was unresponsive to the novel measures Younghusband suggested for indirect control of the trans-Karakoram territories. Moreover the presumptive basis for Younghusband's plan collapsed soon after he had suggested it when the Chinese themselves moved into the no-man's land. In 1890 it abruptly ceased to be that.

### 9. *The Chinese Move in*

Younghusband was wintering in Calcutta after his first mission beyond the Karakorams when a report was received that the Chinese had occupied Shahidula. The report had been sent by the Agency Munshi at Leh.\* An Afghan trader had arrived there from the Yarkand with the news. It was submitted to the Secretary, W. J. Cuninghame, who seems to have been officiating for Sir Mortimer Durand, with a note by the Assistant Secretary, which simply said: 'It doesn't much matter to us whether the Chinese assert their authority there, for at any rate it keeps the Russians out.'<sup>41</sup> Cuninghame signed without demur.

This brief sequence is of very great importance as it reveals the deeply ingrained thinking in the Foreign Department on the border question. It was like a conditioned reflex. Above all else the Russians had to be kept out. Occupation by the Chinese was

\*Agency Munshis, in such distant places as Kabul, Gilgit, Kashgar and Leh, established a unique record of loyal service to the British Government. They held the fort in the absence of the British Agent and were often called upon to fill in for him in times of crisis. Munshi Bahadur Ali Shah dealt with complaints sent to the Kashgar Agency by Captain Deasy from Polu when the Chinese authorities thwarted his attempt to get to Aksaichin. The British Minister at Peking was asked to intervene and a report sent simultaneously to the British Agent at Gilgit. A hospital munshi in Kabul sent information about the atrocities committed by the Amir's army in Kafiristan after its remote valleys were confirmed as the Amir's territory under the boundary agreement concluded in 1893. The news writer at Leh collected intelligence of events at Shahidula and Nubra during Andijani rule in Kashgar.

unobjectionable because this served the security interests of the British empire. However, the file was referred to Younghusband, who, in his very first note of 27 January, raised issues of which the Department itself should have been aware. Perhaps the principal disadvantage of Ney Elias' five-year-long dominance was that his single-minded insistence on a Karakoram boundary had inhibited consideration of the wider implications of a comprehensive border policy. It was Younghusband's great merit that he literally compelled the government in Calcutta, and, through them, the home government as well, to get to grips with all the related aspects of this vitally important matter.

Younghusband's initial note of the 27th was followed by a detailed Memorandum of the 31st. The overriding anxiety as always was to effectively exclude Russian influence from the threshold of the Himalaya. To do so, he suggested, it might be preferable 'that we should hold Shahidula and the valley of the Yarkand river, with the Kuenlun mountains as our northern frontier'.<sup>42</sup> However, if this were likely to cause a risk of serious complications with the Chinese, 'it would be better to leave them in possession of Shahidula', provided they could be induced to close the gap with Afghan Wakhan, so as to leave no debatable no-man's land 'on which the Russians could get a footing'.

Younghusband thought that Chinese occupation of Shahidula had been instigated by the Russians; but in this he was quite as likely to have been mistaken. His own visit to Shahidula, and the unusual events that accompanied it, culminating in the offer of allegiance by the Kirghiz *begs*, had more probably prodded the Chinese into acting at once.

In his Memorandum Younghusband pointedly raised the question whether the British should force the Chinese to retire and occupy the place themselves. The advantages and disadvantages of doing so were pretty evenly balanced. He conceded, too, that the British would not be able to hold an area so remote from their base in Leh in the face of invasion by Russia, and a retreat would be disastrous for their prestige. Moreover, 'we should also by now occupying Shahidula give greater offence to the Chinese than is perhaps justified by the corresponding advantages to be gained'.<sup>43</sup>

Shahidula could not be isolated from the rest of the northern border of Kashmir. Raskam, he urged, might actually be of

more importance. The Russians had turned their attention to it. Grombchevsky had visited Raskam in 1889, and if the Russians gained a foothold there they could outflank the British security position in Hunza. Timely measures were necessary to forestall any such move. Perhaps this could best be done by stopping Kanjuti raids into Raskam and helping the Kirghiz to populate the strip as a buffer against Russian penetration. This suggestion was reminiscent of his earlier plan of extending British control over the trans-Karakoram tribal areas. However, if the Chinese could be persuaded to establish posts linking their territory with Wakhan, the Government of India would have more solid assurance that Anglo-Chinese friendship and Chinese tenacity in resisting encroachment by Russia would serve their purpose of protecting India's northern frontier. Finally, if the gap in the Pamirs could not be blocked, 'we should at any rate close up our Kashmir frontier with Chinese Turkestan'.

To Younghusband more than to any other official of the Government of India at the time should be attributed the long delayed despatch, No. 87 of 14 July 1890, from the Government of India to Viscount Cross, Secretary of State for India, on border policy, and the first on the subject. He was not the author of course. The hand of W. J. Cuninghame can be seen in its cautious penmanship, but he had induced the Foreign Department to think more widely and constructively than it previously had done.

The despatch drew the Secretary of State's attention to two serious gaps on the northern border, 'to which . . . the Russians have turned their eyes, and to which they would doubtless wish to extend their influence'.<sup>44</sup> One was between the Karakoram and Kuenlun mountains, and the other in the Pamirs. As regards the former, although the Kashmir Durbar had occupied Shahidula for some years, the Government of India had been informed that it was now in the effectual possession of the Chinese. 'This being the case, we are inclined to think that the wisest course will be to leave them in possession, for, while on the one hand we should gain little by extending our responsibilities to the further side of a great natural barrier like the Karakoram mountains, it is on the other hand evidently to our advantage that the tract of country intervening between the Karakoram and Kuenlun mountains should be definitely held by

a friendly power like China.' As for the Pamirs, the Government of India felt that if the Chinese could be induced to assert their authority effectively in the territory up to Afghan-held Wakhan, the Russians would be prevented from encroaching towards the northern frontier of India.

The Government of India thought it would help if the situation was frankly explained to the Chinese government. It was hoped that they would be favourably impressed by the various actions taken by the Government of India to protect Chinese interests. They had resisted the Kashmir Maharaja's attempt to reoccupy Shahidula when the Chinese, by their failure to protect the Kirghiz, might have been held to have renounced their right to the area. In the meantime, the Government of India proposed to instruct their political officers in Kashmir that the line of natural water-parting, from a point near the Irshad pass on the west to the recognized Tibet frontier on the east, should be treated as the northern limit of the Maharaja's territories. Instructions to this effect were sent to the Kashmir Resident in a letter of 21 August.<sup>45</sup>

The despatch concluded with a suggestion that the British Minister in Peking should be requested to urge the Chinese government to agree to the appointment of an Agent of the Government of India at Kashgar or Yarkand. His function would be the advancement of British imperial interests in an important area where Russian influence was 'gradually supplanting ours under conditions which prevent us from taking any effectual steps for the advancement of our own interests'.

The Government of India's despatch rested on three principal presumptions. Firstly, the Government of India would gain little 'by extending our responsibilities to the further side of a great natural barrier like the Karakoram mountains'. Secondly, unreserved reliance could be placed on Chinese friendship to hold the territory between the Karakoram and Kuenlun mountains against any attempt by the Russians to penetrate the area. Thirdly, even the existing gap in the Pamirs would be closed to the Russians if the Chinese extended their authority to the watershed of the Upper Oxus, which they then appeared to be doing.

In fact the whole case totally relied on Chinese friendship. No evidence of any kind of unshakable Chinese friendship was

furnished. Nor was there any known instance of the Chinese coming to the assistance of the British except in the sense that by effectively resisting Russian pressure in Kuldja, and showing no signs of yielding anywhere along the Sino-Russian frontier, they could be said to be shielding Britain's Indian empire against the threat of Russian expansion. British illusions were carried so far that they completely failed to understand the significance of the Anglo-Chinese Protocol of 1890 on the boundaries of the State of Sikkim in the eastern Himalaya. The Tibetans had for years defied a suzerain whose practical authority had become largely nominal. By making an agreement with the British over the head of the Tibetan government the Chinese were asserting an authority they had virtually lost. Actual boundary definition, however, could not be completed for another six years because of Tibetan obstructiveness. The example of Sikkim simply did not apply.

And where did the proposed line end? While the western starting point, the Irshad pass, was definite enough, the Secretary of State was left to come to his own conclusion as to the point where it met 'the recognized Tibet frontier on the east. . . .' Did the Karakoram range run along the Aktagh range to the Kuenlun, and there, at some as yet undefined point, meet the Tibet frontier? And if the range should be assumed to drop to the Changlang range, there would still be unresolved difficulties. What is more, the large expanse of high-altitude desert between the two was, till then, undefined. It turned out subsequently that the Government of India's Survey Department was not able to furnish a clear answer to the Foreign Department about the terminal point of the suggested line.

While on his second mission, ~~Younghusband~~ found that conditions in the Karakash valley had changed completely. Writing on 20 August 1890 he reported finding an inscription on a doorpost inside the old Kashmiri fort to the effect that the place belonged to China.<sup>46</sup> Though no Chinese officials were there at the time, there were clear indications that the Chinese had 'definitely asserted their authority over this place and the valley of the Karakash river'.

Moreover, he was informed by the Kirghiz that the Chinese officials who had visited Shahidula declared that they considered the entire territory up to the watershed of the Karakoram

mountains to belong to China. They would have built a fort near the pass, but, since grass and fuel were not available there, had selected a site at Suget, 8 miles to the south of Shahidula, which was the nearest practicable location.

Younghusband had bowed to the wishes of his government with good grace. He concluded:

I understand that it is the wish of the Government of India that the Indus watershed, i.e., the Karakoram or Mustagh range, should be the limit of territories under its rule, while at the same time they would like no unclaimed country left between India and Chinese Turkestan. The present action of the Chinese shows that, in this quarter at any rate, their views are identical with those of the Government of India; and whereas up to last year we had on our northern frontier a strength of no-man's land, we have now the satisfaction of seeing this tract claimed by a friendly power, and the option is therefore left us of selecting, for the northern frontier of Kashmir, a well-defined and easily recognised natural boundary which, even in the event of Chinese Turkestan falling into the hands of an unfriendly power, is probably the best that could be chosen, and is one indeed which affords us an almost impregnable line of defence.<sup>47</sup>

The Foreign Department itself could not have composed a more concise and complete statement of the Government of India's frontier policy in this quarter. However, nine years were to pass before Whitehall made up its mind. The interval was taken up in further investigations and prolonged correspondence between the Government of India, the Secretary of State for India, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Often it was Byzantine in obscurity. For the present it might be recalled that Younghusband considered Raskam to be more important even than Shahidula. The Yarkand valley, in which it was situated, and Taghdumbash, further to the north-west, both deeply affected consideration of the boundary question after the Government of India raised it in July 1890. It is to this area that attention must now be turned.

## B. TAGHDUMBASH AND RASKAM

1. *Two Highland Valleys*

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the Government of India were increasingly pessimistic about the chances of the Chinese being able to retain control of the New Dominion. The view that dominated their thinking, and consequently such policies as they framed, was that this territory was certain to pass into Russian hands. When, and not if that happened, Russia would outflank the Pamir line so painstakingly devised, and the Russian presence would extend as far as the Indian frontier. It was in this context that Taghdumbash and Raskam, in the great inland valley between the two northern ranges, assumed an importance far greater than their intrinsic worth seemed to merit. Both these places were situated beyond the Mustagh-Karakoram range, and Hunza had certain rights to both. The question as to what these claims amounted to, and the privileges and obligations which thereby accrued to the Government of India as the State's protector, involved the British in prolonged inquiries and ultimately in negotiations with the Chinese government, and even the imperial government of Russia.

Taghdumbash, which in Turki means the head of mountains, aptly describes this pamir (high-altitude valley) sloping southwards into the district of Sarikol, of which it is a part. Of Tash Qurghan,\* Curzon once wrote, it 'is not a district but a fort; and it is the capital of the Taghdumbash, if the word capital can be used in such a sense'.<sup>48</sup> At about 11,000 feet, Tash Qurghan is a lush meadow which now boasts the Pamir Guest House with 150 rooms, and running water when it is not frozen. It has become an important stop on the Karakoram Highway from Islamabad to Kashgar. A hundred years ago it was honoured by the occasional presence of a Chinese Amban, or junior district officer, amongst the Kirghiz and Tadzik nomads and their herds of fat-tailed sheep.

In the long and often tortuous negotiations leading to the Pamir Agreement of 1895, neither the Afghans nor the Russians

\*Tash-stone, Qurghan-fort.



claimed the Taghdumbash; it was taken to be Chinese, as the residuary legatee. It is one of the ironies of the power game that the Pamirs, known to the people of High Asia as Bam-i-Duniya, or Roof of the World,\* had to be split into three unviable portions to keep them at peace. Taghdumbash itself was subject to an undefined overlap of claims, this time from the unlikely quarter of the State of Kanjut. What precisely these claims were must be deferred to the succeeding section. For the present it need only be said that the Kanjuts received felt pieces, ropes and shoes made of wool from the Kirghiz in lieu of customary grazing rights in Taghdumbash. The question was whether this was merely a neighbourly custom or some sort of shadowy extra-territoriality. The unravelling of this problem became one of the sticking points in the subsequent boundary negotiations with the Chinese.

Macartney, whose acquaintance has earlier been made in this account, was Special Assistant for Chinese Affairs to the Kashmir Resident, and posted at Kashgar. This appointment was the only immediate outcome of the Government of India's despatch of 14 July 1890. Sir John Walsham, British Minister at Peking, had advised that appointment of a Consul would only have been possible under the terms of a special treaty, such as that of 1881 between Russia and China. The most favoured nation clause of the existing treaty with Britain 'must be strained to apply to this case'. But he suggested a way out: the appointment of an Agent 'whose position need not be defined'. This was a characteristic British fiction. Macartney was the man for the job. He had acted as Chinese interpreter during the negotiations that led to the signing of the Sino-British Protocol on Sikkim in 1890. In Kashgar he lacked official consular status throughout his long stay of 18 years, putting him at a serious disadvantage vis-à-vis the Russian Consul, the overbearing and officious Petrovski.

South-east of Taghdumbash was the imprecisely defined area of Raskam in the valley of the Yarkand river, here known as Yu-ho, or Jade River. Most of the old jade mines were actually

\*The dictionary suggests a wealth of meanings, including dawn, daybreak, light, splendour; a roof or ceiling of a roof; the thickest string or base of a musical instrument. Bam-i-bads is the ninth or empyrean heaven; bam-i-buland, any lofty building; the sky; bam-i-zamana, the lower heaven, the firmament. I should like to think of bam-i-duniya as the first light of day because its snowy heights caught the early dawn.

higher up, on the cliffs along the Karakash. The name Raskam is derived from "ras kan" or true mine, though Younghusband doubted 'whether there is any very large amount of mineral wealth to be obtained from it.'" In the past gold had been panned in the bed of the river before it turned northwards towards Yarkand, which, for two thousand years, had been a busy hub of trade on the Old Silk Road. Whatever its traditional attractions for the Kanjuts, Raskam was also a favourite raiding ground, the victims being the hapless Kirghiz. The Kanjuts rode swiftly through the intervening pass, which was given the name of Khunjerab, or 'valley of blood', apparently because of this grisly association. Moreover, for some years in the past, no one knew exactly how many, the Kanjuts had cultivated portions of the fertile Raskam valley. Here again was an overlap of claims, and one which was destined to take more than the efforts of the British to resolve.

Chinese elusiveness during the Pamir negotiations had successfully confounded the helpful interventions of the British government and the more robust stick-and-carrot methods of the Russians. In one respect at least the Pamir negotiations succeeded. The Tsungli Yamen were stirred into making inquiries of their own about the boundaries and deputed their foremost frontier expert, Hai Ta-lao-yieh, to investigate the lie of the land. Macartney reported from Kashgar that Hai had been instructed to ascertain the boundaries of Kanjut, that State being, as Hai said, under the 'joint protection of the two Powers', Britain and China.

Kanjut clearly was not a trans-Mustagh territory, and China had been told unambiguously by the British Minister at Peking that the State was the exclusive concern of the British government. On the other hand, both Taghdumbash and Raskam were situated beyond the Mustagh-Karakoram range. Their location was compatible with Chinese claims to both these territories, though not conclusive. The actual situation was far from simple. For their part, the Kanjuts were less interested in the symbols of sovereignty than in the prospects of immediate gain. They had acquired an odious reputation as marauders. One of the most frequent complaints of merchants engaged in the Yarkand trade, which were second only to their complaints of extortion by the Maharaja's officials at Shahidula, Nubra and

Leh, was about attacks on the *kafilas* (baggage trains) by robbers from Kanjut.<sup>50</sup> When Robert Shaw was in eastern Turkestan in 1867 and 1868, then ruled by the Atalik Ghazi, they were described as a 'robber tribe'.<sup>51</sup> Secure in their isolation behind the Hindu Kush, they would make sallies beyond the girdling ranges and carry back such booty as they could lay their hands on.

## 2. *The Case of Taghdumbash*

Payments of a more regular kind, in the shape of felt ropes, shoes and *numdahs* (rough compressed wool carpets), were given to the Kanjuts by the Kirghiz of Taghdumbash. It is not known how this practice started. It is not unlikely that the nomads bought immunity from Kanjuti raids by setting apart definite pastures for their tormentors. The matter was exhaustively examined in the Foreign Department of the Government of India in 1895. If established, such extra-territorial rights would have had an important bearing on the frontier arrangements being devised by them at the time. Their conclusion was communicated to the Secretary of State in despatch No. 186 of 1895.<sup>52</sup> Hunza's claims 'to levy dues and grazing rights in certain parts of the Taghdumbash are recognised by the Kirghiz, and, we believe, by the Chinese themselves'.

Corroboration of Chinese authorization of these arrangements was received from Macartney in Kashgar. His newswriter in Sarikol had reported the arrival of a letter addressed by the Taotai to the people of Taghdumbash. In view of its importance a translation of the relevant passage may be reproduced:

'I myself', said the Taotai, 'took away the pasturages subject to Kanjut in Sarikol from the Mir of Hunza and gave them to the Sarikolis, arranging that the Kanjuts were not to graze their cattle in those places. If you do not give the customary felts, felt stockings and ropes to the Kanjuts, they would enter the pasturages and would themselves collect the above things. Both parties (the Kanjuts and the Sarikolis) had of their own accord made written declarations to which I affixed my seal. . . . It is a long time since the payment of felts, felt stockings and ropes had been arranged to be made regularly. Your declaration is in my hands, and you must pay these things in the old established manner.'<sup>53</sup>

What is more, the Taotai addressed a letter to the Mir of Hunza, confirming these arrangements. Information to this effect had been received from the British Agent at Gilgit. The Foreign Department in Calcutta concluded that the right "to levy taxes" had been recognized by the Taotai, apparently with the approval of the Provincial Governor at Urumtsi.<sup>54</sup> At any rate the British were fully justified in regarding the arrangement as one that had received official Chinese approval.

A little over a year later, the Taotai, Huang Tajen, gave Macartney yet another version, though somewhat similar to the arrangements visualized in his letter to the Sarikolis. He told Macartney, on 22 December 1897, that some years earlier he himself (presumably as the Yarkand Amban) had permitted the Kanjuts to collect these articles from the Kirghiz, 'because Kanjut was a tributary State of China', and it was only right that the bearers of the tribute should be provided with articles they required on their journey to and from Kashgar.<sup>55</sup> This arrangement would have been in keeping with borderland protocol as well as Chinese pretensions to suzerainty. While the British, for their part, winked at the payment of tribute by the Mir to the Chinese, the latter approved customary payments (in kind) being made to the Kanjuts. Although no record of an agreement was found amongst the papers in Baltit fort after the Mir, Safdar Ali Khan, had fled, the Political Agent came to the conclusion that an agreement had been reached 'by which the Sarikolis were to pay certain taxes to the Mir of Hunza. The date of the document was probably about the year 1887. The exact nature of the rights conceded to the Mir of Hunza by this agreement cannot be definitely stated at present. . . .'<sup>56</sup>

Muhammad Nazim Khan, who was installed as Mir by the British after Safdar Ali Khan's flight in 1891, had been requesting the Taotai to make over to him the Yarkand *jagir*, where the former chief was then living. After repeated requests had been made, the Taotai lectured him sharply for lack of charity to his own brother, who had no other means of support. He added: 'Regarding the collection of ropes, felts and felt stockings from Taghdumbash, I will send a letter to the Amban of Yarkand, asking him to send orders to the Civil Officer in Tash Qurghan to cause, through the Sarikol Chiefs, these things to be collected from the people.'<sup>57</sup>

Different terms were used to describe the arrangement—taxes by the British, customary payments in kind by the Taotai to the Sarikolis, and assistance to tribute-bearers by the Taotai to Macartney. The British, the Chinese and the Kanjuts, each interpreted the giving and taking in their own way. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that this overlap of claims proved to be one of the major hurdles during subsequent Sino-British boundary negotiations.

It may be concluded from these exchanges that the Kanjuts were entitled to payment in kind in lieu of customary grazing rights. The very least that can be said is that the payment was in kind, that it was customary, and, further, that it related to areas in which the Kanjuts had acquired a prescriptive right of occupation. As suggested earlier, what seems to have happened is that the Sarikolis submitted to these arrangements under pressure from the marauding Kanjuts and that the Chinese Amban formalized them under his seal, thus neatly establishing the suzerainty of his imperial master. This would have been enough to substantiate the claim made by the Chinese Minister in London, in conversation with Lord Kimberley, that Taghdumbash was Chinese territory.<sup>58</sup> Though the Government of India were persuaded that 'the last Chief of Hunza exercised a certain amount of authority over the Kirghiz of Taghdumbash', they were convinced that outright occupation of this territory by the Chinese would be the best solution of the question.<sup>59</sup> Thus the Chinese claim to Taghdumbash, which their Minister in London had made to Lord Kimberley, was tacitly conceded.

The British did not seem to notice the striking parallel between customary "taxes", in the shape of felt products, paid by the Kirghiz to the Kanjuts, and the grazing fees which the Karakash Kirghiz paid to the Chinese. If they could regard the latter as evidence of a Chinese right of possession, by the same token the Kanjuts could claim territorial rights in Taghdumbash. The British weakly surrendered Kanjuti rights without resisting Chinese claims in the Karakash valley. They were led into this apparent contradiction by their tendency to treat each case separately, on its own merits, a characteristic of which they were enormously proud.

In their despatch of 25 September 1895 to the Secretary of State on completion of the Pamir demarcation, the Government

of India reported that their delegate, General Gerard, had 'obtained a satisfactory declaration from the Russian General that the watershed of the Taghdumbash, to which the line has been drawn, is the Chinese frontier', and no gap remained.<sup>60</sup> So far as ~~Hunza's~~ rights were concerned, they hoped it would be possible to stipulate that in the event of China giving up control of the Taghdumbash Pamir to Russia, it should lapse to Hunza in recognition of its customary rights in that territory. It is remarkable that the Government of India were able to convince themselves that a suggestion of this sort could ever be made to a foreign government, one, moreover, which was known to be as tenacious of its sovereign authority as the Chinese.

However, this despatch, of 25 September 1895, had the merit of concluding with ~~one~~ positive recommendation. The present moment, the Government of India advised, appeared favourable for a settlement of the entire Chinese boundary with Kashmir, Hunza and Afghanistan. ~~Unless a definite limit~~ was placed on possible expansion of Russian territory towards the ~~Mustagh~~ and Karakoram mountains, that Power might succeed the Chinese in possession of Sarikol, Taghdumbash and Raskam sooner than was thought likely. Just over five years had elapsed since the Government of India's despatch of 14 August 1890 had proposed consideration of a boundary in the Shahidula sector. At last the Government of India had abandoned a piecemeal approach and taken an integrated view of the northern border as a whole. The question remained whether the home government would be persuaded to come to grips with an issue which was causing increasing concern to its representatives in India.

### 3. *The Case of Raskam*

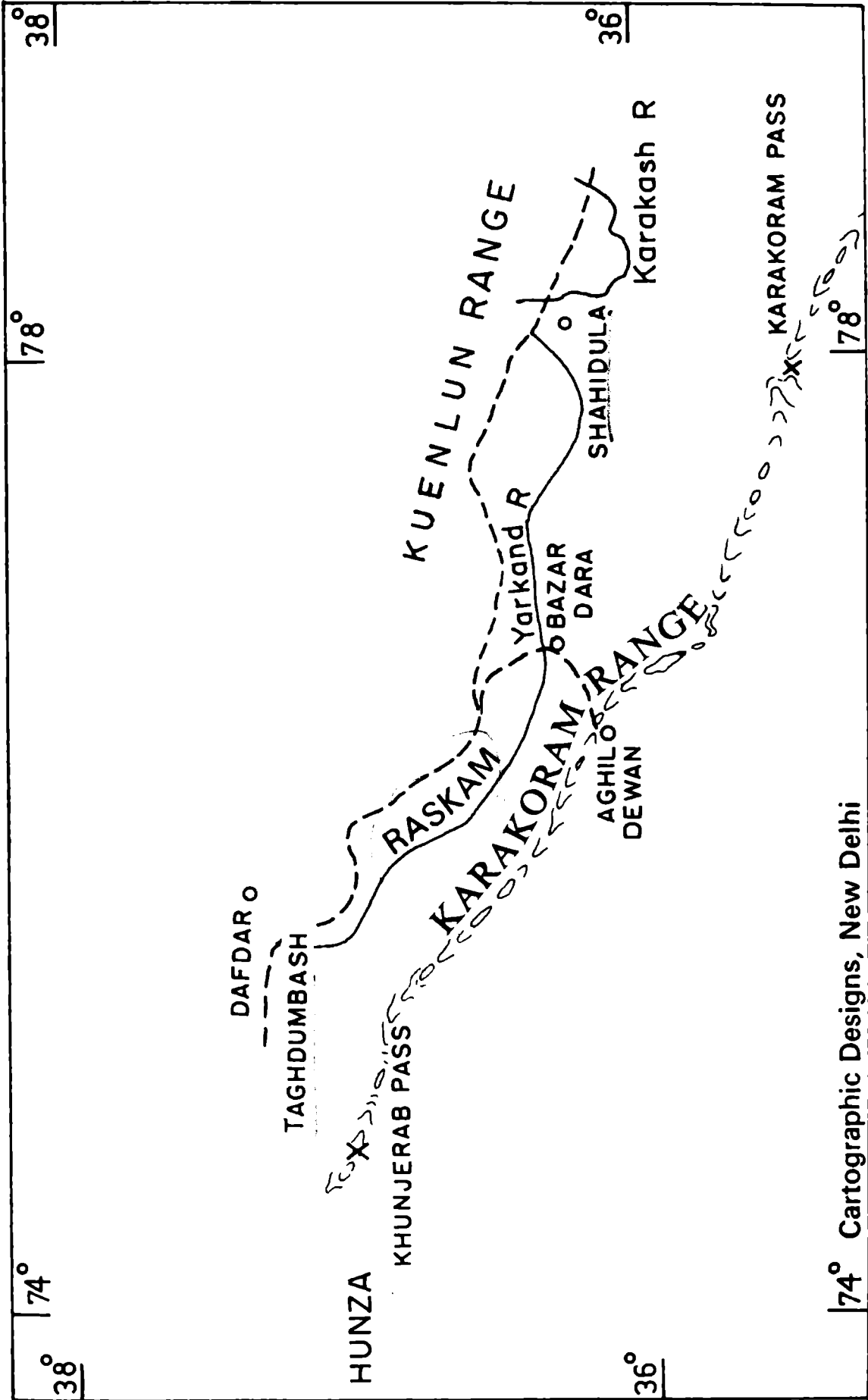
In the summer of 1897 the Mir of Hunza sent some of his people to cultivate land in Raskam in the valley of the Yarkand river. The Amban of Yarkand promptly had two of them arrested, and wrote to the Mir, as Macartney's report for the week ending 20 September put it, 'ordering him to prevent his people going to Raskam against'.<sup>61</sup> When this happened, McMahan, who was Political Agent at Gilgit, wrote to the Resident: 'The Mir of Hunza bitterly complains of this action on the part of the Chinese in territory the Kanjuts have long considered to be

theirs, and asks for orders from the Government in the matter'.<sup>62</sup>

No one seemed to be quite sure when and how the Kanjuts first started cultivating the Yarkand valley. The river here was known by the glittering name of Zarafshan, the gold scatterer, presumably acquired in the days when gold was panned in the river-bed. According to Kanjuti tradition, as related by McMahon, the Mir's eighth ancestor, Shah Salim Khan I, defeated the Kirghiz of Taghdumbash and pursued them as far as Tash Qurghan. 'To celebrate this victory, Shah Salim Khan erected a stone cairn at Dafdar (Dabdar) and sent a trophy of a Kirghiz head to the Chinese with a message that Hunza territory extended as far as Dafdar. The Chinese in return also sent presents which Hunza acknowledged with a small gift of gold-dust, and from this originated the custom of an annual interchange of presents which continues up to the present time.' His informant, the Mir himself, can fairly be credited with being a repository of family tradition. As a result of his inquiries, McMahon was convinced that the Kanjuts had levied revenue in kind from the Kirghiz of Taghdumbash and Raskam from those early days onwards, with the exception of the short period of Andijani rule in Turkestan.

A document, of which mention has been made earlier, confirming these traditional arrangements was drawn up in the time of Mir Ghazan Khan. This was 'signed and sealed by various representative Sarikolis', in the presence of the Chinese Amban. McMahon pointed out that Raskam was not mentioned in the written agreement for the simple reason that it was unnecessary to do so. The Kanjuts were already in effective possession and no question had been raised about it. The Mir's claims went a good deal beyond a mere right of cultivation. He 'asserts that forts were built by the Hunza people, without any objection or interference from the Chinese, at Dabdar (Dafdar), Qurghan, Ujadhbai, Azgar on the Yarkand river, and at three or four other places in Raskam'.<sup>\*63</sup> This amounted to what might fairly be described as a right to rule in the sense that it was understood by the Kanjuts and the local Kirghiz. It is difficult to disagree with McMahon's view that the Chinese

\*Raskam and other places mentioned here are shown in most good modern atlases. See *Times Atlas*, 1979 edition, and sketch map of Raskam.



74° Cartographic Designs, New Delhi

MAP 2. Raskam (Sketch map)





recognized it too, until the unusual events of the summer of 1897 created an entirely new situation.

McMahon was able to roughly define the territorial limits of Kanjuti claims. 'The boundaries of Taghdumbash, Khunjerab and Raskam, as claimed by the Kanjuts, are the following: The northern watershed of the Taghdumbash Pamir from the Wakhijrui pass through the Baiyik Peak to Dafdar, thence across the river to the Zankan nullah; thence through Mazar and over the range to Urok, a point on the Yarkand river between Sibjaida and Itakturuk. Thence it runs along the northern watershed of the Raskam valley to the junction of the Bazar Dara river and the Yarkand river. From thence southwards over the mountains to the Mustagh river leaving Aghil Dewan and Aghil pass within Hunza limits'.<sup>64</sup>

McMahon's information was substantially corroborated in 1898 by Captain H.P.P. Deasy, who threw up a commission to devote himself to trans-Himalayan exploration. An item of special interest was Deasy's description of the limits of Raskam. Starting from Aghil Dewan, or pass, in the Karakoram range, the dividing line ran north-east to Bazar Dara,\* where it met the Yarkand river. He found an outpost built of earth at Bazar Dara, surmounted by a Chinese flag, with a few unarmed Kirghiz in occupation. This was obviously intended as a Chinese boundary marker. From there the line ran 'along the northern watershed of the Raskam valley to Dafdar in the Taghdumbash Pamir, to the north of the mills at that place, and thence to the Baiyik Peak'.

Deasy also came upon clear evidence of what could only have been Kanjuti occupation. South of Azgar 'many ruins of houses, old irrigation channels and fields now no longer tilled, testify to Raskam having formerly been inhabited and cultivated'. Anyone familiar with the care with which the Kanjuts cultivate every available strip of land in their own Hunza would have had no hesitation in regarding this as proof of long-standing Kanjuti occupation. The remains could not have been attributed to the Kirghiz; they were unfamiliar with the 'state of art'. For the strategists, too, Deasy had a clear answer. 'Raskam', he said, 'could easily be defended if the boundaries suggested by me are agreed upon.' A small garrison at either end would have

\*He translated 'bazar' as difficult, and 'dara' as *nullah*, or small river.

sufficed.<sup>65</sup>

Before the incident in the summer of 1897, which precipitated the subsequent chain of events, the Kirghiz of Taghdumbash had petitioned the Amban of Yarkand to be allowed to cultivate Raskam, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Kanjuts. Later, they admitted to Macartney that the Amban had been anxious to deprive the Kanjuts of their position in Raskam 'by any means he could'.<sup>66</sup> At any rate, throughout the controversy over Raskam, the Kirghiz actively canvassed their own claims against the Kanjuts.

After the attempt to resume cultivation in 1897 had misfired, the Mir sent two experienced Vakils, Nazar Ali and Gul Muhammad, with a letter to the Taotai at Kashgar. The Vakils argued their case, but the Taotai directed them to the Amban of Yarkand, in whose jurisdiction the Raskam valley was, and advised them to behave in his presence with 'special obsequiousness'.<sup>67</sup> In all his eighteen years at Kashgar, Macartney betrayed nothing but the becoming earnestness of a junior official. On this occasion, however, a rare touch of irony, clearly unintended, relieved his report from the excessive dullness which characterized his communications from Kashgar. And Huang Tajen, the Taotai, emerges from the succession of exchanges over Raskam as a wily intriguer rather than the giggling simpleton he liked to pose as.

The Vakils accordingly pressed their case at Yarkand, doubtless with "special obsequiousness", for they were told that the Amban would personally accompany them to Raskam along with Brigadier Chang, the military commander, and make it over to them. In his next report Macartney mentioned that the Taotai, Huang Tajen, informed him that 'the Chinese authorities, including the Lt.-Governor of the New Dominion, had decided on allowing the Kanjuts to cultivate a portion at least of the Raskam valley'. The only problem was to settle matters with the Kirghiz who had occupied some parts of it.<sup>68</sup>

The Taotai confirmed this decision in a letter to the Mir, of which a copy was sent to the Foreign Department by McMahon from Gilgit. The style was typical of the lofty graciousness assumed by the Taotai towards a tributary of the Chinese emperor. He accepted the Mir's plea for more land because of the scarcity of food in Kanjut.

You also said that you were sending five miskals of gold. I have come to the conclusion that you are a devoted servant of the Ulug Khan. As the Kanjut people are so badly off, the additional five miskals of gold need not be sent. . . . I have asked the officer at Yarkand to investigate, make out, and hand over the land. Take over the land and cultivate it well. The people may come in to cultivate it. . . . You are under the Khakan of China; so am I. . . .<sup>69</sup>

Such ready acquiescence by the Chinese would have been ~~highly unlikely~~ had Kanjuti occupation of Raskam not accorded with past practice. The Indian government were satisfied with the outcome. The Viceroy wrote to the Secretary of State on 21 July 1898 that the government had accepted the Kashmir Resident's suggestion that the Mir should be advised to continue cultivation on the best terms he could obtain from the Chinese, and they expected the matter to be settled in the next few months.<sup>70</sup>

However, neither the Mir nor the British had counted on Petrovski, the Russian Consul, now at the height of his influence in Kashgar. He lost no time in putting a flea in the Taotai's ear. If the Kanjuts got a foothold in Raskam, he warned, in course of time they would treat it as their own. That would be tantamount to giving it to the Indian government, and the Russians would then be justified in occupying Sarikol.<sup>71</sup> The Taotai was shaken by this threat; the whole arrangement, so laboriously put together, was in grave danger of coming unstuck.

Subsequent developments in this extremely complicated case are difficult to understand unless some of the significant details are mentioned. These will be kept to the minimum. Firstly, altogether seven locations in the Raskam valley were involved, Azgar and Ursur on the right bank, and five others on the left, that is, on the Mustagh-Karakoram side—Kukbash, Kirajilga, Ophrang, Uroklok and Oitughrak, extending from Sarakamish, north of the Khunjerab pass, to Bazar Dara, north of the Arghil pass, comprising an area of about 3,000 acres.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, the Government of India took the position that it was for the Mir himself to settle matters directly with the Chinese authorities in New Dominion. In practice, however, he kept referring to the Political Agent at Gilgit for advice, thus drawing the Indian government into it, albeit gingerly. Thirdly, while the Taotai,

perhaps disingenuously, assumed an air of sympathy for the Mir, the Amban of Yarkand and the smaller fry at Tash Qurghan raised difficulties, probably by pre-arrangement. Fourthly, the Russian Consul was constantly breathing down the Taotai's neck, uttering threats that the Russians would help themselves to a slice of Chinese territory. It was not realized that he had no authority to do so, until about a year later, when the Russian Minister at Peking explicitly repeated them. This materially changed the whole situation. And lastly, Curzon's assumption of the viceroyalty of India in 1899 was another decisive factor. He took up the Raskam case as a matter of prestige, and as a direct counter to Russian threats. In the end, a relatively simple matter involving the Mir and the Chinese, which, as both McMahon and Macartney felt, could have been settled between the two of them, became a contentious issue between the Russians and the British. This frightened the Chinese government into totally withdrawing the permission given to the Kanjuts to cultivate their traditionally occupied land in Raskam. With that as a background a few details can now be filled in.

On 6 January 1899, Macartney, as he often did, called at the Yamen. The Taotai assured him that the Raskam affair could be regarded as having been settled. Seven places would be made over to the Kanjuts, for which they would be expected to pay a grain tax equivalent to 12 taels a year.\* Even a small payment of this kind was necessary, 'if only to prevent the Russians from saying that the Chinese had renounced their jurisdiction over Raskam'.<sup>73</sup> A few months later the Amban of Yarkand peremptorily cancelled the arrangement under orders from the Titai (military commander). The Mir was offered food stocks from the granaries at Yarkand to meet his people's need.<sup>74</sup> This sudden *volte-face* had apparently been caused by Petrovski's pointed threat of Russian occupation of Tagharma in Sarikol and Yegin, which was about twelve miles from the Sino-Russian border near Irkishtan.

Before this the Chinese had already sent the Mir a draft agreement, with fairly simple clauses, which the Government of India told the Kashmir Resident the Mir might accept. However, the Political Agent at Gilgit, Captain Manners-Smith, on his own

\*About Rs.27.

initiative, had already advised the Mir not to sign it because some of the conditions struck him as unacceptable, an advice which Curzon later described as stupid. The Kanjuts, who had commenced cultivation on the right bank, were in a quandary.

Curzon now took charge of the matter. Officials in the Foreign Department had been wrestling with one particularly knotty problem, namely, the position the British should take in respect of Raskam in the event of the Russians seizing the New Dominion. This called forth a characteristic viceregal minute:

It is a rather fine balance of considerations, for while on the one hand, it is desirable to get the Kanjuts into Raskam in order to keep the Russians out, on the other hand, should the latter seize Kashgar, they may claim Hunza as a subject state at least as regards these places, and may give us trouble. On the whole, I am inclined to think that the Mir might be allowed to sign (the cultivation agreement), mainly because the Russians seem to be averse to any arrangement of the kind.<sup>75</sup>

Encouraged by the Viceroy himself, the Mir signed the agreement and returned it to Kashgar. Curzon then penned a despatch to the Secretary of State in the exalted strain characteristic of him at his grandest. Its heightened style led him into the cardinal error, common amongst golfers, of overpressing a point. He made out, for example, that 'in the early part of the century, Hunza conquered the Kirghiz of Raskam and has ever since occupied or cultivated that valley, and has levied tribute from the inhabitants. . . .'<sup>76</sup> The Kirghiz of Raskam had not really been "conquered" in the military sense. They had been harassed, robbed, chased away, and also occasionally put to the sword; but they still "nomadized" (a term used by Ney Elias) the great inland valley between the northern ranges. Constant Kanjuti raids had apparently intimidated them into some sort of submission.

However, all this faded into the background. Curzon was incensed by the Chinese refusal to honour the agreement they themselves had offered. He advised the Mir to refuse to accept grain as compensation, and to demand adherence to the arrangement previously made with regard to cultivation. If compelled to do so, Kanjuti cultivators should be withdrawn under protest, and the Mir should hold fortified posts leading

from Raskam to Gujhal. It would have been naive to have regarded the Chinese offer of grain to the Kanjuts, if they left Raskam, as charity. They would not have suggested a bargain of this kind if they did not recognize the validity of Kanjuti rights. It could also be seen as a patent attempt to wean the Mir away from the British. Acceptance of grain from the imperial warehouses would have implied acknowledgement of suzerainty to the Khakan. Curzon saw through this quickly enough and promptly warned the Mir against taking the bait.

Curzon also shot a bolt directly into the chancelleries of London, St. Petersburg and Peking. Henceforth, Raskam and Taghdumbash were questions of imperial interest, and border rights and boundaries. 'This agreement', his despatch to the Secretary of State rose to a heightened pitch of eloquence, 'the Chinese now propose to cancel from fear of Russian threats, which are probably not authorised from St. Petersburg. Inasmuch as Hunza is now under British protection, and has shown conspicuous loyalty, we should, I think, intervene to prevent sacrifice of their rights, and should appeal both to China to adhere to the bargain already concluded and to Russia to withdraw threats at Kashgar and Peking.'

Firm support was given to these moves by the India Office. There were few in Whitehall to resist the Viceroy's persuasiveness. In the early and unclouded years of his office, the influence of the former Under Secretary of State was at its peak. On 12 May they wrote to the Foreign Office that the position of Raskam outside the Indian frontier and beyond the reach of effective support presented obvious difficulties. Nevertheless, Lord George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, approved the action proposed by the Viceroy, and suggested to Lord Salisbury that 'representations on behalf of the Kanjuts should be made at Peking, and, if necessary, at St. Petersburg also'.<sup>77</sup>

Lord Salisbury was doubtful whether there were adequate grounds for a *démarche* at St. Petersburg; he left it to the British Ambassador's judgement. Sir Charles Scott decided to broach the matter with the Foreign Minister, Count Muravieff. The Count disclaimed knowledge of threats of Russian designs on Kashgar; indeed, he would not countenance any such proposals since the Raskam affair was the exclusive concern of the Chinese and British Governments.<sup>78</sup> Muravieff may be credited with

genuine ignorance at the time of the machinations of the Ministry of War. A month later he told Scott that he could not commit himself until further information about the Raskam land had been obtained and he had learnt the views of the War Minister, General Kuropatkin. The War Ministry, meanwhile, had complained that the Indian government had made considerable advances towards the frontier with Kashgar, pushing forward towards Sarikol in the direction of Russian outposts, and constructing what they called "a carriage road" in Indian territory towards Yarkand.<sup>79</sup> They feared that Russian positions were in danger of being outflanked and the Pamir Agreement itself undermined.

When Scott called on Muravieff on 24 July, he was armed with information on the basis of which he was able to categorically deny these allegations. On 16 August he telegraphed the Foreign Office that his assurances had finally satisfied the Ministry of War. A further important step was taken to allay Russian suspicions when they were given an assurance by the British government that the Government of India did not claim any territorial right in Raskam, 'and have no intention of making such claim whenever the frontier is demarcated'.

By disclaiming Hunza's territorial rights in Raskam, the Government of India, perhaps without realizing the implications, were in fact conceding that the whole of the State's territory proper lay to the south of the Mustagh range, and within the recognized British boundary. 'The question between Hunza and China is not connected with the question of our frontier.' Whatever rights Hunza may have had beyond, in Taghdumbash and Raskam, were not a claim to territorial sovereignty. 'It is important', the Government of India insisted, 'that the Chinese Government should understand the distinction between Hunza's claim to sovereignty over Raskam, which we are prepared to renounce, and the Mir's claim to cultivating or proprietary right in Raskam, which we are vigorously supporting.'<sup>80</sup>

In his great anxiety to gain his point in regard to Kanjuti cultivation, Curzon yielded the far more important one of the State's territorial rights. It was a renunciation the Chinese would never have made, nebulous as their claims were to the no-man's land. He was led into it perhaps because he had imported legal concepts from his Indo-British experience, such as a terminable



right of cultivatory possession, which had little relevance to the fluid situation in nomad territory not clearly subject to either the British or the Chinese. If Lord Kimberley had allowed the Chinese to get away with the claim that Taghdumbash was Chinese territory, it must be remembered that this particular discussion related to the division of the Pamirs between the three principal claimants, the Russians, the Afghans and the Chinese, and not the entire district of Sarikol.

Britain's disclaimer of territorial rights on behalf of Hunza beyond the existing frontier, and Russia's withdrawal of its objections to Kanjuti cultivation in Raskam, about which information had since been received, amicably settled the differences between the two Western Powers. The real difficulty was with China. Bax-Ironside, who was Chargé at the time, had been instructed to enter a firm remonstrance on the reported cancellation by the Chinese of the agreement with Hunza. He was informed by the Tsungli Yeman that the Taotai of Kashgar had telegraphically denied having made any definite arrangements for Kanjuti cultivation in the previous year.\* So far as the current year was concerned, he considered it inadvisable to grant the land in face of Russian threats. It was only after the Russian Minister had confirmed withdrawal of Russia's objections that Bax-Ironside was able to report: 'The Ministers assented; their only difficulty, they said, had always been the Russian objections, but the Russian Minister having now informed them that he withdrew his opposition, they would telegraph to Kashgar their consent to the arrangement.'<sup>81</sup>

Once again Petrovski proved more than a match for high-level diplomacy. The Sarikolis had petitioned the authorities against a lease being granted to the Kanjuts. Petrovsky was quick to point out that disputes with the Kanjuts would surely follow. The Government of India would be drawn into the dispute and would arm the Kanjuts to oppose China. Russia for its part would certainly demand a *quid pro quo*. The Taotai reported this to the Yamen. Later he told Macartney that he had received orders to defer the lease. In Peking, the Ministers explained to

\*The Chinese telegraph had been extended to Kashgar in 1894. On occasions it was used by Macartney to send messages to the British Minister at Peking and from him to the Government of India.

MacDonald, who had resumed charge of the Mission, that, under the circumstances, they were very reluctant to go ahead with the lease, and begged for more time to consider the matter.<sup>82</sup>

In Raskam itself there was an unexpected development. The Kanjuts were suddenly thrown out ('ousted' was the more polite word used) and Sarikolis settled on both banks of the river. This twist provoked a bitter comment in India's Foreign Department: 'The Sarikolis have seen our attempts to uphold Hunza claims in Raskam so far brought to nothing by Russian intrigues.' Equally disturbing was the Chinese decision that they would themselves collect the customary Kanjuti dues of felts and ropes in Taghdumbash, and then hand them over, thus denying the Kanjuts an opportunity to demonstrate their authority in that territory. 'If they did this, and we acquiesced,' remarked the Foreign Secretary in Calcutta, 'we should have lost our only claim to the Taghdumbash.'<sup>83</sup> However, it is difficult to see how they could justifiably object after they had explicitly surrendered Hunza's territorial rights. The trap in which they were caught was entirely of their own making.

It was no use. MacDonald reported to Salisbury on 12 May that the Ministers at the Yamen

disclaimed any desire to go back on the arrangement already agreed to, and said they had given full weight to the official disavowal of the Russian Consul's language. At the same time they declared that in view of the danger of disturbing the present amicable relations between Russia and China in regard to the Pamirs and the clear indications on every side that any concessions granted to the Kanjuts would be made the basis of counter claims in the country further north, they positively could not see their way to sanctioning the arrangement. They begged that I would represent to Her Majesty's Government the difficulties of their position.<sup>84</sup>

In St. Petersburg, Scott was no less embarrassed. Salisbury had instructed him to persuade the Minister of Foreign Affairs to convince the Chinese that ratification of the lease would not give rise to compensation claims by the Russian government. China was then plunged in the throes of another upheaval. Scott reflected that these events, which had occurred after Salisbury had sent his despatch, had radically changed the situation. 'In

the absence of any recognizable authority at present in Peking,' he wrote back, 'I have assumed that your Lordship would prefer that I would defer for the present taking action on these instructions, and await a more favourable opportunity.'<sup>85</sup>

That opportunity was not destined to come. The British government, out of consideration for China's difficulties, had conceded to them almost totally Hunza's rights in the trans-Mustagh-Karakoram area without getting anything in return. They had received no assurance, except of goodwill, and no commitment with regard to the border. British confidence that in some undefined way their own and Chinese interests in the borderlands were identical, and that they would confront Russia together, had come to naught.

Once again the Chinese had demonstrated their skill at salvaging their rights, claims and even their pretensions, despite being plagued by chronic political weakness. They appealed to Britain for sympathy and understanding, although, when it suited them, they did not hesitate to play off one Western Power against the other. It was an object lesson in diplomatic sophistication, opportunism and staying power.

#### 4. *The Chinese Claim the Highland Valley*

In his political diary for the month of October 1892, the British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh reported the appearance of a Chinese boundary mark on the Karakoram pass. This was forwarded to the Foreign Department of the Government of India, and the Resident in Kashmir followed it up with a letter dated 13 December, with three letters about the matter from the Vice-President of the State Council, Raja Sir Amar Singh. The Raja enclosed a "petition"\* from the Wazir Wazarat of Ladakh giving details furnished by Kurban Bai, a trader of Yarkand.<sup>86</sup>

The Wazir reported: 'That on this side of the head of the Karakoram mountain on the near slope, which is at a distance of 72 miles from Ladakh, or 10 stages, a Chinese Amban staying at Suget having come with 12 men, constructed a pillar which is 2

\*An *arzi*. Protocol prescribed this respectful petition form for communications to the Durbar.

yards in length and 2 yards in breadth, and posted an iron or wooden board of black colour on it. In length the board is 1 yard and in breadth 10 *girahs*.\* On it were the words, in Turki: *Khan gha toba takhta*, or: This board is under the sway of the Khakan, the Chinese emperor. The distance was taken from Shahidula, which was the limit of Kashmir territory. In his letter of 2 November, Raja Sir Amar Singh described this action as a 'transgression of Khatais (Cathays) over the Ladakh boundary . . . . The Kashmir State has no intention of making any encroachments on foreign territory, but I hope you and the Government of India will enable (i.e. assist) it to maintain territory already acquired and in its possession, and in that case the unlawful aggression of the Khatais must be repelled, and the original boundary restored.'<sup>87</sup>

Considering that the State's officials abandoned Shahidula as long ago as 1867, the Raja's assertion that it was in their possession was a flight of fancy. The Resident thought it best to advise the Durbar to refrain from taking any action, pending receipt of a reply from the Government of India, to whom he had referred the matter. Neither the State Council, nor even the Resident, seemed to be aware of the Government of India's instructions of 21 August 1890 sent to the Resident's predecessor, Nisbet, after the Chinese first occupied Shahidula. They had decided that 'the Indus watershed should be considered as the boundary of the Kashmir territories to the north', and asked the Resident to convey this to the Durbar and the Joint Commissioners in Ladakh.<sup>88</sup>

The Government of India's despatch No. 87 of 14 July 1890 to the Secretary of State had gone so far as to welcome the Chinese action, holding that it was 'evidently to our advantage that the tract of country intervening between the Karakoram and Kuenlun mountains should be definitely held by a friendly power like China'.<sup>89</sup> So convinced were they of the soundness of this policy that they sent a reply to Col. Prideaux even before reporting appearance of the notice to the Secretary of State. The Resident was informed that the Government of India did 'not view with disfavour this indication of activity on the part of the Chinese, and see no occasion to remonstrate with the Chinese

\*22.50 inches. (16 *girahs* equal a yard).

Government on account of the erection of these boundary marks (sic), provided that they are not on the Ladakh side of the summit'.<sup>90</sup>

In contrast to their complacency on the main issue, which was the claim that the Chinese empire extended as far as the Karakoram range, officials in the Foreign Department were more concerned about the precise location of one of the pillars, some 50 feet this side 'in the descent towards Ladakh'. Sir Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary, indulged in the reassuring reflection that the Kashmir State 'is now well in hand, and I should be inclined to explain to them that any attempt on their part to go beyond the watershed is a mistake. But we should see that the pillar is not over the slope.' It was a loose remark; one pillar definitely was. Lord Lansdowne closed this particular proceeding with a rambling minute, in a style with which we are already familiar: 'We are not in a position to commit ourselves definitely as to the position of the boundary. . . in the vicinity of the Karakoram. Her Majesty's Government is, I understand, endeavouring to bring about a settlement of the frontier as between Russia, China and ourselves.' What in fact they were doing was to delimit a boundary in the Pamirs with which the British were only indirectly concerned, as protectors of Afghan interests. 'We have always hoped that they (the Chinese) would assert effectively their claims to Shahidula and the tract between the Kuenlun and Karakoram ranges. . . . But I don't know that we should go to the length of saying now that we admit unreservedly their right to claim up to the very summit of the Karakoram.' In other words, His Lordship was hedging his bets to such a degree that only he could have known what precisely he meant.

He was a little more definite, however, in what was intended to be conveyed to the Resident. 'It will be best to say that we see no occasion to remonstrate with the Chinese on account of the erection of these boundary marks (provided they are not on *this* side of the summit), but that it must be clearly understood that no boundary marks will be regarded as having any international value, unless they have been erected with the concurrence of both powers'. The Viceroy had the satisfaction of seeing his minute incorporated in the letter sent to the Secretary of State on the 18th. Because of the importance of this link in the sequence

relating to consideration of the northern frontier, the second paragraph is reproduced in toto:

It would in our opinion be (a) matter for congratulation if the Chinese were to assert effectively their claims to Shahidula and the tract between the Kuenlun and Karakoram ranges. We encouraged them to do so at the time of Capt. Younghusband's mission in 1890. We think, however, that it would be desirable to let the Chinese Government know that the proceedings of their local officials are being watched, and that, while we welcome the interest which they are displaying in these remote places, we cannot allow the ownership of them to be disposed of without reference to us and otherwise than by common consent.<sup>91</sup>

This succession of exchanges is a revelation of the poverty of ideas in the Foreign Department at a time when critical developments were taking place on the northern frontier. There was no indication of how two such contradictory positions were to be reconciled, i.e., the decision not to remonstrate with the Chinese on their action in occupying the territory up to the Karakoram mountains, and the resolve not to allow 'the ownership to be disposed of without reference to us and otherwise than by common consent'. The second very clearly entailed an immediate and firm remonstrance, but no one in Calcutta or Whitehall was alive to the necessity of summoning the Chinese Minister at London or of the British Minister at Peking insisting on seeing the Ministers at the Tsungli Yamen. They even lost sight of the relatively simple matter of getting one offending boundary pillar removed from the Ladakh side of the pass. Assuming that it was important enough, an emissary should have been sent to Suget to resolve the matter with the Amban. It was not worth risking a border incident by unilateral removal. Now was it realized that any attempt to secure the shifting of the pillar to the top of the pass would have signified formal acceptance of the Karakoram boundary.

This was not the end to the string of follies. The Resident Col. Nisbet's failure to convey the Government of India's instructions to the Durbar in 1890, it was surmised, had been due to his keeping the instructions to himself or simply destroying them. They were not found in the records. However, now that Col. Prideaux had been left in no doubt about the decision to welcome the Chinese action, the hopes of the State Council and

its enterprising Wazirs of Ladakh of territorial expansion beyond the Karakoram range were not heard of again. On this point at any rate there was finality.

In forwarding the Government of India's letter of the 18th of January to the Foreign Office, Sir A. Godley, Under Secretary of State, suggested that the Chinese government should be informed that the Indian authorities, acting on behalf of the Kashmir State, 'will gladly cooperate with the Chinese authorities in Kashgaria in determining the frontier on the road from Leh to Kashgar'. The tradition of regarding the boundary as a crossing point on the trade route apparently still lingered in Whitehall. Godley went on: 'Her Majesty's Government would, however, demur to any attempt being made by the Kashgarian officials to fix the boundary of the Ladakh State on this road without their previous concurrence being obtained.'<sup>92</sup>

Even the most tactful representative could have interpreted this rather milk-and-water objection more positively as a demand for joint delimitation. However, O'Connor, the British Minister at Peking, preferred to don the smoothest of velvet gloves when he called at the Tsungli Yamen on 12 June. In his despatch to Lord Roseberry, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, O'Connor wrote: 'The Ministers appeared to appreciate the friendly tone of my observations, and promised to immediately make inquiries on the subject.' The Yamen obtained a report from the Governor of the New Dominion which they incorporated in a note of 31 March 1894, forwarded by O'Connor to Lord Roseberry with his own despatch of 3 April 1894.<sup>93</sup> This was forwarded to the India Office on 7 June without comment by the Foreign Office, apparently signifying their approval.<sup>94</sup>

O'Connor recalled that when he visited the Yamen on 12 June of the previous year, he had said that though the British government had not specifically objected to the boundary claimed by China, 'they deprecated the delimitation of a frontier which was so vague and undefined without their acquiescence, or otherwise than by common consent'.<sup>95</sup> The Chinese reply was terse and very much to the point. It is briefly recapitulated below:

- (i) 'British subjects' built an 'earth-work' at Shahidula in 1890, but withdrew when they realized it was a Chinese Station.

(The facts were quite different. The outpost had been built in 1864 and repaired in 1890 by the Kirghiz during Younghusband's visit. The Kashmiris had abandoned it in 1867.)

- (ii) The Karakoram range, known as Ka La Hu Lu Mu, was the southern limit to the district of Yarkand. 'This mountain range is the watershed between rivers flowing north and south, and is the natural boundary.'
- (iii) In 1892, Wei, the Governor of the New Dominion, 'ordered the Taotai of Kashgar to erect a boundary round the Ka La Hu Lu Mu, for the purpose of marking clearly the frontier, and of continuing as a lasting record'.
- (iv) So much for the Governor's report. The Yamen added that 'the locality is without doubt within the territory of China, and has no connection with India'.

Although O'Conor, when he called at the Yamen on 12 June 1893, had, in the words of the Yamen's own note, maintained that 'this district had not been the subject of arrangement between India and China, and China should not proceed to fix the frontier by herself', there was no reference at all to the implied request for joint delimitation. It was simply not mentioned. As far as the Chinese were concerned the Karakoram range was the boundary, and that was the end of the matter.

O'Conor's position was an unenviable one. He could hardly object 'if, as seems probable, the boundary marked by their officials (the Chinese) suits the views and interests of the Indian Government'. Insistence on joint delimitation in such a case would have been pointless, but what he proposed was neither yea nor nay. 'Pending Your Lordship's instructions, therefore, I merely propose to acknowledge the receipt of the note and to inform the Yamen that I have sent Your Lordship a copy of it.'<sup>96</sup> The Chinese government could scarcely have taken this to have implied anything but acceptance of their assertion that the Karakoram range marked the Sino-Indian boundary.

O'Conor made a strained effort to justify his position. The Yamen's note, he said, was 'not quite satisfactory, but there is so much soreness in official quarters over the aggressive policy of Russia in the Pamirs, and also, though to a less degree, over the



proceedings of the French in Siam, and the feeling, moreover, in certain circles, that it is high time China should make it known that she will not tolerate her outlying territory being filched away by European powers, that I do not think it would be advisable to object to the attitude of the Chinese Government in this matter. . . .'<sup>97</sup>

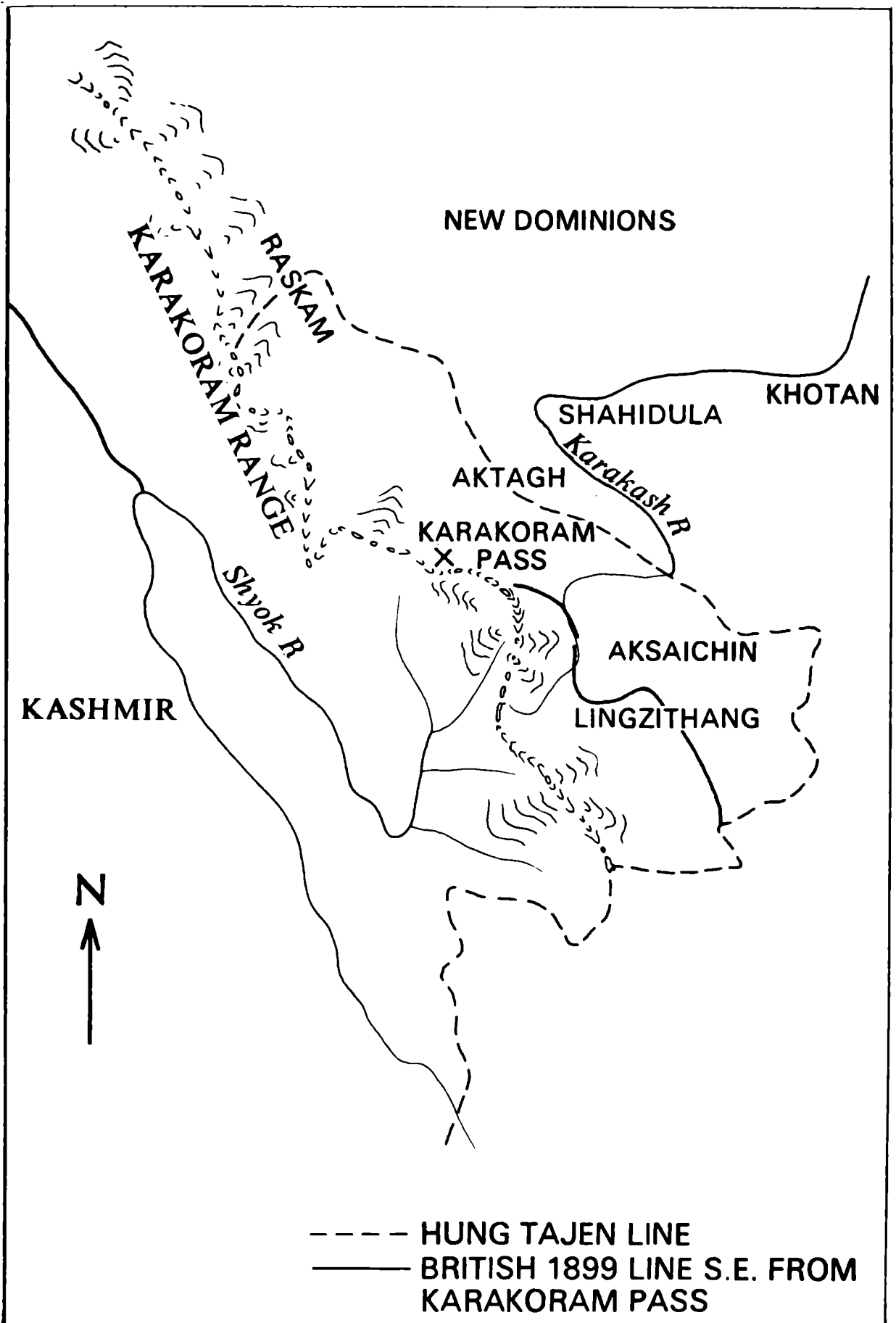
What relevance the alleged ~~highhandedness~~ of Russia and France had to an acceptable settlement of the Sino-Indian frontier O'Connor did not choose to explain. In normal negotiating procedure, all the cards are not laid on the table the moment the hand is dealt. Acceptance of the Karakoram as a boundary could have been made a condition of a comprehensive agreement. Once again, the British were surrendering their aces in a misguided attempt to pose as paragons of generosity in contrast to other Western Powers. Nor did the India office raise any objection. The Secretary of State forwarded the despatch to the Viceroy, remarking that O'Connor 'deprecates any objection being taken to the attitude of the Chinese Government in this matter, and I propose, if your Government concurs, to acquiesce in this view'.<sup>98</sup>

The Government of India, who were principally concerned, agreed without demur. However, they added a comment which was neither a condition nor an elaboration. If, they said, O'Connor decided to signify to the Yamen 'his concurrence with their note of the 31st March 1894, he might with advantage point out, at the same time, that the boundary shown in the map prepared by Hung Tajen, late Chinese Minister at St. Petersburg, is inaccurate in the region of the Karakoram'.<sup>99</sup> In what respect it was inaccurate, and in what way it affected the British government's acceptance of the Karakoram boundary they did not choose to say.

