

Report by Mr. R. P. Cobbold on his journeys on the Pamirs and in Chinese Turkestan.

Mr. R. P. Cobbold to Foreign Office.

Srinagar Kashmir,
5th October 1898.

Sir,

I have the honour to forward herewith—First. A road report from Boulungkul at the head of the Gez defile on the main road from the Pamirs to Kashgar, to the Great Kara Kul Lake. Second. A road report from the Great Kara Kul Lake to the Russian fort of Charog (Shignan) on the Oxus, together with all the information that I was able to collect on my journey, some of which I hope may be of use to Her Majesty's Government. The first portion of my journey included in the road report from Boulungkul to Kara Kul calls for little notice, seeing that this route, or at all events the greater portion of it, has been already traversed by Captain Younghusband, but there are a few points worthy of attention.

From Kuntemis a fair summer road leads to Kashgar, laden ponies do the journey in six days, the road debouches on to the plain at Tashmulak two marches from Kashgar. This is the only road available in summer for traffic from the Pamir direct to Kashgar, for the ordinary road *via* the Gez defile is closed by the volume of water after the middle of May. The number of Kirghiz inhabiting the Kuntemis valley between Boulungkul and the Russian frontier may be put down as roughly 100 "yurtas," which would contain on an average from five to eight persons each. Sufficient grass to support a caravan would be found after the middle of May.

As regards the second portion of my journey, included in the road report from Karakul Lake to the Russian fort of Charog, notice should be taken of the completion of the cart road from Marghilan (the principal cantonment in Ferghana) to Murghabi, which enables supplies to be landed in the Pamirsky post in from 15 to 20 days, even in winter time, except of course during an unusual snow fall, when the Kizil Art Pass would be closed; as a rule, however, this pass is always open. From the Kizil Art Pass to Murghabi, the Pamir is uninhabited except by the Kirghiz stationed in the post houses, this fact may be attributed to the dislike the Kirghiz have to living near the postal road, where they may be called upon for supplies of various kinds.

The water of Karakul Lake is unfit for drinking purposes. The road leading to Kok Jar by the Apak Pass is an easy one and open in July, thereby shortening the journey by a day. This pass is marked Anak on the map, but this name is unknown to the inhabitants of the district.

The river marked Kudara on map is known to the natives as Thanwas, and the name Kudara is applied only to the spot where the Thanwas and Karabulak streams unite, and where there is a permanent Kirghiz settlement.

From Karakul to Kudara the country is very sparsely populated, there being not more than 30 houses in all this region. Below Kudara there are no Kirghiz, and the race of people called Tayik are met with.

The inhabitants of the Oxus valley apply this name Tayik indiscriminately to the people of Roshan, Darwaz, Shignan, Wakhan, Chitral, Yasin, Kanjut, and the inhabitants of Sarikol other than Kirghiz. All these people speak varieties of the Wakhi language and all understand each other; they resemble one another greatly in appearance and customs; they most of them understand Persian.

The history of the Tayiks of Roshan and Shignan appears to be as follows. Until the occupation of these valleys by the Amir of Afghanistan some 15 years ago, these people were under their own Khans and formed an independent State paying tribute to no one. The older Tayiks speak of three generations of Khans. First, Shah Wangi Khan. Second, Abdurrheem Khan. Third, Usphala Khan.

Up to the time of the deposition of Usphala Khan by the Amir of Afghanistan, the greater part of the Pamir as far as Karakul Lake, including

Murghab, Alichur and Khargosh, together with Roshan and Shignan on both sides of the Oxus, paid tribute to Usphala Khan.

There was a Tayik post stationed at Karakul Lake by Usphala Khan to levy toll on all traders entering the Pamir from the north who passed by the lake.

I had some conversation with the Tayik who had formerly been in charge of the post, and he informed me that all traders paid him toll and he likewise levied tribute on the Kirghiz. The residence and chief seat of the Tayik Khan was at Kala Bar Panj.

When Abdurrahman Khan became Amir of Afghanistan he conquered Badakshan, which country had hitherto been independent, and the members of whose reigning house had intermarried with the family of the Khans of Kala Bar Panj; he afterwards sent troops against Usphala Khan, but the latter fled to Khokand. Abdurrahman then sent messengers to him inviting him to return and retake possession of his country, which he promised to restore him, and assuring him of his friendship and protection.

Usphala Khan thereupon returned, and afterwards, at the Amir's invitation, he paid a visit to Kabul with his head men and family; here, however, he is said to have been seized, and, together with his family and 500 Tayiks, to have been buried alive. One son, Abdul Ghazi Khan, was spared, and he is now in Kabul.

The Afghans then occupied the country and levied taxes over all this country, they exercised much "zulm" and were detested by Tayiks and Kirghiz alike.

Shur Chur, the Mimbashi of Roshor village, gave me some interesting information. He informed me that until the Russian occupation of the Panjah, his family had for generations been regarded as Rajahs of the Bartang valley, and had been allowed by the Afghans and previously by the Tayik Khans to levy tribute in kind and money on all the villages between Tashkurgan and Kala-i-Wamar; this fact was afterwards confirmed by the Russian commandant.

