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Errata Sheet

p.5	representatives
p.5	recognised
p.17	divided
p.46	guaranteed
p.50	one hundred and fifty
p.51	the First World War
p.73	fn 73 Indian National Movement
p.122	line 4 from bottom, 'that'
p.192	provide
p.204	[be] sure
p.207	an important
p.221	Indian National Congress
p.226	produce
p.244	administered
p.252	delete 'the'
p.312	foresaw
p.315	August 1947

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BRITISH POLICY AND THE 'DEVELOPMENT' OF TIBET 1912-1933

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

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ABSTRACT

Two conflicting views of Tibet's political status in relation to China have dominated both popular and scholarly literature. The 'pro-Chinese' school views Tibet as a traditional, integral part of China. Tibet, they maintain, was separated from China after the fall of the Manchu dynasty as a consequence of British machinations. Tibet was justifiably reunited with China, the 'motherland', in 1951. The 'pro-Tibetan' school argues that the partnership was between the Dalai Lama and the Manchus: that relationship ended with the collapse of the Manchu dynasty. Accordingly, Tibet is seen as an independent state conquered by the Chinese Communists and illegally incorporated into the Chinese state.[1] This study is not an attempt to enter that debate, but rather to fill a gap in a neglected aspect of Tibetan studies. Nonetheless, the results of this study will, no doubt, become a component in the highly politicized nature of Tibetan history.

Sir Charles Bell's authoritative Tibet, Past and Present (1924) and Portrait of a Dalai Lama (1946) both stand as important primary sources for this study. As secondary sources dealing with British policy, W. D. Shakabpa's pioneering study Tibet: A Political History (1967), P. Mehra's The McMahon Line and After (1974) and A.K.J. Singh's Himalayan Triangle (1988) are indispensable. Alastair Lamb's most recent study, Tibet, China and India 1914-1950 (1989), is the first publication to deal with this period in detail. Lamb expertly evaluates Anglo-Tibetan relations and narrows the gap which this thesis study is also designed to close. However, by locating Anglo-Tibetan relations in the wider context of international politics, this dissertation will augment Lamb's study and contribute to the continuing intellectual debate in the field of Tibetan studies.

Tibet has been significant in the political development of British India, for it was believed to be a key to the safety and security of India's north-eastern frontier. When the British consolidated their power in the sub-continent of India, they were also faced with the problem of securing a stable frontier on India's Himalayan borders. The British government, therefore, had to evolve a definite policy towards the Himalyan kingdoms, especially Tibet. British India's policy during the 19th century was to treat Tibet as a buffer state.

There can be no doubt that the loss of Tibet's independence stems directly from the failure of the British Government's Younghusband Mission of 1904 to achieve what the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, hoped would result from it. Curzon believed that the

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1 M. Goldstein, A History of Modern Tibet 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State (Berkely, 1989), p. xv.

only way to guarantee the continuance of Tibet as a buffer was to ensure the predominance of British influence at Lhasa. This was to be achieved by bringing Tibet under some measure of British protection or influence. Curzon believed that British influence was essential because unless Britain laid claim to Tibet, Russia would draw Tibet into its sphere of influence. After the First World War Britain again had an opportunity to become Tibet's 'protector' but as was the case after 1904, chose to abandon Tibet to Chinese expansionism.

Tibet, even today, conjures up images of 'Shangri-la', 'the savage and the sublime' and, perhaps, 'paradise lost'. It is, however, far from remote or picayune to world history. Tibet represents the interface between the two most populous nations on earth and marks the site of one of the most complex boundary disputes ever to disturb the peace of nations. The problems on India's northern frontiers have become a tangled mass of diplomatic perplexity to the governments and people of India and China.

The loss of Tibet as a buffer zone between two major world powers has produced major long-term consequences. The Chinese domination of Tibet has presented the current Indian Republic with just those dangers which Curzon feared would confront the British-Indian Empire from the extension into Tibet of the influence of Tsarist Russia. Tibet's role today as a garrison state of China goes far towards explaining its important place in current Western geopolitical thought. Tibet has become a major handicap to China's political stability. The fate of modern Tibet, and the problems of India's northern frontiers, are subjects of recent political debate. Tibet's destiny in a broader sense and in these days of national self-determination is now a concern of world conscience.

It is difficult to comprehend the current situation in Tibet and its place in the policy of both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India without an understanding of what happened during the period of British colonial domination in India. The British carry some responsibility for the present state of affairs of Tibet. The question at issue is what responsibility should the British accept and what explanations are there for Britain's inability to prevent the loss of Tibetan independence? The answer to these questions lie in an analysis of the wider pattern of Anglo-Chinese political relations and of international relations after the First World War.

Over the years scholars have trodden a well-worn path to the documents dealing with Anglo-Tibetan affairs held in the Public Record Office and the India Office Library. These documents have, more often than not, been used to compose historical surveys which examine chronological events and often result in Anglo-Tibetan relations being analysed in isolation from the broader international context. The primary information on which this study is based provides a level of detail and understanding of the 1920s and

1930s that has not previously been available. Many studies have been made of the 1904 Younghusband Mission, the 1913-14 Simla Conference and the later period of the 1940s and 1950s. The 1920s and 1930s have been overshadowed by the turbulent decades that preceded and succeeded them. These years have usually been given meaning only as a transition period and have assumed the character of a more or less featureless interval: a static period in Anglo-Tibetan relations.

The relationship formed between British India and Tibet by the resolution of the 1914 Simla Conference appeared unaltered and fundamentally unquestioned until the transfer of power to an independent Indian government. This, however, was not the case. During this period two major policy shifts took place. The apparent continuity conceals the intensity of debates over Tibetan policy in the British and Indian governments, especially during the years 1919-1921 and 1932-33, which disclosed Britain's apprehension about the volatile political situation in central and north Asia during and after the First World War. The destiny of Tibet has normally been treated as if it was almost exclusively determined by Anglo-Chinese relations. This approach ignores the fact that after the First World War the Tibetan question become an important component of a much broader controversy on the course of post-war British policy in Asia.

The major reasons given for the Chinese incapacity to conclude a Tibetan agreement with Britain during the 1920s have been civil strife and popular opposition within China. The general consensus on the reason for Britain's inability to persuade the Chinese to resume negotiations is the aspiring mood of nationalism in China itself. Indeed this is part of the answer, but the other part is that China was awakening to the fact that Britain's power and position in the Far East had been substantially decreased because of the First World War. Britain no longer had the diplomatic strength needed to bluff China into concluding a settlement of the Sino-Tibetan dispute.

It is generally felt that China's intransigence and, at the same time, her weakness gave the Foreign Office no alternative but to sanction a policy of close Anglo-Tibetan relations without reference to China. On the surface this appears to be accurate but it overlooks the general context of Britain's economic situation in the Far East. This, in turn, reflected significant changes in the balance of power in Asia. Britain's position in the Far East had diminished and pressure from the British Legation in Peking, the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office and the British commercial community in China operated to shift the main emphasis of British policy in Asia from one of reliance on Japan to closer links with the United States and with a renascent China.

With hindsight it can be seen that British policy decisions made during this period were crucial to Tibet's future. This study aims to place this period in the

important position it should hold in any debate of Anglo-Tibetan relations. The 'forgotten years' deserve a more prominent place in Tibetan studies.

The beginning date of 1912, or in Tibetan, the year of Water-Mouse, was the year in which the 13th Dalai Lama returned from two years of exile in British India and declared independence for Tibet. 1933, the year of Water-Bird, was the year in which the 13th Dalai Lama died. The intervening years covered a period of Anglo-Tibetan relations which seem to indicate a movement towards the independence and development of Tibet under the umbrella of British influence. It can be seen in retrospect, however, that British influence in Tibet during the intervening years gradually declined. It was the realisation of this fact which prompted the major question: Why did Britain draw away from relations with Tibet? What were the socio-political and cultural issues that caused Britain to withdraw?

The First World War did irreparable damage to the structure of imperialist diplomacy. This fact sets the stage for a discussion of Anglo-Tibetan relations during the 1920s and 1930s. The undermining of the old order came about in two ways. On the one hand, Japanese expansion on the continent, coupled with the temporary distress of the European powers, destroyed the balance in the Far East which, though always precarious, the imperialists had managed to maintain. On the other hand, there were new forces undermining the very foundation of the old diplomacy - the 'new diplomacy' of the United States and the Soviet Union, and the self-conscious assertion of nationalism in China. It was Tibet's particular misfortune to be caught in the clutch of two powerful neighbours, Britain and China, who used her as a pawn in the compassionless game of political intrigue and diplomacy during the inter-war period.

In attempting to answer the central question it is essential to connect the Anglo-Tibetan relationship to the international situation in which it operated. In tracing the British response to these international determinants, a chronological treatment is used. Each chapter therefore contains an evaluation which places Anglo-Tibetan relations in this wider context, identifying the economic, social and political ideas which set the historical boundaries within which British policy decisions operated.

The central problem of Britain's relations with Tibet has required research based on the archives of the British Foreign Office, housed in the Public Record Office in London, and supplemented by records in the India Office Library. These comprise a massive collection of letters, telegrams, notes, minutes, reports of the British and Indian governments, including many from the Tibetan and Chinese governments. The principal collection used are the Political and Secret Department Subject Files.

The Australian National Library in Canberra has on microfilm the Foreign Office series relating to China which covers political correspondence from 1906 to 1922. In

this series is a vast amount of information relating to Anglo-Tibetan relations. The Library also holds original copies of the Foreign Office Confidential prints (1840-), the only set outside Great Britain. Records and manuscripts held in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, India, have also produced some information.

The private papers of Sir Charles Bell, Colonel Bailey, Colonel Weir, all of whom visited Lhasa during their time as British Political Officers, adds another dimension to the study. The diaries of Bell, Bailey, Frank Ludow, who set up the first British school in Tibet, and Captain R. S. Kennedy, who accompanied Bell to Lhasa as a medical officer, have also been consulted. These private papers are held at the India Office Library and the British Library. Books written by principal figures, such as Charles Bell, Eric Teichman, Henry Hayden, David Macdonald, William McGovern and Hugh Richardson, have also been studied as primary source material. Publications by Tibetan authors, R. D. Taring, R. Lha-Mo, K. Dondup, D. N. Tsarong, D. Norbu and T. J. Norbu have contributed a valuable Tibetan perspective.

Interviews with surviving participants and observers have been especially useful, particularly regarding personal character details. Some interviews were tape-recorded in Tibetan and later translated and transcribed, others were translated into English during the interview. Interviews with English-speaking participants were typed directly into a computer data base.

An application for a research visa for access to the National Archives in New Delhi, India, was successful. However, the application took nearly eighteen months to process and arrived too late for me to make use of the opportunity.

Summary:

With the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet in 1912 the British government saw an opportunity to consolidate their influence in Tibet and re-establish Tibet as a buffer zone. The declaration of Tibetan independence inspired and facilitated a programme of development by the 13th Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama intended to initiate changes, political as well as social, which were necessary if his country was to remain independent.

The revived problem of a Russian 'menace' in Central Asia was the primary reason for London to exert pressure on China to attend a conference at Simla in 1914. During the conference the British developed a comprehensive programme to revise the status of Tibet. The Anglo-Tibetan Simla Agreement, in effect, proved to be an unequal bargain. In return for India's frontier security, the Tibetans were promised diplomatic and military support in their struggle with China. From the viewpoint of the Tibetans, the 1914 Anglo-Tibetan agreement identified Britain as 'Tibet's Protector'. Yet, in spite

of all the discussion on the status of Tibet, the notion of concluding some form of protectorate agreement with the Lhasa government was never contemplated. Instead, Britain proclaimed Chinese 'suzerainty' over an 'autonomous' Tibet. The recognition of Chinese suzerainty was to safeguard British commercial interest in China and the support of Tibetan autonomy was to ensure security of India's northern frontier. This provided Britain with informal control of Tibet without involving the granting of responsible government and, at the same time, allowed Britain to continue her stationary economic imperialism in China.

1914 ushered in the Great War, which transformed global politics. During the war years Britain was not prepared to, nor in a position to give, active military assistance to Tibet and the opportunity for building a close relationship with an autonomous Tibet diminished. Taking up arms against China for the sake of Tibetan independence was never a consideration. The Dalai Lama considered that Britain had made a commitment to support and protect Tibet by signing the Anglo-Tibetan Agreement. By 1918 he was very disillusioned. The question at issue by the end of the war was whether Britain was in a position to offer any form of diplomatic assistance or protection to Tibet.

While China was deemed at the commencement of the First World War not to be a threat to Tibet, the war emphasised the increased danger of a China controlled by Japan. It soon became clear that Japan would attempt to take advantage of the war to expand her influence on the mainland of Asia. Despite this ominous situation, it seemed that pre-war circumstances were reviving in which British pressure would eventually overcome obstinate Chinese resistance, and an agreement on Tibet's status would be achieved.

The world, however, was a different place after 1918. During the First World War and the period of post-war settlement British interests in China had radically to be redefined. Altering international economic patterns, changing imperial priorities, rising nationalism in the Far East, and the growth of new ideologies all had repercussions. The predominant theme in Anglo-Tibetan relations during the next few years was Britain's attempt to procure Chinese participation in renewed negotiations over Tibet and Peking's constant refusal, under an assortment of excuses, to oblige. The British government's response to this rejection on the part of the Chinese government was to send a mission to Lhasa.

The sending of a mission to Lhasa and the eventual agreement to supply arms and aid to Tibet were viewed at the time as manifesting a new determination in British policy. Its principal result was supposedly to demonstrate that the British government intended to treat Tibetan autonomy as a reality by strengthening Tibet's ability to defend

itself and by helping to develop the country's resources. Bell's mission to Lhasa, in reality, was a diplomatic bluff to coerce China into resuming negotiations, a bluff which failed. Further indefinite delay, coupled with a continuance of the policy of self-denial, would have involved the risk of the Chinese regaining control over Tibet, as had happened in 1910.

The British feared that the Tibetan government would conclude an independent treaty with China. Policy makers were faced with the choice of continuing to work for a settlement on existing lines, and running that risk, or of taking other measures to protect British interests by adopting a new and more liberal policy towards the Tibetans, which would entail the eventual opening of Tibet and the development of its resources under British auspices. It appeared that Tibet was being drawn more firmly under the umbrella of British influence. With British support, the 1920s seemed to promise a transformation of Tibet: a breaking away from old traditions and a move towards the rudimentary development of technological, economic and military infrastructures which would enable Tibet to become a self-sustaining independent state. Both Charles Bell, Political Officer, Sikkim, and the Government of India wanted a non-interference policy. At the same time they wanted Britain to help develop Tibet in a way that would enable the country to retain its independence but also serve British interests.

The eventual decision to provide military assistance and aid symbolised not a new tenacity of purpose but Britain's inability to intimidate China into accepting an ultimatum. The adoption of the so-called 'new and liberal' policy which followed Charles Bell's mission to Lhasa was little more than an attempt to induce the Chinese government to abandon their obstructive attitude and conclude a settlement of the Tibetan question. The British hoped that the spectacle of Tibet's adoption of a policy of self-development would coerce the Peking government into submission. In retrospect, however, it can be seen that the support given to Tibet was inadequate and the direction which British policy took during the 1920s and 1930s resulted in the eventual loss of Tibet's independence.

The conceptual basis of Britain's new policy was flawed: Britain wanted Tibet as a buffer but was not prepared to give the support necessary for it to remain independent. The source of Britain's impaired policy is manifest. On the one hand, they were committed by a promise to the Lhasa government to support Tibet in upholding her practical autonomy, which was of importance to the security of India, and, on the other hand, Britain's alliance with China made it difficult to give effective material support to Tibet.

What the British wanted was to create a balance. That is to say, give just enough support so that Tibet could protect India's Himalayan border without the British having

to commit themselves to a major defensive initiative, while allowing the Tibetans, meanwhile, to pay for the honour of doing so. The intention was to convince the Chinese that Tibet was becoming self-sufficient. The ultimate objective was to get the Chinese to sign an agreement which would secure, for the British stability in Central Asia. British tactics were impotent and the Foreign Office adopted a 'wait-and-see' approach which dissolved into a 'dormancy' policy.

The 1921 Washington Conference represented the crossroad in Anglo-Tibetan policy. Britain's wider economic and political considerations at this time altered Anglo-Tibetan relations. Britain's Tibetan policy was impaired, as statesmen attempted to cope with the transition between pre-war commitments and post-war attitudes. The British government's post-war position made cooperation with the United States, or at least avoidance of American displeasure, the sine qua non of any successful policy. Britain's Tibetan policy during the 1920s and 1930s was to have no policy - to drift: a symbolic act which reflected the decline of British imperialism. The British found themselves on the defensive in the Far East and a desire to retain their trade position in China became dominant. Especially after the 1925 anti-British boycott in China, Britain followed a conciliatory policy and supported Chinese nationalism.

The implementation of Britain's new China policy during the late 1920s coincided with a period of internal political turmoil in Tibet. The critical years for the Tibetan reformation were the 1920s, when the 13th Dalai Lama was attempting to strengthen and develop his nation. British government policy during this period limited the embryonic reforms and ultimately led to a weak and unstable Tibet. The Lhasa government exhibited a 'spirit of independence' but by 1925 the Dalai Lama was moving his allegiance away from Britain towards China. The Chinese Nationalist government took advantage of this tendency and adopted a 'forward' policy.

By 1933 British commercial interests in China made it necessary to subordinate Indian policy towards Tibet to the wider British approach to China. Britain withdrew from relations with Tibet because post-war international political and economic changes hastened the demise of the British Empire and required Britain to support Chinese nationalism. Britain had to choose either to support and protect Tibet or look after her own interests. Britain, not unnaturally, chose to do the latter.

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A limitation to this study has been Australia's geographical isolation from areas of Tibetan studies and the scarcity of scholars involved in Tibetan studies in Australia, and especially in the University of Wollongong. My decision to undertake a study of Tibet for my Ph.D dissertation initially met with much scepticism within my History department. However, Dr. Ian McLaine agreed to supervise me provided a thesis could

legitimately be developed from a British point of view. I remain grateful for his confidence in me. The absence of scholarly interaction has made my study a solitary and arduous task. Despite modern communication technology, the scholarly debate still remains a vital element in the process of history writing. To some extent this limitation was reduced by my participation in the Sixth International Conference on Tibetan Studies in Norway in 1992, and I would like to acknowledge my appreciation to the Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, Oslo, for the allocation of funds towards my participation.

CHAPTER 1

THE MANCHU LINK IS BROKEN

'The Tibetans are a peace-loving people: they threaten nobody, but merely wish to keep their country to themselves'.[1]

The 20th century began for the Tibetans with the forceful opening in 1904 of their country by the British Younghusband Expedition. Henceforward the relationship between Britain and Tibet was controlled by the vagaries of international politics. European *realpolitik* were determining as never before the course of political developments in Asia.[2] Between 1904 and the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1933 the political context in which the Tibetan conundrum had developed significantly altered. The three empires, Russia, China, and Britain, upon which the destiny of Tibet depended, had undergone extraordinary upheaval. The 'Great Game' was reaching its finale and new rules were being embraced. The First World War obliged Britain to focus on its own backyard. As Britain slowly began to disengage from its empire, Tibet's future became tied to China's imperial claims and Britain's economic and strategic needs.[3]

During the nineteenth century Britain's Tibetan policy moved primarily to the rhythm of Russian, not Chinese, advances and exhibited the onset of British weakness. At the outbreak of the Great War the British had an insecure northeast Indian frontier not because of the menace of China but because they had failed to contain Russia.[4] The Anglo-Russian Convention ultimately caused considerable dissatisfaction and 'failed to fulfil the British aim of halting Russian expansion in areas strategically crucial to the defence of India'.[5] British apprehension about Russian expansion in Central Asia prompted the British after 1914 to consolidate their position in Tibet. By the end of the war a change in the balance of power in the Far East was evident and British hopes of neutralizing Central Asia through the Anglo-Russian Convention were frustrated.

By 1914 the balance of power in Asia had already turned unalterably against Britain. Industrial decline, the impact of the railroad in decreasing the strategic

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1 IOR: L/P&S/971 Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

2 P. Addy, Tibet on the Imperial Chessboard (New Delhi, 1984), p. 305.

3 Ibid, passim.

4 The struggle between Britain and Russia for supremacy in Central Asia , often referred to as 'The Great Game', is well documented. See M. Edwardes, Playing the Great Game (London, 1975), H. W. C. Davis, The Great Game, Raleigh Lecture on History, (London, 1926), J. H. Gleason, The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain (Harvard, 1950).

5 I. Klein, 'The Anglo-Russian Convention and the Problem of Central Asia, 19O7-1914' Journal of British Studies, Vol. 11, 1971, p. 126.

advantages of British sea power, and financial strain from mounting military expenditures contributed to ending British predominance. The first phase in the shift in power in Asia occurred with the intensification of European rivalry for empire. By the 1880s Russia had penetrated Turkoman Central Asia[6] and France had developed its empire in Indo-China near the borders of British India. By 1900 European warships in China seas outnumbered the British China squadron.[7] The British compensated for diminished strength by creating an alliance system to preserve the Asian status quo. Concluding the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902,[8] they redressed the naval balance in the Far East with the rising sea power of Japan. After the Japanese defeated Russia in 1904-05 the British obtained the Anglo-Russian Convention.[9]

The conceptual framework in which the British politicians were operating during the nineteenth century was one of imperial politics, which was concerned with contesting, controlling, reordering and redefining geographical space. It was also about the identity of nations in the global age. Friedrich Ratzel had first proposed this explanation in 1882. He stated that among nations the struggle for existence is a struggle for space. Tibet was embroiled in Western geopolitical struggles for over two centuries. Imperial expansion and rivalry were intense. By 1900 Britain ruled over one-fifth of the globe. Britain had its own spokesperson and theorist for geopolitics in Mackinder. Mackinder believed that the world was moving under the influence of a single dominant global empire and that whoever controlled what he called the 'Asian heartland' would control the world.

The threatened collapse of the Chinese Empire in Central Asia and Russian expansion into that region during the 19th century forced the British to reassess their position in Asia. The Crimean War frustrated Russian aspirations in the Balkans and caused their efforts in Central Asia to be intensified. Their empire in that region was consolidated in just thirty years: in 1860 Russian troops captured Tashkent and in 1868 a treaty was signed with Bokhara. General Kaufmann entered Khiva at the head of a substantial army in 1873, whilst Khokand was annexed in 1876. The Russian frontiers with Persia and Afghanistan were finally fixed in 1885 and 1895. The construction of

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6 See G. Morgan, Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895 (London,1981), Chapter l, pp. 1-9.

7 I. Klein, 'British Imperialism in Decline: Tibet, 1914-1921' Historian Vol. 34, (1) 1971, pp. 100-101.

8 This alliance represented the abandonment of the British policy of 'splendid isolation'.

9 I. Klein, 'The Anglo-Russian Convention and the Problem of Central Asia, 1907-1914', op.cit., p. 101.

the trans-Siberian railway between 1891 and 1903 symbolized this surge of Russian influence.

Imperial philosophy at the turn of the century stressed the absolute necessity for empires to avoid common frontiers. These, it was argued, would inevitably promote friction and lead to wars. Neutral zones of mutual non-interference were considered essential between the boundaries of the Western empires.[10] When the vast space of Central Asia offered scant resistance to the Russian momentum eastward, Russophobia reached a new pitch in India. After 1894, with the imminent disintegration of the Chinese Empire uppermost in their minds, Anglo-Indian strategists began to create 'buffer zones' along the land frontier of India. Previously, Chinese territory had separated rival European empires; now such separation had to be a matter of deliberate policy. In the east, an independent Afghanistan had by 1881 become a relatively stable frontier zone. By 1896 the British had established Siam as a buffer against the French imperial expansion from the east.

Tibet has always been an important factor in the political development of India, for it was perceived as a key to the safety and security of India's north-eastern frontier.[11] When the British consolidated their power in the sub-continent of India they were also faced with the problem of securing a stable frontier on India's Himalayan borders.[12] The British government therefore had to evolve a definite policy towards the Himalayan kingdoms, especially Tibet. British India's policy during the 19th century was to treat Tibet as a buffer state.

In general, British policy up to 1904 permitted acceptance of Chinese influence in Tibet and it was only when the futility of attempting to deal with Tibet through the Chinese government became apparent that the British established direct contact with the Tibetan government. Manchu power and influence over Tibet had steadily declined in the course of the nineteenth century to the extent that by the end of that century British India discovered that China was quite unable to exercise any form of restraint over Tibetan policy. It was this failure on China's part that prompted the Younghusband expedition of 1903-4 to attempt to enter into direct relations with the Tibetan government.[13]

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10 PRO: FO371/1932/F270/24496 Memorandum 'Railway Scheme by Mr. Moore Bennet', Encl. No. 1 in Jordan to Sir Edward Grey, 18 May 1914.

11 M. P. Srivastava, ' British Imperial Defence in South Asia', British Diplomacy in Asia (New Delhi, 1978), pp. 174-192.

12 C. Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (London, 1972), p. 76.

13 The mission to Tibet was the British counter to a reported 1902 Sino-Russian treaty over Tibet.

In 1904 Britain invaded Tibet and drew Tibet into its sphere of influence. The Younghusband Expedition did not establish a British protectorate to the north of the Himalayas nor did the 1904 Convention[14] declare Tibet to be an independent state. In fact, the treaty precipitated a series of discussions and controversies over the status of Tibet. In the Lhasa Convention the boundaries of Tibet were not delimited and no geographical definition of Tibet was given.[15] Consequently, it ushered in a decade of Anglo-Chinese and Anglo-Russian discussion over the nature of the government in Lhasa and the type of relations which the British might consider establishing with the Tibetan authorities.[16] In reality, a power vacuum was created in Tibet which China attempted to fill in subsequent years. Although the Younghusband Expedition succeeded by the terms of the 1904 Lhasa Convention in regularizing British-Indian relations with Tibet and in insulating Tibet from the putative dangers of Russian intrigue, the whole forward movement implied in the Younghusband policy was regarded with deep misgiving by the home government.[17]

Perceval Landon recollected a remark made by Younghusband after one of the bloody military encounters they had with the Tibetans during the 1904 British invasion:

> If after a day like this the Government at home throws away the chance we now have of strengthening Tibet as an autonomous buffer State, why, they will be guilty of retrospective murder.[18]

The barrier to direct relations with the Tibetan government, which had been demolished in 1904, was subsequently rebuilt. On 27 April 1906 Britain signed a convention modifying the Convention of 1904. China approved all the provisions of the 1904 Lhasa Treaty and agreed to 'secure the due fulfilment of the terms specified therein'.[19] In addition, China promised not to permit any other power to intervene in the affairs of Tibet, while Britain gave assurances that they would not annex Tibet or interfere in her administration.[20] Britain was in fact prepared to pursue a policy of 'self-denial' in Tibet. Tibetan authorities took no part in the 1906 Convention. It provided

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14 Signed at Lhasa on 7 September 1904. Ratified at Simla on 11 November 1904.

15 See 'Convention Between Great Britain and Tibet', Appendix VII in C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, (London, 1924), pp. 284-287.

16 S. Ghosh, Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations 1899-1914 (New Delhi, 1977), p. 55.

17 See Sir Francis Younghusband, 'British Action and its Results', The Times Weekly Edition, 5 August and 12 August, 1910.

18 P. Landon, 'Tibet, China, and India', Fortnightly Review, London, Vol. 92, 1912, pp. 655-662.

19 Signed at Peking on 27 April 1906. Ratified at London on 23 July 1906.

20 See 'Convention Between Great Britain and China' in Appendix VIII in C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present , op.cit., pp. 287-289.

that the preservation of Tibet's integrity would rest with China and Tibet lost the jurisdiction to negotiate for itself. Hugh Richardson writes:

> The peculiarly privileged position which had accrued to Britain from the negotiations at Lhasa in 1904 was virtually reversed by the recognition that China was not a foreign power for the purposes of that Convention and had the responsibility for preserving the integrity of Tibet. Chinese rights in Tibet were thus recognized to an extent to which the Chinese had recently been wholly unable to exercise them. This diplomatic success for Peking was due partly to British anxiety to allay foreign criticism of the results of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904.[21]

The integrity of Tibet was further diminished by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 31 August 1907.[22] The Anglo-Russian Convention was the culmination of repeated efforts, first begun by Lord Salisbury's government in the 1880s and later resumed by the ministry of Arthur Balfour after the turn of the century, to secure a rapprochement with Russia regarding Asia. Both parties agreed not to send representative to Lhasa nor to seek concessions or pledges of revenues in Tibet and promised to abstain from all interference in the internal administration.[23] The Convention marked the zenith of Britain's self-denial policy. In the Anglo-Russian Convention the fiction of Chinese suzerainty was for the first time recognized: they would deal with Tibet only through China.[24] Confirmation that Great Britain 'by reason of her geographical position' had a special interest in 'the maintenance of the *status quo* in the external relations' of Tibet was recognised. The myth of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet was created by Britain and Russia because of their own mutual suspicion and hostility. Each of them, anxious to nullify the other, 'was glad to find an alibi in Chinese suzerainty over Tibet'.[25] The British considered it necessary to open the door for Chinese advancement in order to contain the hypothetical danger of Russian intrigue in Tibet.

The general policy of the British government at the time was to abandon Tibet to China but to attempt to keep the latter out of Nepal and Bhutan. Sikkim was secure, as China had recognized its subordination to the British government in the Convention of

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21 H. E. Richardson, Tibet And Its History (London, 1984), p. 94.

22 Signed at St. Petersburg on 18 August 1907.

23 See 'Convention Between Great Britain and Russia' in Appendix IX in C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., pp. 289-291.

24 Article II of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 states: '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.'

25 S. P. Sen, The Sino-Indian Border Question (Calcutta , 1971), pxiii.

1890.[26] The shortcoming of this policy was soon to emerge. The main premise of the policy, that China would be both able and willing to implement the agreements of 1904 and 1906 concerning Tibet, proved to be unfounded.[27] After 1910 the Chinese effectively sealed the Tibetan-Indian border and frustrated all trading contacts. More alarmingly, the Chinese penetrated the undefined border lands to the north of Assam and Burma.

The prospect of Chinese infiltration in these remote tribal areas, hitherto largely independent of both British and Tibetan influence, raised the spectre of a continually unstable north-eastern frontier of India and seriously alarmed the government in Indian. In an immediate response to this threat, the Government of India set out to tighten its political control over the border area between China and Tibet. In 1910 Charles Bell, Political Officer, Sikkim, concluded a new treaty with the state of Bhutan[28] by which the Government of India directly controlled Bhutan's foreign relations (an advance from the purely mediatory role that India had hitherto played in Bhutan's foreign policy), thus excluding the dangers of Chinese intrigue in the kingdom. More significantly, the Government of India hesitantly sanctioned a 'forward' policy in the Himalayan buffer area to the north of Assam and Burma; in the years 1911-1913, a series of expeditions explored these remote areas and closely examined the political systems and traditions of allegiance among the hill tribes.[29] The principal design of this forward movement was not to impose a permanent form of British administration, but to delineate a wide buffer zone under a loose form of British 'influence', where Chinese political influence would be rigourously excluded.[30]

Since the conclusion of the Lhasa Convention in 1904, and the subsequent withdrawal of the British troops, Britain stood aside watching China attempt to restore her position in Tibet by force of arms. The Younghusband Expedition of 1903-4 had dramatically sensitized the Chinese to the strategic importance of Tibet to China. The last years of the Manchu dynasty witnessed an attempt to revive Chinese influence in Tibet, which prompted the flight of the Dalai Lama to India.

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26 Signed at Calcutta on 17 March 1890. Ratified at London on 27 August 1890.

27 See The Tibetan Blue Book of 1910.

28 Treaty Between Great Britain and Bhutan signed at Punaka, Bhutan on 8 January 1910. Ratified at Calcutta on 24 March 1910. See Appendix XI, C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 297

29 British Library, O10055 i 37 C. Bell, Notebooks on Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim and Chumbi.

30 C. Christie, 'Great Britain, China and the Status of Tibet,' Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 10 (4), 1976, pp. 485-6.