Hung Tajen's map had been sent to the Secretary of State for India with the Government of India's despatch No. 214 of 27 September 1893. It had chanced to come into Macartney's hands in Kashgar. He wisely made a tracing of it, and it was this tracing that was sent to the India Office.

##### 5. *Boundary Marking by the Chinese*

Squeezed by the Russian empire from the north and held off by



MAP 3. Hung Tajen's Map 1893 (Main Features)



the British to the west and south, the Chinese soon felt the need to define the frontiers of the extreme north-west of their extensive empire. In this section we shall be concerned only with the nomad's land from the Pamir highlands to the headwaters of the Karakash. Learning of the prolonged negotiations between the two Western empires, which eventually led to the Pamir delimitation of 1895, the Chinese began to show signs of a quite natural nervousness about what it could portend.

Unable to resist the columns of Russian troops roaming virtually at will through the Pamirs, the Chinese were rumoured to have secretly buried an iron plate on the summit of Mintaka pass. The plate, said Macartney, 'is meant to represent an old boundary mark'. 'It seems strange', he observed, 'that the Chinese should have recourse to such a ruse to effect their purpose whatever it is'.<sup>100\*</sup> In a subsequent report of 23 November 1891, Macartney said the Chinese authorities in Kashgar had sent three groups to investigate the frontier in different parts of the Pamirs. All this, taken together with the work of Tao Keun-men, who, in the autumn of 1891, inspected the Chinese frontier near Suget, and that of Chang Tajen in the Pamirs, 'would tend to show that Li Tajen, the new Taotai of Kashgar, is enquiring systematically into the position of the boundary of that portion of his district which is conterminous with Russian and Indian territories'.<sup>101</sup> Two years later, Macartney's munshi, Buniad Ali, reported that some traders had made a request for the opening of the Kugiar and Sanju routes, and that the Amban of Yarkand's response was that this would be considered on the settlement of the Indo-Chinese frontier. Macartney's comment was: 'It seems that, ever since Captain Younghusband's mission of 1890, the Chinese have felt a vague necessity of having the Kashgar-Kashmir frontier permanently settled. The inquiries they have recently made into the position of that frontier tends to show this.'<sup>102</sup>

The inquiries instituted by Li Tajen were a distinct beginning, but they had a tremendous amount of leeway to make up. Sir John Walsham, the British Minister at Peking, had been questioned by the Tsungli Yamen on the subject. On 28

\*In 1912 the Chinese planted flags near Menilkrai in north-east India and then left.

November 1891 the Ministers told him that their Legation in London had been given a map by the Foreign Office, 'showing the line of frontier as ascertained by a British officer on the spot'.<sup>103</sup> The name of the officer was not disclosed. It was quite likely to have been Younghusband who had prepared what he himself described as a rough map during his journeys in the trans-Karakoram highlands. The Foreign Office itself did not consider it definite enough to propose to the Chinese government as a basis for delimitation of the frontiers, but they apparently thought it good enough for a start. Though the Chinese had very little of their own to go on, they were very critical of the map given to them. According to Walsham, 'the Ministers . . . stated that they had carefully compared the map with one of the same region which had been forwarded to them from Turkestan, and had found considerable discrepancies'. When pressed for a copy of the Turkestan map, 'the Yamen excused themselves from complying . . . on the ground that the map in question was a very rough production, and was of little practical value'. They subsequently informed Walsham that the Turkestan map 'was based upon Russian sources, and therefore represents not the Chinese, but the Russian views on the boundary line'.<sup>104</sup> No further clue was given about the authorship of the map or in what respect it differed from the map given by Whitehall.

It will be recalled that the Russians were trying to lure the Chinese into separate negotiations on the Pamir frontiers, and the Chinese, who were adept at keeping several balls in the air at the same time, were nothing loath, whatever the impression they tried to convey to the British. Their survey 'expert', Hai Ta-lao-yieh, was in Kashgar, making plans for inquiries in the Pamirs and as far south as the Hindu Kush. Macartney had been keeping in close touch with Hai and in two successive letters to the Resident of 15 and 16 July 1893, he reported the information he had been able to glean.<sup>105</sup>

According to Hai, Hsu Tajen, who was then the Chinese Minister at the Chinese Legation in St. Petersburg, had deputed Chien, one of his Attachés, to investigate the Russo-Chinese frontier in the Pamirs, with the assistance of a German surveyor. Hai Ta-lao-yieh had also been instructed 'to be particularly careful, in his inquiries, to observe the different

routes leading over the Hindu Kush into British territory'. Macartney tried to get to the bottom of this, but Hai professed ignorance of the purpose of this part of his instructions. He surmised, however, that the British Minister might have hinted to the Yamen that it would not be in British interests for the Russians to gain command of the passes to the Hindu Kush.

However, the cat was soon out of the bag. For some reason Hai was unusually communicative. He was perhaps acting on the time-honoured principle of giving something away in order to get more in return. Macartney was in no position to give very much away. He said Hai Ta-lao-yieh had given a broad hint that he would welcome British good offices in securing Afghan cooperation in the inquiries he had been instructed to make in areas adjoining Wakhan. Macartney professed not to have been drawn; nevertheless, he was able to collect an impressive amount of information which he duly passed on to the Resident. The Tsungli Yamen, he reported, had sent instructions to the Provincial Governor at Urumtsi that an investigation should be made of the frontiers of Kanjut 'on all its sides'. According to Hai, he had pointed out that this would not have been possible without an understanding with the British, 'seeing that Kanjut was under the joint protection of the two Powers'.<sup>106</sup> This was no aimless remark; the Chinese lost no opportunity to remind the British that they had not abandoned their claims to Kanjut, whatever the British might maintain to the contrary.

Macartney was able to get a copy of the orders given to Hai Ta-lao-yieh by the Taotai, and the original of the Governor's orders communicating the wishes of the Tsungli Yamen. He had been given two maps, one sent by Hung Tajen, the previous Chinese Minister at St. Petersburg, and the other by Hsu Tajen, the present incumbent. The Yamen wanted the Hindu Kush range to be shown in these maps. 'In the matter of map making,' said the Governor, 'it is difficult to find any capable person. Deputy Hai, however, has an intimate knowledge of affairs connected with the frontier; and I shall be obliged by your instructing him to immediately proceed (to the Pamirs) . . . to make the necessary enquiries about the country at the northern side of the Hindu Kush, at the east of the Zorkul Lake, and at the west of the Aksu river. He should also inquire whether there are any roads in the south leading to Indian

territory, and should mark in his maps all the routes.<sup>107</sup>

Hai Ta-lao-yieh was no mean diplomat himself. He had been shadow-boxing with the Russians as regards their respective claims in the Pamirs. In a conversation with Macartney, the Chinese survey "expert" revealed that he had sent one of his men to the Russians 'with a message that he was unable to say where the boundary of the two countries was, but that he would like to meet the Czar's officers and have a discussion with them on the subject'.<sup>108</sup> According to the subsequent correspondence, the British advised the Chinese to advance their claim line, in the hope, presumably, of inducing Hai to reveal the extent of Chinese claims. Hai Ta-lao-yieh was soon to disappoint the British agent. Two months later Macartney was to report that he had been unsuccessful in extracting from Hai the result of inquiries that had been made by another official called Li.<sup>109</sup> 'Although he (Hai), avoided giving me a clear reply on the subject, he led me to suppose that he had been advocating, in his report, a method of demarcation based on the water-system of Kashmir and Chinese Turkestan.' And this could only have meant a recommendation based on the natural boundary of the Karakoram range.

Macartney also learnt that the Taotai of Kashgar had sent the Amban of Yarkand a copy of a large Russian map on which the names of places had been translated in Chinese by Hsu Tajen, the present Chinese Minister to the Court of St. Petersburg, and with this map some translations, made in the Tsungli Yamen, based on explorations by Russian and British officers, such as Grombchevsky and Younghusband. Macartney drew Hai's attention to three inaccuracies in translation of names. 'It should be borne in mind', he went on, 'that this map of Hsu Tajen's is now being made use of by the Chinese Government in their negotiations with the Russian Government on the Pamir question, and consequently bears the character of an official document.'<sup>110</sup>

It has been suggested in some quarters that maps prepared by Russian cartographers which were being used by the Chinese in their boundary negotiations with the Russians themselves, as well as the British, should not be taken as definitive. This argument is predicated on Chinese incapacity and gullibility, both of which are disproved by the extreme sophistication they

displayed throughout the border negotiations with the Western Powers. Macartney's conclusion that they bore the stamp of official approval is fully justified. The same conclusion applies with added force to an earlier map prepared by Hung Tajen, the previous Chinese Minister at St. Petersburg; and this apparently was not attributed to Russian sources.

In his letter, No. 141 of 23 July 1893, Macartney referred to a rough copy of a map which he had sent earlier. The original had been 'made by Hung Tajen . . . . I now beg leave to transit to you herewith a *tracing* (emphasis added) of another map by the same official, showing the boundary between Chinese and British Kashmir territories.'<sup>111</sup> Macartney added a postscript: 'I believe that Hung Tajen's maps, which are in a series of 35 sheets, may be purchased at Shanghai.' Doubts about the authenticity and accuracy of this map would appear to be wholly misconceived. It is difficult to believe that Hai Ta-lao-yieh, who was regarded by the Chinese as an expert, would show Macartney a map, and let him make a tracing of it, if he did not himself regard it as authentic. (See Map 3) The Chinese may have been newcomers to the science of modern cartography, but they had long established traditions of map making; and, in the early 1890s, they had put a number of surveyors in the field. If Hai had any doubt about the map it is highly unlikely that he would have produced it for Macartney's critical examination, even to provoke the latter into revealing the British position on the Indo-Chinese boundary. Macartney drew attention to its most striking feature. The Indo-Chinese boundary, he said, 'is not shown as running along the crest of the Karakoram range, as one might have supposed if the watershed between the Indus and the Yarkand river valleys was to be taken as the boundary, but is shown somewhat to the north of that watershed, and following the banks of that portion of the Yarkand river which was explored by Capt. Younghusband in the summer of 1889'.<sup>112</sup> The map, in fact, represented what has been suggested as the actual state of occupation between the Karakoram and Kuenlun ranges; and this in turn confirms its correctness.

#### 6. *Pamirs to Karakash—A Conclusion*

Starting once again from Shahidula, a brief résumé follows of the



territorial position when Hung Tajen's map was prepared, presumably in the year 1892.

(i) *Shahidula sector*. Until the Chinese moved into the old Kashmiri *chauki* at Shahidula Khoja in 1890, this place marked the limit of Kashmiri and Chinese territories. Before they lost control of the New Dominion in 1863, the Chinese occupied the territory up to a line of *chatze* to the north of the Kuenlun range, and this was the actual administrative boundary. During their brief absence, the Kokandis brought their frontier down to the Karakash valley as far as the opposite side of the river, at Nazr Qurghan. On their return, the Chinese resumed their former frontier, north of the Kuenlun, and came down to the Karakash river for the first time in 1890. Despite the grandiose claim in the notice nailed to the Kashmiri fort, the territory between the Karakash and the Karakoram range remained vacant. A Chinese boundary mark was put up on the Karakoram pass in October 1892, but the British did not communicate their acceptance of this as the boundary until O'Connor conceded it verbally when he called at the Tsungli Yamen in 1894. In depicting the boundary along the Yarkand river in the Shahidula sector, Hung Tajen had done nothing more than to graphically express the state of claims and actual occupation in 1892, when he must have drawn his map.

(ii) *Raskam*. The case here is even more definite. As we have seen, the Chinese did not dispute Kanjuti rights of occupation on both banks of the Yarkand river in the extensive Raskam valley, roughly from the Arghil Pass—Bazar Dara line in the east to Dafdar, up towards Tash Qurghan in the north-west. The Kanjuts had occupied the area ever since the time of the eighth ancestor of Mir Muhammad Nazim Khan, probably well over a hundred years before. Though there had been gaps when the Kanjuts had not cultivated the valley, notably during the period of indigenous rule in east Turkestan, Kanjuti rights of occupation cannot be said to have lapsed. When Deasy visited the valley in 1898, he saw distinct evidence of old habitations and cultivated fields in the area claimed by the Kanjuts. Misconceived action by the Indian Government, particularly during Curzon's viceroyalty, enabled the Chinese to assume a position which until then had amounted to a very tenuous claim to suzerainty at the very most. And for this they had the

Russians to thank more than themselves.

(iii) *Taghdumbash*. Here, too, Russian threats worked in China's favour. The *Sarikolis* made no secret of having been instigated by the Russian Consul, Petrovsky, as a counter to British influence. *Taghdumbash* was of vital strategic importance to the Russians, as the southern outlet from the Pamirs. They had nothing to fear from the Chinese. If the Chinese sponsored the *Sarikolis* in preference to the *Kanjuts*, who were subject to the British, the Russians would automatically take over the area when *Kashgaria*, as they expected, fell into their hands. Possession of it would enable them to outflank the British position in *Hunza* while the other arm of the pincer closed in on *Afghanistan*. Their strategical thinking was too transparent to be missed. The Chinese lost nothing; rather they gained territory to which they had only the slimmest of historical claims. The losers, as always in these frontier encounters, were the British and their subsidiaries. There is hardly any sequence of episodes in the British handling of frontier affairs in which they displayed greater ineptitude than in the *Durand-Lansdowne* years. These were climaxed in 1899 by the Government of India's renunciation of *Hunza's* rights in *Taghdumbash* in the expectation of surrender by the Chinese of what the British chose to call their shadowy suzerainty over *Hunza*. The Chinese never obliged. In the result, the British lost *Hunza's* rights in *Taghdumbash* and *Raskam* without gaining anything in return.

But the turn these events took was still some years away when *Hung Tajen's* map was prepared. At the time it correctly represented the actual frontiers between *Kashmir* and *Kashgaria* to the north. It must again be emphasized that in his representations to the *Tsungli Yamen* in 1894, O'Conor did not accept the boundary claimed by *Kashgarian* officials. He made the point that unilateral delimitation was unacceptable. Although the note given to him by the *Yamen* was not specifically refuted, the matter was left in a state of suspense, in a manner which once again reflects no great credit to *Whitehall* and *Calcutta*.

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## CHAPTER III

# The Karakash to Demchok

### A. EARLY YEARS TO 1865

#### 1. *Introductory*

An unexpected display of Chinese assertiveness in the last decade of the nineteenth century, combined with British acquiescence, had established the northern boundary of Kashmir. The Chinese and British empires met along the Karakoram range, all the way from Hunza in the west to the Karakoram pass in the east. About a quarter of a degree beyond 78 degrees east longitude, the Karakoram range plunges almost due south until it meets the Changlang range which is the northern watershed of the Changchenmo valley. The drainage of this valley falls into the Shyok river which eventually joins the Indus; it is thus an integral part of the Indus water system. The Changlang range strikes out almost due east, rounds the valley at the Lanak la, and thus completes the northern and eastern limits of the Karakoram watershed.

Approximately one degree of latitude north of the Karakoram pass is the other great mountain range, the Kuenlun. At about 80 degrees east a spur leaves the Kuenlun in a predominantly southerly direction towards a line of mountains trending east-north-east from beyond the tip of the Changchenmo valley. Boxed in between these features of the Karakoram and Kuenlun ranges is a roughly square area of approximately ten thousand square miles, which may be called the middle plains for the present. Determination of the natural boundary, to say nothing of the political boundary, east of the Karakoram pass, is thus beset with obvious difficulties. Should the Indus watershed of the

Karakoram range be taken as the boundary, or did it include the Kuenlun watershed to the north whose waters flow into the Tarim basin of Xinjiang?

A brief historical survey of the three neighbouring territories of Ladakh, Xinjiang and Tibet is necessary for a proper understanding of the boundaries between them.

## 2. *Early History*

It should not be supposed that a common religion spread a mantle of peace over Ladakh and western Tibet. The early kings of Ladakh were by no means devoid of territorial ambition. In the 11th century the King, Utpala, invaded Kulu and established Ladakhi paramountcy over Guge in western Tibet. 'If there is any historical foundation to this text (the chronicle source)', observes Petech, 'Ladakh was for a short time the greatest power in the Western Himalaya.'<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, the kings of Ladakh never ceased to hanker for dominion in western Tibet. The reasons may have been as much religious as political; but, even in those early days, trade in wool seems to have had quite as much to do with it.

Religion acquired a sharper edge in the 14th century. Petech holds the view that 'the conversion of Kashmir to Islam brought a new element of instability to the western Himalaya, because of the imperialist trends of some of the Kashmiri sultans, under the mantle of the holy war against the infidels'.<sup>2</sup> Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-1470) led an expedition into Tibet, 'and plundered the country and massacred the people'. There was a brief Mongol interlude for twenty years, when Babar's cousin, Mirza Haidar Dughlat, the ruler of Turkestan, included Ladakh in his dominions.

Ladakhi obsession with Guge was revived when Tsenge Namgyal succeeded to the throne in 1624. Tsaparang, Taklakot and Tashigang were captured in the campaigns launched by him and his son Deldan. Inspired by the Dalai Lama himself, the Tibetans rose to defend their country. They were joined by the Mongols under Ghusri Khan, and help was also given by Raja Kehari Singh of Bashahr in return for trading facilities. Deldan retreated and appealed for help to the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb. The conditions imposed, and perforce accepted by

the hapless Deldan, were that he should embrace Islam and have the *khutba* read in the emperor's name.\* The king went through the motions of a nominal conversion, but on a more mundane level he had to concede a monopoly of the wool and transit trade to Kashmir. Thus threatened, the Tibeto-Mongol army retreated and Deldan secured a treaty which ensured the survival of Ladakh with its old frontiers. Nothing whatever had been gained by the years of conflict.

The treaty of Tingmosgang signed in 1683 was the most comprehensive attempt to settle the long-standing differences between Ladakh and Tibet and became the cornerstone of relations between them for well over a hundred years.† Ladakh never recovered the power and influence it once enjoyed. Rudok and Guge were lost and Spiti was also ceded but subsequently given back. Arrangements were made for the burning of the sacred lamps in the Ladakhi monasteries in western Tibet, and for management of the enclave of Minsar near Manasarowar which Ladakh retained until after the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950.

Important as the religious and political agreements were, the treaty's economic terms were at least of equal significance. Wool was to be sold only to Kashmir, even the price being stated. The court merchants of Ladakh were permitted to visit Rudok for this purpose. Kashmiri merchants were not allowed to reside in western Tibet, though a triennial Lopchak mission was permitted to visit Lhasa with 200 loads of goods, 25 riding horses and other necessities. Since it was officially recognized, the Lopchak was entitled to the customary free labour and animals for transport. Richardson has called it 'a sort of tribute mission', and it was continued by the Kashmir Durbar after the annexation of Ladakh in 1842, right down to 1950. The Lopchak was virtually monopolized by the Muslim traders of Ladakh, and they established a small community in Lhasa, from where some of them made their way to Sikkim.‡

In keeping with prevailing custom, no mission was complete

\*The small stone and timber mosque in Leh bazaar dates from this time.

†See Appendix VI.

‡The most notable of these was Sabila, who sold Tibetan curios in Gangtok bazaar in the early 1950s.



without its complement. This took the form of a trade caravan from Lhasa to Ladakh, crossing the frontier at Demchok only, with 200 loads of brick tea. It was given the appropriate name of Ca-pa. With their keen business sense, the Tibetans stipulated that the Ca-pa would be an annual event. This was not unwelcome to the Ladakhis either, because tea was in great demand. It was indispensable for the butter tea offered at monastery ceremonies and other occasions, besides being, after *chhang* (millet or barley beer), the most popular and sustaining drink in the trans-Himalayan highlands. In formal terms the Lopchak was intended as a means of making an offering for the blessings of the Dalai Lama. It could also be viewed by the Tibetans, when it suited them, and after them the Chinese, as a form of tribute. In origin, however, it was essentially an offering to a deeply venerated incarnation of the Lord Buddha himself, in his compassionate Avalokiteswara *avatara*.

The treaty was tantalizingly cryptic on the subject of the frontier. All that was said was that it was fixed at 'the Lhari stream at Demchok'. This, in fact, was the operative boundary, the point at which the caravans from Ladakh and Tibet crossed over into each other's territory. No more than this was necessary. The notion of a defined boundary line encircling Ladakh was very far removed from the thinking of the times and the needs of traditional societies in the trans-Himalayan highlands.

### 3. *The Dogras and Ladakh*

Ranjit Singh's conquest of Kashmir in 1819 not only added this jewel to the Sikh empire but gave them control of the most valuable commodity of the inter-regional trade—the *pashm* of the Tibetan Changthang. Kashmir had enjoyed a monopoly ever since the treaty of Tingmosgang brought the three-year Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal war to an end in 1683. Famine and the disturbance created by political change, however, drove many of the Kashmiri weavers to towns in the plains, such as Amritsar, Nurgpur and Ludhiana. Diversion of the wool from western Tibet to these centres through Spiti and Kinnaur was encouraged by the British. They improved the track along the Sutlej valley and offered higher prices than those fixed by the monopolists of Kashmir and Ladakh.

Gulab Singh, the Raja of Jammu, was on the way to becoming Ranjit Singh's most powerful vassal. His territory was admirably situated for him to take a hand in the politics of the wool trade. The addition of Ladakh to his master's dominions, he hoped, would augment the flow of this valuable commodity. ~~Ranjit Singh readily gave him clearance; and so too did the~~ British. They were much more concerned with the north-west frontier and the strengthening of imperial defences against Russian expansion towards Afghanistan. Zorawar Singh, the Dogra general, was given command of the campaign in the summer of 1834.

The Ladakhi army, which was essentially a collection of irregulars drawn from each house-hold, was no match for the trained and comparatively well-equipped Dogra forces. It was all over in the following summer. Tsepal, the king, was deposed and allowed to settle in the *dzong* at Stok. When he died his eight-year-old son was recognized; he was a king without a country. Tsepal had been forced to agree to a crushing indemnity which did nothing to endear the Dogra jackboot to the people of Ladakh. His descendants manage to preserve the dignity of their ancient Namgyal line despite their present adversities.

Elated by his general's success, ~~Gulab Singh now had~~ visions of conquering western Tibet. The conquest of Ladakh had not, as the Dogras expected, given them a much larger share of the cake. The value of the Tibetan wool trade with Punjab had actually risen from Rs.35,630 in 1837 to Rs.94,807 in 1840. Occupation of western Tibet would enable the Dogras to plug the loopholes. 'The formal justification for invasion was Ladakh's ancient claim to the kingdom of Guge—indeed to the whole of western Tibet up to the Mayum Pass, east of Lake Manasarowar.'<sup>3</sup> Nor was the hope of plundering the fabled wealth of the monasteries far from the mind of the restless Dogra general and his principal lieutenants, such as Ghulam Khan.

In may 1841 Zorawar Singh set out with a small force of 5,000 men consisting mostly of Balti and Ladakhi recruits with a small stiffening of Dogras. Rudok, Gartok and Taklakot were soon in his hands. Roused by iconoclastic fury, Ghulam Khan systematically ransacked the monasteries, and Zorawar Singh settled down for the winter thinking that the Tibetans had been reduced to impotence. He was completely deceived. They had

been inflamed by the desecration of the monasteries. A strong force was despatched from Lhasa which pinned down the Dogras in their winter quarters.

At heights of 15,000 feet and more, Zorawar Singh's soldiers had shown both courage and tenacity, but the biting winter was a hazard for which they were totally unprepared. Some of them burnt their rifle butts to keep warm. Many of them had lost the use of their hands and feet from frost-bite. Lt. Joseph Cunningham, who pieced together an account of their last stand, says that 'on the last fatal day not one-half of the men could handle arms.'<sup>4</sup> Zorawar Singh was wounded in the shoulder and cut down. It was all over. Hardly 1,000 men escaped with their lives, and about 600 were taken prisoner. The fate of the Dogra army proved that dash and determination are no match for the elements in High Asia.

It has often been wrongly supposed that the *coup de grâce* was administered by a Chinese army, as had been the case in 1792 when the Nepali invaders were defeated and driven back to Kathmāndu. The force that repelled the Dogras was purely Tibetan. At the time Chinese authority in Tibet was virtually non-existent. In 1855 the Nepalis once again invaded Tibet and easily defeated the Tibetans, who, this time, had no Chinese imperial army to protect them.<sup>5</sup>

The defeat of the Dogras in Tibet revived hopes among the Ladakhis of regaining their independence. A force of 2,500 house-hold levies with matchlocks blockaded the Dogra garrison in Leh, and they were soon joined by Baltis and a part of the Tibetan force buoyed up by their recent victory. This time Gulab Singh was not caught napping. A strong and heavily armed Dogra force marched into Ladakh, in the face of which the house-holders prudently returned to their homes. The Tibetans made a stand near Tankase at the western end of Pangong lake, but were defeated.

Both sides had had enough. The terms of a treaty were negotiated and signed on 17 September 1842 at Leh.\* The Lahore government and the Chinese had not been parties to the dispute, but the treaty was concluded in their names as suzerains of the Raja of Jammu and the Tibetan government respectively. Its provisions were regularly observed thereafter, and any suggestion that it lacked authority because the two suzerains were not

\*Appendix VII Treaty of Leh (translation).

directly involved, either in the conflict or its termination, cannot erode the sanctity it acquired by continuous and long-standing observance.

There was a remarkable degree of continuity in the treaty of Leh from the earlier Treaty of Tingmosgang on three key points. It provided for a Ladakhi monopoly of the transit trade, an exchange of two-way missions, and confirmation of the traditional boundaries.<sup>6</sup> Apart from the resounding phrases about eternal peace and friendship, the central purpose of the Treaty was disposed of in barely half a sentence. The parties bound themselves to 'allow the annual export of wool, shawls and tea by way of Ladakh according to old-established custom'.\*

\*The distinction between wool and shawls needs some explanation. Shawl refers to *pashm* or the fine underhair of the goats bred by the nomads on the windswept plains of the Tibetan Changthang. The art of treating the wool and spinning the incredibly fine thread for shawl looms was a close Kashmiri preserve. They had been producing *pashmina* ever since they had been patronized by Emperor Akbar in the 16th century. Indeed they must have perfected the art long before *pashmina* had taken the emperor's fancy. The fabulous ring-shawls have become a rarity since the closure of the trade with Tibet in 1959; but some still trickles through and the skill has been preserved.

Apart from goats, the other two animals on which the Changthang nomads depended for their livelihood were the yak and *huniya* sheep. The yak is primarily a carrying animal, fantastically sure-footed and steady, though subject to unpredictable tantrums. Those who attempt to ride had better beware. I have seen a powerful *pipon* (headman) unseated, though he hung on by the horns. The role of the humbler *huniya* has been admirably telescoped by Janet Rizvi in a single sentence: 'it is also a pack animal which provides in addition coarse wool and ultimately meat'. (*Ladakh*; Janet Rizvi, OUP, 1983, p. 94.) The *huniya* performs wonders as a carrier. It can negotiate the highest passes with little bags of salt and grain slung over its shoulders. Goats are equally useful, though bigger loads, such as wool, are laden on horses and mules, and these were exclusively used in the Indo-Yarkand trade.

Biddulph, acting as 'transport officer' to the Forsyth mission in 1873-74, 'recruited' 30 sheep for the journey across Lingzithang. Each carried 20 lb. and put in as much as 24 miles in a single day, keeping up an average of 14. They plugged on day after day across this windswept and barren plateau nowhere less than 17,000 feet high, earning an assured place in the record book if there had been one at the time (*Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*; Calcutta, Government Printing, p. 87). Only one broke down. Biddulph was so impressed that he recommended the use of sheep as carriers instead of ponies, though, obviously with the exception of its own fleece, a sheep could not carry loads of wool and other bulky items. This is why horses and mules were irreplaceable, especially in the Indo-Yarkand trade.

The economic clause of the Treaty of Leh dealing with trade continued to operate until the closure of the border in 1959. However, a measure of territorial dispersal took place with the development of lateral communications, such as the Hindustan-Tibet road up the Sutlej valley, and the routes through Sikkim, following the Anglo-Tibetan and Anglo-Chinese Conventions of 1904 and 1906. But the dominance of Ladakh in the transit trade in *pashm* and the Indo-Yarkand trade generally was preserved as envisaged in the Treaty of 1842.

The two-way missions provided for in the 1842 Treaty, the Lopchak and Ca-pa, institutionalized, in a way for which the people of High Asia had a special genius, the urge for veneration and the need for goods for which there was no other source. While the Lopchak from Ladakh to Lhasa had the very special object of presenting an offering to the Dalai Lama, it also had the very practical purpose of providing a means of trade in articles much in demand. The economic purpose of the Ca-pa was quite undisguised.

In 1842 the Tibetans and the Ladakhis had no more need of precisely defined boundaries than their predecessors in 1683. It was enough to say that 'we shall neither at present nor in future have anything to do or interfere at all with the boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings as fixed from ancient times. . . .' A suggestion sometimes made, that the boundaries which were supposed to have been 'fixed from ancient times' were in fact unknown or known only in the vaguest terms, reveals profound ignorance of the life-style of the Ladakhis and Tibetans for whom such distinctions were second nature. No one could have known better than these two peoples who had been neighbours for several eventful centuries. The differences in terms of grazing grounds and areas of authority were what mattered. About these there was no ambiguity, even if they were not expressed as lines or marks on the ground. Up to that river, or beyond that range of mountains—such were the operative distinctions. The herdsmen did not need to be checked by border guards. Nomadic transhumance involved four movements in the year, not from highland to lowland and back, as in the case of Gujjars and Bakarwals on the Indian side of the Himalaya, but laterally, from pasture to pasture. The Changpas of Rupshu in Ladakh, and their counterparts of Changthang in neighbouring Tibet,

must be expected to have known the traditional trails like the palm of a hand. It was not even necessary to specify that the frontier was fixed at "the Lhari stream at Demchok", as the signatories to the treaty of Tingmosgang had done. There was only one customary "international" route for such officially recognized missions as the Lopchak and Ca-pa. The herdsmen came and went at will, moving freely from one pasture to another. Open frontiers went with a single "official" crossing point. It was an arrangement which adequately served the needs of the time.

#### 4. *The Dogras and the British*

The Sikh kingdom flashed through the early decades of the 19th century with the brilliance of a meteor, burning itself out as suddenly, after Ranjit Singh's death in 1839. His successor was a minor. The Sikh leaders, who were already deeply divided, fell further apart and the State quickly headed for anarchy. Chronically obsessed with the growing menace of Russia in Asia, the British made precautionary troop movements, probably with the deliberate intention of provoking discord. Some of the *sirdars* clamoured for war. Gulab Singh saw his chance. He counselled restraint, warning the Council of Regency of the danger of rash measures against the British.

The Queen Regent prevailed upon Gulab Singh to accept the office of prime minister. When he opened negotiations with the British, they demanded the disbandment of the army. This condition was completely unacceptable, and war became inevitable. The British played their hand with great skill. Their aim was to detach the Dogra leader from the Sikh confederacy by making a secret promise of recognizing him as the independent ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, a prize for which he had long hankered. The bait worked. When hostilities broke out, Gulab Singh held his troops back and thus sealed the fate of the Sikh forces. There was open treachery by some of the *sirdars*. Though the troops fought with fierce courage, these divisions were responsible for the defeat of the finest army that had given battle to the British in a hundred years of warfare in India.

Gulab Singh and Henry Lawrence negotiated terms of peace which involved substitute: amongst other conditions payment to the

British of an indemnity of £1,500,000 as well as the separation of Jammu and Kashmir. The Queen Regent was furious. She sacked Gulab Singh and appointed Lal Singh as prime minister, a change which made little difference to the outcome. The Treaty of Lahore signed on 9 March 1846 recognized Gulab Singh as independent ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, while he took over responsibility for payment of the indemnity. He was not particularly short of cash, having helped himself to practically the entire contents of the Lahore treasury while the Sikh *sirdars* were squabbling amongst themselves.\* The indemnity was paid, the deal completed, and the Treaty of Amritsar between the British and the Dogra ruler was signed a week later, on 16 March.† Three years later the Kingdom of Punjab disappeared from the map when it was annexed by the British. They sent the young Maharaja Dalip Singh to polite exile in England and made an offering of his dazzling gem, the Koh-i-nur diamond, to their Queen Empress.‡

The clause in the Treaty of Lahore recognizing Gulab Singh as an independent ruler is an indication of the pre-eminence he had gained in the affairs of the Lahore State as well as his influence with the British government:

In consideration of the services rendered by Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu to the Lahore State towards procuring the restoration of the relations of amity between the Lahore and British Governments, the Maharaja (Dalip Singh, a minor under a Council of Regency) hereby agrees to recognise the independent sovereignty of Raja Gulab Singh in such hills as may be made over to the said Raja Gulab Singh by separate agreement between himself and the British Government with dependencies thereof which may have been in the Raja's possession since the time of the Maharaja Kharak Singh, and the British Government in consideration of the good conduct of Raja Gulab Singh also

\*Sixteen carts had been filled with rupees and 500 horsemen were each entrusted with a bag of gold mohurs as the *kafila* set out for his stronghold in Jammu.

†Appendix II.

‡The life of a country gentleman in Victorian England had at least one compensation—he became one of the finest bird shots of his time. In the early years of the present century the author's mother was companion to his daughter, Princess Bomba.

agrees to recognise his independence in such territories and to admit him to the privilege of a separate Treaty with the British Government.

Gulab Singh had masterminded the closing chapter of the Lahore government, and the emergence of Jammu and Kashmir as an independent State with the active and totally cynical connivance of the British. Annexation of Kashmir was ruled out because it was too far and beyond it lay a region which was virtually unknown. It suited the British to hand it over to the Jammu Raja. At one stroke Gulab Singh had gained more than he could ever have hoped for. In doing so he had helped the British to destroy the last vestige of Punjabi independence, and, in the process, also to implant a supposedly loyal ally in a large wedge of territory in the extreme north of the peninsula.

Article 1 of the Treaty of Amritsar embodies one of the most unusual disposals of territory made by the British in the history of their relations with Indian States. It 'transfers and makes over for ever in independent possession to Maharaja Gulab Singh and the heirs male of his body all the hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the River Indus and the westward of the River Ravi including Chamba and excluding Lahaul, being part of the territories ceded to the British Government according to the provisions of Article IV of the Treaty of Lahore, dated 9th March 1846.' Chamba was subsequently excluded and constituted as a separate State in the Indian empire.

The treaty is remarkable in a number of respects. Firstly, it made over territory to the Maharaja that he already held as a feudatory of the Sikh ruler. It purported to be a transfer of title, of the right to hold 'for ever in independent possession' of certain territories earlier ceded to the British Government by the Lahore State, according to the provisions of the Treaty of Lahore. Secondly, the eastern boundary of the tract transferred was to be laid down in accordance with Article 2, by joint British and Kashmir State Commissioners appointed for the purpose. Thirdly, Article 4 specifically provided that the limits of the Maharaja's territories were not to be changed at any time without the British government's concurrence. The "freeze" was prospective in character, and it was therefore essential for the proper enforcement of this provision that the limits of the



Maharaja's territories should be made known, determined and fixed for all time. But what were they? While the boundary eastwards of the river Indus was one for determination by the two signatories, the Treaty was silent about the international boundary to the north and further east of the river Indus. Where precisely did the Maharaja's territories end and the territories of Chinese Turkestan and Chinese Tibet take over? The Indus was not a boundary; it was Kashmir's river, all the way from "the Lhari stream at Demchok" to the point where it debouched into the plains.

Could the British, or the Maharaja, or the two of them jointly, have determined the north-eastern limits of this northern swath of territory ceded to the Maharaja without the participation of the Chinese? The British were far too experienced in conducting relations with other States, far too conscious of the niceties of international intercourse and of their obligations to their neighbour, China, to have assumed that the process of definition could have been done unilaterally without Chinese participation. All this was bound to take time, but the British put the necessary procedures in motion almost at once.

There was no minimizing the difficulties. In the distant border areas of Kashmir, deprived of the means of direct control, there was no way of knowing exactly what the local officials of Tibet and the Kashmir Durbar might be up to. What added to the difficulties was the fact that the hold of the emasculated imperial regime of China on the outlying regions of Tibet had been gravely weakened. The 'Opium War', and the Treaty of Nanking of 1842, under which the British acquired far-reaching extra-territorial rights in the so-called treaty ports, had eroded much of the Celestial Empire's practical authority without in any way diminishing its exalted claims. Yet the British Government could hardly have done anything other than treat the emperor as the actual suzerain. Any other course would have given rise to serious formal and practical difficulties.

##### 5. *First Boundary Commission*

In July, barely three months after the Treaty of Amritsar was signed, the Government of India constituted what came to be known as the First Boundary Commission. It was then in Simla

for the summer, and Hardinge, the Governor General, discussed the matter with his Agent for the North-West Frontier, Lt.-Col. Henry Lawrence. In accordance with verbal instructions given to him, Lawrence issued orders to P. A. Vans Agnew, a civil servant, who was to be the first Commissioner, and Captain Alexander Cunningham, R.E., who was to assist him.

The broad aims of the Government of India emerged from a number of instructions given to the Boundary Commission, which may be summarized as follows: Firstly, above all else the Government of India desired stability in its border areas, including Kashmir State, and the neighbouring areas in Tibet and Chinese Turkestan. In the last few years Dogra adventurism had been responsible for far too much political disturbance and consequent dislocation of the traditional arrangements for trade. This now had been effectively restrained. After he had signed the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 it was clearly beyond the competence of the Maharaja of Kashmir to have made any change in the State's boundaries, whether by conquest, encroachment or otherwise. There was no longer scope for such heroics as an invasion of Guge; nor could one of his commanders have gone charging off in the direction of Yarkand.

Secondly, the Government of India's aims could best be realized by interposing clear and definite boundaries between the three different territories which met in the border region. This was largely a domestic issue as regards the Indo-Kashmir border, but became an international one, involving China as well, in respect of the Sino-Kashmir and Sino-Indian boundaries. Since Kashmir was a dependent State of the British government, in effect the boundaries with Chinese territories involved only the Chinese and British governments. This was made perfectly clear in the Government of India's correspondence with Davis, the British plenipotentiary in Hong Kong, for the purpose of his intervention on its behalf. Davis wrote to Ch'i-Ying, the Chinese High Imperial Commissioner at Canton, that Britain was anxious to ensure good neighbourly relations with China. In order to do so, 'it becomes necessary to determine the exact boundaries which divide the Tibetan territories from that pertaining to Great Britain, and from that also which has been conferred on Gulab Singh. This prince, being dependent on Great Britain, can be effectively controlled by the British

government, provided that the boundaries are ascertained. But, without such precaution, it will be impossible to prevent serious disputes and misunderstandings.<sup>7</sup>

As the season was already far advanced, it was visualized that the Commission's work would be divided into two phases. To start with, it was not expected that the two officers would be able to do more than lay down the boundary between British possessions and the Maharaja's territory, and to establish the point where the two met the Tibet frontier. In the next season, that is, in 1847, they would be expected to 'proceed along and map the whole northern and western borders of Maharaja Gulab Singh's principality, so as to enable Government to carry out the provisions of articles 4 and 9' of the Treaty of Amritsar, to maintain the State's boundaries and its security.<sup>8</sup>

Lawrence's executive instructions of 23 July 1846 for the first phase of the Commission's work were prepared with the greatest possible care. He asked the Maharaja to depute 'two intelligent men' to work in coordination with the Commission. 'Listen to all that Maharaja Gulab Singh's agents say,' Vans Agnew was adjured, 'and give all reasonable consideration to their wishes; but when you and Capt. Cunningham are agreed, as to the proper boundary, lay it down at once; where you differ, let the Maharaja have the advantage. Bear in mind that it is not a strip more or less of barren, or even productive territory that we want, but a clear and well defined boundary in a quarter likely to come little under observation.'<sup>9</sup> In stating this, Lawrence was also enunciating a policy which the British closely adhered to throughout the subsequent evolution of the border question. Their aim always was a settled boundary and not accession of territory.

Indeed, the British were prepared to go even further. The Commission was given discretion to relinquish a portion of Spiti, and even of Lahaul, 'but you are on no account to encroach on the Ladakh frontier'. This was not mere generosity but sheer good sense. It was above all important that 'a clear and well defined boundary' should be interposed between British territories and Kashmir state. Stability in the border region, freedom from the possibility of future disputes and a steady increment of trade were well worth marginal adjustment and even sacrifice of territory.

Having laid down these broad principles for the Commission's guidance, Lawrence gave them precise instructions on what they were to do when they got out into the field. These instructions are indicative of the thoroughness with which officers of the Punjab Commission got to grips with the unique problems of administration in their territory, at the same time leaving the men on the spot with plenty of scope for personal initiative. 'You will proceed at your earliest convenience to the point where the Ladakh, Kulu and Chinese Tartary boundaries meet.'<sup>10</sup> Working backwards from that point, they were to lay down and map\* the boundary between British territory and Kashmir. They were to remember that the whole of Spiti was British, but that while Lahaul and Kulu were also British, that part of Lahaul which was in Chamba and Ladakh (that is, Zanskar) belonged to the Maharaja. It was also Government's intention 'to prevent the Jammu troops and traders turning our flank to the north-eastwards'. The boundary line was therefore to be taken to a point clearly beyond the Maharaja's control. Furthermore, both the Jammu and Tibetan authorities 'must be distinctly informed that no encroachment by any party on any pretence will be permitted.'<sup>11</sup>

As a precaution, Vans Agnew was given a letter from the Governor-General to the Chinese Amban in Lhasa, informing him of the changes brought about by the Treaties of Lahore and Amritsar, and the appointment of a Boundary Commission of two British officers. 'As it is now deemed expedient to settle definitely the boundaries to the eastward of the countries thus ceded to His Highness Maharaja Gulab Singh, . . . I have to express my hope that Your Excellency will see fitting to depute confidential agents to point out to my officers the exact limits of the Chinese frontiers in order that no interference may thro' ignorance be exercised with the territories of your high and esteemed Government.'<sup>12</sup>

The request for cooperation in the work of boundary delimitation was coupled with information of a decision taken by the Governor-General to alter certain provisions of the Treaty of Leh of 1842 between the Tibetan government and the

\*The order is important. A boundary could not be shown in a map unless it was known, defined and accepted.

Maharaja of Kashmir. These, it was pointed out, were highly injurious to the interests of the British government and its dependencies. Purporting to act as the supreme authority of the Maharaja, the Government of India had cancelled Article 2 of the Treaty which provided that the entire trade should pass through Ladakh, and modified Article 3 to run as follows: 'Such persons as may in future proceed from China to Ladakh or to the British territory and its dependencies or from Ladakh or the British territory and its dependencies to China are not to be obstructed on the road.'<sup>13</sup> The intention was to remove impediments in the way of British Indian subjects participating in the trans-border trade.

A copy of the Governor-General's letter was sent to the British 'High Officer' at Hong Kong, Sir John Davis, so that its contents could be communicated to His Imperial Majesty.<sup>14</sup> 'As I am led to understand', the Governor-General began rather tentatively, 'that Tibet is immediately under the authority of the Imperial Court at Peking', Davis was requested to secure the cooperation of the Chinese government with the work of the Commissioners deputed by the Government of India.

A *parwana* had been sent to the Maharaja, a letter to the Chinese *Vizier* at Lhasa, as the *Amban* was referred to, and a request to the British plenipotentiary at Hong Kong for the good offices of the Chinese authorities. The Government of India had every reason to believe that their preparations were complete and that the rest was in the good hands of trustworthy men on the spot. Alas for such hopes as they may have had. No Chinese representatives ever appeared and even the Kashmir Durbar proved uncooperative. Elusiveness on the part of the Chinese might have been expected; but there was no apparent reason why the Maharaja should fail to depute the "two intelligent men" he had been asked to send. He had gravely misread the changed situation if he imagined that his new overlord could be dodged. Thwarted for the present, Vans Agnew pushed on towards Gilgit while Cunningham explored the watershed between Lahaul and Spiti, and mapped the area up to lake Tsomoriri in Ladakh. Though the British had little to congratulate themselves for on the achievements of the First Boundary Commission, one welcome outcome was that the route from Rampur to Gartok had been clearly placed within

British territory. Here at least Indian traders would be free from harassment by Kashmiri officials.

#### 6. *Second Boundary Commission*

The lull that followed was purely temporary. The Government of India had already taken a decision 'for the settlement of the *whole* (emphasis added) boundary between the Chinese and Jammu territories', and this meant the boundaries of the Maharaja's possessions in Ladakh.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the major part of the work in pursuance of Articles 2 and 4 of the Treaty of Amritsar had still to be done. However, it was not until 10 July 1847 that they finally appointed a Second Boundary Commission with Captain Cunningham as leader and Lt. Henry Strachey to assist him. There was also a third member, Surgeon Dr. Thomas Thomson. Since very little was known about Spiti and the area north of the Maharaja's territories, it had earlier been decided that 'a man of science' should accompany the mission. He was to occupy himself principally in ascertaining mineral resources.<sup>16</sup>

The Commission was to proceed without delay to the Tibetan frontier to carry out the work which could not be completed in 1846, 'for the purpose of defining the boundary of the territories of Maharaja Gulab Singh and the Emperor of China.'<sup>17</sup> That such a boundary existed was assumed; what was necessary was to define and then map it. They were also to endeavour 'to place on a more satisfactory footing than at present the commercial relations between Tibet and the provinces of India'.

Instructions regarding the investigations they were expected to make were unusually wide-ranging and ambitious. As the Ladakh area was already fairly well known, they were told to winter beyond the Karakoram range. 'If you can obtain the permission of the Chinese commissioners to (visit) Yarkand and Khotan, that would be very satisfactory; but if you cannot go beyond the Karakoram range, it is to be hoped that the Chinese commissioners will arrange for you to winter at Rudok.'<sup>18</sup> The significance of this part of the instructions cannot be missed. The trans-Karakoram area was taken to be Chinese territory. This aspect was developed further. 'As the greater part of the boundary between Ladakh and Chinese Tartary is laid down by nature, and as it is believed that scarcely any portion except the

two termini can admit of dispute, the business with the Chinese commission will probably be soon adjusted. . . .’ It was the Governor-General’s wish that, in any event, geographical knowledge should be increased before they returned. ‘It was taken for granted that Chinese Commissioners would appear on the Himalayan frontier in response to requests already made to the Chinese government in Peking and its Amban in Lhasa.

That done, Cunningham was to work his way to Gilgit and the Dard country (Baltistan) through the Indus valley for antiquarian research. Strachey was to follow up his investigations in Gnari in western Tibet and strike out into the Changthang as far as Rudok and Manasarowar and further east, even to Lhasa, following the course of the Sangpo to Darjeeling and Bhutan. Thomson was to occupy himself in scientific research. The only limits placed on their freedom to range in High Asia were that their travels were not to exceed two years, nor were they to cross the Bolor Tagh to the westward ‘so as to bring yourselves into collision with the bigoted and jealous Muhammedans of Independent Turkestan’. This would seem to refer to what became Russian Turkestan, beyond the Tian Shan mountains and the Pamirs. ‘With this exception you are left to your own discretion as to the best mode of meeting the Government’s wishes in prosecuting your several journeys of discovery.’<sup>19</sup>

Few official commissions before or since were given such freedom. Few produced such negligible results. The Government of India do not seem to have questioned whether they were going about boundary-making in a way that the Chinese would have found acceptable. Davis, in Hong Kong, found the going distinctly unpromising; it was not rough, but confusingly becalmed. He had faithfully complied with the wishes of the Governor-General and sent Ch’i-Ying, the Chinese High Imperial Commissioner, a letter in the sense desired by Hardinge.

The response was far from encouraging. In a letter of 28 January 1847, Davis informed the Governor-General that the Viceroy of Tibet was the Tartar, Keshen, who was not expected to show any particular enthusiasm for the British proposals. He could at best hope that Ch’i-Ying would agree to transmit a true presentation of the case to Peking. He thought this ‘may tend materially to correct and neutralize the evil tendencies of any

mis-representations from the Tibetan Viceroy'. In another letter Davis reported that Ch'i-Ying's reply had been delayed because he had left his seal in Canton! No wonder the Foreign Department gave way to despondency. It was noted that Davis had 'in several communications to the Governor-General detailed reasons which have hitherto thrown obstructions in the way of his negotiations with the Imperial Ministers in order to carry out the views of the Government of India'.

According to Ch'i-Ying, the Chinese government had raised two preliminary objections. Since boundaries already existed there was no need to establish new ones. As for trade, the treaties on maritime commerce recently signed with England fully covered that matter. The Treaty of Nanking had designated four ports for the purpose. Davis had no difficulty in disposing of these red herrings. His clarifications, he assured Hardinge, had finally convinced Ch'i-Ying. He now 'acquiesces in the propriety of ascertaining the old boundaries as contradistinguished from fixing new ones. His Excellency also admits the distinction as to a maritime commerce between England and China, and a frontier trade between India and Tibet', and he engaged to transmit the British request to the emperor.<sup>20</sup> Whether Ch'i-Ying did so or not, and with what effect, may be judged from the failure of any Chinese representative to come within talking distance of Cunningham and his colleagues.

Strachey took up the thread on 25 September, 1847 from Hanle gumpa in Ladakh, in a report to Lawrence in Lahore. The Commission had been stopped on 29 August by a party of Tibetans while attempting to take the direct route to Hanle from the southernmost point of the Parang river in British territory. This would have involved crossing a narrow strip of Tibetan territory. Cunningham weakly decided to turn back with Thomson and make for Hanle by the Lanak pass in Ladakh. That was one positive conclusion. Left to himself, Strachey was distinctly more enterprising than the leader of the Commission. He was able to enlist the help of the *patwan*\* of Juar and other respectable members of the local Bhotia community whom he had met in Kumaon in British India in the previous year. As

\*A local official with much greater revenue and police powers than his humble counterpart in the plains of British India.



licensed traders, well known in western Tibet, they had free access to the Garpon, or provincial governor of Gartok, and other Tibetan officials in Gnari. They were able to make discreet inquiries and send back information to Strachey, until their messengers were intercepted by a Tibetan guard at Demchok. They managed to slip away at night. According to Strachey, Demchok appeared to be the 'Lhassan frontier point upon the left bank of the Indus'; and this established it as one of the termini of the Ladakh-Tibet boundary. It is noteworthy that he did not describe it as the Ladakhi frontier point.

Earlier, Strachey had sent a letter to the Garpon, who despatched two agents simply to verify his presence. The information they gave was deeply discouraging. The only answer of the authorities at Gartok was that 'the orders of the Lhassan Government strictly forbade them to admit any "strangers" into their country, or themselves to enter any neighbouring foreign country, or to hold any intercourse whatsoever with "strangers", and as for the boundaries they were "fixed of old"; in short they would have nothing at all to say to us.'<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, Strachey received a note from Cunningham, sent from Hanle, confirming that there were no Commissioners on the part of the Lhasa government to meet them. Strachey adds the wry comment that this was what he had always anticipated. This clearly was the end of the attempt to meet Chinese Boundary Commissioners. The plain truth was that there were none at all, and the Chinese had no intention of getting involved in discussions with wandering British officers in the border area. The whole enterprise must have offended their sense of protocol.

Elaborate precautions had been taken by the Tibetan authorities to prevent the entry of the "strangers" and any possibility of contact with them. Strachey's Juari friends informed him that men had been sent to every pass on the western frontier of Tibet from Shipki on the Sutlej to Demchok on the Indus to prevent the Commission from entering the country. These precautions, said Strachey, might have seemed 'strange and frivolous', but they were indicative of the 'present political history of the Tibet Commission; and to the best of my belief may be taken as a specimen of the course which the Lhassan Government will steadily pursue in answer to attempts at communication on the part of the British so long as such

attempts are made in the present passive manner, and the Chinese maintain the dictation of foreign affairs at Lhasa'.<sup>22</sup> These were wise words from a relatively junior official, and ones which Lawrence in Lahore and Hardinge, the Governor-General, would have been well advised to ponder. It should have been obvious that no boundary settlement was attainable if the British persisted with the method they had adopted. The logic of their acceptance of China as the suzerain of Tibet clearly called for direct discussions with the Chinese government instead of inconclusive attempts to meet Chinese officials on the border itself. This would not have precluded exploration and survey, and thorough mapping of the border areas, up to the known boundary, with the help of such local officials as the *patwari* of Juar, and the Kashmir Maharaja's people in Ladakh.

In fact, this is precisely what Strachey intended to do. His small party, he said, was incapable of committing any 'aggression . . . and if our advance in this guise be opposed at any point known to be within the foreign border, we turn back without dispute'. By exploring in this way he would gain 'complete cognisance . . . of the existing boundary de facto, whether for future formal adjudication or simply to let alone as proposed by the Government of Lhasa'.<sup>23</sup>

He was modest enough to make no exaggerated pretensions about his mapping work. 'I make a detailed survey of all my routes in such style as a traveller can manage without the skill or apparatus of a professed surveyor, determining the elevations of places without a barometer as frequently as possible. . . . I hope soon to become expert enough with the sextant to fix the latitude of all important points. . . .' In the circumstances his sketching between established high points could not have been more than barely approximate. It was pioneering work, which needed to be verified and filled out by professional surveyors of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India. However, as an example of exploration combined with a rough basic survey in exceptionally difficult conditions, Strachey's work was invaluable. His maps of the border areas in present-day Uttar Pradesh in India have to be viewed in this light.

As regards the Boundary Commission itself, Strachey felt it would be pointless to persist only to be turned back again. In the

circumstances, he made for Hanle gumpa where he wrote up his report. 'I contented myself with having ascertained the existing boundary and the nature of the communications at the only two possible points common to Karah-Bargyoh of Lhassan Gnari and Hanle (district) of south-eastern Ladakh.' One was Demchok and the other the point beyond the Parang river where the Boundary Commission had been stopped by a party of Tibetans on 29 August 1847. There was no question of his being able to work his way eastwards to Lhasa and beyond.

It was Thomson, the "man of science", who turned out to be the most intrepid explorer of the three. Besides collecting botanical and mineral specimens, he made his way into the Nubra valley, crossed over the Sasser pass into the valley of the Shyok, and was only restrained from pressing on over the Karakoram pass along the route to Yarkand by the sobering thought that he was likely to be seized, or at least turned back, at the Chinese post beyond. Admirable as his exploits were, however, they were essentially peripheral to the purposes of the Boundary Commission.

Cunningham had spent the whole of September at Leh. He seems to have busied himself collecting material for his monumental work on Ladakh.\* From Ladakh, Cunningham made his way to the Kashmir valley to continue his antiquarian researches. In later years he became the first Director-General of Archaeology, with a distinguished record of achievement which tends to be overlooked because of the impetus given to preservation of monuments by Curzon when he became Viceroy. Cunningham was quite as scathing as Strachey about the Maharaja's officials. Writing to Lawrence on 20 October from his camp between Leh and Dras, he complained that the agents appointed by Maharaja Gulab Singh had failed to meet the Commissioners at Hanle, although there was ample time for both of them to have been there as stipulated. Their absence in two successive seasons provoked Cunningham to observe: 'I am induced to believe that the absence of any Commissioners on the frontier is not the result of accident, but of a designed plan to

\*Gazetteer in form, it is packed with information about the people, their history and customs, and trade and economy, in the earliest days of the British connection.

delay, as long as possible, if not absolutely to thwart altogether, the final settlement of the boundary.'<sup>24</sup> When Cunningham met Mehta Basti Ram, the Wazir, glib excuses were made, none of them at all convincing.

It would be easy to charge the British administration with weakness in dealing with the Kashmir Durbar, which meant, in practice, the Maharaja himself. Considering that he owed the best part of his State to British generosity, a little more pressure at the right time, by the Governor-General himself, might not have gone amiss. Mehta Basti Ram's apparent slackness was surely not his own view of the honour due to the Maharaja's overlord. He must have been told by the Maharaja himself to keep cautiously aloof.

Soft-handed in dealing with the Maharaja and misconceived in their approach to the Chinese, the two Boundary Commissions must be viewed as an unfortunate failure. Strachey's method, of pressing on until stopped, had worked well enough in Kumaon and the newly acquired districts of Chamba, Kulu and Spiti, and offered the best means of filling in the boundaries of Ladakh. As has been seen, however, the main difficulty was that large areas of the north-eastern border area were uninhabited. If both the Chinese and the Tibetans kept away, it was obviously no easy matter to determine the boundaries which they maintained were fixed from old. In the circumstances, it is very doubtful whether there was any alternative to direct boundary discussions with the Chinese government itself rather than with shadowy personages of any degree who might perchance appear on the border. Lawrence's meticulous instructions to the Boundary Commissioners bore little relation to the uncertainties to which they were subject, whether the harsh natural conditions or the hide and seek at which the Kashmiris, and more so the Chinese and Tibetans, were highly adept.

Lawrence was much more realistic in his advice about actual definition. 'Boundary marks are neither requisite nor probably possible; you will find plenty of mountains ready to your hand. And these natural pillars should not only be carefully mapped for registry with the British Government, but their appearance and bearings should be fully and distinctly recorded in writing.' To Lawrence it seemed that the Hunza and Nagar range (i.e., the Hindu Kush) along with the Karakoram formed the natural boundary the British were looking for. However, he readily

conceded that this was a mere conjecture based on a study of the map. 'It will be for you to inquire without reference to preconceived notions of any kind.' But it was quite apparent that the Government of India were predisposed from the very beginning in favour of the watershed boundary formed by the great Karakoram range.

Though the boundary was held out as the principal object of the Commission, Lawrence cautioned them not to be led by the spirit of inquiry into going a mile further than was strictly necessary. While it was to be discreetly made known that the British offered freedom of trade within their dominions, and security of person, they were to make no overtures with the object of drawing merchants away from old commercial routes. Efforts were to be made to allay such fears as the Chinese and the Maharaja might have entertained that the British had any intention of disturbing the traditional trade. The facilities offered would be sufficient attraction by themselves.

In the previous year, Agnew and Cunningham had suggested an Indo-Kashmir boundary line of which Cunningham made a rough sketch. It was drawn from one high point to the other, but bore no resemblance to a survey map.\* Lawrence observed with judicial impartiality: 'If we are fairly entitled to the northern line proposed by Captain Cunningham, well and good; if not the southern one by Baralacha, Parang and Gamshul passes will, I conceive, be equally acceptable or nearly so.'<sup>25</sup> The Indo-Kashmir boundary so determined was one of the few positive achievements of the two Tibet Boundary Commissions.

### 7. *Vans Agnew's Memo*

When Henry Lawrence wrote out his instructions to the Second Boundary Commission on 16 July 1847, he complained that he had not received a report from the First Commission consisting of Vans Agnew and Cunningham. This was hardly justified, for he had already received an extraordinarily perceptive set of impressions in the form of a Memo of 13th May from Vans Agnew. He had forwarded this to the Foreign Secretary, Elliott, with his comments, in which he took account of a discussion

\*The author has seen the original.

with his assistant. Perhaps he felt that a rather hurried and disjointed Memo could not be regarded as a formal report.\* The Memo is entitled: 'A few Remarks of Maharaja Gulab Singh's boundary with China.' A brief discussion follows of some points of this extremely important document.

In words strikingly similar to those consistently used by the Chinese, Vans Agnew affirmed that the boundary between Ladakh and Changthang and Yarkand was the ancient one which 'by the Chinese is well known and undisputed'. According to information then available the only doubtful points were its two extremities, by which he seems to have meant the points where the routes eastwards to Tibet and north-westwards to Chinese Turkestan crossed the traditional boundary. That apart, the tri-junction of Spiti, Ladakh and Changthang 'does not I believe at present exist'. This was one of the critical points which the Second Commission was not able to resolve owing to the absence of the Kashmiri and Chinese Commissioners. Rights to roads and passes, he said, were not uncertain, 'except near Demchok, one of the termini'. For the rest, the boundary passes through such desolate tracts that a deviation of several miles would not make any appreciable difference to the detriment or advantage of either side. These wise words could have been recalled with advantage at later stages of the boundary question.

Despite the difficulties he faced, Agnew was able to identify what he held to be the traditional boundary. He thought Chinese and British territories met on the Parang river near Akolie, presumably at the point where the Second Commission was turned back by a party of Tibetans on 29 August 1847. Thereafter, the line followed 'the crest of inaccessible ridges round the end of the valley of Handla (Hanle) and down on the river near a village called Demchok'. Here doubts arose. Demchok was claimed by the Maharaja, but could also be claimed by the Chinese. These rival claims 'may interfere with intercourse between Rudok and Gartok by the valley of the Indus'. At Demchok, or 'a little higher', the boundary crossed the Indus, ascended the opposite mountains, and ran along the ridges, leaving the pass to Rudok on the Hanle road via Chibra

\*The Memo is very faded, and much of it difficult to decipher. It took a number of 'sittings' to cull relevant passages, included as Appendix VIII.

in the hands of the Chinese. If the boundary crossed the Indus above Demchok, this village would have been in Ladakh and not in Tibet, as Strachey thought the following year.