Owing, however, to the "zulm" and extortion practised by the officials of the Amir, the Tayiks of Roshan and Shignan invited the Russians to take these valleys under their protection, and Shur Chur and his father were amongst the petty chiefs who visited Marghilan to arrange the matter with the Governor. The Russians, of course, were only too eager to extend their possessions from the Pamirs to the Panjah, and with the aid of the Tayiks, who showed them the only possible roads in this most difficult country and helped them with coolie transport and supplies, they forced the Afghans to cross the Panjah after the fight at Somatash, and later on a skirmish at Yaims above Kala-i-Wamar.

The Tayiks affirm that but for their assistance the Russians would never have been able to effect an occupation of these valleys, and from what I have seen myself of the difficulties and dangers of these roads I can quite believe them.

For the assistance that they gave the Russians Shur Chur and his father received a number of Russian decorations from the Tzar, and were confirmed in their ancient rights in the Bartang. Some time after the occupation of Roshan (which apparently took place as late as four years ago), Shur Chur and his father were summoned to Murghabi, where various charges were brought against them of sending information of Russian movements to the officials of the British Government in Chitral or Gilgit. He was also charged with contemplating, together with other Tayiks, a wholesale emigration to British territory.

The Russian Commandant considered these charges to have been proved, and sentenced the Mimbashi and his father to be imprisoned at Murghabi. Whilst in prison his father died.

After some months an order came that the Mimbashi was to be released, and together with other petty Rajahs from the Tayiks he was sent to St. Petersburg to attend the coronation of the Tzar as an honoured guest. Here he appears to have been made much of, and he received other decorations.

When in St. Petersburg, he petitioned the Tzar to restore to him the former possessions of his family in Roshan which had been forfeited, but

was informed by one of the Ministers that this could not be done, as Roshan had been handed over to the Amir of Bokhara. He was allowed, however, to retain the village of Roshor.

According to Shur Chur an arrangement was entered into at this time between the War Minister and the Amir of Bokhara, by which the latter agreed to enter into negotiations with the Badakshis and the Tayiks on the left bank of the Oxus, with a view to inducing these people to eventually throw off their allegiance to Afghanistan and declare themselves as subjects of the Amir of Bokhara.

The Russian War Minister was unwilling to show his hand directly, and was anxious that the Amir of Bokhara should manage this matter himself, promising that all the country which might be seduced from Afghan rule should be handed over to Bokhara. It was supposed that if the Amir of Bokhara could not gain his object by intrigue, he could find a pretext for a quarrel with Abdur Rahman, in which case the Bokharan troops, drilled by Russian instructors and armed with modern weapons, would be found equal to the task of annexing Badakshan and the Afghan portions of Roshan and Shignan. In case of a reverse, however, Russian assistance was promised.

Five years are stated to have been the period agreed upon during which time the Amir of Bokhara had to carry out his agreement; and of this period some two years have now elapsed. The Mimbashi of Roshor and other petty chiefs were informed that if the Amir failed to carry out his bargain their possessions would be restored to them.

When the Russians handed over Roshan, Shignan, and Wakhan to the Bokharans, it was on the condition that no taxes should be levied for three years. Of this period two and a half years have now lapsed, and it is not known what changes may be instituted at the end of the third year. The people had been so impoverished under Afghan rule that this remission of taxes was a necessity.

The Mimbashi affirms that the Bokharans are intriguing with the Badakshis and Tayiks on the left bank of the Panjah, and that Bokharan emissaries are constantly crossing the Panjah secretly.

The Amir of Afghanistan has, he states, become aware that something of this kind is proceeding, for he has issued orders prohibiting all intercourse with the right bank of the Oxus, and has stopped the exportation of grain from Badakshan, thereby reducing the Tayiks on the right bank of the Panjah to very great straits; the Afghan garrisons on the Upper Oxus have also been increased considerably (this the Russians subsequently confirmed).

This Mimbashi is intensely hostile to the Russians on account of the way he has been treated, and would be eager to help us in any way possible; he has considerable influence. Great scarcity, amounting in many places to a famine, prevails in Roshan and along the Oxus owing to a failure in the rains last year, and the proclamation of the Amir of Afghanistan prohibiting any import of grain from Badakshan.

The fort at Kala-i-Wamar is to be rebuilt and garrisoned by 50 Bokharans.

The population of these valleys is too great for the area of land that can be cultivated.

In Roshan money is little sought after, as little use can be made of it, the natives prefer trinkets of various kinds, and Yarkand felt numdahs are specially prized, otherwise Russian paper roubles are preferred to silver; Chinese silver passes readily on the Russian Pamirs.

The Badakshis are reported very discontented with Afghan rule, as are also the Afghan Tayiks.

Mir Ishan Kul Beg is the name of the Bokharan Beg in civil charge of Roshan, Shignan, and Wakhan.

He told me that, in the past ten years, 25,000 houses, Badakshis and Tayiks, have fled from Afghan territory into Bokharan. Last year 4,000 houses crossed from Afghan Darwaz into Bokharan Darwaz. The Amir of Bokhara has issued a proclamation that he will give all refugees a safe asylum and land to cultivate, and that they will be free from taxation for four years. Most of the refugees are settled in Darwaz.