From 1905 to 1911 Chao Ehr-feng, first as frontier commissioner, then as imperial commissioner for Tibet and finally as the Viceroy of Szechuan, supervised a thorough Chinese military intervention in Tibet designed to absorb the border areas between Tibet and China into China proper and place Lhasa in a strictly subordinate status under China. By 1910, through the efficient and utterly ruthless use of a large force, Chao Erh-feng had brought the whole of the eastern borderland under a degree of control such as had never existed there before.[31] During this period three Chinese proposals threatened radically to transform the status of Tibet: the construction of a railroad from Szechuan to Tibet,[32] the enrolment and instruction of Tibetans into the Chinese army, and the transformation of Tibet into a Chinese province.[33] This Chinese forward movement disintegrated with the outbreak of the 1911 revolution in China and the subsequent public execution of Chao Ehr-feng in December 1911.[34]

The Saturday Review, under the heading 'Chinese "Reforms" in Tibet', observed:

> The military occupation of Lhasa by the Chinese, with the deposition and flight of the Dalai Lama, is clearly the opening move in China's avowed policy of "reform" in Tibet, in other words her annexation of that country. This movement, fraught with fresh danger to our Indian Empire, has unhappily been contributed to in no small measure by our own blundering policy in Tibet.[35]

The transformation of the 13th Dalai Lama from the intangible figure created by the writers of the nineteenth century into the corporeal human of the twentieth was sudden. With no prior warning in March 1910 the Dalai Lama had appeared on Indian soil and Charles Bell was assigned to look after his needs.[36] They became life-long

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31 See E. Sperling, 'The Chinese Venture in K'am, 1904-1911 and the Role of Chao Erh-feng', The Tibet Journal, Vol.1(2), 1976, pp. 10-36.

32 Sun Yat Sen outlined a programme of development for China. A major portion of it related to the construction of railways and roads. The terminus of some of the lines would have been on or near the major passes on the frontier of India. Demchok in Ladakh, Laichiyaling opposite Gartok, Niehlamuh and Yatung all were conceived as railheads. One line was projected through Menchong, Tawang, Dhirangzonz to Taklongjong and then into Assam. See B. Prasad Bisheshwar, Our Foreign Policy Legacy (New Delhi, 1965), p. 77.

33 See J. Kolmas, 'Ch'ing Shih Kao on Modern History of Tibet,', Archiv Orientalni 32, 1964, pp. 77-99. Translation of a section of the Chinese source, Ch'ing shih kao dealing with the period 1903-1912.

34 IOR: L/P&S/11/61 P3520 Extracts from China Annual Report for 1912, Foreign Office to India Office, 19 August 1913.

35 The Saturday Review, 5 March 1910.

36 For an account of the Dalai Lama's arrival in Darjeeling see The Outlook 12 March 1910, pp. 556-557.

friends. The Chinese government had issued an edict on 25 February deposing the Dalai Lama.[37] In May 1910 the British government informed the Dalai Lama that they would not intervene between China and Tibet and that they could recognize only the de facto government set up by the Chinese. Bell's diary entry on 23 May reads: 'I communicated to the Dalai Lama the decision of His Majesty's Government. The Dalai Lama was all smiles, when I came into his room, but his face fell when I told him of the decision, and he was greatly depressed.'[38] Bell later wrote: 'He could not or would not realise the extent to which we were tied and the attitude of the Home Government'[39] The Tibetans were thus abandoned to Chinese aggression, an aggression for which the 1904 British military expedition to Lhasa and subsequent retreat were primarily responsible.

In a caustic article entitled 'The Policy of the Dalai Lama', published in The Contemporary Review in 1910, Sven Hedin proclaimed:

> What a wonderful career! He enters into negotiations with Russia and forces England into war. He hurries as a fugitive through Thibet and Mongolia, received everywhere like a king. He escapes from great difficulties, is venerated in Peking, and returns to Lhasa when the storm is over and past. Then he forces China into war. Finally, he hurries away destitute of everything as a begging friar to seek help in India. He is not content with wind-mills, this Asiatic Don Quixote; no, it must be the Great Powers that are to do all he wants.[40]

To understand the significance of the Dalai Lama's exile to British India and the subsequent declaration of independence for Tibet requires some clarification of Tibet's historical development. The Chinese connection with Tibet goes back into the haze of prehistory. In the seventh and eighth centuries Tibet became a powerful military power carrying out raids and forays into India and China.[41] Sino-Tibetan relations were characterized by frequent conflicts. In 763 the Tibetans captured Sian (Chang-an), capital of China at that time, and for nearly seventy years (781-848) they ruled the Tung-huang region.

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37 IOR: L/P&S/11/26 P3003 Peking Legation to Foreign Office, 31 March 1912. The Dalai Lama's former rank and titles were later restored in October 1912. See The Times, 30 October 1912.

38 British Library, 010057.1.3. C. A. Bell, Diary Vol. IV, 1909-1910.

39 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 113.

40 S. Hedin,'The Policy of the Dalai Lama', The Contemporary Review, Vol. 98, 1910, pp. 140-156.

41 See L. Dondup, 'History of Tibetan Military System', Materials on the Culture and History of Tibet (Lhasa, 1985), Vol. 8, pp. 45-59.

After 842[42] Buddhism brought about an 'ideological and structural transformation' in inner Asia that was 'revolutionary'.[43] A new conception of the state came into operation which was not based on military force as a principle.[44] The 'non-coercive' Lamaist system of rule which evolved created two structural contradictions. 'Internally, it created a highly decentralized polity characterized by the existence of several autonomous centers of local power. Externally, its lack of armed forces compelled the lamaist regime to depend on external powers for military support'.[45] Both these issues need to be examined as they have a direct bearing on any assessment of political developments during the period 1912 to 1933. To do so, it is necessary to survey briefly the historical formation of the Lamaist state in Tibet.[46]

The Buddhist revolution in Inner Asia solved China's pre-modern security problem. It not only curbed the Tibetan martial spirit but also created a non-coercive regime necessitating military dependence. Sino-Tibetan relations were therefore characterized by Tibet's progressive military dependence on external powers.[47] Consequently, when the Mongols launched their world conquests from the Altai Karakoram in 1200, Tibet was unable to ward off the Mongol menace. The Tibetan chiefs bought peace with Jenghiz Khan by despatching a joint delegation in 1207 with an offer of submission. Within thirty years the abbots of the Sakya sect converted the Mongol imperial family to Buddhism and the Sakya Lama became the 'priest' of the Mongol Emperor (1230-1244). Later, the Sakya Lama was recognized by Kubilai Khan as the ruler of central Tibet. The Mongols were at this time engaged in a permanent conquest of Northern China. In 1278 the Chinese Sung Dynasty was finally overthrown and Kubilai Khan became Emperor of China. The relation between the Mongol Emperor and the Sakya Lama, which was anterior to the Mongol conquest of China and the transfer of Mongol metropolis to Peking, continued.[48] The Mongol dynasty in China was supplanted by a Chinese (Ming) dynasty in 1368.

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42 After the death of King Lang Darma the monarchy became discredited,the central power collapsed and the country was divided into numerous lay and monastic principalities.

43 Dawa Norbu, 'An Analysis of Sino-Tibetan Relationships, 1245-1911: Imperial Power, Non-Coercive Regime and Military Dependency', in Aziz, B. & Kapstein, M. (Eds) Soundings in Tibetan Civilization (1985), p. 176.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., p. 178.

46 Also see Samdong Rinpoche, 'The Social and Political Strata in Buddhist Thought', Tibet Journal, Vol. 2 (1), 1977, pp. 1-9.

47 D. Norbu, 'An Analysis of Sino-Tibetan Relationships, 1245-1911,' op.cit., p. 193.

48 N. C. Sinha , Tibet -Considerations on Inner Asian History (Calcutta, 1967), p. 1.

The Mongol chiefs in Mongolia and the Chinese borderlands continued their contact with Tibetan Lamas. A new sect called Gelugpa (Yellow), gained the devotion of these Mongol chiefs. The Sakya Lamas meanwhile declined both in power and prestige. The 3rd Gelugpa hierarch visited Mongolia in 1578 and converted Altan Khan, the leading chief, to Buddhism. Altan Khan named the Gelugpa hierarch Dalai Lama (ocean of wisdom), and recognized him as the ruler of central Tibet. In 1644 a foreign (Manchu) dynasty overthrew the Mings. The Manchus (Ch'ing) immediately sought to participate in Tibetan politics. The Mongol Khan, Gusri, acted swiftly and in 1656 confirmed the fifth Dalai Lama as an independent ruler.[49]

With the Mongol-Manchu conquests of China, the lama-chief relationship became institutionalized into a permanent structure of dominance and dependence. There was, however, a mutuality of interests: Mongol and Manchu chiefs provided the military and political support necessary for lamas to remain in power and the latter reciprocated with spiritual support and, to some extent, legitimation of 'barbarian' rule.[50] The motive behind China's desire to control Tibet was primarily the desire to gain the influential aid of the Dalai Lama, the head of the Lamaist community, in promoting Chinese policy both in Tibet and throughout Mongolia and Manchuria. These latter dependencies, especially Mongolia, lived under the religious influence of the Dalai. 'The possession of the kindred land of Tibet rounded off the Chinese dominions in a natural and homogeneous manner'.[51]

Dawa Norbu argues that a fundamental change in Sino-Tibetan relations came about during the Ch'ing period as a result of Tibet's military dependence on China. The Tibetan Buddhist state was not designed to cope with external aggression or internal rebellion. He maintains that there is a direct relationship between internal crisis in Tibet and external intervention. Norbu also believes that there is an association between the frequency of external intervention and the decrease of Tibetan independence.[52] Between 1708 and 1904 there were at least eight crises in Tibet which prompted Chinese military intervention in Tibet. This fundamentally changed the nature of Sino-Tibetan relations and resulted in the eventual establishment of a Chinese 'protectorate'. Tibet's

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49 See also T. Rose, 'Historical Background of Tibetan Struggle for Autonomy', Modern Review, Vol. 105, 1959, pp. 393-397. O. Lattimore, 'The High Wastes of Tibet', Inner Asian Frontiers of China (Boston,1962), Chapter VII, pp. 206-233.

50 D. Norbu, 'An Analysis of Sino-Tibetan Relationships, 1245-1911' op.cit., pp. 194-5.

51 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 209.

52 D. Norbu, 'An Analysis of Sino-Tibetan Relationships, 1245-1911' op.cit., p. 188.

subordinate relation to Imperial China was a function of the non-coercive nature of the lamaist regime.[53]

The establishment of a Manchu-Chinese protectorate or sovereignty in Tibet was a gradual process. Each crisis led the non-coercive regime to turn to external powers for military support, which in turn led to increasing foreign influence and power within Tibet. Buddhist Tibet, 'being an *ideological state* tolerated external interference in the political sphere as long as external powers did not threaten its belief system'.[54]

Norbu's non-coercive theory is closely tied to the 'patron-priest' concept which contends that the relationship between the Manchu Emperor and the Dalai Lama was a patron-priest relationship following the precedent established between Kubilai Khan and the Sakya hierarch and Altan Khan and the Gelugpa sect. It involved two personalities possessing the same faith, one its exponent and priest and the other its lay devotee and protector. It did not involve any 'confederation' between the two countries. Chusei Suzuki argues that when Manchu power was actually or potentially exercised in Tibet there developed a 'superior-inferior' relationship and the former 'patron-priest' concept did not disappear but was preserved, 'intertwined with the new superior-inferior relationship.[55] The relationship produced a firm political superiority, or hegemony, for the patron, the Manchu Emperor, only from 1720.

In 1720, after installing the 7th Dalai Lama in power, the Chinese Amban[56] converted into a body-guard for himself the soldiers who had been sent originally as a body-guard for the Dalai Lama. From then onwards, until the fall of the dynasty in 1911, Manchu emperors maintained Ambans and some military presence in Lhasa. In this way China 'gradually moulded Tibet into a position resembling political subordination'.[57] After the 1840s, as the central authority in Peking weakened, Manchu power in Tibet also declined. In 1911 the Manchu Empire collapsed, the dynasty was expelled from Peking and a republican regime established. The theoretical paramountcy of the Manchu Emperor over the Dalai Lama was automatically dissolved. The Tibetans were able to expel the remaining Ch'ing forces from Lhasa and in 1912 the 13th Dalai Lama declared Tibet's independence.

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53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., p. 190.

55 C. Suzuki, 'China's Relations with Inner Asia: The Hsiung-nu, Tibet', in J. K. Fairbank, The Chinese World Order: A Preliminary Framework (Cambridge, 1968), p. 193

56 Chinese government official - See J. Kolmas 'The Ambans and Assistants Ambans of Tibet (1727-1912) paper presented at 6th International Conference on Tibetan Studies, Fagernes Norway, 21 August - 28 August 1992.

57 British Library 010057.l.3. C. A. Bell, Diary, Vol IV, 1909-1919, 9 December 1919, Statement by Kusho Palhese.

That the republican regime in China could foster the doctrine of paramountcy was due to British diplomacy in Asia.[58] The Tibet-China relationship was not understood by European officials at a time when it became an important consideration after the Younghusband expedition and during the Simla Conference negotiations.[59] That lack of understanding had significant consequences in later political developments. The British policy makers identified and interpreted the traditional mores of Sino-Tibetan relations in term of European international law and praxis of imperialism. In 1912 'empire' and 'sovereign state' were the distinguishing categories of European territorial power. Nations and nationalities were controlled by empires. According to the British, Tibet 'belonged' to the Ch'ing Empire.

'British negotiators unwittingly helped both the Ch'ing dynasty and the Chinese republican government to redefine and reformulate their conception of China's status in Tibet in Western modern political vocabulary'.[60] After 1905 China used the term 'sovereignty' to describe her status in Tibet, and Britain insisted that it was 'suzerainty'.[61] Chinese 'suzerainty', 'sovereignty', or 'autonomy' were unacceptable to the Dalai Lama's government at Lhasa. Tibet wanted complete independence. These terms were imposed on the Tibetans by Britain.

A fuller examination of the historical status of Tibet is outside the scope of this study and has already received considerable scholarly attention.[62] Some fundamental points do, however, have significance for this thesis. Singh makes one important point:

> The use of the term suzerainty when applied to Tibet and China is anomalous. Its application can be justified only in relation to the British who used the term to describe their view of China's status vis-a-vis Tibet. The word itself defies any absolute legal definition. Nor can it be properly associated with the Central Asian concept of the Priest-Patron tradition, which categorised relations between the Dalai Lama

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58 See J. N. Chowdhury, 'British Contributions to the Confusion of Tibet's Status', Quest (Bombay), No. 54, 1967, pp. 32-38.

59 See N. C. Sinha, 'Asian Law and Usage in European Expression: Some illustrations from Tibet', in Tibet- Considerations on Inner Asian History, op.cit., pp. 19-25.

60 D. Norbu, 'The Europeanization of Sino-Tibetan Relations, 1775-1907: The Genesis of Chinese "Suzerainty" and Tibetan "Autonomy", Tibet Journal, Vol. XVI (4), 1990, p. 53.

61 During the 1905 Anglo-Chinese Calcutta discussions on the 1904 Lhasa Convention, the Chinese delegate,T'ang Shaw-Yi, maintained that the term the British wished to use, 'suzerainty', was inappropriate. He declared 'sovereignty' to be more applicable.

62 See Z. Ahmad, 'The Historical Status of China in Tibet', The Tibet Journal, Vol. 1 (1), 1975, pp. 24-35.

> and the Manchu Emperor long before the British made their appearance on the Himalayan scene.[63]

Sinha concludes, 'The patron-priest relationship between the Manchu Emperor and the Dalai Lama was not a matter to be identified with any concept of Roman or European jurisprudence'.[64]

There is no evidence in Chinese history that China ever considered Tibet as one of her provinces.[65] It was only after the Younghusband invasion of Tibet that China began a 'forward policy', what Lattimore calls 'secondary imperialism'.[66] There is no doubt, however, that Tibet was treated as a tributary state, as indeed were all the peripheral states in East, Southeast and Central Asia. 'Even within that system, however, Buddhist Tibet occupied a special place because of the charismatic lamas' dominant influence in Buddhist Central Asia, and also because some Chinese emperors were Buddhists who venerated high lamas as living Buddhas'.[67] It is only in this context that the term 'suzerainty' has any meaning in Sino-Tibetan relations: that is to say, a relationship of dependency between states of unequal power, the superior state being the 'suzerain' and the dependent state the 'vassal'.

This was the political situation at the turn of the century, but what was the situation after the Chinese Revolution? Distracted by rebellion and domestic trouble, the Chinese were unable to regain their control in Lhasa. The Tibetans took advantage of this chaos to eliminate the last remnants of Chinese power, its administration and soldiers.[68] With the expulsion of the Manchu, Tibet and Mongolia severed their links with China. In November 1911 the princes of Mongolia declared their independence and proclaimed the Hutukhtu of Urga ruler of Mongolia. Immediately after the proclamation of the Republic in China in January 1912 the Mongol tribes affirmed allegiance to Urga.

Tibet's position on the expulsion of the Chinese in 1912 can be fairly described as one of de facto independence. 1912 marked the re-emergence of Tibet as a fully sovereign state. Tibet's de facto independence became legally valid and effective when in 1912 the 13th Dalai Lama, 'Pontiff of Buddhism and Ruler of Tibet by Command of the Buddha', declared the complete independence of Tibet and denounced the Chinese claim

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63 A.K.J. Singh, Himalayan Triangle (London, 1988), p. 2.

64 Sinha, op.cit., p. 6.

65 IOR: L/P&S/11/37/F4440, P4914 Chinese Memorandum 23 December 1912, Jordan to Foreign Office, 26 December 1912.

66 Lattimore, op.cit., p. 187.

67 D. Norbu, 'An Analysis of Sino-Tibetan Relationships, 1245-1911' op.cit., p. 194.

68 The Times, 'Chinese Refugees in India', 18 September 1912. Details of the repartriation are in IOR: L/P&S/11/23 P2631.

to sovereignty. The Manchus were considered Buddhists, the Han Chinese were not. There was no longer any affiliation between Buddhism and China. The connecting link was broken and Tibet was now completely independent of China.[69] Zahiruddin Ahmad concludes, 'The relationship between the Dalai Lama and the emperor of China was a personal relationship, which could not have been inherited either by the Republic of China or the People's Republic of China'.[70] On this foundation, the Lhasa government appealed to Great Britain to mediate a settlement between Tibet and China.[71]

The failure of the Chinese Republic under Yuan Shih-kai to restore its position in Tibet by military means eventually persuaded the Chinese government to attempt to restore at least some measure of influence in Tibet by means of the conference table,[72] and in October 1913 tripartite discussions between China, Tibet and the Government of India - (the 'honest broker') - began in Simla.[73] The British had by 1908 learned that any Anglo-Chinese attempt to define Tibet's status without Tibetan participation was unacceptable to the Tibetans. The Simla Convention was a logical culmination of an attempt to discuss Tibet's status among all three parties involved. It became clear that the status of Tibet, as outlined in the 1906 and 1907 agreements, was unsatisfactory to the British government.[74] From 1913 onwards the British government attempted to extract from the Chinese government a re-definition of the status of Tibet. This involved a firm acknowledgment from China of Tibet's autonomous status, the acceptance of a nominal suzerain status with no supervisory rights and an acceptance by China of closer contacts between Tibet and British India.[75]

The British solution to these conflicting imperatives was a compromise: they declared China's status in Tibet as suzerain but on the condition that Tibet was autonomous. Referring to the 1914 Simla Conference, Hugh Richardson writes: the

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69 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama: The Life and Times of the Great Thirteenth (London, 1946), p. 401.

70 Z. Ahmad, op.cit., p. 31.

71 IOR: L/P&S/11/57 P2585 Translation of letter from Chief Ministers of Dalai Lama to Bell, Encl in POS to Government of India, 29 May 1913. Letter to Dalai Lama from Hardinge,Viceroy of India, 5 June 1913.

72 Britain's refusal to recognise the new Republic and the 17 August 1912 Memorandum (IOR: L/P&S/18/B202), calling upon China to come to an agreement regarding Tibet, had no effect on the Peking government. IOR: L/P&S/11/37 File 4440, reply to the British note, Jordan to Foreign Office, 26 December 1912.

73 IOR: L/P&S/18/B203 Extract from Viscount Moreley's speech in the House of Lords, 28 July 1913.

74 IOR: L/P&S/11/28 P3106 'British Policy towards Tibet 1912', minute paper, 26 June 1912.

75 PRO: FO371/1930 F270 21208 Convention between Great Britain, China and Tibet.

British plenipotentiary, Sir Henry McMahon, 'in order to narrow the gap between irreconcilable claims to independence on the one hand and sovereignty on the other, put forward the concepts of autonomy and suzerainty.'[76]

The Tibetans, who had regained their complete independence, were strongly opposed to accepting Chinese overlordship under any name. They argued that their status in the past was the same as that of the Han Chinese themselves: both were equally tributaries of the Manchu throne. On the abdication of the Manchu Dynasty the Tibetans ceased to owe any allegiance to anyone and became, like the Han Chinese themselves, independent.[77] Their subsequent compliance to the concept of suzerainty was due to pressure from the British government, 'which for many reasons, disinclination to assume additional responsibilities being one, was not prepared to support Tibet's claim to absolute independence'.[78] The Dalai Lama had accepted the term 'suzerain' in the Simla Agreement only on the condition that China agreed that Tibet was autonomous.[79]

What was China's suzerain power? According to the Simla Conference documents, this meant the Chinese right to station an Amban with suitable escort, 'in no circumstances to exceed 300 men',[80] at Lhasa and China's right to oversee the external relations of Tibet.[81] For the British the term 'autonomous' or autonomy meant: absence of Chinese troops other than the specified escort to the Amban; no interference in the Tibetan administration,[82] 'not to send troops into Outer Tibet, nor to station civil or military officers, or establish Chinese colonies in the country';[83] neither China nor Tibet was to admit another foreign power into Tibet[84] and China was not to convert Tibet into a Chinese Province.[85] In short, the Tibetan government was independent in all of its internal affairs. One concession was resisted by the Tibetans with the utmost determination. They fiercely disliked the proposed description of Tibet as an integral part

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76 H. Richardson, op.cit., p. 108. Also PRO: FO371/1929/F270/17253/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 20 April 1914.

77 E. Teichman, Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet (Cambridge, 1922), p. 152.

78 H. Richardson, op.cit., p. 109.

79 PRO: FO371/1929/ F270/18914/10 Encl No. 2 in India Office to Foreign Office, 29 April 1914.

80 PRO: FO371/1930/F270/10 Text as initialled by Plenipotentiaries on 27 April 1914, Article 4.

81 PRO: FO371/1930/F270/21155/Text as initialled by Plenipotentiaries on 27 April 1914, Article 2.

82 Ibid., Article II

83 Ibid., Article III

84 Ibid., Article IV

85 Ibid., Article II

of China and they finally prevailed, to the extent that this point was not mentioned in the main body of the agreement as eventually drafted.[86]

In 1914, then, the Tibetans had secured British recognition of their autonomy and the assurance that the British government would not acknowledge China's 'suzerainty' over Tibet unless the Chinese government fulfilled their side of the bargain by signing the Convention. The Chinese refused to sign the Agreement.[87] The failure of the Chinese to sign the Convention freed them from the implications of the Schedule Note acknowledging Tibet as 'part of Chinese territory'.[88] The Foreign Office agreed: 'The notes in question cannot be regarded as "an integral part of the convention" in view of the fact that they are really in the form of an annex, and are not even referred to in the convention itself'.[89]

The Simla Conference left the question of the status of Tibet in a hopeless tangle.[90] In the long term a re-definition of Tibet's status required the consent of China and also of Russia, since the 1907 treaty had effectively tied Britain's hand in Tibet. So long as the Russians were unwilling to consider a revision of the 1907 treaty regarding Tibet, those clauses in the Anglo-Tibetan bilateral agreement of 1914 which conflicted with the terms of the 1907 agreement, particularly the provision permitting 'the British trade agent at Gyantse to visit Lhassa', would remain inapplicable.[91] Christie concludes:

> By the time of the outbreak of the First World War, therefore, the problem of the status of Tibet was completely unresolved, and two major problems confronted British policy makers: in the first place, some way would have to be found round the 'self-denying' agreement with Russia, and, secondly, it was imperative to persuade China back to the conference table, either on the basis of the Simla agreement or with the terms modified in favour of China.[92]

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86 PRO: FO371/1928/F270/1719 Encl.3 Memorandum regarding progress of Negotiations of Thibet Conference from November 21 to December 24 by A. H. McMahon, 24 December 1913, India Office to Foreign Office, 12 January 1914.

87 The Agreement was **initialled** on 27 April 1914. PRO: FO371/1930/ F270/ 21155. See N. C. Sinha, 'Was the Simla Convention Not Signed?', Tibet: Considerations on Inner Asian History, op.cit., pp. 14-18.

88 PRO: FO371/1930/F270/21208/10 Convention between Great Britain, China and Tibet -Schedule.

89 PRO:FO/371/1930/ F270/ 21155/10 Foreign Office to India Office, 19 May 1914.

90 The Simla Conference will be examined further in Chapter two.

91 PRO: FO371/1929/F270/13570/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 26 March 1914.

92 Christie, op.cit., p. 487

From the Tibetan point of view the Manchu link was broken. The key, therefore, to an agreement on the status of Tibet lay in the Chinese view of their relationship with Tibet. China's view of Tibet after 1914 remained adamantine in regarding the 1911 Revolution as causing a mere hiatus in Chinese control over Tibet, but employing no loss of jurisdiction or right.

Tibet provided a defensive shield for China proper, just as it did for the British in India. Over a period of more than 2,000 years the Chinese evolved a twofold system for the defence of their long land frontiers against external threats. First, they created the policy of the Great Wall, the construction of a physical barrier separating the ethnic and cultural Chinese world from the outside. A second line of defence, a system of buffer states beyond the Wall was designed to intervene between the heartland of the nomad empires and the settled populations of China proper. Under the Manchu Dynasty this second defensive system reached a peak of elaboration.[93] The Chinese border zone, from the Gulf of Tonkin to the Amur by way of the Himalayas, the Pamirs and the Central Asian steppes, had by the end of the 18th century been converted into an elaborate system of Chinese tributary states.[94]

Tibet was, in effect, devided into two regions: the Lhasa territory, where a Chinese Amban, or Imperial Resident, scrutinised the administration of the Dalai Lama or his Regent; and a patchwork of small states in Eastern Tibet between Lhasa and the border of Szechuan province of China, which enjoyed a great degree of internal autonomy under the supervision of the Szechuan authorities at Chengtu.

Never before had the Chinese faced a frontier threat so constant and so extensive as that created by the building of the European frontier system in Asia. During the 19th century the Chinese frontier system of Inner and Outer tributaries came increasingly under a kind of external pressure which it was not designed to resist. The tributary system was intended to protect China from nomadic invasion. In the great age of European imperial expansion, it proved to be a flimsy barrier against the advance of Russia, Britain and France, a trio of powers joined at the end of the century by Japan.

The Chinese, reacting to the developing threat from the powers, modified their traditional frontier policy. The Inner Protectorates, it was now clear, could no longer be safely left under a system of indirect Chinese rule. If they were to remain effective

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93 A. Lamb, 'China's Land Border' Australia's Neighbours, 4th Series, Nos. 18-19, 1964, p. 1.

94 The term 'tributary state' must, in the Chinese context, be used with considerable caution, since in traditional Chinese diplomatic thinking all foreign states were in some degree subordinate to the Chinese Emperor and all diplomatic missions to the Chinese capital had something of the character of tribute bearing missions.

buffers against foreign encroachment they would have, in some way, to be brought under direct Chinese administration and settled by Chinese populations.[95] The genesis of this new policy can be seen in Chinese Turkestan. Chinese Turkestan was converted into Sinkiang, the New Dominion, a region where direct Chinese administration replaced the rule of local chieftains under loose Chinese supervision. In the first years of the 20th century the Sinkiang policy, the Chinese decided, would also be applied to Mongolia and Tibet, regions actually or potentially under threat from Russia and Britain. A statement by the Chinese Foreign Office confirmed that:

> In the 34th Year of Kuangcho (1906), Chang reported to the Throne that unless Tibet, which was the buffer territory between England and Russia, be put in order, the defence of the Empire could not be ensured.[96]

China's immediate neighbours, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Burma, and even Thailand, at one time had recognized the Middle Kingdom by extending tribute. The Outer tributaries consisted of states like Tonking and Korea, which by no means were under as much control as the Inner Tributaries, but were ruled by dynasties which acknowledged the supremacy of the Manchus. There were also states like Nepal and Burma which, while certainly in no way under direct Chinese supervision, by treaty or custom paid tribute to Peking, a process which symbolised their agreement not to disturb the Chinese borderlands. China had been the suzerain of its neighbours. China was considered the 'elder brother' and the vassal country was the 'younger brother' who had to show proper Confucian deference to the elder. The tribute system called for periodic missions, usually every three years, to the Peking court. Members of these missions would perform the proper rituals to show their submissiveness to the Celestial Empire and present to the emperor their gifts. The total effect of this practice was to provide the basis for considerable foreign trade while not giving power or status to private merchants, whom Confucian officials distrusted.[97] In theory, in return for tribute the emperor would protect the suzerain country and take care of its foreign affairs, while allowing it freedom to manage its internal affairs. In Manchu times the Chinese took a close interest in the internal affairs of these outer tributaries, which they considered an important part of their frontier defence system.

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95 British Library, 010057.1.3. C. Bell, Diary, Vol. 1V, 14 April, p. 41.

96 Statement by the Chinese Foreign Office, 'The Tibetan Question', published in 'The Asian Review', Vol. 1, 1920, p. 879.

97 See J. K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng, 'On the Ch'ing Tributary System', in Fairbank, op.cit.

In the Chinese mind the relationship was precisely that of the elder and younger brother, but this relationship was not acknowledged in Western international law and could not be easily explained in non-Confucian terms.[98] According to the Western mind, China either must be held accountable for all the actions of those over whom it claimed suzerainty or forfeit the right to such claims. The French soon concluded that the Chinese were not able to be responsible for what the Vietnamese did. Similarly, the Russians challenged Chinese rights in Central Asia, in the area of Ili and proved to their own satisfaction that the Chinese claims of suzerainty were pretentious. The Japanese vigorously challenged China's claim of suzerainty over Korea and sought to 'open' the Hermit Kingdom to contacts with other countries. China was compelled to substantiate its claims of suzerainty by trying to manage Korea's relations with Japan, but the outcome was a disastrous war in 1894 and 1895. The outcome was a humiliating defeat for China, settled by the Treaty of Shimonosek. China not only had to give up claims of suzerainty over Korea, but also had to cede to Japan Formosa, the Pescadores islands and the Liotung peninsula in Manchuria.

The fact that Japan felt no awe of the Celestial Kingdom and could readily defeat the Chinese was perhaps the most demoralizing blow of all to China.[99] By the beginning of the twentieth century no country in Asia still thought of China as the Middle Kingdom deserving of awe and capable of bounteous protection. The rapid decay of the Manchu dynasty, of which the Sino-Japanese War gave abundant proof, caused many Tibetan officials, including the young 13th Dalai Lama, to consider seriously the possibility of Tibetan independence. China's desire to retain its suzerainty status over Tibet after losing its other vassal states became a matter of 'face', a last ditch stand. After the 1911 revolution Tibet became for the Republican Government a 'nationalist' goal. Part of the whole story revolves around a concept of humiliation: the British were drawn into Tibet in 1904 because they felt humiliated by a country that would have nothing to do with them. The Chinese were humiliated by the loss of their buffers and needed to regain their Han superiority from the humiliating period of being ruled over by the 'foreign' Manchus.

While the new Republican government had every intention of following in the footsteps of its predecessors, it was not able to establish sufficient internal stability to do so. Outer Mongolia was converted into a Russian satellite state and Manchuria was conquered by Japan, which prevented it from being occupied by Russia. Only Sinkiang,

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98 L. Pye, China: An Introduction (Boston, 1978), pp. 118-9.

99 See W. R. Manning, 'China and the Powers Since the Boxer Movement', American Journal of Internation Law, Vol. 4, 1910, pp. 848-902.

Chinese Turkestan remained part of the Chinese state and here the control of the Chinese government was at times virtually non-existent.

After the flight of the Dalai Lama in 1910 the entire administration of Tibet had come under Chinese control.[100] The Tibetan struggle for independence had commenced soon after the news of the revolution in China filtered through to Lhasa.[101] Rebellion soon broke out in Lhasa.[102] By June 1912, the Chinese were without power in central Tibet. The Bengal government intervened and the Chinese garrison in Lhasa was evacuated to Sikkim and repatriated to China.[103] After a two year exile the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet in June 1912.[104] He was met at the Tibet-Indian frontier by the Russian Dorjieff[105] and a Japanese named Yasujiro Yajimo, who was promptly appointed military adviser to the Lhasa government.[106] Yasujiro's appearance did nothing to calm growing British apprehension about Japan's increasing economic presence throughout East Asia.[107]

From 1912 Tibet operated as an autonomous state. Until his death the 13th Dalai Lama fought for the autonomy of Tibet to be recognized. Concomitant with the attempt to break all traditional ties with the Chinese government and obtain independent status went an attempt to secularize the Tibetan system in a movement towards the establishment of a centralized nation-state:[108] absorbing the secular authority of the Panchen Lama and consolidating central Tibet into one administrative unit.[109] In 1895 the Dalai Lama had compelled the regent to resign.[110] This resulted in the permanent direct rule of a Dalai

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100 IOR: L/P&S/10/218 P2396 Annual report on the British Trade Agency at Yatung from 1 April 1911 to 31 March 1912.