From there the boundary continued along the top of the ridges just above the little rivulet running by . . . (place name undecipherable), 'and leading up to the pass called Tsaka la and also the Chushul rivulet running down the other side into the lake Pangong'. From Pangong, the boundary ran along the lake (presumably the southern bank), 'and then the ridges forming the eastern boundary of the river D. . . . . lo till it falls into the Shyok'. Then follows a point of crucial importance. 'Therefrom the ridge bounding the valley of the Shyok on the east is the boundary up to the Karakoram mountains.'

It is not quite clear at what points the route actually taken by Agnew touched the Sino-Ladakh boundary, but it seems from the character of his description that he kept fairly closely to the boundary he described from Demchok to the river Shyok. Since the Chinese and the Tibetans had nothing to do with the Commission, Agnew's information about the boundary must have been derived from Kashmiri officials, the members of his party, and such Ladakhis as he met. There were traditional Champa habitations around Tsomoriri, and on the southern and north-western flanks of Pangong lake. Agnew's inquiries were made within five years of the Treaty of Leh between the Tibetans and the Dogras, and immediately after the cession of Kashmir to the Dogra ruler of Jammu. Neither side had had opportunities to advance claims beyond the traditional boundary in this brief interval. Agnew's findings are therefore of very great importance. His description of the boundary leaves no room for doubt that it encompassed the Changchenmo valley, placing it within Ladakh, before it joined the Karakoram range. The Lanak la, at its eastern extremity, had been identified by the Commission as within Kashmir's territory.

Although Agnew went on to Gilgit from Ladakh, the only information he was able to glean about that part of the traditional boundary was that it went along the Karakoram range, between Yarkand and Nubra, as far as Hunza and Nagar.

Thereafter Agnew made some general observations on how the boundary should be established. He suggested it should be defined with reference to the map, taking account of the 'grand

natural characteristics' of the description given by him, and allowing for 'the undisputed right of Ladakh to the roads up the Shyok and the Indus to certain fixed points and that of the Chinese beyond them. . . .' He did not clarify where these fixed points should have been located; he seems to have assumed that they would be established by joint consultation. Then follows an ambiguous sentence which probably means that it would have been possible for Commissioners of both sides to determine an unmistakable natural boundary on paper, at their first meeting, just as well as if they were to travel along its whole length. That is, of course, if the Tibetans, the Chinese and the Kashmiris were each to appoint Commissioners to effectively coordinate their work with British representatives. The termini could not have been settled in this manner. Each of these would have had to be fixed by joint inquiries on the spot.

Cunningham was a little more specific about the Demchok boundary. 'With Rudok on the east there has been a long peace. The boundary is well defined by piles of stones, which were set up after the last expulsion of the Sokpo or Mongol hordes in A.D. 1687 when the Ladakhis received considerable assistance from Kashmir.' The reference was evidently to the war which ended with the treaty of Tingmosgang of 1683. Unfortunately Cunningham did not say exactly where the piles of stones were or whether he had seen them.<sup>26</sup>

Agnew was sceptical about the sense of duty of Chinese officials who might be deputed as Boundary Commissioners. He thought a more fruitful method might be to discuss the matter directly with the Chinese government instead of 'amidst the discomforts of an arduous journey and in the total absence of all that pomp and ceremonial to which this nation is so much addicted'.

What emerges very distinctly from Agnew's Memo was the impracticability of settling the boundary by joint border commissions, and the lack of any practical alternative to negotiations between the two governments of China and Britain. Strachey's views, submitted the following year, confirmed that the method so far adopted by the Government of India would lead nowhere. There was no option, then, but to proceed with independent exploration and survey, pushing on, as Strachey did, until the Tibetans said thus far and no farther. Maps of the



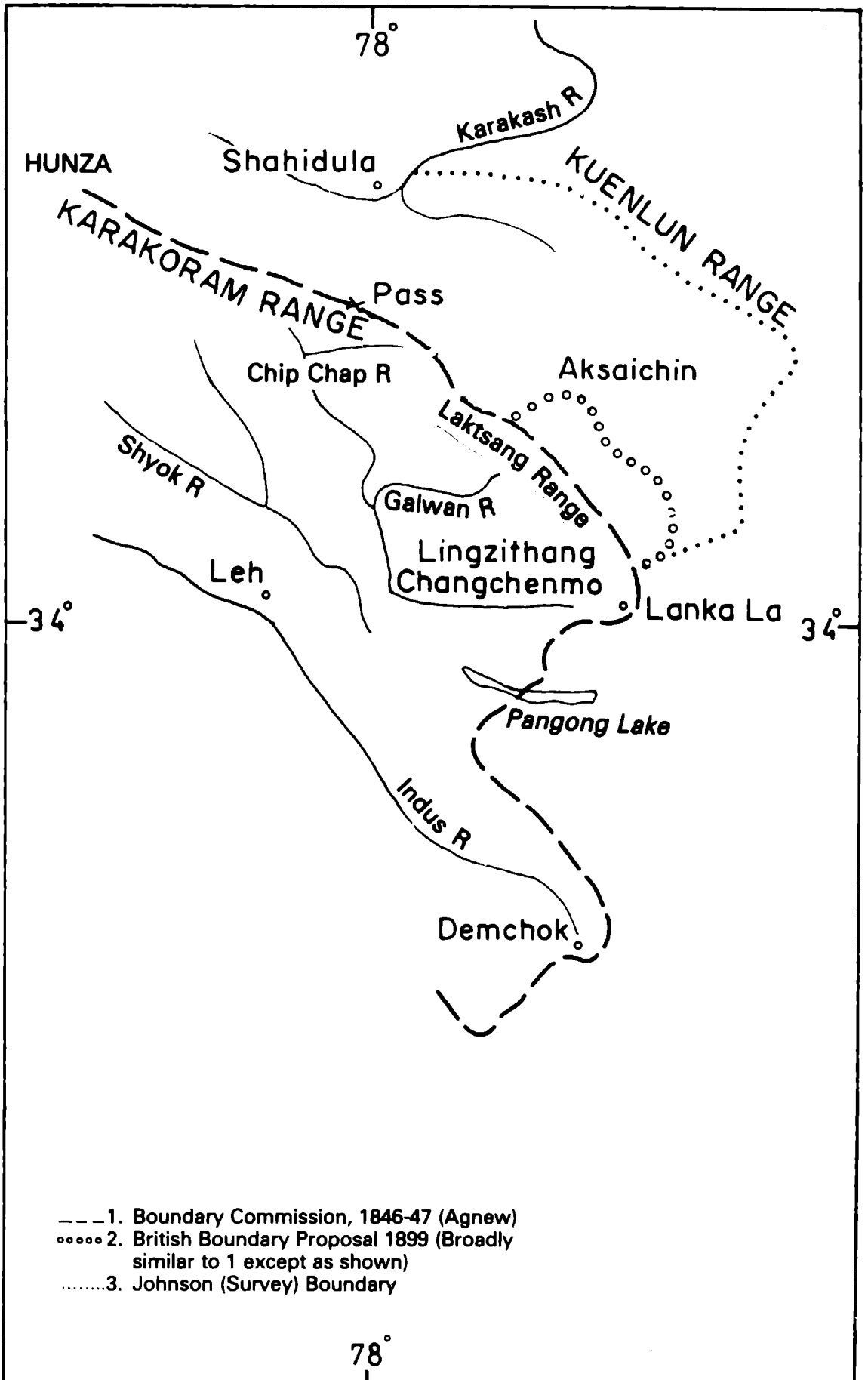
*de facto* boundary, which Strachey's strategy would have given them, could then have formed the basis of a negotiated agreement between the two governments.

In the light of their subsequent behaviour, it is perhaps unlikely that the Chinese government would have agreed to anything so definite. Nevertheless, the British government would have had tradition, history, scientific investigation, and what Agnew called 'the grand natural characteristics of the boundary', fully in their support. Such a combination of factors would have constituted irrefutable evidence of an internationally recognized boundary, whether the Chinese ever formally agreed or not. And this is precisely what the Government of India set about doing, although, characteristically, entirely ad hoc and without framing a deliberate border policy to this end.

It is impossible to overrate the importance of Agnew's pioneering work. In the long, frequently interrupted, and often desultory attempts to establish an international boundary between Ladakh and Chinese Tibet and Xinjiang, his was the first description of the traditional boundary by a responsible officer of the Government of India. Agnew did not actually march along it, the whole way. In the prevailing conditions, and the time available, the best he could do was to make inquiries. Fortunately, his description is detailed enough for the line to be traced from one identified point to the next. The watershed of the Shyok, and this included its tributaries, such as the Chip Chap and Galwan, could also have been delineated. From there it continued north-westwards along the Karakoram range as far as Hunza and Nagar. The line he described can be seen in the accompanying sketch map.

As Agnew described it, the line consists of two distinct parts. The first, from Demchok to the Lanak la on the Changlang range along the north of Changchenmo valley, crossed the Indus basin in a way that appears arbitrary and also unrelated to distinctive natural features. The basin was, and is, dotted by human settlements. In the long span of time, these had found their own level and created their own network related essentially to the exiguous means of support.

There can be no question, however, that after crossing the Indus basin, what Agnew called 'the grand natural characteristics' imposed their own logic. However, Agnew



MAP 4. Three boundaries compared



pointed out that in an uninhabited desert a deviation of many miles would have made no appreciable difference either of territorial gain or loss. Earlier, after studying the map, Henry Lawrence had made an inspired guess that the watershed was the natural boundary. But with Agnew the first outline of something definite emerged from the mists of history and tradition. According to him, Lawrence's natural boundary broadly conformed to the way tradition and custom had separated the people of Ladakh from those of the Chinese empire.

Both Agnew and Cunningham, the latter after his second visit to Ladakh, compiled very useful information about conditions of trade. Like other British officers, Agnew compared past liberality with present Kashmiri oppressiveness. 'Since Zorawar Singh's conquest and the extension of the authority of the Jammu Rajas in the hills, very heavy duties have been imposed. And, of late years, the merchants have been much oppressed.' This was exemplified by a year's import statistics of the two prime items of tea and shawl wool.

Tea	quantity	lbs.	50,000
	value	rs.	62,000
	duty	rs.	56,000
Shawl wool	quantity	(undecipherable)	
	value	rs.	87,000
	duty	rs.	70,310

It is obvious that inordinately heavy duties had been imposed by the Kashmir Durbar. Indian traders, as we know, as well as the Yarkandis, were loud in their complaints against the exorbitant levies extracted from them by Kashmiri officials in Ladakh. Little wonder, therefore, that the effect of a direct route being opened from Rampur Bashahr to Gartok, completely outside Kashmir territory, was for the flow of trade through Rampur to increase without any additional encouragement.

#### 8. *Ladakh: Exploration, Survey and Mapping*

'Boundary marks are neither requisite nor probably possible; you will find plenty of mountains ready to your hand', wrote

Henry Lawrence to Alexander Cunningham, on his appointment as leader of the second boundary commission, on 16 July 1847.<sup>27</sup>

Frustrated in their attempt to determine the boundaries of Ladakh in concert with the Chinese, the Government of India changed tack. In the ~~next four decades~~ they undertook a programme of exploration, survey and mapping of the massive mountain borders of Kashmir which had no parallel anywhere in the world. It was a gigantic task. In 1855, seven years after Cunningham and Strachey disbanded their parties, the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India commenced its operations in Kashmir. 'This, the Kashmir Series, was to be the crowning achievement of one the most ambitious scientific projects undertaken in the nineteenth century'.<sup>28</sup>

From the time that Henry Lawrence studied the map and sent Agnew and his colleagues into the mountains, there was no alternative to defining the boundary "fixed from old" in terms of its physical features. The Chinese could have followed suit in Tibet and Xinjiang, but at the time they had neither the inclination nor the know-how. For the present it was necessarily a unilateral British exercise. But, when they were ready, the Chinese would have to be asked for their concurrence. By the same token unilateral determination of the boundary by either side was impermissible. There was no other way of settling an international boundary.

Mapping of the Indo-Tibet border had started soon after the British annexed Kumaon and Garhwal in 1816 after the war with the Gurkhas. The limits of this territory were traditional and well known. It was essentially the old Tibeto-Nepali boundary along the Himalayan divide, going back even further to the limits of the former Chand dynasty's kingdom of Almora.

In 1846 Strachey had been surveying the border of Kumaon. It was there that he met the Bhotias of Juar, whose help proved indispensable in the following year. Later, their descendants, as the celebrated Survey "pundits", were to pace the vast spaces of Tibet and Turkestan, disguised as Buddhist pilgrims. It was from material they collected that the Survey of India were able to construct maps of areas outside India from which the British themselves were barred. The heroism and romance of this undertaking has received paltry recognition.

In 1851, when Henry Strachey was Deputy Surveyor-General,

two maps were issued by the Survey of India.\* As we have seen, Strachey did not make bold claims about the accuracy of his work. To a large extent the sketching was conjectural; nevertheless the maps were a valuable addition to the cartography of the border area from Changchenmo to the Lipu Lekh pass between the district of Pithoragarh in present-day Uttar Pradesh and western Tibet.

When survey operations started in Kashmir in 1855, Montgomerie was in charge. A base line was taken just east of Jammu and the surveyors cast their triangles across the Pir Panjal range. From the first W. H. Johnson, a civil sub-assistant, was in the vanguard. They dragged, carried and set up their heavy theodolites from one camp to the next. On Muli peak they were struck by an electric thunderstorm. Montgomerie recalled: 'The small iron stove in my tent began to crackle in the most unpleasant manner. . . and the hair of my dog crackled and, in the dark sparks were visible.'<sup>29</sup> Montgomerie could not have observed the behaviour of his own hair, and would have been astonished to find himself looking like a London punk of the 1970s. However, he did not suffer the fate of a man in his party whose hair was set on fire. Late in the summer of 1856, Johnson set up a station on the summit of Haramukh, a modest but breathtakingly beautiful peak overlooking the serene lake of Gangabal.†

From Haramukh Montgomerie sighted two distant peaks in the Karakoram range, and code-named them K1 and K2. They were sighted again by a surveyor in the two following years, and finally by Johnson in 1859, when they were found to be 25,600 and 28,287 feet respectively. K2, Montgomerie wrote, 'may therefore be considered as the second highest in the world'. The palm had already been awarded to Chomolungma, Mother

\*Both have been included in *Atlas of the Northern Frontier of India*, first published by the Government of India in 1959 after differences over the border had arisen with China.

†My plans to make the ascent in 1946 were foiled by a bad fall and a bruised shoulder which was skilfully treated by friendly Gujjars. Sleep in one of their huts, surrounded by chickens, goats and what seemed like several families, was impossible. Armies of fleas finally drove me out to a rock from which I watched the dawn gradually transfiguring the mountain. There I was joined by a college friend, Wazir Ali, whose endurance was greater than mine, but only just.

Goddess of the World, called Everest by British surveyors, after the last Surveyor-General of India. In the same way an attempt was made to name K2 after Godwin-Austen, the survey officer who explored the Baltoro glacier. He was unlucky to be driven back from the Mustagh pass by appalling weather when only five hundred feet from the saddle. The attempt never succeeded. To this day the formidable mountain retains its code name K2.

Montgomerie seemed content to leave the hard mountaineering to his determined and resourceful assistant, Johnson, who subsequently became the central figure in a first class survey controversy. Johnson's problems arose principally from his belonging to a social group ostracized by the official British hierarchy. He was a domiciled European and the son of a sub-conductor. Whatever his merits, Johnson was fated to remain a civil assistant, playing second fiddle to King's Commission officers, however inexperienced or junior in service. A golden opportunity to prove his mettle came his way in 1865. He had already been as far as the Karakoram pass. The whole of north-eastern Ladakh remained unsurveyed. Montgomerie, who was leaving the field, recommended Johnson to continue the Kashmir Series. In July, Johnson was in Leh and ready to go.

Beyond the Kuenlun, as we have seen, Chinese rule suddenly collapsed in 1863. The whole country was in turmoil. Local rulers established themselves in Khotan and Yarkand, and it was not until 1867 that the Khojas, who had been elbowed out of Kokand by the Russians three years earlier, gained control of the cities of east Turkestan under the leadership of the Atalik Ghazi.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh of Jammu and Kashmir was quick to take advantage of the free-for-all. He had a willing agent in the Ladakh Wazir, Mehta Mangal. In 1864 the Wazir sent a party across the Karakoram pass to build a *chauki* (small fort-like post) at Shahidula. Johnson was in Leh the same year, and he also visited the Karakoram pass, Suget and Shahidula. There has been no suggestion of complicity by Johnson in the Wazir's decision to build a *chauki* at Shahidula; but the situation in Leh, in which the two senior local officials of the Government of India and the Kashmir Durbar were, so to speak, thrown together, would suggest a possibility of this kind. For the Durbar, Shahidula was logistically an impossible position. By 1867 its officials were forced to abandon it to the Kirghiz herdsmen, and all semblance of

Kashmiri occupation had pulled back to Nubra, south of the Karakoram mountains, but not before Johnson had set the entire official world buzzing with his exploits in the borderlands.

The Amir who temporarily seized power in Khotan on the breakdown of Chinese authority was looking for friends and allies in an attempt to consolidate his shaky authority. The Yarkandis were hostile. He sent emissaries to the Kashmir ruler and the British in Lahore. There could not have been a better opportunity for the Maharaja to assert claims to trans-Karakoram territory. What passed between Mehta Mangal and Johnson during the week the latter was in Leh in 1865 will never be known. But the impetuous surveyor was entirely dependent on the Wazir for transport, supplies and safe conduct. He was also greatly disgruntled, looking perhaps already for advancement of his prospects under the Kashmir Durbar, whose service he later joined. The fact remains that the map prepared on his return showed the entire plateau area between the Karakoram and Kuenlun in the Maharaja's province of Ladakh.

Since the Government of India's claim to the plateaus rests squarely on Johnson's map, it is necessary to consider his report and the circumstances of his journey very closely. He made so many conflicting statements on his return that no one will know for sure how he convinced himself that he was acting on the instructions given to him when he set out through Changchenmo on his celebrated dash to Khotan across a hundred miles of intervening desolation.

There is little doubt that Johnson was as opportunistic as he was energetic. The exploits of such a colourful character, an official underdog so to speak, were bound to provoke controversy. The story given out in Leh was that the ruler of Khotan, having heard of his achievements, had sent a messenger to Leh inviting him to Khotan. This is pure invention; it would have taken a messenger a month to come and another to return, certainly not the week he was in Leh. If there was pre-arrangement, this would have been settled in the previous year while he was at Shahidula. He was away before the Punjab government, who were responsible for conducting relations with the Kashmir Durbar at the time, even heard of it. They were completely mystified by the news which trickled through. When they asked the Government of India about the authority for



Johnson's journey, they wrote: 'According to the statement of one of his party (a native) who has returned, Mr. Johnson was, when he left, six marches beyond the Changchenmo gap, or within 120 miles of Khotan in the tract of country known as the Aksaichin. He is said to be accompanied by 50 coolies, a chaprasi, five mules, six horses and a sepoy of the Maharaja.'<sup>30</sup> The information that he was then in Aksaichin has an important bearing on the geography of this tract, and it will be necessary to return to this point later.

The rumours that preceded Johnson's return were even more intriguing. Two envoys from Khotan complained to Kashmiri officials in Ladakh about Johnson's conduct. They said he had been very kindly treated by the ruler. When he tried to raise 25 *koors*\* from the merchants in Khotan, and was able to get only five, the Khan gave him the whole amount, along with 4 horses and 4 carpets. The gifts were intended for "The Lord Sahib" (Viceroy). However, when Johnson reached Lahore, he presented the horses and carpets only and said nothing about the silver.<sup>31</sup>

The Survey of India seem to have been considerably embarrassed by the activities of their runaway civil assistant. Colonel Walker, Superintendent of Survey, who at first had greeted Johnson's report as 'the most valuable contribution to the geography of Central Asia that has been made for several years by anybody in India', later criticized it harshly. Johnson's survey observations, Walker made out, had to be checked, his map recast and report largely re-written (see map facing page 160).

The maligned assistant fought back, but was censured for questionable conduct and superseded by Lt. Carter, his junior. Johnson resigned in disgust and took service with the Maharaja of Kashmir.† However, a year later the Government of India had second thoughts. Johnson had gone back on his original story. He now made out that 'far from undertaking at his own desire the journey to Khotan, he went there under compulsion, having being removed from the Kashmir territory by a body of

\*Silver ingots valued at Rs.166 per koor or Rs.4,150 altogether, a considerable sum at the time.

†He could hardly have done so without clearance by the Government of India, just as such clearance was requested some years later for the employment of Johnson's son by the Kashmir Durbar.

horsemen in the employment of the Khan Badshah of Khotan'. Far from having received cash gifts, he alleged that he had to bribe his way out by giving promissory notes of the value of Rs.16,000, arriving penniless in Leh.

Johnson was never able to satisfactorily explain the discrepancies in his statements, but the Government of India re-employed him in 1869 on a higher salary.<sup>32</sup> Three years later he resigned again and went back to Kashmir where he was appointed Wazir of the Ladakh Wazarat in succession to Frederic Drew, a post he held for several years. He is still known there as "Corporal Sahib", a reminder of his humble origin.

A question mark hangs over the entire Johnson episode. It must be said that Johnson's claim of being virtually abducted by the Khan of Khotan's horsemen is totally at variance with the known facts. There was not a single Khotanese horseman with him until he camped at the source of the Karakash tributary after a strenuous march of eighteen days. While he was there he sent a messenger to the Khan asking for facilities to visit Khotan, and he waited twenty days for his messenger to return accompanied by two men sent by the Khan. In fact it was the Khan who yielded to Johnson's importunacy, not the other way round. Once he got there, the Khan was insistent that he should stay; but he was able to get away after eighteen days. Such demanding hospitality was usual in Turkestan. Three years later Shaw and Hayward were detained in Kashgar for three months before the Atalik allowed them to leave.

When confronted with these discrepancies, Johnson gave yet another improbable explanation. He professed to have been under the impression 'that a statement of the whole facts would be thought to reflect "on his reputation for enterprise and zeal".'<sup>33</sup> The fact that the authorities in Leh had provided Johnson with as many as fifty porters and a State sepoy suggests some sort of understanding with the Wazir. The State authorities had not been known to be so forthcoming with help, as the Boundary Commissioners had every reason to know, and as Sir Douglas Forsyth was to discover when arrangements for his first mission to Yarkand actually broke down because of the Wazir's obstructiveness. Moreover, the ready welcome given to Johnson by the Maharaja after his resignation from the Survey of India had all the appearance of a reward for services rendered. This

would seem to suggest that he had shown somewhat more than the usual zeal in supporting the Maharaja's territorial claims.

What indeed was Johnson up to? The indications are that he virtually forced his way into Khotan. He was certainly not under duress, as he made out, at any stage. Even for such a hardy mountaineer, he made exceptionally good speed, averaging 19.2 miles a day, without halting once, until he got to the source of the Karakash after eighteen days' continuous marching. And this, it must be remembered, with a sizable retinue of fifty porters, six horses, a State sepoy and his interpreter Juman Khan. He must have driven them relentlessly through the wastes of Aksaichin. Survey in these circumstances was quite out of the question. Indeed no plane table stations are marked in his map till he entered the Kuenlun range. He cannot be accused of violating instructions not to cross over into Chinese territory for the simple reason that the Chinese were nowhere on the scene. What is more, the invitation, if so it can be called, of the Turki ruler of Khotan had in a sense legitimized his venture.

Johnson's report, which was carefully vetted by Walker, suggests that there was a good deal his superiors knew but declined to reveal. He set out in compliance with instructions given to him by Lt. Carter on 17th May, 'regarding the extension of the Survey operations of the Kashmir series beyond, and to the north of, the Changchenmo valley'. He left Dehra Dun on the 27th, and, proceeding via Simla and Rampur, arrived at Leh on 17th July. He declared that he was emboldened 'to undertake the risk of visiting the Khotan country, thinking by this enterprise to be able to furnish information of value to our Government, as regards those provinces of Central Asia, which are at present almost unknown to Europeans, and also of the movements of the Russian forces in those parts of the world'.

The Government of India very strictly controlled the movements of its officers of whatever rank in the border areas. It is improbable that Johnson could have undertaken, as he made out, a major intelligence mission entirely on his own. Extension of the Kashmir Series must have been the predetermined cover for a venture secretly sponsored by the Survey of India, with the encouragement of the Intelligence wing of the Quartermaster-General's branch at a time when things were stirring in Central

Asia. As a civil assistant, rather than an officer of the regular cadre, there would have been no particular squeamishness about disowning Johnson if he failed or botched his mission. What better person to prospect the lie of the land than a domiciled sub-assistant who, at the worst, could be wigged for exceeding his instructions? Indeed, this is precisely what happened. Even Moorcroft did not influence subsequent events on the border to the extent that his dramatic dash to Khotan, and the map produced thereafter, were destined to do.

## B. THE MIDDLE PLAINS

### 1. *Descriptive*

The extensive plateaus east of the Karakoram watershed which were crossed by Johnson in 1865 have loosely been called Aksaichin. Frederic Drew, a geologist, who was Governor of Ladakh for two years from 1869, preferred the name Kuenlun plains because they are bounded on the north by that range and on the east by its southern spur. But neither of these names accurately describes the area. The plains lie between the Karakoram and Kuenlun watersheds. I shall therefore adopt what is objectively the simplest and most accurate name—the middle plains, and not the eastern plains which was also used by Drew. Though east of the Karakoram, they are west of the Kuenlun spur. They could also be called the intermediate plains—an uninhabited no-man's land between Ladakh and Tibetan Changthang.

Drew estimated that they were about 7,000 square miles in area, or about a hundred miles from north to south and rather less from east to west. Johnson was told that the east-to-west distance was a hundred miles, giving an area of approximately 10,000 square miles. These estimates were at best approximate.

The plains are a lacustrine tract at an elevation of between 15,500 and 17,500 feet. It was abandoned by the sea long ages ago when the Asian plate was heaved skywards as the continents were lifted and folded in the tertiary period of the mesozoic age. It is a vast, confusing, windswept and inhospitable fold of High Asia where neither man nor beast can sustain a regular

existence. If he ever crossed it, the traveller had one thought only in mind, to get out before his bones were gripped by the icy cold. No trace existed there of man's occupation, no ruined habitations, and of past cultivation not a sign. Nowhere on this earth is there a loftier left-over of geological desolation. No place better deserved Jawaharlal Nehru's description of it as a no-man's land where not a blade of grass grew. It was over this intrinsically worthless real estate that, in 1962, bitter battles were fought. Till a few years earlier it was a forgotten land. History, which recounts the comings and goings of man, had passed it by.

How did this come to be? The Dogras, who cannot be accused of lacking either ambition or energy, left it alone. They attempted the conquest of western Tibet and reached out beyond the Karakoram to Shahidula. It was this penetration of territories outside Ladakh proper that shook the equilibrium of the traditional communities of this regional meeting place in High Asia. In a sense, indeed in a very true sense, the Sino-Indian conflict was an extension into contemporary history of the disequilibrium created by the paranoiac ambitions of Maharaja Gulab Singh and his son, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, and the overzealous Dogra general, Zorawar Singh. But there is no suggestion in any of the recorded and oral evidence that they cast covetous eyes at the middle plains.

The Ladakh chronicles, too, are eerily silent about the area, nor is it mentioned in any of the treaties. Indeed, it would have been surprising, to say the least, if such a desolate and totally uninhabitable tract had been taken cognizance of by the chroniclers of the heroic age. The isolation of the plains was so complete that the representatives of the Jammu raja and the theocratic rulers of Tibet found no occasion to mention them even in the comparatively recent Treaty of Leh of 1842.

A brief description of this extremely isolated area would make for a better understanding of the claims that came to be made by India and China in the middle of the twentieth century. The tract is enclosed on all four sides by great mountain ranges—the Karakoram to the west, continuing as the Changlang range or Changchenmo ridge to the south, with the Kuenlun range as a northern rampart, and its eastern spur, just beyond 80 degrees east longitude, as the fourth arm enclosing it to the east.

Starting from about 78 degrees and 30 minutes east, it extends to just beyond 80 degrees, roughly between 34 and 36 degrees north latitude.

The most detailed and accurate description of the middle plains was given by Frederic Drew who for about ten years was in the service of the Maharaja of Kas̄mir, the last two as Wazir of Ladakh. He wrote two authoritative books on Jammu and Kashmir after his retirement. He had travelled extensively in Ladakh even before he became Wazir, but before he left in 1871 he toured the plains from Changchenmo to Soda plain at the extreme north, just below the source of the eastern affluent of the Karakash river. Before Drew's visit, the middle plains had been crossed, from south to north, only by Johnson in his hurried dash in 1865, by Hayward and Shaw, both in 1868-69, in a much more leisurely and observant fashion, and by Forsyth in 1870 and again in 1873-74 on his missions to Yarkand. Forsyth was accompanied by Trotter, an experienced officer of the Indian Survey, who was specifically detailed to survey as much of the route and beyond as he possibly could.

Drew acknowledged that, at the time, 'our knowledge of this tract is but scant, and of a portion of it only conjectural'.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless it is possible to piece together a definitive geography of the middle plains from the accounts of these pioneers. It should be clarified that none of them ventured further east than Thaldat and Soda plain. Consequently, nothing directly was known about an extensive area approximately 40 to 50 miles wide eastward of a north-south line from Lumkang la on the Changlang range to Thaldat and the Soda plain. Of the territory east of the mountains bounding the plains Drew said it had 'never been at all explored, nor even reached, by any European, nor, till some distance beyond, by anyone from whom information could be got'.<sup>36</sup> In the last years of the 19th century Deasy made two attempts to reconnoitre Aksaichin from the south and east. In 1897 he prospected the line of mountains east of Changchenmo but had to return without gaining his goal because winter was setting in. Two years later he made another attempt, this time from Xinjiang. The British Minister at Peking had been able to procure a Chinese passport for Deasy, but he never got beyond Polu. The Amban of Kiria made out that Deasy was attempting to open a road to Aksaichin, an

engineering feat completely beyond the resources of his small party. But the Amban was adamant. Appeals sent through the Kashgar Agency Munshi in Macartney's absence to the British Minister at Peking failed to move this official. Eastern Aksaichin preserved its secrets from the prying British.

## 2. *Laktsang Range*

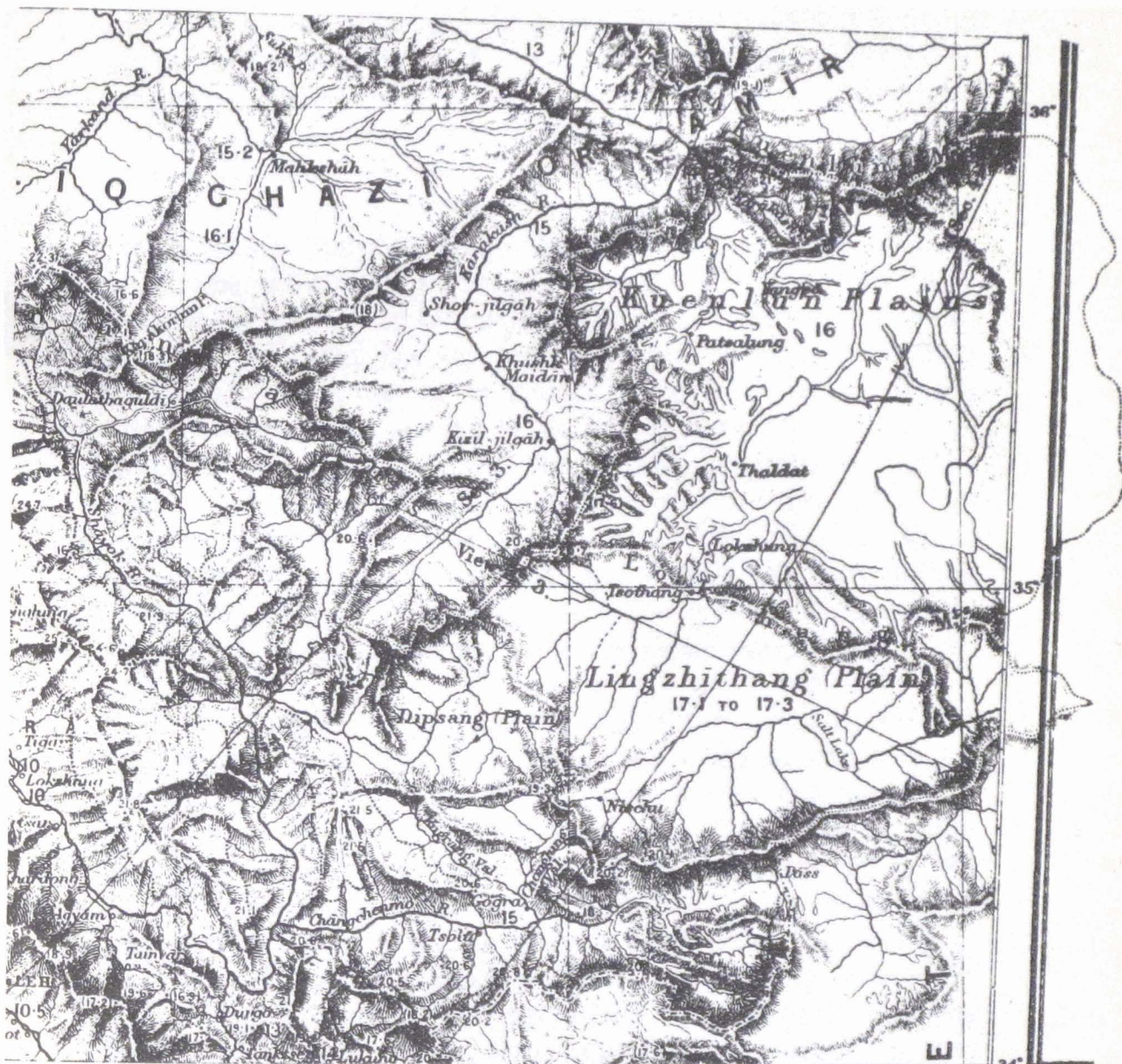
The most striking natural feature of the middle plains is the Laktsang range. It runs south-eastwards from a little east of Kizil Jilga, towards but not quite up to the Lanak la at the eastern tip of Changchenmo valley in Ladakh. Shaw described the range as consisting of two parallel ridges. According to Drew, the more southern of the two was a series of rounded mounds hardly more than 300 feet above the plain. He considered this to be the true watershed. The next consisted of rocky pinnacles and ravines through which the drainage flowed northwards. Together the two ridges were about 15 miles across, meeting an imposing mountain of about 21,000 feet at the north-western end.

The importance of the Laktsang range in the geography of the middle plains was once again brought out by Trotter. In crossing the plain between the Changlang and Laktsang ranges, 'the traveller crosses, almost without knowing it, the watershed between India and Central Asia'.<sup>37</sup> While there can be no doubt that the Karakoram range, which includes its southern extension to the west of the plains Changlang range or Changchenmo ridge to the south, is an unmistakable watershed, it is impossible to ignore the opinion of two such experienced observers as Drew and Trotter that the Laktsang range was a watershed within the middle plains. This is a point to which it will be necessary to return later (see Map 5 on facing page).

## 3. *Lingzithang*

The plains area as a whole is divided into two unequal portions by the Laktsang range. The portion to the south-west, immediately to the north of the Changlang range, is Lingzithang; it resembles a right-angled triangle with the Laktsang range as the hypotenuse and the acute angle at the eastern tip.





MAP 5. Drew's Map of Aksaichin and Lingzithang (details)

Frederic Drew was Governor of Ladakh for two years—1869 to 1871—and visited the Aksaichin area twice. He knew it better than anyone else in the nineteenth century. His map distinctly shows the Laktsang range. is not mentioned as such but the place name Laktsang (meaning Eagle's Nest) is located in this range from which it apparently takes its name. The boundary proposed by the British in 1899 runs along this range. Drew called Aksaichin the Kuenlun plains.





Bounded as it is by a diagonal, Lingzithang is wider at the western end and narrows as it approaches its eastern limit, the average being something like two stages, or 40 miles. Drew describes the plain as bare, strewn with stones and 'wonderfully even'. It seemed to him that 'the whole soil that covers the flat *has been deposited in a lake*'.<sup>38</sup> He saw what he judged to be a temporary lake in the western part of Lingzithang, while in the eastern portion the drainage collected in 'the large lake marked on the map which has, I believe, been viewed from a distance by some members of the Great Trigonometrical Survey'. Forsyth, though a staid civil servant, was far more impressionistic than the geologist. Viewing the prospect from Nischu, the first camp after crossing the Changlang la, he wrote: 'Beneath us lay a vast barren desert, extending from the Karakoram range to the far east. . . . Wherever the eye roamed, nought but desolation met the view, a dreary desert filled with gloom.' It was 'bounded to the north by a range of low, fantastic shaped hills and domes, towers and crags'.<sup>39</sup> This vivid description enables the reader to visualize Lingzithang and the Laktsang range bounding it to the north-east.

All the authorities cited agreed that there was an extensive plain extending north-eastwards from the Laktsang range to the foot of the Kuenlun, though they gave it different names. 'A second plain', Johnson writes, 'slopes for a distance of 30 miles in a north-easterly direction from 16,700 feet down to 15,300, when it rises again towards the watershed of the Kunelun'.<sup>40</sup> Hayward marked this in his map as Soda plain. According to Shaw it was covered with coarse soda and below it 'a sheet of impure common salt, or saltpetre, which you can hear crack like thin ice under fresh snow as you walk'. Except for small patches, the whole plain was covered with a very thin cake of earth, which suggests that it had been flooded in the summer on the melting of the snows. Shaw and Hayward were there at the end of October 1868.

Johnson passed through early in the summer of 1865, and described the route from Mapothang to Yangpa as lying through 'an extensive plain covered with several lakes, the water being exceedingly brackish and having a very offensive smell'. Like Drew after him, Johnson thought the plain must have been a very large lake, 'judging from the water marks to be seen on the

low sandy spurs which are met with . . . and the quantity of saltpetre which lays on the ground to a depth of about nine inches, which is so white that, on looking down from a height, the whole plain has the appearance of being covered with snow'. Here at last was the Chinese 'white desert'.

#### 4. *Aksaichin: A Question of Names*

With scarcely anything by way of authority to go on these pioneers indulged in the liberty of naming the plains as they thought best. Most of them made a distinction between Lingzithang and Aksaichin, though some used the names interchangeably. On his first trip at the end of 1870 Forsyth tried to clear up the confusion but only succeeded in making it worse. Beyond Changlang la (the westernmost of the passes from Changchenmo valley), 'on the north side, the high table-land which connects the Karakoram and Kuenlun ranges may be said to commence . . . . But the Aksaichin, as it is sometimes called, or White Chinese Plain, of which the Lingzithang, Dipsi Col and Thaldat are only different parts . . . is, as compared to the Pamir, very much what the outside of the dome is to the roof of St. Paul's.' He was driven by the sheer desolation confronting him to make a comparison which was hardly fair to one of the noblest domes in the world.

Forsyth's understanding was that the entire area of the plateaus was known as Aksaichin, and that it consisted of a number of distinct parts, i.e., Lingzithang, Dipsi Col (by which Deepsang was apparently intended) and Thaldat or Aksaichin proper. That Lingzithang and Aksaichin were different plateaus separated by the Laktsang range had been known at least since 1865. Johnson was reported to have been in Aksaichin when he was six marches from Changchenmo. Forsyth himself made the distinction on his return journey. From Suget his party broke away eastwards to Deepsang. Then, after 'leaving the upper Karakash river near its source we crossed by a low pass on to the head of the Lingzithang Plain, and then making two marches . . . we came to the Changlang la range, crossing which we entered Changchenmo valley and found ourselves once more in Kashmir territory'.<sup>41</sup> This identification of Changchenmo is a point of some importance which will have to be considered in

the context of the boundary question, but it is clear that Forsyth recognized Lingzithang to be a distinct area.

Despite Forsyth's clarification, Trotter returned to the other nomenclature. He distinguished three routes northwards from Changchenmo, all 'leading on to the Lingzithang Plains'. In a footnote he adds: 'Or Aksaichin.' However, thereafter, he referred to Lingzithang without clubbing it with Aksaichin. Drew went to the extent of giving Aksaichin the altogether different name of Kuenlun Plains.

Despite this idiosyncratic use of names the broad divisions are clear. Lingzithang lies south-west of the Laktsang range and Aksaichin to the north-east of it, while Deepsang is a pocket to the extreme north-west on the way to Suget. Soda plain, though confused by Hayward and Shaw with the whole of Aksaichin, was taken by Drew to be a small part of Aksaichin at the foot of the Kuenlun where he found a deep and extensive deposit of salts. 'The whole place', Forsyth said of the plain north of Thaldat 'is one vast bed of Glauber's salt.' The English compounded the confusion by giving the purely descriptive name of Soda plain to a much larger area traditionally known as Aksaichin.

Identification of the two large plains of Lingzithang and Aksaichin, along with the smaller pocket of Deepsang, was not the end of the matter. There was yet another plain, to the east and south-east of Aksaichin. 'From the hills I ascended,' (presumably near the source of the Karakash) writes Johnson, 'I noticed other plains of considerable extent to the east and south-east, which are believed to merge into the Changthang plains of Rudok.' Johnson could not have seen over the southern Kuenlun spur into the territory beyond. It must be concluded, therefore, that this large plain which merged into Tibetan Changthang lay to the west of the Kuenlun spur, which placed it within the boundary of Ladakh as marked in Johnson's map. He does not seem to have grasped the anomaly, nor apparently did Col. Walker, the Superintendent of Survey in Dehra Dun. Had either of them perceived the contradiction they might have been hesitant about extending the Maharaja's boundary to the Kuenlun spur, thus including in Ladakh a portion of Tibetan Changthang.

Hayward, too, looked back from Thaldat. 'A high range', he

says, 'bounded the view at the distance of 80 miles to the south-east. This range—either the continuation of the main Karakoram chain, or a spur of it—was visible, stretching from the head of Changchenmo and trending with a direction of E.N.E. towards the spurs of the Kuenlun to the eastward.' Looking north from his point of vantage, he saw 'the sunny range of the Kuenlun . . . while eastward stretched the wide expanse of desert, known as the Aksaichin',<sup>42</sup> Here again is a positive identification.

None of those whose accounts have been discussed made any mention of a dividing line comparable to the Laktsang range in the extensive plains area east of Thaldat. The only visible landmarks were the south trending spur of the Kuenlun and the line of mountains which Hayward judged to be 80 miles to the south-east. They are unlikely to have been able to make out anything more than that from such a distance. Though rarefied air at great heights is usually very clear, refraction sometimes plays strange tricks which make it difficult to judge distance and distinguish natural features other than the most prominent, such as ranges of mountains. There seems little doubt that Aksaichin extended northward from Thaldat to the Kuenlun, eastward to its south trending spur and further south-east towards Tibetan Changthang. Where could it be said to end? In 1897 the Surveyor-General of India hazarded a guess that the Aksaichin plain extended eastwards into Chinese territory through the gap between the termination of the southern Kuenlun spur, at about 35 degrees 10 minutes latitude, and the terminal feature of Changchenmo ridge, or what Forsyth called the Changlang la range.<sup>43</sup>

##### 5. *Drainage*

As he traversed Lingzithang from south to north Johnson passed two lakes of about 16 and 60 square miles. Since it was already midsummer, he rightly judged that they would have been considerably larger in April and May, on the melting of the snows. Wherever it occurred the water was brackish and foul. According to Drew the top-soil of the whole of Lingzithang 'has been deposited in a lake'. He confirmed the existence of two lakes in Lingzithang and noticed lakes elsewhere, along with patches of saline efflorescence. However, when he made a

deliberate attempt to find one of the lakes marked in Johnson's map, it was not there. Apparently precipitation and snow-melt created varying conditions from year to year in the landlocked plains. Drew considered them to be an 'enclosed drainage area'. There was no outlet, and evaporation left a residue of salts in the soil.

Drew's opinion is not conclusive but it explains the intriguing hydrology of the middle plains. If there was any separation of waters at all, Trotter's opinion that the Laktsang range constituted an internal watershed would have to carry weight until the hydrology of the middle plains is finally determined by experts. But it was known even then that the limit of the Indus watershed was the crest of the Karakoram range which turned south just beyond 78 degrees east longitude, where it became the watershed of the Shyok and its tributaries, till it turned east again along the Changlang range bounding the north of Changchenmo valley. The drainage from the southern spurs of the Kuenlun flowed into the Karakash river, which, along with the northern drainage of the Karakoram in the Yarkand river, eventually made for the Tarim basin in Xinjiang. Lingzithang, it might be recalled, sloped gradually from the Changlang to the Laktsang, and thence once again to the southern foothills of the Kuenlun, the overall descent being approximately two thousand feet.

Trotter's observation about the watershed between India and Central Asia suggests that such drainage as there was from Lingzithang entered the Shyok system which was tributary to the Indus. As we shall see, this has an important bearing on the boundary which the British were to propose to China in 1899. The true enclosed drainage area mentioned by Drew would thus have been Aksaichin proper, beyond the Laktsang range. This can at best be a tentative view until the hydrology of the middle plains is thoroughly studied.

### 6. *Importance of the Middle Plains*

None of those who visited the plains from India during the ten years after Johnson's visit substantially disagreed with Forsyth's opinion that there was 'a vast barren desert. . . . Wherever the eye roamed, nought but desolation met the view.' The water, if

there was any to be had, smelled foul; there was hardly any fuel and to add to these miseries the whole area was bitterly cold. As Drew said, to be delayed there was to starve. Intrinsicly, the middle plains were a valueless left-over of primeval desolation. What then was their importance? The short answer is that the western end was crossed by three alternatives to the main trade route over the Karakoram pass, which they met at Suget. This opinion was particularly welcome to Indian traders who were anxious to give as wide a berth as possible to the Durbar's officials on the main Karakoram route. Johnson's motive was clear. His goal was Khotan; and since the Yarkandis and Khotanese were at daggers drawn after the Chinese were driven out, he had to keep as far away as possible from the routes to Yarkand.

Then, as so frequently happened in distant imperial outposts, one person with a bee in his bonnet gave an unexpected twist to the whole question. This was Dr. Cayley who was appointed Joint Commissioner at Leh under the Indo-Kashmir trade treaty of 1870. Cayley thought all the world of the route through Changchenmo and Lingzithang. Disregarding the very material fact that it was about a hundred miles longer than the Shyok-Sasser-Karakoram route consistently advocated by Montgomerie, he persuaded the Durbar to build a number of store houses in the Changchenmo valley for the benefit of travellers. These fell into disrepair by the end of the 1870s when interest in the route had virtually lapsed, though a small trickle of traders, mostly from India, continued to use it even afterwards.

Another attempt to tinker with the routes was made in 1878 by Elias when he was Joint Commissioner. He suggested that the Kashmir-Leh route should be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Joint Commissioners since that carried the bulk of the trade.<sup>44</sup> The Government of India declined to raise the issue with the Durbar as it would have entailed revision of the 1870 Treaty. They suggested that the difficulty could be surmounted by improving the road between Sonamarg and Leh.\*

\*To get over the difficulty caused by the Zoji la being regularly closed by heavy winter snow, J. E. T. Aitchison, then Joint Commissioner, suggested in 1873 that a covered way should be made through the pass using *mani* (prayer) walls. . . . It was from reflecting on the uselessness of those laboured constructions, and to what service they could possibly be applied, that it

The Indian interest in Lingzithang was limited to its use as a link in the Indo-Yarkand trade. It must be said, too, that during the fifteen-year absence of the Chinese from Sinkiang there is no evidence of British and Kashmiri officials and traders meeting any Tibetans or Turkestanis in Lingzithang, or in the western extremity of Aksaichin into which they had made occasional sallies. Even after the Chinese returned in 1878 there was no visible presence of Chinese or Tibetans in Lingzithang, right down to 1913 and afterwards. The reason is simple. Lingzithang was very far removed from their area of interest. They had no need to cross through Changchenmo in Ladakh to the cities in Xinjiang. For them there was another way which was direct and relatively trouble-free.

### 7. *Was there Another Way?*

When Younghusband met Grombchevsky in the Yarkand valley in 1889, like most competitors isolated from their own base, they were not averse to giving each other gentlemanly help on a modest scale. But Younghusband succumbed to the temptation of playing a trick on his rival. Grombchevsky wished to make his way through Ladakh and Tibet to Polu. Younghusband readily promised a Kirghiz escort from Shahidula by 'a route of absolutely no importance, leading from nowhere to nowhere, and passing over very elevated plateaus and mountains without grass or fuel, and to cross which in winter will cause him extreme hardships and loss to his party'.<sup>45</sup> Younghusband's merriment was confined to the telling of the story, not the discomfiture he had intended. The Government of India declined to agree to the Russian agent crossing through Ladakh to Tibet.

occurred to me that, if two of them were placed side by side and roofed in, an admirable construction would thus be formed for a permanent way through any depth of snow'. (*Ibid*). Considering that the Zoji la is an unusually long tunnel-like pass, even an unconcerned traveller, as the author was at the time, would have had no difficulty in ruling it out as impracticable. Aitchison seems to have been completely insensitive to Buddhist sentiment. Be it said to Johnson's credit that when he was Wazir of Ladakh he finally shot down this suggestion. I understand, however, that engineering skills have so advanced that the idea of a covered way is being seriously considered.



Younghusband's plan would have fallen through anyway. In contrast to his own modest height, Grombchevsky was over six feet tall, handsome and powerfully built. He would have forced his way through Aksaichin, but the fact remains that there were no east-west routes across the middle plains, though there was one from Khotan to Changthang from north-west to south-east. Johnson gathered from 'native information', and it must be inferred that he met with his informants in Khotan, that 'the Kuenlun range stretches in an easterly direction for a distance of about 100 miles from the sources of the Karakash river, and then terminates on an extensive plain, communicating with the Changthang plain'. He was also told that there was a relatively easy route over this plain from Ilchi (Khotan) to the Changchenmo valley, *which was suitable for wheeled carts.* (Emphasis added.) The only difficulty would be possible obstruction by the Tibetan shepherds of the Rudok district.

This information was of exceptional importance. Firstly, since it clearly was not the Kiria-Polu route to ~~northern Changthang~~, the route he was told about could only have been west of Kuenlun spur and within the plain to the east and south-east which he had seen from his point of vantage near the source of the Karakash. As pointed out earlier, he could not have seen over the southern Kuenlun spur to the plains beyond. Secondly, possible obstruction by Tibetan shepherds of Rudok district meant that the route was clear of Changchenmo valley, and beyond the Lanak la. Thirdly, even at the time it was fit for "wheeled carts". Fourthly, nothing was known about this route in Indian trading centres, else the resourceful traders of Hoshiarpur, Kinnawar and Rampur would have found it an invaluable means of by-passing their pet hate, the officials of the Kashmir Durbar. Johnson did not hear about it until he reached Khotan.

Five years later Drew received further confirmation of the existence of this route from a Ladakhi who had made the journey from Rudok to Khotan in 18 or 20 days.<sup>46</sup> It was obviously very direct and relatively easy.

Trotter's thorough analysis of the routes distinguished three main ones:

- (i) the Karakoram route, with its summer (tabistani) and winter (zamistani) variations, meeting at Daulat Beg Oldi in the

north-western corner of Deepsang plain, 11 miles short of the Karakoram pass;

- (ii) the Changchenmo routes to Yarkand and Khotan; and
- (iii) the Rudok or Changthang route to Khotan.

The first two categories have been considered already. It was the third which ~~Trotter decided to investigate~~, and he did this by sending out Kishen Singh 'pundit' from Yarkand to the great unknown behind the beyond. Kishen Singh brought back information about a road which Trotter considered to be 'one of the most important geographical results secured by the Mission'. He went on to say: 'It is apparent by combining the results of the survey with other information collected by the Survey pundits in the past few years, that a road exists between the plains of Hindustan and Turkestan which entirely avoids the territory of the Maharaja of Kashmir'.<sup>47</sup> The route had the further advantage of being free from snow in the summer months, and without even one really difficult pass to cross.

Thinking still of the potential of this route, Trotter remarked, prophetically as it turned out, that 'the newly acquired knowledge of this road may perhaps lead to important practical results, but not until our relations with the Chinese Empire, and their too independent subordinates in Tibet, are placed on a more satisfactory footing than they are at present'.

But the route Kishen Singh "discovered" was the old Kiria-Polu-northern Changthang route and not the one across Aksaichin. Any possible confusion on this score was removed by the Surveyor-General in his U.O. No. 22 of 8 February 1897 to the Foreign Department, headed "note on the Aksaichin".<sup>48</sup> The note, prepared by Lt.-Col. Gore, pointed out that the Aksaichin Hayward saw looking east from Thaldat could not possibly have been beyond the line of mountains in the Kuenlun spur about 60 miles off. About Aksaichin, he reached this conclusion: 'On the evidence at present forthcoming it is clear that ~~there~~ is a plain South of the Kuen Lun somewhere East of Thaldat and West of the dividing spur which runs South from the Kuenlun in about longitude 80 degrees 25 minutes, which is called Aksaichin'.<sup>49</sup> Thus Gore substantially corroborates the conclusion reached earlier that Aksaichin lay entirely to the west of the Kuenlun spur. It was this Aksaichin that was traversed by

the route from Khotan to Changthang which Johnson and Drew had written about, and which the Ladakhi mentioned by Drew was able to cover in a mere 18 or 20 days.

Information about the regional routes was not abundant, but it was sufficient for a fairly definite picture to be formed. The most well known and heavily used was the one via the Karakoram pass. About the Lingzithang route, Hayward wrote: 'There is no regular road as yet, and the mere track of a few merchants and travellers who have ever gone this route is easily missed'. In India nothing was known about the third route, from Rudok to Khotan, across the plateau known as Aksaichin. Even at that time Johnson was told that it was fit for wheeled carts.

As a link between Chinese subjects in Xinjiang, and what Trotter called 'their too independent subordinates in Tibet', Aksaichin and the route through it obviously was of very great potential importance. Younghusband had pointed out that the middle plains as a whole totally lacked jurisdictional boundaries. It remains to be seen why the Kashmir boundary came to be shown in Survey of India maps along the Kuenlun spur at about 80 degrees east, thus including a large area of which next to nothing was known in Kashmir.

#### 8. *Ladakh's North-Eastern Boundary*

According to Drew, Johnson's map was the foundation of all the Survey of India maps constructed thereafter, but it lacked the detail of regular survey maps, 'for it was made on a hurried journey over ground where to halt was to starve'.<sup>50</sup> As pointed out earlier, Johnson literally charged across the plains until he got to the source of the Karakash, knocking up a fantastic average of 19.2 miles a day at elevations ranging from just under 20,000 to 15,500 feet. It is inconceivable that he could have done any serious survey until he camped for twenty days in the mountains above the source of the Karakash. At no stage of his journey, either to Khotan or on the way back, was he anywhere near the boundary of Ladakh as shown in his map except at the points where his route crossed the boundary line. He does not say in his report how he determined the north-eastern boundary shown in his map eastwards of the Karakoram pass along the Kuenlun range and its southern spur, just beyond 80° east. The





**MAP**

illustrating the routes taken by

**M. JOHNSON CIVIL ASSIS. G. T. SURVEY**  
 in travelling from LEH to KHOTAN and back

in 1865

SCALE 16 MILES = 1 INCH

**Notes**

- The country to the South of the Karakoram and Kuen Lun Ranges is taken from the maps of the G. T. Survey of Kashmir and India.*
- △ Stations of the Great Trigon. Survey.
- M. Johnson's Plane table Stations.
- x Encamping grounds where there are no habitations.
- M. Johnson's Route.
- ..... Probable course of unascertained Streams.
- Boundary of Maharajah of Kashmir.

MAP 6. Johnson's Survey Map

Alignment of the international boundary does not conform to the authenticated boundary of India.



only information he noted as having been collected during his journey was the eastern extent of the Kuenlun range from the source of the Karakash and the existence of the eastern road. There is little doubt that the boundary was drawn along the Kuenlun watershed in Leh or perhaps in Dehra Dun. That is where the finishing touches were given to his map.

Following closely on Johnson's heels were Shaw and Hayward in 1868-69 and Forsyth in 1870. All three of them rejected Johnson's boundary and reverted to the watershed boundary of the Karakoram-Changlang range. Although Hayward caught up with Shaw in Changchenmo valley, it was the tea planter from Kangra rather than the soldier who realized his consuming ambition to be the first Englishman to reach Kashgar. Shaw crossed over the Changlang la into Lingzithang, camped at Laktsang, which means Eagle's Nest, and went on to the source of the Karakash from Thaldat in Aksaichin. A week later he was at Shahidula, and his arrival there elicited the following comments:

Four years ago while the troubles were still going on in Turkestan, the Maharaja of Kashmir sent a few soldiers and workmen across the Karakoram range (his real boundary), and built a small fort at Shahidula. This fort his troops occupied during two summers; but last year, when matters became settled, these troops were withdrawn. In reality the Maharaja has no more right to Shahidula than I have. He has never had any rights on a river which flows northward through Turkestan, nor over the pastures of the Kirghiz, who pay taxes to Yarkand. It is the more astonishing that our most recent maps have given effect to his now abandoned claim, and have included within his frontier a tract where he does not possess a square yard of ground, and whose only inhabitants are the subjects of another state'.<sup>51</sup>

It is significant that none of these three travellers said a word about whose territory the middle plains were, nor even did Johnson, though he included it in his map of Ladakh. As Younghusband had said, it was completely devoid of jurisdictional boundaries; at that time at any rate it belonged to no one, and apparantly there were no claimants either. The Ladakhis who accompanied Shaw were familiar with the track through Changchenmo and Lingzithang as far as the source of the Karakash, from which it may be inferred that it was used as

an optional route to Shahidula.

It should also be mentioned that notwithstanding Shaw's emphatic opinion regarding the rights to Shahidula, Forsyth, a senior civil servant, arrived at a different conclusion after carefully sifting the known facts. In 1870, when the Atalik was at the height of his power, Forsyth held Shahidula to be the limit of Yarkand territory.<sup>52</sup> In 1888, Captain Ramsay, who was then Joint Commissioner in Ladakh, came to the conclusion that Forsyth would have had the boundary drawn along the Karakash river to a point not further south than Shahidula and not further north than the foot of the Sanju pass, 'where the Karakash turns to the east and flows away in the direction of Khotan'.<sup>53</sup> Ramsay was interpreting Forsyth's cautious statement that the territory north of the Karakoram pass had a 'tendency' to be Kashmir's, a view that was not as ambiguous as it appears.

Saifulla Khan, the Khan of Khotan's *dadkhwah* (receptionist), met Johnson at Brinjga, 'the first encampment beyond the Ladakh boundary', about 28 miles north of the Yangi pass. Traders and others Johnson met at Ilchi suggested that the Maharaja should ensure the safety of the routes in his territory, mentioning in particular "Kirghiz Jungle" on the Kugiar route and Shahidula and Ilnagar on the Sanju route, the latter being right up near the Walagot pass on the Kuenlun. ~~On the return~~ journey he said of the "extensive plateaus" in the Karakash valley that 'these being within the territory of the Maharaja of Kashmir, could easily be brought under cultivation by Ladakhis and others, if they could be induced and encouraged to do so by the Kashmir government'. The waters of the valley having been taken by him to be within Kashmir territory, the decision to put the boundary at the next watershed, that is, the Kuenlun, could be said to follow from that.

Johnson's boundary along the Kuenlun could be taken as representing the situation in 1865 during the "time of troubles" in Turkestan, when conditions had not settled down in favour either of the local rulers or of the Khojas of Andijan. At the time, too, there was no foreseeable prospect of the Chinese recovering their lost province of Xinjiang. Three years later both Shaw and Hayward rejected the Johnson boundary as incorrect. And whatever Forsyth may have regarded as the boundary in the Karakash valley, it was not until he had crossed the Changlang

range into Changchenmo that he knew for sure he was back in Kashmir.

Drew occupies a middle position between the two. He prepared a set of topical maps which follow the Survey of India map, based on Johnson.<sup>54</sup> This is how he explains the position he adopted: 'As to the boundary with this (Yarkand territory), from the Mustagh pass to the Karakoram pass, there is no doubt whatever. A great watershed divides the two territories. But it will be observed that from the Karakoram pass eastward to past the meridian of 80 degrees, the line is more finely dotted. This has been done to denote that here the boundary is not defined. There has been no authoritative demarcation at all; and as the country is quite uninhabited for more than a hundred miles east and west and north and south I cannot apply the principle of representing the actual state of occupation.'<sup>55</sup> These remarks applied all the way to the Lanak la at the head of Changchenmo valley.

According to Drew, the dotted line represented his opinion of what would be defined, 'were the powers interested to attempt to agree on a boundary'. He was not being untrue to his salt as a former employee of the Maharaja of Kashmir. His period of service coincided with the absence of the Chinese. In whatever way he might have liked to have drawn the boundary, his was at best a tentative view. The fact remains that the actual north-eastern boundary was not known at the time. An attempt had been made by the Boundary Commissioners to define it, but they had failed. Agnew delineated the traditional boundary as strictly following the Karakoram watershed, not the Kuenlun. In view of the provisions of Article 4 of the Treaty of Amritsar, forbidding any change in the limits of the Maharaja's territories without the British government's concurrence, the political justification for the Johnson line is open to question.

Making a boundary in an uninhabited no-man's-land, and even the delineation of an existing traditional boundary, was essentially an imperial responsibility of the British government. This had been made perfectly clear in the instructions to the Boundary Commissioners and other proceedings in that connection. Aitchison, the Foreign Secretary, stated the government's position in no uncertain terms in a minute of 7 June 1871: 'In paragraph 7 of our letter to the Punjab

Government, dated 8 February, 1870, we directed that, as the boundaries of the Maharaja's territories to the north and east have never been accurately defined, Government was in no way to be committed as to the boundaries of the Maharaja's possessions in any direction.<sup>56</sup> If Johnson's boundary had any foundation at all it represented a claim by the Maharaja during the brief span of three years when the Shahidula *chauki* was occupied by his people. There was then no authority in Turkestan to contest his line, even if they had known about it.