Roshan contains 400 houses, Shignan 1,100, Wakhan 500—a house may be reckoned at from eight to ten inmates.

Badakshi traders bring horses, saddlery, puggarees, cotton goods, coral, tea, &c., from Peshawur, and take back sheep, goats, wool, puttoo, and paper roubles.

The Tayiks speak highly of an Englishman who visited the Oxus valley and penetrated as far as Tashgurgan, in Roshan, some 14 years ago during the Afghan occupation; they say that he promised them they should come under British rule.

The Bokharan and Afghan officials hold no communications. According to Mir Ishan Kul Beg the Bokharans are by no means pleased with the Russians. He states that, at the time of the Russian occupation of Bokhara, the country was split up into different factions, otherwise if they had been united the Russians would not have found the country such an easy conquest. The Bokharans are, of course, much afraid of the Russians, and the Amir pretends to be a firm ally, but really is not. He says the Russian officials in Bokhara are extremely badly paid by their Government, and are eager to make all they can out of a people who are unable to resist any demands they choose to make. He states that, in the event of a war between the English and Russians, the sympathy of the Bokharans would be with us, and that the Government of India could easily conclude an arrangement with the Amir ensuring his neutrality, and further that, if we assisted the Bokharans with officers and material, they would undoubtedly lend us active assistance. They seem to have a high idea of the fairness and liberal treatment the native races subject to British rule enjoy, and recognise that it is not our wish to acquire fresh territory merely to enrich ourselves at the expense of the native inhabitants, as seems to be the case with the Russians.

The Bokharans told me that there is a considerable intercourse with Chitral, and that the Chitralis all speak in highest terms of the treatment they receive from us, they report no "zulm," fair payments and justice. Formerly the Chitralis who visited this part of the Oxus were very poverty stricken, but according to the Bokharans there is a manifest improvement. I ascertained from the Bokharans that there is no doubt some truth in the statements made by the Mimbashi Shur Chur, as to some agreement about Badakshan between the Russians and the Amir of Bokhara. The Beg told me that the Khokandis dislike the Russians intensely, and that at the time of the Russian occupation of Khokand, one of the Khan's brothers fled to Peshawur where he now lived, this man has a large following and might under certain eventualities be of service.

I regret that I have not his name, but I was obliged to destroy a good many of my notes on my arrest at Kala-i-Wamar. The road from Kala-i-Wamar to Darwaz occupies six days, there are one or two bad places, but laden ponies can go from Wamar to Bokhara one month.

There is a garrison of 1,000 Bokharans at Kala Khum.

The Chief Political and (? Military) Officer in supreme charge of the Pamir district, which includes jurisdiction over the Bokharans in Wakhan, Shignan and Roshan, is Captain Kevekiss. He is a Swede by birth, and I imagine not particularly attached to Russian service.

His headquarters are at Charog in the corner of the junction of the Ghund Dara with the Panjah, and about two miles above the Afghan fort of Kala Bar Panj. He has under him the following troops:—

At Murghabi—two officers, a lieutenant in charge, 40 Cossacks and one Maxim.

At Charog—three officers, 40 Cossacks and one Maxim.

At Langar Kisht opposite Kalai Panj—one officer, 15 Cossacks and one Maxim.

At Aktash—two Cossacks.

The fort at Charog is extremely well built and would withstand a considerable bombardment by mountain artillery; a fair road leads from Charog to Murghabi, traversed by baggage animals in eight days; it is intended to construct a cart road.

According to the Russian Commandant the Afghan garrisons have been considerably strengthened lately, and the Russian garrisons are to be

doubled in the next relief. There is ample accommodation at Charog and at Murghabi.

At the time of the British occupation of Chitral, Kevekiss was serving as a lieutenant on the Pamirs. He tells me that the Commandant of the Pamirsky post had actually received definite instructions to cross the Hindu Kush and occupy Chitral, but that our actions frustrated his plans. Only those people acquainted with the Russian capacity for intrigue can understand the evil effect that such a movement would have had on the neighbouring Pathan tribes and in the Punjaub.

The road between Charog and Langar-Kisht is possible for laden ponies, but not a good one.

The Oxus from Charog to Kala-i-Wamar is traversed in summer by rafts made of inflated goat skins; in winter donkeys can ford the river, some snow falls, but not a great quantity. The Russians had got a report that the Afghans were going to build a fort at Ishkashim, or rather that English Engineers were going to build it for them.

They regard the relation of Afghanistan to ourselves as very similar to the position of Bokhara, and talk of the former country as being under our suzerainty.

I gathered that very complete plans exist for an advance on Badakshan and Chitral from the Upper Oxus, the number of men that could move by each road has been calculated. Their idea is that the best road to Badakshan is Ishkashim, and that the best road to Chitral would also be the road starting from that place and turning off by Zebak and the Dorah Pass. There is also, they say, a fair road from Shikarf by which British territory is entered in a few hours, there is no Afghan post at this point.

Another road *via* the Nuksar Pass is not so good.

The main advance from this portion of the Upper Oxus would apparently be made from Ishkashim and smaller parties would advance on Chitral by Zebak, Shikarf and the Baroghil Passes.

The Kunjut road is considered quite out of the question.