101 IOR: L/P&S/11/37 46282 Extract from Chengtu Intelligence Report for September quarter, Encl.No. 1 in Jordan to Grey.

102 IOR: L/P&S/11/7 P709 Letter from POS to Government of India, 17 February 1912.

103 IOR: L/P&S/11/23 P2631 'Repartriation of Chinese Troops from Tibet via India 1912-1923'.

104 IOR: L/P&S/11/26 P3023 Montagu's Budget Speech July 1912. The Times, 'The Dalai Lama: Departure for Lhasa', 25 June 1912. See also IOR: L/P&S/11/7 P709 'Movements of the Dalai Lama January-March 1912'.

105 IOR: L/P&S/11/22 P2728 Government of India to India Office, 15 July 1912, The Times 'Dorjieff and the Dalai Lama', 19 July 1912, See A. Lamb, 'Some Notes on Russian Intrigue in Tibet', Royal Central Asian Society Journal, Vol. 46, 1959, pp. 46-65.

106 IOR: L/P&S/11/61 P3520 Foreign Office to India Office, 19 August 1913.

107 IOR: L/P&S/64 P3949 Alston, Peking, to Foreign Office, 15 August 1913.

108 One 'nationality' under a strong centralized government.

109 IOR: L/P&S/10/210 P3873 Gyantse Trade Agency News Report No. 3 in Letter from Campbell, Trade Agent, to Government of India, 8 August 1916.

110 L. Petech, Aristocracy and Government in Tibet 1728-1959 (Rome, 1973), p. 5. R. Rahul gives the date as 1893, 'The Government of Tibet', International Studies, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1962, p. 170.

Lama.[111] The 13th Dalai Lama was the first Dalai Lama for nearly 150 years to assume personal control of the government.[112] No Dalai Lama since the 'Great Fifth' had exercised personal rule for more than a few years. In the past the incumbent was merely a symbol of power by whose authority the regents and their ministers governed.[113]

The young Dalai Lama, then 20 years old, intended to deal with domestic politics and foreign policy based on an edict of five articles which clarified Tibetan polity.[114] His 1912 declaration of Tibetan independence further inspired and facilitated a programme of consolidation and 'development'. On his return to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama summoned four representatives from each of the districts (Jongs) in central Tibet (U and Tsang) to Samding and Lhasa to give their opinion on matters of external policy and internal administration which seemed to be in need of reform. An entry in Bell's diary reads: 'Palhese tells me that they were forbidden to say, "I am a man of no position and do not understand these things".[115] According to Bell's Tibetan assistant, Palhese, the questions discussed were:

> (1) With what foreign power or powers should Tibet make friends? (2) How to raise revenue to pay for an army? (3) What reforms, if any, should be introduced into the administration of Justice?

The answers indicate the perplexity felt by most Tibetans:

> Answer to question (1) 'Make friends with Britain, she is the nearest to Lhasa' and, 'Make friends with China; she is strong and populous. Otherwise she will take revenge on us later on, unless you can ensure some other power helping Tibet'. To question (2) 'make the landed estates of the aristocracy liable to rent and pay high salaries to those who serve the Tibetan Government, instead of paying them, as at present, partly by their rent-free grants of land', and 'Resume the monastic estates and pay them subsidies in cash'. Others said, 'that would not do. Three monasteries (Sera, Drepung and Ganden) are very powerful and would not obey an order like that'.[116]

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111 'On the 11/1/ Wood-Sheep (7 March 1895) the Dalai Lama performed the rite of his receiving the commandments for monkhood. On September 26, 1895 he was enthroned' . T. A. Tada, The Thirteenth Dalai Lama (Tokyo, 1965), p. 28.

112 See L. Petech, 'The Dalai-Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study', T'Oung Pao, Pt.47, 1959, pp. 368-394.

113 M. Goldstein, An Anthropological Study of the Tibetan Political System, Ph.D thesis, University of Washington, 1968, p. 165.

114 For an account of the Five Edicts see T. Tada, op.cit., p. 32-34. See also T. Chhodak, 'The 1901 Proclamation of H.H. Dalai Lama XIII', Tibet Journal, Vol. 3 (1), 1978, pp. 30-38.

115 British Library, 010057.1.3 C. A. Bell, Diary, Vol. 1V, 1909-19, 13 August 1913.

116 Ibid.

This type of consultation had never taken place in Tibet before. At about the same time the administrative machinery in Tibet also underwent a vital change. The Dalai Lama issued a proclamation to all his officials and subjects that unilaterally reaffirmed his total rule of Tibet.[117] He assumed full administrative power and responsibility and concentrated on reorganising the Lhasa government.[118] Reforms were carried out in the Ministry of Justice. New criminal and civil courts were set up. Along with these changes came reforms in the prison system and the development of a police force. Among his legal reforms were those pertaining to the ancient privileges of nobles and monastic leaders. There were enormous political difficulties in bringing these internal changes about, for many undercut the bases of power of influential men at court and in the monasteries.[119] A fuller examination of this issue will be dealt with in a later chapter.

It is outside the scope of this study to dwell on the complicated structure of the government, administration and society in Tibet. There are, however, some important features which need to be examined if the political and diplomatic relations between Britain and the Lhasa government during the early twentieth century are to be understood.[120]

Because of the dominance of religion over the Tibetan polity, this system has often been called a theocracy. The term is not really appropriate, because Buddhism does not recognize a divinity (theos) but rather a spiritual essence in which all beings partake. Another popular belief is that Tibet, before the Chinese takeover, was an autocratic state, typical of Asia,[121] with the Dalai Lama as a divine king or Living Buddha whose authority as absolute ruler was acknowledged by all Tibetans. It appears that there is little

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117 W. D. Shakabpa, Tibet: A Political History (New Haven, 1967), pp. 246-248.

118 The Dalai Lama now exercised both the temporal and ecclesiastical rule in Tibet.

119 F. Michael, Rule by Incarnation: Tibetan Buddhism and Its Role in Society and State (Boulder, Colorado, 1982), passim.

120 For a full account see M. Goldstein, op.cit., Also National Library Australia, 327.42 GRE, Foreign Office Confidential Print, C. A. Bell,'Report on the Government of Tibet', Calcutta, 1906. Also R. Rahul, 'The Government of Tibet 1912-1933', International Studies, Vol. IV No. 2, 1962, pp. 169-193.

121 The model of 'Oriental Despotism', as Susanne Rudolph maintains, 'distorted our perception of Asian polities in ways which are only now becoming evident'. 'Presidential address: state formation in Asia - prolegomenon to a comparative study', Journal of Asian Studies, 46, (4), 1987, pp. 731-746.

validity in this view. Research on the Dalai Lama's regime indicates that the degree of centralised control exercised by the Dalai Lama's administration at Lhasa in modern times was quite limited.[122] The Dalai Lama's regime at Lhasa was only one, if in recent times the largest, of a variety of state formations within the Tibetan region.[123] It was nevertheless the nearest to an effectively centralised state achieved by Tibetans in the pre-modern period. [124]

Only a minority of Tibetans were even nominally within the area controlled by the Lhasa regime.[125] Within this area large monastic and aristocratic estates had great local autonomy, although the degree of control they could exercise over their peasant tenants and nomadic clients was also restricted.[126] Outside the area of the Dalai Lama's administration a variety of smaller political units under lamas or secular rulers seems to have had a similarly limited authority.[127]

It was only during the period under examination, 1912 to 1933, that the 13th Dalai Lama made an attempt to increase political control through his Lhasa government. The Dalai Lama's government worked towards becoming an effective state. In the process it introduced a standing army and also, significantly, attempted to control much more closely the acquisition of lama status. Between 1912 and 1933 the Dalai Lama's administration was attempting to strengthen its regional domination of Tibet into a strong central political authority. This process meant that an attempt would have to be made to assert its control over the monastic orders.

Before the 13th Dalai Lama assumed his powers in 1895 the monasteries were the chief internal controlling influence in the body politic of Tibet. The monasteries were able greatly to influence any Regent because the latter's appointment and removal lay

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122 See M. Goldstein, op.cit. and P. Carrasco, Land and Polity in Tibet, (Seattle, 1959), passim.

123 ie. Sakya and Trashi Lhunpo - The 'galactic polity' model developed by Stanley Tambiah, primarily in relation to the Theravadin states of South-East Asia with its *mandala*-type structure based on an exemplary centre, and regional administrations which replicated the structure of the centre, bears some relationship to the Lhasa state and also to the relationship between the Manchu regime in China and the various Tibetan polities.

124 G. Samuel, 'The Lhasa State and the Diversity of Tibetan Society', Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies, Pre-Publication Version B (Washington, July 1991), p. 81.

125 See P. Carrasco, op.cit. for information on the various states or quasi-states within traditional Tibet.

126 G. Samuel, op.cit. pp. 79-84.

127 Ibid.

largely with the National Assembly, in which the influences of the monasteries predominated.[128] There had developed a whole class of monk officials, corresponding to the lay officials of noble family, who were employed in government service.[129] In theory, lay and monk officials had equal responsibilities in the administration of the country, but since the regime represented primarily the *Gelugpa* order, and all lay officials recognised its head, the Dalai Lama or his Regent, as their religious leader, the 'church' in fact predominated.[130] Consequently, when the Dalai Lama personally took control of the government, he reduced the power of the monasteries and of the Amban, thereby increasing to some extent that of the Tibetan lay-officials. The reasons given by the Dalai Lama for reducing the power of the monks was that their proper concern was with religious affairs, 'that they were not trained to administer justice and to take part in State affairs, and that they were in the habit of oppressing the people. He found in point of fact that they encroached largely on what he regarded as his own prerogative'.[131]

The Dalai Lama returned from his long exile[132] with a conviction that the form of Lamaism in Tibet was superior to that practised in Mongolia and China and set about to develop and enhance it further. To this end, he embarked upon a programme of monastic reform which involved the republication of works on the study of Buddhism and restoration of the Potala Palace and other important Buddhist temples. The Dalai Lama also tightened supervision of the monastic examination system and took control of the appointment of abbots. Both modifications were intended to increase his own power. Despite Chao Erh-feng's callous campaign, the Chinese, in the person of the Emperor, were still remembered by the monastic orders as the benefactors of Tibet's religion.[133] Consequently, there was what might be considered a strong 'pro-Chinese' element in some of the leading monasteries, especially in those that enlisted monks from eastern Tibet. The Dalai Lama's supervision of the appointment process allowed him to circumvent those monks and abbots that might have been too actively sympathetic to the Chinese.

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128 R. Rahul, 'The Government of Tibet' International Studies, op.cit., p. 184.

129 See B. R. Burman, Religion and Politics in Tibet (New Delhi, 1979).

130 D. Snellgrove & H. Richardson A Cultural History of Tibet, (Boston,1986), p. 242.

131 C. Bell, Report on the Government of Tibet , op.cit., p. 25.

132 The Dalai Lama fled Lhasa for Mongolia in 1904 returning in 1910.

133 All three principal monasteries received large grants from China. C. Bell, The Religion of Tibet (Oxford 1931), p. 172.

Anglo-Tibetan relations were complicated by European confusions about Buddhism and the exact relationship of Tibetan religion to it and politics. In Tibet, State and Religion were one and the same. The single conscious aim of the administration was the maintenance of religion which automatically meant the maintenance of the State. Tibetan Buddhism was the infrastructure from which all decisions emanated.[134] The British government used the term 'Tibetan government' to describe the administration of the Dalai Lama. It appears that the term, Lhasa government (Deba Shung), would be more appropriate, considering the government's territorial limits. However, for the sake of clarity, in this study both terms are used. The head of every government in Tibet is the Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Rinpoche, embodiment of Chenresig. His first and foremost duty is the protection of his country and his people.[135]

Primarily concerned with the spiritual welfare of the people, the Dalai Lama is above all else a lama, or teacher. He instructs his people in the Buddhist religion in general and in the teachings of the Gelukpa sect in particular. As the head of the government the Dalai Lama gives it its essentially religious character. The Councils through which he works, which are responsible for most legislation, and the Assemblies are carefully divided so that secular as well as religious interests are equally served. Approximately half of the officials are monks, the other half laymen.[136] The Dalai Lama, however, was quite clearly the centre of Tibetan culture and politics.

The Lhasa government was closely linked to the Gelugpa religious order of which the Dalai Lama, while not the titular head, is the most senior incarnate lama. The Panchen Lama, or Tashi Lama, is his spiritual senior. The three large Gelugpa monasteries of Ganden, Drepung and Sera, all close to Lhasa, have played an important role in the history of the Lhasa government.[137] The structure of the Lhasa government was complex.[138] For this reason a diagram best supports a brief explanation.

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134 See Samdong Rinpoche, op.cit., pp. 1-9.

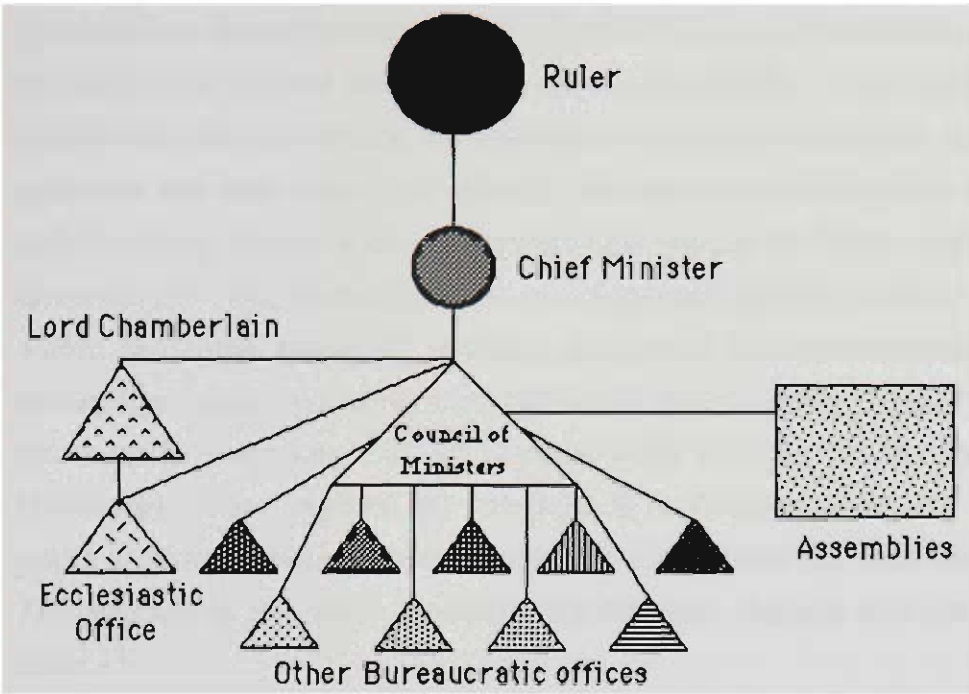
135 For information see Robert Thurman,'The Dalai Lamas of Tibet: Living Icons of a Six-hundred-year Millennium', The Tibet Journal, Vol. 8 (4), 1983, pp.10-19. Also I. Malik, 'The Great Thirteenth', Dalai Lama of Tibet (New Delhi, 1984). Also T. Tada, The Thirteenth Dalai Lama, op.cit.

136 Norbu, T & Turnbull, C., Tibet: Its History, Religion and People (Middlesex, 1972), p. 331.

137 G. Samuel, op.cit, p. 27.

138 See R. Rahul, 'The Structure of the Government of Tibet: 1644-1911' International Studies, Vol. III, No. 3, 1962, pp. 263-298 and 'The Government of Tibet: 1912-1933', International Studies, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1962, pp. 169-193.

STRUCTURE OF THE LHASA GOVERNMENT [139]



As noted, the paramount authority on all secular matters was the Dalai Lama or Regent. Under him the bureaucracy was divided into a segment representing the aristocracy and a counterpoised segment representing primarily the Gelugpa church. The political and judicial administration of the government was carried out primarily by the Council of Ministers (*Kashag*), with the Dalai Lama involving himself as much or as little as demanded. The Kashag was composed generally of three lay members (*Shape*), and one monk official (*Kalon*), holding joint responsibility. The *Kashag* constituted a court of appeal for the laity, with the Dalai Lama having ultimate franchise. Immediately under the Kashag was the Ecclesiastical Department or Grand Secretariat (*Yiktsang*), staffed by four monk officials in charge of religious affairs, and the Finance Office, headed by four lay officials. The Lord Chamberlain (*Chekyab Khempo*) was the link between the Ecclesiastical Department and the Dalai Lama. Direct access to the Dalai Lama invested him with considerable power. The *Chekyab Khempo* also attended the meetings of the *Kashag* when discussions of national importance were debated. Below thc *Kashag* was another administrative body divided into departments: Judicial, Political, Economic, Military, Foreign, Financial, and Education.

There were three types of Assemblies, all of which met irregularly. The balance of power within the body politic was embodied in the General Assembly (*Tsongdu*),[140] represented by the four grand secretaries, the four finance officers, a number of other

139 Based on Figure 5, M. Goldstein, Ph.D Thesis, op.cit., p. 194.

140 Often referred to as the National Assembly. This term, however, holds misleading politcal connotations.

high officials, and representatives from the three state monasteries near Lhasa. (Sera, Drepung and Ganden). While the General Assembly had no legislative role and possessed no formal power, neither the Dalai Lama nor the *Kashag* normally opposed decisions that derived from General Assembly debate. The *Kashag* was concerned mainly with internal affairs, the Tsongdu was summoned to deal with any international questions and with issues that affected the nation as a whole. Both the State Astrologer and Nechung Oracle wielded considerable power in Tibet's religious and political hierarchy.[141] The Nechung oracle was a spiritual political adviser: a medium through whom the spirit spoke.[142] Another group that held considerable power were the 'favourites', personal companion-advisers to the Dalai Lama.[143] The three great monasteries were not managed by the state through the ecclesiastical secretariat (*Yiktsang*). They enjoyed the privilege of self-management and exercised immense political power. Their abbots or representatives were the most vocal members in the *Tsongdu* and in the other assemblies the monastic element was also the most powerful force.[144]

All government positions, whether filled by monks or laymen, were graded in a scale of seven ranks (*rim*). The first rank was for the Dalai Lama, the second for the regent. Both positions were always occupied by incarnate lamas. The four ministers of the Kashag held the third rank. The four grand secretaries, the four finance ministers, the chief treasurer, and some provincial governors held the fourth rank. Governors of subordinate districts held the sixth rank and other various officials held the seventh rank.

In order to implement the decisions of the government, and to enforce laws and apply justice, Tibet was divided into a fifty-three regional districts, each under the joint governorship of a monk and a lay official. The *Dzongpen*, as the governors are called,

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141 Interview with Jampa Gyaltsen Drakthon, State Astrologer, Dharamsala, 12 December 1990.

142 A very fateful part was played for instance by the State Oracle in the political developments which led up to the British military expedition into Tibet in 1904. The State Oracle was consulted regarding the measures to be taken, and suggested that a certain mountain, situated a short distance within the Sikkimese territory, should be occupied by the Tibetan troops, as this mountain, by its magical qualities, would stop further advances by the British. The move, however, did not meet with success and the Tibetan troops were easily defeated. He seems to have been still of the opinion that eventually the Tibetan army would be victorious. Therefore, the Tibetan government refused to negotiate with the advancing British forces . This policy was reversed only after Lhasa had been captured. The 13th Dalai Lama removed the State Oracle from his office because of his false prophecies.

143 IOR: L/P&S/10/714 P3344 Bell to Government of India, 18 June 1917.

144 C. Bell, The Religion of Tibet, op.cit., p. 169.

acted as representatives of the people. Below the *Dzongpen*, between them and the people, were the *Ganpo*, or village headmen.

There were, broadly speaking, two main social classes in Tibet: a lower class of peasants holding land from the state in return for taxes and services and an upper class of noblemen holding landed estates in return for political service to the state. The clergy formed another distinct class. There were gradations and sub-divisions within each of these three classes.[145] The clergy and lay-men constituted two parallel streams at all levels.

Tibetan society exhibited a sharp hereditary class division into aristocrats and commoners, though movement between the divisions was not entirely closed. All commoners were in theory at least attached to one or another lord, though the 'lord' status could be occupied by a monastic estate or by the central government rather than by an aristocratic family. The commoners were traditionally divided into pastoral nomads, agriculturalists and artisans. Most of the population was agriculturalist, though there were large numbers of pastoralists in some areas, particularly on the great plains north of Central Tibet and in Amdo. Artisans were relatively few in number.[146]

Although the Dalai Lama exercised final authority concerning governmental decisions, the majority of the system's demands were converted into policy by the bureaucracy. Goldstein observes: 'The Dalai Lama's potential paramount authority was limited by restraints upon his movement and education and by the existence of a bureaucracy dominated by the traditional aristocratic stratum, as a unit, possessing a number of important rights such as initiating policy.'[147] The real source of authority was religious. The principal strength of the system was derived from the particular and unique system of its leadership, rule by incarnation. Michael notes: 'It is the acceptance of the Buddhist faith and of the role of the Dalai Lama as the incarnation of an emanation of Avalokitesvara that is the basis of all authority among Tibetans'.[148] It is in this light that Tibetan nationalism, political identity and the quest for independence must be investigated.

What then was independence meant to imply? The Dalai Lama returned from exile in British India with a clearer understanding of the complexities of power politics in Central Asia and Tibet's position within them. He understood explicitly that if his

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145 See G. Saklani, 'A Hierarchical pattern of Tibetan Society', The Tibet Journal, Vol. 3 (4), 1978, pp. 27-33.

146 G. Samuel, 'Religion in Tibetan Society - A New Approach Part One: A Structural Model', Kailash Journal of Himalayan Studies, Vol. VI (1),1978, p. 48.

147 M. C. Goldstein, op.cit., p. 195.

148 F. Michael, op.cit., p. 168.

country was to preserve its independence his house would need to be put in order. To accomplish this he initiated a policy of consolidation and development, changes, political as well as social, which were necessary if the country was to be 'saved' from outside intervention. He had working with him a personal 'favourite' *(Jensey)*, Chensal Namgang. During the Dalai Lama's flight into exile it was 'Jensey Namgang' who commanded the rearguard action which delayed the Chinese pursuers at Chaksam Ferry on the Tsang Po, allowing the Dalai Lama's entourage to escape into India.[149] Under directions from the Dalai Lama, Chensal Namgang left Kalimpong in 1911 and returned to Lhasa to co-ordinate the revolt against the Chinese occupation forces. He covertly entered Tibet through western Sikkim and after recruiting his men organized resistance fighting within the Lhasa area.[150] He worked closely with the newly-formed Tibetan War Department, which had been secretly set up to prepare for military action.[151] Under his leadership the Tibetan armed rebellion was successful.[152] Lacking reinforcements and supplies, the Chinese troops were forced to surrender on 12 August 1912.[153] He was granted the title of Tsarong *Dzasa* by the Dalai Lama[154] and the forenames, Dasang Dadul, (*Zla-bzan-dgra-'dul*) when he was ennobled by marrying into the Tsarong family.[155] In 1913, in accordance with his programme of administrative consolidation, the Dalai Lama appointed Tsarong, *dMag Spyi,* Commander-in-chief, of the Tibetan Army[156] and in 1914 made him a cabinet minister (*Kalon,Shabs pad*).[157] During the next few years Tsarong reorganised and substantially strengthened the Tibetan army.[158]

Tsarong had returned from British India with the conviction that if Tibetans were to be able to deal with the new world encroaching on them, they had to comprehend and

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149 See R. L. Tenzin, 'Hero of Chaksam', Gyun-Kho'i Cho-sid Shes-ja Nas-dus, Chapter 27.

150 Interview with Jigme Taring, Dehra Dun, 22 November 1990.

151 Ibid.

152 The Times, 'Defeat of Chinese Troops, 18 April 1912, 'Plight of the Chinese Garrison', 24 April 1912, 'Chinese Troops Hard Pressed', 30 April 1912, 'Fighting in Tibet, 7 May 1912, 'The Struggle in Tibet: A Chinese Surrender', 11 May 1912.

153 The Times, 'The Fighting at Lhasa', 3 August 1912, 'Agreement Expected at Lhasa', 21 August 1912, 'Peace at Lhasa', 22 August 1912.

154 IOR: L/P&S/10/128 P2396 Report on the British Trade Agency at Gyantse from 1 April 1913 to 31 March 1914 in Letter from Gould Officiating POS to Government of India, 16 May 1914.

155 Interview with Rinchen Dolma Taring, Dehra Dun, 8 November 1990.

156 Ibid.

157 PRO: FO371/1930/F270/40005/10 McDonald to Government of India 3 July 1914.

158 Before 1913 there were only about 3,000 regular troops in the whole of Tibet. Interview with Jigme Taring, 22 November 1990. See N. W. Gyal-Tse, The Tibetan Military System (Dharamsala, 1976).

adapt to it. He understood with more clarity than most other Tibetan officials how essential reforms were for Tibet's independence.[159] Tsarong recognised that the world had changed around the Tibetans, and they had not changed with it. He endorsed the dictum of Garibaldi, which Heinrich Harrer says he once quoted to him:

> If we want to remain as we are certain things must be changed.[160]

Tsarong appears to have gained a clear understanding that those who valued internal unity and external strength needed a strong military establishment and he was convinced of the need to find support for that establishment in administrative, technical and commercial developments. He knew that the forces of disunity, local and class privilege, tradition and religious schism were themselves so strong that the surest way to escape turmoil was to subdue these forces and impose a superior force: a new and rational political order backed by the military.[161] The non-coercive state had become obsolete. A new conception of the state came into operation in Tibet, one based on military force as a principle. Tibet's ancient martial spirit was to be revived.[162]

What the Dalai Lama wanted was that Tibet should be treated as an independent nation having friendly diplomatic relations with China, British India and Russia. With international cooperation, he wanted to have Tibet recognized as a neutral nation. He wanted political freedom and release from the ties inherited from the past: to be an ally of China, not subjects. In the final analysis, the Dalai Lama wanted little more than to be left in isolation to continue his role as 'Protector of Tibet' and 'Defender of the Faith'. His foremost duty was to carry out this task and he intended to do this by strengthening Tibet militarily. A Tibetan verse states: 'If there be an enemy of the Buddha, the followers of *him* shall wear armour'.[163] The recognition of this important vocation is crucial to any assessment of Anglo-Tibetan relations during the 1920s and 1930s. It is crucial also to understand that the Tibetans were far too weak and disunited to stand alone despite their successful campaign against the Chinese.

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159 Interview with R. D. Taring, op. cit.

160 Interview with H. Harrer, Dehra Dun, 22 November 1990. See Return to Tibet (Harmondsworth, 1984), p. 8.

161 Ironically, over the next few years these very forces were to bring about the downfall of Tsarong. See H. Spence, 'Tsarong II, the Hero of Chaksam, and the Modernisation Struggle in Tibet, 1912-1931, The Tibet Journal, Vol. XVI, No. 1, 1991, pp. 34-57. For an account of Tsarong by one of his former servants see Skal ldan, 'Tsharong zla bzang dgra'dul gyi skor', Materials on the Culture and History of Tibet, Vol. 5, (Lhasa, 1985), pp. 249-293.

162 The author intends to carry out post-doctoral research on Tsarong II and the formation of the modern 'coercive' state.

163 IOR: 12,061A Translation by Kusho Pa-lhe-se. 'Corrections of Report on Government of Tibet, August and September 1927.

CHAPTER 2

AN AMBIGUOUS 'PROTECTORATE'

> 'What did we need from Tibet? Put briefly, our main requirement was that Tibet herself should be strong and free . . . unless she is free, she cannot really be strong.'[1]

The prime objective of the Dalai Lama from 1914 was to stabilise Tibet on the basis of a permanent settlement with China. He knew that Tibet's independence could not be retained without an agreement. What the Lhasa government wanted was either China's acceptance of the Simla Convention or adequate assistance to keep China at a distance. The Tibetan reaction at this time was to hold desperately to Britain as the most likely and efficacious means of protecting the integrity of their lamaist state. But Britain's policy let Tibet down on both counts.

What Britain wanted in 1914 was a settled government in Lhasa which was not hostile to Britain and, ultimately, sufficient control over Lhasa to keep Russia out of Tibet.[2] The Government of India's interest lay in securing its Himalayan frontier by maintaining the integrity and autonomy of Tibet with an effective Tibetan government able to establish peace and order and free from the influence of Russia or any foreign power, including China. Peaceful conditions in Tibet and its freedom from external control were the two important goals of India's foreign policy towards Tibet.[3]

The revived problem of a Russian threat in Central Asia was the primary reason for London to exert pressure on China to attend the conference at Simla. The major proposals of the British at Simla were given form by the fact that the Russians had circumvented the intent but not the letter of the Anglo-Russian Convention.[4] In central Asia [5] after 1912 the Anglo-Russian Convention encumbered rather than enhanced the British endeavour to obtain security. Anglo-Russian relations dominated British policy

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1 C. Bell, Tibet, Past and Present, op.cit., pp. 190-191.

2 IOR: L/P&S/18/B324 Memorandum by J. Shuckburgh, Secretary, Political Department, India Office 14 July 1919.

3 B. Prasad, op.cit., p. 33.

4 I. Klein, 'The Anglo-Russian Convention and the Problem of Central Asia, 1907-1914', Journal of British Studies, Vol. 11, 1971, p. 142.

5 Although the term is in general use, Central Asia has never been a clearly defined region. In modern maps this area is shown as occupied by the Kazakh, Turkmen, Uzbek, Kirgiz and Tajik Soviet Socialist Republics, the Sinkiang-Uygur Autonomous Region of China and by the independent state of Afghanistan'. G. Morgan, Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895 (London , 1981), p. xv.

in Central Asia, and it was anxiety about Russian expansion in Central Asia which led the British after 1912 to alter their 'self-denial' policy and consolidate their influence in Tibet.

The inability of the British to secure their aims in Central Asia through the Anglo-Russian Convention derived from the long-term weakening of the British position in Asia. Klein maintains it stemmed 'from the strategic advantages of Russia's position astride the Asian land mass, and from the failure of the British to develop the Convention as a sufficiently forceful instrument of British policy'.[6] At the end of the Russo-Japanese War, the British and Japanese had renewed their pact. The new pact required a rapid Japanese response to any Russian thrust against India. The second alliance of 1905 referred directly to Japanese assistance in defending the frontiers of India in return for reciprocal British aid in defending Korea. Hardinge, Viceroy of India (1910-1916), considered that the Japanese treaty and the Anglo-Russian Convention gave the British complete protection in India, while effectively controlling the Russians in Asia, whose energies might be removed from Asia to the Balkan peninsula.[7]

Accustomed to acquiring territory to protect existing possessions in Asia, the British rarely expected to be pulled forward to obtain security for their newer possessions. In attempting to safeguard India through the Anglo-Russian Convention, the British limited their diplomatic manoeuvrability in Tibet without obtaining agreements for the maintenance of the status quo in the Central Asian borderlands of Tibet and India - Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan.[8] There were, however, solid diplomatic realities behind British actions. Britain's Japanese allies expected renewed Russian expansion which would obstruct Japanese plans for dominating northern China, and asked the British not to initiate any agreement which would improve the Russian position in Mongolia.[9] When, during negotiations preceding the 1907 Convention, Isvolsky, the Russian delegate, suggested that the British should have a free hand in Tibet in exchange for a similar Russian advantage in Mongolia,[10] the British, severely restricted by the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906, were obliged to dismiss an excellent opportunity of neutralizing India's northeast frontier.[11]

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6 Ibid., p.126. By the 1880s, the railway revolution in transport gave Russia an immense strategic advantage for further domination in Asia.

7 According to I. Klein, this reorientation of Russian interests indirectly provided additional security for the British, for without British naval supremacy and diplomatic support, the Russians would have been unable to prevent Austro-German domination of the Balkans.

8 I. Klein, op.cit., p. 137.

9 Ibid., p. 129.

10 PRO: FO371/1937/F1028/5785/10 Letter from Buchanan to Grey, 3 February 1914.

11 PRO: FO371/1937/F1028/7516/10 Grey to Buchanan, 27 February 1914.

A Mongol delegation secured support at St. Petersburg in July 1911 for the declaration of Mongol independence, which precipitated the rupture of ancient ties with China.[12] The Russo-Mongol Treaty of October 1912 [13] endowed Russia with extensive economic privileges and committed the Russians to support of Mongolian autonomy.[14] In Article I Russia agreed to prevent 'the presence of Chinese troops' or Chinese colonization in Mongolia. The treaty placed Mongolia essentially under Russian protection.[15] Russian incursions into Chinese Turkestan also presented another serious threat to India's security.