Hayward and Forsyth expressed concurrent views about the boundary eastwards of the Karakoram pass. According to Hayward, 'the natural boundary of Eastern Turkestan to the south is the main chain of the Karakoram; and the line extending along the east of this range, from the Mustagh to the Karakoram, and from the Karakoram to the Changchenmo passes, may be definitely fixed in its geographical and political bearing as constituting the limit of Kashmir's dominions to the north.'<sup>57</sup> This view was confirmed by Forsyth. As mentioned earlier, he noted that, on returning from Yarkand in 1870, 'we came to the Changlang la range, crossing which we entered Changchenmo valley and found ourselves once more in Kashmir territory.'<sup>58</sup>

Incredible as it may seem, the Government of India persisted in refusing to look at the boundary question. In 1878 Elias, then Joint Commissioner at Leh, made a number of suggestions for the improvement of Ladakh's defences. These were quietly buried, but his comments on the boundary became accepted wisdom in government circles. As we have seen in Chapter II, he consistently advocated the Karakoram water-parting as the boundary. In 1878 he extended his proposed boundary east of the Karakoram pass. 'Thus beginning in the west, the crest of the Mustagh or Baltoro pass might be demarcated as the first point; the summit of the glacier at the head of the Nubra valley . . . as the second; the summit of the glacier at the head of the Shyok valley as the third; the crest of the Karakoram pass, where the main road to Yarkand crosses, as the fourth; the crests of the two Changlang passes at the crossing points of the alternative routes via Changchenmo as the fifth and sixth; and finally some point on the present Chinese-Tibetan boundary to be afterwards decided on.'<sup>59</sup> Till then Elias had not seen



Shahidula himself, but was quite certain that this water-parting boundary would place a natural barrier between Kashmir and possible enemies from the north, while it would not 'exclude a single inhabitant of the Maharaja's present dominion or an acre of habitable ground. . . .'

Henvey, Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir (renamed Resident after Maharaja Ranbir Singh's death in 1885) considered Elias' proposal 'as fair a solution as can be wished for'.<sup>60</sup> Henvey and Elias, the two top officers representing the British government in Kashmir, reverted to Agnew's traditional line without even mentioning Johnson's boundary, although Johnson was Wazir of Ladakh at the time. Lyall, the Foreign Secretary, recorded a minute characteristic of the prevailing British trust in the Chinese buffer: 'These papers refer to the question of demarcating and strengthening the northern frontier of Kashmir toward Kashgar, and beyond the Karakoram. I think the matter may stand over—if Kashmir is threatened at all, it will be from the North-west.'

The intriguing question remains as to why the Johnson boundary continued to be shown in one trans-frontier survey map after the other. Averse as the British general were to making changes, at some point they would have had to sit up and take notice. Eventually, a report from George Macartney, the Kashmir Resident's Special Assistant for Chinese Affairs at Kashgar, roused the British from their complacency.

The occasion was the presentation of an innocuous gift by Macartney to Tao Taju, the Provincial Governor in Urumtsi, in December 1895, consisting of books and mathematical instruments. Amongst the books was a world atlas, later identified as Keith Johnston's *Handy Royal Atlas of 1878*.\* The

\*The presents were actually delivered in Macartney's absence on leave by Munshi Ahmad Din of the Kashgar Agency, accompanied by the Chinese Munshi. They had been received from the Government of India, and consisted of a box of compasses, a pocket sextant, a pantograph, Keith Johnston's *Royal Atlas* and Thacker's *Map of India*. Drew's *Jammu and Kashmir*, Ince's *Guide to Kashmir* and Bogle's *Tibet* had also been sent to him earlier (Kashgar Diary, 15 December 1895; For. Sec. F. March 1896; 246/262). Both Johnston's atlas and Drew's book on Jammu and Kashmir contained maps which depicted Aksaichin in Ladakh. Perhaps the books had been selected deliberately, to make known Kashmir's claims and to provoke a reaction. That was the effect at any rate.

Governor's reaction was conveyed by Huang Tajen, the Kashgar Taotai, a 'superficial, childish and characterless man' who talked nonsense for the two hours of Macartney's visit to the Yamen. But he also mentioned that he had come across a map of Kashmir in the atlas, and 'was surprised to find that the region situated at the east of Ladakh known as Aksaichin had been marked in it as within British territory. This region, he said, belonged to Chinese Tibet, and in forwarding the atlas to the Provincial Governor, he had drawn Tao Tajen's attention to this error of frontier; and His Excellency had replied that the Taotai should . . . mention to me for the information of the Indian Government that Aksaichin was considered by the Chinese as belonging to them.'<sup>61</sup> It should be remembered that the telegraph line had been extended to Kashgar from Urumtsi in 1894. It must be presumed, too, that the Governor had obtained directions from the Tsungli Yamen in Peking. Chinese officials did not play off their own bat in such matters in the highly centralized imperial system of government.

Macartney was equal to the occasion. His diary for the fortnight ending 15 October 1896, in which he reported the matter, went on: 'I replied that Aksaichin was apparently a general name for an ill-defined and very elevated table-land at the north-east of Ladakh; and it was as likely as not that the region known by that name was partly in Chinese, and partly in British territory.' Not having seen the map in question, that was the most he could say. Nevertheless, Macartney could not have said even as much as he did had he not, during the five years he had been in Kashgar, taken pains to study the lie of the land in what may be described as his charge.

Macartney was convinced that the Chinese reaction had been prompted by Petrovski, who was Russian Consul at the time the atlas had been given to the Taotai for transmission to the Governor. According to Macartney there were strong reasons to believe that Petrovski was shown the atlas and had pointed out to the Taotai that the map of Kashmir did not agree with the Ladakh-Tibetan frontier as shown in Hung Tajen's map. There was talk in the Yamen about the Consul having said that 'the Indian frontier was so traced as to enclose within it the town of Khotan.'<sup>62</sup> Hung Tajen was the former Chinese Minister at the Court of St. Petersburg, and the case of his map has been

considered in Chapter II.

It is hardly surprising that the Russians would show great interest in Indian maps of the border areas, and the government of India in Russian maps. Indeed, the Superintendent of Survey had been exchanging maps with his Russian counterpart. This transpired in 1873, in the course of a controversy over the boundary of Ladakh being shown by the Survey of India along the Kuenlun in their Turkestan map. In a report to the Surveyor-General of 28th July, Walker, the Superintendent of Survey, explained how this had happened. Originally the Survey maps had shown the northern boundary along the Karakoram-Changchenmo watershed, 'until Mr. Johnson went to Khotan and found that the Maharaja of Kashmir had established an outpost at Shahidula, and laid claim to the advanced boundary line'. This makes it clear that Johnson had accepted the claims of the Maharaja at a time when there was no effective authority in East Turkestan. 'Subsequently,' Walker went on, 'Messrs. Hayward and Shaw have repeatedly insisted that this claim was without foundation and that the line should be brought back again.' The Kashmir outpost at Shahidula, which was the apparent basis of the claim, had been withdrawn. Forsyth himself had advised Walker that 'wherever there were differences . . . Mr. Hayward's delineation should be adopted'.

Walker was in a quandary. The new edition of his Turkestan map, with the advanced boundary, had been extensively circulated. Several copies had been sent to England and two to Russia, 'as I make a point of supplying Russian Geographers with my maps as soon as published in return for their maps'. It would have been inadvisable to have made corrections in maps that have already been circulated, and this view was ultimately accepted by the Surveyor-General of India. It was apparently this advanced boundary which was incorporated in the maps of some cartographers such as Johnston.

Walker furnished two significant clarifications. Firstly, maps issued by the G.T. Survey were not published with the authority of the Government of India. Secondly, with certain exceptions, 'no boundaries . . . have as yet been defined, and therefore every one should understand that the map cannot be considered conclusive regarding the hitherto undefined boundaries'. However, apparently to preserve consistency, Turkestan maps,

containing what Forsyth had called 'sundry serious errors', continued to be issued by the Superintendent of Survey. That apart, as a result of the practice of exchanging maps, the Russians must be presumed to have been aware of British boundary claims when they saw Johnston's atlas with the Taotai. Putting a flea in the Chinese official's ear was a perfectly normal reaction.

A brief run-through of the conclusions reached in the Foreign Department on the map question follows:<sup>63</sup>

1. It was certain that the boundary in the direction of Aksaichin had never been defined.
2. Before the issue of the Turkestan series, the G.T. Survey's maps used to show the boundary along the northern edge of the Changchenmo valley and the ridge of the Karakoram'.
3. In the first edition of the Turkestan map the boundary was carried up to the Kuenlun. This was done apparently because, at the time, it was claimed that Shahidula belonged to Kashmir. (It may be explained, in parenthesis, that since Shahidula is well in advance of the Karakoram range, the boundary line was taken to be the next watershed, i.e., the Kuenlun.)
4. In the second edition the boundary was brought back to its original position along the watershed of the Changchenmo valley and the Karakoram, excluding the middle plains. At the time, the Government of India informed the Surveyor-General that the boundary shown in this map could not be accepted as authoritative. The Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir was simultaneously informed that 'no authoritative delineation of Kashmir frontiers will be attempted without previous reference to the Darbar'.
5. The Departmental view was that 'any boundary line that we may draw can only be arbitrary, until it has the consent of the Chinese authorities'.<sup>64</sup>

The Government of India's position on the boundary evidently was ~~still very~~ fluid. That no authoritative delineation was possible without prior reference to the Kashmir Durbar was formally correct, but there is little doubt that the British government were not prepared to countenance claims which they themselves did not accept. The determining consideration was the security of

the British empire. This had been clear ever since Aitchison stated the position in his minute of 7 June 1871.

It was equally clear, as the Foreign Department emphasized, that the international boundary would remain an arbitrary one until it had the consent of the Chinese government. Even a traditional boundary needed to be accepted. It was not enough for the Chinese to say, as they had done in the past, that the boundary was a non-issue because it was already well known. They had to say what they considered it to be.

The Foreign Department felt the time had come to press the Chinese to agree to the appointment of a Joint Commission to demarcate the Kashmir-Tibet boundary. However, it was recalled that when a suggestion to this effect had been made in 1896, the Marquis of Salisbury, who was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had decided that 'the present condition of the Chinese Government is such as to make it impolitic for Her Majesty's Government to bring these questions before them'.<sup>65</sup> The effect of his chivalrous concern for the condition of the Chinese government on the vital question of boundary determination has been related in Chapter II. The "freeze" was still operating. Nothing further was done, but the opportunity was taken to refer the boundary question to the Surveyor-General for his advice.

According to the departmental note sent to the Surveyor-General there were two areas named Aksaichin, one in Lingzithang plain and the other near Soda plain, north of Lingzithang. This Aksaichin, north of Lingzithang, appeared within the Ladakh boundary for the first time in the 3rd edition of the Turkestan map. But there was also another Aksaichin, further to the east. The Department thought that it was quite possible that 'the Chinese are confusing Aksaichin north of the Lingzithang plains with Aksaichin (white desert) which, lying to the east of those plains, has never been included within our boundary'.<sup>66</sup>

The Surveyor-General's views were conveyed to the government with telegraphic brevity, but in two sentences he condensed the entire collective knowledge on the subject: 'Our maps show two Aksaichins, one in China and one in Kashmir. There is evidence to prove the existence of the more western one in Kashmir, but none of any value with regard to that to the

east, which is within Chinese territory.'

Strahan, the Surveyor-General, attached a note on the subject by Lt.-Col. Gore. According to this there were two Aksaichins, one immediately to the east of Thaldat, and the other further east, whose position he was unable to precisely determine for lack of conclusive evidence. From a distance of about 60 miles Hayward saw a range of high peaks, 'which are clearly those on the spur projecting south from the Kuenlun range, which on our maps forms the boundary between China and Kashmir'. He argued that the Aksaichin Hayward saw could not possibly have been beyond this range. 'There is no direct evidence, that is, the evidence of any one who has seen the country, that there is an Aksaichin to the east of the spur. . . .' If it was not to the east of the spur, Aksaichin could only have been to the west of it. The eastern road from Rudok to Khotan, which was not used for the Indo-Yarkand trade, even though a link with it was feasible evidently lay entirely within China's Aksaichin.

But Gore's note was not as clear-cut as it seemed. According to him one Aksaichin, that of Kashmir, was immediately east of Thaldat, and the other, the Sino-Tibetan, further east. At the time he wrote his report, Gore did not have the benefit of Younghusband's advice, given in 1907, that the whole area was absolute desert, totally lacking any jurisdictional boundary, 'for there is not a single Kashmir subject there for the Durbar to have jurisdiction over'.<sup>67</sup> Nor was there a single Tibetan or Chinese subject for the Chinese to have jurisdiction over. But it is surprising that neither Gore nor Strahan could make the obvious deduction from the evidence to hand. All the earlier visitors, who had left records of their journeys, had been unable to discern any natural boundary between Thaldat and the south trending spur of the Kuenlun and the line of mountains to the south-east of Aksaichin. The whole area was apparently undifferentiated and continuous. How, then, could the western part have been marked off from the eastern part?

In the absence of jurisdictional boundaries there was nothing to go on except the geographical dividing line of the Laktsang range. What the Surveyor-General's branch had apparently overlooked was that both Forsyth and his survey officer, Trotter, had included Lingzithang in Aksaichin. It was this part of the middle plains, that is, Lingzithang, which was in Kashmir. Apart

from the Lakhsang range being a prominent physical feature, it also marked off predominant interest and predominant use, of the Indian side in Lingzithang, and the Chinese and the Tibetans in the remainder. When the Marquis of Salisbury eventually agreed in 1898 to the boundary question being raised with the Chinese government, this in fact was the boundary they were to suggest.

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10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. For. Sec. Con. 26 December 1846, p. 65.
16. For. Sec. M. (Cr & EA) A. Con. 28 August 1847, 139/183, p. 117.
17. *Ibid.*, No. 249.
18. *Ibid.*, No. 249, 27 July 1847.
19. For. Sec. M (Cr. & EA) A. Con. 28 August 1847, 139/183, No. 9.
20. As in 17, Nos. 11 and 12.
21. For. Sec. A. Con. 31 December 1847, 129/136.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, No. 6.
25. For. (Original) Sec. M(Cr. & EA) A. Con. 28 August 1847, 139/183 p. 87.
26. *Ladakh*, Cunningham; 1854, p. 261.
27. For Sec. M(Cr & EA) A. Con. 28 August 1847, 139/183, p. 221.
28. The thrill, excitement, danger and disappointments of this great saga are admirably told by John Key in *When Men And Mountains Meet*, The Explorers of the Western Himalayas, 1820-75, John Murray, London. 1977. The quotation is from p. 188.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
30. For. Gen. B. Progs. September, 1865, 108.
31. For. Pol. A. March 1867, 187/189.

32. For. Pol. Con. 24 May 1867, No. 93.
33. *Ibid.*
35. *The Northern Barrier of India*, London, Edward Stanford, 1877, p. 316.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 350.
37. *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*, Sir T.D. Forsyth, 10, V. 3, 129, p. 233, et seq.
38. As in 35; p. 320.
39. For. Pol. A, January 1871, 382/389 (382), para 43.
40. N.A.L., Y63T/1866, No. 102, Dehra Dun, 22 April 1866.
41. For. Pol. A, January 1871, 382/389 (382), para 119.
42. RGSJ, Vol. XL, 1870, para 41.
43. KW. Sec. F. January 1898, 160/169.
44. For. Pol. A., July 1878, 395/412 (KW 2).
45. For. Sec. F. February 1890, 59/84.
46. *The Northern Barrier of India*, London, Edward Stanford, 1877, p. 350.
47. *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873*, Sir T. D. Forsyth, 10, V. 3, 129, p. 233 et seq.
48. K.W. Sec. F. January 1898, 160/169.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *The Northern Barrier of India*, 1877, p. 332.
51. *Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar*, Robert Shaw, OUP, 1984, p. 107.
52. For. Pol. A. January 1871, 382/386, para. 58.
53. For. Sec. F. March 1889, 115/116 (116).
54. *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories: A Geographical Account*; London, Edward Stanford, 1875.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 494.
56. For. Pol. A. June 1871, 560/597.
57. RGSJ, Vol. XL, 1870.
58. For. Pl. A. January 1871, 382/389 (383, para 119).
59. For. Sec. February 1880, 2/3, KW 1.
60. *Ibid.*
61. For. Sec. F. January 1898, 160/169, (162).
62. *Ibid.*
63. KW Sec. F. January 1898, 160/169.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Sec. F. October 1896, 533/541.
66. KW, Sec. F. January 1898, 160/169.
67. For. Sec. F. February 1907, 40/51 (p. 35).



## CHAPTER IV

# A Boundary is Proposed

### 1. *The British Bestir Themselves*

The Chinese occupation of Shahidula in 1890 was welcomed by the British government, who saw it as an 'advantage that the tract of country intervening between the Karakoram and Kuenlun mountains should be definitely held by a friendly power like China'.<sup>1</sup> Two years later the Chinese followed up this assertion of authority by erecting a notice on the Karakoram pass declaring it to be under the emperor of China, 'for the purpose of marking clearly the frontier and of continuing as a lasting record'.<sup>2</sup> Once again there was no objection by the British government and its agents in India.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps to their considerable surprise the British had looked on as passive spectators as the Chinese, taking the initiative, gave them a boundary which admirably suited their imperial interests. In doing so the gap between the two ranges had been closed against Russian penetration, if Kashgaria itself did not succumb to Russian might.

A few years earlier Ney Elias had deprecated the idea of setting up a Boundary Commission jointly with the Chinese. He described them as 'a most impractical nation'. If, as he probably did, he meant that it was extremely difficult to persuade them to get to grips with problems of international relations in a Western way, he may have been right. But if he imagined that they did not know what they wanted he was completely wrong. This was demonstrated in the clearest possible manner by their occupation of the territory between the Karakoram and Kuenlun mountains, and the unambiguous declaration that the Ka La Hu Lu Mu (the Karakoram range)

was the natural watershed boundary between the two countries.

In all their internal consultations, the British in India had invariably maintained that ~~the watershed was the best of all possible boundaries~~. But it was time also for them to take a definite decision of their own. Interposition of the Chinese empire to prevent Russian penetration towards the Karakoram mountains was necessarily predicated on a northern Indian boundary. However, it was not until 25 September 1895 that the Government of India took up the question with Whitehall, and that also only casually. The occasion was the consideration of alternative routes to Xinjiang suggested by O'Connor, the British Minister in Peking. The suggestion itself was unimportant, and the Government of India negated it. In the concluding paragraph of their reply, however, the Government of India drew attention to the possibility of Sarikol and Raskam being taken over by Russia, which might then succeed in outflanking the recently concluded Pamir boundary. 'The present moment . . . appears favourable for settling the Chinese boundary with Kashmir, Hunza and Afghanistan, and we invite earnest attention to the desirability of effecting an arrangement whereby a definite limit would be placed on possible extension of Russian territory towards the Mustagh and Karakoram mountains, should that Power succeed the Chinese in the possession of Sarikol and Raskam.'<sup>4</sup>

The Government of India had at last woken up from their long slumber. It is noteworthy, however, that this new awareness was not in response to Chinese actions on the border. No danger whatsoever was foreseen from that quarter; the Chinese were always regarded as informal allies in resisting the inevitable Russian advance through Central Asia. It is also significant that while the importance of imposing a limit was emphasized, the Government of India did not suggest precisely what it should be. Durand, the apostle of inactivity, had indeed left to be Ambassador to Persia, but the deeply ingrained habit of the Government of India of doing nothing in particular had not yet been completely shaken off.

Tentative though Calcutta's proposal was, the India Office forwarded it to the Foreign Office with a noticeable lack of warmth. While they agreed that it would be an advantage to define the Indo-Chinese frontier, they left it to the Foreign

Secretary, the Marquis of Salisbury, 'to determine if the present time is opportune for making any proposals to China on the subject'.<sup>5</sup> Eight months later, Bertie, his Under Secretary of State, informed the India Office that 'Lord Salisbury considers that the present condition of the Chinese Government is such as to make it impolitic for Her Majesty's Government to bring these questions before them.'<sup>6</sup> The war with Japan had reduced Chinese power perhaps to its lowest ebb since the unhappy days of the 'Opium War'. It was not mere delicacy which restrained the British government in their dealings with the Chinese, but genuine sympathy for the difficulties to which they were subject at the time.

For the next two years the Government of India and the India Office were equally circumspect in pressing their views on the Foreign Office. The Marquis of Salisbury, a formidable father figure, continued to hold office as Secretary of State. His fiat of 29 June 1896 was treated with deep reverence in the Foreign Department in Calcutta, being trotted out on whenever the boundary was considered. By a fortunate chance, however, the Foreign Office itself gave them an opening. In a despatch of 23 April 1898, the Secretary of State for India informed the Viceroy that the Foreign Office had received reliable information of negotiations between the Russians and the Chinese to settle their mutual frontier in east Turkestan. The India Office felt the occasion justified an enquiry being made of the Foreign Office whether Salisbury was 'of opinion that the time has now arrived when effect may be given to the views of the Indian Government'.<sup>7</sup>

Salisbury's reluctance to raise the border question with the Chinese may have chafed the Government of India, but it had also forced them to think more rigorously about the boundary they had in mind. In the Foreign Office's letter of 26 January 1897, he had advised that 'an efficient control should, in the first instance, be acquired within the frontiers which might be considered as falling within the legitimate range of British influence, or as essential to British interests, before proceeding to any negotiations'.<sup>8</sup>

The Government of India's thinking had been marked by a considerable degree of woolliness ever since the debate on the border question had been initiated in its Foreign Department

from about 1870. They had been more concerned with restraining the Kashmir Durbar from reclaiming its former and temporarily held possessions across the Karakoram than in laying down a boundary determined by physical features and the scanty evidence of occupation in what they persisted in viewing as a no-man's land. In their letter of 22 January 1898 to Whitehall, they took the position that no strategic advantage would be gained by going beyond the natural frontier 'and across mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted'.<sup>9</sup> This was still not definite enough to be taken up with a foreign government. Bertie insisted on being told the objects of the proposed negotiations with the Chinese government more precisely so that these could be explained to Her Majesty's Minister at Peking.

In the summer of 1898 the Government of India at last got to grips with the questions raised by Lord Salisbury. Younghusband happened to be there, and was consulted. The view that emerged was put to the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, by the Foreign Secretary, W. J. Cuningham, and finally incorporated in the Government of India's despatch No. 198 of 1898 dated 27 October, to the Secretary of State. What was suggested was essentially a watershed boundary along the Mustagh-Karakoram range. That was simple enough, but problems remained at the western and eastern ends.

At the western end, Hunza as usual presented difficulties. It was considered that there was no practical or strategical advantage in including Taghdumbash and Raskam in its territory. Younghusband suggested, and the Department agreed, that an exception should be made in respect of Darwaza, where the Kanjuts had a post. This could be done by breaking away from the crest of the Mustagh range at the peak above the Shingshal pass and returning to it a little north of 36 degrees latitude. However, and this was the important qualification, Hunza's rights in Taghdumbash and Raskam should be used as a means to induce China to negotiate a boundary and to acknowledge that 'all on our side of the boundary are British exclusively over which the Chinese have no rights whatsoever'. These rights might be waived only if the Chinese made a complete renunciation of their claims on Hunza. In that event, Kanjuti rights in Taghdumbash and Raskam, for grazing and

cultivation, would be foreign rights for which they would pay cesses to China.

The Viceroy accepted these suggestions, but a difficulty remained about depicting the line suggested on a map all the way to the eastern end. The one available did not go even as far east as the Karakoram pass. Younghusband had marked a line on it which, it was thought, would meet all requirements. It would be necessary to get a map prepared, but Cuningham pointed out that 'there could be no demarcation along the greater part of this boundary. Points like Darwaza and the Karakoram pass might be fixed on the ground, but I would not propose more than a paper agreement.'

A telegram dated 20 July 1898 was sent to the Secretary of State on these lines, which was followed up by despatch No. 198 of 1898 dated 27th October. It was the first comprehensive boundary to be suggested by the Government of India to Whitehall, and has therefore been included as an Appendix.\*

Calcutta's main anxiety was to suggest a line by which China would agree to be bound. The problem which could be categorized as relating to sovereign rights was of course the familiar case of Hunza and its extra-territorial rights in Taghdumbash and Raskam. While on the one hand China claimed a shadowy sort of suzerainty over Hunza, which had received limited acknowledgement by the British government by the continuation of tribute payments to Kashgar, Hunza itself actually enforced extensive claims in both the trans-Mustagh areas.

The Government of India argued that these claims and counter-claims could prove extremely embarrassing in the event of Russia taking over Kashgaria from the Chinese. Since 'no strategical advantage would be gained by going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted', Hunza's claims could best be used to disentangle the State from its indefinite obligations to China. The line suggested in para 5 of the despatch took care of this, and also secured the Kanjut post of Darwaza which was just in advance of the Shingshal pass. Characteristically, Younghusband pronounced the pass to be easy enough to be crossed by cavalry.

\*Appendix IX.

The line suggested started at the northern end from peak Povalo-Schveikovski, the terminal point of the Pamir line of 1895, joined the crest of the Mustagh range at Karchanai pass, went along the range with a slight deviation to take in Darwaza, and then regained the crest up to the Karakoram pass. So far the line was relatively straightforward. East of the pass it entered new ground which had not before been strictly identified.

This is how the Government of India defined it: 'From the Karakoram pass the crests of the range run nearly east for about half a degree, and then turn south to a little below the 35th 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 Jilga and from there, in a south-easterly direction, follows the Laktsang range until that meets the spur running south from the Kuenlun which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80 degrees east longitude.' The line specifically abandoned Johnson's eastern boundary along the Kuenlun range itself. The Laktsang range intersected the Kuenlun spur at its south-eastern terminal leaving the north-eastern part of the plateaus area in Chinese territory.

The line suggested followed the watershed to beyond the Karakoram pass, from where it took the principal natural divider running in a south-easterly direction till it cut the Tibetan boundary. If there was a watershed at all in the middle plains, no feature satisfied this criterion better than the Laktsang range. It will be recalled that this is precisely the line which was supported by the preponderant evidence of occupation and use discussed in Chapter III. Physiographic features, hydrology and the admittedly meagre evidence of actual possession by both sides could be cited in support of the line recommended by the Government of India (see map facing page 138).

In his brief Memo of 1847 Vans Agnew did not refer specifically and by name to the Laktsang range, but he pointed out that the traditional boundary ran along the eastern watershed of the Shyok river. It thus included the confluents of the Shyok, principally the Chip Chap and Galwan. The first natural dividing line to the east of these two streams is the Laktsang range. When, in 1962, the Chinese occupied the area west of this range, including Chip Chap and Galwan valleys, to

say nothing of Changchenmo, they broke through the watershed of the Indus system which they themselves invariably had held to be the traditional boundary between India and China.

Much has been made by some writers of the reference, in MacDonald's despatch, of 1899 and the Indian-claimed boundary, to the longitude of 80 degrees east. Traditional communities, unfamiliar with Mercator's projection and the resulting meridional lines, are not known to have regulated their wanderings by curious lines on maps they had never seen. What is important in this context are the natural conditions which moulded their comings and goings; and none were more influential than geographical features, climate, and availability of fuel, water and pasture. The reference to longitude was solely intended to fix the description for the benefit of people who pore over maps. What was decisive was the description, not the approximate longitude.

The point at which the Laktsang range met the Kuenlun spur was thought to be a little east of 80 degrees east. In this area both features apparently dwindle to the level of the plains. In any case, the Government of India were only too conscious of their inability to produce a map in which the whole line could have been shown 'either accurately or on a large scale'. The map they enclosed was accurate only up to the point where the Darwaza diversion rejoined the Mustagh range. The continuation of the line from there up to the 79th degree of east longitude was derived from the map to illustrate Younghusband's explorations, 'and is approximately correct'. The 'general trend of the whole', they said, 'may be gathered from sheet No. 4 of the map of Turkestan, a copy of which, with the line hand shaded', was enclosed.\*

The aim of the Government of India was quite clear. It was 'to arrive at an agreement with China describing the line in question by its better known topographical features, each power reciprocally engaging to respect the boundary thus defined'. In seeking an agreement the British were doing no more than following normal diplomatic practice between nations with a tradition of acknowledging the force of binding agreements and

\*Regrettably, not available in India for research or reproduction, but the boundary suggested seems to have approximated to the traditional boundary (Agnew) shown in Map 4 facing page 138.

the sanctity of international law. They could quite well have followed the very recent example of the Chinese themselves, set up boundary markers, put up notices and announced that the line so defined was without doubt within Indian territory and had no connection with Tibet, Xinjiang or any part of China. The British had already had quite enough experience of the ways of the Manchus in these matters, and the complete futility of expecting to win their agreement by processes of negotiation.

Nor would the line itself have lacked legitimacy; there is little doubt that it reflected the actual situation on the ground, to the extent that it was possible to establish possession in the uninhabited middle plains, devoid as these were of jurisdictional boundaries. Indeed, it could fairly be said that in the trans-Karakoram areas the line was considerably short of the Kashmir durbar's historic claims, as confirmed by Hung Tajen's map of 1893. The line thus suggested offered the best hope of resolving the boundary question, although the strictly correct procedure the British decided to adopt was almost certain to be infructuous. It was this dilemma, the question of the most appropriate process rather than the undoubted merits of the proposal itself, which was the root cause of subsequent differences and conflict.

## 2. *Ardagh Line—Boundary or "Fanciful Military Dogma"?*

While the Government of India were formulating their boundary proposal for Whitehall's consideration, they were asked to comment on a Memorandum entitled "~~The Northern Frontier of India, from the Pamirs to Tibet~~",<sup>10</sup> of which the author was General Sir John Ardagh, Director of Military Intelligence at the War Office in London.\* At the end of the eighties, Ardagh was Private Secretary to the Viceroy. We met him in that capacity when Ney Elias wrote to him directly, by-passing his superiors in the Foreign Department, to advocate his strongly held belief in the strategic merits of the Karakoram as Kashmir's boundary. Making full use of his Indian experience, and, of course, intelligence available to him at the War Office, Ardagh propounded a strategic concept totally at variance with the watershed principle which had been regarded as sacrosanct in India. His Memorandum was sent to the India Office by Francis

\*Appendix X.



Bertie, Under Secretary in the Foreign Office.

The provocation for Sir John Ardagh's Memorandum suggesting 'settlement of the whole line of frontier with China' was, as may be expected, the usual one of not having to negotiate the same questions with the Russian Government, whose eventual takeover of Kashgaria was regarded as certain. Lord Salisbury had not at the time withdrawn his objection to raising the question with the Chinese government. However, Ardagh anticipated this, pointing out, as Bertie put it, 'that there are other means by which the British position in those regions might be strengthened'.<sup>11</sup> These other means were very briefly adumbrated by Ardagh in the last paragraph of his Memorandum: 'The Governor General's Agents and officers adjacent to the frontier may arrange to procure the recognition of our supremacy and protection by the Chief of the local tribes, and to assert it by acts of sovereignty, annually exercised within the limits decided upon, and in this manner acquire a title by prescription.'

Ardagh's evident intention was to throw out a challenging idea expecting that it would be taken up by the Viceroy. It was in fact a more extended version of taking the tribes in the Karakoram-Kuenlun basin under British influence. It gave Lord Salisbury an opportunity to raise a highly pertinent question regarding the manner in which boundary territories should be held, one to which too little thought had been given by civil servants in India. They were habituated to thinking on more conventional lines. As we have seen, Lord Salisbury insisted on efficient control being established in the range of British influence before a boundary was negotiated. The whole point of doing so was that in the event of it being decided later on to occupy the territory brought within British influence, 'the existence of a recognised British supremacy or influence within the boundaries claimed would constitute a prior advantage that might invest such negotiations with a practical character and ensure to them a reasonable chance of success'.

Lord Salisbury's views were marked by strong common sense. They were no more than a British version of the policy in practice followed by the Chinese in asserting control as far south as the Karakoram range. They had converted indirect authority over the Karakash Kirghiz into practical measures of direct

control, which the British would have been unable to controvert even if they had wanted to. As it turned out, though the Government of India were forced to give careful consideration to Lord Salisbury's views, they did little to consolidate their hold up to the limits of the boundary they eventually suggested. They were quite content with the handful of Kashmiri troops stationed at Leh, and took comfort in the post set up at Chimre, a short distance away, by W. H. Johnson, when he was Wazir of Ladakh.

First of all, Ardagh argued that the eventual Russian occupation of Kashgaria had to be anticipated. China's hold on it relied on a single line of communication passing through the disaffected Muhammedan district of Kansu. In this respect his views were directly at variance with those of Younghusband, who did not think the Russians would risk attempting to make a dent anywhere along the 3,500 miles of common border. Russia, Ardagh thought, following up his questionable line of argument, would push her boundary as far south as possible. 'It is evident, therefore, that sooner or later we shall have to conclude a definite agreement regarding the northern frontier of India.'

Next, he questioned the effectiveness of a watershed boundary as a defensible line. The enemy could best be kept off by holding the glacis beyond. 'We should, therefore, seek a boundary which shall leave all these longitudinal valleys in our possession, or at least under our influence.' Accordingly, the passes in the Mustagh-Karakoram range would be barred to a possible enemy 'by retaining within our territory the approaches to them on the northern side, and the lateral communications between these approaches'. He proceeded to recount the scanty evidence of Kashmiri occupation of the valley beyond, and jumped to the following non sequitur: 'We are therefore justified in claiming up to the crests of the Kuenlun range.' He went on to suggest that, in the event of a prospective absorption of Tibet by Russia, the same principle might have to apply to the upper basins of the Indus, Sutlej and even the Brahmaputra. The implications can well be imagined. According to Ardagh it might have become necessary to occupy Lhasa in order to defend the crests of the Himalaya to the south of the Sangpo. Ardagh does not seem to have been in the least deterred by the insuperable logistic

problems involved in following up the implications of his daring theory.

Applying it to the ~~frontier between British India and Kashgar~~, Yarkand and Khotan, if, as Younghusband found, the Yarkand river was fordable at a number of places, and therefore a bad boundary, the solution was to advance the boundary to the crests of the Kuenlun. He confidently maintained that the valley 'contains mines of iron and copper, hot springs, and possibly petroleum and gold. . . .' There was yet a third line which could be adopted if the other two were found impracticable. This he described in terms of its physical features. While waiting for a settlement with China in pursuance of her suggestions, he advocated assertion of British supremacy over local tribes in the manner described earlier.

It took the Government of India a full ten months to reply. In the meantime they consulted everyone who could have been concerned, including Younghusband, who was not. (He was Resident at Abu at the time.) There was not one person who supported the Ardagh theory. The Quartermaster-General, who was responsible for intelligence, consulted four officers who had intimate knowledge of the area. The QMG summed up the position: 'I may say that the opinions expressed are practically unanimous in condemning Sir J. Ardagh's views'.<sup>12</sup> They were regarded as militarily unsound. The Commander-in-Chief agreed. As Major Bower put it, they were being asked to occupy a poverty-stricken region, 'and thus to interpose between ourselves and our outposts a belt of the most difficult and impracticable country in the world for the sake of bringing our frontier into accord with some fanciful military dogma'. India's military position would inevitably be weakened by extending it into a territory extremely difficult of access. Nor did India's security needs call for such an arrangement.

Major Bower went on: 'The proposal strikes me as an error politically no less than militarily. It is suggested that, for this rectification of our frontier, we should incorporate a zone to which we have not, - practically, the shadow of a right, in total disregard of the claims of China, a power which is usually tenacious of its rights. . . . In every way, therefore, the proposal under consideration is strongly deprecated.' It was not the first time that a top-ranking intelligence officer had offered unsound

advice, nor the last.\*

No one could contest Younghusband's opinion on the impracticability of a boundary which was 'allowed to meander across indefinite valleys and ridges on the far side of the boundary formed by nature'. He had crossed every pass from the Karakoram in the east to the Baroghil on the west. They were all lofty and difficult of passage for any but small parties. 'The defence of country south of this line is easy; the defence of country north of it against a European Power would be attended with the utmost difficulty.'<sup>13</sup> Cuninghame, the Foreign Secretary, noted that everyone who had seen the country agreed. The Government of India's reply, No. 170 of 1897, dated 23 December, which was probably drafted by him, was measured in tone and cogently argued.\*

Judging from past experience, the Government of India were convinced that China was unlikely to agree to any of the lines suggested by Ardagh. The argument was clinched in a single sentence: 'We believe that any attempt to incorporate within our frontier either of the zones mentioned by Sir John Ardagh would involve real risk of strained relations with China, and might tend to precipitate the active inter-position of Russia in Kashgaria, which it should be our aim to postpone as long as possible.'<sup>14</sup> When they did actually suggest a boundary line in October of the following year, the Government of India were studiously silent about the Ardagh theory. He had not in fact singled out a particular boundary line, but a choice from three. His primary purpose was to convert the Foreign Office, the India Office and the Government of India to an altogether new strategy of border security, and he had failed. He only succeeded in confirming the 'pundits' in Calcutta in their conventional wisdom of relying on the Mustagh-Karakoram watershed.

### 3. *British Boundary Proposal reaches Peking*

Lord Salisbury acted on the Government of India's despatch No. 198 of 27 October 1898 with commendable promptitude.

\*During the differences between India and China just before the 1962 War, civil intelligence advised that the Chinese would not react militarily on a large scale if Indian troops took steps to remove them from Thagla ridge.

\*Appendix XI.

Instructions were sent accordingly to Sir Claude MacDonald, the British Minister at Peking, in the Foreign Office's letter No. 209 of 14 December, and on 14 March 1899 MacDonald addressed the Tsungli Yamen. A copy of his despatch was sent back to Whitehall by Bax-Ironside, who was Chargé at the time.<sup>15</sup> It was the first definite boundary proposal to be made by the British to the Chinese government, and it was based directly on the Government of India's despatch of 27 October 1898.

MacDonald attacked the problem horns down. The relevant portion of his despatch runs: 'It is now proposed by the Indian Government that, for the sake of avoiding any dispute or uncertainty in the future, a clear understanding should be come to with the Chinese Government as to the frontier between the two States. To obtain this clear understanding, it is necessary that China should relinquish her shadowy claim to suzerainty over the state of Kanjut. The Indian Government, on the other hand, will, on behalf of Kanjut, relinquish her claims to most of the Taghdumbash and Raskam districts.'

The rest was a summary of what the Government of India had suggested. It would not be necessary, he said, to mark out the frontier. 'It will be sufficient if the two Governments will enter into an agreement to recognise the frontier as laid down by its clearly marked geographical features.' Pointed attention was drawn to the great advantages to be derived by the Chinese government if they agreed. 'Your Highness and Your Excellencies will see by examining this line that a large tract of country to the north of the great dividing range shown in Hung Chun's map as outside the Chinese boundary will be recognised as Chinese territory.' The line, superimposed on Hung Tajen's map, is shown in Map 3 (facing page 100).

The bait was not taken. The Chinese never replied. Nor did they reveal what their reservations were. Had the question become enmeshed in the Hunza tangle beyond all hope of extrication? Had the Chinese taken offence at their suzerainty over Hunza being described as 'shadowy', so shadowy indeed that they could be expected to relinquish it to satisfy the British? Could the offer of recognizing 'a large tract of country to the north of the great dividing range shown in Hung Chun's map', as Chinese territory, when it was already theirs, have been regarded as a piece of British impertinence?

After the British boundary proposal was delivered at Peking a qualitative change took place in India in the handling of the border question. Curzon had assumed the viceroyalty. His appointment could not be attributed solely to his towering ambition. Amongst the most notable of his many merits was an intimate knowledge of Central Asia, and his celebrated exploration of the Upper Oxus. He was regarded as an authority on that mysterious tangle of mountains, the Bam-i-Duniya. By the time he arrived in India he was a confirmed Russophobe, with a deep conviction of the Russian menace and an exalted sense of duty to do everything in his power to halt its onrush through the northern outposts of the great Indian empire.

No sooner had he arrived than he was driving hard on the question of Taghdumbash and Raskam, only to learn through Macartney in Kashgar of a reported Sino-British agreement in Peking that the Raskam land was not to be given to the Kanjuts after all. Curzon thought that the fourth paragraph of MacDonald's letter to the Tsungli Yamen was not happily worded. The misconception could have arisen because of the British offer to withdraw the claim of Kanjuti sovereignty to obtain recognition of their right to proprietary possession of the Raskam land.<sup>16</sup>

As Satow, MacDonald's successor at Peking, was to say later, it was not just a question of wording; it was the substance of the suggestion. The last thing the Chinese could be expected to renounce was their claim to sovereignty, however shadowy it may have appeared to other Powers.

Or, perhaps, the failure to reply could be attributed to a confirmed disinclination to be pinned down. It is difficult to judge, but Curzon's legalistic approach to a question of sovereignty is unlikely to have been relished by the Tsungli Yamen. Nevertheless they informed Bax-Ironside verbally that the question of the frontier had been referred to the Governor of Chinese Turkestan, and that a reply would be sent to MacDonald's despatch on receipt of his report.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever else may have been responsible for Chinese reluctance to respond to the British boundary proposal, there is little doubt that Hunza and its rights in Taghdumbash and Raskam lay at the heart of the matter. In a despatch of 22 June, Bax-Ironside reported the result of a visit to the Tsungli Yamen:

'Their position, the Yamen said, was a delicate one. . . . Negotiations for settling the Russo-Chinese (frontier) were pending, and it was impossible for them, in view of Russian interests which were affected, to ignore the attitude of Russia and fulfil any proposal involving a grant of land.'<sup>18</sup> The reference was to the seven areas in Raskam traditionally occupied by the Kanjuts. It will be recalled that, at Curzon's instance, strenuous efforts were being made both at St. Petersburg, to convince the Russians that all they wanted was a recognition of Kanjuti rights of possession, and at Peking, to assure the Yamen that the Russians were not interested in raising counter-claims, as Petrovski in Kashgar had threatened.

Two years later the Chinese had still not relented. Satow found it necessary to remonstrate strongly against the expulsion of Kanjuts from Raskam and the settlement there of Chinese subjects, i.e., the Kirghiz. He requested the Wai Wu Pu, as the foreign ministry was called after the change of government in China, that 'orders be sent without delay to the Governor of the New Dominion for removal of the Chinese settlers and the reinstatement of the Kanjuts in their rights.'<sup>19</sup>

Another two years later Macartney reported from Kashgar that neither the Mir nor his Wazir seemed eager to press the colonization scheme.<sup>20</sup> They must have been exhausted and disillusioned. After seven years of persistent effort, their suzerain had not been able to secure from the Chinese confirmation of rights they had inherited from past generations. In a despatch of 3 November 1903 to Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Satow ruefully concluded that the question of colonizing Raskam had better be allowed to rest where it was. The Chinese government, he continued, 'began to make use of Russian objections, as an excuse for not completing the grant of lands, immediately after delivery of the note proposing a definition of the boundary between Kashmir and Kashgaria, and the renunciation by the Chinese of their suzerainty over Kanjut. Those who know the Chinese will admit that such a proposal would probably be extremely distasteful to them, and that they would evade it as long as possible.'<sup>21</sup>

In 1898, MacMahon, who was Political Agent at Gilgit, thought that the Raskam question 'is a matter which it is infinitely better should be, if possible, decided directly between

the Chinese and Kanjuts without our interference. . . . The Chinese have always shown a fair and considerate spirit in dealing with Hunza rights and claims. . . .'<sup>22</sup> But Curzon was less inclined to settle the matter than to use it in his general strategy of countering the Russians and extracting the best terms he could from the Chinese in an over-all settlement. By linking it to the renunciation of sovereignty by the Chinese, the British had shown quite extraordinary insensitivity to their feelings, and created complications from which the boundary question could not be extricated. Satow, at any rate, thought so. 'The question of defining the frontier', he wrote in his despatch of 3 November, 'has been entirely lost sight of in the prolonged dispute about the lands in Raskam. The Chinese Government have never replied to the note of Sir Claude MacDonald on the subject, although the Governor of the New Dominion reported before July 1899 in favour of the proposed frontier conditions.' He went on with a distinct trace of bitterness: 'Nor have any instructions been received by this Legation to press the matter.'

Whitehall was in a quandary. They seemed unable to offer their Minister at Peking any light on how to proceed. Not so Curzon. He had no doubt that the nettle had to be grasped firmly. In a despatch of 24 March 1904 to St. John Brodrick, the Secretary of State, Calcutta, fired a characteristic Curzonian salvo, in fact a double-barrelled one. It was recommended that since the Chinese government 'had been unable to fulfil their promises to the Mir of Hunza, that State, under advice from the British Government, withdraws all relations with China, and henceforth will own suzerainty to the Kashmir State and the British Government alone'. As for the boundary, Whitehall was requested to inform the Chinese government that, 'as they have not shown any reasons for not disagreeing with the proposals placed before them in Sir Claude MacDonald's (despatch) of the 14th March 1899,\* we shall henceforth assume Chinese concurrence and act accordingly'.<sup>23</sup>

By this time the Curzon-Kitchener duel was common knowledge. It was one of the most damaging internal squabbles ever to have rocked the Indian empire. Curzon's former friend, the Secretary of State St. John Brodrick, had gone over to the Kitchener clique. A spell of home leave did Curzon little good, nor did it soothe his haughty temperament. The case of Hunza's

\*Appendix XII.



claims across the watershed, a never-ending conundrum, was held over by Lord Ampthill for his return.

Brodrick agreed with the Government of India that it was desirable to terminate Hunza's existing relationship with China and to secure the boundary proposed by MacDoland in 1899. However, he asked what measures would have to be taken to hold Raskam and the western tip of Taghdumbash if the Chinese proved unreliable. He drew attention to the Marquis of Salisbury's earlier policy diktat of the necessity of establishing effective control up to the boundary claimed, and suggested to the Foreign Office that the Government of India should be directed to go further into these aspects. The Foreign Office readily agreed, and the Government of India were asked to comply.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4. *Curzon's Brain-Child: The Composite Agreement*

During the ensuing examination of these questions, Colvin, the Kashmir Resident, suggested that the frontier line should be modified so as to follow the northern watershed of the Taghdumbash Pamir and the Mustagh-Karakoram range throughout, except for the Darwaza projection and, he added, the neighbouring Shingshal enclave. The latter was regularly grazed by the Kanjuts, who were thus dependent on it for their livelihood.<sup>25</sup> Curzon returned from leave soon afterwards, and the case received his full attention. He saw it as consisting of a number of strands which could neatly be brought together.

One of these was the plight of the unfortunate Special Assistant for Chinese Affairs at Kashgar. Macartney had plodded along encumbered by this anomalous designation ever since his appointment in 1890. The total lack of response by the Chinese was incomprehensible. Satow, who visited India in 1903, promised to see what he could do; but he was taking it, as the Foreign Department thought, in a liesurely manner. Curzon was much exercised at the implied slight to an official who, all said and done, was the British representative in Kashgar. It was time, too, to make another attempt to settle the question of Hunza's rights. In a minute recorded on Christmas Eve, 1904, when he might well have permitted himself some small relaxation, he wrote:

Is it not possible to settle all our difficulties with China in this region by a composite agreement? There are three subjects which we desire:

1. to get Mr. Macartney recognised as Consul at Kashgar;
2. to sever the connection between Hunza and China;
3. to secure for the Kanjutis a projection of the watershed frontier beyond Shingshal.

If the Chinese do not accept these exceedingly handsome terms we must still insist upon (1); we propose immediately to carry (2) into execution; and as regards (3) we shall maintain the existing claims of Hunza at all points beyond the Mustagh range.<sup>26</sup>

Curzon was clearly captivated by the completeness of his plan.

He expected wholehearted support on the part of the longest-serving official in the Foreign Department, the Deputy Secretary, Clarke; but Clarke, in effect, said 'no'. The Chinese, he pointed out, would see the demand for the Shingshal enclave as a cession of territory in return for what were merely grazing rights in Taghdumbash and proprietary rights in Raskam. What he was suggesting, albeit obliquely, was that the Chinese were unlikely to see the terms as "exceedingly handsome". Moreover, the inclusion of the enclave went beyond the line already offered. Curzon's rejoinder was characteristic: 'I don't think it matters one bit that the proposed extension lies beyond the MacDonald line. Equally and still more does the proposed surrender to China lie inside it. China will give less than she will get. I think it is worth trying.' However, Curzon was gracious enough to compliment Clarke on his draft of the eventual despatch No. 20 of 1905 dated 26 January to St. John Brodrick, in which a case was made for the composite agreement Curzon had so confidently proposed.

The Government of India were aware, the despatch conceded, that Whitehall 'have decided to defer presentation to China of the note regarding Mr. Macartney's position, until the negotiations as to the Adhesion Agreement respecting Tibet are concluded, but there would perhaps not be the same objection to putting forward the case as part of a general arrangement for the settlement of all outstanding questions'. He persisted in seeing the affair solely from his angle. 'If the Chinese do not accept these exceedingly liberal terms, we must still insist upon the recognition of Mr. Macartney as our Consul in Kashgar; we

would propose, in any case, immediately to carry into execution the severance of Hunza's relations with China; and we shall maintain the existing claims of Hunza at all points beyond the Mustagh range.' It was a challenging, almost defiant, winding-up of extremely complex proposals, which he had persuaded himself to believe would break the log-jam. He seemed so certain of this that he urged the British Government to act upon them 'with the least possible delay'.

The India Office raised an immediate question. Was the line now proposed identical with the one suggested in 1898? They wanted a map with the precise boundary now claimed clearly marked from 74 degrees 55 minutes to 80 degrees east longitude. There was an initial difficulty; the Government of India had no such map on which both limits were marked. Sheet No. 2 of the North Trans-Frontier map stopped short at 76 degrees. The attempt to depict the line on a map occasioned a brief skirmish between Kitchener and Curzon. The Commander-in-Chief insisted that the line should take in the northern glacis of the Kilik pass. He was personally acquainted with the area, but so also was Curzon, and this only sharpened the difference. The matter was ultimately resolved by the Viceroy overruling the Commander-in-Chief. The resulting despatch, No. 153 of 1905, dated 10 August, enclosed an old map prepared by Younghusband, the boundary claimed in 1899 being marked in blue and the variations proposed in red.

Although the India Office sent the despatch to the Foreign Office promptly enough, St. John Brodrick stipulated an important condition. As Lansdowne, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, put it in his despatch to Sir Ernest Satow, the British Minister at Peking, 'the Secretary of State for India, in view of your advice to defer approaching the Chinese in the case of the Kashgar Consulate, which forms part of the settlement, is not prepared to press for immediate action in the matter pending the conclusion of the negotiations respecting the Tibet Convention'.<sup>27</sup> He asked Satow whether, in his opinion, the time had come to take up the whole question with the Chinese government.

St. John Brodrick may have seen in Curzon's error an easy way of embarrassing him; but in this matter at any rate he was clearly right. By linking the main question of the boundary

settlement with a peripheral prestige issue, Curzon had made practically certain that all three parts of the composite agreement would be held up.

Curzon's obsessive Russophobia had distorted his appreciation of the problems of the Indian empire in its relations with China. He had shown distinct evidence of this in the Raskam question, but all else was eclipsed by the events leading to the Lhasa expedition of 1904. The Mongol Buriat monk Dorjiev assumed the frightening mask of the Romanoff empire. The details of the expedition and the resulting Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 7 September 1904, are not in themselves of special relevance here. The effect is. Its terms were confirmed by the Sino-British Convention of 27 April 1906.

In the following year Russia and the British carved out for themselves spheres of influence in the three countries surrounding India. On 18 August 1907 they signed a Convention which contained three agreements: Arrangement concerning Persia, Convention concerning Afghanistan, and Arrangement concerning Tibet. The British and the Russians professed to be 'animated by the sincere desire to settle by mutual agreement different questions concerning the interests of their States on the Continent of Asia', and were therefore 'determined to conclude Agreements destined to prevent all cause of misunderstanding' between them. They had every reason to be satisfied. It seemed that their mutual imperial interests had been stabilized for the foreseeable future.

Our immediate concern is with the "Arrangement concerning Tibet". Article II ran as follows: 'In conformity with the admitted principle of the suzerainty of China over Tibet, Great Britain and Russia engage not to enter into negotiations with Tibet except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government.' However, direct relations between British commercial agents and Tibetan authorities, which had been provided for in Article V of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904, were not excluded.<sup>28</sup>

The "great powers" of the day were so preoccupied with balancing each other on the continent of Asia that they completely overlooked the imperialist traditions of the one remaining oriental empire, that of China. Soon after they had settled their mutual affairs, the Chinese felt free to start what can

best be described as the persistent erosion of the eastern territories of Tibet. This raised the curtain on an entirely different drama. Its three acts could be entitled: The Fall of Tibet, Indian Summer in Lhasa, and, The Glorious Liberation of 1950.

##### 5. *Composite Agreement—A Quiet Burial*

With the signing of the Adhesion Agreement, Satow's objection to the composite arrangement being put to the Chinese had lapsed. Sir Edward Grey, the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, accordingly asked Carnegie, the Chargé at Peking, 'whether you consider the present moment opportune for approaching the Chinese Government with a view to obtaining a settlement of these questions'.<sup>29</sup> Sir John Jordan was later appointed Minister. In a despatch of 13 November 1906, he reported that the question of Macartney's appointment as consul had been notified to the Wai Wu Pu by Carnegie on 25 August. They had received it with studied silence. Jordan pointed out that in the circumstances silence meant not assent but dissent. He doubted the wisdom of reopening the question so soon.

As for Hunza, Jordan recalled Satow's despatch No. 371 of 3 November 1903. He agreed that any suggestion that the Chinese should renounce their connection with that State would be very distasteful to them and would be evaded as long as possible. As regards the boundary, it would be difficult, he said, to bring the Chinese government 'to agree to any rectification of frontiers in remote districts of which they have very imperfect geographical knowledge'.<sup>30</sup> Although he hesitated to attach undue importance to these considerations, Jordan felt they should be mentioned because the Government of India were apparently under the impression that the terms offered were very liberal. Clarke, Deputy Secretary in India's Foreign Department, had suggested as much to Curzon. The Viceroy's notion that the terms offered were exceedingly handsome and that the Chinese would get more than they would give proved his judgement at fault yet again.

The government of his successor, Lord Minto, was of very different temper. The India Office concurred in Jordan's views, and the Foreign Department's assessment was that 'unless

Whitehall invited their views, the Government of India need not volunteer them'. Clarke, who had urged restraint in 1905, thought an impossible task had been imposed on the British Minister at Peking. He saw no prospect of the Chinese accepting the composite arrangement. Dane, the Foreign Secretary, minuted: 'The question is not pressing, and we need not move, I think.' The Viceroy signed his assent on 19 January 1907. Curzon's composite arrangement, launched in so imperious a fashion, had ended as a damp squib. The case was allowed to drift.

Dane saw some advantages in the outcome, if it can be so described. He was veering in a somewhat different direction. After a discussion with the Viceroy he noted: 'It is rather satisfactory that the compromise was not put to the Chinese, as I think that there is a great deal in the view put forward by H.E. the Commander in Chief in 1905 that we should have a post of observation on the northern glacis of the passes in the Taghdumbash, and as long as the Hunza Khan collects his revenue there, we shall always have an opportunity of advocating this.'<sup>31</sup>

What might be seen as the formal end to the Raskam affair was a demand made in 1907 by the Mir of Hunza for compensation for the expenses he incurred in cultivating the area in 1899. Two years earlier, Colvin, then Resident, had suggested an annual sum of Rs.6,000. The Government of India, always notorious for their niggardliness, settled for the paltry sum of Rs.1,000 as a single payment. The Chinese, having read the signs surely, agreed to Macartney being designated Consul on his departure to another post in China in 1908, and to his successor in Kashgar (Captain Shuttleworth) being given the status that had eluded Macartney for eighteen years. It was a minor consolation to the British. As for the Chinese, it had been unnecessary for them to part with any of their aces. The British had committed themselves to a boundary line very favourable to Chinese interests; the Chinese had merely sat back and swept in the chips from the roulette table without giving anything away.

## 6. *Taking Stock*

Whitehall's acquiescence in Jordan's despatch of 13 November

1906, advising against taking up with the Chinese any of the three points of the so-called composite arrangement, may be said to constitute a watershed in the process of defining a boundary in the northern and eastern border areas of Kashmir. There was no serious attempt to revive the proposal for 'a post of observation on the northern glacis in the passes of the Taghdumbash'. The British apparently regarded themselves as committed to the boundary proposal contained in MacDonald's despatch of 14 March 1899 to the Tsungli Yamen.

What is surprising is the total absence of follow-up. There had been no response at all by the Chinese, apart from a verbal assurance given to Bax-Ironside that a reply would be sent on receiving the views of the Governor of Xinjiang. MacDonald's despatch had apparently disappeared into a diplomatic void. The troubles in China that immediately followed may have been partially responsible. As has been seen, Satow complained that his legation had not received instructions to pursue the matter. The British were too tactful, or perhaps too indecisive, to notify the Chinese government, as Curzon recommended in the Government of India's despatch of 24 March 1904, that, in the absence of a reply, they took it that the proposal had been accepted, and that they, for their part, would proceed to act as if it had. This would have been a perfectly justifiable position, remembering that, in October 1892, the Chinese had notified the Karakoram boundary without previously consulting the British. Instead, the Government of India acquiesced in the home government's approval of the inexcusable shilly-shallying by their Minister at Peking. In their own words, the case was allowed to drift, putting off the evil day until some indefinite time in the future.

Satow and Jordan, successively British Minister at Peking, had indicated the possible reasons for Chinese reticence. They thought the proposal had been linked with suggestions regarding Hunza and its extra-territorial rights which had been phrased rather unhappily. The solution was to make suitable amends by presenting the case in a manner the Chinese would have found more palatable. The British woodenly kept mum.

In the same year, 1907, the Government of India were wrestling with the allied question of a map depicting the northern and eastern boundaries of Kashmir, and the colour

wash to be used. Sir Francis Younghusband, then Resident in Kashmir, was consulted; he recommended a straight line running east after the boundary rounded the source of the Karakash, in the mistaken belief that it was the watershed. But when he was reminded that the line proposed to the Tsungli Yamen had also twice been suggested to Whitehall, he agreed that it was this line which should be shown in the map. Sir Louis Dane accepted this view, though with noticeable reluctance.

In a demi-official ~~letter of 4 July 1907 to Ritchie~~ of the India Office, Dane pointed out that, pending further consideration, the boundary line was being indicated as it had been in the old maps, i.e., along the Kuenlun range. However, 'in view of what has passed, we are afraid that the boundary must be withdrawn from the Kuenlun range to . . . the boundary indicated to the Home Government in 1898, and to the Chinese authorities in 1899'. The Secretary of State's decision was telegraphed on 1 August. He directed that the map of the border between China and Kashmir 'should indicate the frontiers as following the line described in Notification of 1899 to China with addition of the deviation in neighbourhood of Shingshal which was proposed in your Secret Despatch No. 153 of August 10th, 1905. The map of India will not of course attempt to indicate border between Tibet and China.'<sup>32</sup> This addition had become necessary because of the Government of India's intention 'to keep Aksaichin in Tibet in order to adhere to the Kuenlun boundary for that country as far as possible'. That was no business of the Government of India.

The decision was perfectly clear, but there was still some doubt as to how the line so described should be shown in the map then under preparation. The Kuenlun spur, which the south-easterly Laktsang range met, was shown in the Intelligence map of Kashgaria well to the east of the 80th degree. What this meant was that the point of intersection, not the Laktsang range as a whole, was to the east of the 80th degree. Dane gave vent to his exasperation at the wording of the Government of India's despatch of 27 October 1898. 'What on earth induced Sir W. Cuningham to recommend this boundary I cannot tell, but it was recommended by the Government of India and I agree that we must adhere to it.'<sup>33</sup>



Clumsily worded or not, it was perfectly clear that Calcutta and London ~~were committed to the boundary proposed~~ to the Chinese government in 1899. Was that commitment in any way nullified by the failure of the Chinese government to send a formal reply? This question was raised in the Foreign Department, but was not followed up, evidently because it made no difference whatever to the British position. They had not offered to give away any part of Indian territory.

Dane's reluctant adherence to the line suggested to the Chinese government had actually started in 1904. Taking advantage of Curzon's absence, he seems to have thought that Lord Ampthill, who was officiating in Curzon's place, could be what would now be called a push-over. Dane apparently had not been discouraged by the embarrassments of the Tibet expedition in which he had been so closely involved. 'We have an opportunity now', he minuted to the Viceroy on 9 June 1904, 'of acquiring an efficient political control over the western portion of Tibet which is nearest to the probable future field of Russian activity, and I venture to think that we should not lose this. . . . She may at any moment occupy the New Dominion, and as inheritor of Chinese claims push her frontier to, the south of the Aksaichin desert, if we have not anticipated her by establishing our influence in Western Tibet, which we can now do effectively and comparatively cheaply.'

Ampthill attacked Dane's premisses as much as his objectives with a vehemence that would have made Curzon seem a moderating angel '. . . . I cannot for a moment regard the extension of our frontier towards the Kuenlun Mountains and the annexation of Western Tibet as within the sphere of practical policy. It is quite unnecessary to argue the question. The Home Government and the Indian Government have repeatedly declared that they have no such intention, and if any thing is likely to precipitate a hostile move on the part of Russia, it is the extension of our own frontiers. His Majesty's Government would have a fit if we proposed anything of the kind, and the unanimous voice of the British nation would be against it. While our army is insufficient to guard our present frontier, it would be rank madness to put out advance posts far from our bases and natural defences, which would only invite attack and which it would be impossible to reinforce.'

As regards Tibet, Amphill reminded Dane that the home government had 'declared most clearly and emphatically that they will not annex any part of the country, and in the face of that declaration it is impossible for us to propose anything of the kind, unless and until circumstances compel us to do so.'<sup>34</sup>

Malleson, Assistant QMG, Intelligence Branch, questioned the military assumptions of Dane's proposal. He conceded that while the Kuenlun range was theoretically an admirable barrier, 'we cannot take up military obligations so far afield.' Such a frontier, he pointed out, 'must be obtained by methods purely diplomatic and not by means which could by any possibility involve even remote chances of locking up of troops in regions so inhospitable and so distant not only from all our military bases but from the real danger zone of our land frontier.' Dane's proposal was also strongly opposed by Kitchener on military grounds. The Foreign Secretary retracted with poor grace and closed the case.