The Tayiks told me that last year a Nogai (Tartar) officer disguised as a Tayik visited Chitral and brought back complete plans of that place.

I asked Kevekiss if this was true, and he appeared much confused, but afterwards owned that it was.

He told me that such a step was necessitated by the policy of the Indian Government in refusing Russian officers permission to cross the Indian frontier.

The next day he told me that it was not true that a Russian officer last year had visited Chitral.

The system of espionage from Charog is very thorough. There are regular spies employed by the Chief Political Officer, they are paid at the rate of 25 roubles a month, and do nothing else but travel to and from Kabul and Chitral and occasionally visit Gilgit.

These men are Tayiks, and as they precisely resemble the Chitralis it would be difficult to catch them; they keep the Russians exceedingly well informed of every matter of interest in Kabul and Chitral.

One of these spies had brought back a magnificent rifle manufactured at Kabul.

Kevekiss informed me that the garrison of native troops at Hunza had been withdrawn.

Afghan sepoys constantly desert from Bar Panj and Kalal Panj, these deserters are not pure Afghans.

Kevekiss states he gets good information from Yasin from the "Prime Minister of the Mehtar."

It appears that the plans for the invasion of Badakshan and Chitral from the Upper Oxus are a matter of common discussion at the dinner table of the Governor of Ferghana, and the officers at Charog told me that at Marghilan the present Russo-Afghan frontier of the Oxus is considered as a purely temporary arrangement, and likewise the boundary fixed by the Pamir Commission as by no means permanent. They affirm that in due course they will advance their frontier to the Hindu Kush on the south and

cross the Oxus and occupy Badakshan. They anticipate that our Government will give way, and not dare to risk a war with them on behalf of the Amir.

They do not, however, recognise the possibility of the Afghans being anything else than opposed to themselves and fighting side by side with our troops, although they say that Abdurrahman is in constant correspondence with the Governor of Turkestan.

The expenses of the occupation of the Pamirs are 50,000 roubles per annum inclusive.

Reserve of grain and flour at Murghabi stated to be 100,000 puts, and a similar quantity at Charog.

The Kirghiz population on the Russian Pamirs is 2,000 souls. There are no Russian troops in Darwaz.

The largest Russian garrison is at _____ near Herat. Here there are three regiments of infantry, one regiment of Cossacks, and two batteries of artillery.

It is common talk that the Amir of Afghanistan assisted the Afridis with rifles and supplies.

I found the dislike to the Russians pronounced amongst all classes of Mussulman Kirghiz and Tayiks equally, and the recent revolt at Andijan will not tend to lessen this feeling. This revolt had occasioned intense excitement on the Pamirs and in Roshan, and all kinds of rumours were afloat.

Some Kirghiz returning from the Alai told me that they had heard that the Andijanis had appealed to Abdurrahman for aid; others told me that an Anglo-Afghan force had occupied Aktash and that the Russians had fled from Murghabi.

Many other reports were prevalent, which were chiefly interesting in demonstrating the idea that every Mussulman of these parts seems to have that some day there must come an Anglo-Russian conflict, and that when it does come the Russian Mussulman subjects will be found on our side.

These Tayiks and Kirghiz openly stated that if the Andijanis received any help from ourselves or from Kabul they would immediately join in the fray.

My impression is that this general dislike of the Russians is not so much due to excessive taxation as to the impossibility of obtaining fair justice.

Russian officials are so badly paid, that from highest to lowest they will, as a rule, take the side of the man who can offer them the largest bribe. This is my experience also in other portions of Russian Central Asia, and the Russians themselves do not deny taking bribes. They cannot live without them, they say, for neither civil nor military officers in charge of enormous districts receive any allowances for travelling, and therefore must get what they can out of the people. If I might make a suggestion to Her Majesty's Government, I would say that there is no better way of gaining the goodwill and friendship of the various races of Mussulmans in Central Asia, than by encouraging in every way possible Englishmen to travel amongst them. By such methods Government is put to no expense, and the natives readily appreciate the difference between an Englishman, be he sportsman or scientific traveller, who, one may say, is invariably a man of some means and pays his way liberally, and a Russian, who will probably be an official, or, if a private individual, will be armed with an official "parwana," the possession of which places him at once on a par with an official, and makes it obligatory on the natives to supply all his wants "by order."

I have been greatly surprised at the goodwill evinced everywhere I have been, by Russian Mussulman subjects, to myself as an Englishman, and the idea generally prevalent that some day they will be on our side against their conquerors is a curious one to note.

I need hardly point out the advantages to be gained by ourselves in having the Mussulmans in Ferghana and Turkestan on our side, and the great disadvantages the Russians would labour under if such a state of affairs came about.

In an advance on Chitral and Badakshan, the Kirghiz of Ferghana, in which I include the Pamirs, would be called upon to supply many thousands of camels, ponies, and yaks, also sheep; if they were unwilling to do so and

drove their animals away into the mountains, or if we had been able to distribute a certain quantity of arms amongst them and the Tayiks, the Russians would find themselves in a bad way for transport and supplies, and would experience very great trouble from these admirable horsemen on their lines of communication. No doubt also for an advance from the Lower Oxus huge numbers of animals would be requisitioned from Turkestan and the Steppes, and in the latter province I can certify that the prevailing spirit among the Kirghiz is as distinctly hostile as elsewhere.