The new Russian position in Mongolia was of major significance for the British in India. The Russian success in gaining a dominating position near Tibet began to revive British nervousness regarding Russian expansion in Central Asia. The final blow to British hopes of neutralizing Central Asia through the Anglo-Russian Convention was delivered in January 1913 with the signing of the Mongol-Tibetan Treaty of mutual defence, which had the potential of fostering Russian penetration into Tibet. It was reported that Dorjieff, acting as the Dalai Lama's agent, and equipped with the latter's credentials, signed a treaty on behalf of the Tibetan government with Mongolia at Urga.[16] In the alleged treaty, both Tibet and Mongolia declared themselves free from Manchu domination, asserted their position as independent states, and declared themselves allies in view of their common religion (Articles II, III, and V). Each recognized the other's independence and both agreed to work for the advancement of Buddhism and to assist each other against external and internal dangers (Article IV).[17] Under this treaty the Russian protectors of Mongolia could use the Urga regime as both puppet and screen for establishing a major Russian influence at Lhasa. The implication was obvious. If Russian efforts proved more successful in permanently dislodging the Chinese from Tibet than had the docile British policy, Tibetan dependence on the British would end. If

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12 In April 1914 the Imperial Mongolian government declared herself an independent State and notified the British government that Mongolia 'is no longer under the Government of China'. See PRO: FO371/1937/ F1028/28145 Declaration from Mongol Government to Jordan, April 1914, Encl.No. 1 in Letter from Jordan to Grey, 5 June 1914.

13 Signed at Urga on 21 October 1912. Ratified 3 November 1912.

14 The Times, 'The Russo-Mongolian Treaty: Privileges and Safeguards', 26 December 1912.

15 For an extensive analysis see PRO: FO371/1937/ F1028/15908/10 Memorandum by Mr. Rockhill on the 'Question of Outer Mongolia', 10 February 1914, Encl. No. 1 in Letter from Jordan to Grey, 23 March 1914.

16 IOR: L/P&S/10/149 P225 Buchanan to Grey, 17 January 1913.

17 Treaty between Tibet and Mongolia., H. Richardson, op.cit., p. 280.

the Government of India was not prepared to fill the role as protector, then the Lhasa government might encourage Russia to fill the vacuum.

By the end of 1912, then, the British were faced with the entire collapse of their hopes for the Anglo-Russian Convention in Central Asia. Their optimism had been built on miscalculation, which perhaps was understandable as the prospect of continued prickly relations with Russia were unpalatable to the Liberal government, and undesirable in view of relative British weakness in Asia and the German naval challenge to the Royal navy.[18] Policy makers had derived a misplaced sense of security from the Anglo-Japanese pact, which was thought to protect India. They had underestimated Russia's determination and ability to transform the strategic situation in India's borderlands. By 1912 Whitehall realized these changes might be crucial if, in the future, the Anglo-Russian Convention and Anglo-Japanese alliance ceased to exist. Perhaps most distressing and perplexing to the British was the fact that the Russians had managed to transform the strategic situation in Central Asia without directly contravening the Convention.[19]

Russia's effective manoeuvres in Central Asia delivered a conclusive jolt to London's policy of non-intervention in Tibet: Russian expansion transformed politicians' attitudes and stimulated a search for measures to place Lhasa under some degree of British influence. The Minister at St Petersburg, Sir George Buchanan, expressed this opinion in a despatch: 'it seemed to me that the veiled protectorate which Russia was assuming over Mongolia materially altered our respective positions in Asia, and, as above changes might react on Thibet, . . . we should wish to safeguard our interests there'.[20] The Foreign Office believed that they would have to find exceptionally subtle means to implement their policy as Russian manoeuvres had been sufficiently astute to ensure that the British had not gained the right to place an agent at Lhasa. Whitehall was united, however, regarding the need to keep Russia out of Tibet and to extend British influence there. Significantly, Whitehall's policy was supported by British diplomats at Peking, who previously had been staunchly opposed to intercession in Tibet, fearing disruptive effects on British commercial interest in China. Tieh-Tseng Li, commenting on the situation, writes: 'Great Britain had been crying wolf in regard to Tibet; this time she seemed to hear at least the distant footsteps of a bear' [21]

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18 I. Klein, op.cit., p. 141.

19 I. Klein, ibid., p. 142.

20 PRO: FO371/1937/F1028/4563/10 Letter from Buchanan to Grey, 1 February 1914.

21 Tieh-Tseng Li, Tibet Today & Yesterday, (New York, 1960), p. 134.

The 1907 Convention had become more an encumbrance than an aid to the British in Central Asia, but in order not obviously to break with it, they required to extend their influence in Tibet by means of what Klein has called 'unobtrusive political control'.[22] Changed conditions required a changed policy. In essence this meant Britain needed to deploy a policy that ensured the autonomy of Tibet, while refraining from any 'forward' movement, and at the same time do no injury to the prestige of the Chinese Republican Government or their relationship with it. The Simla Tripartite Conference offered this prospect.

Yet the Simla Convention failed to solve most of the fundamental problems occasioned by the new political orientation in the period before 1914.[23] The British developed a comprehensive program at Simla to revise the status of Tibet.[24] The Simla Convention specifically divided Tibet into two zones: Outer Tibet, (Tibet proper) which was declared autonomous under the direction of the Government of Lhasa, and a semi-autonomous area, Inner Tibet, the area consisting of Kham and Amdo, which was declared a Chinese sphere of influence in which the Chinese nominally would have greater control.[25] The Chinese were precluded from introducing military forces, administrative officials or colonists into the zone defined as Outer Tibet.[26] They were, however, to be permitted to station an Amban with an escort of 300 men at Lhasa [27] and a British 'agent' and escort was to be stationed at Gyantse.[28] Tibetan boundaries were modifed and the Governments of China and Tibet were prohibited from entering into any negotiations or agreements regarding Tibet with one another or with any other Power.[29] The major aim was undoubtedly to gain effective control of the foreign relations of Tibet and to exclude Russia from direct contact with the Tibetans. British and Chinese

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22 I. Klein, op.cit., p. 143.

23 For a summary of events see PRO: FO371/1930/F270/43390 Final Memorandum of the Thibet Conference. Encl. 1 in India Office to Foreign Office, 25 August 1914.

24 PRO: FO371/1929/F270/10695/10 Proceedings of the Fourth Meeting of the Thibet Conference, 'British Statement on the Limits of Thibet', 17 February 1914.

25 PRO: FO371/1929/ F270/13584/10 Government of India to Marquess of Crewe, 26 March 1914, Encl. No.1 India Office to Foreign Office, 27 March 1914.

26 PRO: FO371/1930/F270/21155/10 Text initialled by Plenipotentiaries on 27 April 1914, Article III.

27 Ibid, Article IV.

28 Ibid, Article VIII.

29 Ibid, Article V.

influence was exerted on the Tibetan delegates, both powers intending territorial gains and political concessions.[30]

The objective of the British policy appears to have been to remove the Chinese to as great a distance as possible from Lhasa and Tibet proper. At the same time, by creating Inner Tibet, they could interpose a buffer state under Chinese administration between Tibet and Mongolia so that Russian influence could not easily penetrate to the Lhasa.[31] While they ensured that no other foreign power would supplant China in Tibet, the British were most emphatic that Tibet should not be included in China proper. If Tibet was included in China proper, foreign powers could demand most favoured nation treatment in Tibet and the British government would forfeit the dominant position which it held in that country.[32]

The formula which the British were hoping for in 1914 was an autonomous Tibet, subject to a weak Chinese suzerainty and guaranteed by an Anglo-Russian treaty. At best the Simla Convention proved to be a compromise. Though no settlement was arrived at, Peking formally notified Great Britain that the only point in the draft convention which was unacceptable was that affecting the boundary: [33]

> This Government has several times stated that it gives its support to the majority of the articles of the Convention. The part which it is unable to agree to is that dealing with the question of boundary.[34]

The treaty formed a base upon which to work out a solution to the Tibetan problem. What was needed was the consent of the Chinese government. Assurances were given that the Chinese troops stationed on the frontier would not advance beyond the positions they then held, provided they were not attacked by the Tibetans. Both sides waited for a final

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30 PRO: FO371/1929/F270/10695/10 British Statement on the Limits of Thibet, 17 February 1914, PRO: FO371/1920/ F270/18834/10 Final statement presented by the Chinese Plenipotentiary at the Meeting of 7 April 1914, Encl. 2 letter from India Office to Foreign Ofice, 28 April 1914.

31 According to Sir Charles Bell, the Chinese wanted to give the parts of Tibet near China Chinese names and treat them as provinces of China. By using the terms 'Inner and Outer Tibet' the British were able to keep Tibet's name thereby retaining a legitimate claim to the eastern regions.

32 PRO: FO371/1929/F270/9407/10 Treaty Series No. 35, 1908, (Amending those of 5 December 1893) 'Regulations on "Trade in Tibet" concluded between The United Kingdom, China, and Tibet'. Signed at Calcutta, 20 April 1908.

33 Wai Chiao Pu to British Minister, 29 June 1914, encl. in Sir J. Jordan despatch No. 250, 30 June 1914 cited in IOR: L/P&S/18/B324 India Office Memo 14 July 1919. See also N. C. Sinha, 'The Simla Convention 1914: A Chinese Puzzle', Bulletin of Tibetology, Gangtok, No. 2, July 1987, pp. 5-12.

34 Wai Chiao Pu to British Minister, 29 June 1914, Ibid.

settlement by diplomatic means. The frontier truce, which lasted for the next few years, was based on this understanding.[35]

The British failed to secure their primary aim of obtaining a dominating influence over Tibetan foreign relations. The Dalai Lama was willing to 'consult' the British regarding Tibetan foreign policy but insisted on retaining final power: 'Tibet shall consult with Great Britain in important questions, but otherwise manage them herself.'[36] Lhasa continued to exercise a considerable degree of independence in formulating foreign policy. Consequently, the Lhasa government was not hesitant in seeking a settlement with the Chinese without British knowledge or approaching Russian and Japan for support. Britain did not have the diplomatic weapons to force the Dalai Lama to accept British tutelage or to make China abandon its hereditary claim to Tibetan overlordship.

Most significant, however, was Russia's resistance to the new British policy in Tibet.[37] Russia used the Tibetan issue in order to strengthen its own position at the expense of the British protectorate in Afghanistan. Anglo-Russian friction raised seriously the possibility of the collapse of the Anglo-Russian rapprochement. The Russian foreign minister, Sazonov, described the new agreement 'as "abrogating" and "virtually tearing up" the Tibetan section of the Convention of 1907.'[38] He derided any suggestion that the status quo in Tibet would not be affected by the British reform plan and insisted that the British were attempting to establish a protectorate.[39]

Sazonov would agree to end Russian resistance to the establishment of a British agent in Tibet only in return for a high price: he asked for the stationing of a Russian official in Herat, an area which the Indian government had been trying to secure from the Russians for four decades.[40] The home government and Lord Hardinge considered it strategically vital that the Russians be kept away from Herat. The Foreign Office specified that Herat and the crest of the Hindu Kush must remain within the sphere of British influence. Amidst proposals, counter-proposals and friction, Buchanan warned Sazonov that excessive Russian demands would cause the Anglo-Russian accord to 'break down altogether'. Attempts to persuade Russia to agree to some modifications in the 1907 Agreement proved complex and protracted. The outbreak of war relieved the

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35 E. Teichman, Travels of a Consular Officer, op.cit. p. 46.

36 PRO: FO371/1612/34848/10 Encl. in No. 1 Government of India to Foreign Office, 27 June 1913.

37 A draft of the Agreement was communicated to the Russian Government in May 1914. IOR: L/P&S/18/B324 Memo by Secretary, Political Department, India Office 14 July 1919.

38 Ibid., p. 2.

39 I. Klein, op.cit., p. 144.

40 IOR: L/P&S/18/B324 Memo by Secretary, Political Department, India Office, 14 July 1919.

Viceroy of having to contend with a decision in London which ultimately would have proved unsatisfactory both to Afghanistan as well as to India. The British and Russian Ministers decided to postpone the talks until early in 1915.[41] On 4 August, only a month after the conclusion of the Simla Convention, Great Britain entered the First World War.

The Simla Convention was important in terms of international recognition for Tibet. The Anglo-Tibetan agreement confirmed Tibet's political status. It was signed between Britain and Tibet without consultation from China.[42] Yet this in itself accentuates the ambiguous nature of the Convention. While Tibet was declared to be 'part of Chinese territory',[43] Tibet was affirmed as a separate entity with treaty making powers. The fundamental significance, however, is that when the Chinese refused to sign any agreement the British government, by signing the 1914 Anglo-Tibetan Agreement, changed its policy from neutrality that recognized the sovereignty of China to active participation in the movement for local Tibetan autonomy.[44]

What was the theoretical foundation of Britain's new Tibetan policy? As pointed out in Chapter One, Tibet's future was inextricably tied to Britain through a series of conventions which, before the First World War, were the acceptable means of procuring concessions, privileges or special rights. Britain, in an attempt to protect its imperial possessions and spheres of influence, had developed certain political notions and undertaken specific defensive strategies. Imperial philosophy at the turn of the century stressed the absolute necessity for empires to avoid common frontiers. Neutral zones of mutual non-interference were considered essential between the boundaries of the Western empires.

During the Simla Conference, Sir Henry McMahon, President of the Conference,[45] negotiated with the Tibetans a new border in Assam which became known

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41 A. K. J. Singh, op.cit., p. 82.

42 F. Greenhut maintains that the British were aware that if they signed a separate agreement with Tibet they would, in effect, be acknowledging an independent Tibet which they might soon be called upon to defend. The compromise was that the British and Tibetan delegates would sign a declaration stating that they agreed to be bound by the terms of the Convention. F. Greenhut, The Tibetan Frontiers Question from Curzon to the Colombo Conference (New Delhi, 1982), p. 37.

43 PRO: FO371/1930/F270/21155/10 Text as initialled by Plenipotentiaries on 27 April 1914.

44 IOR: L/P&S/10/714/3344A Memorandum on Thibetan Question, August 1915.

45 Sir Arthur Henry McMahon was then Foreign Secretary to the Government of India and had to resign to take up this appointment.

as the McMahon Line. McMahon was an enthusiastic believer in the buffer concept.[46] He equated 'frontier' with 'buffer' and considered it as a tract of neutral territory, or 'zone', separating the centres of two sovereignties.[47] He was satisfied that he had prevented a vacuum in Tibet, which China and also Russia, with its history of expansionism, might have tried to fill. By fixing the McMahon Line as the India-Tibet boundary along the crest of the Himalayan watershed in India's north frontier,[48] McMahon sought to make the Assam Himalayas secure and remove any ambiguity about India's sovereignty over tribal areas on the mountainous southern slopes.[49]

By 1914, then, the British ambition of an autonomous Tibet to the north of the Himalayas had been achieved. But the Simla Convention had transformed Tibet into an ambiguous buffer-state for the British. It declared that China had suzerainty over Tibet yet insisted on Tibetan autonomy. Tibet was proclaimed 'part of Chinese territory'[50] yet Tibet's separate territorial entity was to be protected. These contradictory elements of British policy towards Tibet caused much uncertainty in the actual implementation of policy. Ten years later McGovern wrote:

> Officially England is entirely neutral on the dispute between China and Tibet. Probably it would be officially declared that England would like to see an autonomous Tibet under the technical suzerainty of China, and undoubtedly many officials in the diplomatic service of England have very pro-Chinese sympathies in the matter. But certainly the India Office, while maintaining its neutrality, manages to make it a very benevolent neutrality in favour of Tibet. The Indian Government would probably like to see Tibet an independent buffer-state, not entirely devoid of British sympathies and influence, and so while the Indian Government refuses to recognize the Dalai Lama's claim of independence from China, it has placed no difficulties in the way of allowing the Dalai Lama to increase his power and his fighting forces so that China will be unable to enforce her claim over Tibet.[51]

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46 McMahon's experience of boundaries and boundary-making was considerable. He had demarcated the boundary between Baluchistan and Afghanistan in 1894-96 and acted as an arbitrator on the boundary dispute between Persia and Afghanistan.

47 A. Lamb, Asian Frontiers: Studies in a Continuing Problem (Melbourne, 1968), p. 7.

48 PRO: FO371/1929/F270/17595/10 Memorandum by McMahon, 28 March 1914 including Exchange of Notes on 'India-Thibet Frontier' between the British and Thibetan Plenipotentiaries, 24 March 1914 Encl. No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 21 April 1914.

49 Ghosh, op.cit., p. 196.

50 PRO:FO371/1930/F270/21208/10 Convention between Great Britain, China and Tibet -Schedule.

51 W. M McGovern, To Lhasa in Disguise (London, 1924), pp. 259-69.

This situation carried with it a degree of confusion. If the British were not prepared to endorse 'direct' Chinese control what amount of Chinese influence could be sanctioned? This difficulty created a divergence of opinion between London and the Government in India. In the Foreign Office the view was that Chinese interest and influence in Tibet were legitimate but needed to be defined. Yet the Government of India desired the autonomy of Tibet with an effective Tibetan government able to establish peace and order and free from the influence of Russia or any foreign power, including China. The discord between London and India overshadowed British policy concerning Tibet. It would take twenty years, late 1933, before the Government of India consented to 'exclude' China as a 'foreign power' in relation to Tibet. In 1914, however, the Government of India were resolute in their stance that all foreign powers should be prohibited from the Tibetan buffer state.

In 1894, in his book Rise of British Dominion in Asia, Sir Alfred Lyall defined the conception of 'buffer state'. His definition is interesting, if not entirely precise:

> The device has been likened to the invention of buffers; because a buffer is a mechanical contrivance for breaking or graduating the force of impact between two heavy bodies; and in the same way the political buffer checked the violence of political collisions, though it rarely prevented them altogether.[52]

Perhaps Alstair Lamb's analogy gives a more accurate definition:

> They served as an elastic substance placed between the unyielding fabric of colonial sovereignties. They could bend and bounce in a way that the defined boundaries of colonies could not. They prevented the clash of colonial interests from leading to conflicts which would prove extremely difficult to control once metropolitan public opinion was aroused.[53]

In the West the most clearly developed examples are those established in the nineteenth century around the perimeter of the British Indian Empire. Specifically, it was a system of peripheral defence, involving the establishment of a border of protected territory between the actual possessions which they administered and the possessions of formidable neighbours whom they desired to keep at arm's length. The inner line consisted mainly of tribal areas, the outer line of states in friendly relations with the British Indian government.

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52 Sir A. Lyall, Rise of British Dominion in Asia (1894), Chapter xviii p.340. See also A. Lyall, 'Frontiers and Protectorates' The Nineteenth Century, August, 1891, pp. 312-328.

53 A. Lamb, Asian Frontiers, op.cit., p. 62.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the concept was also familiar to more than one Chinese dynasty.[54] Alastair Lamb refers to China's 'Asian tribute-paying protectorates'. According to Lamb, the 'Inner Protectorates' were Tibet, Sinkiang, Inner and Outer Mongolia, Manchuria and the 'Outer Protectorates' were Annam, Burma, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Ladakh and Hunza.[55] If Tibet was stategically important to the British empire in India, it was no less so to the Chinese empire. Especially after the British Younghusband Expedition of 1903-4 the Chinese realized the strategic value of Tibet to China. Tibet was recognised as 'the back-door' to China. If the backdoor was open and occupied by a foreign power, China proper would be exposed and vulnerable.[56] The Chinese contention that the British in India coveted Tibet and would later use it as a base to attack China proper became an important ingredient in Anglo-Chinese relations. During the 1930s this issue, once again, became a major issue.[57]

Two important features characterise the idea of the buffer state. Firstly, the buffer is geographically interposed between the potential enemy and the area to be defended and, secondly, the region must in some sense be a protectorate.[58] The protectorate was a convenient method of extending into the zone the degree of power that would suit the varying circumstance. In essence, 'it enabled the great Power to appropriate certain attributes of sovereignty without affirming full jurisdiction'.[59]

The British buffer system 'depended for its practical validity and effect on a retention of, and respect for, complete internal freedom within the buffer area. The diminution of sovereignty suffered did not affect the internal field, whether in tribe or in State; it required only that the buffer should exclude other foreign influence and in foreign relations be guided by the British Government.'[60] The point regarding freedom is best illustrated by the fact that, while the British were willing occasionally to use force, and did use force, to exclude rival influence from these areas as in the Tibetan War of 1904, they did not attempt to incorporate the buffer zone into India. No policy of incorporation, no imposition of administration, no interference with law or custom beyond the administered line was considered. The British government knew and respected the fact

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54 Owen Lattimore, op.cit. in his classic analysis termed the concept 'Inner Asian' frontier. See also Chusei Suzuki, op.cit., p.180. Also O. W. Wolters, 'China irredenta: the south' The World Today, Vol. 19, December 1963, pp. 540-552.

55 A. Lamb, Asian Frontiers, op.cit., pp. 21-28.

56 See J. D. H. Lamb, 'The Relations of China with Great Britain Concerning Tibet', China Quarterly (Shanghai) Vol. 2, 1936-37, pp. 431-449.

57 See Chapter Thirteen.

58 Unknown author, 'Buffer States: Their Historic Service to Peace', Round Table, Vol.45, 1954/5, p. 334.

59 Ibid., p. 335.

60 Ibid., p. 337.

that the inhabitants of a buffer area would resist the use of force to alter their internal policies or to incorporate their territories in India. In other words, 'the buffer-States around India, having admitted a certain derogation of sovereignty in external affairs, were in no sense satellites.'[61] Charles Bell wrote 'What did we need from Tibet? Put briefly, our requirement was that Tibet herself should be strong and free. . . unless she is free, she cannot really be strong . . . Tibet desires freedom to manage her own affairs. Her people resent foreign interference. And it is well that it should be so, for thus is the barrier most efficient.'[62]

A necessary requirement of a buffer, therefore, was an appropriate geographical position, and, secondly, complete internal freedom. Where, however, there existed a definite right of exclusion of rival influence, as in Afghanistan up to 1921,[63] and also in Tibet, that right of exclusion carried with it the duty of defence. The 1904 Treaty with Tibet had granted Britain exclusive influence in Tibet. Article IX of the Treaty stipulated that:

> Without the consent of Great Britain no Tibetan territory shall be sold, leased or mortgaged to any foreign power whatsoever . . . no foreign Power shall be permitted to send either official or non-official persons to Tibet, no matter in what pursuit they may be engaged . . .[or] to construct roads or railways or erect telegraphs or open mines anywhere in Tibet.

Britain's political influence in Tibet was secured by the cancellation of the virtual monopoly of economic and commercial concessions which the Chinese had obtained, through Article III of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906,[64] by the grant of most-favoured-nation treatment and by advantageous arrangements for trade between India and Tibet.[65] The agreement between Tibet and Britain at Simla in 1914 [66] had also committed

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61 Ibid.,

62 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., pp. 190 and p. 246.

63 In 1919 the Afghans obtained full independence. A Soviet-Afghan agreement was concluded in 1921.

64 Signed at Peking on 27 April 1906. Ratified at London on 23 July 1906, See Appendix VIII in C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., pp. 287-289.

65 Tibet Trade Regulations 1908. Signed at Calcutta on 20 April 1908. A new set of trade regulations was signed in 1914 which replaced those of 1893 and 1908. See PRO: FO371/1929/ F270/9407/10 'Proposed New Trade Regulations with Thibet' Encl. 2 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 2 March 1914. Also 'Anglo-Tibet Trade Regulations' IOR: L/P&S/10/344, 3 July 1914.

66 For documents relating to the Simla Conference see PRO:FO371/1937 F1028; FO371/1928/F270; FO371/1929/F270. For an analysis of the Simla Conference see P. Mehra, The McMahon Line and After (New Delhi, 1974), pp. 147-292.

the British government to diplomatic support and a supply of arms to Tibet in their struggle against China.[67] These documents testify to both Britain's legal and moral position as 'protector' of its Tibetan buffer. Alastair Lamb maintains that the 1904 Treaty 'in effect placed Tibet to some degree under British protection'.[68] An India Office Memorandum states: 'by our past intervention in Tibetan affairs we have incurred certain moral obligations towards the Tibetan people which cannot be ignored'.[69] It must be concluded that Britain functioned during the period under examination for all practical purposes as the protector of the lamaist state.

The advantage of the buffer breaks down, however, without a strong and well-organized government and administration at its frontier. It is in this respect that Britain's Tibet policy, based on the buffer concept, was impotent. On the one hand, Britain resolutely maintained the most fundamental principle of the buffer state concept - that of rigourous abstention from intervention in the internal affairs of the buffer- but, on the other hand, they were reluctant to execute their duty of defence. The British government had no intention of creating an unequivocal protectorate over Tibet. The Tibetans were kept weak and in a state of limbo because it suited the British government's wider foreign policy to do so. The intellectual baggage of mid-Victorian free trade still weighed on the minds of policy makers and the Tibetan buffer state became part of Britain's informal empire.

In a famous article published in 1953 J. Gallagher and R. Robinson argued persuasively for the fact of continuity in British imperialism throughout the nineteenth century. To consider imperialism only by the criterion of formal control was 'rather like judging the size and character of icebergs solely from the parts above the water-line'.[70] Gallagher and Robinson maintain that Britain's political and economic role in the world expanded in formal and informal terms throughout the century and that the mid-Victorian era was not one of hostility to the development of empire as formerly maintained. Accordingly, it was not the struggle for political control or annexation of territories which mattered, but the execution of economic power for the benefit of the metropolis through informal empire. The task was to 'encourage stable governments as good investment

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67 IOR:L/P&S/18/B191 'Tibet', Sir F. A. Hirtzel, p.3, 27 January 1913. See also IOR: MSS EUR F80 5d. 8 'Notes from the Simla Conference', C. Bell 8 January 1914.

68 A. Lamb, Asian Frontiers, op.cit., p. 127.

69 IOR: L/&S/18/B324 Memorandum by Secretary, J. Shuckburgh, Political Department, India Office, 14 July 1914.

70 J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', Economic History Review, 2nd series, 6, 1953-54, p. 1.

risks, just as in weaker or unsatisfactory states it was considered necessary to coerce them into more co-operative attitudes'.[71]

Informal empire also meant empire without responsibility or, to quote Stanley Baldwin, 'power without responsibility': in other words, imperialism without the desire to assume the responsibilities - administrative, financial, and military - of direct formal rule. Such responsibilities could be a burden to the mother country. In an informal empire, writes J. Osterhammel, 'the metropolitan country exerts power and influence within an asymmetrical relationship, but does not assume outright domination and formal sovereignty over the peripheral country'.[72] The theory of informal empire goes beyond the imperialism of free trade. It also postulates that Britain aimed at informal control of an indigenous government in order to advance her own trading and other interests. The control could be political, economic, financial, or military, exercised either by Britain alone or in conjunction with other powers where common interests were at stake. In any event, informal imperialism entailed informal control without involving 'responsible government' to achieve the same end.

The main objective of British expansion was, according to Gallagher and Robinson, to integrate new regions into the expanding economy of the metropolis.[73] This was not, however, for the mutual benefit or co-prosperity of the metropolis and the periphery, but for the maintainence of Britain's dominant position in the world economic order. The acquisition of territories and spheres of influence was the means, not the end. This is evident in Britain's Far Eastern policy. The principal objective of British policy in China was always stated in terms of the expansion of trade, and Whitehall was apt to disclaim any territorial designs on China, or for that matter on Tibet.

It would seem that it is within the principle of 'informal empire' that the answer to Britain's reluctance to support the complete independence of Tibet, which would have automatically ensured British security requirements, is to be located. The recognition of Chinese suzerainty was to safeguard British commercial interest in China and the support of Tibetan autonomy was to ensure security of India's northern frontier. This provided Britain with informal control of Tibet without involving 'responsible government' and, at the same time, allowed Britain to continue her stationary economic imperialism in China. The belief that China could in the future become a source of immense importance for

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71 Ibid., p. 9.

72 Jurgen Osterhammel, 'Semi-Colonialism and Informal Empire in Twentieth-Century China: Towards a Framework of Analysis', in W. Mommsen and J. Osterhammel (eds), Imperialism and After (London, 1986), p. 308.

73 J. Gallaher and R. Robinson, op.cit., p. 5.

British trade was as tenaciously held in the early 1900s as it had been in the 1830s and 1850s.

There were two fundamental tenets of British foreign policy in the region that need to be emphasised. The principal tenet in East Asia was to uphold the territorial integrity of China. The primary consideration in India was to ensure the security of its long northern frontier. Tibet's importance was, as it is now for independent India, purely strategic. The only recourse for the British was to conclude that China had suzerainty over Tibet but that Tibet was autonomous. 'Such a conditional policy safeguarded British economic interest in China as well as the national security of the Indian Empire'.[74]

The basic theory behind British policy was that Tibet under the suzerainty of a weak China would not be a source of danger to the safety and security of India. This could only be ensured if Tibet remained free from direct Chinese control or hegemony. The obvious way to do this was to keep China weak. This, however, was only possible if China remained weak and did no more than act as a professed suzerain authority in Tibet.[75] This, in turn, relied upon Britain acting as deterrent against any Chinese armed intervention in Tibet.[76]

Why didn't the British act as a deterrent on the frontier of Tibet? An encroachment of Tibetan territory meant war with China. No British government would embark upon such an encounter except in a case of extreme necessity. In spite of all the discussion on the status of Tibet, the notion of concluding some form of protectorate agreement with the Lhasa government was never seriously contemplated. The Tibetans, however, would have been 'delighted to be under a British Protectorate, controlling their external affairs and leaving their internal independence on the lines of the Bhutan Treaty of 1910.'[77] The annexation of Tibet would have meant considerable expenditure, involvement of troops and would have led to the estrangement of relations with China and a consequent hampering of trade.[78] The British policy of maintaining Tibet as a buffer by recognition of Tibetan autonomy under Chinese suzerainty was the least expensive and most practical policy for Britain. Bell wrote: 'it was recognized on our side from the first that this would

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74 D. Norbu, 'The Europeanization of Sino-Tibetan Relations', op.cit., p. 44.

75 The professed aim of the Powers was to strengthen China but neither America nor Britain wanted China to become too strong.

76 D. Norbu,'The Europeanization of Sino-Tibetan Relations', op.cit., p. 45.

77 British Library, 010055 i 37, Statement by Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim, C. Bell, Tibet Note Book, Vol. 1, 3 May 1912, p. 25.

78 Imperially and economically the Tibetan frontier zone and the Northwest Frontier marked the limit of diminishing returns for the Government in India. O. Lattimore, op.cit., pp. 244-5.

have developed too heavy a burden upon us, the responsibility of protecting the distant and difficult expanses of Tibet'.[79]

The source of Britain's impaired policy is manifest. They were committed by a promise to the Lhasa government to support Tibet in upholding her practical autonomy, which was of importance to the security of India, but at the same time the alliance with China made it difficult to give effective material support to Tibet. Consequently, the program of protection and development implemented by the British between 1914 and 1933 was limited and inadequate.

The British did not create an effective buffer state but still required Tibet to remain a neutral zone. As Singh maintains: 'The weakness of her neutrality lay in the very Simla Convention which had meant to establish her separate status. By agreeing to the terms of the Simla Convention in Article II, Tibet agreed to acknowledge Chinese suzerainty on condition that China guarantied her autonomy. Although the failure of China to sign the 1914 Convention released Tibet from surrendering her sovereignty, yet it also released China from guaranteeing Tibetan autonomy and agreeing to a defined joint frontier.'[80] Undoubtedly this unsatisfactory situation carried wider implications, as Lyall predicted in 1894: 'the government of a neutral Asiatic country would be distracted by the conflicting demands and admonitions of two formidable neighbours, would listen alternately to one and to the other, and would find itself between the millstones'.[81] British policy between 1914 and 1933 left the Lhasa government with no choice but to adopt a see-saw approach in an attempt to secure Tibetan independence.

The British had gained what they wanted through the 1914 agreement with Tibet: a secure strategic frontier along the Himalayas. But, as Singh rightly points out in Himalayan Triangle, 'When the final concession of June 1914 came, it agreed to transfer the buffer zone in Inner Tibet to China and away from Tibet, thereby denying to the Tibetans a guarantied eastern frontier with China and consequently international recognition of the limits of Inner Tibet. These zonal alignments, were designed principally to give India frontier security; their effect was to deprive Tibet of her traditional boundaries and the means of guaranteeing her own viable limits.'[82] Tibet was indeed placed in a position of weakness.