The collapse of the Manchu regime in 1911 revived the Government of India's fear about Russia spilling over into Xinjiang. They could be headed off, the Viceroy, Hardinge, suggested in a telegram to the Secretary of State, by a line 'similar to that proposed by Sir John Ardagh in 1897.'<sup>35</sup> With the Viceroy's approval, Denys Bray, MacMahon's successor as Foreign Secretary, reiterated the proposal to Shuckburgh in the India Office by a letter of 7 April 1917.<sup>36</sup> The proposal does not seem to have been accepted by Whitehall. At any rate it was not put to the Chinese government, nor was an attempt made to appropriate the area up to the Ardagh line by means which Malleson would have described as non-diplomatic. The idea seems to have lingered in official circles in Delhi, though not the reasons why the Government of India rejected it in 1898 and again in 1904. This might have induced them to read a meaning into MacDonald's despatch of 14 March 1899 which had exasperated Sir Louis Dane in 1905. Professor Huttenback thought the Indian team at the official level Sino-Indian talks in 1960 altered the provisions of the despatch considerably. 'Instead of saying that it was the spur running south from the Kuenlun range which former British maps had shown as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. . . . they said it was the Kuenlun range itself which the British had described as being the northern frontier of Ladakh.'<sup>37</sup>

The Indian thinking seems to have been different. They consistently maintained that the official survey maps correctly represented the frontier whether in the eastern or the western sectors. Thus the Ladakh survey map of 1865 was held to be correct. The error was to suppose that MacDonald's clumsily worded despatch supported the importance they attached to the survey map line. Initially, Dane too had been confused. For his part, Hardinge seems to have assumed that the boundary question was still open and that the Ardagh line would hold the Russians at bay. But even its progenitor had not thought of it as a defence against the Chinese. At the time the Chinese were considered allies in the paramount purpose of resisting Russian expansion. The need for pursuing the proposal further lapsed with the Russian revolution of 1917.

If the boundary question was left in the air, not so the work of exploration and survey. That went on continuously. The Survey of India took advantage of the visit of the Italian De Filippi Scientific Expedition to Yarkand in 1914 to send a detachment of their own under Major Wood. It was primarily concerned with geographical exploration of the Karakoram and the little known sources and tributary rivers of the upper Yarkand river. According to Major Kenneth Mason, who wrote the introduction to Wood's report, the travels of Shaw, Hayward and Young-husband had raised many interesting geographical questions, some of which the detachment attempted to resolve.

Wood was evidently much more professional than the early pioneers. 'The lie of the hills and valleys in this region is so uncertain, and I have been so often deceived by the unexpected course taken by them, that I knew that nothing less than actual inspection on the spot would ensure that no mistake was made.'<sup>38</sup> No more the broad and often imaginary sweep of Johnson, Hayward and Shaw, who claimed they could take in the lie of the land as much as 60 and more miles away. Wood came upon the the Chinese fort at Suget, which was occupied only in the open season, 'when it is the residence of a minor Chinese official'. They were able to map about 5,000 square miles in the upper Yarkand river 'that was previously entirely unknown, or of which only the roughest sketch maps were available'.

It obviously cannot be said that the Survey maps previously produced were only approximate. The high points at least had

been triangulated, but there was enormous scope for detailed survey and mapping. This was further confirmed by the exploration of the Shaksgam valley and Aghil ranges undertaken in 1926 by Major Kenneth Mason, Superintendent, Survey of India, published two years later. 'The watersheds east and west of the Nubra valley are as yet very imperfectly explored and though they are shown in the old atlas sheets, they were sketched from so great a distance as to be almost imaginary. . . . Here are situated two fields of almost virgin grounds for the climber, and *absolutely new* (his italics) ground for the modern surveyor.'<sup>39</sup>

Mason pointed out that what he calls the Central Asian watershed was not actually in the Karakoram range, but in the black gravel area north of the range. 'The divide is hardly perceptible, for small tributary streams trickle among the disintegrating rocks, flow in all directions, and finally, as if uncertain whether to take the road to India or Yarkand, separate on the pass and flow both ways. Such is the Indo-Asian watershed.'<sup>40</sup> The Chinese boundary mark, which was erected in October 1892, was put up not on the true watershed but south of that, on the steep rim of the mountain range. This alone is sufficient to illustrate the margins of error that may occur in boundaries following even the most prominent geographical features. What is underlined is the importance of boundaries being defined by agreement.

Where did all this leave the Chinese?

In 1890 they moved down to Shahidula from their posts on the northern foothills of the Kuenlun. In October 1892 they put up a boundary marker on what they took to be the Karakoram pass. These measures were not objected to by the British, nor did they specifically agree to them. But so far as the Chinese were concerned they had been left with the distinct impression that what was not opposed was accepted. This had application to the basin between the Karakoram and Kuenlun mountains, not to the vast expanse of the middle plains further east, which were uninhabited, barren and forbidding.

Younghusband described the area pithily in 1889. He had met the Russian Grombchevsky near the Yarkand river, while the latter was preparing to enter Ladakh in order to proceed from Tankse to Polu. Younghusband devised a ruse to throw his plans

out of gear. As he reported it to the Government of India, he had instructed the Kirghiz 'to show him the direct route from Shahidula to Polu—a route of absolutely no importance, leading from nowhere to nowhere'. He was referring to Aksaichin.<sup>41</sup> When he was the Kashmir Resident in 1907, he said of the middle plains: 'The whole country is absolute desert and even if Cambell went there he would not be able to discover any jurisdictional boundary, for there is not a single Kashmir subject there for the Durbar to have jurisdiction over.'<sup>42</sup> Nor was there a single Tibetan or Chinese subject for the Chinese to have jurisdiction over.

Although the middle plains had no jurisdictional boundary they were not lacking in physical features which marked off areas of constructive occupation. The Government of India developed and used routes across the south-western portion while a little known route across the north-eastern end linked Khotan with western Tibet. They were divided by the Laktsang range, which was a clear enough physical feature to serve as a boundary between the two. This was the boundary which the British proposed to the Chinese government in 1899. In his despatch of 3 November 1903, Satow wrote that the Governor of the New Dominion had reported before July 1899 in favour of the British proposal.<sup>43</sup> The Tsungli Yamen, however, never replied either formally or informally. Whatever their reservations about the wording of the British proposal regarding Hunza's extra-territorial rights, there is little doubt that the line suggested in the middle plains was tacitly accepted by them. It took account of their need for a communication link between Xinjiang and western Tibet across eastern Aksaichin.

The People's Republic of China had no more right to their present "line of actual control", undefined as it is, than the Republic of India had to the Kuenlun line which, till 1899, had 'been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh'. The Indian position that they inherited traditional boundaries defined by the British commits them to the boundary suggested by the British government to the Chinese government on 14 March 1899. There are sufficient grounds for holding the Chinese to have tacitly committed themselves to it too. In whatever way their silence may be explained now, the irresponsibility of the Chinese government of the day, and the contributory negligence

of the British in not pursuing their own suggestion in a purposeful manner, lay at the heart of the differences that arose fifty years later. The Chinese and the Indians fought over the territory of Aksaichin in 1962, but they fought *because of the lack of responsible statesmanship at the turn of the century*. It called for another supreme act of statesmanship by both sides to compose their differences without resorting to arms.

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22. For. Sec. F. July 1898, 306/347 (313).
23. *Ibid.*, 39.
24. For. Sec. F. February 1905, 165/202 (179).
25. *Ibid.*, 197.
26. *Ibid.*
27. For. Sec. F. January 1906, 56/63 (59).
28. Extract from Parliamentary paper, "Russia, No. 1 (1907)". In For. Sec. E. December 1907, 343/395 (371).
29. For. Sec. F. October 1906, 68/78.
30. For. Sec. F. June 1907, 212/222.
31. *Ibid.*
32. For. Sec. F. February 1908, 40/51.
33. *Ibid.*
34. For. Sec. E. February 1905, 1398/1445.

35. Quoted: *Himalayan Frontiers*, Woodman, p. 267.
36. For. Sec. F. November 1917, Nos. 1-67.
37. A Historical Note on the Sino-Indian dispute over the Aksaichin. *The China Quarterly*, No. 18, April/June, 1964, p. 162; quoted Woodman, p. 266.
38. 'Exploration in the Eastern Karakoram and the Upper Yarkand Valley'. Published by order of the Government of India, Dehra Dun, at the Office of the Trigonometrical Survey, 1922, p. 12.
39. Preface, *ibid* p. v.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
41. For. Sec. F. February 1890, 59/84.
42. For. Sec. F. February 1907, 40/51 (p. 35).
43. For. Sec. F. April 1904, 31/46, (32 encl. 1).

## CHAPTER V

# Green Mountains

### 1. *The Tibet Expedition*

The main importance of the Tibet expedition of 1903-04 was twofold. It was an expression of the prevailing British belief that Tibet was autonomous enough to be dealt with independently. Secondly, it gave the Government of India certain prescriptive rights in Tibet which were assumed by India when it attained independence in 1947.

Once again the immediate provocation was Russia's supposed designs, this time on Tibet. The evidence itself never signified much more than an attempt to extend Russia's influence through its Asian Buddhist subjects. The Buriat monk Dorjiev, it was firmly believed, was the main intermediary. Curzon's strategy to meet the implied threat to the Indian empire, and which Whitehall accepted, was the despatch of a mission to Lhasa with the professed object of establishing friendly relations and commercial dealings with Tibet. Any idea of political or territorial objectives was disavowed; but, necessarily, they had to be ready to make a show of force if the mission was rebuffed.

Colonel ~~Younghusband~~ was appointed to head the Mission. He took the trail through northern Sikkim towards Khamba Dzong. The dilatory tactics of the Tibetans, the failure of the Amban to persuade the Chinese emperor's so-called feudatories to provide him with transport, and the endless shadow-boxing in the howling wind of the Giagong gap, do not need to be recounted. In January 1904 a force of three thousand combatants and seven thousand followers was mobilized under Brigadier MacDonald. The column moved up through the Chumbi valley. The Tibetans refused to enter into negotiations. Near Tuna they



made a sudden rush at MacDonald's troops. In a matter of minutes three hundred of them were shot down. The column then moved on to Gyantse after a smaller though equally bloody engagement on the way. Before Younghusband reached Lhasa, the Dalai Lama had fled, along with Dorjiev, leaving the Chinese Amban to welcome him. The Amban was quite helpless in the situation. It was left to the Tibetan Regent, Tri Rimpoche, to negotiate and sign the Anglo-Tibetan Convention. British consternation on account of the carnage compelled Whitehall to whittle down the terms forced on the Tibetan government and reprimand Younghusband for exceeding his instructions.

The ~~punitive conditions~~ finally accepted by the home government were the payment of an indemnity of Rs.25 lakhs in three years, and occupation of Chumbi until payment was completed. Of lasting importance, however, were the provisions for expansion of trade and opening of marts at Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok, and appointment there of British agents 'to watch over British trade at the marts in question'. The political provisions bound the Tibetan government to respect the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, 'and to recognize the frontier between Sikkim and Tibet'. The Tibetans also undertook to exclude foreign influence in furtherance of British hopes that the Russians would thereby be effectively prevented from meddling in their Tibetan buffer.

There was one clear omission. Although the Chinese Amban was present throughout, and Younghusband told the Tibetans that there was no intention of calling Chinese suzerainty in question, he did not obtain the Amban's signature to the Convention, nor was he able to secure Chinese adherence thereafter. It took another two years of strenuous effort to obtain Chinese ratification through the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906. In Article II the British engaged 'not to annex Tibetan territory or to interfere in the administration of Tibet', a commitment they scrupulously observed. It is necessary to emphasize this provision and the observance of it because of allegations later made by the Chinese that Tibet's territorial integrity had been infringed at various places on the border.

No less important was the second part of Article II which runs: 'The Government of China also undertakes not to permit any other foreign state to interfere with the territory or internal

administration of Tibet'. Reference was made to the rights conceded to the British under Article IX (d) of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 which stipulated that if concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights were granted to any foreign power or subject, similar rights were to be granted to the British government. Under Article III of the Anglo-Chinese Convention, China was explicitly excluded from the category of foreign powers, and China agreed to the British laying telegraph lines to the three trade marts.

The effect of these provisions was to restore the position of China as the controlling power in Tibet without any specific mention being made of what this authority amounted to. By implication it had earlier lost the substance of that position when Tibet independently signed the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904. International recognition of China's pre-eminent position in Tibet was taken a step further when the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 bound the British not to negotiate with Tibet except through China or to send a representative to Lhasa. These two instruments of 1906 and 1907, as Richardson says, virtually threw away the efforts made by British diplomacy and trade for over a hundred years, and paid scant regard to the sentiments of the Tibetans. But very much more was to follow when the Manchu empire made a determined bid to assert its authority in Tibet.

## 2. *The Backwash*

Only the briefest outline of the two-pronged measures taken by the Manchus is necessary for our purposes. The first and most disturbing to the Tibetans was the campaign of the Manchu general Chao Erh-feng who by the use of ruthless military force virtually subjugated the eastern marches as far as Giamda, only sixty miles from Lhasa. Tibetan resistance never altogether died down, but as Chinese control was consolidated, Chao sent a force of 2,000 men to Lhasa in 1910. The Dalai Lama fled once more, this time to India, and was promptly deposed by an imperial decree. His appeals for foreign help only served to embarrass the British who realized they had closed the door against themselves by signing the Conventions of 1906 and 1907

with the Chinese and the Russians respectively.

Lord Morley, who was Secretary of State for India, propounded the patently disingenuous view that the Chinese were merely making their acknowledged suzerainty effective. The Chinese proceeded to do very much more than just that. All those Tibetan dignitaries who had signed the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904, or who were known to be pro-British, were dismissed, and obstacles were put in the way of implementing the trade agreements.

It was realized that the Manchu in roads into Tibet were a reaction to the British expedition and the harsh terms extracted by them in 1904. Sir Charles Bell, who as Political Officer in Sikkim became a confidant of the Dalai Lama and an acknowledged authority on Tibetan affairs, summed it up: 'The Tibetans were abandoned to Chinese aggression for which the British Military Expedition to Lhasa and its subsequent withdrawal were primarily responsible.'<sup>1</sup> Porter, who as Consul General at Chengtu was in a good position to know, was much more forthright. 'Although Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, including the border districts, dates from the year 1720 when Lhasa was first occupied, and guards stationed at the principal places along the main road from Tachienlu to keep the lines of communication open, no attempt to administer any of the territory was made until after the British expedition to Lhasa in 1903 had given China cause to fear the possibility of losing her paramount position in Tibet.'<sup>2</sup>

Once before, though on a much smaller scale, the British had attempted to extend their influence beyond the border in what was acknowledged to be the Chinese empire. This was in 1889-90 when Younghusband visited Kirghiz settlements beyond the Karakoram pass. The Chinese responded by proclaiming that the entire trans-Karakoram area was Chinese territory. Fifteen years later the British took a military force into the Tibetan capital. Instead of establishing a firm presence there, an option from which they recoiled, they withdrew, leaving the field to the Chinese suzerain to convert the myth of allegiance to a distant emperor into the daily reality of an effective occupation. In both cases the principal British instrument was Francis Younghusband, whose fate was to be disowned by his own government. It would not be unfair to say that British

maladroitness in the Xinjiang borderlands and Tibet was directly responsible for the consolidation of Chinese imperial authority in the Chinese province of Xinjiang, which was expected, and in the autonomous region of Tibet, where it was unpopular and deeply resented. The latter became an element in the complex legacy which the British were to leave behind in India, unwitting grist to the mill of dialectical interpreters of history.

Smouldering Tibetan discontent was released in full flood when the Manchu empire suddenly collapsed in China in 1911. The Dalai Lama returned in triumph and the harried remnants of Chinese troops had to be escorted to safety through India. Having rid China of the hated foreign rulers, the President of the newly proclaimed republic, Yuan Shih-kai, issued a decree in 1912 that Tibet, Mongolia and Xinjiang were to be treated as provinces and considered integral parts of the Chinese Republic. The incongruity of the argument later to be advanced by the People's Republic that India was not above garnering the fruits of foreign rule was seldom if ever applied to themselves. Republican China in this respect, was, in no way different from its imperial predecessor. The departure of the Son of Heaven made no difference as far as the autonomous regions were concerned.

The British had no illusions about being able to intervene to preserve Tibetan autonomy. It seemed best that Chinese suzerainty should be maintained as long as Tibetan autonomy was respected and treaty obligations were fulfilled. Weak as they were, the Chinese government refused to give any guarantee to this effect, and made a demonstration of their suzerain authority by issuing a decree restoring the Dalai Lama to his office. The pontiff spurned the offer and announced that he had himself resumed the temporal and spiritual authority in Tibet. But the Chinese could always argue that such authority as he enjoyed flowed from their decree rather than his own announcement. For their part the Tibetans pressed home their military drive in the eastern marches, and were able to restore the pre-1910 boundary line along the Mekong-Salween divide.

### *3. The Tripartite Conference*

Reacting to Chinese moves in the eastern marches, Jordan, the

British Minister at Peking, telegraphed Whitehall on 24 May 1912 to suggest that the Chinese government should be told not to undertake military measures against Tibet without previous consultation with the British government.<sup>3</sup> His anxiety arose from a clear perception of the value of the Tibetan buffer such as it was. The Government of India supported Jordan's suggestion. Thereafter Sino-British relations took a course that was to lead directly to the Simla Conference of 1913-14.

At his first meeting with the acting Foreign Minister, Jordan drew his attention to the Presidential order of 21 April. 'This explicitly stated that Tibet was in future to be on the same footing as a province in China proper, and that its administration was to be entrusted to the Ministry of the Interior.' Jordan pointed out that this 'was completely at variance with past assurances and treaty obligations'.<sup>4</sup> However, after seeing the President on 16 August, Jordan was able to report to Grey: 'The President assured me more than once in the clearest possible terms that there was no intention whatever of ordering the troops to advance into Tibet. . . . His Excellency went even further and spontaneously assured me that there was no intention of incorporating Tibet in the provinces of China. He added that the natural authority over Tibet was vested in the Dalai Lama, and that he would much prefer to arrange matters by amicable agreement with him.'<sup>5</sup> Despite these assurances, there was no abatement of the military operations against Litang, Batang and Tachienlu, and no withdrawal or modification of the proclamation that Tibet was one of the provinces of China.

Jordan's concern deepened as the months wore on. Earlier it had been decided that negotiations should be initiated between China and Tibet, with what Jordan described as 'an attitude of benevolent assistance on our part'. Things had gone much too far for that. Early in 1913 he pressed for a tripartite agreement in which the British would also be involved. 'China is now weak, and, warned by her Mongolian experience, anxious to settle Tibetan question. If we postpone an agreement until China and Tibet come to terms without pressure from us, China, or at least Szechuan, may have recovered sufficient strength to make our task a much more difficult one than it is at present.' This view was accepted by the Foreign Office. On 23 May 1913 Grey informed Jordan of the British government's decision to call a

Conference of Chinese, Tibetan and British representatives 'with a view to settling the Tibetan question by means of a tripartite agreement'.<sup>6</sup>

Jordan and his temporary successor, Alston, had to muster all their reserves of diplomatic skill to prepare the ground for the Conference. The Chinese government was unwilling for it to be held in India. They suggested London as HMG were more liberal, but yielded to British pressure. The main stumbling block from their point of view was the equal representation of Tibet as 'the third party'. For their part the British objected to the continuance of the operations in the eastern marches. Jordan explained to the Chinese Foreign Minister, Lu, that the 1908 agreement amending the trade regulations had been negotiated with both China and Tibet. Nevertheless, Chinese objections to Tibetan participation were not removed until Alston, on instructions from Whitehall, informed Lu that the Presidential order appointing Ivan Chen with the unacceptable designation of Commissioner for Pacification of Tibet would have to be cancelled, 'failing which HMG would have to withdraw their invitation to the conference and consider other means of dealing with the situation'.<sup>7</sup>

It was not until 30 June that Alston was able to send Grey a revised Presidential order of the same date to the Chinese Commission in Szechuan. 'It has now been agreed with the British Government to appoint negotiators for Tibetan affairs. . . . All troops stationed along the frontiers must strictly adhere to their present positions and not advance pending a definite decision.' It was a curiously indirect way of communicating a decision. Hardly a week later, the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs renewed the suggestion for two sets of negotiations—between China and Tibet and then China and the British government. Alston regretted that his instructions were quite definite. The Wai Chiao Pu then issued the following Presidential order: 'Ivan Chen is appointed special officer with plenipotentiary powers for Tibetan negotiations.' The British appointed the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, Sir A. H. McMahon and the Tibetans nominated Lonchen Shatra. The membership of the negotiating body was at last complete, but three days later, on 10 August, Alston sent Grey the complete Presidential order which revealed the extreme caution

with which the Chinese were prepared to proceed. It ran: 'It becomes the duty of this Government to order said plenipotentiary to proceed to India, there to negotiate *provisional treaty* (emphasis added) jointly with the plenipotentiary appointed by Great Britain and the Tibetan plenipotentiary, and to sign articles which may be agreed upon in order that all difficulties which have existed in the past may be dissolved.' Whatever the Chinese government's misgivings were, there is no doubt that Chen had full powers. The British government pronounced this arrangement to be satisfactory, and the Government of India made ready to start the Conference on 13 October.

On 12 February, Grey had sent Jordan a five-point draft agreement for comments. This provided for Tibet's territorial integrity and internal autonomy, China's right to station a representative at Lhasa, with an escort of 300 and no more, who would advise the Tibetan government about foreign affairs, and the territory of Tibet to be held to include Zayul, Markham, Draya, Chiamdo, Gyade and Nagchuka, and all the country lying south and west of the Tang-la range.<sup>8</sup> From the very beginning the purpose of the Conference had been to settle affairs between China and Tibet; but on 9 October the Viceroy telegraphed the Secretary of State: 'It appears necessary to include in Article V of the draft some definition of the boundary between Tibet and India. In the light of knowledge acquired from our recent surveys it will now be possible to define a satisfactory frontier in general terms. . . . It would seem obviously desirable to come to a mutual understanding on this point with Tibet and as question is one which interests suzerain power it would appear one for inclusion in the tripartite agreement.'<sup>9</sup> This important suggestion was accepted by Whitehall on 21 October.

The main question of the Sino-Tibet border dragged on from session to session. Chen insisted on two questions being decided first, namely, recognition of Chinese suzerainty and reinstatement of a Chinese Amban at Lhasa. Because of Sino-Tibetan differences, McMahan, as president of the Conference, decided that the question of the extent of Tibetan territory should be decided first. In a Memorandum of 20 November 1913 he said that Shatra agreed to this procedure; accordingly, he intended to have initial discussions with Shatra separately till

Chen was ready to discuss the issue.<sup>10</sup> He had taken the precaution, as early as the 28th of October, of giving both plenipotentiaries copies of a map of the Tibet region published by the Royal Geographical Society in 1906, with some additions. They had 'recorded on their respective copies the Chinese and Tibetan equivalents of the English versions of the names used in the map together with the course of the boundaries of Tibet as claimed by each party'.<sup>11</sup>

Differences in the degree of control exercised by the two parties in a belt of territory between China and Tibet proper, McMahon thought, could be resolved by following the example of Inner and Outer Mongolia. 'The blue and red lines indicated on the map demonstrate the solution which I propose for the geographical problem. As regards the political difficulty, I am of opinion that it will best be met by recognizing the established autonomy of Outer Tibet, whilst recognizing also the right of the Chinese to re-establish such a measure of control in Inner Tibet as will restore and safeguard their historic position there, without in any way infringing the integrity of Tibet as a geographical and political entity.'<sup>12</sup> The advantages expected to accrue from these proposals were that they would (1) perpetuate and safeguard Tibetan (and, indirectly, British) interest in Inner Tibet, (2) facilitate negotiations, and (3) create a Chinese belt between Tibet proper and a zone of Russian or other foreign influence. Autonomy would be restricted to Outer Tibet. The proposal neatly took account of the various interests involved and found favour with the home government.<sup>13</sup>

The proposal encountered heavy flak from the start. The Viceroy reported on 11 March that the Chinese declined to recognize the proposed inner zone as a part of Tibet, while the Tibetans deprecated the recognition of any Chinese right of intervention in Tibetan territory. Jordan, who was back at his post, was visited by a Secretary in the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He gathered that the Chinese wished to retain territory approximating to Chao Erh-feng's conquests. From Delhi, the Viceroy reported that Chen had received instructions insisting on the disputed territories on the eastern border being administered absolutely by China. McMahon's comment was: 'It amounts in effect to rejection of my whole draft.' To cap it all, Jordan reported from Peking on 21 April that the President had



sent a Secretary to him with three new proposals. The Secretary had been instructed to say that 'the Government of India, as represented by Sir H. McMahon, were aggressive, exacting and unfriendly'.

It was a severe blow to the Government of India and to McMahon personally. The new proposals when they reached Chen were actually five in number. None of these, McMahon maintained, could possibly be accepted as they disregarded the basic principles of settlement. Chen regretted that his instructions precluded him from initialling the Convention, and Shatra too said he would not be able to initial it. 'After due consideration I formally withdrew draft and map. . . .'<sup>14</sup> McMahon, however, was equal to the occasion. Rose, his China expert, was told to negotiate with Chen, and McMahon quickly agreed to certain modifications of the frontier. Lake Koko Nor and the towns of Tachienlu and Atuntze were included in China, whilst the Mekong-Yangtze watershed was reintroduced as the boundary to the south-east.

It was hoped that these changes would satisfy Chen, but he was still determined to resist ratification on a tripartite basis on the plea that China 'will be formally reinstated as the suzerain power in Tibet on the day the Convention is signed'.<sup>15</sup> However, events moved fast. On the 27th the Viceroy telegraphed that the Convention and map had been initialled and the Tibetan Trade Regulations were subsequently signed by McMahon and the Tibetan plenipotentiary. McMahon reported that the Chinese plenipotentiary's consent to initial the Convention had been obtained with great difficulty. Article 9 disposed of the boundary question in the following terms:

For the purpose of present Convention the borders of Inner and Outer Tibet shall be as shown in red and blue, respectively, on the map attached hereto.

Nothing in the present Convention shall be held to prejudice the existing rights of the Tibetan Government in Inner Tibet, which include power to select and appoint the high priests of monasteries, and to retain full control in all matters affecting religious institutions.<sup>16</sup>

The euphoria, if there was any after the hard bargaining that had taken place, was extremely short-lived. On the 29th the Viceroy telegraphed Whitehall that Chen had communicated his

government's repudiation of the Convention initialled by him, stating that this had been done without their approval. He clarified, however, that the final instructions to the Chinese plenipotentiary, 'as officially communicated to me on 27th April accepted main principles of our draft with the exception of Article IX (the boundary clause). In regard to this clause, Chinese asked for boundary concessions without, however, any specific indication of their nature.'<sup>17</sup> It was then that McMahon made last minute changes in favour of China.

A note in the India Office file, apparently by T. W. Holderness, reflected the feeling in Whitehall: 'Characteristically Chinese. They have changed their form of government but not their diplomacy.' The frustration, disappointment and subdued anger was encapsulated in these two brief sentences.

But Whitehall was confident that confirmation by the Chinese was round the corner. The very next day, the Marquis of Crewe, Secretary of State for India, suggested that the Foreign Office should take steps to obtain the assent of the Russian government. 'It is understood that the Foreign Office think it quite impracticable to sign the Convention until we have got Russian assent.' According to the Foreign Office this concurrence was expected within a fortnight.

There was no sign of change from the Chinese. Chen gave information of a message from Peking which maintained that he (Chen) had been coerced into giving his assent to the draft initialled on the 27th. The Chinese Minister in London made similar allegations to the Foreign Office. These were firmly denied by McMahon. He insisted that every concession had been made to their wishes, and he hoped that the agreement as initialled would be signed in due course.

The actual sequence of events in the last fateful days was revealed in the proceedings later submitted by McMahon. It transpired that on the 27th Chen had stated that he had not received authority to initial the draft. He was asked for his final decision after being told the substance of the discussions with Shatra. 'Mr. Chen then said that he was willing to initial the documents, but on the clear understanding that to initial and sign were two separate actions. He also said he was waiting for express instructions from his Government before the formal signature of the Convention.' It was only after he had clarified

his position that he initialled the Convention and map.<sup>18</sup>

The negotiations simmered on largely through correspondence. The Chinese attempt to get the Conference transferred to London or to be conducted by Sir John Jordan at the Wai Chiao Pu in Peking were firmly negated by the British government who held that any such course would have amounted to reopening the entire question. To make their position plain the Wai Chiao Pu sent detailed instructions to Chen. The main points relating to the boundary and the status of Tibet were:

(i) The new trade regulations negotiated between Britain and Tibet would have to be submitted to the Chinese government for approval.

(ii) (a) All places north of the Tang-la range, the original limits of Chinghai, Atuntze, Batang, Litang, etc., were to be administered by the Central Government in the same way as the inland districts.

(b) All places east of the Salween, together with Derge, Niarong, Chiamdo, Jyade (Gyade), etc., would retain the original territorial name of Khamo, but be regarded as a special zone where the Central Government would have the right to do whatever they thought necessary for the consolidation of their position in that country.

(iii) All places west of the Salween were to be included within the limits of autonomous Tibet, but any question arising there of a political, territorial or international nature would be discussed between China and Great Britain, while the Tibetans could participate in the discussions.<sup>19</sup> Jordan's despatch of 13 June generally confirmed that, in substance, such instructions had been sent to Chen.<sup>20</sup>

The Government of India objected to the boundary suggested by China in respect of the Salween river because that would have excluded Chiamdo, Jyade and other districts from Tibet's autonomous outer zone. If the Chinese established themselves there they would be within striking distance of Lhasa.<sup>21</sup> In resisting the Chinese attempt to include in their own domain the short-lived conquests of Chao Erh-feng the British were both politically and morally justified. It may be suggested that by yielding the British could have secured Chinese agreement to the Tripartite Agreement. This is speculative, and also most

unlikely. The Adhesion Agreement of 1906 excepted, the experience of the previous twenty-five years was far from encouraging. The Wai Chiao Pu's instructions to Chen mentioned in the previous paragraph gave them plenty of scope for putting questions and raising objections. Who can say what might have happened? As it is, the British and the Tibetans signed the Convention on 3 July 1914. This action provoked the Chinese into informing the British government through their Minister in London of their disapproval and inability to adhere to the Convention as it stood.

The British declined to change their position. As they saw it all that remained was for the Chinese to sign the Convention. For their part the Chinese renewed their request for reconsideration of the boundary between Inner and Outer Tibet, but any further territorial concessions would have been unjustified. The Simla Conference was clearly at an end.

In a final Memorandum of 8 July from Simla, McMahon recounted the conditions which had made it necessary to convene the Simla Conference. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 had brought about 'the practical sterilization of Tibet . . . a political and industrial vacuum had been produced and for a moment it seemed possible that the country would be left to its own devices . . . an effective buffer between the conflicting interests of three great Empires in Asia'. But these arrangements had left the Chinese a free hand in Tibet, and Chao Ehr-feng was able to launch his campaigns without any practical opposition by the other two Powers. The Tripartite Conference was called to stabilize the situation and to adopt territorial limits that would be respected.

The Government of India's policy of inaction on the north-east frontier had become obsolete. Chinese aggressiveness towards the trijunction near Rima had convinced the governments of Assam and Burma of the necessity of making an effective presence along the border. The entire area had been taken under a loose form of administration through the local chiefs. This was 'the pacification of the tribal belt, the prevention of foreign intrusion, and the collection of data on which to base a suitable frontier line'. This work had facilitated the negotiations of the Simla Conference which 'have served to make clear the mutual rights and responsibilities of Great Britain, China and Tibet. . . . We

have now a defined boundary line along the whole of the North East Frontier and that line should prove a most valuable asset in our relations with our neighbours.<sup>22</sup>

The Simla Convention adopted the physical boundary between India and Tibet along the highest crest from the India-Bhutan-Tibet trijunction in the west to the India-Burma-Tibet trijunction in the east. It extended further all the way along the Sino-Burmese frontier, a total length of 850 miles, though our concern is with the Indo-Tibet boundary only.

It has been called the McMahon Line. The Chinese do not like the name; nor did Nehru. In his letter of 26 September 1959 to Chou En-lai, he wrote: 'As you know the boundary in the Eastern Sector is loosely referred to as the McMahon Line. I do not like this description, but for convenience I propose to refer to it as such.' No one could have objected to it being called the Tripartite Convention line or simply the Simla Convention line. The name made no difference to the line itself or the principles on which it was drawn. Such deviations from the true crest as were discovered later were negligible and easily reconcilable. Though the Chinese government never ratified the convention, the boundary expressed the political and geographical realities of the situation between the two actual neighbours, India and Tibet. By and large it was a stable frontier, unlike the eastern limits of Tibet which had been subject to the ebb and flow of armed conflict between the Tibetans and Chinese from the earliest times of recorded history.

#### 4. *The Tripartite Convention Boundary*

Sir A. H. McMahon, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, gave his name to a boundary line 850 miles in length which had actually been determined by generations of frontiersmen who had worked in the tribal areas of Assam since the middle of the nineteenth century. There was a slow and measured advance from the plains. It took account of the different stages of development of the people and the kind of administration tuned to their needs. This was reflected in the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations of 1873, which were extended to Lakhimpur district in 1875.

The regulations defined the extent of the provincial

government's ordinary jurisdiction. 'From the Chief Commissioner's letter No. 2600, dated the 27th July 1875, to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, it appears that the line taken represented the limit of the Deputy Commissioner's ordinary, as distinguished from his political jurisdiction, and that beyond the line no revenue was collected.'<sup>23</sup> Those familiar with the intensive system of administration set up by the British will appreciate that it was totally unsuitable for application to very "primitive" tribal areas. Though unadministered to start with, they were nevertheless included in the Deputy Commissioner's political jurisdiction.

Two simultaneous trends brought plains and hills together. While the bazaars at Pasighat and elsewhere became increasingly popular with the tribals, timber contractors from the plains tried to extend their logging operations to the primeval forests where the tribals roamed unhindered. The inevitable clash of interests came to a head in the Abor country. In 1907 the Lt.-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam\* held a meeting of officers familiar with this area. 'It is the unanimous opinion of all the officers consulted that Government should no longer tolerate the claims of the Abors and should prohibit and, if necessary, prevent by force the extortion of blackmail from timber-cutters or traders in the British territory below the hills.'<sup>24</sup> No government today could defend a policy so blatantly indifferent to the biosphere and the needs of indigenous inhabitants. Whatever the motive, there is little doubt that these interests would have resulted in gradual extension of direct British control to the tribal areas.

Initially, the Government of India and Lord Morley, Secretary of State for India, were disinclined even to hasten slowly. Loose political control beyond the outer line was considered sufficient. This could take the form of periodic "promenades", as the Viceroy called them, in his letter of 11 June 1908—expeditions, surveys, exploration and punitive measures when necessary. Such an occasion arose when Williamson was murdered in Abor country beyond the outer line. The murder and its aftermath brought about major policy and practical changes. The punitive measures Major-General Bower was directed to take led on to an entire process of boundary definition, and it is this which is of

\*The eastern part of the province of Bengal after Curzon's ill-fated partition.

special importance for our present purpose. The instructions were given by McMahon, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, in letter No. 1773-E.B. of 25 September 1911.<sup>25</sup> These were amplified by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam in operative orders to their frontier officers. Particular attention should be drawn to two aspects: firstly, assertion of political control over the border tribes; and secondly, the delineation of a secure boundary to be marked on a General Staff map provided for the purpose.

The principles on which the boundary was to be determined were clearly laid down. Government itself suggested a line at approximately 29° latitude, from 94° to 96° east longitude. Bower and the provincial government's officers were to submit proposals 'for a suitable frontier line between India and Tibet in general conformity with the line marked on the map'. No boundary, however, was to be marked on the ground 'except in cases where the *recognised limits* of Tibetan-Chinese territory are found to conform approximately to the line indicated in the map and to follow such prominent physical features as are essential for a strategic and well defined frontier line'.

Emphasis has been added to stress the point that boundary determination was not an arbitrary exercise in grabbing territory to which the British had no political right. The actual proceedings were very deliberate. Careful attempts were made to mark the line at the recognized limits of foreign territory along prominent physical features.

Apart from retribution for Williamson's murder, an immediate cause of anxiety was an "order" given by the Chinese from Rima to a chief of the Miju Mishmis to cut a track from Tibet to Assam.<sup>26</sup> Chao Ehr-feng's conquests of Tibetan territory in the eastern marches and the drive toward Zayul had brought the Chinese to Rima, a little beyond the north-eastern border of Assam. The Mishmi chief did not oblige, allegedly claiming that he was a British subject. It had become necessary, Lord Minto's government concluded, 'to push forward the present "outer line" so as to obtain a good strategical boundary under our control, agreements being taken from the tribes within or beyond the line binding them to have no relations or intercourse with any foreign power other than ourselves'. The "line" referred to was the outer limit of ordinary district administration.

As a preliminary it was necessary to obtain reliable information about:

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

The last consideration, that of cost, was typically British. The Government of India never quite got out of its commercial origin, and quite often were prepared to sacrifice political interest to considerations of cost. Sir Lancelot Hare, who was Lieutenant-Governor of the Eastern Bengal and Assam province, considered the line suggested by the Government of India as the minimum necessary to prevent the ingress of foreign powers.

Reports from the British Legation in Peking, and from Wilkinson, the Consul General at Chengtu, revealed that the Chinese were going ahead with a plan to plant flags on the Assam-Tibet frontier. In 1910, and again in 1912, Chinese flags appeared near Menilkrai in Mishmi country, and this had probably been done by Chinese-led parties from Rima.

In 1911, the Government of India under Minto's successor, Lord Hardinge, exhaustively examined the entire border question. On the status of the tribes and their relations with the British government the resulting despatch to Whitehall dated 21 September 1911, summed up the position: 'Treaties and engagements of sorts exist with the Charduar and Thebengia Bhutias, the Akas, and the Abors. The Tawang, Charduar, and Thebengia Bhutias, the Akas, Daflas, Miris, and Abors receive annual allowances "posa" either in cash or kind from us.' Although the Government of India's policy generally was one of non-interference, the tribes had been left in little doubt that they owed allegiance to the Government of India.<sup>27</sup>

Lord Minto's proposals, referred to earlier, and which had been held over for his successor's consideration, were renewed even more forcefully. With the recent changes in Tibet, 'the question of a boundary well defined and at a safer distance from our administrative border has become one of imperative importance, and admits of no delay. . . .' On the boundary itself, the general line proposed by Minto was endorsed. This



represented 'roughly the limits of tribal territory on the Assam frontier which we desire to keep out of Chinese control. . . .' No intermediate line between the outer line and the new external boundary was considered necessary. Cairns, the Government of India felt, would have to be put up as markers at appropriate places, one of them opposite the flags put up by the Chinese near Menilkrai in 1910.<sup>28</sup>

Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, was reluctant to accept what he saw as very far-reaching proposals. In words reminiscent of those used by Lord Salisbury fifteen years earlier with regard to the Kashmir boundary, he questioned 'the impolicy of claiming territory which we are not prepared to hold and administer'.<sup>29</sup> The Marquis of Crewe pressed forward the Government of India's views once again. Grey finally concurred, though with more than a trace of reluctance.

The provincial government, who were completely ready with their plans, promptly put them in train. During the working season of approximately eight months from November 1911 to June 1912, a number of missions fanned out into the tribal areas. Only a few highlights of these remarkable proceedings need be mentioned. Dundas, the Political Officer at Sadiya, was appointed Officer on Special Duty, North-East Frontier. He coordinated the work of a number of officers engaged in survey, identification of the watershed boundary, and establishing firm relations with the tribes through their *gams* or chiefs. Dundas in particular was to erect cairns between Menilkrai and Walong, where the Chinese had planted two flags, to signify the Indian boundary. The Mishmis were to be made clearly to understand that they were under British protection.

The erection of the cairns was an occasion for one of those rare flashes of cultural interchange which sometimes illumined the work of officers in border areas. Dundas reported that Captain Jeffery, a Sapper officer, had carved on a rock a quotation from the analects of Confucius which meant: 'Is it not a pleasant thing to meet friends from a far country?' Three Chinese who came later took impressions of the inscription on banana leaves.<sup>30</sup>

In the 1912-13 working season, Dundas supervised the work of Captain Trenchard, the Officer Commanding the Abor detachment, Captain Bethell of the Lakhimpur Military Police,

Captain Hore, and other officers. Dundas' diary mentions frequent meetings with the *gams* or tribal chiefs. A typical entry in his tour diary ran: 'I wished to get to Karko and see the *gams* who had sent me a pressing invitation to halt at their village on my return journey.'<sup>31</sup> The programme of survey laid down for Pritchard's detachment was:

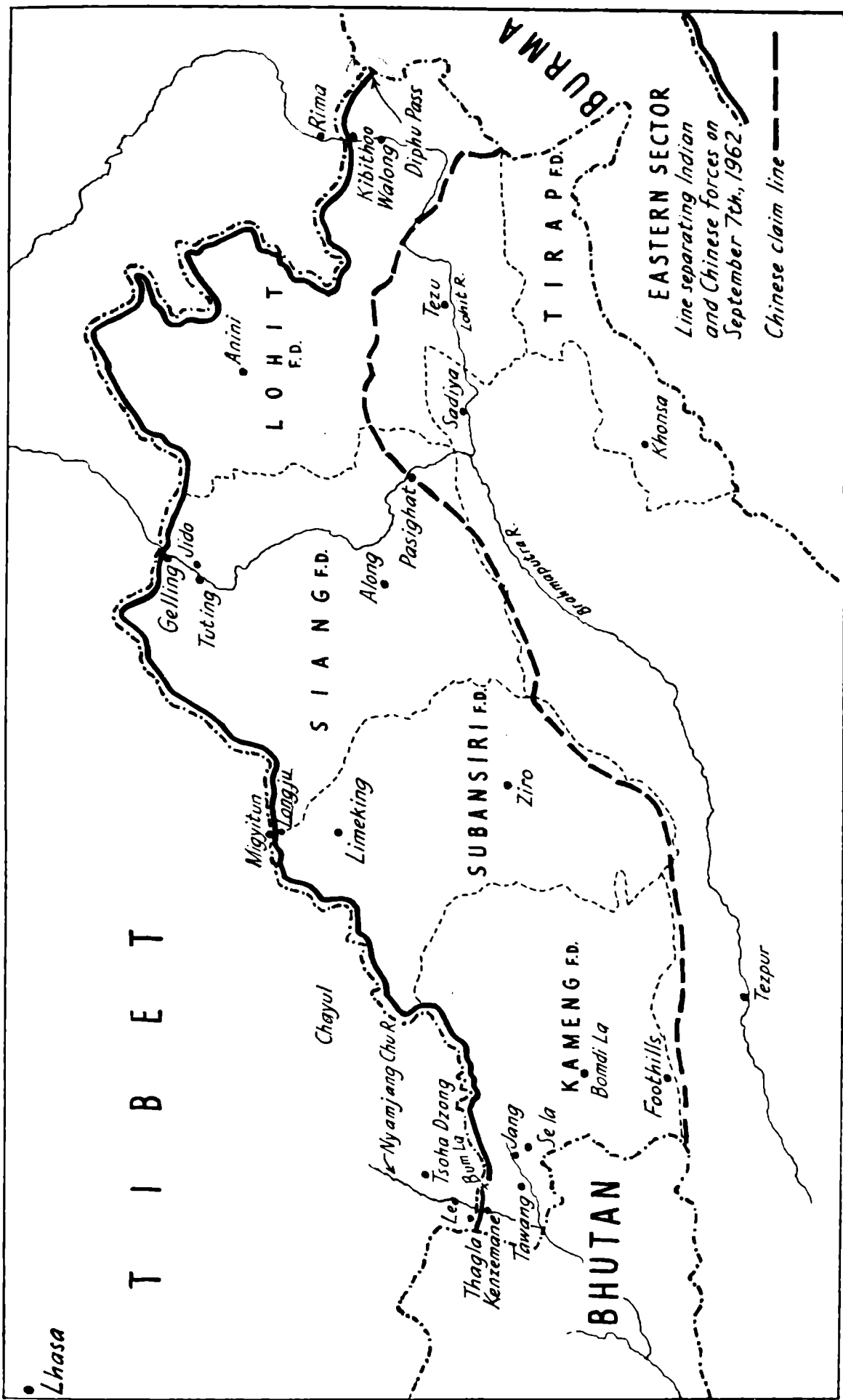
- (i) to fix the position of the main range from the head of the Siyom valley to the point in the north-east where the Tsangpo breaks through it, and as much east of that as possible;
- (ii) to explore and fix the Doshung la and other passes in this portion of the main range;
- (iii) to survey the source of the Dihang up to the gorge, and the course of its tributaries, the Siyom and Sigong.

In his final report Pritchard wrote: 'The orders have been carried out, with a few minor exceptions, completely:

- (i) The position of the main range has been fixed and the range itself surveyed in detail on the Dihang side up to the crest from longitude 94°15' to 95° . . . .
- (ii) Two main passes into Tibet, the Doshung la . . . and the Lungma (Lulung) la . . . have been explored and their positions fixed. In addition the position of six other minor passes over the portion of the range under reference have been fixed approximately, and the paths leading to several of them have been surveyed more or less accurately.
- (iii) The course of the Dihang river has been surveyed accurately up to lat. 29°30'.

Pritchard concluded with a touch of well-justified satisfaction. 'Thus the total area of survey amounts to 6,340 sq. miles, and comprises the whole of the Abor country (with the exception of a small area in the Siyom valley containing about 20 Bori villages) and practically the whole of Pemakoichen.'<sup>32</sup> In each case he had gone right up to the crest or the passes through it.

When they received the Abor report, the India Office observed: 'The results achieved appear to be most satisfactory, and we are now in a position to define the Abor-Tibet boundary with some degree of accuracy.'<sup>33</sup> Similar results were achieved by the Miri and Mishmi missions. Their combined efforts had



MAP 7. Sino-Indian Border: Eastern Sector



provided a comprehensive picture of the *recognized limits* of Tibetan-Chinese territory, which had been the objective from the start.

While the frontier officers in Assam were mapping the tribal areas, Captain Bailey of the Political Service and Lt. Morshead, brilliantly exceeding their instructions, explored the upper reaches of the great Brahmaputra river where it was still known as the Tsangpo. They were able to confirm some of the findings of the great Sikkimese explorer, Kinthup, for the Survey of India, and ended up in Tawang. Bailey's report is a classic of its kind.<sup>34</sup>

Definition of the boundary had been backed up by assertion of political authority over the entire tribal area from Tawang in the west to the Mishmi area in the east. In his letter No. 1625-P of 5 April 1913, the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam summed up the policy changes which had taken place since the Government of India gave orders on 8 May 1911. 'The position has since completely changed . . . a policy of loose political control over the area between the administrative boundary and the new external frontier has been accepted.'<sup>35</sup>

The Chinese were not unaware of these proceedings on the Indian side of the frontier. Manchu rule had collapsed in the meantime and a republic proclaimed. According to the semi-official paper *Kung pao*, Huang Liu-ch'ing, Director of the newly established office for Frontier Arrangements, had sent an intelligence officer to report on affairs in Tibet's eastern marches and Zayul. In its issue of March 4 to 11, 1912, the paper commented: 'There are no reliable maps of China's long line of frontier; hence constant controversies, whenever a frontier question arises. It is now proposed to send a special officer along the whole line, to survey and map, not in great detail but so as to give a general idea of it.'<sup>36</sup> In his forwarding letter of 19 March, Wilkinson, the British Consul-General at Chengtu, commented: 'There can, therefore, be no doubt that the Chengtu government is interesting itself in the Mishmi Expedition', and preparing to start some kind of negotiation about the frontier. It was apparent from this, however, that the Chinese were primarily concerned with the frontier of Zayul in the direction of Rima.

Apart from an abortive campaign in Pomed in 1911, where Chinese troops were harried and forced to retreat, the Chinese

had no presence of any kind along the border with Assam. After the revolution, stragglers were permitted to escape from Tibetan vengeance through India. The furtive operation of planting flags near Menilkrai never became an actual presence. ~~Only the Tibetans had any definite information about the Indo-Tibet boundary.~~ It was at this point that the Tripartite Conference met in Simla. The British had a clearly mapped boundary up to the recognized limits of Tibetan-Chinese territory; the Tibetans knew these limits and revealed their information at the Conference; the Chinese had virtually no information about 850 miles of Indo-Tibetan and Sino-Burmese boundary. It also transpired that they had nothing to match the mass of evidence the Tibetans were able to produce on the vexed question of the Sino-Tibetan boundary, which was the main subject of the Conference.

##### 5. *Was the Convention Boundary Definitive?*

It was only fitting that Sir A. H. McMahon should be appointed by the British government as their plenipotentiary to the Tripartite Conference. He was Foreign Secretary to the Government of India and had had long and varied experience in dealing with frontier affairs. His orders of 25 September 1911 to Major-General Bower were the basis of the instructions to border officers of Assam, which had become a Chief Commissionership after the unscrambling of the partition of Bengal. He showed extraordinary patience, resource and mastery of detail in steering the Tripartite Conference to the eventual initialling of the Convention documents on 27 April 1914. The Chinese government immediately repudiated it. It is doubtful whether he or anyone else could have secured their confirmation.

The record of proceedings tells the tale. It would be tedious to go over the number of times the Chinese changed or added to positions once taken. McMahon formally put his proposals and map at the Fourth meeting of the Conference in Delhi on 17 February 1914.<sup>37</sup> On 17th March Jordan reported from Peking that the Chinese government claimed to be in effective occupation of Chiamdo and Gyade to the west of the proposed boundary of Outer Tibet. On 20th March McMahon reported that Chen had received instructions insisting that the disputed

territories on the eastern border were 'administered absolutely by China. . . . It amounts in effect to rejection of my whole draft'. In his verbal statement Chen maintained that 'The whole of Tibet is . . . a sphere within which China has actually exercised her authority and cannot be designated as a sphere "within which Chinese dictation was of a purely nominal nature"'.<sup>38</sup>

British realists tended to cause offence by their often too explicit description of the insubstantial character of Chinese authority in some peripheral territories to which they laid claim. As Satow had pointed out, MacDonald's despatch of 14 March 1899 had erred in this respect. McMahan promptly cited documentary evidence of the Manchu emperor vetoing a proposal to set up an administrative district as far west as Chiangta (Giamdo). Moreover, President Yuan Shih-kai had assured Jordan on 4 June 1913 that 'the insertion of Chiangta in the Presidential order of 25 May 1913 was due to a clerical error'.<sup>39</sup>

On 8th April the Chinese Legation in London delivered a Memorandum from the Wai Chiao Pu listing five concessions they were prepared to make. The boundary between Szechuan and Tibet would be the Salween river, and the territory to the west of it up to Chiangta 'shall be under the self-government of Tibet'.<sup>40</sup> The Chinese government hoped that these concessions would enable the president of the Conference (McMahan) to settle the issue quickly and satisfactorily.

This was not the end. In a despatch of 21st April, Jordan reported that the President had sent a Secretary to him with three new proposals along with a complaint that the Government of India were 'aggressive, exacting and unfriendly'. On 27th April, the day the Convention was initiated, Chen communicated his government's final instructions. They accepted the main principles of the draft, with the exception of Article IX on the boundary. 'In regard to this clause, Chinese asked for boundary concessions without, however, any specific indication of their nature.' McMahan responded by including Koko Nor in China. But they were not through yet. On 13th June, Jordan sent a further list of proposals made by the Chinese. It was then that the British stood their ground. They were not prepared to exclude Chiamdo, Gyade and other districts west of the Salween from Tibet's autonomous outer

zone. The accommodation shown by McMahon and the British government could hardly merit the Chinese charge that they were 'aggressive, exacting and unfriendly'.

Even if all the territories they had claimed for Inner Tibet had been conceded, there were clear indications that the Chinese government were trying to insert unacceptable conditions regarding the status of Outer Tibet. They had ~~never~~ quite reconciled themselves to the idea of a country over which they were suzerain being treated as a co-equal. This hard-to-swallow objection kept cropping up in one way or other. They played for time, avoiding finality, without killing the Conference. Peking and London were suggested as alternative venues. China had not fully recovered from the dislocation caused by the revolution. They needed breathing time, as they did after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. This had been recognized by Salisbury who halted attempts to reach an agreement over the northern boundary on the ground that it would have been impolitic to force the issue at the time. When the government was weak the Peking mandarins tried ~~every stratagem to avoid a~~ final commitment. The Simla Conference had been convened at a time when they were trying desperately, and unsuccessfully, to resume control of Chao Ehr-feng's conquests.

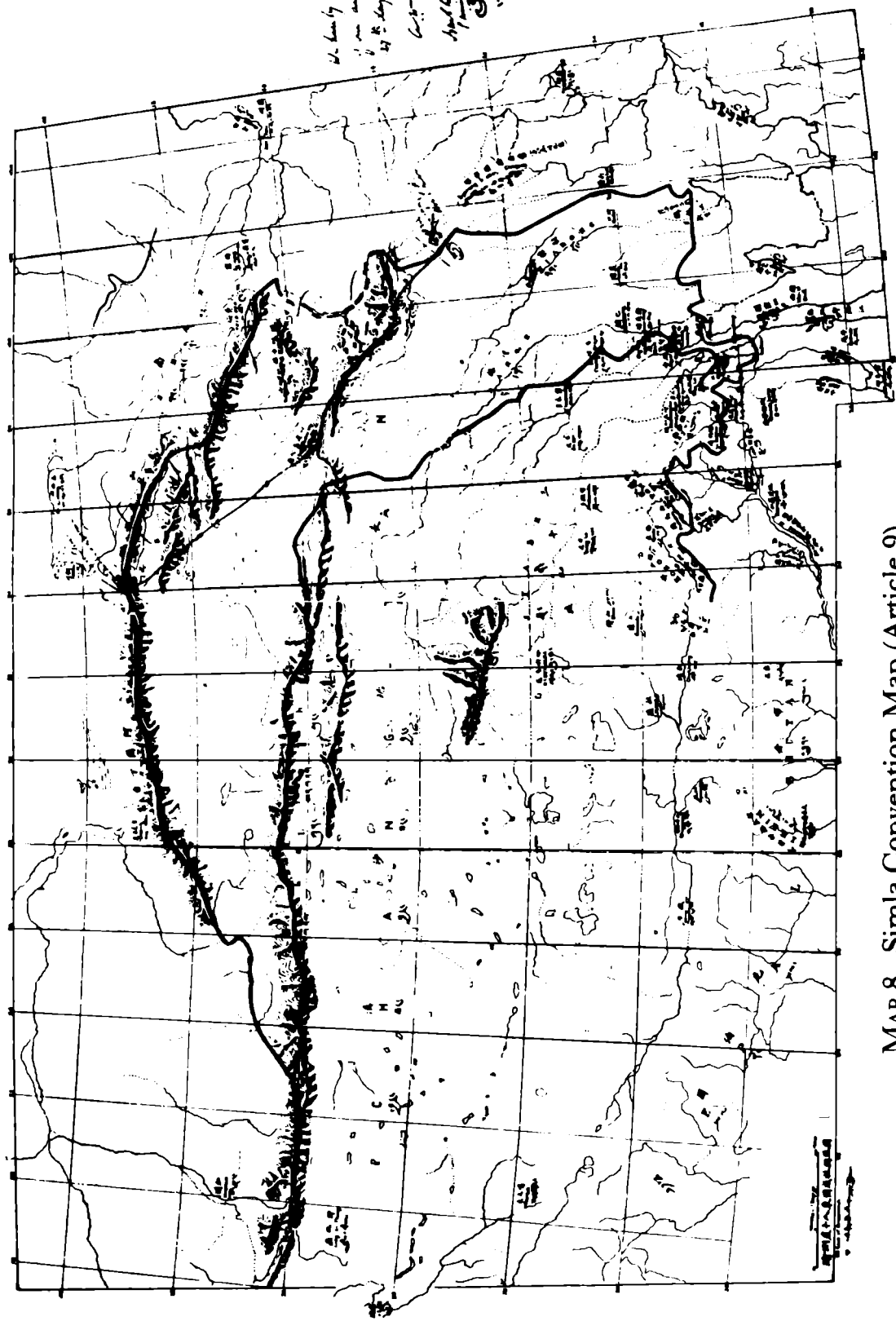
Can it, therefore, be maintained with conviction that the proceedings of the Simla Convention on the Indo-Tibet border were definitive? The answer must be affirmative, for the following reasons.

(i) At no stage had the Chinese imperial regime ever claimed a specific boundary with Assam.

(ii) Whatever territorial claims China had in this sector were entirely derived from the theocratic rulers of Tibet. In terms of the hold of lamaistic Buddhism in the tribal areas of Assam the animistic Lopas, as they were contemptuously called, as if belonging to a lower order of beings, had been touched by the Lord Buddha's teaching only in the magnetic field of the Tawang monastery. The point here is that there never was any substance to later Chinese pretensions to the tribal areas of Assam. A few months before the PLA moved into Tibet at the end of 1949, the Tibetan government raised a claim to most of this territory. The Government of India had no difficulty in exposing the hollowness of the claim. The furtive appearance of

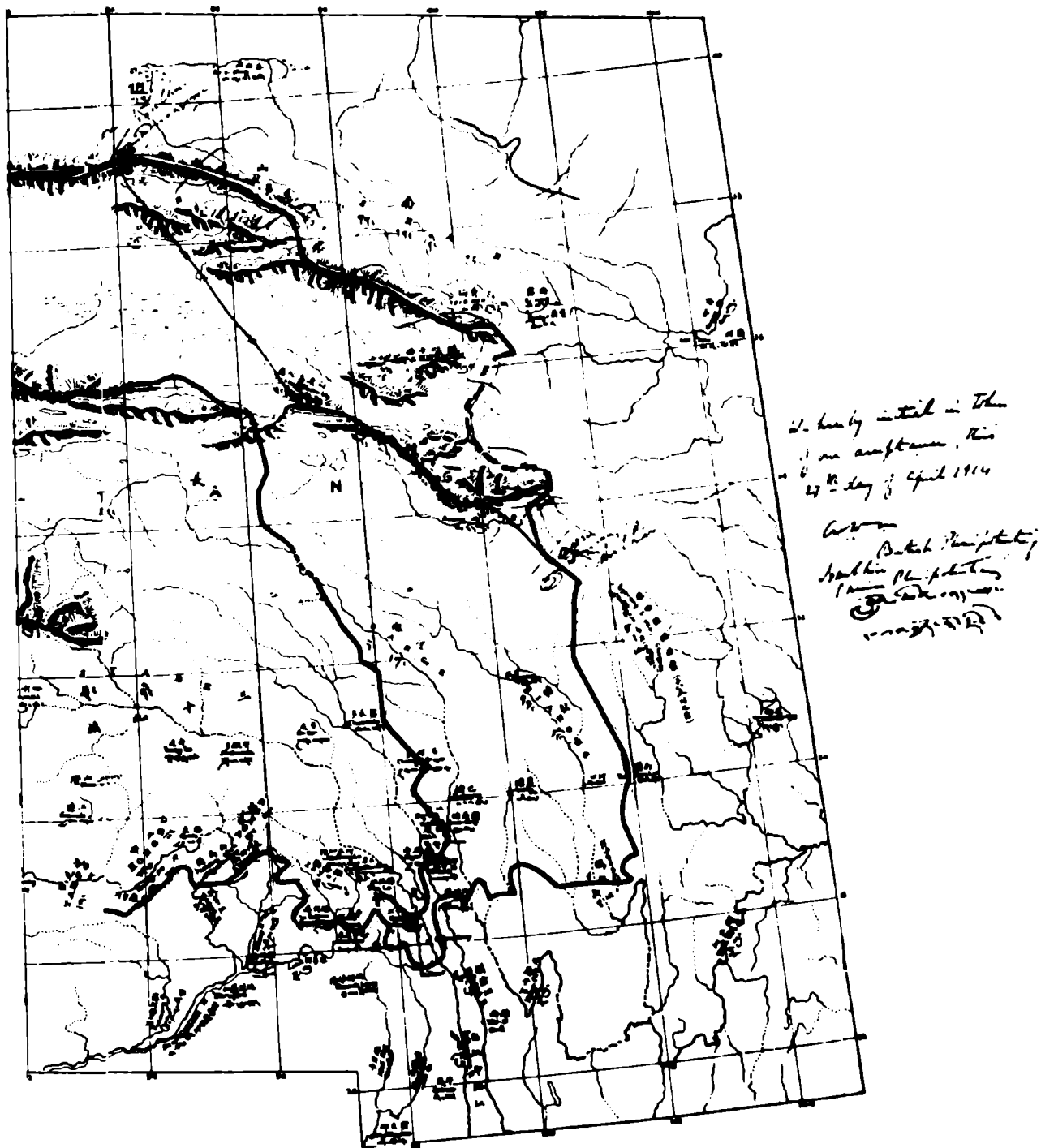






MAP 8. Simla Convention Map (Article 9)

The marginal endorsement reads: We hereby initial in token of our acceptance, this 27th day of April, 1914 (i) A.H.M. British Plenipotentiary (ii) Ivan Chen Chinese Plenipotentiary (iii) Lonchen Shatra Tibetan Plenipotentiary (signed in Tibetan).



MAP 9. Details of Simla Convention Map (Article 9) showing the Indo-Tibet Boundary



Chinese flags at Menilkrai was quickly countered by Dundas. The British government maintained that they were under no obligation to accept ex-parte definition of the border. 'In any case the situation has been entirely changed since January 1912 by the expulsion of the Chinese from Zayul, which has deprived them of all power to enforce their claim to the Menilkrai Line.'<sup>41</sup> As Dundas had pointed out, just one visit and the planting of flags which indicated no boundary line, could not sustain a claim to territory.

(iii) No ulterior motive can be attributed to McMahon's decision to discuss the details of the Indo-Tibet boundary separately with Lonchen Shatra. It was the only practical course. The Tibetans had all the knowledge and evidence relating to this boundary. The map with the boundary marked on it was presented at the fourth session on 17 February 1914. Separate discussions with the Tibetan delegate did not prejudice the tripartite character of the agreement. Separate discussions were also held with Ivan Chen, notably through Archibald Rose, after which McMahon excluded Koko Nor and Atuntze from Outer Tibet. The map with the proposed Indo-Tibet boundary was on the table to the end; not once did the Chinese object. Their only objections were about the boundary between Inner and Outer Tibet.