The presence of a few Englishmen selected for the purpose would ensure these people presenting a hostile attitude to the Russians in the event of a war with ourselves.

I have been frequently asked if our Government is on good terms with the Sultan of Turkey and have of course always replied in the affirmative.

All these Mussulmans, be they Tartars, Sarts, Kirghiz, or Tayiks, look to the Sultan as their head and by his wishes they are much influenced.

These people have said to me, "If the Sultan is on your side we will all assist the 'Ferang' and sweep the Russians off the face of the globe."

It will, I think, be admitted that the goodwill of these races of Mussalmans, even if they are not in a position to render us active assistance, may be of great importance to ourselves in the event of a war with Russia.

It would seem therefore advisable that we should frame our policy so as to maintain as friendly relations as possible with the Porte. Time alone can show the benefits that we may derive from such a policy.

This point, and what I remarked previously as to the good impressions left by Englishmen wherever they go (I might mention that the names of Younghusband, Littledale, Leonard, Beech, and others are still gratefully remembered on the Pamirs and in Chinese Turkestan), I would earnestly commend to the attention of Her Majesty's Government.

There is another matter which appears to me to press for action, and that is the position of Mr. Macartney in Kashgar. I am aware that Her Majesty's Government are, from that officer's reports, kept well informed of the state of affairs in that city; but a traveller perhaps sees and hears more of the aspect in which traders engaged in business with Chinese Turkestan, and the inhabitants of that province generally, regard the position which Mr. Macartney at present is placed in, than the Government can ascertain from mere official reports.

Even at Viernoi beyond the Thian Shan, a large town of considerable importance and where roads from Siberia, Kuldja, Tashkent, and Kashgar all unite, and where therefore representatives from every nation in Asia may be encountered, I was astonished at the accurate way in which Mr. Macartney's position had been summed up by Russian and Sart traders having dealings with Kashgar or Yarkand.

The former are quite aware that our Agent occupies a position not officially recognised by the Chinese, and expressed their surprise that the British Government allowed their representative to occupy a position so inferior to that held by the Russian Consul, and constantly asked me why it was. The Sarts (Kashgarians) expressed their regret that our Agent was not in a position to withstand the growing influence of the Russian Consul with the Chinese, affirming that they were themselves feeling the influence he exercised in favour of Russian merchants and to their detriment.

The Chinese in Kashgar are entirely under Russian influence; for any demand that the Russian Consul may make and which is not complied with is forthwith telegraphed on to Peking by him, when he seems to be invariably supported by M. Pavloff and in the end his demands are conceded.

M. Petrovsky told me as much himself, laughing at the contrast between his position and Macartney's; adding also that the Taotai was so much in his hands that if he refused to accede to any wish of his, he would not hesitate to invite him to the Consulate to take a Russian bath, and then have him flogged by his Cossacks.

It should be noted that the Chinese themselves are well disposed to Mr. Macartney, and would eagerly welcome any improvement in his status which would help them to combat more effectually Russian intrigue.

On the Pamirs the Kirghiz and Sarikdis constantly asked how it is that the Russians are allowed a free hand in Kashgar and Yarkand and why Mr. Macartney is not made Consul, or at all events placed on a better footing; for these people fear, too, the effect of Russian influence exerted over the Chinese in their direction.

The action of the Yarkand Amban in March last in reversing a decision of Macartney's in an arbitration case between two British subjects has been unfavourably commented upon far and wide, as was also his fining certain British subjects who had presented petitions to Mr. Macartney, and threatening them with flogging and other penalties should they ever dare to present him petitions again or show any civilities to English travellers.

In July last there was still much talk going on about this matter in Sarikol, no news of any redress had been received, and the natives generally expressed their astonishment that our Government could put up with such insult to its representative. I need hardly point out how injurious it is to British prestige that such treatment of our Agent can be possible. Reports of this action of the Amban's has circulated all over the Pamirs; and through Badakshi and Afghan traders, of whom there are numbers in Yarkand and Kashgar, has been carried on to the Oxus; for Captain Kevekiss asked me about it at Charog.

If Her Majesty's Government fully realised the intolerable position in which their representative is placed, open as he is, and powerless to defend himself against Russian intrigues, leading to insult from the Chinese (the Munshi attached to the agency in Kashgar was some time ago half murdered by the Chinese soldiery), I cannot help feeling that steps would be taken to alter his status and either give him full Consular powers or oblige the Chinese to accord him official recognition. I might add that the fact that Mr. Macartney has no official uniform to wear, although he appears to have done excellent work in the Political Department of the Indian Government, does not help to raise him in the estimation of the Chinese officials in Turkestan, who regard the wearing of Government uniform as a most important matter.

I must confess that the sight of Mr. Macartney going to pay an official visit in a top hat and frock coat in Kashgar or Yarkand, does not add to the dignity of the British representative. Possibly no opportunity may occur better than the present time for improving our agent's position in Chinese Turkestan.