Britain's whole Tibetan policy revolved around the idea that Tibet should be autonomous and maintain an unalloyed neutrality. It was only a matter of time, however, before Tibetan neutrality, without effective support, would succumb to internal and

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79 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 247.
80 A.K. J. Singh, op.cit., p. 83.
81 Sir A. Lyall, Rise of British Dominion in Asia , op.cit., p. 340.
82 Singh, op.cit., p. 78.

external pressures. An official in the Foreign Office in 1912 had pointed to the danger: 'The theory of the buffer state has never worked properly except where the buffer state was strong enough to keep up an efficient government and administration and to make encroachments by either neighbour a risky undertaking'.[83]

Neither Britain nor Tsarist Russia wanted to extend a formal protectorate over Tibet. Both powers had important security and economic interests in Central Asia. Once colonization of, or protectorate over, Tibet was ruled out, from the British point of view it became a matter of adjustment with the Chinese Empire. The overriding development in British policy was the need to placate China as a possible bulwark against Russia.[84]

The Anglo-Tibetan Simla Agreement, in effect, proved to be an unequal bargain. In return for India's frontier security, the Tibetans were promised diplomatic and military support in their struggle with China. From the viewpoint of the Tibetans, the 1914 Anglo-Tibetan agreement had identified Britain as 'Tibet's Protector'.[85] Tibet was anxious to find a 'patron' state which would act as a bastion against China. The year 1914, however, ushered in the Great War which transformed global politics and the question at issue by the end of the war in 1918 was whether Britain was in a position to offer any form of diplomatic assistance or protection to Tibet.

The British thought they could manage their national security through diplomatic manoeuvres without colonizing or even extending a protectorate over Tibet. This, however, was not the case. As the effects of the war became more obvious, it showed that Britain no longer held the dominant position it had once held and no longer could use diplomatic efforts to uphold its ambiguous policy in Tibet. Consequently, the protection of Tibetan autonomy through international pressure was doubtful.

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83 PRO:FO371/1317 No 15527 Minute, 13 April 1912, cited in P. Addy, op.cit., p. 311.

84 P. Addy, ibid., p. 47.

85 This terminology is used in PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/143679/10 Translation of a Confidential letter from Chief Ministers of Tibet to Macdonald, 17 May 1918.

CHAPTER 3

BRITAIN: PROTECTOR OF TIBET?

'We trust that we may not be left thus, like tiny fledglings on an open plain'[1]

It was clear that Britain had become convinced of the inadvisability of an active 'forward policy' in the trans-Himalayan areas and determined to exercise its influence by diplomatic and economic means, thereby avoiding military entanglements. Provided the prestige of Russia, Japan and China could be excluded from Tibet, the British could also remain quiescent, saving themselves a yearly expenditure of hundreds of thousands of pounds. It was obvious that the Indian Empire would be financially ruined if it had to provide fortifications and garrisons along the Tibetan frontier. British influence in Tibet was therefore conditional on Chinese weakness.

Anglo-Tibetan relations during the years of the First World War has generally been given little attention by scholars. It is usually glossed over with the observation that settlement of the Tibetan question had to await the conclusion of the war in Europe. A closer examination of the interactions between London, India, and Lhasa during this period reveals how opportunities for building a close relationship with an autonomous Tibet diminished during the war years. The Dalai Lama considered that Britain had made a commitment to support and protect Tibet by signing the Anglo-Tibetan Agreement. By the end of First World War he was palpably disillusioned. After 1914 the British left Tibet very much alone, protected only by the pantheon of Mayahana Buddhism and a little redundant technical aid. What is clear is that for most of this period the Government of India's attitude towards the plight of Tibet was languid, symbolizing its conviction that the danger to India was Russian, not Chinese, aggression.

As we have seen, British policy toward Tibet was part and parcel of British policy towards both the Chinese Empire and, particularly from the later part of the 19th century, the Empire of Tsarist Russia. After 1914, however, British policy was also influenced by Japanese and American policy.[2] The welfare of Tibet hinged on the

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1 IOR:L/P&S/10/716 File3260 (4) cited in translation of letter from Lonchen Shokang, Chief Minister of Tibet, to Major W. L. Campbell, P.O.S., 7 December 1919.

2 The formation of policy regarding Eastern Asia during 1914-1918 remained in the hands of the Foreign Office. The Far Eastern Department retained much of its prewar autonomy, despite the decline of authority of the Foreign Office as a

interaction between these major nations. British India's policy towards China and Tibet was determined principally by the home government and as such it was viewed in the wider perspective of the international relations of the British Empire and European diplomacy. After 1913 the most important feature of her foreign policy was the Anglo-German conflict. Consequently, Britain was not prepared, or in a position, to give active military assistance to Tibet. An independent Tibet might have thrown itself into a conflict with China which would have been deleterious for the British. Taking up arms against China for the sake of Tibetan independence was never a consideration. Britain's tacit policy was to place Tibet in a position whereby Britain would have unabridged control over its military strength. The idea was to give just enough military aid to allow the Dalai Lama to retain internal stability and to keep China at arms length.

British policy towards Tibet was hampered by the fact that it could not be determined solely by the Foreign Office. Treaty rights with China meant that the India Office and the Government of India had always to be consulted. This led to a degree of friction which precipitated the genesis of a contest between British officials in India, London and China to direct British policy on Tibet. Although the Foreign Office became in these years increasingly involved in the debate over Tibet, its position remained one of maintaining the larger view of the situation.[3] It was the Government in India and especially the India Office at Whitehall who were primarily responsible for defining a consistent policy towards Tibet. The India Office worked within a complex constitutional and legal framework both inside and outside Whitehall. Formal and informal relations with the Crown, Parliament, Cabinet, other departments of state and political parties all affected the course of policy-making by the India Office and the Government of India at Simla.[4]

In India, a remarkably small number of men administered and controlled vast areas of country through the officers of the Indian Civil Service. The I.C.S., entered by examination after university, was regarded as representing the cream of British administrative services. It produced not only remarkable administrators, but also that ideal combination - the administrator-scholar, whose qualities Charles Bell embodied. A special branch of the I.C.S was the Foreign and Political Service, which was

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whole. The War Cabinet, War Office, and Lloyd George's Secretariat played a much more peripheral role in making Far Eastern policy. See D. G. Bishop, The Administration of British Foreign Relations (Syracuse 1961), pp. 87-89.

3 See R. Warman, 'The Erosion of Foreign Office Influence in the Making of Foreign Policy 1916-1918', The Historical Journal, Vol. 15, (1), 1972, p. 133-157.

4 See A. P. Kaminsky, The India Office, 1889-1910 (New York, 1986), p. 159.

responsible for representation of the independent states of the Princes of India, and also for representation in certain areas bordering on India. These included Afghanistan and Tibet.

The Foreign and Political Service, less than one hundred a fifty men, were recruited from military officers and civilian administrators. They had responsibility for maintaining relations between the Viceroy, from whose political department they took their orders, and the states. Some of these, such as Hyderbad, had First Class Residents. Others, grouped together, had Second Class Residents with subordinate Political Agents as well as junior Political Officers working as Under Secretaries and Assistant Political Agents. Tibet had no British Resident and contact was maintained from the time of Paul White onwards by the Political Officer, Sikkim.[5] All Political Officers followed the 'non-interference' precepts of the service. In their *Manual of Instructions to Officers at the Foreign and Political Department* they were told that their first duty was to cultivate direct, friendly, personal relations with the ruling Kings and chiefs [6] and thereafter to 'leave well alone; the best work of a political officer is very often what has been left undone'.[7] The Political Officer was not to interfere except when there were real instances of misrule to the detriment of the people.

The part played by individual initiative was often fundamental: the man on the spot had considerable freedom, especially in the 19th century when communications with superior authority and particularly with London were slow and cumbersome. Sir Andrew Clark said in the 1890s, with reference to his own work in Malaya twenty years earlier, that the minds of men in London sometimes had to be made up for them by the man on the spot.[8] All the British Political Officers and the Trade Agents responsible for Tibetan affairs used the fear of Chinese, Russian or Japanese expansion to support their requests for support of Tibet.[9] In most cases, certainly in Bell's, they themselves supported Tibet for more intrinsic and praiseworthy reasons but knew that the purely national needs of a poor country would count for little in

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5 First appointed Political Officer in Sikkim 5 June 1889. See A. C. McKay, 'The Establishment of the British Trade Agencies in Tibet: A Survey, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Series 3, Vol. 2, (3), 1992, pp. 399-421.

6 See IOR: L/P&S/20/D216 List of Chiefs and Leading Families in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet.

7 Manual of Instructions to Officers at the Foreign and Political Department, 1924, cited in Peter Collister, Bhutan and the British (London, 1987), p. 165.

8 W. D. McIntyre, The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics, 1865-75: a Study of British Colonial Policy in West Africa, Malaya, and the South Pacific in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli (1967), p. 209.

9 Peter Collister, op.cit, p. 166.

Delhi, and even less in London. The tendency of officers in the field, especially in Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan, to identify themselves too enthusiastically with the needs of the people of those countries resulted in a degree of chiding from the Government of India and the home government. Nonetheless, the man on the spot in the early years of this century still held a prominent place in the making of policy.

The extent of support Britain would have given Tibet if First World War had not occurred remains a matter of conjecture. What is obvious, however, is that during the period up to a change in policy in 1921 the support that Britain gave Tibet was token. In August 1914 the British supplied Lhasa with 5,000 rifles and 500,000 rounds of ammunition against a possible Chinese attack, informing the Dalai Lama at the same time that no further assistance in the immediate future would be forthcoming.[10] These, verified the Simla Foreign and Political Department, were '5,000 old and worn long .303 rifles.[11] The Japanese monk, Tada, resident in Lhasa at that time, noted: 'At first, it was understood that they were free, but the Dalai Lama thought the better of it, and refused the British government's offer, insisting that he wanted to pay for them.'[12] In November the Government of India informed the Dalai Lama that they 'regretted that they were unable to at present supply any further arms or ammunition of any kind, either on payment or on loan'[13]

In response, on 3 December the Chief Ministers confirmed that the Dalai Lama had placed his trust in Britain and, while grateful for such help as had already been given, he awaited the fulfilment of a British promise made to the Tibetan Prime Minister, Lonchen Shatra, that negotiations with China would be 'brought to a speedy conclusion'.[14] They continued: 'although it may be inconvenient at present to grant a further supply of arms, etc., it is very desirable to send a British representative with a suitable escort to Cham-do (eastern frontier) at once'.[15] The letter issued a prophetic warning: 'If this request is not acceded to in this hour of trial, there may be great suspicion in the minds of the Tibetan subjects, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his

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10 PRO:FO371/1930/F270/47360/10 Government of India to Marquess of Crewe, 3 September 1914 Encl. No. 1 in India Office to Foreign Office, 7 September 1914.

11 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933 F34280 Letter from Government of India to Manners Smith Resident in Nepal, 25 November 1914.

12 T. Tada, op.cit., p. 70.

13 PRO: FO371/2318/ F1933 cited in Letter to D MacDonald from Chief Ministers of Tibet, 3 December 1914. The Government of India would 'lend them four Indian army infantry instructors', PRO: FO371/1930/F270/50536/10 Government of India to Marquess of Crewe, 16 September 1914.

14 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/10 Letter to D MacDonald from Chief Ministers of Tibet, 3 December 1914.

15 Ibid.

Ministers have informed both the laymen and the monks that the British Government have shown great kindness to the Tibetan Government'.[16] In other words, if the British did not now support Tibet, the position of the Dalai Lama and his Council would be weakened in the eyes of those who saw little benefit in becoming tied to Britain.

The Dalai Lama's expectation of what he believed had come out of the Simla Agreement is made quite clear from his letter to 'His Majesty the King-Emperor of Great Britain, who wields the wheel of power and wealth':

> In the dispute between the Tibetans and the Chinese the great British Government have put down the wicked and have helped the meek. I, with all the people of Tibet, both monks and laymen, have therefore put our implicit faith in the British Government . . . the Chinese, in order to settle the boundary question, may attack us, knowing as they do our weakness to resist their advance. We therefore requested that troops might be sent to our help in order to enable us to defend our country.[17]

There is no doubt that the Dalai Lama expected more than the right to buy munition and a few 'old rifles'; he expected the British military would become involved in his struggle against China.[18] The Dalai Lama was determined that all those involved would not be confused as to his expectations. In December 1914 the Chief Ministers of Tibet confirmed that the Dalai Lama had written letters to 'His Majesty the King-Emperor, one to His Excellency the Viceroy of India, one to the Foreign Secretary, one to the Acting Foreign Secretary, and also one to Mr. C. A. Bell, Political Officer in Sikkim, praying that British troops may be sent to Tibet whenever required to protect the country'.[19] The file was minuted in the Foreign Office thus: 'The Government of India will no doubt compose a polite and evasive answer'.[20] The Dalai Lama had been 'hooked' and now the British intended to keep him dangling on the line as long as possible.

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16 Ibid.

17 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/53979/10 Translation of letter from Dalai Lama to His Majesty the King-Emperor, 21 November 1914, Encl. in Bell to Government of India, 23 December 1914.

18 In his book, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, Bell records that the Dalai Lama's understanding of the Simla Conference was, until 1921, far from perfect. He wrote: 'It was well-known that he was at a loss to know why Tibet had been divided into two.' pp. 206-207.

19 PRO: FO371/2318/F1933/6922/10 Letter to MacDonald British Trade Agent from Chief Ministers of Tibet, 2 December 1914.

20 PRO: FO371/2318/F1933/6922/10 Minute by Grey, 19 January 1915.

For the Government of India the question of military aid was complicated by the objections of the Nepalese Durbar to any possible strengthening of Tibet.[21] The 'gift' of 5,000 rifles had come to the notice of His Highness the Maharaja and it had been reported that the Tibetans 'are free to import these from India in any quantity they liked'.[22] According to Bell, the strengthening of Anglo-Tibetan ties had weakened Nepal's privileged position in Tibet.[23] He wrote later that 'the idea of a British official coming into personal and friendly contact with the Tibetan Government at Lhasa was naturally distasteful to them'.[24] The Lhasa government was not on good terms with Nepal and the Nepalese Prime Minister thought that 'this new accession of military strength to Tibet, may, in course of time, come to have no small bearing upon her relations with Nepal and in that case should our worst fears be realised a strong and hostile Tibet will form a formidable menace to us and a source of anxiety and danger to our interests in that country'.[25]

The British Resident in Katmandu, Manners Smith, had informed the Nepalese Prime Minister verbally that "nothing in the Simla Convention between Great Britain-China and Tibet is intended or will be allowed to affect existing agreements or arrangements between Nepal and Tibet".[26] Chandra Shum Sher had also been advised that the first consignment of arms and ammunition given to Tibet in August 1914 had been entirely for use in the eastern borders of Tibet and could in no way affect the military position of Tibet vis-a-vis Nepal.

The reply from Chandra Shum Shere sarcastically observed:

> It goes without saying that it is a proof of highminded-ness and confidence of the high and magnanimous Government of India towards the Government of Tibet to have been so graciously pleased to grant a gift of such a large quantity of Lee-Metford rifles, old and worn though they may be, with ammunition with a view to help them in their difficulty. This great acquisition of modern armament will, no doubt,

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21 For full analysis of the relationship between Nepal,Tibet and Britain before 1924 see C. Bell, Tibet: Past and Present, op.cit., pp. 231-343.

22 PRO:FO371/2318/Fl933/3428O/10 Memorandum from Kasi Marichiman Singh, Prime Minister's Private Secretary,to Nepalese Orderly Officer in Katmandu, 19 November 1914.

23 By the Treaty of 1856 Nepal had a trading colony in Lhasa and other districts of Tibet. Nepalese subjects were exempted from trade duties and their own magistrates adjudicated quarrels.

24 C. Bell, Tibet: Past and Present, op.cit., p. 240.

25 PRO:FO371/2318/Fl933/34280/10 Letter from Chandra Shum Shere to Manners Smith, 4 December 1914.

26 PRO:FO371/2318/Fl933/34280/10 Letter from Manners Smith, British Resident Katmandu, to Government of India , 8 December 1914.

> add much to their military strength, and will be prized by them very much as such. Indeed nothing could have been better if the purpose for which the gift was made could be served by it. But when the situation is fully taken into consideration it may be doubted whether the increased efficiency arising from the possession of those arms alone will enable the Tibetan Government to cope successfully with a determined China.[27]

Manners Smith's opinion on the subject is clear: 'There is no question in my mind as to the comparative value of Nepal versus Tibet as a friend and ally and I feel sure that the Military authorities of the Government of India must have the same opinion.'[28] As practical proof that the British did not intend to see Nepal placed at a disadvantage, the Government of India decided 'to allow the Gurkha Contingent to retain, when they go back to Nepal, three thousand of the short rifles with which they will be armed'.[29] A Foreign Office official minuted the file, 'The trouble seems to have blown over, but it shows how careful we must be in future not to alarm the Nepal government by anything we may do to help Tibet'.[30]

The Tibetans, however, were having troubles of their own on their eastern border. In January Bell had received a letter from Lonchen Shatra, advising that the Chinese were collecting soldiers and large quantities of munitions of war and other supplies on the Tachienlu side, and it was feared that they might attack soon.[31] The Lonchen once again requested that a British representative with an escort might be sent to Cham-do to 'help us greatly in the defence of our country'.[32] The British government, as part of the Anglo-Tibetan Agreement, had agreed to warn the Chinese government officially against any aggression on Tibetan territory.

Bell warned that there seemed to be no doubt that ammunition and other supplies were being moved up by the Chinese and that fresh refusal of the request made by Tibetans might compel them to forge independent terms with Chinese.[33] Bell had set out his views on the situation in a telegram sent to the Government of India on 24 January 1915: 'I would suggest that the Government of Tibet may now be

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27 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/34280/10 Letter from Chandra Shum Shere to Manners Smith, 4 December 1914.

28 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/34280/10 Letter from Manners Smith to Government of India, 8 December 1914.

29 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/34280/10 Letter from Government of India to Manners Smith, 19 February 1915.

30 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/34280/10 Minute, 24 March 1915.

31 PRO:FO371/2318 F1933/42657/10 Letter from Lonchen Shatra to Bell, 14 January 1915.

32 Ibid.

33 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/42657/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 24 January 1915.

allowed to buy from the Government of India another half million rounds of ammunition or such lesser amount as can be spared.'[34] In February 1915 the Government of India sanctioned 'the supply, on payment, of 200,000 rounds of .303 ammunition'[35], instead of the half million rounds requested,[36] and the services of four drill instructors under the supervision of the British Officer commanding the escort at Gyantse.[37] As the majority of Tibetan troops had been sent to Kham the Lhasa government could only manage to send two officer, two sergeants, fifty soldiers and one interpreter.[38] The full cost was met by Lhasa government.[39]

There is no doubt that this concession to supply further ammunition had been made as much by the news that the Dalai Lama had written to the President of the Chinese Republic and the Officers of the Mongolian and Tibetan Bureau [40] as by the official entreaties of Lhasa. This, combined with reliable information dispatched from Tachienlu by the consular officer, Louis King, confirming that an attempt was being made to negotiate secretly with China, would not have been welcome news in the Foreign Office.[41] The Foreign Office believed that this was an attempt to reopen negotiations by the 'pro-Chinese opposition on the Council at Lhasa, probably aided and countenanced by the Tashi Lama'.[42] Bell confirmed that attempts were indeed

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34 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/42657/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 24 January 1915.

35 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/42657/10 Telegram from Government of India to POS, 16 February 1915.

36 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/42657/10 Translation of letter from Ministers of Tibet to MacDonald, British Trade, 6 January 1915.

37 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/42657/10 Telegram from Government of India to POS, 23 February 1915.

38 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/42657/10 Telegram from POS to Government of India, 28 January 1915. PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/67169/10 Telegram from British Trade Agent at Gyantse to POS, 15 April 1915 confirmed that drilling commenced on 9 April 1915.

39 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/42657/10 Telegram from Government of India to POS, 23 February 1915.

40 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/44351/10 Letter to President of China and letter to Officers in Charge of the Bureau of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs from Dalai Lama, 19 September 1914, Encl. in Letter from Bell to Government of India, 3 March 1915. See Also PRO:FO371/2318 /F1933/42657 Translation of letter from Liu Tungling, Chinese Commissioner on Tibetan Frontier to Dalai Lama received 2 January 1915.

41 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/42657/10 Letter from Louis King to Jordan, 28 December 1914. Also Report from King, 2 January 1915.

42 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/42657/10 Minute, 12 April 1915.

being made to 'persuade the Tibetan officials on the frontier to conclude an independent agreement with China.' [43]

By March 1915 the Government of India had, as the Foreign Office expected, 'composed a polite and evasive answer' defining their 'commitment' to Tibet:

> the Chinese military forces on the Thibetan frontier are disorganised by mutiny, and we are not satisfied that the situation justifies the grant of any further assistance to the Thibetan Government. We therefore propose to inform the Dalai Lama, in reply to a letter addressed to his Excellency the Viceroy, in terms almost identical with the letter to His Majesty, that his request have received the fullest consideration, and that, in view of reports from British consular officers especially deputed to watch events in the Marches, His Majesty's Government do not propose at present to furnish further military assistance or to despatch a British official to Chiamdo, . . . but that His Holiness may rest assured that they will, by diplomatic measures, do everything in their power to prevent Chinese aggression until such time as a final settlement in regard to the status of Thibet shall be reached.[44]

The Foreign Office endorsed the proposal.[45] A Minute paper justified their stance: 'As the Tibetans have just confessed that they have sent officials to try to make peace with the Chinese, it is certainly not the time to supply them with any further munitions, especially as we always have to soothe the Nepalese by a present of an equal or greater amount'.[46]

As early as May 1915 Bell pointed out to the officials in India that 'While the Thibetan Government is fully alive to the advantages gained by Thibet, they are no doubt equally alive to the advantages gained by us.'[47] He warned that the Chinese had tried, unsuccessfully, immediately after the break-up of the Simla Conference, to carry on direct negotiations with the Tibetan government. The persistent pressure of the Chinese and the strain of keeping a comparatively large number of Tibetan troops on the frontier 'is telling seriously on the resources of the country and the patience of the minor officials and people of Thibet'.[48] The Foreign Office minuted the file, 'Mr.

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43 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/44351/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 26 February 1915.

44 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/53979/10 Letter from Government of India to Marquess of Crewe, 25 March 1915.

45 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/53979/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 15 May 1915.

46 PRO: FO371/2318/F1933/ 53979/10 Minute paper, 4 May 1915.

47 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/83841/10 Report from Bell to Government of India, 15 May 1915.

48 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

Bell's summary of the advantages gained by His Majesty's Government and the Tibetans respectively from the agreement is interesting, especially as Mr. Bell from long association, habitually looks at everything from a Tibetan point of view'.[49]

In a letter to Bell from the Tibetan Council the fears of the Lhasa government were made quite clear. They were concerned that the Chinese, taking advantage of the European war, would gradually collect troops on the frontier before initiating a full-scale attack on their country. Their sombre message illustrates the submissive standing to which they were reduced by British post-Simla decisions: 'The British Government have already been doing a great deal for the Tibetan Government and we therefore hesitate to trouble them further with our affairs, especially now that the European war is going on. But we cannot help it as we have nobody beside the British Government to appeal to, and we therefore request you not to be displeased'.[50] The letter ended thus: 'Lest we may spoil the good name of the British Government, we are reporting these matters confidentially'. A request either to 'lend or sell them a cannon' was humbly added at the end.[51]

Reports were now coming through to the Government of India of 'a strong rumour' that high Tibetan officials at Lhasa, including the Lonchen Shokang, the Shapes and the representatives of the Sera, Drepung and Gaden monasteries, were discussing the advisability of carrying on direct negotiations with the Chinese.[52] Bell reported that:

> The Shapes are said to have stated that, according to the reports which they have received from India, the British Government are hard pressed in the present European war, and, having failed to raise troops by volunteer recruitment, they have resorted to conscription, and that they are therefore not in a position to help the Tibetan Government, at least for the present, that the Tibetan Government, on account of their financial weakness, are no longer in a position to oppose the Chinese and have therefore decided to sue for peace.[53]

Bell observed, 'Lonchen Shatra . . . is reported to be much blamed for failing in his negotiations in India and for surrendering the Tawang tract and for making other important concessions to the British Government in the recent Convention'. He concluded his report, 'They appear however to feel that our Government, while

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49 PRO:FO371/2318 Fl933/83841/10 Minute by Grey, 26 June 1915.

50 PRO:FO371/2318/ Fl933/lll752/10 Translation of letter from Lonchens of Tibet to Bell POS, 3 June 1915.

51 Ibid.

52 PRO:FO371/2318/Fl933/120259/10 Report from Bell to Government of India, 17 July 1915.

53 Ibid.

concluding a Convention with them, has failed to afford them adequate assistance against Chinese aggression in Eastern Tibet. This aggression has now been going on for several years; they are weary of the unequal struggle, and their funds, never plentiful, have now run very low.'[54] Referring to the Anglo-Russian Agreement, the Foreign Secretary minuted on Bell's report: 'I am afraid things look rather bad. We can only hope that we shall get our hands free from the Russians before anything happens'.[55]

In August 1915 Bell again felt constrained to point out to the Indian Government that the Simla Convention, while being beneficial to the Tibetan Government, was also 'highly beneficial to His Majesty's Government also'.[56] In a report sent from Gyantse, Bell advised the Government of India that 'I have been enabled to come into more direct touch with Thibetan opinion'. He warned:

> Missions have been sent to negotiate with the Thibetan Government; Chinese gold and Chinese promises have been set to work on the pro-Chinese classes in Thibet, and the Thibetan Government and Thibetan officials have been freely threatened that if they do not cast off the alien and deal direct with their Chinese brothers, the Chinese troops will advance and devastate the country.[57]

Bell summarised the situation with clarity: 'To all threats and inducements they have given straightforward replies, asking the Chinese Government to recognise the convention which the Chinese plenipotentiary initialled. Their men are not trained or equipped as are the Chinese troops; they have no cannon, no mountain guns, no machine guns. Still they have done what they could, and so far they have kept the Chinese back.'[58]

The economic disadvantage to Tibet constituted by the Anglo-Tibetan treaties was emphasised by Bell:

> The Government of India have insisted on the abolition of monopolies throughout Thibet under the provisions of the new trade regulations. The export of Thibetan wool, the chief Thibetan staple, from India has been prohibited, whereby the woollen mills in Cawnpore have become

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54 Ibid.

55 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/120259/10 Minute by Grey, 27 August 1915.

56 IOR: MSS Eur F8O No. 167 E.C. Letter from Bell to Government of India, 6 August 1915. See also PRO: FO371/2318/ F1933/146289/10.

57 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/146289/10 Report from Bell to Government of India, 6 August 1915.

58 Ibid.

> the sole purchasers of Thibetan wool, and the war-price of Thibetan wool has fallen instead of risen.[59]

According to Bell, the Tibetans were in 'somewhat serious straits'. 'They have still 10,000 men under arms in Eastern Thibet. The crops for the last few years have been inferior, and it is difficult to feed them'.[60] Pointing out that the war and its consequences had radically altered the state of affairs which had existed at the Simla Conference when Britain refused to agree to a customs tariff, Bell called upon the Government of India to allow the Tibetans to levy a simple customs tariff on exports from Tibet to India. The Tibetans felt, according to Bell, that they had a better right to tax their own commodities going out than foreign commodities coming in.[61] Bell expected that the tariff would be temporary and would be terminable whenever the Government of India so decreed.

Bell persisted in his efforts to fulfil what he viewed as Britain's commitment to Tibet. 'We should allow them to procure a few machine guns and mountain guns. China, whom we are endeavouring to restrain, has plenty of these. It is difficult to understand why we should prevent Thibet, for whom we are at present working, from buying a few'.[62] Bell thought that his recommendations moderate: 'They constitute the minimum that we should do for Thibet in her present emergency'.[63] He bluntly told the Foreign and Political Department in Simla that 'It is now about a year since the Simla Convention was concluded. . . Apart from our treaty obligations, it is in our interest as well as the interest of Tibet, to support it'.[64] He concluded with considerable firmness: 'The question then arises whether we are doing all that is possible in the present circumstances to give the Thibetans their dues under this convention, which we ourselves have concluded'.[65]

The Government of India, however, considered that all this was 'purely academic' since the Simla convention had not been signed by the Chinese government nor accepted by the Russian government and was, 'therefore, for the present invalid'.[66] They were, however, prepared to concede that by the Anglo-Tibetan

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59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 IOR: MSS Eur F8O No. 167 E.C. Letter from Bell to Government of India, 6 August 1915.
65 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/146289 Report from Bell to Government of India, 6 August 1915.
66 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 No. 448 Government of India to Bell, 3 September 1915. See also PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/146289/10.

Declaration, which recognized the Convention as binding on Great Britain and Tibet, certain advantages under the convention had been obtained by both parties, but maintained that 'no useful purpose can be gained at present by an examination of those respective advantages.' [67] As regards the actual proposals which Bell put forward, the Government of India were 'not inclined, at the present time of grave preoccupation, to take up so complicated a question as the levy of a customs tariff on exports from Thibet to India'.[68] The response was patronizing : 'It must be obvious, even to the Thibetan Government, that at such a time as the present the Government of India are not likely to be inclined to procure munitions of war for others when they have troops engaged in so many theatres of war themselves . . .we must mark time and await developments in Tibet'.[69] But, as an India Office Minute pointed out, 'Mr. Bell's whole point is that, as things at present stand, the Tibetans are not deriving any advantage (though we are) from the Declaration'.[70]

Nonetheless, the India Office came to the conclusion that 'there is nothing to be done for the present' and agreed with the Government of India's decision to withhold any further military aid. While respecting the fact that the Government of India 'have a great deal on their hands at present' and 'not unnaturally' prefer to leave the Tibetan question alone, they concluded that it would certainly be necessary, 'when the time comes for a more active policy', to consider the whole question in a 'more sympathetic spirit than is displayed in the Government of India's reply to Mr. Bell'.[71] Bell wrote later: 'We were continually protesting our friendship for Tibet, but we were not acting up to our protestations'.[72]

The survival of the independence achieved by Tibet in 1914 depended on British strength and Chinese weakness and, as time was to prove, the British were unable to obtain a settlement in Central Asia, mainly because of Anglo-Russian and Anglo-Japanese problems which 'reflected significant changes in the the balance of power in Asia and decreasing British ability to protect their vast economic interests in China'.[73] Britain's alliance with Japan, on which she depended to an increasing

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67 Ibid.

68 PRO:FO371/2318/ Fl933/146289/10 Government of India to Bell, 3 September 1915.

69 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 No. 448 Letter from Government of India to Bell, 3 September 1915.

70 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 No 3710A India Office Minute, undated, viewed by Committee on 27 October 1915.

71 Ibid.

72 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 191.

73 I. Klein, 'British Imperialism in Decline', op.cit., p. 100.

degree as the war progressed, was of the most precarious kind, and it was becoming clear that in the long term the interests of Britain and Japan in Asia diverged radically.

In 1915 the British government's attitude towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance[74] was that it was necessary both for political and strategical reasons.[75] Engaged in a world war, London regarded the assistance of Japan as essential to British victory. The war, however, revealed clearly how Japanese expansionism would exacerbate the British predicament in Central Asia.[76] The Japanese besieged Kiaochow, swept German power from mainland China and replaced German influence in Shantung. Within months of accepting what they thought was the new order in China, British diplomats were shaken completely by the Japanese Foreign Minister's, Baron Kato, enforcement of the Twenty-One Demands on the Peking government in January 1915.[77] China yielded to the Japanese ultimatum. The Chinese now thought it was necessary to cooperate with Japan's ally. President Yuan Shih-Kai, counting on British support for his new imperial regime, directed the Chinese Foreign Office to work out a compromise solution regarding Tibet. During 1915 Britain's minister in China, Sir John Jordan, was informally approached several times by Yuan Shih-Kai's government with a view to reopening the Tibet question.[78]

British pressure, combined with the delaying tactics of the Chinese President, prevented Japan temporarily from obtaining dominance at Peking. The principal effect of the Twenty-one Demands on thinking in London was to stimulate suspicions of Japan. The problem presented for British policy in Central Asia by Japanese manipulations at Peking was clear to Beilby Alston, then British charge d'affaires at Peking. Alston acknowledged that the British could not attempt to preserve a strong

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74 The treaty of 1902 was expanded in 1905 and 1911.

75 The alliance with Japan also had the advantage to Britain of countering Pan-Asian resistance to British colonialism. Whitehall saw and exploited the value of such an alliance with a non-white power.

76 PRO: FO371/2318/F1933/106350/10 Letter from Viceroy of India to Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, 24 June 1915.

77 The term 'twenty-one demands' refers to five groups of items which collectively totalled twenty-one and which were presented by Japan to China in January 1915. Most historians regard them as one of the first Japanese attempts to dominate China and thus constituted a warning of the developments that came two decades later, culminating in full-scale war between the two countries from 1937 onwards. See P. Lowe, Britain in the Far East: A survey from 1819 to the present (New York, 1981), p. 220.