(iv) Copies of the Royal Geographical Society's map were given to the Chinese and Tibetan plenipotentiaries as early as 24 October 1913 for them to mark the boundaries they claimed. According to the legend on Map 28 of the Simla Convention: 'The yellow line represents boundary originally claimed by China at Convention.' This line runs west-north-west from Menilkrai to Pemakoichen, to the north of the tribal area of Assam. Then skirting the north of Changthang, it met the Kuenlun range at 36° north latitude.

The Tibetan claim line, shown in red, broke off from the Chinese yellow line at Pemakoichen, and ran along the crest of the range to the district of Tawang, but north of the place of that name, more or less as shown in the final Convention map.

(v) In their exchanges with India after 1950 the Chinese have referred to the Convention boundary as the so-called McMahon line and also the illegal McMahon line. Repudiation of Chen's initialling of the Convention documents deprived them of the

formality of signature but not of the substance of agreement. The Simla boundary line enjoys the authority conferred on it by mutual consent, long observance and international recognition.

<sup>17</sup> The Simla Convention boundary is substantially different from the north-eastern boundary of Kashmir proposed to the Chinese government in MacDonald's despatch of 14 March 1899. The latter was described in terms of prominent and clearly defined physical features starting from the Schweikowski peak, running along the Mustagh-Karakoram and finally the Lakhsang range to Lanak-la. From there it crossed the Indus basin to Demchok. No simple description was possible in the case of the eastern sector. To start with it was cut across by rivers whose headwaters were in Tibet. McMahon referred to this in his letter No. 1773 E.B. of 25 September 1911 to Major-General Bower. The military aspect, he said, 'should be prominently kept in view'.<sup>42</sup> Referring to the Abor country, he went on: 'We are already precluded from obtaining the best military line on this part of the border; the Tsangpo alone decides this point. . . . From east to west, the more important (rivers) are: the Lohit; the Nagong chu, or Dibang; possibly the Yamne; the Tsangpo, or Dihang; the Nia chu, or Kamla, the Tawang chu, or Dangma.' All these rivers, he added, cut through the approximate frontier line proposed by the Government of India. That the missions appointed by the Assam government were able to determine the recognized limits of foreign territory is a tribute to the thoroughness with which they completed the task assigned to them during the years 1911 to 1913. The results of their investigations were transposed to the map McMahon submitted to the Tripartite Conference.

It has sometimes been suggested that McMahon's blue pencil could have diverged from the actual boundary at various places. But, obviously, the highly technical work of transposing the line to the map was done by the experts in General Staff. It was certainly not an amateur effort. Considering that the scale is 60 miles to a degree, it has been estimated that the thickness of the line represents a width of about six miles. Differences, if any were to arise, would only have been within these very narrow limits, and quite easily reconcilable. Established cartographers recognized the line as an international boundary and showed it as such in their publications.

Soon after the conclusion of the Tripartite Conference, McMahon permitted himself the indulgence of reviewing its achievements. The Western Powers had hoped that the Peking Agreement of 1906 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 would result in Tibet becoming 'an effective buffer between the conflicting interests of the three great Empires in Asia'. But the Chinese had been left with a free hand in Tibet, and they decided on an active policy culminating in Chao Ehr-feng's conquests. It was because of this that it became necessary to hold the Conference. The creation of the two zones had given the Chinese a considerable degree of military and administrative control in the inner zone, while Anglo-Tibetan relations had benefited in three respects: (i) freedom of direct negotiations; (ii) settlement of the common frontier, and (iii) freedom of commercial and industrial enterprise.

McMahon was optimistic that the frontier settlement along 850 miles would prove to be 'not the least valuable of the results which have been achieved by the Simla conference'. He described it as a defined boundary, adding: 'So long as the frontier was unknown and undefined constant friction with China was inevitable. . . . The frontier work of the last three years and the negotiation of the 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 anxieties which have beset the Indian Government during the last few years.'<sup>43</sup> There is little doubt that this boundary was viewed as definitive by all three parties to the Conference. Given scrupulous adherence to the boundary line as delineated on the Conference map there was every prospect of it serving as an effective and lasting solution of the boundary question in the eastern Himalaya.

McMahon was equally optimistic about the effect of the decisions at the Conference on the main trade route from Odalgiri to Lhasa via Tawang. Its usefulness had been crippled by the exactions of the Tawang monastery and the raids of the Lopa tribes in the vicinity. 'The pacification of the tribes, and the control which will now be established over the Lamas of Tawang, should materially assist the development of this route.' The creation of a new political district in this section of the frontier,

and the presence of a British officer would, he expected, safeguard the trade from a recurrence of the troubles which had affected it in the past.<sup>44</sup>

After the Conference broke up, the British position was that the only thing that remained was China's signature. This was not China's position. In his telegram No. 152 of 28 June 1915, Jordan, the British Minister at Peking, said the Chinese had approached him several times to suggest the reopening of the Tibet question. They made it clear that they could not sign the Convention in its existing form, but indicated the possibility of some adjustment regarding the Sino-Tibet border, in respect of Chiamdo in particular, and its inclusion in Outer Tibet. Jordan thought there was a good chance of the matter being settled, but the Government of India opposed discussions in Peking and the reopening of issues without Tibetan concurrence. The Tibetans themselves, seldom fully united, were wavering. According to persistent reports, secret approaches were being made by a powerful faction for a separate settlement of the differences between Tibet and China. These issues were eventually settled in a very different way when the PLA marched into Tibet at the end of 1949 to effect the "peaceful liberation" of Tibet. This event raised the curtain on the last act of the Tibetan tragedy.

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## GREEN MOUNTAINS

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## CHAPTER VI

# India and China: “The More than 1,000 Million People of Our Two Countries”\*

Mao opened the conversation by saying that in China there was an old belief that if a man lived a good life he would be reborn in India.

—K.M. Panikkar†

### 1. *The PLA marches into Tibet*

After India attained Independence in 1947, two persons came to exercise an influence on Indian affairs which had far-reaching consequences on India's relations with China and, in a deeper sense, on India's place in the world. One was K. M. Panikkar who, as the title of one of his many books describes him, was Ambassador to two Chinas. The other was V. K. Krishna Menon who was appointed India's High Commissioner in London and, in 1957, Minister of Defence in the Union Government. Neither of them had any established political base in the country. Panikkar's glittering intellectual attainments were matched by a remarkable gift of seizing the occasion. He had caught Nehru's eye as early as 1924; that was enough.

Panikkar's first China was the KMT regime of Chiang Kai-shek. He was present at its demise, but returned six months later as Ambassador to the People's Republic already firmly convinced that the 'special political interests' in Tibet which India had inherited from the British could not be maintained.

\*Premier Chou En-lai to Prime Minister Nehru, in a letter dated 7 November 1959. White paper III; p. 45.

†*In Two Chinas*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1955, p.80.

'The Prime Minister', he claimed, 'had in general agreed with this view.'<sup>1</sup> This was a complete turnabout for someone who, during the preceding civil war, had suggested establishment of an independent Tibet.<sup>2</sup>

Premier Chou En-lai told Panikkar on 22 August 1949 that the liberation of Tibet was a 'sacred duty', but that the Chinese government were anxious to secure their ends by negotiation and not military means. None the less, rumours of an invasion were afloat in the middle of October. On the 25th Peking Radio announced that the 'liberation' of Tibet had begun. It was soon apparent that there was fierce resistance, particularly by the warlike Khampas, and that the use of military force had become unavoidable.

Nehru was in a dilemma. The Korean crisis was coming to a head. Panikkar's estimate, correct on this occasion, was that 'if America extends her aggression China will have to resist'.<sup>3</sup> Nehru worked strenuously to activate a diplomatic fire brigade, and sent Chou En-lai a personal message urging patience. Carried away perhaps by his own personal influence, Nehru declared in a speech at the Congress session at Nasik, 'the world looks upon us as representing the centre of Asian feelings'. Nearer home the question was whether counsels of restraint would influence China's action in Tibet. Nehru's optimism rested on a belief in the great importance of India and China being friends. He wrote to Panikkar on 2nd September: 'I think the future of Asia and to some extent of the world depends on this.' The basis of his belief in Chinese friendship, never very substantial, led Nehru into making an intercession on Tibet which evoked a stinging response from China.

Panikkar was instructed to convey to the Chinese government India's hope that the negotiations with a delegation sent by the Tibetan government 'will result in a harmonious adjustment of legitimate Tibetan claims to autonomy within the framework of Chinese suzerainty'. Not that it made much practical difference, but in the message as it was delivered to the Chinese the term "sovereignty" was substituted for the more distant and insubstantial "suzerainty".\* Panikkar had either forgotten or not

\*The author was told by a senior member of the Embassy that the 'mistake' was deliberate.

bothered to find out that Ivan Chen had not claimed anything more than Chinese suzerainty at the Simla Conference in 1913-14. The pitfalls of inspirational diplomacy did not end with this easy give-away.

In Delhi it was realized that the Ambassador's gaffe could not be undone. In their reply of 30th October the Chinese government bluntly asserted that Tibet was an integral part of Chinese territory and that they were determined to effect the military occupation of Tibet in order to liberate its people and defend the frontiers of China.<sup>4</sup> As if this was not enough, India's protest was considered to have been inspired by foreign influences hostile to China.

Panikkar managed to compose a plausible explanation of this sharp blow to any hopes Nehru might have had of peace being kept in Tibet and its autonomy preserved. Bajpai, Secretary-General in the Ministry of External Affairs, delivered a scathing criticism of India's Ambassador to China. 'I feel it my duty to observe,' he minuted to the Prime Minister, 'that, in handling the Tibetan issue with the Chinese Government, our Ambassador has allowed himself to be influenced more by the Chinese point of view, by Chinese claims, by Chinese maps and by regard for Chinese susceptibilities than by his instructions or by India's interest.'<sup>5</sup> Any other person would have been recalled without further ceremony, but not Panikkar. An undisillusioned Nehru continued to pin his hopes on Sino-Indian friendship. In a speech in Parliament on 7th December he declared his confidence in India's ability to defend the Himalayan border. 'Whether India had the necessary military resources or not, I would fight aggression whether it came from the mountains or the sea.' And how did he propose to do this? 'I am not thinking in terms of blocs. I am on my side and on nobody else's side. I am on my country's side.'

Lest this should seem like naive rhetoric as a substitute for an effective defence against a potential enemy honed by years of war, it should be remembered that these were the years of faith in the unity of purpose of newly liberated countries. In Nehru's vision both India and China shared this ideal. He may not have been aware of Sir Lewis Namier's dictum that a neighbour becomes an enemy and his neighbour, on the other side, a friend. India's own Kautilya could have provided relevant guidance. Further

and even clearer warning of China's intentions was received six months later.

Panikkar was restricted to such snippets about the progress of the PLA's march into Tibet as his Chinese informants chose to give him. As Dewan of Sikkim\* I was able to keep the Government of India informed of the way it was developing. Ngabo Shape, who had been sent by the Kashag to negotiate a halt to the invasion, was soon treating with the Chinese. He too had seen the flush of the rising Chinese sun. A seventeen-point Agreement was signed at Peking on 23 May 1951. The first of these was: 'The Tibetan people shall unite and drive out the imperialist aggressive forces from Tibet; the Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the Motherland—the People's Republic of China.' Was India the big bad imperialist wolf?

The second was even more pointed. 'The local government of Tibet shall actively assist the PLA to enter Tibet and consolidate the national defence.' Whoever else the Chinese may have intended, it was then not their close ally the Soviet Union. There is little doubt that the defence of the Himalayan frontier against India was the principal aim. This was substantiated in the clearest possible manner by Chinese actions in Tibet.

To reach Lhasa the twenty-five thousand strong PLA had to overcome immense natural difficulties of distance, the forbidding terrain of the eastern marches and lack of supplies. One of the first tasks addressed was the establishment of communications not only to China but laterally, along the valley of the Tsangpo and further west to Gartok and Rudok. I was able to keep the Government of India informed of these developments and also the derogatory and threatening language used by the Chinese in their references to India.

But suddenly all was sweetness and light. The reason became apparent when a request was made for shipment of Chinese rice through India and Sikkim to their troops in Tibet. This could, and indeed should, have been made the occasion for a settlement of the major problems with China as a prelude to the altogether unprecedented help requested from the Government of India. It simply did not occur to anyone in Delhi, and such

\*Prime Minister of the ruler, Maharaja Sir Tashi Namgyal, KCSI, KCIE, from 1949 to 1954.

caution as I advised was brushed aside.\* Released from anxiety on account of supplies, the Chinese and local Tibetan labour were able to press ahead with the vitally important task of creating a network of communications to defend the frontiers of China with India.

There was no matching activity on the Indian side until the Border Roads Organisation was set up eight years later. By then the Chinese had a full-fledged network in the very much easier trans-Himalayan terrain. It will be recalled that as long ago as 1865 Johnson had been told of the existence of what became the Yehcheng-Gartok highway. Even then it was fit for wheeled traffic.

Indian hopes were pinned on the recommendations of a border defence committee set up in 1951 on which the senior military officer was Lt.-General Kulwant Singh who had a reputation for staff brilliance. The outcome was meagre. A brigade headquarters was set up in Gangtok, but the men had to be content with mountain trails. There was little improvement of communications in that particular sector right up to 1960.

~~By the middle of 1950 the Tibetan buffer had disappeared.~~ The anxiety expressed by some of Nehru's political colleagues, notably Sardar Patel, India's strong man, was not allayed. In truth there was little in practical terms that Nehru could have done to resist the "liberation". India had inherited the British position without its world power. It is questionable whether Nehru should have championed China's admission to the United Nations in season and out, regardless of their forcible occupation of Tibet. Sentiment for an Asian neighbour apart, his expectation that China would respond to India's concerns was a forlorn hope. India got nothing out of it. No other country was prepared to speak up for Tibet except Ireland and El Salvador. It was clearly beyond India's unaided capacity to have done more than appeal to the Chinese to abstain from the use of force. They had given their answer.

\*The Chinese Intelligence officer stationed in Gangtok to see the movement through was a man of considerable poise. For my part, after taking over at the Siliguri railhead, I made sure that the whole exercise was carried through with the utmost expedition. Something like a thousand mules were constantly on the move for several months between Deorali near Gangtok and Yatung. Not a bag of rice was lost.

## 2. India's China Policy

Nehru made his views known on the border almost as soon as the Chinese occupation of Tibet was an accomplished fact. On 20 November 1950 he told Parliament: 'The frontier from Bhutan eastwards has been clearly defined by the McMahon Line which was fixed by the Simla Convention of 1914. The frontier from Ladakh to Nepal is defined chiefly by long usage and custom. . . . Our maps show that the McMahon Line is our boundary and that is our boundary—map or no map. That fact remains and we stand by that boundary, and we will not allow anybody to come across that boundary.'<sup>6</sup>

An attacking statement of this kind by the country's undisputed leader had a dual effect. Firstly, the public were convinced of the inviolability of the Himalayan border. This belief remained unshaken by subsequent developments. Secondly, Nehru's emphatic stand tended to inhibit objective inquiry into the actual position. It became a kind of dogma which no one seriously questioned. On the other hand Nehru's confidence promoted national solidarity.

Panikkar anticipated no difficulty from the Chinese on the border question. He had seen Chou En-lai on 27 September 1951 and reported the result to Nehru the next day. There were no territorial differences between India and China on Tibet, the Chinese Premier had assured him. 'Stabilization of the Tibetan frontier', which was a matter of common concern to India, Nepal and China, could best be done by discussion between them. As Gopal aptly remarks, 'this shrouded sentence was not an explicit recognition of the frontier'. Bajpai and K.P.S. Menon, the two top officials in India's Ministry of External Affairs, were in favour of making such a recognition an essential part of a general settlement. They advised that India should not withdraw her garrisons from Gyantse and Yatung without this. Nehru then approved the issue of explicit instructions to Panikkar to secure Chinese affirmation of the McMahon Line and the rest of the frontier with Tibet.<sup>7</sup>

Panikkar had already demonstrated his preference for not forcing issues on the Chinese Prime Minister. He ignored these clear instructions and confined the discussions with Chou En-lai to trade and cultural interests, even at subsequent meetings. A

shade of annoyance crept into Nehru's telegram of 16 June 1952 to Panikkar. 'We think it rather odd that, in discussing Tibet with you, Chou En-lai did not refer at all to our frontier. For our part, we attach more importance to this than to other matters.' He thought there might be some advantage in India not raising the issue, though he did not say why; but added: 'I do not quite like Chou En-lai's silence about it. . . .'

Instead of giving Panikkar categorical orders, or recalling him, Nehru allowed Panikkar to slip through the loophole which he had thought lessly given to him. He kept quiet. Panikkar appeared in Delhi at this crucial juncture, on his transfer to Cairo. Once again, he managed to persuade Nehru to override Bajpai's objections and to treat the border as a closed issue. But the Ministry's officials hung on. The matter was raised again in 1953 in preparation for the forthcoming discussions on the treaty with China on Tibet. The Ministry suggested that a definite declaration about the boundary should be included in the general statement; but Nehru ruled that the matter need not be raised 'for the present'.<sup>8</sup>

Nehru had been completely won over by Panikkar, against the advice of perhaps the most impressive array of official opinion the Ministry has ever had. A map in *People's China*, on a scale too small to be definitive, showed the boundary roughly as depicted in Indian maps. This was enough to convince Nehru that the boundary issue should not be raised. One opportunity after another had been allowed to slip by, justifying Gopal's remark that the shift of attitude was to have disastrous consequences.

Denied by Nehru's decision of the opportunity to include a definitive agreement on the border in the general statement, the agreement on Tibet signed to Peking on 29 April 1954 provided for:

- (i) establishment of three trade agencies by each side;
- (ii) recognition of a number of trade marts;
- (iii) facilities for traditional pilgrimages in both countries by persons of 'Hindu and Buddhist faiths'.

In a note of the same date India undertook to withdraw its military escorts stationed at Yatung and Gyantse and to hand over the postal, telegraph and public telephone services for a



reasonable price, along with twelve rest-houses and other buildings owned by the Government of India in Tibet. It was in fact a total exodus, which was replaced by normal consular and trade arrangements. In addition there were two unusual provisions. What came to be known as *panchsheel* was set out in the general statement. This was an affirmation of mutual respect for territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence. Initial Chinese reluctance to agreeing to the inclusion of this provision was withdrawn on Indian insistence. the other provision was the listing of six passes, all in the middle sector, by which traders and pilgrims would be permitted to travel. This was later taken by India to imply confirmation of the boundary running through the watershed line formed by the passes.

Panikkar claims that just before his departure from China in 1952 he had been authorized to convey to the Chinese government the renunciation by India of her rights in Tibet, later formalized by the 1954 Treaty.<sup>9</sup> Panikkar in fact laid the foundations of India's China policy in the first flush of cordiality. Perhaps he was right in perceiving that China even then was the Great Power that she saw herself to be though that was even more reason, one would have thought, for not abolishing the Tibetan buffer at one stroke, nominal though it was bound to be. Few People in Delhi other than Nehru had any illusions about Panikkar. N. R. Pillai, Bajpai's successor as Secretary-General in the Ministry of External Affairs, told a highly perceptive diplomat then in Delhi that Panikkar 'had the reputation as an historian of mixing fiction with fact and in his reporting from Peking he had a tendency to believe what he wanted to believe'. Escort Reid, then Canadian High Commissioner, described Panikkar as highly intelligent and cultured, but a complete cynic. 'He had no illusions about the policies of the Chinese Government and he had not been misled by it. He considered, however, that the future, at least in his lifetime, lay with the communists and he therefore did his best to get in well with them by misleading Nehru.' The French Ambassador was more forthright. 'He said to me that Panikkar had consistently and deliberately misled Nehru about China.'<sup>10</sup> In the last analysis Nehru took the decisions, but the architect, if this is the word, of India's policy of renunciation was a man of

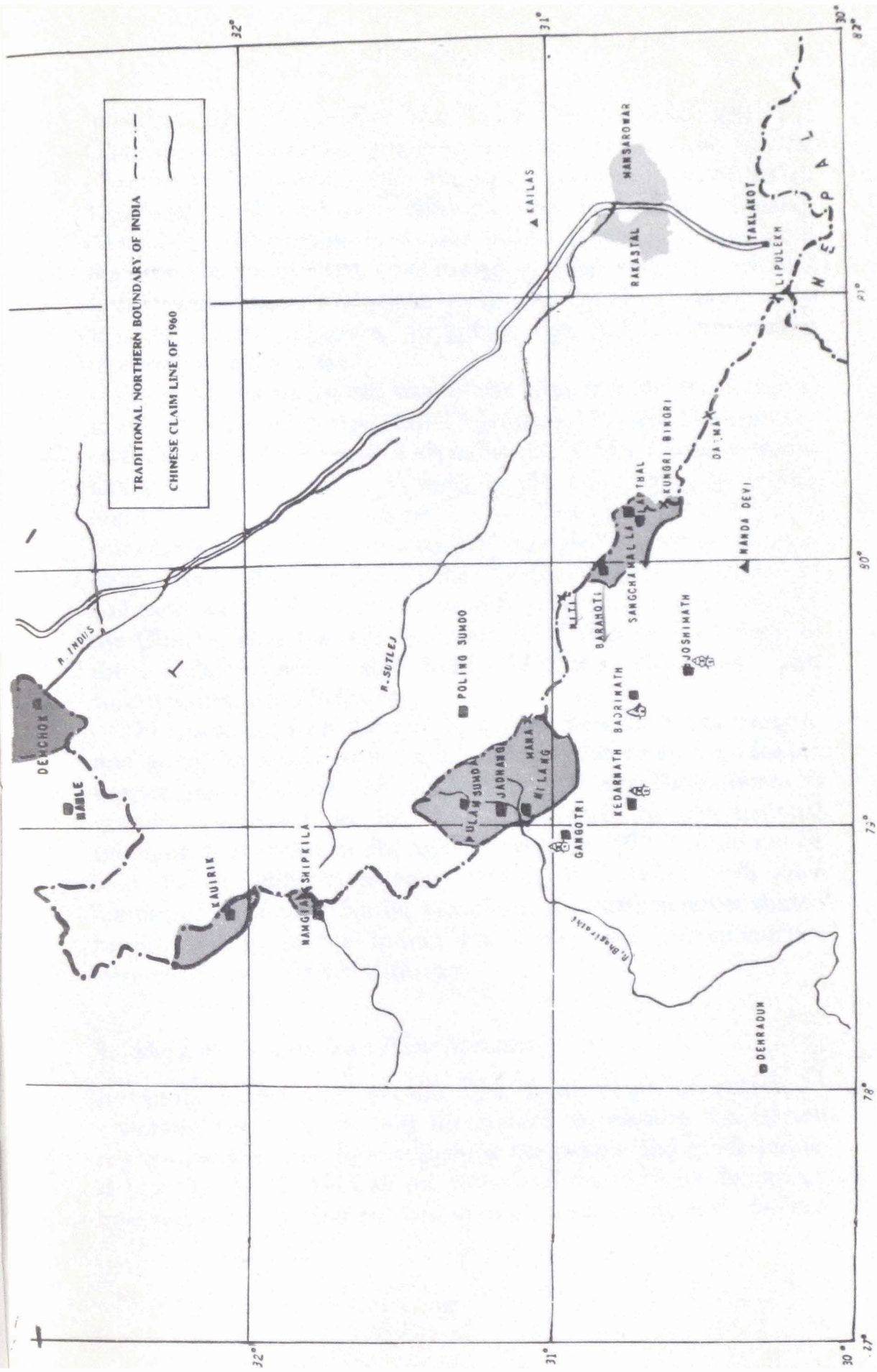
far-reaching ambition who had been allowed far too much indulgence.

### 3. *The End of Panchsheel*

Ten days short of three months after the Tibet Agreement was signed the Chinese sent the first signal that friendly co-existence was over. In the course of a normal summer tour a party of the Indian Border Security Force camped on the Hoti plain south-east of Niti pass. On 17 July 1954 the Chinese Counsellor in Delhi presented a note to the Ministry of External Affairs alleging that over thirty Indian troops crossed the Niti pass into Wuje of the Ari areas of Tibet. This action, the note maintained, was not in keeping with the principles of non-aggression and friendly co-existence. After making thorough inquiries, Delhi handed the Counsellor a note dated 27th August. No Indian personnel, it said, had crossed the Niti pass into Tibet. On the contrary, some Tibetan officials tried to cross into Hoti. Delhi hoped that 'the Government of China will instruct the local authorities in Tibet not to cross into Indian territory, as we have instructed our authorities not to cross into Tibetan territory'.<sup>11</sup> Significantly, Niti was one of the six passes specified in the Indo-Chinese Agreement by which traders and pilgrims were permitted to travel.

The two governments exchanged notes on Hoti for four years thereafter, although even from their own account the Chinese should have realized that Hoti was on the Indian side of the pass. On 1 September 1956 these differences were extended to Shipki la, the main and very clearly formed pass on the pilgrim route to Kailash and Manasarovar. The provocation occurred when a party of armed Chinese took up positions two furlongs on the Indian side, and withdrew only when told of their error. Shipki la too was one of the passes listed in the Agreement as a travel route over the long established customary border in the middle sector. In both cases the Chinese were clearly in the wrong. It may be surmised that these were probing actions to test Indian reactions.

In the summer of 1958 Chinese troops visited Khurnak fort on the Kashmir border. A *note verbale* was given to the Chinese Counsellor in Delhi claiming that Khurnak was in Indian



MAP 10. Sino-Indian Border: Middle Sector



territory. On 18 October the Indian government drew the Chinese Ambassador's attention to the construction by the Chinese of a motor road through Aksaichin, from Sarigh Jilganang north-westwards through Haji Langar to Xinjiang. Aksaichin, India maintained, was Indian territory. It transpired that the road had been constructed in 1956 and 1957 without India's knowledge. Invitations to an inaugural ceremony were sent to some embassies, including the Indian. No Indian representative attended.\*

From the extreme north-west of the Himalaya the focus shifted to the extreme south-east. On 17 January 1959 the Government of India complained that a detachment of fifty Chinese troops had penetrated as far as Walong in the Lohit valley in India's North East Frontier Agency. On 23rd June the Chinese complained that Indian troops had occupied Migyitun, Samgar Sanpo and other places in the Tibetan region of China in collusion with 'Tibetan rebel bandits', a term regularly used by the Chinese after the Tibetan uprising of 1959 and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India. Other allegations and counter-allegations followed.

Thus, starting with the middle sector, then the north-western, and going on finally to the south-eastern, the entire Sino-Indian border had become the subject of dispute. Panchsheel, so grandly conceived as an Asian approach to international relations, had ended in discord. However, in 1959 it could not be said that the differences were unbridgeable. While both sides continued to protest border violations, the main interest shifted to proceedings in the Indian Parliament and correspondence between the two Prime Ministers.

#### 4. *Maps, Parliament, Two Prime Ministers*

In India Parliament became the focal point of national concerns. Only Nehru had the stature to reassure the elected representatives; only he could rouse the people and guide public debate; his hands held all the strands of the intricate diplomacy involved with his Chinese counterpart; and, in the end, defence

\*A senior staff member to the author.

policy and the vital decisions on the action to be taken travelled back to his panelled office in South Block.

When war broke out in 1962, informed circles in Delhi were convinced, on what evidence it never became clear, that Mao had ordered it. Twelve years later, Khrushchev said very much the same thing in his memoirs. 'I believe it was Mao himself who had stirred up the trouble with India. I think he did so because of some sick fantasy. . . . I think Mao created the Sino-Indian conflict precisely in order to draw the Soviet Union into it. He wanted to put us in the position of having no choice but to support him.'<sup>12</sup> Mao may have held the ultimate levers, but there is little doubt that the negotiations extending over three years from the end of the 1958 were very much Premier Chou En-lai's domain. It is unquestionable, too, that he displayed all the skills of his mandarin ancestors.

Nehru revealed in Parliament that Chinese maps had for the last thirty years included a portion of north-eastern India in China. They were not a sudden or new development. Stranger still, it transpired that the Russians had published identical maps. Nehru explained to the Lok Sabha that 'the Russians had apparently copied Chinese maps; they said they would inquire into the matter.'<sup>13</sup> This was hardly surprising; the Soviet Union and China were still closely fraternal countries, but things were changing. It was not until 1958, as troubles mounted in Tibet and Chinese map claims persisted, that members of Parliament pressed home a sustained attack on the government. On 25th August, Hem Barua, who was a consistent critic of the government's frontier policy, asked whether a map in the July issue of *China Pictorial* had shown 'a big chunk of Northern Assam and NEFA territory' (now Arunachal Pradesh) in China. this was confirmed by Nehru, though he found it difficult to say precisely where the line lay. 'You can't say. It may make a difference of 50 miles or more if the line is thick or thin.'

Nehru told Parliament that the Chinese had not had time to revise the old pre-Liberation maps which included large parts of NEFA, Bhutan, and Ladakh in Tibet. Indeed, India had been 'privately assured on some occasions that they (the Chinese) attach no importance to these maps and they will revise them in time.'<sup>14</sup> But he was much more optimistic than the communications from the Chinese justified. A Memorandum of

3 November 1958 given by the Chinese Foreign Office to the Indian Counsellor simply stated that old maps were being reproduced because the government had not had time to survey China's boundary nor consult with the countries concerned. Thereafter, 'a new way of drawing the boundary of China will be decided on in accordance with the results of the consultations and the survey'.<sup>15</sup>

Nehru then dispensed with ministerial notes and on 14 December 1958 wrote directly to the Chinese Premier.<sup>16</sup> It was his belief, he wrote, that the 1954 Agreement 'had settled all outstanding problems between our two countries', and that there had been no suggestion of any border differences. (However, according to the preamble the Agreement purported to deal only with 'promoting trade and cultural intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India and facilitating pilgrimage and travel by the peoples of China and India'.) Next, Nehru raised the question of Chinese maps in which a large part of India's North East Frontier Agency was shown in Tibet, along with a part of north-eastern Bhutan. He reminded the Chinese Prime Minister that during his visit to China in 1954 he had raised the subject of the erroneous maps. Chou En-lai had explained that they were 'reproductions of old pre-liberation maps and that you had had no time to revise them. . . . I expressed the hope that the borderline would be corrected before long.' Though four years had elapsed a recent issue of *China Pictorial* contained a map which, though not quite clear, took into Tibet a considerable area of NEFA and north-east Bhutan. Once again the Chinese government explained that it was based on old maps. 'It has been further stated', Nehru continued, 'that the Chinese Government has not yet undertaken a survey of the Chinese boundary nor consulted with the countries concerned, and that it will not make changes in the boundary on its own. . . . I do not know', he concluded, 'what kind of surveys can affect these well-known and fixed boundaries'.

Nehru also referred to discussions regarding the McMahon Line in 1956 when Chou En-lai had visited India. The Chinese Prime Minister had told him that the Sino-Burmese boundary had been discussed during U Nu's visit to Peking. 'It was in this connection', Nehru recalled, 'that you mentioned to me the

Sino-Indian border, and more especially the, so-called McMahon Line. . . . You told me then that you had accepted the McMahon Line border with Burma and, whatever might have happened long ago, in view of the friendly relations which existed between China and India, you proposed to recognise this border with India also.' Nehru recalled that the Chinese Prime Minister had proposed to consult the Tibetan authorities as well. He had recorded a note of this discussion at the time, which he reproduced in his letter. 'I remember discussing this matter with you at some considerable length. You were good enough to make this point quite clear. . . .'

Chou En-lai's reply of 23 January 1959 amounted to a repudiation of the historical boundaries between the two countries.<sup>17</sup> 'First of all, I wish to point out that the Sino-Indian boundary has never been formally delimited. Historically no treaty or agreement on the Sino-Indian boundary has ever been concluded between the Chinese central government and the Indian Government.' It was as if two formless countries sprang into being in 1947 and 1949, without a history, with the past completely blanked out. The border question, he wrote, was not raised in 1954 because 'conditions were not yet ripe for its settlement and the Chinese side, on its part, had had no time to study the question'. No specially sinister interpretation need be given to this way of putting it. The McMahon Line map was not published until 1937 when the Long Marchers were more concerned with the survival of their country against Japanese aggression. The talks resulting in the 1954 Agreement took place a little more than four years after the PRC was established. At the time India had inherited the complete documents but made no use of them. Another opportunity to press the Indian case was lost in 1956, when Chou En-lai visited Delhi. A suggestion that he should be shown the Indian map boundaries was turned down by Dutt, the Foreign Secretary, because it would have seemed impolite to the distinguished visitor.

The Chinese Premier then referred to differences which had cropped up with regard to certain border areas. Particular mention was made of 'the southern part of China's Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region, which has always been under Chinese jurisdiction. Patrol duties have continually been carried out in that area by the border guards of the Chinese



Government.' The actual extent of China's jurisdiction may be judged from the fact that in 1958 an India reconnaissance patrol got as far as Haji Langar on the highway completed in 1957 before it was detected and its members arrested. Quite likely the area in which the road was built was sporadically visited from about 1952; but for the previous one hundred years at least, Aksaichin was totally uninhabited. As pointed out earlier there were no jurisdictional boundaries. The presence of occasional travellers along the old route which came to be called the Yehcheng-Gartok Highway could hardly be said to amount to settled and established jurisdiction. On the other hand Indian border patrols were unaware of the existence of the Chinese road while it was being built.

Chou En-lai attributed the divergencies in the Chinese and Indian maps to the lack of any formal boundary delimitation. 'On the maps currently published in our country, the Chinese boundaries are drawn in the way consistently followed in Chinese maps for the past several decades, if not longer. We do not hold that every portion of this boundary line is drawn on sufficient grounds. But it would be inappropriate for us to make changes without having made surveys and without having consulted the countries concerned.'

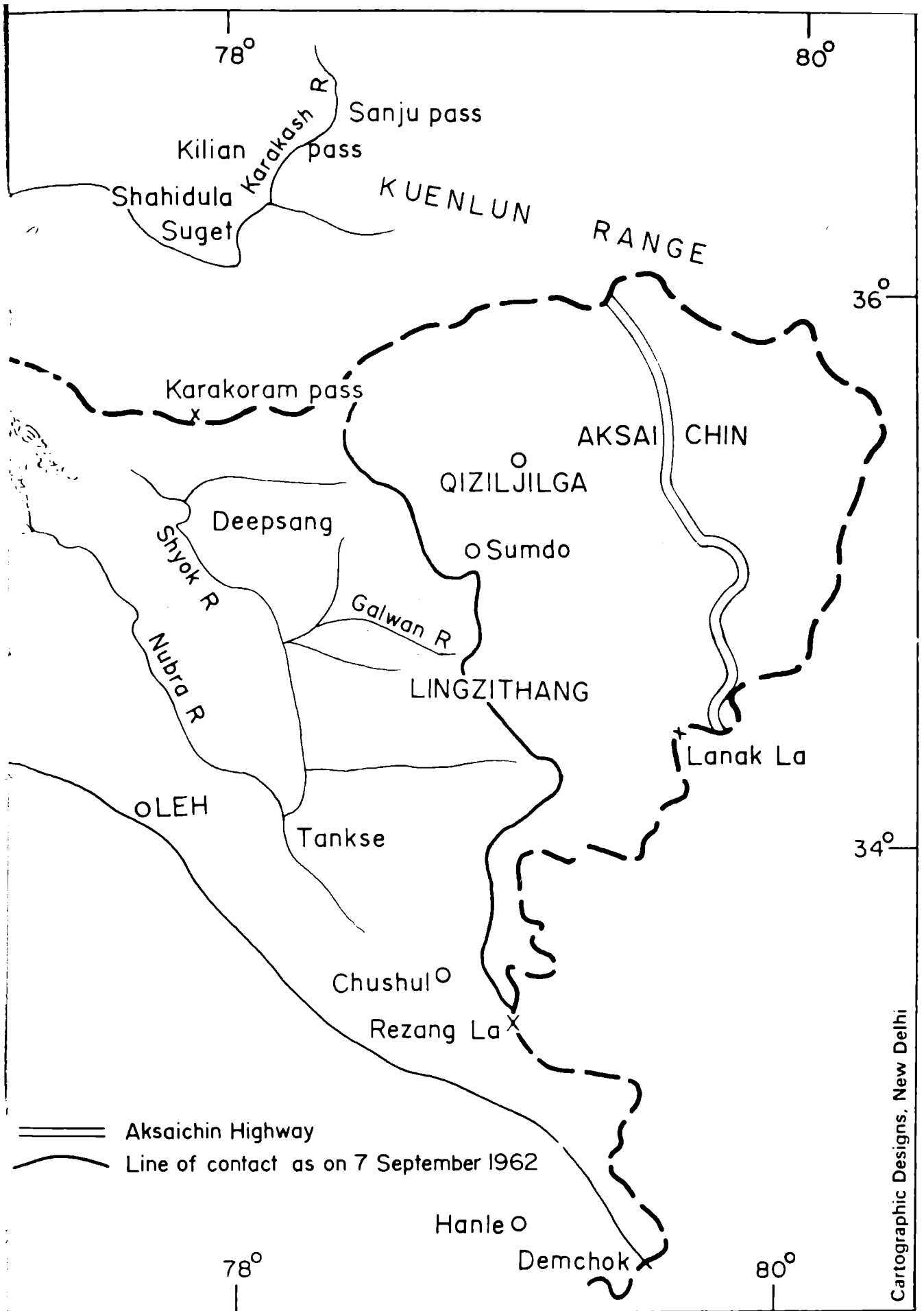
The argument that the maps could not be changed without consulting other countries, when the only other country concerned was not a country in the Chinese view but a region of China, had little meaning. Nehru's observation, on the other hand, that he could not see how surveys of any kind 'can affect these well-known and fixed boundaries', reflected a conviction that the boundaries as India understood them could not be questioned. The Chinese Premier apparently wished to contrast his own readiness to concede that Chinese maps were still not definite with the Indian Prime Minister's unshaken adherence to India's survey maps. In conclusion Chou En-lai proposed that: 'As a provisional measure, the two sides temporarily maintain the *status quo*, that is to say, each side keep for the time being to the border areas at present under its jurisdiction and not go beyond them.'

Nehru's reply of 22nd March reviewed the situation along the entire border. He hoped the Chinese Premier would be convinced that: 'Not only is the delineation of our frontier, as

published in our maps, based on natural and geographical features but that it also coincides with tradition and over a large part is confirmed by international agreements.' By putting it this way, Nehru seemed to foreclose the possibility of the differences being bridged. However, he went on: 'I agree that the position as it was before the recent disputes arose should be respected by both sides and that neither side should take unilateral action in exercise of what it conceives to be its right. Further, if any possession has been secured recently, the position should be rectified.'

In September Nehru was to tell Parliament that: 'These places are not demarcated on the land. We go by our maps which the Chinese do not recognize and they presumably by their maps, whatever they have.'<sup>18</sup> ~~The battle of the maps could be said to have been joined, but the core of an agenda for peaceful resolution of the differences had been spelled out by both sides. The two leading statesmen of Asia had need to take hold of the opportunity with the courage which the circumstances demanded. Their joint failure could only have set the two countries on the perilous course to confrontation. They fell apart eventually on the crucial question of 'the position as it was before the recent disputes arose'. Aksaichin proved to be the sticking point. Nehru's reliance on an old survey map first prepared in 1865-66, at a time when there was a power vacuum in Xinjiang, revealed a disinclination to consider any weakening of India's claim. In his reply he referred to the Chinese Minister Hung Tajen's map of 1893, but made no mention of the subsequent British proposal to the Chinese government of 14 March 1899 which put Aksaichin in China. This was the only official communication on the boundary to have been addressed by one government to the other.~~

Even if Nehru continued to attach sanctity to the old survey map, seeing the situation of Aksaichin between two regions of China, and its virtual uselessness to India, it seems a little strange that he could not bring himself to take a fresh look at the situation. He was to tell Parliament that Aksaichin was sterile. 'It has been described as a barren, uninhabited region without a vestige of grass and 17,000 feet high.'<sup>19</sup> He might have added that it was militarily indefensible, and that the only hope of holding it was if China recognized the superiority of India's claims. He



MAP 11. Aksaichin and Lingzithang (details).  
(See also Maps 1 & 5)



seems to have realized this, because he went on to explain to Members of the Rajya Sabha: 'Presumably the Chinese attach much importance to this area because of the fact that this route connects part of Chinese Turkestan with Gartok-Yehcheng.\* This is an important connection.' Only Nehru could have carried through the implications with the Indian public. The likely consequence would have been to strengthen India's position on the rest of the boundary rather than to weaken it. But Parliament and the public had by then been thoroughly roused. It would have taken a superhuman effort. Nehru had never been out of step with Indian democracy. This has to be recognized as one of the key factors determining India's position in subsequent developments.

### 5. *The Great Divide*

There were other elements, too, in what had clearly become a major difference between the two countries. Very much more was involved than the rights to disputed border territories. The differences went beyond the competition between two Asian giants and the personality clash of two great Asian leaders, of which there had been signs as early as 1955 at Bandung. One cause of these differences can be traced directly to events in Tibet, and the other to the tiny cracks that had started to appear in Sino-Russian solidarity.

Smouldering resistance to Chinese rule in Tibet among the Khampas and Amdowas to the east of the upper Yangtze filtered through to India in the spring of 1956. It became known later that the CIA was air-dropping arms to them. Their fierce resistance made it necessary for the Chinese to undertake expeditions against them in considerable strength. The Chinese also widened the range of their repression of the Tibetan people and relentlessly pursued their policy of Hanification. Refusal to permit the Dalai Lama to attend the 2,500th anniversary of the nirvana of Lord Buddha caused deep resentment, not least in India. Eventually he was permitted to come, and it was arranged that the Chinese Prime Minister would be in India at the same

\*A mistake for Gartok. Yehcheng was the old Turki town of Kargalik in Xinjiang.

time. The Dalai Lama made a request to Chou En-lai for restoration of conditions which had prevailed in Tibet before the dismissal of the ministers in 1952. Though there was no prospect of this being accepted, Nehru was able to obtain an assurance from Chou En-lai that Tibetan autonomy would be respected. The success of Nehru's intervention could hardly have been viewed as anything but a loss of face; nevertheless it heralded a slackening, all too temporary, of oppressive measures in Tibet.

For the Khampas and Amdowas, nothing had changed. They fought on with undiminished vigour inflicting heavy losses on the Chinese forces sent to crush them. Large areas of Central Tibet were virtually under their control. In 1958 the Tibetan government were able to prevail upon the Chinese to invite Nehru to Lhasa. Chou En-lai said he would meet him there. Faced by mounting evidence of Tibetan hostility the Chinese later asked Nehru to postpone his visit, and the invitation was not renewed. Repressive measures were intensified and the trickle of Tibetans making their way to India increased in volume. In Parliament, Nehru played down the violence in Tibet: 'It is more a clash of wills than, at present, a clash of arms or a clash of physical bodies.'<sup>20</sup> Yet that very day—17 March 1959—shells were fired into the Norbu Lingka summer palace where the Dalai Lama was residing.

That night, in conditions of utter secrecy, devoted bands of Tibetans hurried the Dalai Lama out of Lhasa and beyond the Tsangpo. It became known later that the CIA were in contact with an agent in the party and that the Chinese had more than an inkling of what was happening. This would lend credence to the view that the Chinese were less concerned about sanctuary being granted to the Dalai Lama in India than the activities there of persons described as Kuomintang and US agents.<sup>21</sup>

On the 29th the Dalai Lama was at the Indian border post of Chutangmo. Permission for entry was granted immediately and he was safely in Indian territory the next day. The event electrified the Indian public. There was widespread enthusiasm, marred by some ugly and entirely unwarranted incidents disgracing the Chinese. The event became the signal for unadulterated repression in Tibet and closure of the passes to India. Nevertheless, thousands of Tibetans managed to escape. In course of time, India became a second homeland for several

groups of Tibetan settlers who have won admiration by their fortitude, hard work and enterprise.

The Chinese, losing all sense of proportion, made wild charges against India, alleging that she was harbouring imperialist agents in Kalimpong. All kinds of people converged on this sleepy border town. The Himalayan Hotel run by the family of the old Lepcha official, David MacDonald, became a favourite haunt. It was really quite innocuous, but in the heightened imagination of the Chinese government Kalimpong was a hotbed of spies,\*

Nehru was characteristically correct and dignified. The Dalai Lama was described as an honoured guest, though he made it quite clear that the Government of India could not countenance his functioning as the head of a government in exile. On the other hand, Nehru vigorously repudiated Chinese charges that a statement made by the Dalai Lama on 22nd April had been prepared by the Indian government. He had less difficulty in rebutting the puppet Panchen Lama's tutored allegations about 'reactionaries in India, walking in the footsteps of the British imperialists, who harbour expansionist activities towards Tibet.'<sup>22</sup> Nehru justifiably accused the Chinese of 'using the language of the cold war'. Not in the least put out, the *Peking Review* of 12th May countered with strident criticism of India's policy, condemning it as interfering. The 'truth and propriety' of several of Nehru's statements were also questioned. From then on only wise statesmanship by both sides could have headed off the impending conflict.

## 6. *Competing Forward Policies*

In India it had clearly become necessary to take stock of border defence. Two closely allied measures were adopted. In 1960 a road building programme was introduced on an unprecedented scale with the aim of establishing all-weather communications to distant Himalayan outposts through a special Border Roads Organization. Another measure, which Nehru consistently supported, was the so-called forward policy, of which the originator and chief advocate was B. N. Mullick, the long-serving

\*The author knew a number of those named by the Chinese Government. Some were Khampas; all were Tibetan nationalists.

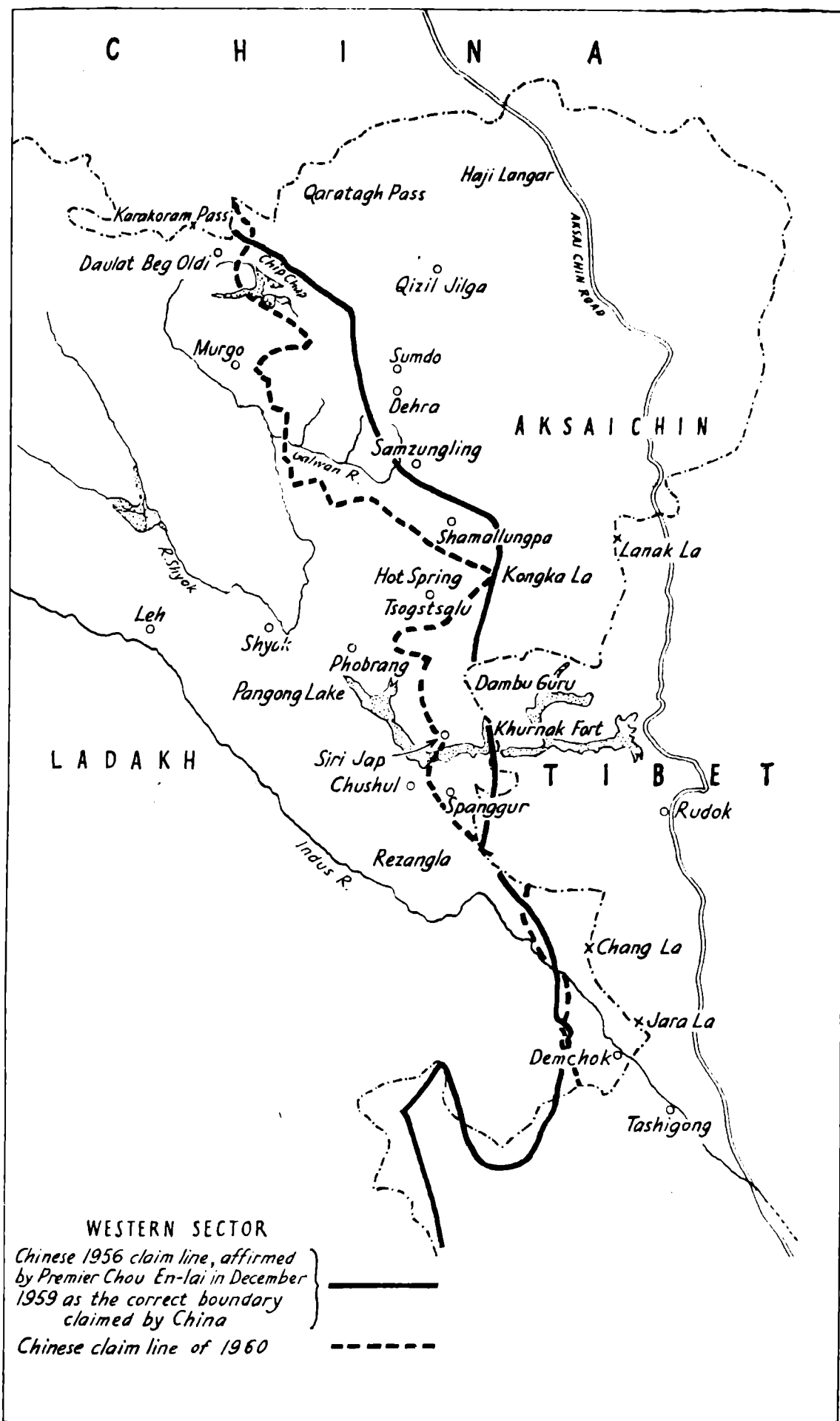
Director of the Intelligence Bureau. In essence the aim was to set up posts as close to the border as possible. To start with, these were manned by the Assam Rifles in NEFA and civil police in the north-western sector.

There was an important difference in the effect of the creation of these border posts in the two sectors. Though the Chinese rejected the 'so-called McMahon Line' as illegal, in whatever way they depicted the boundary on their maps, the watershed was never seriously questioned as the dividing line between the two countries. Except when an Indian border post was set up in a disputed location, such as Longju and, as it later transpired, at Tsenjang near Dhola, the posts in the eastern sector were in no sense an encroachment on Chinese territory or a military threat of any kind.

However, conditions were completely different in the north-west, where Indian and Chinese claims overlapped. While the boundary claimed by India was represented by the clearly defined feature of the Kuenlun range, the Chinese never precisely described what they called the traditional boundary. In his letter of 23 January 1959 to Nehru, Chou En-lai referred to it merely as 'the southern part of China's Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region, which has always been under Chinese jurisdiction'. This absence of precise definition left the Chinese free to extend their claims on the ground, and could have been deliberate. Thus they were able to advance their claims progressively, maintaining one position in 1956, another in 1960 and a third after the 1962 war. By September 1959 they had occupied virtually the whole of Lingzithang and Changchenmo.<sup>23</sup> Both these areas had fallen to India under the British boundary proposal of 14 March 1899 which the Chinese had tacitly, though not formally, accepted. Nor were these claims represented by anything more definite than a notional line connecting the posts they set up as they advanced. This is brought out in the accompanying sketch map which shows that the Indians were thwarted in their attempts to establish posts up to the (1899) line and even to the full extent of Shyok watershed.\* Thus the Chinese had their own forward policy

\*The author and his counterpart in the Ministry of External Affairs did a study of border posts in the context of the Colombo proposals, but he has not been able to refer to it.





MAP 12. The Chinese Claim Lines of 1956 & 1960 in the Western Sector



~~which was considerably more ambitious, not to say audacious, than India's.~~

In January 1959 Mullick had advocated the establishment of Indian police posts in Aksaichin, but came up against opposition by ~~Thimayya, Chief of the Army Staff, who considered the Chinese road to be of no strategic importance to India.~~ The Ministry of External Affairs were also doubtful of the wisdom of Mullick's plan. On 21st October a police patrol was ambushed at Kongka la in Changchenmo and eight men were killed. This outrage occasioned a review of the entire question of what had come to be called the forward policy. At a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister himself a decision was taken not to set up more police posts and to place those already in existence under the Army's operational control.

Mullick's ~~faith in the policy he had advocated~~ remained unshaken, even though he conceded that the Army would be unable to withstand an attack by the Chinese and that in any case unfavourable logistics would prevent them from deploying sizable forces in Aksaichin. As he saw it the justification was essentially political; forward posts were a symbol of sovereignty. He maintained that if his January proposals had been implemented, the Indian flag would have been planted there before the Chinese took possession. 'They could, of course, come in force and throw us out, as they had done at Longju, but they could not have claimed the absence of any Indian posts as evidence of their possession over this territory, as they did later.'<sup>24</sup> It did not seem to have occurred to him that only an agreed boundary could have invested his symbols with the substance of sovereignty. Something much more substantial than his isolated flag posts would have been required to withstand the immense national drive which the Chinese had gained, after decades of intense struggle, through the success of their revolution. The officer who was Deputy CGS at the time has commented: 'In his zeal for adding territory Mullick forgot that frontiers between nations are not fixed by law but by naked power.'<sup>25</sup> An eminent military authority has said that whatever the political rights and wrongs involved may have been, the Indian forward posts were 'militarily nonsensical'<sup>26</sup>

Krishna Menon dismissed the term "forward policy" as a misnomer. It simply did not apply, he said, to posts in your own

territory.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand 'it was China which was following a forward policy in our territory'.<sup>28</sup> For Krishna Menon, of course, the Indian boundary was the Kuenlun range. Politically, India had a clear right to set up forward posts in Aksaichin; their military untenability was a question which, in his reckoning, did not seem to arise. He told Brecher three years after the war: 'Our policy in regard to China was one of building posts, showing the flag, and so on, largely depending on our hope that good sense would prevail.'<sup>29</sup> Good sense in this context meant Chinese acceptance of the rights India claimed in Aksaichin. The Chinese were saying precisely the reverse, by *their* actions in the territory. Thus the jockeying for positions intensified in the disputed area between the Karakoram and Kuenlun ranges.

The Government of India's interdiction on establishment of forward posts was effectually withdrawn on the appointment of Lt.-Gen. B. M. Kaul, first as QMG and, in 1961, as CGS. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the policy, and, as Nehru's cousin, enjoyed an influence in the extended defence organization out of all proportion to his rank and functions. After Thimayya's retirement in 1961, Thapar, his successor as Army Chief, fully supported Kaul's plan to set up military posts at key places which could be maintained by the Air Force.

Both sides pushed ahead with their respective 'forward policies', the Chinese in the territory south and west of the boundary line proposed by the British in 1899, and which properly belonged to India, and the Indians at selected places in the same area. Without an agreed line of division, the strenuous efforts being made by both sides were bound to result in confusion and conflict, and this indeed is what happened. For example, on 15 April 1962, India charged China with setting up a new post in Indian territory six miles west of Sumdo. This, they maintained, was 'a flagrant breach of the repeated assurances extended by the Chinese Government regarding maintenance of the status quo in the area.'<sup>30</sup>

The Chinese reply was equally categorical. 'The entire area east of the traditional customary Sino-Indian boundary line in the western sector, including the aforesaid place, is part of China's territory and has been and is under the effective control of China. . . . The place where China has allegedly set up a new post . . . is deep within Chinese territory, being over thirty

kilometres from the boundary line.<sup>31</sup> As the alignment of this line was not described there was no basis to judge the tenability of the Chinese assertion.

A similar complaint had been made by India on 31 October 1961, alleging that three new check posts set up by the Chinese were in Indian territory.<sup>32</sup> One was said to be 120 miles to the west of the traditional alignment shown in Indian maps, while those at Nyagzu and Dambuguru were about a mile and two miles respectively within Indian territory. On the other hand China maintained that all three posts were within its territory.

The difficulty of determining the extent to which these claims and counter-claims were justified is brought out by the accompanying map published by the Government of India, in which a dotted line has been added to trace the alignment suggested by the British in 1899. It will be noticed that while Sumdo and Dambuguru are clearly within Indian territory, by virtue of both the Indian map line and the proposed line of 1899, there is no way of depicting the boundary claimed by the Chinese except by connecting the posts known to have been set up by them at the time. However, in a note of 20 November 1961 the Chinese maintained that the boundary in the western sector 'has always been most clear and definite. It is the line marked on Chinese maps published in 1956 which was mentioned in Premier Chou En-lai's letter to Prime Minister Nehru dated 17th December, 1959; it is also the line marked on the maps handed over to the Indian side by the Chinese officials' in 1960.<sup>33</sup> While the occupation of territory by China, as exemplified by the advancing line of forward posts, did not correspond to a clear line of division, the map evidence was equally inconclusive.

## 7. *The Maps*

In the north-west, the Indians from the start relied on the survey map of 1866, based on Johnson's travels the year before, and succeeding survey maps in which this boundary had been incorporated. It had also been adopted by a number of internationally known cartographers. It was one such map, in Johnston's *Handy Royal Atlas* which touched off the controversy about Aksaichin between the governments of India and China,

and which subsequently faded out inconclusively when the British government suggested another line to the Chinese on 14 March 1899. The Chinese maintained a not entirely unpredictable silence on the subject, in keeping with their reputation of not agreeing to anything when they are weak. For their part the British also failed to prod them. In their note of 22 March 1962 to the Indian Embassy, the Chinese government made the apt remark: 'The Sino-Indian question is a question left over by history.'<sup>34</sup> It was left over because neither of the two past governments really got to grips with the question. In particular, the question of a definitive map was left suspended, only to become a bone of contention between the two succeeding national governments.

The Chinese assertion, just quoted, about their 1956 and 1960 maps was not accepted by the Indian side at the official level talks in 1960. In a note of 26 February 1962 to the Chinese Embassy, the Government of India compared the 'well-known traditional boundary' on which they relied with 'the bewildering variety of alignments' shown in Chinese maps. 'There was even, as has been shown in the Report of the Officials and in the note of the Government of India of October 31, 1961, a discrepancy between the map published in China in 1956, which according to His Excellency Premier Chou En-lai showed the alignment correctly, and the map provided by the Chinese side at the talks between the officials.' It was pointed out that while the 1960 map showed an alignment running due east from the Karakoram pass, in the 1956 map the boundary ran south-east from that known common point. Similarly, the 1960 map cut across Pangong lake, while that of 1956 left the entire western half in India. The major part of Spanggur lake was shown in India in the 1956 map but the later map showed the whole of it in China.<sup>35</sup>

There were other anomalies as well, including a failure to adhere to a known watershed. In answer to questions put to them during the official talks in 1960, the Chinese claimed that the boundary between the Karakoram pass and the Kongka pass crossed a number of rivers, including the Chip Chap and the tributaries of the Changchenmo. If the watershed principle, so frequently stressed by them, had any meaning, the line claimed by China should have followed the watershed, which was further

east. But the Chinese contradicted themselves in the very next answer when they said the alignment 'followed the watershed between the tributaries of the Yarkand river and the Shyok'. However, the actual line of control they established crossed the rivers west of the watershed, in violation of the very principle stated in answer to the second question put to them.<sup>36</sup>

The boundary claimed by India also deviated from one watershed to another. 'From the Karakoram pass the boundary lies along the watershed between the Shyok (belonging to the Indus system) and the Yarkand, and runs through the Qaratagh pass to cross the eastern bed of the Karakash river and to ascend the main Kuenlun mountains. Thereafter the boundary runs through the Yangi pass along the crest of the mountains separating the Yurungkash basin from those of the lakes in Aksaichin.'<sup>37</sup> Thus the line left the Shyok watershed, crossed a river flowing northwards into the Tarim basin and ascended the Kuenlun range. The alignment is the one shown in Johnson's map of 1866, included as No. 13 in the *Atlas of the Northern Frontier of India*, published by the Government of India in 1960.

This atlas was its opening shot, so to speak, in the battle of the maps which raged unendingly, though without in any way clearing the confusion over the western boundary. It contains a number of official Chinese maps and maps of other agencies which show the Chinese boundary in the western sector as neither definite nor consistent. On the other hand, Map 3, published by the China Inland Mission in 1908, Map 6, from the *New Atlas and Commercial Gazetteer* published in Shanghai, and Map 9, published by the National Geographic Society of Washington in 1954, substantially confirm the Indian boundary line.

The confidence displayed by both sides in the accuracy of their own maps has, however, not fully convinced cartographers and scholars one way or the other. Starting with Drew's depiction of the boundary from the Karakoram pass to Lanak la as undefined, the *Times Atlas* of 1958 has shown the boundaries as claimed by India, but with broken lines. H. C. Hinton, who had examined all the official Indian maps published before and after 1947 then available in the map room of the Library of Congress, writes: 'No map published before 1954... shows without reservations the entire boundary now claimed by

India. . . . No line at all is shown for the outer border of Kashmir, which is labelled "Boundary Undefined".<sup>38</sup>

The abundance of material available from contemporary British sources on the Indian boundary claims is in striking contrast to the dearth on the Chinese side. The text of the Simla Conference of 1913-14, which the British withheld from publication for twenty years in the expectation that the Chinese government would decide to ratify the agreement, was released in 1934. On the other hand, even at the height of the Sino-Indian border controversy, the Chinese admitted that they had still to conduct border surveys and hold consultations with other countries concerned before finally adopting a boundary line. During the official talks in 1960, they frankly said they were unable to furnish the clarifications requested by the Indian side, 'as the Sino-Indian traditional customary line cannot be very precise at every point. . . . Coupled with the fact that in the interest of Sino-Indian friendship and in the interest of avoiding misunderstanding and clash, the Chinese Government has purposefully refrained from conducting surveys in places too close to the boundary or in those areas which were traditionally under China's administration but are now under Indian control.'<sup>39</sup> In these circumstances Chinese border maps cannot be considered either complete or authoritative.

It has become something of a habit for some scholars to highlight what they see as weaknesses in the Indian case, and to conclude, almost as if it was a mathematical corollary, that the Chinese case thereby stood proved. If there are difficulties about regarding the Indian survey boundary of Aksaichin as authoritative, it by no means follows that the Chinese claims are any more acceptable, especially as they are inconsistent with positions previously taken, as well as earlier Chinese maps, and those of independent agencies. In short it does not seem possible to affirm the existence of a definite and agreed boundary in the north-western sector on the basis of the map evidence, though it may be taken to have a contributory value.

The boundary in the eastern sector stands on an altogether different footing. This part of the Sino-Indian border was the subject of the Simla Tripartite Conference and Agreement of 1913-14. Though the agreement was repudiated by the Chinese, the boundary followed the crest line for the most part, the



principle of which was not questioned. Differences about specific locations arose in 1959, and it was one of these places (the valley below thagla) where major clashes between Indian and Chinese troops first took place in October 1962.