On my return to Kunjut I met a red bearded Mahomedan at Misgah, the first village in British territory. He told me that he had been sent by Major Deane from Chitral to go to Khokand and bring back information of Russian movements and troops, and that he was to return by Badakshan to Peshawur, and collect on his way information of Afghan movements also. His idea was, he said, to go to Kashgar and obtain a passport from the Russian Consul; but I told him that whatever disguise he assumed, that official would be unlikely to be taken in by him, for he is extremely wide awake. I advised him to take the road following the Oxus through Wakhan Shignan and Roshan and Darwaz, by which route he would probably be able to pass without much questioning.

Russian officials seem to think that the recent appointment of General Koropatkin as War Minister, denotes the commencement of a policy of renewed activity on the Russo-Afghan frontier.

I have, &c.,

RALPH P. COBBOLD, F.R.G.S.,
late 60th Rifles.

The Under Secretary of State,
Foreign Office.

No. 1.

Report of a Journey from Boulungkul at the head of the Gez Defile to the Great Kara Kul Lake, by R. P. Cobbold, late 60th Rifles.

Number of Stage and Date.	Names of Stages.	Distances.		Remarks.
		Inter-mediate.	Total.	
I. May 11	Chagarakul	7	7	Road follows the Kuntemis R.; grass at this time very scanty; small lake; 2 Kirghiz yourts; mud fort here, garrison of 50 Chinese sepoy's stationed here in summer. Temperature night 32° F.
II. May 12	Kuntemis	17½	24½	Road follows Kuntemis R.; for 5 miles over grass then 5 miles up stony river bed; at 13 miles cross river water half way up ponies' sides; Kirghiz encampment of 4 yourts; grass scanty; no fuel but dried dung. Temp. night 25° F. Road from here to Kashgar in 6 days open for laden ponies in summer; good alternative from Gez defile which is closed in summer; this road comes out at Tashmulak, name of pass Oulgart.
III. May 13	Moja	15	39½	Follow river; road good all day; at 12 miles Kirghiz encampment, 4 yourts; Moja encampment of an important Beg, 10 yourts; supplies but no fuel. Temp. 19° F. Summer road to Rangkul by the Oi-Bal-gun Pass.
IV. May 15	Ke Akbashi	7	46½	Road muddy and sticky from melting snow. Outpost of 6 Kirghiz sepoy's; snow fell in night, Temp. 19° F. Road to Rangkul from here; a Russian doctor had crossed on 28th April.
V. May 17	Kolpootch	20	66½	Road level over bare plain; at 10 miles ascent to Koshbil Pass; pass easy, no snow descent to valley; at 14 miles a second pass, then descent over bare plain to Karaart R.; road down river to right leads to Markhun Su; path turns up river to left; at 20 miles Kirghiz arkois; grass. At the junction of the Karaart and Markhun Su is Chinese fort called Mook, garrison 10 Chinese and 20 Kirghiz sepoy's. Chinese propose to send 100 Chinese sepoy's and are re-building fort. Temp. 7° F.
VI. May 19	Kum Bel	12	78½	Follow Karaart R. down 3 miles, then turn up Kum Bel R., road good; at 12 miles Kirghiz camp; little grass; bhourtsa; nullah continues for 20 miles, from summit is summer road to Kara Kul. Temp. 12°.
VII. May 21	Chadirtash	12	90½	Cross Kum Bel P. ascent easy to summit; descent perpendicular to Markhun Su 4 miles; follow river up 8 miles; valley averages one mile width, grass and low jungle in places in fair quantities; mountains bare, water low; no signs humanity.

Number of Stage and Date.	Names of Stages.	Distances.		Remarks.
		Inter-mediate.	Total.	
VIII. May 22 -	Kizil Kul -	20	110½	Follow river up; at 1 mile nullah to right Kanuskartin leading to Tongmaroon Dawan, whence in summer there is road to Alai (not marked on map), road stony, grass scarce, mountains bare; at 9 miles Kokjilga, up which there is road to Kizil Art coming out at Mash Ali Sai below the pass; at 15 miles Ak Jilga nullah; at 19 miles succession of frozen lakes; grass scarce, no wood; this camp is 4 miles due E. of base of Kizil Art pass; no signs of humanity.
IX. May 23 -	Karakul -	20	130½	For 2 miles due W. to point opposite Kizil Art P. 14,260 ft. few patches of snow on pass; at 2 miles lake frozen snow and ice fed by 2 streams from the Kizil Agyn and by stream from Oiboolak; these streams are sources of the Markhun Su; path leads S.W. skirting base of mountains on left, then across sandy plain rising gradually to Oiboolak where there is a spring of water; here track across sand joins cart road from Marghilan to Murghabi; at 12 miles summit of ascent 14,200 ft. first view of Karakul Lake; road descends to lake; at 20 miles post station of Kirghiz for post between Murghabi and Osh cart road opened last summer, finished in 2 months by Kirghiz from Andijan; a certain amount of labour required Kizil Art and Ak Baital passes, but elsewhere level. Post Murghabi to Osh 8 days in summer and 12 days in winter; carts in 10 days summer and 15 winter; cart road always open except in exceptional snow fall. Post every third day. No signs humanity between Kizil Art and Karakul; grass scanty; labourers brought from hills by Kirghiz; good road over ice on lake up to end of April; water Karakul brackish; supplies scarce. No Kirghiz are found near Karakul, as they dislike living near Post Road.
	Description of Karaart Pass (15,800 ft.), 30th June.			From Karakul Lake ascent nullah leading to pass keeping to right hand; at 6 miles nullah divides into 2 branches, nullah to right has no road; follow left-hand branch; at 7 miles strike stream from pass and some grass, follow stream; nullah narrows; at 12 miles leave stream and ascend left side of nullah by zigzags to summit 15 miles; ascent severe but path good, some snows, easy descent; at 19 miles grass, large nullah to right has no road, follow stream; at 15 miles Kirghiz camp. The watershed of pass is Russo-Chinese frontier boundary.