78 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/85781/10 Telegram from Jordan to Grey, 28 June 1915. P. Addy, Tibet on the Imperial Chessboard, op.cit., maintains that Peking was under the mistaken impression that Britain and Tibet had proceeded to a full signature of the Simla Convention. pp. 310-11.

China and at the same time impose their Tibetan solution on the Chinese President. The British, moreover, were militarily dependent on Japan. Alston wrote:

> We are in the anomalous position in China of working entirely at political cross-purpose with our allies, the Japanese . . . Our avowed policy is the maintenance of a strong China - as opposed to the known desire of Japan for a weak China . . . We have made up our minds that the preservation of Yuan is a guarantee for the continued integrity of China, and, for good or evil, we have staked our money on him . . . [Yuan] knows that behind his back we have made, or tried to make a bargain with Russia over one considerable portion of the old Chinese Empire; and a bargain with Japan over another considerable portion. This knowledge goes far to invalidate our position in his counsel.[79]

The prevailing attitude towards Japan in India was that the alliance was, from the viewpoint of the empire, a disagreeable necessity and it was unfortunate that Britain had to rely on an Asian power to help defend her interests, for this diminished British prestige in the eyes of the Indians.[80]

Apathy and condescension disappeared between 1911 and 1915 to be replaced by growing suspicion and alarm, as Japan began to be seen as a menace to the stability of British rule in India.[81] Originally, the threat was economic in character, arising from the increasing competition in shipping from the Nippon Yusen Kaisha, which was heavily subsidised by the Japanese government.[82] There was also some suspicion that personnel of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha were indulging in pan-Asiatic propaganda against British rule in India.[83] The suspicion was developing in India that the Japanese government was either encouraging or permitting the dissemination of propaganda aimed at British rule.[84] This view was not held by the the Foreign Office. They found it impossible to believe that Japan could seriously contemplate making an attempt to supplant Britain in India. The Foreign Office believed that 'Japanese connivance at Indian sedition' did not constitute a serious danger under wartime

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79 PRO:FO371/2326/15089/10 Memo by Alston, 1 February 1915.

80 P. Lowe, op.cit., pp. 288-9.

81 See D. Dignan, 'Far Eastern Questions in a New Indian Perspective', New Perspectives on British Far Eastern Policy 1913-19, (Brisbane, 1969), pp. 279-289.

82 Ibid. p. 279.

83 Birmingham University Library, Austen Chamberlain papers, A.C. 21/89, Secret dispatch, from Department of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, to Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India , 31 March 1916 (Circulated to Cabinet 3 May 1916) cited in C. B. Davis, Partners and Rivals: Britain's Imperial Diplomacy Concerning the United States and Japan in China 1914-1922, (New York, 1987), p. 135.

84 P. Lowe, op.cit., pp. 289-290.

restrictions, although the possibility remained open that it might become more dangerous after the war.[85] The Government of India laid their main stress on the political implications of Japanese economic expansion into the Indian sphere:

> We cannot regard it as other than undesirable that the Japanese should establish themselves on any large scale in this country. In fact to the political aspect of the question we attach the utmost importance. The prestige of Japan is great and her ambitions unbounded. A systematic commercial penetration may well be the precursor of wider schemes.[86]

The Secretary of State, Lord Crewe, bluntly concluded that any further Japanese interest in India would be most undesirable: 'There is a consensus of opinion among responsible Indian authorities that any tendency of the kind is not in the interest of British rule in India'.[87] The impression was strengthened by the presence of three Japanese 'agents' in Tibet. Bunkyo Aoki arrived in Tibet in 1912 and stayed for a year in the Drepung monastery.[88] In 1913 a retired Japanese military expert, Yasujiro Yajima, was given charge of one section of the Tibetan army which he trained in Japanese methods of warfare. Another Japanese, Togan Tada, arrived in Tibet in 1913 and studied in the Sera monastery for eleven years.[89] The Foreign Office considered that they were secret agents connected with the pan-Asiatic expansionist societies which sent agents all over Eastern Asia. But their activities did not cause alarm. Sir Edward Grey minuted, 'The Japanese have apparently established themselves permanently at Lhassa. It is unsatisfactory but presumably cannot be helped.' [90] The

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85 PRO: FO371/327/327/45/10 Greene, Ambassador in Tokyo, to Balfour, 1 November 1917. The India Office feared a Japanese sphere of influence in Yunnan as a threat to the borders of India but the Foreign Office recommended that no action be taken. See FO371/2645 India Office to Foreign Office, 25 April 1916 and FO371/2693 India Office to Foreign Office, 28 December 1916.

86 PRO:FO371/2696/F83294/10 Government of India to Foreign Office, March 1916.

87 CAB 37/119, Memorandum by Lord Crewe on Japanese competition in the Indian coastal trade, 1914 cited in P. Lowe, op.cit., p. 290.

88 Previously Private Secretary to Count Otani (brother-in-law of the Emperor of Japan) PRO: FO371/2318/F1933/106350 Viceroy of India, Hardinge, to Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, 24 June 1915.

89 For information see P. Hyer, Japan and the Lamaist World: Japanese Relations with Tibet,Unpublished Ph.D. Also see Ekai Kawaguchi, Three Years in Tibet (Benares & London, 1909).

90 PRO: FO371/1929 F270/13062/10 Minute by Grey, 24 March 1914.

net effect, however, was to increase British anxiety about the future trend of relations between India and Japan.[91]

In the meantime, in China, the monarchist movement was responsible for a major schism between the north, predominantly pro-Japanese, and the south, unmistakably anti-Japanese. Yunnan declared its 'independence' on 25 December 1915 and China slid into civil war.[92] From 1916 onwards China hardly had a single year without civil strife. The authority of the central government extended not much further than the boundary of Peking. The response to Yuan Shih-Kai's request to reopen the Tibet question was no more than lukewarm. At this stage, the Government of India was prepared to take the risk of the Tibetans entering into separate negotiations with the Peking government. It was argued that an impression of weakness would be conveyed to the governments of China if the British sought to reopen negotiations and Tibet, by such action, would be 'impaired'. It was also recognized that 'no step could be taken by us in this matter' unless the Tibetan government were to 'accord their full consent and co-operation'.[93]

Whitehall agreed with the Government of India that it was not worth being confronted by Russia and stirring up the question of Afghanistan in return for acquiescence in the Tibetan Convention.[94] The Government of India felt that as the Anglo-Tibetan Declaration 'sufficiently protects our relations with Thibet, we consider that we should not be in a hurry to reopen negotiations with China'.[95] In these circumstances, Grey doubted 'whether it would be worth while to encourage false hopes in the Chinese by attempting to discover their wishes even informally'.[96] Nevertheless, Jordan was instructed to ascertain from the Chinese Government 'quite informally, and as though for his personal information' what modifications of the boundary they wished to propose.[97]

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91 Austen Chamberlain, as Secretary of State for India, submitted to Cabinet in May 1916 two document: *Japanese Activities in China* and *India* and *Japanese Policy and Its Bearing on India.* Cab.37/148.

92 See B. L. Putnam Weale, The Fight for the Republic in China (London, 1918), pp. 174-183.

93 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/91147/10 Telegram from Government of India to Chamberlain, 6 July 1915, Encl. No.1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 7 July 1915.

94 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/65429/10 Minute, 25 May 1915.

95 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/91147/10 Telegram from Government of India to Chamberlain, 6 July 1915, Encl. No.1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 7 July 1915.

96 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/91147/10 Minute by Grey, 8 July 1915.

97 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/97232/10 Letter from Grey to Jordan, 23 July 1915.

Jordan's reply came on 2 August 1915. He submitted the informal and tentative proposals given to him by the Wai-chiao Pu (the Chinese Foreign Office), which stipulated that if the statement that Tibet forms part of Chinese territory be included in the Convention, the Chinese government would agree to inclusion of Chamdo within Outer Tibet and withdraw Chinese troops and officials within a year. The boundaries in other respects were to remain as finally proposed by China in 1914. Chinese trade agents were to be allowed into Tibet and they required the insertion of a clause in the convention to the effect that Outer Tibet recognised China's suzerainty.[98] Jordan told the member of the Wai-chiao Pu that they were 'quite inadmissible' and advised Grey that the question 'has been dropped.'[99] The British government refused to reopen the Tibetan question at that stage and thereby probably lost the one and only opportunity to secure a fresh tripartite agreement with China in regard to Tibet. In 1916 Yuan Shih-Kai died while attempting to restore the Chinese monarchy[100] and with him passed the chance of a settlement with China over Tibet. The fall of Yuan Shih-Kai's regime in 1916 was followed by the reinstitution of the Republic under a new constitution.

Despite Bell's pleas, the policy the Government of India followed during 1915 and 1916 was unmistakable:

> If the Thibetan Government succeed in negotiating a treaty with China, which is in itself unobjectionable from our point of view, there would appear to be no reason why such a treaty should not be embodied in a fresh tripartite convention and accepted by the British Government. If on the other hand the Thibetan Government conclude an objectionable treaty with China, we should have ample justification, under our existing engagements with Thibet, to repudiate it and demand its cancellation on pain of the withdrawal of our support and such other action as might be deemed advisable. If, however, no separate agreement should be arrived at between China and Thibet, things must remain for the time being in status quo, the Thibetan Government being assured, should occasion arise, of our continued diplomatic support.[101]

It is therefore not surprising that the Dalai Lama considered a rapprochement with Russia. An 'urgent' secret message was sent in October 1915, through the Russian diplomatic agent at Urga, in which it was reported that the Dalai Lama 'testifies to the

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98 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/105699/10 Telegram from Jordan to Grey, 2 August 1915.

99 Ibid.

100 B. L. Putnam Weale, op.cit., pp. 184-199.

101 PRO:FO371/2318 F1933/146289/10 Letter from Government of India to Bell, 3 September 1915.

success of his efforts to consolidate his spiritual powers and his administration'[102] and asked for advice on the possibility of a rapprochement. The Russian response was to 'pass over in silence' the question of a rapprochement.[103] In the Foreign Office Wakely minuted, 'Nothing could be more correct than this attitude of the Russian Government, but it is not a good sign that the Dalai Lama should be turning to them'.[104]

Considerable confusion reigned within the Legation in Peking and in Whitehall regarding the suspected Sino-Tibetan agreement. Louis King had reported to Jordan in late July 1915 that 'some sort of provisional agreement has been reached between the Chinese and the Thibetans on the frontier, providing for the withdrawal of the Chinese troops from Chamdo and district' and that the governor of Szechwan, General P'eng Jih-sheng, had arrived in connection with this matter.[105] But it was not till August that he confirmed that 'a provisional agreement has been reached by the Chinese and Thibetan Governments'.[106] However, David Macdonald, the British Trade Agent at Yatung, reported that his 'informant' had spoken to the Tibetan Prime Minister, Lonchen Shokang, and had found 'no foundation' for the report that the Chinese and Tibetans had concluded any new treaty negotiations.[107] In October, Jordan telegraphed the Foreign Office reporting that King had 'learnt from a fairly trustworthy source' that the Chinese Government, 'in view of the repudiation of negotiations' by the Tibetan Government, had 'resolved to use force, and instructed General P'eng to advance on Lhasa'.[108] On 19 October King wrote to Jordan informing him that the General was due to arrive in Chamdo on the 24 October with 'two field-guns and three machine-guns, all modern, and a large supply of ammunition'.[109]

It was not until November that the official Chinese version of events was telegraphed to the Foreign Office from Jordan. The Wai-chiao Pu had informed Jordan that General P'eng had not gone to Chamdo or Lhasa but that he would remain at

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102 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/146834/10 Telegram from Ambassador at Petrograd to Foreign Office, 8 October 1915.

103 Ibid.

104 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/146834/10 Minute by Wakely, 9 October 1915.

105 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/135731/10 Letter from King to Jordan, 30 July 1915.

106 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/135731/10 King to Jordan, 11 August 1915.

107 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/150930/10 Report from MacDonald to Government of India, 30 August 1915.

108 PRO:FO371/2318/ F1933/157054/10 Telegram from Jordan to Grey, 24 October 1915 See also PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/201407 letter from King to Jordan, 17 October 1915.

109 Ibid.

Tachienlu or Batang.[110] In a full report Jordan explained that the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs had stated that they had no intention of sending a Chinese Envoy to Lhasa and had no intention of sending a military force either. He affirmed, on the authority of the President, that the attitude of the Chinese Government towards the Tibetan question had undergone no alteration and that they still adhered strictly to the assurances contained in their note of 24 September 1914.[111] The Chinese Foreign Minister told Jordan they were anxious 'to come to a friendly understanding with His Majesty's Government on the whole question, but they could not see their way to adhering to the Thibet convention in its present form without some territorial adjustment of the frontier regions'.[112] By November 1915 Bell had summed up the situation : 'It seems fairly clear that P'eng did intend to advance. It is fortunate therefore that Mr. King was prompt to report the matter and that His Majesty's Minister at Peking brought it to the notice of the Chinese Government, whose disovowal has, one may hope, eased the situation.'[113]

In September 1915 Bell received an official delegation from Lhasa led by the Commander-in-Chief, Tsarong Shape, to 'discuss the present state of affairs'.[114] The Dalai Lama requested:

> (a) The conclusion of the Tripartite Convention, but, if this is not possible at present,
> (b) To ask the Chinese to withdraw their troops from the Tibetan frontier so that the Tibetans may also do the same.
> (c) Supply of mountain guns and machine guns from the British Government.
> (d) The Loan of the services of three or four good mechanics to teach the Tibetan mechanics at Lhasa how to make good ammunition for the rifles presented to the Tibetan Government by the Government of India, as the ammunition turned out at Lhasa is unsatisfactory.
> (e) Assistance in the construction of a telegraph line between Lhasa and Gyantse.
> (f) Intention to levy a tax of 5 Tangkas per load, ie., Rs. 1-4 per maund approximately, of wool and yak hairs, tails etc., as tax on the profits accruing from rearing sheep and cattle, and request that no objection may be taken by the Government of India to this.[115]

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110 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/168621/10 Telegram from Jordan to Grey, 10 November 1915.

111 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/184788/10 Letter from Jordan to Grey, 5 November 1915.

112 Ibid.

113 PRO: FO371/2318/ F3043/4484/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 20 November 1915.

114 PRO: FO371/2649/ F3043/44482/10 Translation of letter from Shapes to Bell, 16 September 1915.

115 PRO: FO371/2649/F3043/44482/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 28 October 1915.

Tsarong also asked Bell if a license could be obtained to import guns through India to the Tibetan frontier. He thought he might be able to arrange through Calcutta gunmakers for a 'few older or inferior type that would be of no use to the Government of India'.[116] He also requested that one bayonet might be sent as a pattern from which they would make others. Indeed, the requests were reasonable. It must have been a melancholy task for Bell to communicate the official policy. He advised Tsarong that it was not possible for the Tibetan Government to purchase mountain guns or machine guns from His Majesty's Government and that at this stage it would be impossible for a survey to be attempted for the telegraph line.[117] Tsarong returned to Lhasa no doubt feeling exasperated. Bell wrote later that 'during these years 1915/16 the Government of Tibet was confronted by a double anxiety. They had to guard against an advance by the Chinese troops in eastern Tibet, and they had to wait for the outcome of the World War'.[118] The anxiety as to the result of the war continued and reports that Germany was winning were general in Lhasa.

Not surprisingly, the Dalai Lama's response was to seek other sources of military supplies. Aware that the Japanese and the British were allies, he reasoned that if the British had no guns to spare, and he could not purchase them in India, then perhaps Japan could supply some. Bell advised the Government of India that a letter had been dispatched to the Emperor of Japan[119] through the Japanese Consul General at Calcutta requesting that machine guns be purchased in Japan.[120] Bell advised that the Japanese monk, Aoiki, who was engaged in the study of Tibetan scriptures in Lhasa, had 'promised to help the Tibetan Government with the Japanese Consul General in this matter if it were found impossible to obtain machine guns from India'.[121]

The Viceroy's response to this turn of events was predictable: 'In view of recent assurances and internal preoccupations of Chinese Government the Tibetan Government can have no urgent need of these guns and whole business is doubtless

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116 Ibid.

117 Ibid

118 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit; p. 166.

119 PRO: F0371/2649/F3043/82357/10 Translation of letter from Dalai Lama to Emperor of Japan, 12 January 1916.

120 PRO: FO371/2649/F3043/82357/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 7 March 1916.

121 Ibid. Also PRO: FO371/2649/F3043/114422/10 Annual Report on the British Agency at Yatung from 1 April 1915 to 31 March 1916, encl. in Bell to Government of India, 21 April 1916.

result of Japanese intrigue'.[122] Hardinge put forward three alternative courses: '(1) to supply some machine guns ourselves, or (2) to inform Tibetan Government that we regret that we cannot allow passage through India of machine guns purchased in Japan, but hope to provide a few later on ourselves, or (3) to permit purchase of machine guns from Japan by Tibetan Government and their passage through India.'[123] All three courses, according to the Viceroy, 'appear objectionable'.[124] The India Office agreed. Austen Chamberlain, who had replaced Crewe as Secretary of State, concluded that it was necessary, therefore, to find 'some means of inducing' the Tibetan Government to 'abandon their project of their own accord'.[125] He suggested that a British officer be despatched to Lhasa to discuss the matter. If the Tibetans could not be persuaded to drop the project, Chamberlain feared that it would 'become necessary to inform the Japanese that their passage through India cannot be permitted'.[126] Neither suggestion appealed to Grey. In Grey's opinion it was 'essential not to raise at the present moment any questions of a controversial nature with the Russian or Japanese Governments'.[127] There was the danger of offending the Japanese and an additional risk would be run of raising a controversial question at Petrograd. The copious minutes relating to this issue[128] confirmed the existence of a major diplomatic dilemma. It was agreed in the Foreign Office that Bell should be instructed to write and dissuade the Tibetan Government from this course. Bell was, however, to abstain from making any mention of the Japanese.[129]

In April 1916 the Indian government officially refused Lhasa's request to be permitted to purchase machine guns abroad or allow the passage of such articles through India. In what can only be viewed as a weak compromise they informed Lhasa they 'will endeavour to supply guns themselves as soon as possible'.[130] Bell was informed that he 'should endeavour to dissuade Tibetan Government from

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122 PRO: FO371/2649/F3043/61658/10 Telegram from Viceroy to India Office, 24 March 1916.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 PRO:FO371/2649/F3043/61658/10 Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 31 March 1916.

126 Ibid.

127 PRO: FO371/2649/ F3043/61658/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 7 April 1916.

128 PRO: FO371/2649/F3043/61658/10 Minutes by officials, 3 April 1916.

129 PRO FO371/2649 F3043/61658/10 Foreign Office to India Office, 7 April 1916.

130 PRO: F0371/2649/F3043/144357 Telegram from Government of India to Bell, 22 April 1916.

moving further in matter'.[131] He was to suggest that Tibetan officials should be deputed to Gyantse to meet the British Agent and discuss the question with him.[132]

In April 1916 Lord Hardinge, having completed his tenure as Viceroy, returned to Britain[133] and Lord Chelmsford replaced him. There was no change in the Government of India's Tibetan policy. In June Trumpase[134] was despatched from Lhasa for discussions with Lieutenant William Campbell, the British Trade Agent at Gyantse. There is no doubt that Trumpase had been deputed to Gyantse to make a pressing appeal to the Government of India for immediate assistance in the shape of machine guns and ammunition. According to Trumpase, the military situation in Kham was being 'kept a profound secret in Lhasa and was known only by the Dalai Lama, four councillors and two or three other leading officials'.[135] While keeping up an appearance of calm confidence in public, "they are in reality much alarmed by a despatch from Kham to the effect that Chinese have placarded an ultimatum calling upon Tibetan troops to evacuate a place called Tagri and threatening to send troops to enforce compliance".[136]

The news contained in the despatch from Kalon Lama had aroused considerable fear within the Tibetan government that the Chinese might be planning an advance backed by artillery and machine guns. Tibetan patrols had observed at least fifteen guns, some of them machine guns. It was thought that although the Tibetan troops might be able to resist to some extent if fighting was confined to the hills, there was considerable doubt that the soldiers would be able to resist a Chinese advance along the valley.[137] Although the British Trade Agent explained to Trumpase that the chances of a Chinese advance would appear to have been minimised by revolutionary movement in eight provinces and the death of Yuan-Shih-Kai, Trumpase rightly argued that the Chinese government were unable to control the troops in Kham.

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131 Ibid.

132 PRO: FO371/2649/ F3043/144357/10 Letter to Tibet Council from Bell, 3 May 1916.

133 Lord Hardinge, Old Diplomacy (London, 1947), pp. 194-196.

134 Master of the Horse and Joint Director of Lhasa Arsenal. Married to the 13th Dalai Lama's neice.

135 PRO:FO371/2649/F3043/159123/10 Report from Campbell to Bell, 13 June 1916.

136 PRO: FO371/2649/ F3043/144357/10 Telegram from British Trade Agent to POS, 13 June 1916.

137 PRO: FO371/2649/ F3043/159123/10 Report from Campbell to Bell, 13 June 1916.

Consequently, he emphasised that 'the state of mind of innermost circle at Lhasa is one of great anxiety almost amounting to panic'[138]

The Tibetan view, which Trumpase reflected, was reported by Campbell: 'The Tibetan Government had no friend except the British government to whom they felt in the relation of a son to a father, trusting that the father, in spite of his own preoccupations, would not desert the child at this critical juncture'.[139] In his report to Bell, Campbell reiterated Trumpase's message: 'He spoke of the many prayers which the Tibetan Government were offering for the success of the British arms and hinted that they expected some return for their friendly attitude during the present war.'[140] The Trade Agent concluded, 'I gather that he must have been instructed in Lhasa to leave no stone unturned in his endeavours to obtain machine guns and that he is very unwilling to return to Lhasa empty-handed'.[141] Campbell summed up the situation and, in support of the Tibetan point of view, he wrote:

> It may be thought that the Tibetan Government are making capital out of a comparatively trifling frontier incident in order to make out a good case for the supply of machine guns at once but in support of the Tibetan point of view, it may be remembered that it has not been uncommon in the history of China for the outlying forces of the Empire to embark on semi-independent adventures at times when the control of the central government was weak or non-existent. It is always possible that the officials at the head of the revolutionary government in Szechuan Province have decided on an advance in Tibet as a means of employing some of their badly-controlled troops. As regard the actual feelings of the Tibetan Government towards the British Government, I think, if I may venture my opinion, that they are now making their utmost endeavour to obtain machine guns at once and that their present extremely friendly attitude may undergo some change if nothing can be done for them. Trum-pa-se's obstinate refusal to realise the present difficulties in the way of supplying these guns is only characteristic of the simple but persistent people of Tibet. It is difficult to tell him in so many words that the fate of Tibet is of little consequence compared to the result of the war in Europe, and while larger considerations must naturally far outweigh local advantages, I feel that if it were possible to find a small quantity of ammunition, or better still even one machine gun of any kind, this would be sufficient to restore the confidence of the Tibetan Government for the time being and to remove the chance of their taking the line that they have been deserted in what they believe to be their hour of need.[142]

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138 PRO: FO371/264/ F3043/144357/10 Telegram from British Trade Agent to POS, 13 June 1916.

139 PRO FO371/2649/F3043/159123/10 Report from Campbell to Bell, 13 June 1916.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

The Foreign Office file was minuted 'It is to be hoped that the Government of India may be able to give the Tibetans a gun or two to keep them quite. Otherwise the idea of importing them from Japan will certainly be revived'.[143] Bell communicated the Government of India's decision to Campbell. Trumpase was advised that 'no machine guns are at present available, but that they will bear the matter in mind'. Yet another token gesture was made. The Government of India were 'pleased to let Tibetan Government have, on payment, 200,000 rounds of .303 ammunition.[144] The Foreign Office minute read: 'This may keep the Tibetans quiet for a time'.[145]

In December 1916 Asquith's ministry had fallen and its successor was led by Lloyd George. At the Foreign Office, Grey was replaced by Balfour. Edwin Montagu succeeded Chamberlain as Secretary of State for India in July 1917.[146] Despite the change from a Liberal government to a coalition of parties, Tibetan policy was unaffected. Agreement reigned in the Foreign Office and India: the whole Tibetan question would be kept in abeyance till the end of the war.

While Japanese influence in China was limited it was not urgent for the British to resolve the Tibetan issue. After the death of Yuan Shih-kai in 1916, however, the Japanese managed to obtain a dominant influence over the shaky new Peking government of the Anhwei and Chihli political cliques, whose weakness made them almost Japanese puppets. In the dangerous event that Japan controlled a reunited China, including Tibet, after the war, India's northeast border would become hostage to Japan's ambitions in East Asia. When Jordan went on leave from Peking to London in 1917, he took a memorandum drawn up in the British legation which stressed the 'likelihood of the whole country falling. . . under Japanese influence'.[147] It was 'essential that the opportunity created by the elimination of Chinese power' in Tibet should 'not be allowed to pass'.[148] British policy makers now recognized that nothing short of an ultimatum would induce Peking to abandon its claim on Inner Tibet.

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143 PRO: FO371/2649/ F3943/159123/10 Minute, undated.

144 PRO: FO371/2649/F3043/164386 Telegram from Government of India to Bell, 29 June 1916.

145 PRO: FO371/2649/ F3043/164386/10 Minute, 21 August 1916.

146 P. Addy, op.cit., p. 323.

147 PRO:FO535/20 Memo on the Tibetan Question, Encl. in Letter from Alston to Balfour, 19 May 1920 cited in I. Klein, 'British Imperialism in Decline' op.cit., p. 105.

148 Ibid. p. 104.

If the British were concerned most directly about Japanese expansion in East and Central Asia, calculations about Russian attitudes and alignments continued greatly to influence British policy. Whitehall considered it short-sighted to act as if existing arrangements with Russia had lapsed. They did not want a renewal of Russian pressure on India's northwest frontier. They needed to encourage Russia to honour the 1907 Convention which recognized the British protectorate over Afghanistan.[149] Despite the Soviet denunciation of all Czarist treaties, the Foreign Office did not, after October 1917, approve of a mission being sent to Lhasa in case any future Russian government might consider that Britain had seized the opportunity of chaos in Russia to invalidate existing agreements. British hesitancy reflected their predicament. Despite fear of potential Japanese expansion, the value of a Russian alignment and acute concern about ultimate Russian penetration into India dictated Whitehall's cautious policy in Central Asia.[150]

It was fear of the Chinese, however, that dictated Lhasa's urgent appeals. The Tibetans were not discouraged by the coolness of the British reply. That Campbell's advice was not heeded by the Tibetan authorities is evident from the fact that in January 1917 Trumpase, obviously instructed by the Lhasa Council, now visited the Trade Agent at Yatung in an attempt to solicit help. He was 'authorised' by the Tibetan government to send 'a reminder' from the Tibetan government[151] to the effect that an early settlement of the outstanding questions between China and Tibet be obtained in order to prevent disturbances on the China-Tibet frontier. Regarding the purchase of machine guns, the Tibetan government quite understood 'the difficulties of the supply' at the present moment; however, the 'exigencies of the present trouble with the Chinese' compelled them to repeat their request to provide them with 'at least 2 or 3 machine guns' for the purpose of training the Tibetans in their use.[152]

The 'reminder' also included a request for the 'systematic training of Tibetans in English drill and musketry at Gyantse, in batches of 75 at a time'. Strangely, they also requested the training of '20 Tibetans in Military Band music by some India Band Masters'. The Lhasa government wanted the services of '5 or 6 munition Mechanics and Armourers to proceed to Lhasa (or failing which, the deputation of some

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149 Ibid. p. 105.

150 Ibid. The Russian Revolution attracted the favourable attention of the India Nationalist Movement rather on account of its anti-imperial programme than its anti-capitalist and communist ideology, which had no appeal to the Indian Congress.

151 PRO: FO371/2904/F141/131446/10 Message from Kusho Trumpase cited in Letter from Macdonald to Bell, 5 January 1917.

152 Ibid.

intelligent and experienced Tibetan mechanics to India) to instruct the Tibetans in the manufacture of arms and ammunition'.[153] Lhasa was prepared to meet all expenses. Macdonald reported that Trumpase had stated that he had 'been purposely sent down to endeavour to procure some machine guns' and had 'instructions not to return to Lhasa without them'. Trumpase's message finished thus:

> I humbly beg that you will do all in your power and urge Government to consider this request favourably. If I return empty handed, it would be a very great disgrace to me. We Tibetans entirely rely on the benign British Government for assistance and advice in all matters.[154]

It would seem that, in view of India's decision to refuse the supply machine guns, Bell believed that the Tibetan government's constant requests for machine guns 'would do them more harm than good'.[155] He advised Macdonald that Trumpase 'should not raise the request again'.[156] It was not long before Bell changed his opinion. There is little doubt that this reversal was due to a letter received from the Dalai Lama through Campbell. Information had been received of the intention of the Governor-General of Szechuan to send two thousand troops from Tachienlu to Chiamdo.[157] Further letters submitted to him by the Tibetan Council[158] indicated that the outlying provinces of Szechwan and Yunnan had broken away from the centre, so that it was with local war-lords that the Tibetans had now to contend.[159]

According to David Macdonald, the ambition of the Peking government was to conclude, by force, an independent treaty with the Tibetans at a time when Britain was at war. This, once accomplished, Macdonald believed, would cause complications in Britain's future Tibet policy and needed to be energetically avoided as the Treaty once

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153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.

155 PRO:FO371/2904/F141/131446/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 5 February 1917.

156 Ibid.

157 PRO:FO371/2994/F141/131446/10 Translation of letter from Dalai Lama to Campbell, 19 February 1917.

158 PRO:FO371/2904/F141/131446/10 Translation of letter from Tibetan Council to Bell, 5 March 1917.

159 PRO:FO371/2904/F141/131446/10 Translation of letter from the Riwoche Jetrung Trulku Lama to Gar-ra Lama, 24 November 1916 also Translation of Letter from the ex-Dronyer of Traya to Kalon Lama , undated. Translation of letter from Po-tins (headmen) of Chiamdo to Kalon Lama , 23 February 1917. Translation of letter from the Tsawa Bultog Trulku Lama to Kalaon Lama. Enclosures in Letter 126-P to Government of India from Bell, 28 March 1917.

signed would not be easily revoked.[160] Bell agreed. There was no doubt that the constant Chinese pressure, 'both by persuasion and by threats', had told on the nerves of the Tibetans.[161] Bell reminded the Government of India that it was 'now two and a half years since the Simla Convention broke up . . . the future appears to them uncertain'.[162]

The general view of the Government of India was that the Lhasa government was over-anxious about the threats on their eastern border. Jordan and the home government also believed that the Tibetan fears were exaggerated. Bell, in closer contact with the Tibetans, was better able to judge their position. Consequently, by 28 March 1917, Bell was taking it upon himself to put pressure on New Delhi:

> If the Government of India find it possible now to supply some machine guns, say six, with a suitable supply of ammunition, it would undoubtedly have an excellent effect in Tibet. This small number of guns and small amount of ammunition could never be a serious military menace to India or Nepal, in view of the trifling number of the Tibetan soldiery and their lack of training and equipment. Moreover the Tibetans have not yet learnt how to look properly after their guns, which are therefore likely to deteriorate after a few years. But as a stop-gap against the Chinese troops for the present, and easing their minds, the possession of the machine guns would be very useful.[163]

The Government of India replied on 4 May. They did not view the situation as urgent, stating that the 'Government of India have received no confirmation of the report that preparations are being made for the despatch of 2,000 Chinese troops . . . the report is extremely improbable'.[164] Bell was asked to inform Lhasa that, while the Government of India were not yet in a position to comply with the request, they would 'endeavour to supply one or two of the latest type of gun at the end of the war'.[165] The Indian Government was, however, willing to assist in instructing batches of Tibetan soldiers in drill and musketry and advised that Tibetan mechanics could be

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160 PRO: FO371/2904/ F141/131446/10 Letter from Macdonald to Bell, 3 March 1917.

161 PRO: FO371/2904/ F141/131446/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 15 March 1917.

162 PRO: FO371/2904/ F141/131446/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 15 March 1917.

163 PRO: FO371/2904 F141/131446/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 28 March 1917.

164 PRO: FO371/2904/F141/131446/10 Letter from Bray, Government of India to Bell, 4 May 1917.

165 Ibid.

trained at the Dum Dum and Ishapore Ordnance factories in the manufacture of arms and ammunition.[166]

It had taken over three years to get a British official actually on to the Tibetan frontier.[167] Now reports from O. R. Coales, the Vice-Consul at Tachienlu who had reached Riwochi, confirmed that the 'present administration of the frontier province is so bad that it can hardly be worse. . . the Frontier Province is saddled with the same venal, incapable and inefficient government that exists anywhere else in China, with the additional burden of an establishment out of all proportion to the small population, disorganised finances, a swollen army with pay long overdue and no public opinion of any sort to act as a check.'[168] General P'eng Jih-sheng, acting on his own authority and without the sanction of the Chinese government, deliberately provoked a resumption of hostilities in the autumn of 1917.[169] As China fell into warlordism, the temporary stabilization of Sino-Tibetan relations collapsed.[170] Years of continuous frontier service and neglect by the central government had made Chinese troops almost indistinguishable from brigands. They had gradually developed virtually autonomous control over the Tibetan areas they conquered. After the unstable Peking government of Premier Tuan Chi'i-jui lost control over Szechuan all available resources were allocated to the reconquering of Szechuan and other provinces under warlord domain.