### 8. *The Status Quo*

While contention regarding forward posts, boundary lines and conflicting map claims intensified, Premier Chou En-lai suggested a process for the avoidance of border incidents. 'Our government', he wrote to Nehru on 23 January 1959, 'would like to propose to the Indian Government that, as a provisional measure, the two sides temporarily maintain the *status quo*, that is to say, each side keep for the time being to the border areas at present under its jurisdiction and not go beyond them.' Nehru responded constructively on 22nd March: 'I agree that the position as it was before the recent disputes arose should be respected by both sides and that neither side should try to take unilateral action in exercises of what it conceives to be its rights'. So far so good; but a condition was attached that 'if any possession has been secured recently, the position should be rectified'.<sup>40</sup> As pointed out earlier the reference was to the entire area between the Kuenlun and Karakoram ranges, loosely called Aksaichin. In the Indian view, China's possession dated from 1956 when it started constructing the Yehcheng-Gartok road. On the other hand China claimed its possession was of long standing. Thus the *status quo* held different meanings for the two sides.

Chou En-lai's long delayed reply of 8 September 1959 did not take the *status quo* proposal any further. Nor did Nehru's letter of the 26th. In fact, while dealing with the British boundary proposal of 1899, to which Chou En-lai had referred, Nehru took it to support the survey map boundary on which the Indian government relied. 'It was stated in that context that the northern boundary ran along the Kuenlun range to a point east of 80° east longitude, where it met the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This signified beyond doubt that the whole of Aksaichin area lay in Indian territory.'<sup>41</sup>

As pointed out in Chapter IV the proposed boundary ran along the Laktsang range, till it met the southern Kuenlun spur

at about 80° east, and not that the Kuenlun range itself was the boundary, as Indian maps had hitherto shown it to be.

It is not clear how the misapprehension arose. Professor Huttenback thought that in referring to the British despatch of 14 March 1899 to the Chinese government, in which this proposal had been made, the Indian delegates to the official talks 'altered its provisions considerably. Instead of saying that it was the spur running south from the Kuenlun range which former British maps had shown as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. . . they said it was the Kuenlun range itself which the British had described as being the northern frontier of Ladakh.'<sup>42</sup> More likely it was simply a case of misunderstanding. The Indian view could have been that since the 1899 line was not actually adopted, the earlier survey map line still held the field.

Had the true significance of the despatch been grasped, it is possible that the Indian government would not have insisted on the vacation of Aksaichin north-east of the Laktsang range, or at least kept an open mind on the subject. Only that way was there a possibility of genuine mutual accommodation.

The *status quo* suggestion was taken a step forward when the Chinese informed the Government of India that 'out of consideration for Sino-Indian friendship and border tranquillity' they had stopped sending patrols within 20 kilometres of their side of the boundary in the north-western sector.<sup>43</sup> The Government of India, however, described this claim as 'patently false',<sup>44</sup> because 20 kilometres from the Chinese line of control brought them a considerable distance into Indian claimed territory. They continued to operate west of the Indian boundary, sending out patrols and setting up new posts. In fact, Mullick, Director of the Indian Intelligence Bureau, complained that they had utilized the gap of six months in 1959 before the Chinese Premier replied to Nehru's letter to establish a whole network of border posts up to their claim line. In concluding their note, the Indian government said they were prepared, 'in the interest of a peaceful settlement, to permit, pending negotiations and settlement of the boundary question, the continued use of the Aksaichin road for Chinese civilian traffic'.

This was the origin of idea of leasing Aksaichin to the Chinese in return for a lease to India of the Chumbi valley which was very secretly broached in Indian circles. Nothing came of it

because of opposition by the Home Minister, but the idea was entirely impracticable. Krishna Menon avoided answering questions put to him about it by Michael Brecher. 'There may have been all sorts of ideas', was all he would say.<sup>45</sup>

Because of the radical differences between China and India on the rightful extent of their respective territories in the north-western sector, both sides intensified patrolling, creation of posts and other potentially provocative activity. For example, a Chinese note of 8 July 1962 accused India of setting up 'a new base for aggression' in the Galwan valley. The Indian response was equally sharp. Galwan was 28 miles to the west of the 1956 claim line which the Chinese Premier had said was correct. If, as the Chinese claimed, they had set up a post in this valley, it constituted . . . . 'a serious violation of Indian territory which must be vacated'.<sup>46</sup> On 13th July the Chinese complained that their post in Galwan had been surrounded and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Indian troops from their territory. Complaints of aggressive action by both sides covered the entire north-western sector from Chip Chap and Galwan in the north to Nyagzu near the Pangong lake in the south-east. It was clear that by midsummer a point of no return had been reached and that the so-called *status quo* was perilously close to becoming a state of war.

### 9. *A Chinese Threat*

The qualitative change in the Chinese attitude to India after the Dalai Lama's escape was immediately manifested by an intense propaganda barrage, but not, for the first few months, by hostile action on the border. Both sides stopped short of actual use of force. The Indian police and Assam Rifles, at their posts in the western and eastern sectors respectively, were under strict orders not to fire except in self-defence, nor to establish posts within three miles of the boundary. Considering the extreme difficulty of approach on the Indian side in the middle and eastern sectors, in comparison with conditions on the northern side of the Himalayan divide, a wider unoccupied zone would have meant a distinct loss of the capacity to defend the border.

Peace, which was held by the slenderest of threads, was, however, suddenly snapped on 7th August when a Chinese force,

200 strong, compelled an Indian patrol to withdraw from Khinzema to the bridge at Drokung Samba. On the 25th the newly opened Assam Rifles post at Longju was encircled; it was overrun the following day and occupied by Chinese frontier guards. There was an immediate outcry in India. Opinion in western countries, which had been disillusioned by the Chinese invasion of Tibet, saw their action at Longju as a potentially disturbing development.

There were also repercussions in the Soviet Union. Unknown at the time to the world at large, cracks had appeared in Sino-Soviet solidarity. This development, which has since been fully documented, had far-reaching implications for the Soviet Union's relations with India. These had steadily improved since Bulganin and Khrushchev's visit in 1955. When the clash occurred at Longju, the Soviet Union remained ostentatiously neutral. A Tass statement of 9th September, as Khrushchev remembered it, regretted that 'a misunderstanding had led to accidental hostilities between our Indian friends and Chinese brothers'. Mao left it to Chen Yi to expostulate with Khrushchev when he subsequently visited Peking, and this he did with considerable heat. "How could you make such a statement?" he blurted out. "Don't you know Nehru is nothing but an agent of American imperialism? Don't you know Nehru must be destroyed if the progressive forces in India are to prevail?"<sup>47</sup> Allowing for Khrushchev's colourful way of expressing himself, to the Chinese it must have seemed a betrayal of an ideological ally. What made the Tass statement all the more reprehensible was that it was published despite a formal request to the Russians that they should desist.<sup>48</sup>

While the Chinese were drifting away from the Russians, important new policy directions were being taken in India. In 1958 Nehru overruled his cabinet colleagues and official advisers to accept Soviet proposals for two-way rupee trade.<sup>49</sup> Two years later India took the first steps towards establishing links with the Soviet Union in the vitally important development of its Air Force. Outright purchases were made of a fleet of AN 12 transports and MI 4 helicopters, to which MI 8s were added later. Krishna Menon revealed that Khrushchev had offered as many of these rugged machines as India wanted.\* An Advance

\*To the author.

Base Repair Depot was set up at Chandigarh and a new airfield built at Leh. All this is common knowledge, but at the time it must have seemed to the Chinese that India was intent on backing up its forward policy with military muscle acquired from their ally, to directly threaten the Aksaichin link between Xinjiang and Tibet.

The last straw was the supply of Mig 21 fighter aircraft and arrangements for their production in India. According to Khrushchev, China blew the whole affair wildly out of proportion. They had not been given anything better than the Mig 19. The last remaining piece of skin, in Mao's vivid phrase, was torn off when Khrushchev signed the limited test ban treaty in July 1963. It was seen as final proof that he preferred detente with the US to unity with China. He had become an unqualified revisionist.

Chinese anger on account of the warm welcome given to the Dalai Lama was expressed in an exceptionally crude and heavy-handed 'warning' given by Ambassador Pan Tsu-li to Dutt, the Indian Foreign Secretary, on 26 April 1959. This appeared in the form of a statement which opened by putting the blame on India for 'deplorable abnormalities in the relations between China and India' which had appeared since 10th March, when 'the former Tibet Local Government and the Tibetan upper class reactionary clique unleashed armed rebellion. . . .'<sup>50</sup> China, he said, could not afford to face two fronts, one against the United States and the other to the south-west. 'Friends!' he declared rhetorically, 'It seems to us that you too cannot have two fronts. Is it not so? If it is, here lies the meeting point of our two sides.' China and Pakistan were the two fronts. The warning could not have been clearer.

At this meeting the Ambassador also referred to the establishment by India of forward posts in the western sector. He claimed that these could be by-passed without any particular difficulty.<sup>51</sup> The Chinese had apparently taken account of the strategic situation and were calculating their moves accordingly. But although it was impossible to miss the point of the warning conveyed by the Ambassador, India's military response in the border areas remained distinctly low-key.

### 10. *Indian Ambivalence*

Indian reactions to developments on the border were epitomized

in Parliamentary proceedings in the eventful Monsoon and Winter Sessions of 1959 which witnessed some of the sharpest debate in many years—Acharya Kripalani's biting sarcasm, Hem Barua's repier-thrusts and the soaring oratory of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Alone on the Treasury benches, Nehru took all the barbed shafts. No one else had the authority to handle the first really serious international crisis India had faced since Independence.

Deep in the Indian consciousness was a conviction that China had betrayed Indian friendship; and yet the message that got through to Parliament was curiously ambivalent. In an answer to Acharya Kripalani on 21st December, Nehru had seemed to rule out even a contingent recourse to arms: ' . . . As far as I am concerned and so far as this Government is concerned, we will negotiate and negotiate to the bitter end.' When one Member suggested that the Chinese road in Aksaichin should be bombed, he dismissed such military notions as inapplicable. 'In places like this, decisions can only be made by conferences, by agreement. Countries do not—should not—go to war without proceeding in those other ways in such matters.'

But the man of peace, it seemed, also wore a coat of mail. In November, in a speech at Agra, he had declared: 'We cannot allow China to keep a foot on our chest.'<sup>52</sup> Once again he roused the people with stirring words. The wrong China had done to India would not be tolerated. 'We will face the situation with our own strength. The need of the hour is courage and unity.'<sup>53</sup> India would strengthen herself for defence, not aggression. She did not need outside help; non-alignment would not be sacrificed for temporary gain.

Roused by the possibility of conflict with a neighbour hardened by years of war, and yet reassured by messages of peace, few Indians believed that real danger loomed ahead. Planned development went on very much as before. There were no visible preparations for the worst case. In the three years up to 1962, the defence budget as a proportion of national expenditure actually fell. Indeed, nowhere was this ambivalence more marked than in the Defence Ministry itself. And Krishna Menon, more so than anyone else, personified these contradictions.

As a relative newcomer to the country's political life, Krishna Menon was desperately keen to make a mark for himself. He

once exclaimed: "I am sixty-six; I don't have time." His ambition soared far beyond what seemed attainable. Since India was committed to peace and non-alignment, he threw himself into production with almost tempestuous zeal. Trucks and earth moving equipment were turned out from Defence factories in collaboration with foreign manufacturers at almost breakneck speed. These and other items would better have been left to the civil sector. Moreover, much of the energy expended was misdirected. Defence factories were diverted to an experimental aircraft unsuitable even for crop spraying and such sundries as hair-clippers and pressure cookers. When hostilities broke out in 1962 Menon was planning the manufacture of mechanical toys on the entirely fallacious plea that expertise would thus be consolidated.<sup>54</sup>

While the strengthening of the production base was of unquestionable value in toughening India's defence capability, turning a Nelsonian eye to the actual security threat was an altogether different matter. When it became clear in 1959 that India had to defend the Himalayan border, the Chiefs of Staff asked the Defence Minister for a specific directive. They never got it; the matter was quietly buried.<sup>55</sup> Soon after Chinese troops occupied Longju, Krishna Menon was asked about India's reaction by a delegation from the Canadian Defence College. 'Longju', he countered, 'is it this side of the border or the other!' This could have been as much an attempt to play down the threat from China as a hint to the assembled top brass that an open mind on the delineation of the McMahon Line was as important as defending it. Krishna Menon lacked the credibility to encourage fresh thinking. Politically he was totally dependent on Nehru, and Nehru had unambiguously committed himself to the McMahon Line as the eastern boundary, with Longju on the Indian side.

Menon's motivation, however, probably was quite different. When another border violation occurred, he exclaimed with visible exasperation: 'How foolish can they be! Do they want to drive this country into the arms of the Americans!' At the time, America was the natural ally of any country threatened by communist China. India was almost totally dependent on the West for defence supplies. A break with China would have provoked an irresistible demand for closer ties with the West.

This would have created a serious impediment in the way of the extremely cautious moves being made at the time to cultivate the Soviet connection. Scarcely anyone in Menon's Ministry had wind of it. As long as Nehru was at the helm there was no question of getting irrevocably involved with either bloc. A more constructive relationship with the Soviet Union, which is what the measures Nehru visualized actually amounted to, was in no sense a departure from the non-alignment which, for years, had been the sheet anchor of his world view. Actual hostilities with China, however, could have forced his hands.

Re-equipment and modernization of the Army were often cold-shouldered. For example, when the Army suggested re-equipment with the American armalite automatic rifle, the proposal was toyed around with until, much too late to make a difference, the right decision was taken to manufacture an equivalent at the Ishapore rifle factory. Repeated attempts to meet the Air Force's urgent requirement of 30 mm ammunition were resisted, until the Minister was confronted with the option of going into battle with dangerously low supplies. Only then were limited purchases sanctioned, backed by a manufacturing project.

Much more serious was the damage done to the morale of the Services by the encouragement the Minister gave to those who were complaint. He had little use for others, unless they happened to have some importance of their own. Lt.-General B. M. Kaul, the Quartermaster-General, as Nehru's cousin enjoyed an influence in Defence circles out of all proportion to his rank and functions, and he made no bones about it. In 1959, for example, the Prime Minister asked Krishna Menon to advise whether the so-called forward policy in Aksaichin was viable. Both the Army Chief and the Chief of General Staff were against it, but the Quartermaster-General, whose main concern was logistic, was strongly in favour. By any standard the view of the Army Chief should have prevailed, but it was Kaul's that did.\*

Thimayya, the Army Chief, had been unhappy with Kaul's selection as a Principal Staff Officer to start with. Despite his undoubted merits, Kaul lacked higher command experience. Thimayya was known to be restive, and Katari, the Naval Chief, was only slightly less put out by the Minister's idiosyncratic

\*A civilian officer who was present.



behaviour. Thimayya, choosing his ground with something less than military skill, decided to make an issue of the PSO's postings. He resigned. He was unquestionably the most outstanding commander the Army had had, and was immensely popular with the Services and the public. His resignation hit the public with the force of a bombshell. Nehru talked him into withdrawing his resignation, and made a statement in Parliament which made him appear rather like an errant schoolboy.

Nehru, as his biographer has suggested, had begun to share Krishna Menon's suspicion of the senior officer corps. Not much later Krishna Menon propagated the wholly baseless canard that Thimayya was planning a coup. Two years later Kaul himself was disillusioned, and the Air Chief, quivering with anger, once accused Krishna Menon of insulting his uniform. Within a year of his appointment in 1961 as Army Chief in succession to Thimayya, Thapar repeatedly had heated exchanges with Krishna Menon. In the summer of 1961, while addressing a gathering of middle ranking officers, the Minister declared: 'Seventy-five percent of our difficulties come from the Chiefs of Staff. I am not saying they have not made up their minds, because they haven't got minds to make up.'<sup>56</sup>

It is inconceivable that Nehru was unaware of the effect on the Defence organization of ~~the Minister's abrasiveness~~ and insulting behaviour. Menon should have been eased out of a responsibility far too sensitive and important for a man of his temperament, but Nehru stood by him to the last, as he had, in a smaller way, by Panikkar. Nehru must therefore share the responsibility for the incalculable damage done to the Defence organization at a time when *esprit de corps* was absolutely paramount. For all his brilliance, Krishna Menon was totally lacking in credibility even inside the narrow confines of his Ministry. Instead, Nehru turned the tables on Menon's detractors. He accused them of McCarthyism and vaunted him for having brought about a 'complete reawakening' in the Army by giving it new life and spirit and equipping it with modern weapons!<sup>57</sup> Menon had recently ridden to a victory in the Parliamentary election from North Bombay after driving out the Portuguese from Goa. Nehru acclaimed this as a demonstration of confidence, but his biographer's comment that to the officer

corps this meant added strength to Menon's vicious grip reveals the strength of feeling against Nehru's favourite.

Menon's attempts to turn down the heat may have been justified in the circumstances, but some of his actions were misconceived and also inconsistent with India's position on the border question as enunciated by Nehru. As late as 10 September 1961 he categorically declared to a gathering of Defence personnel at Agra: 'I am not aware of any aggression, incursion, encroachment or intrusion by the Chinese in any part of Indian territory.'<sup>58</sup> In other words Aksaichin was in China not India, and nowhere else along the border had China ingressed on Indian soil. This flagrant contradiction of what Nehru had repeatedly said in Parliament and in endless public gatherings could only have planted doubt in the minds of soldiers and airmen who would be called upon to defend it. If Menon was convinced that the legitimacy of China's territorial claims merited reconsideration he should have cleared the matter with the Prime Minister. He seems to have lacked the courage to face him on this issue, although he once had the temerity to say that he had 'told Nehru what to do and if he doesn't it's his own funeral'.

Hardly anyone knew how Menon's mind worked. It might be uncharitable to say that, in his case, the process of give and take involved in negotiation resolved itself into political gamesmanship. But it seemed very much like that in October 1962 when Menon let slip information of large-scale troop movements near the Indian border in Pakistan. Army Headquarters were then feverishly moving troops to the eastern sector. Officials in the Defence Ministry were completely nonplussed, but Menon carried this fiction to dangerous lengths. Pakistan had always been his favourite whipping boy, and he trotted it out again at a time when everything pointed to the likelihood of hostilities with China. The Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, who happened to be in Delhi, had no information of any such troop movements, and it turned out that there had not been any intelligence report to this effect at all.<sup>59</sup> That Menon should have had the nerve to invent a diversion of this kind at this critical time shows the extent to which he was prepared to presume on Nehru's goodness.

An open mind on the boundary might have paid dividends if

Menon had succeeded in persuading Nehru to have a second look at the question; and provided, too, that the Defence organization had been geared to the contingency of war with China in the Himalaya. He did neither of these. If he tried persuasion it had no effect. It was therefore incumbent on Menon to have ensured complete preparedness, but he failed in this vitally important duty. When pressed by Michael Brecher three years later he had to admit: '~~I make no secret of the fact that we were not prepared for a war with China.~~'<sup>60</sup> When it came to the crunch, staff and command were at cross purposes, directives were either non-existent or disputed and confused, while men at the front were critically short of equipment. The military leadership's will to fight had been sapped by the contradictory signals emanating from New Delhi. Little wonder that in the Kameng Frontier Division the nerve of some of the commanders cracked, and there was an inexplicable failure to stand up and fight. It speaks volumes for the discipline of the Indian Army that the majority of them held out against overwhelming numbers and retrieved honour in defeat.

### 11. *Peace or War*

As the year 1959 drew to a close it became apparent that while all hopes of peace had not been lost, there was a distinct possibility that the rising tensions could drift into war. Everything turned on the reaction to proposals made by Chou En-lai in his ~~letter of 7 November 1959 to Nehru~~, 'to create a favourable atmosphere for a friendly settlement of the boundary question'. These included the following:

- (i) Pending a settlement of the border dispute, the *status quo* should be maintained and not altered by either side 'by any means';
- (ii) the armed forces of both sides 'withdraw 20 kilometres at once from the so-called McMahon Line in the east, and from the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west', nor send them back to the evacuated area for any purpose;
- (iii) civil administrative personnel and unarmed police only to be maintained in the evacuated zone 'for the performance of administrative duties and maintenance of order'.

Premier Chou said the Chinese government would be ready 'to do its ~~utmost~~ to create the most peaceful and most secure border zones between our two countries, so that our two countries will never again have apprehension or come to a clash on account of border issues'. In conclusion he made an eloquent appeal for peace. 'I earnestly hope that, for the sake of the great, long-standing friendship of the more than 1,000 million people of our two countries, the Chinese and Indian Governments will make joint efforts and reach a speedy agreement on the above-said proposal.'<sup>61</sup>

Nehru replied very promptly, on the 16th. Conditions on the Indian side of the border in the eastern sector are strikingly different from the rolling table-land of Tibet. Anyone familiar with natural conditions on both sides will readily appreciate the difficulties which the Government of India would have experienced in implementing the proposal to withdraw 20 kilometres. Nehru therefore suggested that the purpose would be served merely by refraining from sending out patrols. He also rejected the Chinese contention that Longju and Khinzemane were north of the eastern boundary. There was also no doubt, he maintained, that India's evidence on the western boundary was unassailable. Moreover, 'we do not yet know with any precision where the frontier line lies according to the claims of the Chinese Government. This is a matter for surmise based on small scale maps published in China.'<sup>62</sup> He therefore suggested that India should withdraw all its personnel 'to the west of the line which the Chinese Government have shown as the international boundary in their 1956 maps. . . . Similarly, the Chinese Government would withdraw their personnel to the east of the international boundary which has been described by the Government of India in their earlier notes and correspondence and shown in their official maps.' Separated in this way by long distances, 'there should not be the slightest risk of border clashes between the forces on either side'.

The Chinese Premier's disappointment was evident from his next letter, of 17 December. The proposal for the evacuation of Aksaichin 'represents a big step backward'. He maintained that: 'This area has long been under Chinese jurisdiction and is of great importance to China. Since the Ching Dynasty, this area has been the traffic artery linking up the vast regions of Sinkiang

and western Tibet.' China had been actively using it since 1950 to bring in supplies. He asked, perhaps more rhetorically than seriously, whether, on the lines of India's proposal for the west, India would agree to both sides withdrawing their personnel from the area between the McMahon Line, 'and the eastern section of the Sino-Indian boundary as shown on Chinese maps (and on Indian maps too during a long period of time)'. Nehru had suggested the evacuation of Longju by both sides; Chou proposed the extension of this suggestion to other disputed areas, including Khinzemane and nine areas in the middle sector to which the Chinese had laid claim.

Chou En-lai concluded with a dramatic suggestion. The two Prime Ministers should meet, either in China or in Rangoon. 'Here indeed lies the hope for a turn for the better in the relations between the two countries.'<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, Chou En-lai himself came to Delhi on 20 April 1960, and spent six days in a strenuous round of talks. Tragically, it turned out to be a confrontation, and the last, between the two leading statesman of Asia. The situation could not have been better put than by Nehru's biographer: 'But Chou had always a clearer idea than Nehru where power and interest lay, and by now they had become paired antagonists locked together.'<sup>64</sup>

Years later, Chou En-lai's interpreter, who was then himself an Ambassador, told an Indian Ambassador he had met in Delhi during the talks, that the Chinese Premier had gone to Delhi ready and anxious to reach an agreement. (Nehru, on the other hand, seems to have gone into this crucially important meeting with a mind that was already made up. This was revealed in a letter of 13 April to the Prime Minister of Nepal, where Premier Chou was expected immediately after his visit to Delhi. India, he said, had a strong case, 'and I see no reason why we should weaken in it at any point'. In other words, if there had to be any give at all it would have had to be on the Chinese side. Why Nehru should want to be so categorical in advance was characteristic of his negotiating strategy. He had committed himself time and again to Parliament and the Indian public to an extent which made it virtually impossible for him to reach an agreement based on the kind of mutual accommodation inherent in genuine negotiation. The talks, it would seem, were doomed from the start, unless the Chinese

Premier conceded the Indian case in its entirety.

According to Gopal, who has based this comment on the record of the discussions between the two Prime Ministers on those five fateful days from the 20th to the 25th of April, 'at no time during these talks did Chou offer explicitly to recognise the McMahon Line in the east in return for the secession of Aksaichin in the west'.<sup>65</sup> His sentence is carefully worded. The Chinese Premier was not going to 'recognise' the McMahon Line, which was not legally binding on China, in return for India 'seceding' what it did not possess. It was believed, however, at the time of Chou En-lai's visit in 1960, that an agreement on the lines of the *status quo* might have been attainable but for the opposition of Pant, the Home Minister, Morarji Desai, the Finance Minister, and the elder statesman, Maulana Azad. There is no available Indian record to substantiate their opposition, but the Chinese themselves are known to have been convinced that the opposition of these Indian notables to yield on Aksaichin had been the main obstacle.

~~In Parliament the very next day, Nehru said the talks had foundered on the rock of wholly different approaches. The Chinese Premier, on the other hand, told one of India's most respected public servants that an agreement could have been reached but for the opposition of Pant and Desai. It seems that Nehru might have been prepared to reconsider his position on the western sector had he been fortified by the support of his principal Cabinet colleagues. He is known to have suggested to Premier Chou that he might try to convince Pant and Morarji Desai. If Nehru had failed, assuming that he had urged them to agree to a solution based on the *status quo* in the east in return for recognition of the Chinese line of control in the west, it was beyond expectation that the Chinese Premier could have succeeded, even if he had agreed to try. Such persuasion was properly Nehru's own responsibility. Chou En-lai was left with the impression that India wanted recognition of her claims in Aksaichin and confirmation of the McMahon Line boundary without any concession to China's well-founded expectations. In Kathmandu, two days later, he accused Nehru of being unfriendly to China. On the 27th the *People's Daily* castigated the Indian government for demanding unilateral concessions under~~

the influence of imperialist and reactionary forces.<sup>66</sup> The opportunity had been lost. Nehru's commitment to Parliament and people had closed the option of yielding ground at any point. There was nothing now between the two countries but the certainty of a deepening crisis.

In July 1962 a last-ditch effort was made to retrieve a situation that had all the appearance of being irrevocably locked on to conflict. Marshall Chen Yi, the Chinese foreign minister, and three high ranking colleagues were in Geneva to sign the agreements on Laos. India was represented by Krishna Menon and Ambassador Arthur Lall who had had unrivalled experience of international negotiations, especially with the Chinese. During informal negotiations, of which Nehru was constantly informed, an arrangement of forward posts was suggested which 'implied that both sides would claim possession of some of the Aksaichin, and that the territory would have to be divided, leaving the road on the Chinese side'.<sup>67</sup>

To make this acceptable in India a counter offer by the Chinese was essential, and Chen Yi did not reject the suggestion though no specific area was mentioned. Chen Yi in fact suggested the issue of a joint communique which ran: 'Two senior Ministers of the Governments of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India have met and discussed the border situation between the two countries. These discussions have been constructive and fruitful, and it is the intention of the two governments that they should lead to further talks in the near future.'

Tragically, Nehru had left for Bombay and his approval, which was brief and unambiguous, arrived after Chen Yi had left. As Lall puts it: ' . . . there was an outcry in the Indian Parliament against his (Menon's) negotiations with Chen Yi. . . . At that point Nehru, already a sick man, denied that there had been any negotiations at all, which was far from the truth'.<sup>68</sup> Not unnaturally the Chinese 'took Nehru's remarks to be a repudiation of the process of negotiation between the two countries'. The opportunity was lost. There was a general disbelief in Menon's credibility; but the real stumbling block was Nehru's inability to go back to Parliament with a proposal which might have implied that Aksaichin was negotiable after all.

## 12. *War*

The first sizeable battle took place on 10 October 1962 at Tsenjang, immediately across the Namkha chu, north-west of Tawang in the Kameng Frontier Division of NEFA. Why NEFA, and why this isolated post in that sector, when the main contention was about an extensive area of several thousand square kilometres in the western sector? As this account develops it will become apparent that this was a tactical move in the overall Chinese battle plan, a feint at an Achilles' heel where the Indians at the time were strung out and obviously unable to set up an effective resistance to the immediate Chinese objective of gaining a foothold and taking possession of Tawang. India's forward posts in the west could, as Pan Tsu-li had warned, be bypassed and then, presumably, mopped up piecemeal.

Why, also, October 1962? The Chinese, it subsequently became known, had been building up supplies for at least a year and deploying forces from early in 1962. Indian positions in the forward areas were certain to be much stronger by the summer of 1963. Kaul, as CGS, had submitted two important papers on reorganization and equipment of the Indian Army and in 1962 the Government of India had approved plans to toughen the strike capacity of the Air Force. They could then perhaps cut the Chinese jugular through Aksaichin. And, finally, the international situation suddenly presented the Chinese with a golden opportunity to flout the Soviet Union at a time when they could have been involved in a shooting nuclear war over Cuba.

While the Sino-Indian border differences had a momentum of their own, from their Chinese point of view there could not have been a more favourable set of circumstances. Only the Russians could have held them off, and they were locked in the most serious confrontation they had ever had with the United States. The abortive Bay of Pigs invasion instigated by the CIA had been followed by the Cuban missile crisis. The Soviets started planting their missiles in September. They needed a friendly China at their rear. On 8 October the Soviet Ambassador at Peking was told that India was about to launch a massive attack on China in the border areas and that Soviet-made helicopters and planes were being used by them. On the 13th and 14th Khrushchev told the Chinese Ambassador in Moscow that they had received



similar information and that if the Soviet Union was in China's position they would have taken the same measures. 'A neutral attitude on the Sino-Indian boundary question was impossible. If anyone attacked China and said they were neutral, it would be an act of betrayal.'<sup>69</sup> On 22 October Kennedy made his failure to realize that some policies can lead to an unwanted war.

This is not the same thing as saying that war was inevitable or that the Chinese deliberately planned it to coincide with the Cuban crisis, or that the Indians, though not wanting it, were led into it by miscalculation. To some extent all these elements contributed to the situation, but none so significantly as the failure to realize that some policies can lead to an unwanted war.

As elsewhere on the frontier, Indian forward posts were being pushed ahead in NEFA, under a plan code-named Operation Onkar. As many as 35 locations had been selected by the Intelligence Bureau, but all under Army supervision. When Major-General Niranjan Prasad was posted as GOC Fourth Infantry Division in May 1962, he was directed to ensure that the posts were set up with as little delay as possible. The GOC then formulated proposals to restrict the number, and 'to have stronger posts further away from the border as bases for patrols operating up to our claim line'.<sup>70</sup> When this was put to the CGS, he received the short reply that the posts had been ordered to be set up by the Prime Minister on the highest intelligence advice. One of those posts was in the vicinity of the Bhutan-Tibet-India tri-junction, at Tsedong (also known as Dhola) on the banks of the Namkha chu. A little later Chinese forces were reported to have carried out a regimental exercise, for an estimated brigade strength, on the Thagla ridge overlooking the Namkha chu. However, the intelligence appreciation was 'that there was little or no probability of the Chinese resorting to armed hostilities'.<sup>71</sup>

It transpired that this was Nehru's own view. At a press conference in May 1962 he said he believed China wanted a settlement and would not mass large forces in the border areas. He reiterated this two months later, on 14 July. For his part he had no wish to get involved in hostilities, least of all in the high mountains.<sup>72</sup> Kaul, who as CGS would certainly have known, said the Prime Minister was convinced that the Chinese would

not react in strength to Indian activities on the border.<sup>73</sup> The Deputy CGS, who was officiating for Kaul in the critical month of September, said substantially the same thing: 'The Government appreciation was that the Chinese will have a tactical advantage but our posts must put up a fight. In the worst case it would be no more than a border incident. The Chinese could never attempt to destroy India's armed forces. India was too big, the Chinese had too many problems and Himalayas were still a formidable barrier.'<sup>74</sup>

If it was not a case of Nehru's wish being father to his thought, this appreciation of Chinese intentions, which had also made the rounds of the higher echelons in the Ministry of Defence, must be attributed to B. N. Mullick, the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, who had regular access to the Prime Minister. The Intelligence Bureau was responsible for strategic intelligence, the Army being confined to battlefield intelligence. In a book he wrote some years later, Mullick strenuously maintained that he kept the Army regularly informed about the strength of Chinese forces. However, as late as 10 September 1962, Mullick asked a senior Army officer to show him on a map the location of the Thagla ridge in relation to the McMahon line. Incredible as it may seem in retrospect, the Joint Intelligence Committee, the inter-ministerial body responsible for coordination and critical appraisal of intelligence, had not even met in the eighteen months preceding the war. Miscalculation can be attributed to errors of judgement, but it is difficult to resist the conclusion that there was a serious failure to read the signs.\* The view that prevailed was that localized clashes, such as might occur, could be contained by the Army.

Nehru was full of fighting spirit. In a speech at Allahabad on 27 July, he declared that, thanks to an energetic programme of road construction, India's position in the border areas had greatly improved, and she could 'give a good fight to the Chinese'.<sup>75</sup> But the generals had fewer illusions. At a meeting called by the Prime Minister before he left to attend a conference

\*A joint study conducted by a group of senior officers at the National Defence College had accurately predicted the time and place of a likely Chinese attack, i.e., the Kameng division of NEFA, in October 1962.

of Commonwealth Prime Minister in the first week of September, the Western Army Commander said he was much concerned at the steady build-up of Chinese forces. They had increased the number of their posts and were building roads close to the Karakoram and Changlang ranges. He feared that if they attacked they could annihilate his forces. Nehru gave orders that no post was on any account to be abandoned. If necessary additional posts could be set up, and fire opened in self-defence. But it was in the east, in the valley of the Namkha chu, at heights of 4000 metres and more, that sudden developments forced the issue.

### 13. *Thagla—First Shots*

The brief account that follows is in no sense a 'history' of the Sino-Indian War of 1962. Rather, it is an attempt to analyse the reasons why it took place at all, and, possibly, how the totally unnecessary recourse to arms could have been avoided, bearing the following in mind:

- (i) General Thimayya's view that the Chinese road through Aksaichin was of no strategic importance to India;
- (ii) the area itself ~~was intrinsically useless~~, except, as Premier Chou had emphasized, as a vitally important link between Chinese Xinjiang and Chinese Tibet; or, as Ambassador Galbraith was to put it: 'For the Chinese the Aksaichin was a passage, for the Indians a desert.'<sup>76</sup>
- (iii) Premier Nehru's recognition of the importance of the territory for the Chinese, as he had earlier stated in Parliament; and, finally,
- (iv) the inconclusive character of the historical evidence of possession either way.

Within a few years after the war a number of Indian officers who had some part in it came out with accounts of their own, largely to explain or justify themselves. Official records remain closed, and may never become available, even if they still exist. Minutes were not circulated of meetings held in the Defence Ministry in Delhi in the crucial weeks from September 1962, to

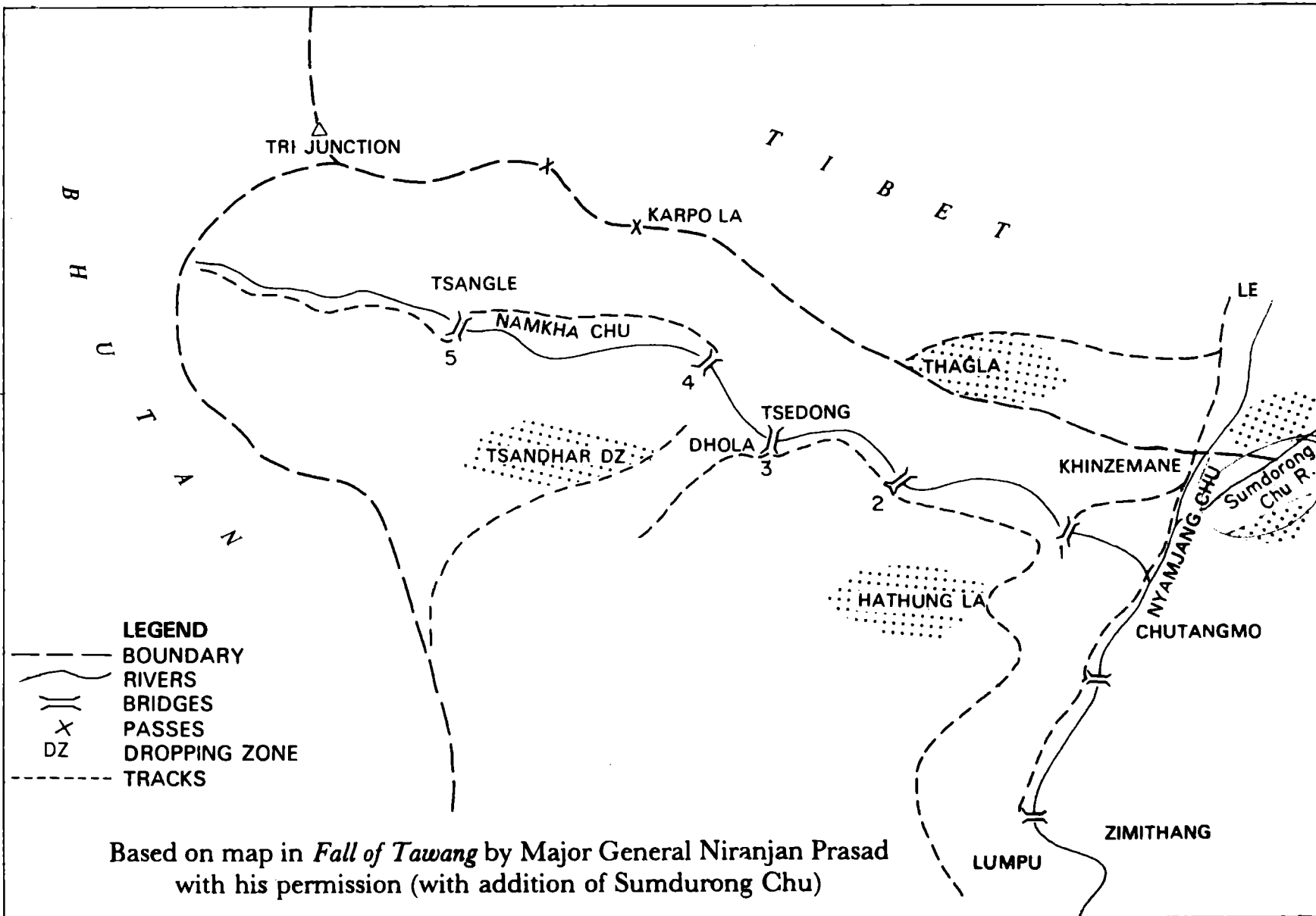
preserve security, it was said.

India's insistence on the McMahon Line remained unchanged even though it had been found necessary to adjust it south of the topographical boundary so as to leave Migyitun in Tibet. Nehru explained the situation to Chou En-lai in his letter of 26 September 1959. 'At the time of the Simla Convention, the exact topographical features in this area were not known. Later, after the topography of the area had been definitely ascertained the actual boundary followed the geographical features except where a departure was necessary to leave Migyitun within Tibetan territory. The actual boundary as shown in the Indian maps, therefore, merely gave effect to the treaty map in the area based on a definite topography. This was in accordance with international practice.'<sup>77</sup> This sensible adjustment had been made so as to leave two sacred lakes in Tibet, as well as Migyitun, from where the pilgrimage to the lakes started. Longju was just a mile and a half from Migyitun, and could have been a part of the same cluster. Limeking, the nearest outpost, was five days' march from Longju, and was itself twelve days' march from the area headquarters and as much as three weeks' journey from the roadhead.<sup>78</sup> The balance of advantage might well have weighed in favour of excluding Longju as well.

There was also some genuine doubt about the coincidence of the McMahon Line and the topography of the Thagla ridge in Tawang. Since this is where the war actually started, an attempt has been made to depict the situation in the accompanying sketch.\*

The field map originally given to the GOC showed the McMahon Line boundary running westwards from Chutangmo (literally, cold water) along the Namkha chu stream to Dhola and on to the tri-junction with Bhutan. This map was withdrawn and replaced by another showing the boundary as given in the sketch, from Khinzemane to Thagla, Karpo la and the tri-junction.<sup>79</sup> The post to which the Army gave the name of Dhola in 1962 was actually at Tsedong on the northern bank of the Namkha chu, and thus just outside Indian territory according to the map originally issued to the field commander. Since the

\*Based on the end map in *Fall of Tawang*, by Major-General Niranjana Prasad (retd.), Palit and Palit, 1981. He was the GOC and had toured the area up to bridge 4 across the Namkha chu, shown in the map. My own travels have not taken me beyond Tawang.



MAP 13. Thagla and Namkha Chu Valley



object of the Simla Conference was to establish a watershed boundary, it seems the reason why the boundary dipped southwards from Khinzemane to the Namkha chu was the difficulty of determining the actual crest in this area.

Bailey, during his epic exploration of the border in 1912, found that the range on the east bank of the Nyamjang chu, which is joined by the Namkha chu, ran north to south. The river, he observed, 'flows in a deep narrow gorge as it breaks through the Himalayas, though it is difficult to say what becomes of the main range in this neighbourhood.'<sup>80</sup> This probably explained why the McMahon Line left the highest crest and dipped southwards from Khinzemane to the tri-junction.

In September 1962 a party of Chinese visited Taktsang gompa, which is below Bumla at about 16,000 feet on the crest overlooking Tibet. When information about this was received at Tawang, an Indian party made for the area, travelling by way of Lumla and Chutangmo. When they arrived the gompa was unoccupied. An exceptionally observant member of the party found that the ridges ran north to south, along the Nyamjang chu, confirming Bailey's observation made fifty years earlier.

It must be assumed that the Chinese had copies of the original Simla Convention map; consequently, a declared commitment to the McMahon Line, such as Nehru had announced in Parliament in 1960, precluded any unilateral shifting of the boundary line to what had later been found to be the crest in this sector.

In September 1962 varying numbers of Chinese forces appeared on Thagla ridge in full view of the Indian post below. The Chinese had a considerable military concentration at Le, immediately north of Thagla and barely ten miles away from Dhola. Tawang, the nearest Indian Army strong point, was roughly sixty miles to the south-east. Though the Indian Army's post at Tseujang was just beyond the de facto boundary of the Namkha chu stream, it was obviously no threat at all to the Chinese. In fact it was completely dominated by their forces on Thagla. The Indian presence in negligible strength at Tseujang was a relatively minor affair which could have been resolved by discussion, but the Chinese chose to treat it as an excuse for launching an offensive in the eastern and western sectors, for which, as events subsequently proved, they had fully prepared

themselves. Unwittingly, the Indians presented them with a colourable justification, inviting consequences for which they were unprepared in terms of disposition of armed forces, equipment and, above all, a sound battle plan.

On 8th September the Chinese surrounded the Indian post at Tseujang. After calling out the usual invocation to the brotherhood of the two nations, they told the Indians to leave as they were on Chinese territory. Since the Chinese were then in battalion strength, Eastern Command ordered 7 Brigade (Brigadier ~~J. P. Dalvi~~) 'to make immediate preparations to move forward within forty-eight hours and deal with the Chinese investing Dhola.'<sup>81</sup>

It should have been clear to both sides that this was no repetition of the Longju incident, and the few confrontations that had taken place in Ladakh between Indian police and Assam Rifles on the one side and Chinese 'border guards' on the other. Suizable bodies of regular troops were involved, and even larger numbers could be deployed by the Chinese from Le. They had evidently taken a conscious decision to attack in force. On the Indian side, instead of taking another look at the boundary in this sector, the Defence Minister, Krishna Menon, decided that the issue had to be settled on the field. He announced his decision at a meeting on 10th September in the teeth of opposition by the Army Chief, General Thapar, who warned that fighting would break out all along the border and that there would be grave repercussions.

The Prime Minister had already left the country for probably his longest foreign visit, from the 7th to the 30th of September. Krishna Menon himself left on the 18th. A day or two later the press reported that the Army had been ordered to evict the Chinese from Indian territory. The report had obviously been leaked. Thapar was incensed at having his hands forced in this underhand way. At a meeting on the 22nd with Raghuramiah, the Deputy Minister, Thapar once again warned government of the possibility of grave repercussions, and demanded that he should be given written orders. Krishna Menon, who was at the United Nations in New York, was spoken to on the phone, and on the same day Army Headquarters were given the following orders signed by a joint secretary:



The decision throughout has been as discussed at previous meetings, that the Army should prepare and throw out the Chinese as soon as possible. The Chief of the Army Staff was accordingly directed to take action for the eviction of the Chinese in the Kameng Frontier Division of NEFA as soon as he is ready.<sup>82</sup>

Early 1963, General Chaudhuri, Thapar's successor, told the author that, three years before the war, the Chiefs of Staff had asked government for a directive dealing specifically with the new situation on the Himalayan frontier. After more than three years the abrupt 'directive' of 22nd September was all the Army ever got.

Despite the casual, not to say irresponsible, way in which Krishna Menon had made known the decision to expel the Chinese from Thagla, it became apparent when Nehru returned from his prolonged foreign travel on 30th September that the decision was his own. At a meeting the next day, he was furious when told of the Army's inaction, and heard yet again the Army Chief's oft-repeated refrain of 'grave repercussions'. He did not care, he declared, if the Chinese came as far as Delhi; they had to be driven out of Thagla.

Kaul, who had insisted on proceeding on leave because of strained relations with Krishna Menon, was immediately recalled, as if he alone could have saved the situation. In the absence of a carefully considered plan of action, a hasty decision was taken to create a new corps with just two brigades filched from XXXIII Corps, for operations in the Kameng sector. The former Director of Military Operations has characterised it as a 'fake solution', a corps headquarters without any teeth. The then GOC jocularly characterized it as Kaul's 'circus', 'there is no doubt in my mind,' says the for ever CGS, that . . . the sudden surprise sprung upon the Army was a definite cause of our early reverses.<sup>83</sup> The government's failure to grasp the dimensions of the border problem and the likely implications deprived an army leadership, which at this time was itself faltering and weak, of a fair opportunity to prove the mettle of the armed forces.

Nehru explained his compulsions to Kaul when he assumed command on the 3rd. 'He went on to say he agreed with some of his advisers in the External Affairs Ministry that we had tolerated the Chinese intrusions into our territories far too long

and a stage had come when we must take—or appear to take—a strong stand irrespective of consequences.<sup>84</sup> Thagla was in Indian territory and would have to be recovered. In Parliament and from public platforms Nehru had strengthened the ground swell and was now being swept along by it. Making an appearance of doing something decisive against a foe who was fully prepared might not have been the dangerous enterprise it became if, in the two or three preceding years, no effort had been spared to match strength with strength and, it must be said, political judgement with the subtlety and sophistication of his antagonist.

General Kaul made a rapid on-the-spot survey of the situation in the Kameng Sector. As the GOC, Niranjan Prasad, saw it, he was anxious 'to make' a "gesture" to appease the powers-that-be in Delhi' by sending troops to the north of the Namkha chu. On 8th October, 9 Punjab established a post at Tsenjang without mishap, and early on the 10th a file or 2 Rajput made for bridge III to lend support. The Chinese, who till then had not shown their hand, threw their cover aside and attacked the Punjabis in strength. The defenders held their ground until ammunition ran out. They had just fifty rounds each in their pouches—a forewarning of the fate of hastily assembled heroic Indian troops being flung into battle in olive greens, fifty rounds in their pouches and a single blanket to protect them from the biting cold. Seven hardy Gurkhas were the first casualties, from pulmonary oedema, an illness which proved its disregard of rank when it accounted for the Corps Commander, Kaul, a week later.

On the 11th Kaul returned to Delhi convinced that the orders given to recover Thagla were impracticable at the time. He went straight to the Prime Minister's house for a hurried conference with the top civilian and military advisers. As he understood it, a decision was taken to cancel the orders to attack, but to hold existing positions. The option to regroup in more favourable conditions elsewhere was not accepted.<sup>85</sup> The Deputy CGS, who was also present, has confirmed that this was the decision actually taken.

Nehru, who had a way of communing with the public, said something quite different just before emplaning for Colombo on the 12th. He told the assembled press: 'Our instructions are to free our territory. . . . I cannot fix the date, that is entirely for the Army.' Kaul had no doubt at all that Nehru's announced

decision was 'contrary to the orders he had given me on the night of 11th October . . . where he had told me, in the presence of the Army Chief, that instead of attacking the Chinese, which we were not in a position to do, we should hold on to our present positions.'<sup>86</sup>

Once more the Army was under intolerable pressure to attack. The public had been given an assurance by the Prime Minister himself. The date had to be 'now'. The Chinese could not have understood it any other way. On the 19th they moved forward in strength. Early on the 20th, attacking in waves, they over-ran Indian positions in the Namkha chu valley.

In a book he wrote later, Kaul raised the question whether the Chinese would have attacked, as he says, anyhow: "if not then, perhaps later. But I wonder if Nehru's statement did not precipitate their attack."<sup>87</sup> He seems to have regarded the statement as provocative. Questioned a few years later about Nehru's Madras airport speech, Krishna Menon told a Canadian academic that there had been a forward movement in the border areas. No one, he said, 'had briefed Nehru on his Madras speech; it was just on his own, the way he felt about it. He doubtless thought it necessary to reassure the people. . . . The Chinese probably took it as implying powerful resistance.'<sup>88</sup> He suggested, rather ambiguously though, that the speech could have been regarded as provocative. It transpired, however, that the Chinese were much better informed about the global forces at work than Kaul was.

A series of horrendous mistakes followed in India. Kaul had been taken ill before the end of his first forward tour. When he returned to the front after the meeting on the 11th it was found that he was suffering from pulmonary oedema. He staggered on as long as he could, but had to be replaced by Lt.-General Harbaksh Singh, a seasoned officer, who prepared a tactical plan to make a stand at Se la. The pass, which it was possible to maintain by air, commanded the approaches from Tawang; a well entrenched brigade could have held divisional forces at bay. Even if it was bypassed, the invaders could have been cut off and dealt with piecemeal. Kaul, however, insisted on resuming command. The Army Chief demurred but was overborne by the Prime Minister. It was a disastrous decision. A new divisional commander was appointed who lost his nerve completely.

Radios, abandoned by their units, went off the air, reducing the troops to a shambles of isolated groups scrambling to safety as best as they could. It was a disgraceful rout. The Chinese plunged headlong through Bomdila, and on to Plains overlooking the Brahmaputra valley. In the west, as the Army Commander told me, it was just a question of time before his hopelessly outnumbered troops would have to yield their dogged stand. The Chinese occupied yet more territory, going well beyond their claim lines in some places.

Nehru and Menon, who went to see Kaul while he was ill in bed, were told that reorganization and expansion of the Army were essential, but in the immediate present there was no option except to request help from friendly foreign countries. Kaul's bedside campaign included a request to the US Ambassador, Prof. J. K. Galbraith, to see him. Kaul confided that he had advised his government to abandon non-alignment and seek American assistance. Independently of this, Kaul reveals that Desai, the Foreign Secretary, and Sarin, a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, had hatched up an appeal to Kennedy and Macmillan and got Nehru to agree.<sup>89</sup> Three years later Krishna Menon, when interviewed by Michael Brecher, said: 'Panditji did not make this request.'<sup>90</sup> The fact is he did not know.\* He had been forced out of office by a revolt in the Congress party.

Kaul's sick-bed diplomacy did not specially impress Ambassador Galbraith. 'He took it for granted that such was our antipathy to Communism we had only to be asked. I thought him a bit unstrung and said it would not be our wish to be so involved. I was much less impressed by this conversation than I should have been. Like all of the World War II generation, I was inured to the idiosyncratic tendencies of generals'<sup>91</sup> However, prompt help of a judicious kind was given, mostly the use of C-130 Hercules transport aircraft with American crew. It was a symbol of Western concern; that was enough.

The real change was the blowing over of the Cuban missile crisis and what can only be assumed was a sober Chinese appraisal of the impossibility of holding on to territory in NEFA

\*The author and a military officer were asked to retouch the draft. There was no evidence of its having been a Cabinet paper. I was of no help at all; its abject tone had struck me dumb.

which they had gained as they swept through an army that had shattered itself. Perhaps equally important for their proverbial zenophobia was, as Liu Xiaoqi said in the following January, that they 'had taught India a lesson, and, if necessary, they would teach her a lesson again and again.'<sup>92</sup> On 19th November, Premier Chou En-lai informed the Indian Charge d'Affaires that the need of the hour was to settle the dispute in an objective and friendly manner. Two days later the Chinese announced a unilateral cease fire, to be followed in ten days by withdrawal north of the boundary in the east and to the line of actual control in the west. They had gained what they wanted to in Ladakh and were not going to give that up.

Some scholars have propagated the view that the Indians brought the war upon their own heads by professing a willingness to negotiate but, in practice, not budging an inch from rigidly held positions. The boundary treaties negotiated by China with Burma, Nepal and Pakistan are cited as proof of Chinese reasonableness. This view fails to take account of the entirely unique character of Sino-Indian relations. No other country had given refuge to the theocratic ruler of Tibet, who was a potential focus of revolt against their regime in Tibet. No other country had claims, well based or not, to a vitally important link between their territories in Xinjiang and Tibet. No other country had tried, though unavailingly, to persuade the Chinese to eschew force in their dealings with Tibet. On the other hand, in the Nehru years, it seemed that the two countries were in competition for the leadership of Asia.

The contention between them was essentially strategic. This aspect of the boundary dispute was not grasped by Nehru and his advisers. They tended to treat the whole affair as one of legality, basing this view on excessive reliance on Indian survey maps. The nub of the matter did not escape Khrushchev. 'Tibet is right on India's border,' he countered, when Chen Yi assailed him over the Tass statement of 9 September 1959. 'Can't you see that the Indians consider it of vital importance to have an independent neighbour? Tibet is a weak country and it can't pose any threat to India on its own. A Chinese Tibet, however, does pose a threat to India.'<sup>93</sup> Britain's withdrawal from India rapidly changed the power balance in Asia. With the emergence of a strong China the balance shifted from the south of the

Himalaya, where the British had held sway, to the north.

Countries under threat must defend themselves by every means at their disposal. The serious and potentially crippling divergence between the Indian government and its top soldiers should have been resolved by a twofold initiative: firstly, a diplomatic effort to contain the brewing crisis, along with the inescapable corollary of substantive border negotiations on the basis of mutual accommodation. Secondly, an unambiguous directive to the armed forces to meet the contingency of taking on up to eight Chinese divisions, fully equipped for operations in the Himalaya, at all points along the border. What was needed in short was the interlocking of diplomatic and defensive measures, so that one supported the other.

With the end of the shooting war, Nehru's leadership gained a new nobility, but internally he was a shattered man. In eighteen months he was dead. What India needed was a new kind of leadership which realised that wars, when they were not deliberate, were the outcome of faulty policies. Above all, it was imperative to make a realistic appraisal of aims and means, your own, and even more so the other side's. His own daughter learned the lessons that eluded him.

#### 14. *Report of the Officials*

One of the least publicized results of the meeting of the two Prime Ministers in April 1960 was the report of the officials, submitted to the two governments before the end of 1960 (later published by the Government of India). This originated from a proposal by the Chinese Premier that experts should be deputed by both sides 'to ascertain the historical and material facts through joint boundary committees visiting the border areas'. There was a striking similarity between his suggestion and the Boundary Commission suggested by the British in 1846. On that occasion the Chinese did not cooperate; in 1960 the position was reversed. Nehru's biographer, who had access to the record of the talks between the two Prime Ministers, makes a comment which presumably reflects Nehru's views: 'As this would entail groups wandering for years in the high mountains, Nehru made the more practical suggestion that officials of the two sides jointly examine the evidence available on the alignment.' Chou En-lai's

reaction was that his delegation had come to discuss principles, and not go into details. It was therefore decided that the officials 'should meet later to examine the material in their possession with regard to the boundary alignment and present a report'.<sup>94</sup>

Since India and China held widely different views on the boundary alignment, particularly in north-eastern Ladakh, in practice the officials were restricted to marshalling evidence to substantiate their own official case. Neither side yielded an inch. The three sessions virtually became a shouting match, with the Indians getting decidedly the better of the argument. The evidence produced by the Chinese was almost embarrassingly scanty.

It was to be expected that the documentation left by the British would be far more complete than what the Chinese could have collected in fifty years of turbulent history. Kashmir State records were also available to substantiate the Indian claim to Changchenmo and the entire border territory south-east of the Indian map boundary from Lanak la to Demchok. India's evidence for this part of the boundary was not merely convincing, it was overwhelming; but without either agreement or an impartial arbiter, who was to say which should prevail?

Perhaps in retrospect Nehru might have felt that acceptance of Chou En-lai's suggestion of border committees might have averted actual conflict, at least for as long as the inquiries lasted. Neither side would have decided to throw the other out of Thagla in October 1962 had it been visited by border committees instead of military forces. What was needed was an agreed boundary. The nearest the two sides had come to that in the eastern sector was at the Simla Conference in 1914. The line suggested by the British had been comprehensively explored, but it is unlikely that even the most self-confident of the British officers so engaged would have insisted that the dividing crest had been accurately determined throughout its length in one working season of eight months in 1911-12. They waited twenty years for Chinese accession to the Simla Agreement before they published the documents and map in 1934 and 1936. Publication itself did not confer any more legality on the agreement than it had possessed before. This was an aspect which the succeeding government of India would have done well to have ~~taken~~ taken into account before they insisted on the finality of

the McMahan Line.

Nehru himself was to explain why an exception had been made at Tamadem and Migyitun. There was also an obvious discrepancy between the crest and the McMahan Line near the tri-junction in the Kameng frontier division. If they had meant business, joint border committees might have succeeded in reconciling these differences, and possibly unearthed others. Time, always a great healer, may possibly have convinced both sides that there was really no occasion for antagonism. Only a fatalist could have expected a thorough investigation to have worsened the situation. However, Nehru seems to have felt that public opinion, by then thoroughly roused, would not have tolerated further delay.

It is possible of course that boundary committees would have arrived, more deviously perhaps, at the same conclusions. Officials seldom enjoy genuine latitude. But time would have been gained. The Soviet Union would not have been under compulsion to support one side or the other. More important for India's self-respect, the self-inflicted humiliation of having to appeal for Western help would have been unnecessary.

### 15. *The Crystal Ball*

At the end of this attempt to reconstruct what has become history, the author may perhaps be permitted the indulgence of gazing into the crystal ball. The war of 1962 settled nothing. The Chinese gained the territory they wanted in the north-west without the Indians abandoning their claim to it. In the east they withdrew from the territory they overran, without abandoning *their* claim to it. Some Indian commentators have argued that the *status quo* is a political solution of sorts, a drawing down of the curtain on an unhappy episode. But such pragmatism would leave India with a deeply felt sense of loss in the north-west coupled with concern arising from the reasserted Chinese claim to the old territory of NEFA in the east. For India it might seem an unfavourable balance of dissatisfactions. In any case the *status quo* is not a known and determined position. It is no more than two lines for each country, the ones in the north-west being a good deal more approximate than the ones in the east. Two lines of actual control that are separated from one another are liable



to be changed unilaterally unless an agreed boundary is negotiated.

One thing, however, is crystally clear. Neither side is going to wage another war to put paid to the past. At the worst the balance of dissatisfactions could be subject to unforeseen pressures. At best a way will be found of making it seem that, after all, the balance could be the basis for a negotiated boundary that meets the essential needs of both sides, not fully perhaps, but adequately, in a way in which history has been known to close episodes that have torn neighbours apart.

Fortunately for the peace of Asia, both sides have pinned their faith in two cardinal principles, tradition and natural features. Even more fortunately, perhaps nowhere else in the world has such a long frontier been unmistakably delineated by nature itself. The Himalayan crest is the clearest possible determinable dividing line. However, it is equally obvious that the crest line must be established jointly by agreed processes.

Commonly understood, the crest is the watershed, but this is not invariably the case. The Mustagh-Karakoram range is a true watershed, but the Himalaya are everywhere cut through by the great rivers of the Indo-Gangetic plains—the Indus, the Sutlej, and the Brahmaputra and its numerous tributaries. As we have seen, Bailey found it difficult to determine the crest westwards of Khinzemane where the Nyamjang chu flows south from Tibet through the Kameng frontier division. Determination of the crest line therefore includes the links spanning the gorges in which the rivers break through the southern slopes of the Himalaya, a situation underlining the imperative need for agreed processes and joint delineation of the boundary.

Communities on either side have conformed to the logic of crests and watersheds as dividing lines, thus giving them the added force of tradition. But there are some areas, principally in the uninhabited plains between the Karakoram and Kuenlun ranges, which, until about 1950, were still what the British called a no-man's-land. However, even here, as Agnew found during his investigations in 1846, tradition and natural features combined to form the known boundary. The nearest either side came to defining it was in the British despatch of 14 March 1899 to the Chinese government. And the fact that the line so described was indeed the operative boundary, on the rare

occasions that the question arose, was that the Chinese government never opposed the British proposal. What is more there is every indication that the governor of Urumtsi reported in favour of the proposal to Peking.

The Chinese government, which seldom missed an opportunity to raise objections when they did not agree to suggestions made by the British government, for at least fifty years tacitly accepted the boundary proposed to them. They cannot, and certainly should not, now attempt to take diplomatic advantage of their failure to formally agree while advocating a more advanced line in the Sino-Indian negotiations. Disregard of established tradition by either side would erode hopes of a stable settlement.

As was stressed while considering the British proposal, the line suggested (see sketch map) followed the only clearly distinguishable mountain range through the middle plains, i.e., the Laktsang feature. In 1873, Trotter, an experienced Survey officer of the government of India, held it to be the true watershed between India and Xinjiang. Twenty-five years earlier, Agnew had found that the eastern watershed of the Shyok was the traditional boundary, and this includes its tributaries such as the Chip Chap and Galwan. Although Agnew did not name the Laktsang range itself, there is no other watershed from the Karakoram pass to Lanak la. Continuing from that point, there is substantial evidence of the traditional boundary from Lanak la to Demchok, which was produced by the Indian side during the official discussions in 1960.

Thus there is quite enough to go on for a mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question, in the north-west, and even more so in the south-eastern sector of the border. This can be done on the basis of principles suggested by the two sides, but which, unhappily, were lost sight of in the heat of the argument. Very briefly, these are:

- (i) acceptance of tradition and natural features as the determining factors; and
- (ii) actual determination by joint committees, guided by accommodation of each other's essential needs where tradition and natural features are inclusive.