No. 2.

Report of a Journey from the Great Kara Kul Lake to the Russian Fort of Charog, by R. P. Cobbold, late 60th Rifles.

Number of Stage and Date.	Names of Stages.	Distances.		Remarks.
		Inter-mediate.	Total.	
1. 24th May	Toom Shu Uttok	30	30	From post station by Karakul Lake follow post road towards Muskol; at 6 miles road leaves post road, turns S.W. across broad sandy plain; at 12 miles enter broad nullah running W.; at 17 miles gradual descent to S.W. corner of Karakul; 18 miles skirt base of hills on left, at 24 miles leave hills and cross salt marshes to mountains on right S.W., at 28 miles frozen snow bed, cross to foot of hills 30 miles, grass, no bhourtsa, little dung, no Kirghiz seen all day. Temp. 15° F.
2. 25th May	Kokui Bel	11	41	Proceed up nullah, which is called Kuatata, S., at 4 miles road from Muskol joins; plain bare, at 6½ miles bare plain ends, some grass, at 8 miles path leaves main nullah, at 11 miles camp perpetual Kirghiz camp here. Supplies grass. There are two passes leading from head of nullah, first, Tuzakh Pass leading to Karakul; second, Kokui Bel Pass, 15 miles, leading to Belen Kiik and Allai; both these, also path to Tocktogoram, only open late summer. There is a good road from here to Kok Jar by the Apak Pass in one day; open in July.
3. 27th May	Koouz	10	51	For over 4 miles over low slopes of bare hills, at 4 miles entrance to Dunga-ga nullah here streams from Kizil Bilis Pass 16 miles, and Apak Pass 12 miles join. Defile narrow, at 6 miles river from Kokui Bel joins; joint rivers flow via Karabulak defile to Kudara; path to left bank crosses bare stony ground for 3 miles; at 9 miles grassy plain, stream from Tashkole N. joins; camp 10 miles, bhourtsa grass. No Kirghiz seen all day. From here entrance, Karabulak defile 5 miles; winter road to Kudara good; in summer no footpath. Kudara from here three days, first stage, Karabulak; second Tockoi Bashi; third, Kudara. Temp. 20° F.
4. 28th May	Belaytuk	9	60	Cross to right bank stream; at 2½ miles entrance to large nullah on right, bare ground, follow nullah up over bare plain; at 9 miles watershed, water on far side W. flows down Thanwas River to Kudara, this camp is at entrance to Kokjar N.; 7 "yourts" here, supplies; usual road from here to Kudara by Kokjaris on left bank of river, but now closed.

Number of Stage and Date.	Names of Stages.	Distances.		Remarks.	
		Inter-mediate.	Total.		
5. 30th May	Toptal-Tockoi	5	9	69	Road proceeds W.; at 1½ miles entrance to Shur Ali N. is opposite, on right up this N. is Kizil Bilis Pass, at 4 miles entrance to Tocktogoram N., 6 miles up this is pass to Belenkiik and Allai; at 4½ miles path ascends on right bank of river over bare stony ground; at 6½ miles Yaman Jar precipitous ravine cutting sides of mountains, ponies unloaded, baggage carried by Kirghiz to opposite side, 7 miles path continues along side of mountains, and descends to Toptal Tockoi, from here on right is Yangi-dawan N. pass to Alai; here water from Thanwas glacier (5 miles) joins; no Kirghiz, plenty grass and wood.
6. 31st May	Pollis		21	90	Follow river called by natives Thanwas down defile called by same name; at 7½ miles Kizil Tockoi N. grass, wood plentiful; path stony and bad; at 18½ miles mouth of defile, path descends to a sandy plain; at 19 miles cross to right bank of Thanwas River; here river from Karabulak defile joins, this place called Kudara, united rivers enter defile leading to Tashkurgan; camp under cliffs on right side of river, summer encampment of Tayiks, cultivation barley, grass; wood scarce. Temp. 45° F.
7. 1st June	Tashkurgan		17	107	Road on right bank of river; at 2½ miles hamlet of Pussore five houses of Tayiks, cultivation barley, path ascends side of mountain descending at Jailoo Bashure 5½ miles, descent steep for laden ponies, road by river side over stony ground; at 15½ miles river from Murghab joins, large volume water; at 16 miles foot of rocky hill; at 17 miles termination of rocky hill and village, 10 houses, fruit trees, and cultivation, grass scarce, supplies and little corn obtainable; the defile from Pollis to this place called Pussore, and the river Thanwas, people Tayiks, speak Persian as well as their own dialect of Wakhi. Winter road to Murghabi lies up the Murghab defile over the snow bed, and is a good one. Summer road impracticable for animals, goes from Nassur to Sarez, then follows Murghab River as far as junction of the Pshart River, which nullah is only one used by natives in summer.
8. 3rd June	Roshor		5	112	Pony road ascends to small plateau avoiding parris by river side along which there is a foot path; at 1 mile on opposite (left) bank is village Nassure, five houses, from here road to Sarez (40 houses); at 1½ miles Yezgelon N. leading to Koorgeen Ok Bar P. good summer road to Darwar; at 2 miles road leaves river and crosses side of hill to large plateau called Roshor, 30 houses, grain of most kind grown; supplies; attached to Roshor is village of Yupchun; 10 houses by river bank. Temp. 42° F. Coolies obtainable.