It was doubtlessly a disappointing time for the Dalai Lama, who had pinned considerable hopes on his new British patron. In December 1916 he had gone into retreat for religious meditation[171] while his Chief Ministers continued to argue for a settlement :

> We think that if the British Government will press the Chinese now, when they are preoccupied with their internal troubles, they will agree to the Convention. . . All the Tibetans, both high and low, are of this opinion and we would therefore request you to kindly arrange it like that if possible, but if this is not possible and if the Chinese as usual put off the settlement of the question, then we would reiterate the requests

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166 Ibid.

167 PRO: FO371/2904/ F141/138694/10 Alston to Balbour, 19 May 1917.

168 PRO: FO371/2904/ Fl41/138694/10 Report 'Journey to Chamdo' by Coales, 31 March 1917.

169 Tieh-Tseng Li, op.cit., p. 144.

170 For an analysis of this period in China see O. E. Clubb, 'Revolutionaries against the warlords', 20th Century China (New York, 1964), Chapter IV.

171 The Dalai Lama went into meditation to make invocation to Dorje Jigcee,the Chief deity of Tibetan Tantraism. He stayed in meditation for three years in the Norbu Lingkha Detached Palace. It was necessary for the Dalai Lama to attain this stage of Tantric arcana as it proved his leadership ability by demonstrating his courage in accomplishing this difficult practice. During this period he continued to take an active part in administrative decisions.

> already made by the Tibet Council that permits to purchase cannon, machine guns and ammunition may be given to us and also that necessary help may be rendered to us to get them.[172]

With no reply from the Government of India throughout September, October and November, Bell received numerous letters asking that the Sino-Tibetan question be settled as early as possible and requesting machine guns, cannon and ammunition.[173] The situation from 1914 to 1917 was aptly summed up by a Foreign Office minute penned on a file relating to the general situation: 'These papers illustrate Tibetan faith in Great Britain and their fear of Chinese aggression'.[174]

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172 PRO:FO371/2904/F141/227195/10 Translation of Letter from Chief Ministers to Bell, 27 July 1917 encl. in Letter from Bell to Government of India, 14 September 1917.

173 PRO:FO371/3180/F2567/10171/10 Letter from Chief Ministers to Bell, 16 October 1917, encl. in No. 395-P Letter from Bell to Government of India, 12 November 1917. Also PRO: FO371/3180/ F2567/42093/10 Letter to Macdonald from Chief Ministers of Tibet, 26 November 1917.

174 PRO: FO371/2904/ Fl4l/131446/10 Minute undated.

CHAPTER 4

A NEW ERA

'China is now coming more and more under Japanese influence. . . there can be no question but that Chinese aggression on the Indo-Tibetan frontier would develop into a very serious menace.'[1]

For the Tibetans the war years did not represent a period of inertia, as one might assume given the scant examination this period has received from historians of Tibetan affairs. As the previous analysis has shown, throughout these years the Lhasa government was determined not to leave the issue of military support in abeyance, but constantly attempted to persuade the British to execute what they believed to be Britain's obligation to Tibet, as represented in the Anglo-Tibetan Agreement. Probably the most important consequence that has been neglected in historical examinations of Anglo-Tibetan affairs during the years of the First World War is the realization that while China was deemed in 1914 to be of little threat to Tibet, the war emphasised the increased danger of a China controlled by Japan.[2]

The realization that Tibet might come to an independent agreement with China not only exemplified the weak position of Britain in the Far East during the war, but clarified the extent of the threat that she faced from Japan. It soon became apparent that Japan would endeavour to take advantage of the war to expand her influence on the mainland of Asia.[3] In all probability Japan's attention would initally be directed towards China, but ultimately she would attempt to gain a foothold in the European colonial preserves verging on China. An obvious focus of Japan's interest and intrigue would be British India: the India Office conceded that 'if the ambition of Japan is to play a leading role in the Far East, it is in her interest to keep us as weak as possible there, and to this end a constant threat to India is an obvious means'.[4] One aspect of this strategy would undoubtedly be the encouragement of pan-Asiatic sentiment within India itself and the encouragement of the Indian revolutionary movement. The more intimidating threat, however, was Japan's seeking to expand her influence through the medium of a

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1 PRO:FO371/3180/F2567/10171/10 Report from Bell to Government of India, 24 November 1917.

2 See D. Dignan, New Perspectives on British Far Eastern Policy 1913-19, (Brisbane, 1969), pp. 263-302.

3 IOR:L/P&S/11/174 P5366 'Japanese "expansion" in Asia', British Embassy Tokyo to Curzon, Foreign Office, 21 April 1920.

4 PRO:FO371/1036/F711/53388 Memorandum by the Secretary of the Political Department, India Office, 16 May 1916. Cab.37/148.

Japanese-controlled or Japanese-influenced Chinese government in the Chinese provinces encircling Tibet. From such a vantage point Japan would be able to expand her influence, albeit indirectly, into Tibet itself and the security of the north and north-east frontier of India and the eastern frontier of Burma would be exposed.[5] The implication of such a situation was obvious: the attempt by the British government to exclude both Russian and Chinese influence in Tibet would be wasted if Tibet was allowed to fall under the influence of Japan.

A renewed apprehension of Japanese influence in Tibet marked a turning point in the hitherto indolent approach that had been adopted by the Government in India since 1914. In December 1917, the Viceroy advised the India Office that:

> We now think it wise to take advantage of present frame of mind of Tibetan Government and to secure if possible settlement of the question before either hostilities assume serious proportions, which Chinese Government might find difficult to check, or Tibetans revert to less accommodating attitude.[6]

In a complete about-face, the Government of India proposed to give the Tibetan government, free, the 500,000 rounds of rifle ammunition[7] which the Tibetans had asked for in October and November 1917.[8] The Foreign Office noted that 'the Government of India appear to be suffering from one of their periodical scares about Chinese aggression'.[9] It is more likely, however, that two other major factors brought about this change.

In November Bell had submitted to the Government of India an explicit appraisal of the Tibetan situation, pointing out the dangers in following their wait-and-see policy which viewed a settlement with China as being 'in itself unobjectionable from our point of view.'[10] Bell explained:

> The Chinese would have no difficulty in convincing the Tibetans of the futility of looking to us for any substantial help and the Tibetans would completely lose their present faith in us. At present, as the Chinese

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5 Ibid.

6 PRO:FO371/29O4/Fl4l/230146/10 Telegram from Viceroy to India Office, l December 1917.

7 PRO:FO37l/3180/F2567/42095/10 Letter from Government of India to Bell, 9 January 1918.

8 PRO:FO371/3180/F2567/42093/10 Letter from Chief Ministers to Bell, 16 October 1917, also Letter from Chief Minister of Tibet to Macdonald, 26 November 1917.

9 PRO:FO371/2904/F141/230146/10 Minute, undated.

10 PRO:FO371/2318/F1933/146289 Letter from Government of India to Bell, 3 September 1915.

> have not attacked them in force, they believe in the value of the diplomatic support, which we have been giving them at Peking. But, if the Chinese attack them and we are unable to do anything to stop the Chinese, the Tibetans would consider our support worse than useless. They would think that the Chinese refrained from attacking them so far, not because of our diplomatic support, but because of the internal troubles of the Chinese themselves. They would think that, but for their hope of help from us, they could have long ago settled their dispute with the Chinese. The embitterment between the Chinese and Tibetans, consequent on the long struggle, would be placed to our account. If therefore we leave the Tibetans to their fate at this critical moment of their history and disaster results, their present friendship towards us will turn to distrust and contempt.[11]

Bell quoted an old Tibetan prophecy which, he said, had been current among the Tibetans for a long time before 1904: "The British will come to Lhasa one day but will be unable to stay there. They are merely road makers, their influence will last for only fifteen years, and they will leave Tibet without fighting as soon as the people of Hor invade it". A Chinese advance into Central Tibet and Lhasa, according to Bell, 'would appear to the people a fulfilment of this prophecy. The effect would be disastrous to our prestige in the Himalayas'.[12]

Bell warned of the 'calamitous' results of such an event:

> But for the accident of the Chinese revolution the Tibetans would have been unable to eject the Chinese soldiers from Central Tibet. But if Chinese troops come again, they will hold the country firmly and these intrigues will be pushed much further than before. China is now coming more and more under Japanese influence. . . there can be no question but that Chinese aggression on the Indo-Tibetan frontier would develop into a very serious menace. This frontier, one thousand six hundred miles in length, is the longest, but at present the most peaceful, of our India frontiers. Nearly the whole of this would become a hot bed of intrigue. If the intrigues fructified in the frontier States and tribal territories, Chinese troops and colonists from the over-populated areas in Yunnan and Szechuan would settle in the tribal territory to the north-east and north of Assam, for much of this is eminently suitable for Chinese colonisation. Under Japanese guidance past mistakes would be avoided. The intrigues would branch out, the pressure would harden and the strain on this long frontier might prove intolerable.[13]

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11 PRO:FO371/3180/F2567/10171/10 Report from Bell to Government of India, 24 November 1917.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

The Political Officer pressed for the Tibetan question to be reopened. Suggesting that 'when we know the terms that the Chinese are willing to accept', it 'would perhaps be for me to take them personally' to the Dalai Lama.'[14]

It seems likely also that the reversal of policy was tied to the news that the United States had moved to end the embarrassment stemming from its co-belligerency with both China and Japan through the Lansing-Ishii Agreementof 2 November 1917, in which Japan paid lip service to the Open Door[15] while the United States recognized Japan's 'special interest' in China.[16] The India Office was concerned that this agreement might affect British rights in Tibet. In its vagueness, it did not assure the Japanese that their spheres of interest and its imprecision could be interpreted by Tokyo to include far more geographically than even Whitehall was prepared to concede. British policy towards Japan in the last two years of the war was laid down by the new Foreign Secretary, A. J. Balfour, in a dispatch to Greene, British Ambasssador in Tokyo, early in 1917. He maintained that the British objective must be to protect her interests in China, Tibet and the areas bordering India and Tibet, and to prevent the Japanese securing a footing 'where their exclusion is considered essential to British political interests'.[17]

A 1916 India Office memorandum, *Japanese Policy and Its Bearing on India*,[18] had categorically stated that in the event of a peaceful economic penetration of China by Japan, Britain would need to consider adopting a graceful accommodation policy. Sir Eric Drummond, Grey's private secretary, minuted: 'If we desire to keep on good terms with Japan we must allow her to expand some-where and China is the one safe place'.[19] In return, Britain could secure Japan's agreement to the 'cordoning off' of the provinces of Yunnan and Szechuan as a British sphere. The memorandum conceded that should it be necessary at any time to ask for military or increased naval favours from the Japanese, 'the price that would have to be paid could only be - as far as it is possible to see - at the expense of British interests in China . . . It must indeed be a cardinal point in British policy that, in an extreme case, concessions to Japan could be looked for only in

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14 Ibid.

15 A secret memorandum appended to the Lansing-Ishii Agreement pledged both powers not to take advantage of the war to abridge the rights of other nations in China. See PRO: FO371/2904/F141/21148 Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 19 November 1917.

16 See F. Michael, 'Japan's "Special Interests" in China, Pacific Affairs, Vol. X, No. 4, 1937. pp. 407-411.

17 PRO: FO410/66 Balfour to Green, Despatch 25, 13 February 1917, cited in P.Lowe, op.cit., p. 9.

18 PRO:FO371/1036/F711/53388/10 Memorandum by the Secretary of the Political Department, India Office, 16 May 1916. Cab. 37/148, May 1916.

19 Ibid.

this direction, and not in the direction of India'.[20] India's security requirements were paramount:

> How far the Japanese can be admitted to the Yangtse valley without detriment to existing British interests, or how far these interests may have to be sacrificed on the altar of world policy, are questions with which India has no direct concern. What Indian interests do require is the exclusion of the Japanese from those portions of the Chinese Empire (viz. Tibet and the border provinces of Yunnan and Szechuan) which march with the Indian frontier, and which, under the control, direct or indirect, of an energetic and aggressive power, might constitute a permanent manace to Indian security.[21]

Despite these pessimistic views Britain was able to avoid any major change in the outward character of its Far Eastern policy but the spirit of Anglo-Japanese relations had been drastically changed. With the Korean rebellion and American support for Chinese nationalism the Japanese threat to Chinese independence subsided. Like the Russian threat to Tibet, the Japanese threat was no more than hypothetical but it did serve to point to the dangers of allowing the Tibetan question to drift, particularly in the context of increasing political uncertainty in China and, after 1917, in Russia. For this reason the Indian Government and the Peking Legation still maintained a vigilant watch on Japanese activities and intrigue in Yunnan, Szechuan and Chinese Turkestan.[22]

The second issue took the form of a document submitted by Eric Teichman, the British vice-consul at Tachienlu, on 21 November 1917, confirming that Military Commissioner, Yin Cheng-hsien, had put forward a series of proposals for the strengthening of China's military position on the Szechuan border and the reduction of Tibet by force.[23] This document lent strength to the Tibetan view that the European war was being used by the Chinese to gain advantages. This was clear in Part II of the document:

> Great Britain is now occupied with the European war and has no leisure to pay attention to matters in the East. . . British interests in Tibet are small compared with their interests in India. If we move troops into Tibet, and the British do not yield to diplomatic methods, it seems

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20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 C. Christie, op.cit., p. 489.

23 PRO:FO371/3180/F2567/55660/10 Translation of secret memorandum submitted by Yin Cheng-hsien, Military Commissioner for the Szechuan Frontier Territory (October 1916-October 1917) to the Central Government in December 1916, encl. in Report from Teichman to Jordan, 21 November 1917.

> almost certain that they will not under the circumstances make this a pretext for a serious quarrel with us.[24]

The Government of India now began to argue for a settlement. In March the Viceroy telegramed:

> . . . we think re-opening negotiations desirable. . . Present situation involves continual strain on Tibetan resources and perpetual menace to Lhassa itself. Our inability to settle question tends to embarrass and may eventually discredit us with Tibetan Government, whose applications for assistance in machine guns, &c., we have so often to refuse.[25]

In the meantime, hostilities increased on the frontier and with no solutions forthcoming from the Government of India, the Tibetans saw no other choice than 'to retaliate'. The only course open appeared to be to prepare for war.[26] Bell was instructed to impress on the Tibetan government the 'absolute necessity of restraining their troops from assuming offensive'.[27] The Tibetans, however, were in no position to oblige and MacDonald reported that 'The Tibetan Government are drilling their troops daily and are mobilising a large number of country militia at Lhasa with a view to training them for active service. The Tibetan Government have manufactured three small guns at the Lhasa Arsenal. They are going to send them to Kham if they prove to be satisfactory'.[28]

Despite Teichman's disclosures, Whitehall, while appreciating the 'importance of finding a remedy' and 'the risk' of allowing the present conditions to be 'prolonged indefinitely', thought it seemed 'desirable, especially in view of the present critical situation in other parts of the world, to take no action vis-a-vis the Chinese Government that could be interpreted as a weakening of the attitude hitherto adopted by Great Britain.'[29] The general view in both Peking and Britain remained that settlement of the Tibetan question had to await the conclusion of the war in Europe.[30] However, Jordan

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24 Ibid.

25 PRO:FO371/318/F2567/54720/10 Telegram from Viceroy to India Office, 24 March 1918.

26 PRO:FO371/3189/F2567/55660/10 Translation of Letter from Chief Ministers of Tibet to Bell, 29 December 1917, encl. in Letter 7-P from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1918.

27 PRO: FO371/3180/F2567/55660/10 Telegram from Government of India to Bell, 5 February 1918.

28 PRO:FO371/318O/F2567/83122/10 Yatung Trade Agency Report No. 1 of 1918 Macdonald to Government of India, 12 March 1918.

29 PRO: FO371/3180/F2567/57928/10 Letter from Shuckburgh to Foreign Office, 2 April 1918.

30 PRO: FO371/3180/ F2567/70224/10 Telegram from Jordan to Foreign Office, April 1918.

decided to 'enter into purely personal and informal conversations' with the Wai-Chiao-Pu with a view to ascertaining how far the Chinese would be prepared to go in the event of the British renewing negotiations.[31] Teichman was appointed to attempt to negotiate a temporary truce on the frontier.[32]

Despite the War Office's argument that the situation in Central Asia now required 'the support of the Tibetan Government . . . in preventing enemy agents from percolating from Turkestan to India through Tibetan territory'[33], Simla turned down the Tibetan request for artillery, machine guns and a million rounds of ammunition which had been asked for constantly since January.[34] This could only 'serve to make early settlement less feasible'[35] and the Lhasa government was told that the 'Government of India rely implicitly on Tibetan Government issuing clear instructions to their local officers to refrain absolutely from further aggression'.[36] The response to this ultimatum revealed the extent of Tibetan anxiety:

> As the Great British Government is the Protector of Tibet, we cannot disobey their orders about not attacking the Chinese . . . but as General Peng and his soldiers are attacking us and have strongly fortified Chamdo, which lies in outer Tibet and according to the Treaty belongs to Tibet, we cannot but act in self-defence. If we are not supplied with the ammunition for the good rifles presented to us by the Great British Government with a view to benefit Tibet, we will surely lose our lands and there is a great danger of our being defeated. . . if the ammunition is not granted and the Tibetan people come to know this, they will feel very disappointed because the Great British Government have not extended their protection to Tibet in her time of need.[37]

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31 PRO:FO371/3180/F2567/70224/10 Telegram from Jordan to Foreign Office, 20 April 1918.

32 PRO:FO37l/3180/F2567/85435/10 Telegram from Viceroy to Foreign Office, 5 May 1918.

33 PRO:FO371/3180/F2567/74876 Letter from War Office to Foreign Office, 27 April 1918.

34 PRO:FO371/3180/F2567/10 Letter from Chief Ministers of Tibet to Campbell, 24 January 1918. See also PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/126958 Translation of Letter from Chief Ministers of Tibet to Campbell, officiating POS, 23 April 1918.

35 PRO:FO371/3181/ F2567/126958/10 Letter from Government of India to POS, 24 May 1918. See also Letter from Government of India to Bell, 4 June 1918.

36 PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/126958/10 Letter from Government of India to POS, 24 May 1918.

37 PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/143679/10 Translation of a Confidential letter from Chief Ministers of Tibet to Macdonald, 17 May 1918.

Throughout 1918 the Tibetans continued to press the Government of India for a further supply of ammunition[38] and even resorted to requesting the Nepalese Government to supply rifles.[39] Increasing Chinese warlordism, the absorption of Chinese frontier troops in the Yunnanese revolt and conflict in Szechuan forced the Tibetans to launch a major offensive in spring 1918. Despite inadequate military equipment, clever use of the mountainous terrain enabled the Tibetans to cut off Chinese supplies and threatened Chinese control of the entire trans-Yangtze region.[40] As fighting increased in Kham, the Tibetans eventually gained control of Derge and Nyarong. In April 1918 Chamdo surrendered and General P'eng with his two thousand troops were captured by the Tibetans.[41]

Almost remorseful, the Tibet Council wrote: 'We could not remain with our hands folded and therefore took counter-measures and have taken possession of some districts formerly belonging to Tibet'.[42] The response from India was harsh: 'if they persist in an aggressive policy they must sooner or later meet with reverse at the hands of Chinese . . . Unless they can accept advice of British Government, British Government will be unable to continue their support and assistance as heretofore.'[43] The Foreign Office agreed: '. . . Tibetans should be given no further assistance likely to encourage them to continue aggressive policy'.[44]

Through Teichman's efforts a provisional agreement was signed on 19 August 1918,[45] establishing peace on the Sino-Tibetan frontier.[46] The Truce of Rongbatsa provided for a year's armistice. Whitehall and Lhasa were impatient to secure an

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38 PRO:F0371/3181/F2567/143735/10 Translation of letter from Chief Ministers to Macdonald, 3 June 1918. Also translation of letter from Shapes of Tibet to Cambell, POS, 8 July 1918.

39 PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/163204/10 Letter from Bayley, Resident in Nepal to Government of India, 6 July 1918.

40 I. Klein, 'British Imperialism in Decline', op.cit., p. 106.

41 PRO:FO371/3180/F2567/10 Jordan to Foreign Office, 20 April 1918.

42 PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/169361/10 Translation of letter from Chief Ministers of Tibet to Campbell, POS, 27 July 1918.

43 PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/143884/10 Telegram from Viceroy to Foreign Office, 15 August 1918.

44 PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/169855/10 Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, 7 October 1918.

45 IOR:L/P&S/18/B300 Agreement dated 19 August 1918 for the Restoration of peaceful Relations and the Delimitation of a provisional Frontier between China and Tibet. Also IOR: L/P&S/18/B300a Supplementary Agreement, 10 October 1918.

46 PRO:FO371/3181/F2657/202877/10 Report from Teichman to Jordan, 21 August 1918. Also PRO:FO371/3181/F2657/171753 Telegram from Jordan to Foreign Office, 13 October 1918. See also Eric Teichman, Travels of a Consular Office in Eastern Tibet, op.cit.

agreement within that time, but not so the Chinese. Internal and external pressures were now being exerted on the Peking government and any compromise regarding Tibet could undermine an already fragile government.

An intercepted telegram from the Foreign Minister in Peking to the Chinese Minister in London indicated that the Chinese government were very suspicious of British motives in reopening the Tibetan question.[47] According to Jordan, the knowledge that Tibetan troops had received modern arms and instructions from "certain persons" (the British) and were consequently more 'formidable than formerly', would not foster 'any feeling of gratitude to us'.[48] Teichman reported from the frontier: 'All kinds of rumours, which I do my best to discredit, about foreign assistance are current'.[49] An embarrassing situation was developing. The Chinese inquired 'how it was that the Government of India provided the Dalai Lama with British rifles with which to attack the soldiers of China, a Power now allied to Great Britain in the European War'.[50]

The Chinese Minister in London, Alfred Sze, suggested to his government that in the event of the opening of negotiations the United States of America be called in as arbitrator.[51] Jordan 'earnestly' hoped that 'such a revolutionary proposal will not be entertained'.[52] Jordan realized that this would have far-reaching results on British relations with China and the Far East in general. He maintained that it would virtually place British policy in China in the hands of the United States, 'as China would naturally find it convenient to extend principle to every difficulty that occurs'.[53] The Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, was emphatically opposed to any suggestion that the Tibetan question should be referred to the arbitration of the United States.[54] By the end of the war the United States was viewed by Whitehall as a commercial competitor which could be as dangerous, if not more so, than the Japanese. This was due to the capacity of the American economy, which neither Japan nor Britain could expect to match.

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47 PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/156871/10 Telegram from Viceroy to India Office, 10 September 1918.

48 PRO:FO371/3181 F2567/155533/10 Telegram from Jordan to Foreign Office, 19 September 1918.

49 IOR:L/P&S/10/714 P3804 Depatch No. 4, Teichman to Government of India, 11 February 1918.

50 Ibid.

51 PRO: FO371/3181/F2567/156871/10 Foreign Office Minute to Hardinge 19 September 1918.

52 PRO:F0371/3181/F2567/157190/10 Telegram from Jordan to Foreign Office, 13 September 1918.

53 PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/157190 /10 Telegram from Jordan to Foreign Office, 13 September 1918. See also IOR: L/P&S/10/714 No. 784.

54 IOR: L/P&S/10/714 No.784 Minute by Shuckburgh, September 1918.

The re-opening of the Tibetan question had been precipitated by Teichman's negotiations and, according to Jordan, 'Chinese pride' had been hurt, but he saw no reason why an eventual settlement could not be attained. In the meantime Jordan followed a harsh anti-Tibetan line: 'Tibetans should be definitely refused further assistance. . . and the Dalai Lama . . . who is an arch-intriguer and a most unscrupulous and dangerous person should be warned to drop his ambitious schemes of conquest on Chinese frontier.' [55] Hugh Richardson writes: 'It was all done in a spirit of grudging circumspection, for the British government, involved in a world war, was preoccupied by its wider obligations'.[56]

With the war over in Europe, and with 'secret agents' reporting that the Chinese were collecting troops and large quantities of rations and ammunition in preparation to attack Tibet,[57] the Tibet Council called for the fulfilment of the promise made in May 1917 by the Government of India that they would 'endeavour to supply one or two of the latest type of gun at the end of the war'.[58] Major Campbell, who had succeeded Bell in March 1919 as Political Officer in Sikkim, received a request from Lhasa for '100 machine guns,[59] ten thousand rounds of artillery ammunition and 1,500,000 rounds of small-arm ammunition.' [60]

The Government of India was by now convinced that there was no possibility of settlement with China and urged Lhasa to claim self-determination at the forthcoming Peace Conference in Paris.[61] They viewed with some anxiety the possibility that Britain's prolonged refusal to supply Lhasa with arms and ammunition would force the Dalai Lama to pursue alternative means of supply, most likely from Russia. Consequently, the Indian Government were prepared to sell 2 machine guns with 50,000 rounds of

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55 PRO:FO371/3181/F2567/157190 /10 Telegram from Jordan to Foreign Office, 13 September 1918.

56 H. Richardson, op.cit., pp. 118-19.

57 PRO:FO371/3688/F4004 Translation of Letter from Tibetan Trade Agent to Campbell, 24 May 1919 Encl in 181-P Letter from Campbell to Government of India, 30 May 1919.

58 PRO:FO371/2904/Fl4l/131446/10 Letter from Bray, Government of India to Bell, 4 May 1917. This referred to an earlier promise made on 18 April 1916.

59 The figure of 100 machines guns might have been a translation error. A letter sent by Lonchen Shokang on 6 August 1919 asks for 10 machines guns. See PRO: FO371/3689 F4004/10 Letter from Chief Minister of Tibet to Campbell, 6 August 1919 encl in No.216-P Letter from Campbell to Government of India, 22 August 1919.

60 PRO: FO371/3688 F4004/10 Letter from Shapes of Tibet to Major Cambell, 19 May 1919 encl in 181-P Letter from Campbell to Government of India, 30 May 1919.

61 A. K. J. Singh, op.cit., p. 85.

ammunition and 1,250,000 rounds of ammunition for rifles.[62] The Foreign Office vetoed the move. To supply arms to Tibet would, in their view, be 'most emphatically, a violation' of the Arms Traffic convention, which had been signed in Paris on 10 September 1919.[63] Under the terms of the convention Britain could only export arms to governments of other signatory powers. The agreement was constituted to curb the movement of munition to volatile parts of the world in the interests of international peace and stability. A fundamental goal was to restrict the flow of Japanese arms to China and consequently to limit Japan's political influence.

During 1919 the Lhasa government pressed, both in writing and orally, for a reply regarding peace negotiations and their request for ammunition. In September Campbell reported to the Viceroy that 'Tibetan Government were somewhat hurt by non-receipt of any reply to the National Assembly's letter or to their own repeated request(s) for ammunition'.[64] Bell later wrote: 'Their scanty store of reliable ammunition being by now almost exhausted, the Tibetan Government found it impossible to continue the long, unequal contest with China; and, feeling that our Government was not helping them as had been promised, consented at last to receive a Chinese Mission in Lhasa.'[65] Campbell reported to the Government of India in October that 'the Tibetan Government and the official classes are beginning to lose faith in us as a *protecting power*'.[66] The opportunities for building a close relationship with an autonomous Tibet had certainly diminished during the war years. The war years had also revealed very clearly that European unity was a scarcely veiled myth which need no longer intimidate the Chinese.

The Chinese had entered the First World War with the distinct expectation of ultimately limiting the structure of foreign rights and privileges and obtaining the liberty to reassert influence on their borderlands. At the Paris Peace Conference, the dominant Chinese controversy for the allies concerned Japanese privileges in Shantung.[67] The Peking government demanded retrocession of all former German rights in Kiaochow-Shantung. However, in return for additional light cruisers and destroyers to cope with

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62 PRO:FO371/3688/F4004/P5191Telegram from Viceroy to Foreign Office, 25 August 1919. Also IOR: L/P&S/10/715 P5191.

63 PRO:FO371/3688/ F4004/141818/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 23 October 1919.

64 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/P5965 Telegram from Viceroy to Foreign Office, 23 September 1919.

65 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 174.

66 PRO: FO371/3689/F4004/No.233-P Letter from Campbell to Government of India, 3 October 1919, emphasis added.

67 See Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany, 28 June 1919, Part IV, Section 1, Articles 128-133.'German Rights and Interests outside Germany'.

submarines in the Mediterranean, the Foreign Office had agreed to support Japanese claims regarding the disposition of Germany's rights in Shantung.[68] While Japan was made to relinquish some excessive privileges gained in 1915,[69] the announcement of the Council's conclusion on the Shantung question caused nation-wide disappointment and evoked protest throughout China.[70] Although the international situation was distinctly favourable to the success of China's new programme for treaty revision, the peace conference undermined Chinese confidence. The Peking government consequently became temporarily more acquiescent about a Central Asian settlement. The conclusion of the war and the peace settlement enabled Jordan to coerce the Chinese into discussions about Tibet. In June 1919, Chinese responses convinced him that they 'were most willing to effect a settlement of the question'[71]. It seemed that pre-war circumstances were reviving in which Britain's diplomatic potency would ultimately subdue defiant Chinese resistance.

The world, however, was a different place after 1918. During the First World War and the period of postwar settlement, British interests in China faced a radical re-definition. Altering international economic patterns, changing imperial priorities, rising nationalism in the Far East, and the growth of new ideologies all had repercussions. The Great War emphasised the importance of stabilizing conditions throughout Central Asia and the Far East, and of the creation of sound political institutions in all the Asiatic states. The war, however, also ushered in the concept of political self-determination and the rights of peoples in Asia. Britain now had to contend with rising Asian nationalism. In hindsight it can be seen that this was the crucial first stage of non-European nationalism and resurgence around the globe. The Japanese victories over a European enemy aroused an Asiatic consciousness and nurtured an intense desire for independence.[72] After the announcement of the Allies in 1914 that they were waging war to preserve democracy, and with the publication of the doctrines of President Wilson concerning self-

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68 PRO:FO371/2950/9266/10 Message received from Japanese government in letter from Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 2 February 1917.

69 Lord Curzon's assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of leaving the Japanese in Siberia led to the conclusion that it would be greatly to Britain's advantage to keep them involved there. This would, according to Curzon, provide an outlet for surplus population, would divert Japan from China, and would prevent a Bolshevik victory in Siberia. Both Clemenceau and Lloyd George agreed that from a European standpoint, there was no objection to Japan remaining there. C. B. Davis, Partners and Rivals , op.cit., pp. 238-239.

70 Letter from Chinese Delegation to President of Peace Conference, 26 May 1919 cited in Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Treaties and Agreement with and concerning China, (1921) p. 1496.

71 PRO:FO371/3688/4004/111278/10 Jordan to Earl Curzon, 1 June 1919.

72 The Russo-Japanese war of 1905 and the First World War.

determination, independence, and self-government of small and dependent states, this movement became a definite and vital force in Oriental countries.[73] The doctrine of self-determination had not only been applied to the subject races of Europe, it was also being cited in favour of Arab, Armenian and Kurdish independence. Upon the basis of that doctrine the supremacy of Great Britain was being challenged in Ireland, India, Egypt and newly liberated Mesopotamia.

The steady decline of British power during the late 19th and early-20th centuries in the face of European competition was immeasurably hastened by the enormous strain of the First World War. During the second half of the 19th century, the prime interest of Britain had been to find markets in China for the products of Britain's expanding industries, especially textiles. This motive, together with Britain's outstanding technological superiority, explain the main characteristics of British policy during this period.[74] On the one hand, Britain took the lead in opening up the China market and in building up the elaborate system of treaty rights and privileges, and, on the other, she was quite content to allow other nations, by means of the most favoured nation clause, to share in these gains.[75] By the end of this period, however, new forces began to operate in the relations between Britain and China.

Economically, Britain was passing from the stage in which practically her sole interest in China was commercial to the stage in which the possibilities of China as a field for long-term capital investment, particularly in railways and mining, were of major interest.[76] Russia, France, Germany, Japan and the United States now began to challenge the previously undisputed position of Britain. Thereafter, China's place in the world system of states became that of an object of international rivalry, causing major shifts in Britain's policies.[77] The two main characteristics of British policy had been equality of access to commercial markets, referred to as the 'open door', and the preservation of China's territorial integrity. In the period after 1894, the acquisition of special 'spheres', with repeated violations of China's integrity, were characteristic. Britain turned from its previous policy of open door to support the concept of 'spheres of interest', and evenutally to tacit acceptance of 'spheres of influence'. The concept of sphere of interest comprehended merely a 'local preponderance for specific concessions

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73 'Patriotism' was born at this time, not only in Turkey, Persia and India, but also in China and Japan.