The greatly improved technical means now freely available, for

aerial and ground surveys, could also be utilised. While such procedures, given a spirit of goodwill, could be completed reasonably ~~quickly in the extraordinarily difficult natural~~ conditions of the border areas, imposition of a rigid time frame is unlikely to facilitate smooth progress of the procedures adopted. True give and take is much more likely to bring about an enduring settlement than insistence on the sanctity of starting positions.

When he was questioned by Michael Brecher in 1964 and 1965, Krishna Menon was asked what he thought about a suggestion, attributed to Jayaprakash Narayan, that Aksaichin should be leased by India to China. He was also asked whether he had suggested that in return the Chinese should lease the Chumbi valley to India. He was not particularly forthcoming. 'There may have been all sorts of ideas', he said. 'Actually the Prime Minister and I had talks on what could be done but other people, some of them senior men, although they did not veto it, said: "Why all this now; we will see when it comes."<sup>95</sup>

Whether or not these suggestions were made is immaterial. Pandit Pant and others could hardly have agreed to the lease of territory they had been assured was India's. Both suggestions were divorced from any sense of realism. Chumbi has been a part of Tibet from the time of the great Chinese Emperor, Chien lung. The Maharaja of Sikkim had a small estate there; and the Tromowas of Sikkim had close family ties with some Sikkimese families. Tradition goes no further than that. The British occupied Chumbi for three years as security for the indemnity of Rs.25 lakhs imposed on Tibet at the end of the 1904 campaign, but they walked clean out, leaving the succeeding Indian government with no claim to it whatsoever. Chumbi is a fertile and beautiful valley of great strategic importance to the Chinese, lying, as it does, between Sikkim and Bhutan. To expect that the Chinese would part with it, in exchange for India leasing to them a high altitude desert, which is already theirs, does not credit the author of the exchange lease plan with either intelligence or realism.

Aksaichin was neither Chinese nor Indian. In 1899 the British suggested to the Chinese that this desolate and uninhabited territory should be divided roughly equally. The portion known as Lingzithang would have fallen to India, and the rest,

~~north-east of the Laksang range, the only clear physical line of~~ division, to China. No opposition to this arrangement was ever suggested by the Chinese. In his letter of 8 September 1959 to Nehru, Chou En-lai ~~said that the British had been trying to push forward their claims up to the year 1899. The implication was that the position on both sides became stable in that year.~~ The ~~notional Chinese claim line~~ connecting the posts which they had set up ~~by about the spring of 1959 also approximated to the division suggested by the British and tacitly accepted by China.~~ Though never precisely described in terms of natural features, ~~this notional Chinese line was also not very different from the 1956 line which, in his letter of 17 December 1959 to Nehru, the Chinese Premier said correctly depicted the traditional boundary.~~ It was only later in 1959, and again after hostilities began, that they advanced to the present line of actual control, ~~which is undelimited and not even defined.~~ The boundary in ~~this sector suggested by the British in 1899~~ represents a fair application of the two determining factors of tradition and natural features, and adequately meets the essential needs of the Chinese for a link between their territories in Xinjiang and Tibet.

It may be too early to hope that the two sides will agree to ~~revive the old freedom of movement in the border areas,~~ but the hope is one which must not be totally abandoned. Perhaps the day will come when merchants from Amritsar and Yarkand will cross in the highlands as they did in the past, and yak herdsman will circulate from one pasture to the next, obeying only the ~~cycle of the seasons and not the brute orders of frontier guards of either side.~~ Once the frontiers were known and open; today they are closed and disputed. If both sides have the will, they should jointly investigate the traditional boundary. It is not for one or other to decide unilaterally. Only an agreed boundary can have sanctity or even legitimacy. As this has to be done in any case, how much better for Asian peace and solidarity for China and India to accept the traditional boundaries, subject to joint determination and positioning of markers at key points on the ground. This unquestionably is what the world community would recognize as a statesmanlike solution of a problem that could otherwise embitter the future of both countries.

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## Appendices



## APPENDIX I

*Treaty of Lahore between the British Government and the State of Lahore, signed on 9 March 1846, corresponding to the 10th day of Rabi al awal 1262 Hijri:*

### *Article III*

The Maharajah cedes to the Honourable Company, in perpetual sovereignty, all his forts, territories and rights, in the Doab or country, hill and plain, situated between the rivers Beas and Sutlej.

### *Article IV*

The British Government having demanded from the Lahore State, as indemnification for the expenses of the war, in addition to the cession of territory described in Article III, payment of one and a half crore of rupees; and the Lahore government being unable to pay the whole of this sum at this time, or to give security satisfactory to the British government, for its eventual payment, the Maharajah cedes to the Honourable Company, in perpetual sovereignty, as equivalent for one crore of rupees, all his forts, territories, rights, and interests in the hill countries which are situated between the rivers Beas and Indus, including the provinces of Cashmere and Hazarah.

### *Article XII*

In consideration of the services rendered by Rajah Goolab Singh, of Jummo, to the Lahore State, towards procuring the restoration of the relations of amity between the Lahore and British

governments, the Maharajah hereby agrees to recognise the independent sovereignty of Rajah Goolab Singh in such territories and districts, in the hills, as may be made over to the said Rajah Goolab Singh by separate agreement between himself and the British government, with the dependencies thereof which may have been in the Rajah's possession since the time of the late Maharajah Khurruk Singh; and the British government, in consideration of the good conduct of Rajah Goolab Singh, also agrees to recognise his independence in such territories, and to admit him to the privileges of a separate treaty with the British government.

## APPENDIX II

The text of the Treaty of Amritsar is as follows\*:

Treaty between the British Government on the one part and Maharajah Gulab Singh of Jammu on the other concluded on the part of the British Government by Frederick Currie, Esquire, and Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence, acting under the orders of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., one of Her Britannic Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council, Governor-General of the possessions of the East India Company, to direct and control all their affairs in the East Indies and by Maharajah Gulab Singh in person—1846.

### *Article I*

The British Government transfers and makes over for ever in independent possession to Maharajah Gulab Singh and the heirs male of his body all the hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the River Indus and the westward of the River Ravi including Chamba and excluding Lahul, being part of the territories ceded to the British Government by the Lahore State according to the provisions of Article IV of the Treaty of Lahore, dated 9 March 1846.

### *Article II*

The eastern boundary of the tract transferred by the foregoing articles of Maharajah Gulab Singh shall be laid down by the Commissioners appointed by the British Government and

\*From *The founding of the Kashmir State*, by K.M. Panikkar; George Allen & Unwin, 1953, p. 111.

Maharajah Gulab Singh respectively for that purpose and shall be defined in a separate engagement after survey.

*Article III*

In consideration of the transfer made to him and his heirs by the provisions of the foregoing article Maharajah Gulab Singh will pay to the British Government the sum of seventy-five Lakhs of Rupees (Nanukshahee), fifty lakhs to be paid on ratification of this Treaty and twenty-five lakhs on or before the 1st October of the current year, A.D. 1846.

*Article IV*

The limits of the territories of Maharajah Gulab Singh shall not be at any time changed without concurrence of the British Government.

*Article V*

Maharajah Gulab Singh will refer to the arbitration of the British Government any disputes or questions that may arise between himself and the Government of Lahore or any other neighbouring State, and will abide by the decision of the British Government.

*Article VI*

Maharajah Gulab Singh engages for himself and heirs to join, with the whole of his Military Forces, the British troops, when employed within the hills or in the territories adjoining his possessions.

*Article VII*

Maharajah Gulab Singh engages never to take or retain in his service any British subject nor the subject of any European or American State without the consent of the British Government.

*Article VIII*

Maharajah Gulab Singh engages to respect in regard to the territory transferred to him, the provisions of Articles V., VI., and VII., of the separate Engagement between the British

Government and the Lahore Durbar, dated 11th March, 1846.\*

*Article IX*

The British Government will give its aid to Maharajah Gulab Singh in protecting his territories from external enemies.

*Article X*

Maharajah Gulab Singh acknowledges the supremacy of the British Government and will in token of such supremacy present annually to the British Government one horse, twelve shawl goats† of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of Cashmere shawls.

This Treaty of ten articles has been this day settled by Frederick Currie, Esquire, and Brevet-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence, acting under directions of the The Right Honourable Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, on the part of the British Government and by Maharajah Gulab Singh in person, and the said Treaty has been this day ratified by the seal of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General.

Done at Amritsar the sixteenth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-six, corresponding with the seventeenth day of Rubee-ul-Awal 1262 Hijree.

(Signed) H. Hardinge (Seal).

(Signed) F. Currie.

(Signed) H.M. Lawrence.

By Order of the Right Honourable the Governor-General of India.

(Signed) F. Currie  
Secretary to the Government of India,  
with the Governor-General

\*Referring to jagirdars, arrears of revenue and the property in the forts that are to be transferred.

†On the 13th March 1884, it was arranged by mutual consent that in future the Maharajah should present, instead of 12 goats, 10 lb. of pashmin in its natural state as brought to Kashmir from Leh, 4 lb. of picked and assorted black wool, 4 lb. grey wool, 4 lb. white wool, and 1 lb. of each of the three best qualities of white yarn.

### APPENDIX III\*

*Peking Gazette* (manuscript copy) of 14th May 1895

T'ao-Mo, the Governor of the New Dominion, submits a memorial to the Throne, forwarding the tribute of gold from a Muhammadan State. It has always been the custom, he states, when the Muhammadan State of Kanjut, situated to the south of Sarikol, tenders its annual payment of gold dust, to report the matter to the Throne and to bestow upon its Ruler presents of rolls of satin.

The Taot'ai of Kashgar, Huang Kuang-ta, now reports having received from the chieftain of Kanjut, Muhammad Nazim, an ounce and-a-half of gold dust as tribute for the 21st year of Kuang Hsü (1895) and in compliance with established usage, the Taot'ai has forwarded for reverent acceptance by the chieftain two pieces of large sized satin conferred upon him by the Emperor.

The Taot'ai humbly requests that a memorial should be submitted to the Throne on the subject.

Finding that the procedure is in due form the Governor has forwarded the gold dust to the Imperial Household Department for transmission to its high destination, and he now begs to bring the matter with all due reverence to the knowledge of Her Majesty.

Rescript! Let the Yamên concerned take note.

\*From: For. Sec. F. August 1895, 207-210.



## APPENDIX IVa

Commission for the Russo-Afghan Delimitation in the Pamirs set up by virtue of the settlement signed by His Excellency Mons. de Staal et Commt of Kimberley at London on 27th February/11th March 1895.

### *Protocol No. 1*

In accordance with the settlement signed by His Excellency Mons. de Staal and the Commt of Kimberley at London on 27th February/11h March, 1895, outlining in a general manner the Russian-Afghan frontier east of Lake Victoria (Zore Kul), the Commission met on the banks of the above-mentioned lake on 16th/28th July 1895.

Those present—

(For Russia):

Major-General Povalo Schveikovsky

Counsellor Ponafidine

Counsellor Major Galkine

(For Great Britain):

Major General M.G. Gerard, C.B.

I. At the exchange of powers between the two Commissioners, General Gerard presented his commission of date 21st May/2nd June 1895, signed by Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, nominating him as Commissioner and giving him full powers to undertake all actions which would be necessary and appropriate to the accomplishment of the objectives of the Commission.

General Povalo Schveikovsky then presented an order signed by His Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Lobanow Rostovsky dated 5/17 June 1895 accrediting him, by supreme order, as Commissioner.

II. The Commissioners of the above-mentioned powers decided that the work of the Commission would be deemed to have started from this date.

III. The question of the status which should be assigned to the Afghan representatives having been discussed, it was decided, after an exchange of views, that they would help in the actual demarcation of the frontier, while awaiting the outcome of communications made on the subject by the British representative to his Government.

IV. Coming to the question of the powers of the Afghan representative, General Povalov-Schveikovsky informed his British colleague that according to his instructions, it was absolutely necessary that the above-named representatives must be provided with full powers by His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan.

Following this deposition, General Gerard produced extracts and copies of the following documents:

- (1) Extract of a letter from His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan to His Excellency the Viceroy of India dated 30 Zil-Hadj 1312 H. corresponding to 24th June (n.s.) 1895. It appeared from this document that H.H. the Amir had already given instructions to Taj Muhammad Khan, Commander of the regular troops at Badakschan, that when he received a letter from General Gerard, he should send to the location of the proposed delimitation an Agent on behalf of His Highness.
- (2) The Translation of the ordinance given by Taj Muhammad Khan to Ghulam Mohiuddin Khan and Mufti Ashoor Muhammad Khan, named by His Highness of Afghanistan as representatives of his Government. This last document represents an order given by the Commander of regular troops at Badakschan to the above-mentioned representatives to proceed without delay to the banks of Lake Victoria.

Having communicated what was stated above, General Gerard added that he had already taken necessary measures so that the Afghan representatives were provided with formal powers. At the same time, he expressed to his Russian colleagues the desire that, while awaiting the arrival of these powers, the work of

delimitation could start. General Povalo-Schveikovsky remarked that although the documents mentioned above were far from satisfactory from the point of view of instructions he had received, but animated by the same desire to proceed with work already delayed and, keeping this view the declaration of His Excellency regarding the necessary measures which he had taken so that the Afghan representatives were provided with powers, he was obliged to be content for the time being with the documents that were available at hand, while maintaining that the protocol should be signed by the above-mentioned Afghan representatives. General Gerard observed that for his part he agreed to this proposal while asserting that the protocols received should only be signed by him and his Russian colleague.

V. Proceeding to a discussion of the future work of the Commission, it was agreed that the scale of five verstes to the English inch (1/210,000) would suffice for all the requirements of the present delimitation. The scale adopted by the English topographical officers being 4.76 verstes to an inch (1/200, 000) which represented a minimal difference, the scale of 5 verstes to the inch was adopted.

VI. Concerning the designation of the various peaks and mountain chains acting as the frontier, Counsellor Ponafidine proposed the name of one of the peaks close to Lake Victoria as the "Concord Peak". General Gerard on his side proposed the designation of the entire range constituting the frontier and including the "Concord Peak" as the Range of Emperor Nicolas II. He expressed the desire that this name in concert with those of 'Victoria' and 'Concord', would serve as a symbol of the happy agreement between the two great powers.

VII. The first boundary under No. 1, intended to serve as the basis for future work of delimitation, was established in the presence of the two Commissions and the Afghan representatives at the eastern end of Lake Victoria at the point which corresponds to the line traversing the middle of the lake from west to east. The latitude and longitude of the location of this boundary would be included in one of the following protocols.

VIII. From boundary No. 1: the frontier line takes a southerly direction (Azimut magnetique S.W. 5°, Azimut astronomique S.W. 12°) and after crossing the small Gulf of Lake Victoria, it proceeds towards Boundary No. 2, located on the slope of the

nearest branch of the Nicolas II range. From this last point, the line proceeds along the crest of the above-mentioned range, which it follows to rejoin the Concord Peak. After having passed this peak, the frontier line comes to the peak Nicolas II, which forms the dividing line of the waters between Lake Victoria and Wakhan Darya, to turn to the east.

Read and approved 21st July/2nd August 1895.

I am indebted to Mr. U.S. Bajpai, IFS (retd), my successor as Director of the India International Centre, New Delhi, for this translation of the First Protocol delimiting the Pamir boundary line.

## APPENDIX IVb

*Description of the Russo-Afghan Frontier from the Eastern End of Lake Victoria (Sir-i-Kul) to the Chinese Border demarcated by Major-General Montagu Gerard and Major-General Povalo-Schveikovsky, August-September 1895.*

The first pillar has been erected at the eastern extremity of Lake Victoria at a spot which corresponds with a line crossing the centre of the lake from west to east.

From this pillar the frontier line takes a southern direction and crossing the small gulf of Lake Victoria, proceeds towards pillar No. 2 which is situated on the slope of the nearest spur of the Nicolas II range.

From this latter pillar the line ascends the crest of the above-mentioned spur which it follows to rejoin the Peak la Concorde. After passing this peak the frontier line reaches the crest of the range, Nicolas II forming the watershed between Lake Victoria and the Wakhan Darya.

From here the frontier line follows an easterly direction for nearly 5.3 miles, after which it turns almost north-east and maintains this new direction for about  $14\frac{1}{2}$  miles as far as the high peak named peak Prince Lobanob-Rostobsky. From this point the frontier line proceeds towards the south-east, and after continuing this direction for about 4.6 miles, ascends the peak Marquis of Salisbury and trends towards the north-east to the top of the Bendersky Pass where pillar 3 is erected. From pillar 3 the line continues to follow a north-easterly direction for about 1.3 miles, after which it makes a sharp turn to the north-west, and after having reached peak Lord Elgin, turns to the east and continues in this direction for about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles. It then changes its direction somewhat to the south-east, and having crossed the Imanshura Pass, turns east-north-east, and after following this

direction for about 4.7 miles, proceeds east-south-east till it reaches the Ortabel Pass, where pillar No. 4 is erected. Throughout the whole extent of the line from pillar No. 3 to pillar No. 4, the frontier follows the watershed between the Istik and the Aksu. From pillar No. 4, the line proceeds eastwards to pillar No. 5, situated at a distance of about two-thirds of a mile, and after following this course for nearly 3.3 miles from this latter pillar, the line descends a spur of the Nicolas chain which, leaving the chain itself, joins the bed of the Gounjibai stream. Here pillar No. 6 is erected. The line now follows this stream until it joins the river Aksu at the junction of the two streams, and on the right bank of the last-named pillar No. 7 is erected. From there the frontierline follows the Aksu to the spot where it receives the water of Mihman Yol, and here on the left bank of the Aksu, is erected pillar No. 8.

The line now follows the Mihman Yol stream for about two miles, when it leaves the bed of the stream and ascends a small spur situated on its right bank on which pillar No. 9 is constructed. It next proceeds towards Lake Bakhbirberi, and after having reached this lake follows for 1.3 miles the western arm of the Kachka-su stream which empties its waters into the above-mentioned lake. On leaving this arm still following an east-south-east direction, pillar No. 10 is reached, after which the line descends still in an east-south-east direction into the valley of the Taghramansu river towards pillar No. 11, which is erected at the embouchure of a stream unnamed. Following this stream for about a mile the line passes pillar No. 12, and reaches a spur of the branch of the Mustagh which it follows as far as peak Povalo-Schveikovsky on the Mustagh chain which forms the frontier of Chinese territory.

## APPENDIX V

Indo-British Trade Treaty of 1870 between the British Government and HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJA RUNBEER SINGH G.C.S.I., Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir.

Whereas in the interest of the high contracting parties and their respective subjects it is deemed desirable to afford greater facilities than at present exist for the development and security of trade with Eastern Turkistan, the following Articles have, with this object, been agreed upon:

### *Article I*

With the consent of the Maharaja, Officers of the British Government will be appointed to survey the trade-routes through the Maharaja's territories from the British frontier of Lahoul to the territories of the Ruler of Yarkund, including the route *viâ* the Chang Chemoo Valley. The Maharaja will depute an Officer of his Government to accompany the surveyors, and will render them all the assistance in his power. A map of the routes surveyed will be made, an attested copy of which will be given to the Maharaja.

### *Article II*

Whichever route towards the Chang Chemoo Valley shall, after examination and survey as above, be declared by the British Government to be the best suited for the development of trade with Eastern Turkistan, shall be declared by the Maharaja to be a free highway in perpetuity and at all times for all travellers and traders.

*Article III*

For the supervision and maintenance of the road in its entire length through the Maharaja's territories, the regulation of traffic on the free highway described in Article II., the enforcement of regulations that may be hereafter agreed upon, and the settlement of disputes between carriers, traders, travellers or others using that road, in which either of the parties or both of them are subjects of the British Government or of any Foreign State, two Commissioners shall be annually appointed, one by the British Government and the other by the Maharaja. In the discharge of their duties and as regards the period of their residence the Commissioners shall be guided by such rules as are now separately framed, and may from time to time hereafter be laid down by the joint authority of the British Government and the Maharaja.

*Article IV*

The jurisdiction of the Commissioners shall be defined by a line on each side of the road at a maximum width of two Statute kos, except where it may be deemed by the commissioners necessary to include a wider extent for grazing grounds. Within this maximum width the Surveyors appointed under Article I, shall demarcate and map the limits of jurisdiction which may be decided on by the Commissioners as most suitable, including grazing grounds; and the jurisdiction of the Commissioners shall not extend beyond the limits so demarcated. The land included within these limits shall remain in the Maharaja's independent possession; and subject to the stipulations contained in this Treaty, the Maharaja shall continue to possess the same rights of full sovereignty therein as in any other part of his territories, which rights shall not be interfered with in any way by the Joint Commissioners.

*Article V*

The Maharaja agrees to give all possible assistance in enforcing the decisions of the Commissioners and in preventing the breach of evasion or the regulations established under Article III.



*Article VI*

The Maharaja agrees that any person, whether a subject of the British Government, or of the Maharaja, or of the Ruler of Yarkund, or of any Foreign State, may settle at any place within the jurisdiction of the two Commissioners, and may provide, keep, maintain, and let for hire at different stages, the means of carriage and transport for the purposes of trade.

*Article VII*

The two Commissioners shall be empowered to establish supply depôts, and to authorize other persons to establish supply depôts at such places on the road as may appear to them suitable; to fix the rates at which provision shall be sold to traders, carriers, settlers, and others, and to fix the rent to be charged for the use of any rest-houses or serais that may be established on the road. The Officers of the British Government in Kullu, &c, and the Officers of the Maharaja in Ladakh shall be instructed to use their best endeavours to supply provisions on the indent of the Commissioners at market rates.

*Article VIII*

The Maharaja agrees to levy no transit duty whatever on the aforesaid free highway; and the Maharaja further agrees to abolish all transit duties levied within his territories on goods transmitted in bond, through His Highness's territories from Eastern Turkistan to India and *vice versâ*, on which bulk may not be broken within the territories of His Highness. On goods imported into, or exported from, His Highness's territory, whether by the aforesaid free highway or any other route, the Maharaja may levy such import or export duties as he may think fit.

*Article IX*

The British Government agree to levy no duty on goods transmitted in bond through British India to Eastern Turkistan, or to the Territories of His Highness the Maharaja. The British

Government further agree to abolish the export duties now levied on shawls and other textile fabrics manufactured in the territories of the Maharaja and exported to countries beyond the limits of British India.

*Article X*

This Treaty, consisting of ten Articles, has this day been concluded by Thomas Douglas Forsyth, C.B., in virtue of the full powers vested in him by His Excellency the Right Hon'ble Richard Southwell Bourke, Earl of Mayo, Viscount Mayo of Monycrower, Baron Nass of Nass, K.P., G.M.S.I., P.C., &c, &c, Viceroy and Governor General of India, on the part of the British government, and by His Highness Maharaja Runbeer Sing, aforesaid; and it is agreed that a copy of this Treaty, duly ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India shall be delivered to the Maharaja on or before the 7th September 1870.

Signed, sealed, and exchanged at Sealkote on the second day of April in the year of our Lord 1870, corresponding with the 22nd day of Bysakh Sumbut 1927.

This Treaty was ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India at Sealkote, on the 2nd day of May, in the year 1870.

## APPENDIX VI

### *Treaty of Tingmosgang, 1684\**

When Llachen de Legs Namgyal was King of Ladakh and also of Ngarekoorsum in Western Tibet, his territories were invaded by a Tibetan army under the "ex lama" Tsang. With the help of the Nawab of Kashmir the invaders were driven back, and were invested in the fort of Tashigang, on the Indus. The Ladakhi chronicle recounts these events. A translation by Dr. Karl Marks of the Moravian Mission at Leh follows:

"The Depazhung" (Lhasa Government) desired the Dugpa Omniscient One (Mi-pam-wang-po) to go and negotiate for peace. The result of their deliberations is as follows: 'The Bodpa have come to consider that whereas Tibet is a Buddhistic and Kashmir a non-Buddhistic country, and whereas Buddhistic and non-Buddhistic religions have nothing in common, it follows that if at the frontier the King of Ladakh does not prosper, Bod also cannot enjoy prosperity. The occurrences of the recent war should be considered things of the past.

"The King, on the other hand, undertook in future to keep watch at the frontier of Buddhistic and non-Buddhistic faiths, and out of regard for the doctrine of Sangsgyas would not allow the army from India to proceed to an attack upon Bod. As to the merchandise in demand in Kashmir, the following agreement was come to:

"The fine wool of Ngarekoorsum shall not be sold to any other country; that the price of fine and coarse wool mixed shall be fixed at eighty *nyag* or two rupees, to be paid both in money and kind; that the Changthang people shall not be allowed to use the

\*The text of the treaty is from *Sport and Life in the Further Himalaya*, R.L. Kennion (Blackwood, London), 1910; p. 247.

*nyag* of the people of the Indus gorge; that it shall not be said of the wool of the Chang that it contains soil, stones, or moisture; and that to Rudok itself none but the Court merchant shall be admitted. Regarding the fine wool trade, four Kashmiri merchants shall reside at Spectub and do the trading with the Kashmiris of Kashmir; this shall be the only way by which it shall go to Kashmir. No Kashmiri of Kashmir shall be allowed to go to Changthang. Those Ladakh Kashmiris who go to Changthang shall not be allowed themselves to go down to Kashmir with loads of fine wool. Regarding Ngarekoorsum, Mi-pam-wang-po's stipulations were to this effect: It shall be set apart to meet the expenses of sacred lamps and prayers at Lhasa, but at Minsar the King shall be his own master, so that the Kings of Ladakh shall have wherewithal to pay for lamps and other sacrifices at Kailas; and the lake, it shall be his private domain. With this exception the boundary shall be fixed at the Lhari stream at Demchok.

From Tibet the Government trader shall come with two hundred loads of tea, and nowhere but by Ladakh shall rectangular tea-bricks be sent across the frontier. The King of Ladakh, on the other hand, shall send once in three years a mission conveying presents to the clergy of Bod. As regards presents to ordinary lamas, the quantity and quality is not fixed; but to the Labrang steward shall be given ten *zho* of gold, ten *shang* of scent, six pieces of calico, and one piece of cotton cloth. Throughout their sojourn, the mission shall receive daily rations; for the road, beasts of burden shall be supplied to carry two hundred loads, fifteen baggage, and ten riding ponies; private ponies shall have as much fodder as they like for the steppe districts."

The number of loads was normally limited to 260, but in practice very much more was taken on the Lapchak (or Lochak) mission every three years. The *chapa* from Lhasa was an annual event.

The firm of Nasr Shah (who were Arghuns, of mixed Ladakhi and Muhammedan origin) had the exclusive right to the Lochak; but the titular head was always a Ladakhi Buddhist of good family who could have access to the Dalai Lama.

## APPENDIX VII

### *Treaty between Tibet and Ladakh, 1842 (translation) \**

As on this auspicious day, the 2nd of Assuj, Sambhat 1899 (16th or 17th September A.D. 1842), we the officers of the Lhasa Government Kalon of Soka and Bakshi Shajpuh, Commander of the Forces, and two officers on behalf of the most resplendent Sri Khalsaji Sahib, the asylum of the world King Sher Singhji and Sri Maharaj Sahib Raja-i-Rajagan Raja Sahib Bahadur Raja Gulab Singhji, i.e., the Mukhtar-ud-Daula Diwan Hari Chand and the asylum of vizirs, Vizir Ratnun, in a meeting called together for the promotion of peace and unity, and by professions and vows of friendship, unity and sincerity of heart and by taking oaths like those of Kunjak Sahib, have arranged and agreed that relations of peace, friendship and unity between Sri Khalsaji and Sri Maharaj Sahib Bahadur Raja Gulab Singhji and the Emperor of China and the Lama Guru of Lhasa will henceforward remain firmly established for ever; and we declare in the presence of the Kunjak Sahib that on no account whatsoever will there be any deviation, difference or departure (from this agreement). We shall neither at present nor in future have anything to do or interfere at all with the boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings as fixed from ancient times and will allow the annual export of wool, shawls and tea by way of Ladakh according to old established custom.

Should any of the opponents of Sri Khalsaji and Sri Raja Sahib Bahadur at any time enter our territories, we shall not pay any heed to his words or allow him to remain in our country.

We shall offer no hindrance to traders of Ladakh who visit our

\*From Appendix 4, *Tibet And Its History*, by H.E. Richardson; OUP, 1962, p. 246.

territories. We shall not, even to the extent of a hair's breadth, act in contravention of terms that we have agreed to above regarding firm friendship, unity and fixed boundaries of Ladakh and the keeping open of the route for wool, shawls and tea. We call Kunjak Sahib, Kairi, Lassi, Zhoh Mahan, and Khushal Choh as witnesses to this treaty.

## APPENDIX VIII\*

No. 56, dated 20 May 1847,

From: Lt. Col. H.M. Lawrence, Resident at Lahore,

To: Mr. Elliott, Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, with the Governor General at Simla, forwarding a Memo by P.A. Vans Agnew dated 13 May 1847, entitled: 'A few Remarks on Maharaja Gulab Singh's boundary with China.'

1. The only doubtful points on this boundary according to present information are its two extremities.

2. It is the ancient boundary of Ladakh and Changthang and Yarkand, and by the Chinese is well known and undisputed.

3. It runs through almost desolate tracts. A deviation of many miles would not to any appreciable amount cause territorial advantage or disadvantage.

4. The right to roads and passes is nowhere dubious, except near Demchok, one of the termini.

5. The exact point where the boundary of Piti (Spiti), Ladakh and Changthang meet, does not I believe at present exist.

6. As rivers are lost in a desert, the three boundaries become undefined in the uninhabited mountains south of a line drawn from the southern extremity of the Tsomoriri lake to the monastery of Hanle.

7. The Chinese, I believe, touch the Spiti (British) frontier on the Para river near Akolie (?). Thence they (i.e., the Chinese boundary) follow the crest of inaccessible ridges round the end of

\*The original handwritten record is not legible at places and these are indicated in the text.

the valley of Hanle, and run down on the river near is a village called Demchok.

8. Here there may possibly be a doubt. This place has been claimed for M. Gulab Singh and may be so by the Chinese. It may interfere with intercourse between Rudok and Gartok by the valley of the Indus.

9. But here, or a little higher, the boundary crosses the river Indus; and, ascending the opposite mountains, runs along the ridges, so that the pass to Rudok, on the Hanle road via Chibra, is in the hands of the Chinese.

10. The boundary continues along the top of the ridge so as just to leave to Ladakh the little rivulet running by (place name indistinct) and leading up to the pass called the Tsaka La and also the Chushul rivulet running down the other side into the lake Pangong.

11. Thence the boundary runs along the lake Pangong and then the ridges forming the eastern boundary of the river (D. . . . .lo) till it falls into the Shyok.

12. Therefrom the ridge bounding the valley of the Shyok on the east is the boundary up to the Karakoram mountains.

13. And thence they (i.e. the Chinese), running westwards from the boundary between Yarkand and Nubra and the independent states further west.

14. When the Karakoram ceases to be M. Gulab Singh's boundary it will be where an independent state, say Nagar or Hunza, inter-poses between Little Tibet (i.e. Baltistan) and that chain.

15. It is of course highly advisable that all boundaries be defined, but on reference to the map and after comprehending the grand natural characteristics of the boundary above detailed, the absence of all grounds for variance, and the undisputed right of Ladakh to the roads up the Shyok and the Indus to certain fixed points, and of the Chinese beyond them, while there is absolutely nothing else to acquire nearer than Yarkand, Rudok and Gartok. I conceive that a safe and unmistakable boundary could be traced by the Commissioners on paper at their first meeting, as if they were to travel along its whole length.

16. There remain, however, I admit, the termini. I would suggest that the officer in charge of, or on boundary duty near



Spiti, fix the one, and the Commission to lay down M. Gulab Singh's on the N.W. determine the other.

19. The appointment of a Commission by the Chinese Government with a view to fix this and perhaps other boundaries with China, and to open lines of traffic is in every point of view desirable.

20. The question is whether this Commission would not be more likely to yield more reasonable terms if received at the Headquarters of Government and in communication with the highest authority than amidst the discomforts of an arduous journey, and in the total absence of all pomp and ceremonial to which this nation is so much addicted.

21. In fact unless the Chinese officials, who may come on this duty, turn out much more patriotic than their countrymen in office are reputed, a hint that any frivolous delays or excuses would make such a journey necessary (probably: "might have. . .") no small effect in making the Chinese Commission more agreeable.

22. Whether any other boundary except that of M. Gulab Singh is required with China or not I know nothing.

44. I was also informed that there is another road from Yarkand east of the Shyok river, to Rudok, but that it was prohibited by the Chinese Government.

52. There are about lb. 12,000 per an. of fine tea exported by this route to Ladakh, about lb. 50,000 of shawl wool, about lb. 70,000 of *bung* (i.e. *bhang*), about one lac of rupees worth of gold, about two of silver, and about 100 more horse loads of valuable merchandise at lb. 241 per horse load.

53. In return about lb. 44,000 of opium are imported from Bashahr and Nurpur together with sundry(?) and various articles of Indian growth and manufacture as fine sugar, ginger, indigo, cotton cloths, drugs, etc.

55. Between Nurpur and Ladakh Rs.47 duty was levied at 4 places on every horse load . . . and between Ladakh and Yarkand Rs.2½ more. That is a duty of 2 shillings on every lb. 5 of such articles, as leather and cotton goods, etc.

56. Opium was charged Rs.91 for that same weight or nearly 11½ annas per seer, that is nearly 9 d. per lb.

57. The bulk of this trade passes through Ladakh. In the time of the Bhot (Ladakhi) rule, little or no duty was levied. . . . Since

Zorawar Singh's conquest and the extension of the authority of the Jammu Rajas in the hills, very heavy duties have been imposed. And, of late years, the merchants have been much oppressed.

## APPENDIX IX

No. 198 of 1898  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
FOREIGN DEPARTMENT  
SECRET  
Frontier

To

THE RIGHT HON'BLE LORD GEORGE F. HAMILTON,  
*Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India.*

SIMLA, *the 27th October 1898.*

MY LORD,

In the telegram which is copied for facility of reference . . . Your Lordship was informed that we would prepare and send a map and statement descriptive of the boundary which we wish to secure between Kashmir and its dependencies and Chinese territory.

Telegram, dated the 20th July 1898.

From—His Excellency the Viceroy, Simla,

To—Her Majesty's Secretary of State, London.

With reference to Your Lordship's Secret telegram, dated the 13th July 1898, we think it expedient to settle with China the boundaries of Hunza, Afghanistan and Kashmir. A map and statement, giving the boundary we wish to secure, will be prepared and sent to Your Lordship. Up to that line our influence is asserted. We might claim rights over Taghdumbash and Raskam for Hunza, but be prepared to renounce them in exchange for renunciation by Chinese of all claim over Hunza. We have not relaxed our political control over Hunza and Nagar.

2. The matter of first importance in our judgment is to secure some line by which China will agree to be bound. In the present condition of things the Hunza State has indefinite but rather extensive claims over Raskam and Taghdumbash, while the claim of China to exercise a concurrent jurisdiction of a shadowy sort in Hunza has received definite admission at our hands by the continuation of Hunza's tribute payment to Kashgar, and by the permission\* granted to Chinese officials to be present at the installation of the Mir of Hunza.

3. If the district of Yarkand were at any time to pass from the possession of China into that of a more energetic power, these acknowledged rights within our borders could scarcely fail to be extremely embarrassing. We are not anxious to make good Hunza's counter-claims, except as a means for disentangling Hunza itself from the claims of China, and as we have already stated in our Secret despatch No. 170 (Frontier), dated the 23rd December 1897, no strategical advantage would be gained by going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted.

4. Beginning at the peak Povalo-Schveikovski, at the end of the Pamir line demarcated in 1895 by the Joint Commission under Major-General Sir Montagu Gerard and Major-General Povalo-Schveikovsky, we would desire to follow generally the crest of the main range of mountains from that point along the east of Hunza and Nagar and the north of Baltistan and Ladakh until the line which is at present marked as the eastern limit of Ladakh is reached. This line of frontier, which would run along the crests of a high mountain range, always difficult and in places inaccessible, would not be one which could be demarcated on the ground. Our object is to arrive at an agreement with China describing the line in question by its better known topographical features, each power reciprocally engaging to respect the boundary thus defined.

5. The following is a description of this line; beginning at the

\*Telegram from Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, dated the 27th May 1892, and subsequent corresponding.

north end at the peak Povalo-Schveikovski, the line takes a south-easterly direction, crossing the Karachikar stream at Mintaka Aghazi, thence proceeding in the same direction till it joins, at the Karchanai Pass, the crest of the main ridge of the Mustagh range which it then follows passing by the Kunjerab Pass and continuing southwards to the peak just north of the Shimshal Pass. At this point the boundary leaves the crest and follows a spur running east approximately parallel to the road from the Shimshal to the Hunza post at Darwaza. The line, turning south through the Darwaza post, crosses the road from the Shimshal Pass at that point and then ascends the nearest high spur and regains the main crests, which the boundary will again follow, passing the Mustagh, Gusherbrum, and the Saltoro Passes to the Karakoram. From the Karakoram Pass the crests of the range run nearly east for about half a degree, and then turn south to a little below the 35th 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 Jilga and from there, in a south-easterly direction, follows the Lak Tsung Range until that meets the spur running south from the Kuen Lun Range which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° East Longitude.

6. We regret that we have no map to show the whole line either accurately or on a large scale. The first part of it, from peak Povalo-Schveikovski to where the line re-ascends the main crest of the Mustagh after passing Darwaza, is marked on the enclosed N.T.F. sheet No. 2 (April 1898). This section has been surveyed and may be taken to be accurate. The "map to illustrate the explorations of Captain F.E. Younghusband, King's Dragoon Guards, on the Northern Frontier of Kashmir" contains the continuation of the line to the 79th degree of East Longitude, and is approximately correct, while the general trend of the whole may be gathered from sheet No. 4 of the map of Turkistan, a copy of which, with the line hand shaded, we have the honour to enclose.

7. It will be observed that the line described in paragraph 5 includes within the frontier which we desire to secure two tracts

which lie beyond the main watershed. Although, as we have stated, we are not anxious to add Raskam or the whole of Taghdumbash to the territory of Hunza, we think that there would be advantages in including within our sphere the western end of Chin had been marked as within British territory, while the tract belonged entirely to China. Still more recently, in replying to an application for a passport for one of the officers of the Gilgit Agency to cross the Kilik to shoot, the Taotai evinced his interest in China's rights to the Taghdumbash up to the very borders of Hunza, by conceding the request subject to the condition that the British officer should not stay more than ten days in Chinese territory. Again, during the month of October 1897, a report reached us from our Political Agent at Gilgit that the Chinese authorities have arrested some Kanjutis who were cultivating a small piece of land in Raskam, and have written to the Mir of Hunza that he must not allow his subjects to come there again. We believe that any attempt to incorporate within our frontier either of the zones mentioned by Sir John Ardagh would involve real risk of strained relations with China, and might tend to precipitate the active interposition of Russia at Kashgaria, which it should be our aim to postpone as long as possible.

8. We are unable to concur altogether in Sir John Ardagh's suggestions on military grounds. He advocates an advance beyond the great mountain ranges which we regard as our natural frontier, on the ground that it is impossible to watch the actual watershed. Sir John Ardagh is no doubt right in theory, and the crest of a mountain range does not ordinarily form a good military frontier. In the present instance, however, we see no strategic advantage in going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted. Moreover, the alternative frontier which Sir John Ardagh proposes practically coincide with the watersheds of other ranges. Our objection is mainly based on the opinion of officers who have visited this region. They unanimously represent the present mountain frontier as perhaps the most difficult and inaccessible country in the world. The country beyond is barren, rugged, and sparsely populated. An advance would interpose between ourselves and our outposts a belt of the most difficult and impracticable

country, it would unduly extend and weaken our military position without, in our opinion, securing any corresponding advantage. No invader has ever approached India from this direction where nature has placed such formidable barriers.

We have the honour to be,  
MY LORD,

Your Lordship's  
most obedient, humble servants,

(Signed) ELGIN  
" G.S. WHITE  
" J. WESTLAND  
" M.D. CHALMERS  
" E.H.H. COLLEN  
" A.C. TREVOR  
" C.M. RIVAZ

## APPENDIX X

No. 166.

### The Northern Frontier of India, from the Pamirs to Tibet.

The collapse of China in the late China-Japan war showed the futility of our trusting to that Power as a possible ally, and there is every reason to believe that she will be equally useless as a buffer between Russia and the northern frontier of India.

The war was followed by a serious Muhammedan rebellion in the provinces of Kansu, which has been dragging on ever since, and has lately received an additional stimulus by the adhesion of the Kolao Secret Society, the most powerful and ubiquitous organization of its kind in China.

China maintains her hold on Kashgaria by one single line of communication, namely, the road between Kashgar and Peking, which passes through the disaffected Muhammedan district of Kansu and is some 3,500 miles in length.

Though this alone is sufficient to demonstrate the precarious nature of China's sovereignty in Kashgaria, it may be added that, in July last, Mr. Macartney reported that the stability of Chinese rule in Kashgaria had been much shaken, and that riots were taking place, not so much due to the inhabitants as to the unruly Chinese soldiers quartered there.

The general history of Russian expansion in Central Asia, the eagerness with which she has advanced her borders towards India over such inhospitable regions as the Pamirs, the comparative fertility and natural wealth of Kashgaria, as well as the political activity displayed by the Russian representative in Kashgar, lead one to suppose that an eventual Russian occupation is far from improbable. In this connection, too, it is worthy of remark that Russia has not demarcated her frontier



with Kashgaria further south than the Uzbek Pass between the latitudes of Kashgar and Yarkand, thus leaving herself untrammelled in the natural process of expansion from the Pamirs eastward.

The rumours current during the summer of 1896 of an impending Russian advance into Kashgaria appear to have been unfounded. Mr. Macartney, confirming this view, is of opinion that the Russians have made no preparation for intervening, as the time is not yet ripe, and as a Russian demonstration, unless it were immediately followed up by annexation, would only serve to strengthen the hands of the Chinese by intimidating the rebels.

If, then, the eventual annexation of Kashgaria by Russia is to be expected, we may be sure that Russia, as in the past, will endeavour to push her boundary as far south as she can, for political reasons, even if no real military advantage is sought. It is evident, therefore, that sooner or later we shall have to conclude a definite agreement regarding the northern frontier of India.

We have been accustomed to regard the great mountain ranges to the north of Chitral, Hunza, and Ladak as the natural frontier of India; and in a general sense they form an acceptable defensive boundary, easy to define, difficult to pass, and fairly dividing the peoples on either side. But the physical conditions of these mountains, their great extent, high altitude, general inaccessibility, and sparse population, render it impossible to watch the actual watershed; and the measures requisite for security, and for information as to the movements of an enemy, cannot be adequately carried out unless we can circulate freely at the foot of the glacis formed by the northern slope, along those longitudinal valleys which nature has provided on the northern side at a comparatively short distance from the crest, a configuration which, it may be observed, does not present itself on the southern slope of the range.

For military purposes, therefore, a frontier following the highest watersheds is defective, and we should aim at keeping our enemy from any possibility of establishing himself on the glacis, occupying these longitudinal valleys, and there preparing to surprise the passes. We should, therefore, seek a boundary which shall leave all these longitudinal valleys in our possession,

or at least under our influence.

The application of this principle to the further demarcation of the northern frontier of India leads to the following results:—The Hindu Kush, the Mustagh range, and the Karakorum range, form the principle line of waterparting between the basin of the Indus on the south and the basins of the Oxus and the Yarkand rivers on the north.

On this range are situated, *inter alia*, the Kilik, Mintaka, Khunjerab, Shimshal, Mustagh, and Karakorum passes, access to which we desire to bar to a possible enemy, by retaining within our territory the approaches to them on the northern side, and the lateral communications between these approaches.

This object is to be attained by drawing our line of frontier so as to include the basins of the Danga Bash river and its affluents above Dehda, at the junction of the Ili Su and Karatchukar, called by Captain Younghusband Kurghan-i-Ujadbai; of the Yarkand River above the point where it breaks through the range of mountains marked by the Sargon and Ilbis Birkar Passes, at about latitude  $37^{\circ}$  north and longitude  $745^{\circ} 50'$ \* east on Mr. Curzon's map, published by the Royal Geographical Society; and of the Karakash River above a point between Shahidullah and the Sanju or Grim Pass. These three basins would afford a fully adequate sphere of influence beyond the main crests.

During the disturbances in Kashgaria Shahidullah was occupied by Kashmir.

At the time of Sir Douglas Forsyth's mission to Yarkand in 1873 the frontier post of Kashgaria was situated at Shahidullah. When Captain Younghusband visited that place in 1889 the fort had long been abandoned, and he granted money to a Kirghiz chief to rebuild it and keep it in repair, as a protection to the trade route from Leh to Yarkand. He forestalled Captain Grombtchevsky, whom he met on the Yarkand River.

In 1890 the Chinese pulled down the Shahidullah Fort, and built another near the Sujet Pass, where, in 1892, Lord Dunmore saw a notice board to the effect that "anyone crossing the Chinese frontier without reporting himself at this fort will be imprisoned."

\*A printing mistake in the original, it seems for  $75^{\circ}50'$

In 1874 Dr. Bellew found an abandoned Chinese outpost at Kirghiz Tam near Shiragh Saldi. In 1889 Captain Younghusband likewise found Shiragh Saldi outside the recognised Chinese frontier.

We are therefore justified in claiming up to the crests of the Kuen Lun range.

We now represent on our maps the Yarkand River as a boundary, the Taghdumbash Pamir is claimed by China, at least as far as Bayik. It is therefore clear that the three basins described above may encroach upon Chinese territory to a certain extent which may be difficult to define, and our solicitude should be to obtain from China an agreement that any part of those basins which may eventually be found to lie outside our frontier shall not be ceded to any country but Great Britain. If China were strong enough to maintain possession, and to act the part of a buffer state, this assurance would not be needed; but in view of her decadence, and of the prospect of Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan falling before long into the hands of Russia, it will be well to take timely precaution to prevent her from becoming so close a neighbour to the mountain rampart of India as she has lately become on the Chitral frontier.

The present value of this very sparsely inhabited country is insignificant, but its importance as a security to the Indian frontier is considerable.

The same principles and arguments may have to be applied at a future period to the upper basins of the Indus, the Sutlej, and even the Brahmaputra, in the event of a prospective absorption of Tibet by Russia. At the present moment, however, we are only concerned in the definition of a frontier between British India and Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan.

Dealing first with the main portion of the line marked on our maps as following the Yarkand River, we find that Captain Younghusband in 1889 pointed out that this stream would form a bad boundary, as it is fordable, and the road along the valley frequently crosses from one side to another. This objection is well founded. If we are to keep this valley, which contains mines of iron and copper, hot springs, and possibly petroleum and gold, and which, formerly cultivated, has within late years become depopulated in consequence of Kanjuti raids, now at an end in consequence of our occupation of Hunza, we should

include the northern slope of its basin up to the crests of the Kuen Lun Mountains. It is not likely that China in her present state would offer much objection, or, indeed, that her influence extends to the south of the Kuen Lun. This, then, is the line which it would be preferable to claim. But, if it be found that there should arise insuperable objections to the Kuen Lun line, and that we cannot adopt the line of the river, there is yet a third alternative which will still give us a glacis in front of the Mustagh, *viz.*, the mountain crest commencing at the summit marked 14,680, near the Kurbu Pass, passing by the Uruk Pass to the summit marked 8,815, crossing the mouth of the Mustagh or Uprang River, and following the line of waterparting between that river and the Yarkand River, to which it would descend at a point near the ruins of Kugart Auza and mount on the northern side, and some point between the Sokhbuluk and Sujet Passes, following the latter range eastward across the Karakash, and onwards to the point where the frontier makes its great bend southward.

This second line as defined by river basins would comprise within our territory, the basin of the Mustagh River from its junction with the Yarkand River or Raskam Daria, the basin of the Upper Yarkand River above the ruins of Kugart Auza, and the basin of the Karakash above latitude 36° north.

At the western extremity of both this line and the Kuen Lun line we have to deal with Chinese claims to the Taghdumbash Pamir. The Chinese have their furthest post up the valley at Chadir Tash or Bayik, where the road from the Bayik Pass meets the Karatchukar river. Above that point the nomad Kirghiz pay taxes to both China and Hunza, and we may claim on behalf of Hunza the basin of the Karatchukar above some point between the Bayik Chinese post and Mintaka Aghazi, the boundary to the north of the river being one of the spurs descending from the Povalo Shveikovski Peak. This would cover the debouches from the Tagerman-su, Mikhman Guli, Kukturuk, Wakhjir, Kilik, Mintaka and Karchenai Passes. It is therefore of much importance to secure the possession of Mintaka Aksai.

On the eastern side of the Tughdumbash Pamir, the debouches of the Kunjerab and Kurbu Passes can be secured by the possession of Mazar Sultan Seyid Hassan. A parallel of latitude south of the Bayik post is the simplest mode of laying

down a boundary here so as to include Mazar Seyid Hassan. From thence the boundary should mount to the waterparting near the Zeplep Pass, and thence join the Kuen Lun, the Yarkand river or the Uruk lines, already described.

Under circumstances of China quoted at the commencement of this paper, the settlement of this frontier question appears now to be urgent. If we delay, we shall have Russia to deal with instead of China, and she will assuredly claim up to very farthest extent of the pretensions of her predecessors in title, at least to the very summits of the Mustagh and the Himalayas.

I venture, therefore, to recommend that the matter should now be brought to the notice of the Government of India, if the proposal meets with approval at the Foreign and India Offices.

When the Government of India has studied the question, and pronounced an opinion as to the line which would be most advantageous, the matter will, on our part, be ripe for further action. But, as it may happen that, at that moment, other considerations may render it unadvisable to communicate with China, it may be well to point out that there are other steps, short of actual delimitation or international agreement, which would tend greatly to strengthen our position while awaiting a favourable opportunity for arriving at a definite settlement.

The Governor-General's Agents and officers adjacent to the frontier may arrange to procure the recognition of our supremacy and protection by the Chiefs of the local tribes, and to assert it by acts of sovereignty, annually exercised within the limits decided upon, and in this manner acquire a title by prescription.

# APPENDIX XI

No. 170 of 1897  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

SECRET  
Frontier.

To

THE RIGHT HON'BLE LORD GEORGE F. HAMILTON,  
*Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India.*

FORT WILLIAM, *the 23rd December 1897.*

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's Secret despatch No. 5, dated the 12th February 1897, transmitted for our consideration a letter from the Foreign Office, enclosing a memorandum by the Director of Military Intelligence on the northern frontier of India, contiguous to the Chinese dominions. We understand that Her Majesty's Government remain of opinion that it would not be politic to bring before the Chinese Government the question of the settlement of their boundaries with Kashmir, Hunza and Afghanistan. The matter for examination is therefore whether it is advisable to take any other steps in the direction of consolidating the boundaries of India in the region under notice.

2. Sir John Ardagh considers a frontier following the highest watersheds defective for military purposes, and suggests that we should aim at keeping our enemy from any possibility of establishing himself on the glacis, occupying the longitudinal valleys, and there preparing to surprise the passes; he proposes

that, if it is inadvisable to communicate with China on the subject, our frontier officers might arrange to procure the recognition of our supremacy and protection by the chiefs of the local tribes, and to assert it by acts of sovereignty, annually exercised within the limits decided upon, and in this manner acquire a title by prescription. He thinks it unlikely that China, in her present state, would offer much objection. Our experience leads to an opposite conclusion.

3. The Chinese have, on more than one occasion, evinced a determination to assert their territorial rights in the direction of the Indian frontier. Your Lordship will remember the pertinacity with which they insisted on what they consider their suzerain rights over Hunza, as demonstrated by the "tribute" of gold which Hunza still pays to Kashgar. They have erected boundary pillars on the Karakoram. In October last year the Taotai of Kashgar, purporting to act under instructions from the Governor of the New Dominion, made a verbal representation to Mr. Macartney to the effect that, in a certain copy of a Johnston's Atlas, Aksai Chin had been marked as within British territory, while the tract belonged entirely to China. Still more recently, in replying to an application for a passport for one of the officers of the Gilgit Agency to cross the Kilik to shoot, the Taotai evinced his interest in China's rights to the Taghdumbash up to the very borders of Hunza, by conceding the request subject to the condition that the British officer should not stay more than ten days in Chinese territory. Again, during the month of October 1897, a report reached us from our Political Agent at Gilgit that the Chinese authorities have arrested some Kanjutis who were cultivating a small piece of land in Raskam, and have written to the Mir of Hunza that he must not allow his subjects to come there again. We believe that any attempt to incorporate within our frontier either of the zones mentioned by Sir John Ardagh would involve real risk of strained relations with China, and might tend to precipitate the active interposition of Russia in Kashgaria, which it should be our aim to postpone as long as possible.

4. We are unable to concur altogether in Sir John Ardagh's suggestions on military grounds. He advocates an advance beyond the great mountain ranges which we regard as our natural frontier, on the ground that it is impossible to watch the

actual watershed. Sir John Ardagh is no doubt right in theory, and the crest of a mountain range does not ordinarily form a good military frontier. In the present instance, however, we see no strategic advantage in going beyond mountains over which no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted. Moreover, the alternative frontiers which Sir John Ardagh proposes practically coincide with the watersheds of other ranges. Our objection is mainly based on the opinion of officers who have visited this region. They unanimously represent the present mountain frontier as perhaps the most difficult and inaccessible country in the world. The country beyond is barren, rugged, and sparsely populated. An advance would interpose between ourselves and our outposts a belt of the most difficult and impracticable country, it would unduly extend and weaken our military position without, in our opinion, securing any corresponding advantage. No invader has ever approached India from this direction where nature has placed such formidable barriers.

We have the honour to be,  
MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble servants,

(Signed)

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”

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ELGIN

G.S. WHITE

J. WESTLAND

M.D. CHALMERS

E.H.H. COLLEN

A.C. TREVOR

C.M. RIVAZ



## APPENDIX XII

### PROCEEDINGS OF THE FOREIGN DEPARTMENT, AUGUST 1899.

Enclo. 1, No. 188.

*Enclosures in Foreign Office covering letter of 14th June 1899.*

AFFAIRS OF CHINA.

[May 29.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 2.

Mr. Bax-Ironside to the Marquess of Salisbury.

(No. 81. Confidential.)

My Lord,

Peking, 7th April 1899.

In accordance with the instructions conveyed in Your Lordship's despatch No. 209 (Confidential) of the 14th December 1898, Sir Claude MacDonald on the 14th ultimo addressed a despatch to the Chinese Government, copy of which I have the honour to inclose, advocating an understanding as to the frontier between Chinese Turkistan and Afghanistan, Hunza and Kashmir.

The Tsungli Yamên have informed me verbally that they have referred the question to the Governor of Chinese Turkistan, and that upon receipt of his report they will reply to Sir Claude MacDonald's despatch.

I have, &c.,  
(Sd.) H. O. BAX-IRONSIDE.

Sub-enclo. 1 (enclo. 1), No. 188.

Sir C. MacDonald to the Tsungli Yamên.

MM. les Ministres

Peking, 14th March 1899.

I have the honour, by direction of Her Majesty's Government, to address Your Highness and Your Excellencies on the subject

of the boundary between the Indian State of Kashmir and the New Dominion of Chinese Turkistan.

In the year 1891 the Indian Government had occasion to repress by force of arms certain rebellious conduct on the part of the Ruler of the State of Kanjut, a tributary of Kashmir. The Chinese Government then laid claim to the allegiance of Kanjut by virtue of a tribute of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of gold dust paid by its Ruler each year to the Governor of the New Dominion, who gave in return some pieces of silk.

It appears that the boundaries of the State of Kanjut with China have never been clearly defined. The Kanjutis claim an extensive tract of land in the Taghdumbash Pamir, extending as far north as Tashkurgan, and they also claim the district known as Raskam to the south of Sarikol. The rights of Kanjut over part of the Taghdumbash Pamir were admitted by the Taotai of Kashgar in a letter to the Mir of Hunza, dated February 1896, and last year the question of the Raskam district was the subject of negotiations between Kanjut and the officials of the New Dominion, in which the latter admitted that some of the Raskam land should be given to the Kanjutis.

It is now proposed by the Indian Government that, for the sake of avoiding any dispute or uncertainty in the future, a clear understanding should be come to with the Chinese Government as to the frontier between the two States. To obtain this clear understanding, it is necessary that China should relinquish her shadowy claim to suzerainty over the State of Kanjut. The Indian Government, on the other hand, will, on behalf of Kanjut, relinquish her claims to most of the Taghdumbash and Raskam districts.

It will not be necessary to mark out the frontier. The natural frontier is the crest of a range of mighty mountains, a great part of which is quite inaccessible. It will be sufficient if the two Governments will enter into an agreement to recognise the frontier as laid down by its clearly marked geographical features. The line proposed by the Indian Government is briefly as follows: It may be seen by reference to the map of the Russo-Chinese frontier brought by the late Minister, Hung Chün, from St. Petersburg, and in possession of the Yamên.

Commencing on the Little Pamir, from the peak at which the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission of 1895 ended their work,

it runs south-east, crossing the Karachikar stream at Mintaka Aghazi; thence proceeding in the same direction it joins at the Karchenai Pass the crest of the main ridge of the Mustagh range. It follows this to the south, passing by the Kunjerab Pass, and continuing southwards to the peak just north of the Shimshal Pass. At this point the boundary leaves the crest and follows a spur running east approximately paralld to the road from the Shimshal to the Hunza post at Darwaza. The line turning south through the Darwaza post crosses the road from the Shimshal Pass at that point, and then ascends the nearest high spur, and regains the main crests which the boundary will again follow, passing the Mustagh, Gusherbrun, and Saltoro Passes by the Karakoram. 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 to 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, and from there in a south-easterly direction follows the Lak Tsung range until that meets the spur running south from the K'un-lun range, which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° east longitude.

Your Highnesses and Your Excellencies will see by examining this line that a large tract of country to the north of the great dividing range shown in Hung Chün's map as outside the Chinese boundary will be recognised as Chinese territory.

I beg Your Highness and Your Excellencies to consider the matter, and to favour me with an early reply.

I avail, &c.,  
(Sd.) CLAUDE M. MACDONALD.



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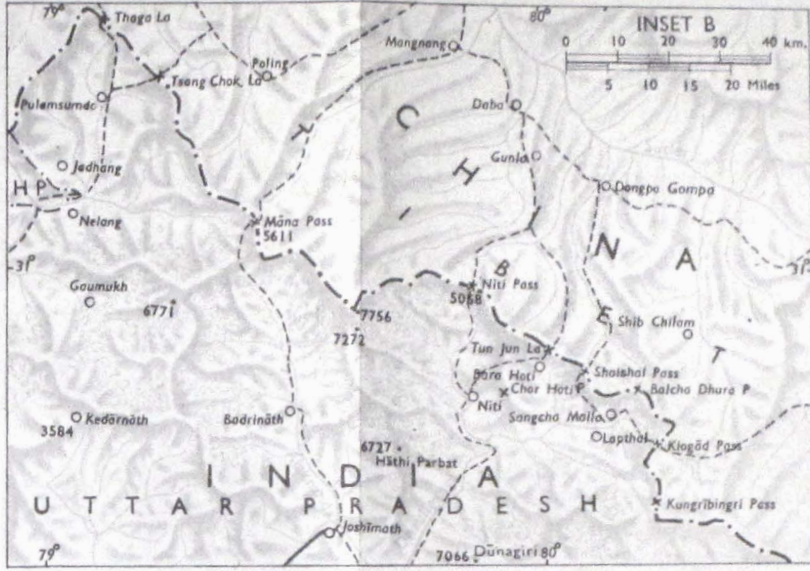
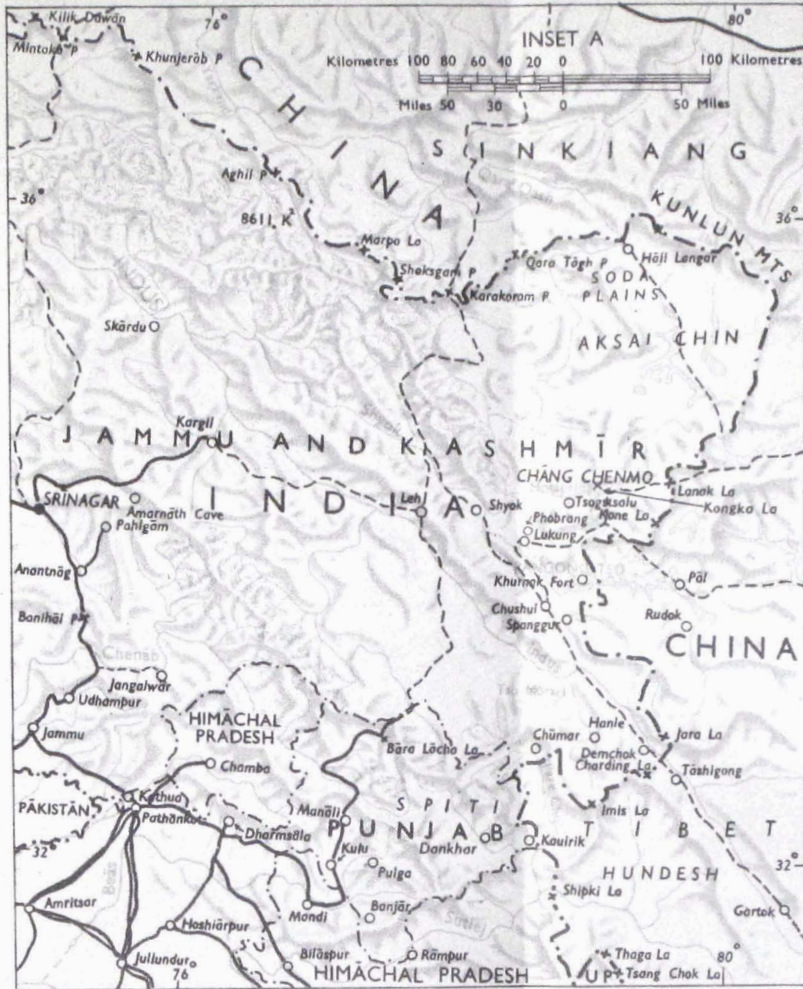
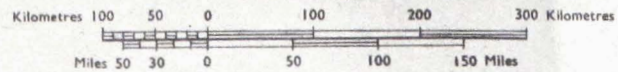
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