Number of Stage and Date.	Names of Stages.	Distances.		Remarks.
		Inter-mediate.	Total.	
9. 4th June	Camp	8	120	Road for laden ponies ends Koshor, path descends for 3 miles to above river here called Bartang, then by zigzags across face of precipice to level of river, going dangerous; from river ascend side of rocky hill to summit 4 miles, gradual descent to river 5 miles, grass; ascend sharply 600 feet across undulating ground descending to river at 7 miles here, very bad, "parri is crossed." Camp, no supplies or grass, character of country bare, road very bad; nine hours on road; baggage on coolies.
10. 5th June	Baseed	7	127	Path on right side of Bartang; at 1 mile foot of Indoof Jehr very dangerous precipice; pony road by zigzags up face of cliff, foot road by river also bad; from summit (1,000 feet) easy descent to river 1½ miles; at 3 miles ascent to the top of a spur 3½ miles, opposite on left bank Bardera N. summer road to Shignan; by Ok Bar P. ponies go; at entrance of Bardera village, Badour, 15 houses; path descends to Chadud, 10 houses, cultivation and fruit trees, this village and Baseed under one Aksakal; ponies here swim river to left bank, baggage on skin rafts, river 100 yards wide. From Chadud a lofty road over tops of mountains practicable for unladen ponies descends to Bartang River 5 miles the Chadud side of Razouge; path on left bank; village 30 houses, supplies except eggs; 12 hours on road; coolies.
11. 6th June	Razouge	12	139	At 1 mile footbridge to right bank; coolies cross ponies on left bank; at 1½ miles difficult "parri," at 6 miles village Addgerch, five houses; at 7½ miles ponies swim to right bank, baggage by rafts, at 8½ miles sharp ascent, at 10 miles descends to river, then crosses bad "parri" and descends to river. Razouge large village 30 houses; supplies, river here divided into many channels and fordable; coolies; 10 hours on road; hills bare.
12. 7th June	Sur Panj	6	145	At ½ mile ponies swim to left bank; foot-path on right bank crosses a "parri"; at ¼ mile ponies recross to right bank, path along river till 4 miles when ponies ascend and cross side of mountain by lofty path, foot road along river very bad; at 5 miles village Rowevd, five houses, footbridge across Bartang; large village, 30 houses; supplies coolies; 4 hours on road.
13. 8th June	Pyderoot	8	153	Road to left bank by footbridge, ponies swim at 1 mile on right Bai Shah Vitch Hoof N. summer road to Darwaz; at 2 miles on left bank village Oosow, six houses; at 4 miles footbridge to right bank, ponies swim; at 5 miles Engmeed N., large volume of water inside Nullah village, 30 houses; at 7 miles recross to right bank; summer camp of Tayiks, grass, wood abundant; road bad all day, eight hours on road.

Number of Stage and Date.	Names of Stages.	Distances.		Remarks.
		Inter-mediate.	Total.	
14. 9th June -	Barghoo -	4	157	At 1½ miles ponies swim to left bank; at 2½ miles Rhete N., six houses in this nullah, path crosses succession of galleries and "parris," six houses, supplies.
15. 10th June -	Kala-i-Wamar -	6	163	Bad road on right bank; at 2 miles village Yaimis, 20 houses; at 4 miles village Soojun, 30 houses; at 5 miles junction of Bartang and Dara Panj, from here cultivation. Kala-i-Wamar, large village, 40 houses, old fort built by Afghans, headquarters of Bokharan Beg in civil charge of Roshan, Shignan, and Wakhan, garrison 20 irregulars. Oxus River 200 yards wide; Tayiks cross by rafts and mussocks; in winter asses can ford.
16. 19th June -	Charog -	50	213	Good bridle road along Oxus; various villages passed; cultivation scanty for number of population; village 30 houses, supplies; fort very strongly built of rock, wood, and earth, on lofty ground near river. The Ghund Dara joins Oxus 4 miles higher up. Afghan fort, Kala Bar Panj, is situated 2 miles below Russian fort; garrison 100 men, many of them Tayiks; two cannon; Russian garrison at Charog four officers, 40 Cossacks, one maxim. The officer in charge, Captain Kevekiss, is in charge of the Pamir District, including Roshan, Shignan, and Wakhan, and has full political as well as military powers. The defile of the Bartang from Tashkurgan to Kala-i-Wamar is the worst piece of road imaginable, and in summer there is no foot traffic.