74 See E. V. G. Kiernan, British Diplomacy in China 1880-1885 (New York, 1970), passim.

75 I. S. Friedman, British Relations with China: 1931-1939 (NewYork, 1940), p. 10.

76 Ibid.

77 See C. B. Davis, op.cit., passim.

of a single power, not implying a monopoly, at least in theory,'[78] while sphere of influence 'implied more general economic and commercial exclusiveness and considerable political control in a limited geographic area'.[79] Britain now had to take into account the ambition and strength of her competitors, and out of this came the 'balance of power' policy.[80] International rivalry in China took the form of competition for loans and for railroad and mining concessions. It was at this time that the bulk of Britain's investments in China were formed. The rivalry between the Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation, the Russo-Asiatic Bank, the Deutsch-Asiatische Bank, the Banque del'Indo-Chine, the International Banking Corporation and the Yokohama Specie Bank was intense.[81] Hay's Open-Door Note attempted to maintain equal commercial access in China, but did not touch the issue of 'special spheres'.

The war of 1914-18 caused an even greater rupture in economic than it did in political affairs. It resulted in a new alignment of economic forces, Japan becoming in China a more important commercial force than Great Britain. It also resulted in a growth of industrialization in China, as elsewhere in the Far East, and it was followed by, and was to some extent responsible for, the appearance of nationalism in China.[82] Accordingly, instead of being quite obviously 'top dog' in the economic sphere and in many respects 'top dog' also in the political sphere, Great Britain entered upon a period destined to deprive it both of economic and of political supremacy.[83]

British policy in China in the years immediately after the war therefore reflected the change in the balance of forces in the Far East. Russia and Germany, the two main pre-war rivals, were eliminated. Japan combined economic expansion in the Far East with an attempt at political expansion and in doing so set in motion forces which gave political significance to the changing economic balances. The United States, strategically, economically and diplomatically, was in an unprecedentedly strong position.[84] The

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78 L. K. Young, British Policy in China, 1895-1902 (New York, 1970), pp.,77-88.

79 Ibid.

80 The Balance of Power was a system of international relations based on the assumption that peace can be maintained only be ensuring that the threat of predominance by any one country or alliance is offset by the creation of a group of states of equal strength. It was abandoned as a discredited device of the 'old diplomacy' when the League of Nations was created in 1919. I. S. Friedman, op.cit., p. 11.

81 E. M. Gull, British Economic Interests in the Far East (London 1943), passim.

82 China refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles because of the Shantung clauses. In China, the Shantung issue precipitated the nationalist, anti-Japanese 'May Fourth' movement. Widespread demonstrations, strikes, and anti-Japanese boycotts destabilized the government.

83 E. M. Gull, op.cit., p. 5.

84 I. S. Friedman, op.cit., p. 12.

policy of American economic penetration of China, which was launched in full force in 1915, had its immediate genesis in fears that Japan would succeed in turning China into a protectorate, from which American economic concerns would be excluded, as had occurred in South Manchuria.[85] The United States couched its renewed interest in China in terms of a 'New Diplomacy': a new balance of power could only arise through the mutual adjustments of the only remaining significant imperialist powers in China, and only in terms of a China radically changed by the stress of revolution and civil war.[86]

Britain was forced to define its position in the new triangular rivalry in the Pacific. They had also to contend with the public rejection of the old forms of imperial diplomacy and the increasing interest of the Dominions in international affairs. Scrutiny of British documents reveals how, at the conclusion of the First World War, the Tibetan question had become a significant component of a much broader debate on the direction of post-war British policy in Asia. The vulnerability of British commercial interests in China helped immobilise her action in Tibet. British statesmen like Sir Edward Grey, as Foreign Secretary until 1916, and Sir John Jordan, feared not that China would expand, but that it would be carved by the powers into separate territories and that Britain's widespread interests would collapse.[87] Moreover, they were concerned that a weak China would encourage Russian intrigues in Central Asia near India.

The Anglo-Japanese alliance was the foundation of Britain's balance of power diplomacy in China. As the Anglo-Japanese alliance helped keep Russia in check, so the British alignment with Russia discouraged Japanese expansion before 1914. Anglo-American cooperation on many issues added to the alignments which hindered aggrandisement by any one power. The war destroyed this diplomatic balance. Debilitating European strength in Asia, the war lessened dramatically Japanese reliance on the British, who were unable now completely to resist Japanese encroachments on China. Despite Japan's formal loyalty to the alliance, the British soon found that their Japanese

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85 C. B. Davis, op.cit., p. 149.

86 American initiatives aimed to transform the whole framework of the relationships of the powers in China. This 'New Diplomacy' approach culminated in the Washington Conference. Britain's special relationship with Japan was severed at the Conference. British commercial predominance in China suffered a blow when the decision was made to work within the American framework of the Consortium and depend on American capital to develop British concessions and railways in China.

87 Britain's attitude was governed by the wide diffusion of her commercial stakes. British policy reflected the belief that that it was better to be sure of a part of the spoils, than to risk losing all. The alternative 'partition policy', whereby Africa was 'carved-up' was considered 'too wild to be seriously maintained' in China. Quoted in section on Macartney in Hall, Eminent Authorities on China, cited in E. V. G. Kiernan, op.cit., p. 310.

allies presented the greatest threat to British interests in East Asia. The frustration the British Minister, Jordan, felt after tenaciously defending British interest in China for many years was clearly revealed in a letter to Sir Walter Langley, the Assistant Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office: 'Nobody realises more keenly than I do the helplessness of our position. But there is no use flinking facts or trying to make it appear that our interests are not affected . . . I should be failing in my duty if I did not point out that the War and the Japanese intervention in it have hit us hard in China'.[88] The First World War was a period during which Britain, unable to advance her own position, had to acquiesce in the aggressive policy of her ally Japan. The war catapulted Japan and, even more so, the United States into the position of financial arbiters in Far Eastern economic matters.[89] The primary concern for Britain after 1918 was Japanese aggrandizement and American commercial dominance.[90]

The Great War had not altered the fundamental anomalies and weaknesses in British power. The empire remained, on balance, a colossal burden: there was India and the strategic over-extension it involved; there was the colonial empire, small return for much responsibility; there were the 'white' dominions, incapable of their own defence and yet contributing per head a fraction of what the British paid out to defend them. British responsibilities vastly exceeded British strength. This was not power but weakness. Responsibilities and strength therefore needed urgently to be brought into a proper ratio. This required the shedding of imperial responsibilities.[91] The British had considerable trade with China and regarded China's integrity as essential for the interest of the British empire. For Whitehall the interests of the British Empire was more important than those of India alone and their policy in Tibet was based on this

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88 PRO: FO350/13 Jordan papers, Letter from Jordan to Langley, 5 March 1915, cited in P. Lowe, op.cit., p. 237.

89 In attacking the special interests of Japan in China, American capital also threatened the vested interests of all the other powers. The open door policy was an American alternative to the spheres of influence. 'It posited as an implicit assumption that the United States could achieve economic primacy in open competition with other powers, and create an informal empire in China'. C. B. Davis Partners and Rivals, op.cit., p. 151. For an analysis of John Hay's open door notes as an instrument of this policy see Thomas J. McCormick, 'A Fair Field and No Favor: The Structure of Informal Empire', Some Pathways in Twentieth Century History, Daniel R. Beaver, (ed), (Detroit, 1969).

90 The post-war conflict with the United States is sometimes referred to as the 'Anglo-American war for commercial dominance.'

91 C. Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (London, 1972), p. 120.

consideration. Ultimately, Tibet's independence rested on China's imperial claims and British economic and strategic needs. Britain's requirement for a buffer state intensified as Communism spread into Central Asia and China. Tibet was destined to remain as Britain's ambiguous 'protectorate'.

CHAPTER 5

THE DECLINE OF BRITISH POWER

'I did not see any reason why we should be sacrificed on the altar of their [China] domestic convenience, or should be treated in a manner that was not only not courteous but almost unfriendly, because they had political difficulties elsewhere'.[1]

The importance of the period 1919-1921 to Anglo-Tibetan relations is to be found in the exchange of opinions between the home government and the Government of India which reflected London's apprehension over the political instability of central and north Asia after the First World War. This debate placed the question of Tibet into the much wider debate of post-war British policy in Asia. Political developments in central and eastern Asia during and after the First World War gradually disclosed a disturbing reality: the decline of British power had relegated them to the status of distinguished patrons of an extravaganza they no longer directed.

However, Britain's temporarily strong position in Asia at the end of the war, strengthened even further, so far as Tibet was concerned, by China's deepening political paralysis, indicated that there might never be a more favourable opportunity to conclude a settlement of the Tibetan question.[2] Consequently, the dominant theme in Anglo-Tibetan relations during the next few years was Britain's attempt to procure Chinese participation in renewed negotiations over Tibet and Peking's constant refusal, under an assortment of excuses, to oblige.

Despite the Anglo-Japanese alliance and the Anglo-Russian Convention, the reduction of British power confounded British attempts to recover the dominant position she had once held. After the collapse of imperial Russia the British remained unable to impose their solutions for Central Asian problems on China. Their large commercial stake in China restricted their endeavours in Central Asia and the task was not made easier by the burden of post-war global responsibilities. The British faced the bleak prospect of maintaining their East Asian interests in the midst of expanded Soviet influence in Asia and increased Japanese imperialist expansion. It must also be remembered that between 1919 and 1920 there were six separate revolts involving the British. There was the Egyptian revolt of March 1919, the trouble with Afghanistan in May 1919, the prolonged hostilities with Mustapha Kemal from 1919 to 1923, the Iraq

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1 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/10 Sir John Jordan to Foreign Office, 26 November 1919.

2 C. Christie, op.cit., p. 481.

rebellion of July 1920, the Persian nationalist movement from 1919-1925, and the Syrian rising of July 1920. The vagaries of international politics, the imminent collapse of China and the changing balance of power in Asia explain Britain's inability to realise a solution to the long-standing Tibetan question.

As noted, of major concern for Britain was the growing power of Japan and the possibility that a serious decline in the position of the Allied powers in Europe would provide Japan with the opportunity to establish some form of hegemony in east Asia, including the eastern marches of Tibet.[3] The Japanese were already spreading influence through Mongolia toward Urga. While the collapse of Russian power during the war freed British policy from earlier restraints in Tibet, the re-emergence of Russian power in the form of Bolshevism pointed to the need for haste in stabilising Britain's relations with Tibet.[4] The Lenin government remained in power and the Red Army was preparing to demolish the White forces, opening the prospect of a vigorous Soviet state near India. Danger to India from Germany and France had been eliminated, but the new revolutionary experiment in Russia induced a fresh sense of hostility towards the Soviet state which was reflected in the foreign policy of the Indian Government and its relations with its frontier states, including Tibet.

Continued British impotence in Central Asia was aggravated by new frictions with Japan during the 1920s [5] and by the British fear that strong pressure on China in Central Asia would encourage Japanese expansion at China's expense and would thus cause the ruin of Britain's China trade.[6] The Paris Peace Conference exposed the two branches of Japanese expansionism, rooted in a bursting population and a booming industry in need of raw materials and markets. Japan suffered the least human and material loss in the First World War and registered astounding growth. Between 1913 and 1918 Japanese production exploded, foreign trade rose from $315,000,000 to $831,000,000 and population grew 30 percent until 65,000,000 people were crowded into a mountainous archipelago smaller than California.[7] Clearly Japan had the potential and the opportunity for rapid expansion in East Asia.

Japanese ambitions in the Pacific had been revealed by its seizure of the German colonies and by its Twenty-One Demands upon China. In the months following the war the British looked with alarm on the prospect of the greater part of China being sealed off

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 See I. H. Nish, 'Japan and the ending of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance', in K. Bourne and D. C. Watt (ed), Studies in International History: Essays presented to W. N. Medlicott, 1967.

6 See E. M. Gull, op.cit.

7 The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 21, (1990) p. 752.

and lost forever to British trade because of the consequences of Japan's occupation of Shantung. This view gave rise to a theory of geo-politics in the Far East that reflected growing suspicion of Japan and an affirmation of the belief in the China trade. If the Japanese were allowed to entrench themselves in Shantung, they would control the strategic railway stretching inland, which in turn would allow them to tap the trade of the interior all the way to Tibet.[8]

Foreign Office suspicions of Japanese intentions were shared by the Americans and even more by the Government of India, but the fact remained that to Whitehall Japan's friendship during the war had been vital and needed to be preserved if at all possible. The Anglo-Japanese alliance, made less necessary by the elimination of Germany and Russia, was, however, extremely unpopular in the United States. Although the British repeatedly attempted to persuade the Americans that the Anglo-Japanese alliance would never be turned against the United States, such arguments were in vain. Clearly, London would soon have to choose between Washington and Tokyo.

What was not fully appreciated by either the home government or the Government in India was that the British no longer controlled the balance of power in Asia sufficiently to intimidate the Chinese. Unable alone to carry the commitments of empire in the Far East, Britain needed increasingly to rely on American strength. Concern was felt, however, with America's less than altruistic interest in China. The United States had an enormous interest in China and it appeared to many in the Foreign Office that while attempting to rescue China from the clutches of Japan, the US was not merely acting for the sake of China but with considerable regard for its own trade and interests in the future. There was also a general suspicion of British motives in the United States, especially in regard to Britain's objectives in China. Central to American desires in Asia during the half-century that followed Hay's Open Door was the existence of a strong, independent China.[9] A backward China dominated by other powers held no promise for the United States. Conversely, a strong, modern China, able to preserve its own territorial integrity, would provide the best assurance of a stable balance of power in Asia. American sentiment was highly sensitive to any supposed violations of Chinese rights and the new reality of a weakened British empire meant that the British Foreign Office had to adopt a cautious approach. With the United States firmly committed to the territorial integrity of China and its dominions, Tibet's hope of securing international recognition of its sovereign status diminished.

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8 R. Louis, British Strategy in the Far East 1919-1939 (Oxford, 1971), p. 22.

9 See M. Schaller, The United States and China in the Twentieth Century (Oxford, 1979).

These, then, were the political tensions which encumbered British efforts to obtain a Tibetan settlement from Peking and ultimately prevented the British from supporting Tibet decisively. However, the full implication of Britain's lost influence in the East was not obvious in the early 1920s but was, nonetheless, reflected in the paralysis of the British government's Tibetan policy. This took time to develop and the wider implications of the war years did not become evident until the 1930s. In the concluding weeks of 1918 the British government was optimistic about the future. The House of Lords assembled on 18 November 1918 to celebrate the victory of the Allied Powers. Lord Curzon, as spokesman of the second Coalition government, moved the address. Curzon claimed with dignity: 'The British flag has never flown over a more powerful or a more united empire . . . Never did our voice count for more in the council of Nations; or in determining the future destinies of mankind'.[10] The reality, however, was that in China, Britain's voice was hardly audible. Nonetheless, the prevailing view was that China's game was one of 'procrastination' and that only a firm British policy could defeat Peking's ends.

Sir John Jordan had urged the Wai Chiao-Pu several times during 1918 to begin discussions on the Tibetan question that had been obstructed since the Chinese refusal to accept the Simla agreement.[11] The political situation in China at the time these fresh approaches were made by Jordan was highly unstable. The Monarchist movement was responsible for a major schism between the predominantly pro-Japanese north and the anti-monarchy south. With the expiry of the Rongbatsu Truce in October specifically in mind, in April Jordan renewed his demands for a settlement. In May 1919 the Chinese government submitted to the intense British pressure and reopened negotiations on the Tibetan question. The Chinese government responded with proposals to settle the problem on the basis of a compromise frontier line. Compared with the Simla Conference map, this would have meant 'the abandonment of a good deal of the "Inner Tibet" of 1914 to China'.[12] Jordan held that Batang, Litang and Tachienlu territories had 'long been integral portions of the province of Szechuan' and that the southern portion of Kokonor territory 'is now, and always has been, under the nominal control of the Chinese'.[13] Generally speaking this meant the return to the old historical frontier. The

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10 Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase 1919-1925 A Study in Post-War Diplomacy (London, 1934), p.29

11 In 1916 Yuan Shi-K'ai died and the prospect of a settlement with China over Tibet diminished. During a conversation with Jordan before his death Yuan Shi-Kai had explained that the government's reason for refusing to sanction China's signature to the Simla Conference was that it did not have the power to enforce the Convention upon the provinces of Szechuan and Yunnan.

12 PRO:FO371/228/F2962 No. 253 Jordan to Curzon, 1 June 1919.

13 Ibid.

new Chinese proposal was practically a reversion to what was known as the Ningching Shan boundary line which had been demarcated by the Manchu rulers in 1727.

Jordan strongly advised discussions with the Chinese alone and then, if an agreement were reached, 'to present it to the Tibetans as the best we can do for them and proceed to sign it on a tripartite basis'. No doubt, this approach is what earned him the reputation of exhibiting a firm anti-Lhasa bias. He wanted the boundary arrangement 'to take the form of an article, and not a map' since the areas concerned were so little known and partly unexplored.[14] During the ensuing months the Chinese had second thoughts and attempted to postpone talks. In the middle of the negotiations China repudiated them without satisfactory explanation.[15] Jordan wrote: 'For the Chinese now to withdraw from the negotiations was an unprecedented breach of faith and an insult to Great Britain'.[16] A formal explanation was later received from the Chinese Legation in London stating: 'The people of the whole of China regard the Tibetan question of no less importance than the Shantung question which has already given rise to a boycott of Japanese goods, and it is feared if the Tibetan question were raised at the same time violent opposition would also be provoked.'[17]

A major factor in this revocation was undoubtedly the fermenting nationalist militancy in China, which had been augmented by the May 1919 decision of the Council of Four to hand the German leasehold territory of Kiaochow to Japan. Unfortunately, the British Foreign Office had permitted three months to elapse before it wired Jordan of its approval of this Chinese proposal. By that time, August 1919, the Shantung question had erupted and the Chinese people had been greatly incensed over the treatment of their representatives at Paris and the bargaining away of Chinese territory at the peace negotiations without consultation. The intellectual ferment in China became highly politicized with the May Fourth Movement. Miles Lampson, counsellor at the Foreign Office, was in no doubt that the negotiation with China were called off as a 'result of the Shantung Clauses of the Treaty of Versailles' to which Britain was party.[18] Japan, after negotiations with its British ally, had filed an ultimatum on Germany, peremptorily demanding the handing over of all those interests that had been forcibly acquired in Shantung province in 1898. Since China had declared war on Germany as a consequence of American persuasion there was a strong feeling in China that the

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14 Ibid.

15 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/139984/10 Jordan to Foreign Office, 28 August 1919.

16 Ibid.

17 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/160537 Sao-Ke Alfred Sze to Earl Curzon, 6 December 1919.

18 PRO:FO371/6607/F1210/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 8 April 1921.

'motherland' had been unjustly treated by Woodrow Wilson. In fact, President Wilson repeatedly informed the British, French, and Japanese representatives that he wished not only to see the German rights in Shantung restored to China but believed that all spheres of influence should be abrogated.[19] By mid-May student nationalists had called a general strike and there was widespread sympathy on the part of merchants who were anxious to boycott Japanese products.[20] This resulted in a Japanese-engineered agitation in China over Tibet as a red herring to draw public attention from the Shantung question.[21] Anti-British propaganda, misrepresenting and caricaturing the nature and scope of the Tibetan negotiations, was disseminated through Japanese controlled newspapers,[22] leaflets and pamphlets.[23]

This atmosphere of revanchism was solidified when in the autumn of 1919 the Chinese reoccupied and annexed Outer Mongolia. The militarists, under strong Japanese influence, who then constituted the Chinese Government, the so-called Anfu Party,[24] were elated with their easy success in Mongolia. They were therefore unwilling to come to any settlement which would prevent them from obtaining a similar success if the opportunity offered itself in Tibet.[25] When the British demands were made known through a circular telegram sent out by the Chinese Foreign Office in September 1919,[26] strong opposition was raised in the parliament in Peking by the leaders of the local governments of Szechuan, Yunnan, Kansu and Chi'inghai, the regions which were

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19 See R. S. Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement (New York, 1927), p. 247.

20 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/143696/10 Jordan to Foreign Office, 17 October 1919.

21 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/151228/10 Jordan to Foreign Office, 9 September 1919.

22 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/151228/10 Extract from *Japan Advertiser*, 23 August 1919. Also PRO:FO371/3689/F4994/151232 *Tsinan Jih Pao* 20 August 1919, 6 September 1919, 7 September 1919.

23 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/25093/10 Earl Curzon to Alston, 1 September 1919. On 16 June a joint statement had to be issued in China by the Chinese government and Sir John Jordan repudiating the 'travesty of their proceedings'. See PRO:FO371/3689/F004/151232/10 'Memorandum respecting Japanese Control of News and Communications by Mr. Charles Crow', formerly employed on United States War Propaganda in China.

24 The Anfu group was badly discredited at the outset of the May Fourth Movement because it had been in charge of the Peking government during the Paris Peace Conference.

25 PRO: FO371/3689/F4004/128755/10 Jordan to Foreign Office, 31 July 1919.

26 PRO: FO371/3689/F4004/170014/10 Precis translation of Circular Telegram from the Cabinet and Wai-chiao Pu to the Provinces about Tibet.

adjacent to Tibet.[27] The Anfu Party knew it would not be politic to acquiesce in any further cession of the national domains such as were contemplated in the Simla Treaty.

Jordan was convinced that it was primarily pressure from Japan that had forced the Chinese government to suspend negotiations. He saw this as their first 'official attempt' to prove that 'Japan's grip on the Government of China was so strong' that China, against its better judgment, was compelled to break off negotiations 'with their truest friend'.[28] Jordan suggested to the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, that these intrigues were 'the culmination of an effort on the part of Japan to challenge the whole position of Great Britain in Asia . . . I venture to hope', he concluded, 'that the challenge will be accepted'.[29] The Japanese Government, however, adamantly disclaimed any responsibility for the breakdown in the negotiations,[30] and it was indeed clear that whatever influence had been exercised by Japan had been of an indirect nature.

The failure of Jordan to get negotiations started again in October 1919 suggests more deep-rooted reasons for China's reluctance to arrive at a settlement over Tibet. It is important to recognise the overriding factor: the question of a modification of the Chinese treaty system. In the minds of Chinese authorities and of certain sections of the public the hope had been entertained that entrance into the war might bring about some modification of the treaty system. This hope received some encouragement when, at the time of China's declaration of war the Allies made certain minor concessions. The Chinese delegation at the Peace Conference contained a number of Western-educated Chinese who had thoroughly learned the Wilsonian lesson of respect for the rights of weaker nations, and were determined to further the movement for a revision of the Chinese treaty system.

In a memorandum entitled *Questions for Readjustment Submitted by China to the Peace Conference*[31] it was argued that while these questions were not directly connected with issues arising out of the World War, the object of the Conference was not only to conclude peace with the enemy but also to establish a new world based on principles of justice and respect for the sovereignty of states embodied in President Wilson's Fourteen Points. The memorandum discussed seven major restrictions on the sovereignty of

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27 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/151228/10 Jordan to Foreign Office, 9 September 1919. Also PRO: FO371/3689/F4004/170014/10 Precis translation of Telegram to Peking government from General Ma Ch'i, Frontier Commissioner of the Kokonor.

28 PRO: FO371/3689/F4004/139984/10 Jordan to Foreign Office, 28 August 1919.

29 Ibid.

30 PRO:FO371/3689/F4994 Statement by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, October 1919.

31 Reprinted in China Year Book, 1921-22, pp. 719-741.

China that were being imposed either by means of the provisions in the treaties or through the actions of individual Powers. Among the most important proposals were those which suggested that each Power make an independent declaration that it did not possess any sphere of influence and that it was prepared to undertake a revision of previous agreements that bestowed territorial advantages or preferential rights which created a sphere of interest.

The Chinese attempt to have the subject of treaty revision discussed at the Conference failed. Nonetheless, a fracture appeared in the treaty system with the cancelling of China's agreements with Germany and Austria-Hungary.[32] The breach was widened further when, in July 1919, the Russian government declared its willingness, in return for the recognition of the Soviet government and the conclusion of a new agreement, to abandon all concessions and treaty rights in China, including those of extraterritoriality.

Although President Wilson lost his fight for China's case at the Peace Conference, American public opinion was aroused and the admonition against the Shantung agreement was one of the principal factors in the defeat of the Versailles treaty by the United States Senate.[33] American policy was now aligned to enforcing the 'Open Door' in China. During the decades in which the treaty system developed the Powers assumed that they could either obtain further privileges from China or preserve the status quo. Now the Treaty Powers suddenly found themselves in a defensive rather than an offensive position. The World War, among other things, had taught the lesson that nations wax and wane. Consequently, the Chinese policy toward foreign nations after 1919 was one of patient but confident expectation. It was a policy of opportunism. The object was the elimination, where opportunity offered, of Western political control. It was a policy of resolution, waiting patiently for changes in the international situation from which China could take advantage. With America adopting the role of China's 'political ward', the Chinese, intensely vocal and nationalistic, had no intention of negotiating with Britain. The possibility of having to concede territory on their border with Tibet at a time when they were insisting that foreign countries relinquish the special position which they had acquired in China was invidious. A Chinese newspaper article concluded: 'There are many reasons why China should not yield to Great Britain in the Tibet question; but the most important reason is to prevent Great Britain getting control of

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32 See John Van Antwerp, (ed), Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, 1894-1919 (New York, 1921), Vol. 2, pp. 1485-1494.

33 C. J. Lowe and M. L. Dockrill, The Mirage of Power: British Foreign Policy 1914-22 (London, 1972), Vol. 2, p. 298.

the Yangtze region, and thereby threatening the provinces of Yunnan and Kansu'[34] The opportunity of reopening negotiations with the Chinese government diminished after 1919 as a result of these events.

On 7 December 1919 the British government received a poignant message from the Tibetan Government in the form a letter from Lonchen Shokang, the Chief Minister of Tibet, to Major Campbell, the new Political Officer in Sikkim. The letter was a response to the Government of India's notification that the Chinese had 'found it inconvenient to proceed with the negotiations for the present' and that the British government 'have not yet arrived at a final decision' about the supply of munitions.[35] The Chief Minister supported the British view that the Chinese government might have found it inconvenient to proceed with the negotiations either 'owing to internal troubles' or to their having 'refused to listen to the British Government'. . . 'In any case', he lamented, 'the Tibetan Government cannot look elsewhere than to the British Government for protection'. His letter ended with an arresting but sorrowful plea that the Tibetans 'may not be left thus, like tiny fledglings on an open plain'.[36]

Sir John Jordan must have been experiencing somewhat similar feelings. His predicament was especially unenviable: formerly the most powerful diplomat in Peking, his position had been eclipsed by the outbreak of the War. Up to this time he had represented the power with the greatest political and material interests in China; from August 1914 onwards Japan became the dominant power and Britain was clearly dependent on Japan for the defence of British interests. Before the First World War, members of the bloc of Treaty Powers, through its instrument, the Diplomatic Body, by collective action maintained the treaty rights of foreign residents and supervised the actions of the Chinese government. The power of control exercised by the Diplomatic Body over the functions of the Chinese government was very real.[37] The first rift in the apparently impregnable and solid foreign bloc came after the First World War, when the German, Austrian and Russian representatives, having lost their treaty status, were excluded from the diplomatic circle of the Treaty Powers. While for a few more years the Diplomatic Body continued with weakening authority, their role of overseer and guardian of the Chinese government was eroded as the Chinese Nationalists, in their drive against

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34 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/182050/10 British Legation, Peking to Foreign Office, 17 January 1920.

35 PRO: FO371/3689/F4004 Telegram from Government of India to POS, 21 November 1919.

36 IOR:L/P&S/lO/7l6 File 3260(4) Translation of a letter from the Lonchen Shokang, Chief Minister of Tibet, to Major W. L. Campbell, POS, 7 December 1919.

37 Teichman, Affairs of China, op.cit., pp. 83-84.

the treaty system, wrenched themselves free from the supervision of the foreign diplomats. Later, in the 1930s, when the Nationalists established their government in Nanking, the Nanking Foreign Office refused to receive the corporate communications of the Diplomatic Body.

The new situation must have been offensive to Jordan but, conscientious and astute diplomat as he was, he tried to make the best of the position. Jordan tried in vain to reopen negotiations in January 1920, suggesting a conference in Lhasa. This attempt also came to nought as the Tibetans at that moment were participating in diplomatic discussions with a Chinese-sponsored mission from Kansu.[38] On a pattern it had adopted previously, the Peking government now made another effort to negotiate a bilateral agreement with Lhasa.[39] The British role as mediator, Peking argued, was superfluous; their role was to 'witness' any agreement which the other two parties concluded. The Chinese government did not see why Britain should interfere in the dispute between China and Tibet 'which was an internal matter for China to settle in her own way'.[40]

The Tibetan government had 'yielded to the pressure always being applied by the Chinese, and had allowed a Chinese diplomatic mission to proceed to Lhasa'.[41] This was an event that had not happened since the Chinese troops drove the Dalai Lama into exile in 1910, and it indicated a setback in the relations between Britain and Tibet.[42] Campbell reported that there was no doubt that the absence of any reply to their 'repeated requests for ammunition' or to the representations made by the National Assembly had 'created a feeling of despondency'.[43] The advantage had been taken by the pro-Chinese party to 'spread rumours that Great Britain was no longer likely to come to the assistance of Tibet'.[44] Bell wrote that his 'Tibetan friends', obviously with pro-British leanings, 'were almost in despair at our turning the cold shoulder to them'. The Chinese mission, they told him, 'had done what it could to poison the minds of the Tibetan Government and people against us'.[45]

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38 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/166794/10 Jordan to Foreign Office, 27 December 1919.

39 PRO: FO371/3689/F4004/No. 232-P Campbell to Government of India, 3 October 1919.

40 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/159391/10 Interview with Chinese Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jordan to Foreign Office, 4 December 1919.

41 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 246.

42 Ibid., p. 245.

43 PRO: FO371/3689/F4004/No. 232-P Campbell to Government of India, 3 October 1919.

44 Ibid.

45 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 176.

The mission's emissaries had two interviews with the Dalai Lama and, as part of their diplomatic proposal, urged that a delegation be sent from Lhasa to Peking for discussions on the future of Sino-Tibetan relations.[46] The Lhasa government wrote to Bell asking for his suggestions on what strategies they should adopt. Bell conceded that 'perhaps they were a little nervous as to what I would think of their action in admitting the Chinese mission'.[47] Bell was clearly shaken by these developments, and advised them that 'they should tell the mission that they thanked them for their interest in the Yellow Hat Religion; but that when negotiations were conducted at Simla in 1913-14, the Chinese broke them off without coming to an agreement'[48] Bell made the salient point that again, in 1919, when the Chinese themselves re-opened negotiations, they themselves broke them off again. He suggested they acknowledge that 'in these circumstances the Tibetan Government did not think any useful purpose would be served by sending delegates to China to negotiate an agreement'.[49]

The Tibetan Prime Minister, replying to the India government's dispatches, reported that he had dutifully informed the Dalai Lama of the Government of India's conjecture that the Chinese emissaries were 'not properly accredited representatives of the Chinese Government'. 'Further', he advised, 'I informed His Holiness that the Government of India did not therefore consider it advisable to send a Tibetan delegate to China with the Kansu Mission'[50] He continued, 'The British government is our protector and we shall follow their advice in this matter.'[51] The Tibetan government replied to the Chinese mission in accordance with advice given by both Bell and the Government of India, and the mission left Lhasa shortly afterwards.[52]

Three months later, on 7 May 1920, the Dalai Lama wrote to the Political Officer in Sikkim giving an explanation of the whole episode:

> On their arrival they repeated verbally the request made by the Governor in writing. It was to the effect that it will greatly promote the friendly relations between China and Tibet if the Tibetan Government depute two or three representatives to go with them to Peking, and if this is not

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46 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/168008/10 Government of India to Peking Legation 23 December 1919, Incl. No 3 in India Office to Foreign Office, 5 January 1920.

47 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 246.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 IOR: L/P&S/10/833 Translation of letter from Lonchen Shokang to D. Macdonald, 28 February 1920, Encl in letter No. 47-P from Bell to Government of India, March, 1920.

51 Ibid.

52 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 246.

possible, at least to Kansu, to negotiate for peace between China and Tibet.[53]

The Dalai Lama reiterated that: 'they pressed this request a great deal'. But, 'in accordance with the advice already received by us from the British Government, who is our hope and protector', the Dalai Lama had told the mission that 'it is entirely impossible to carry on negotiations unless the British Government acts as mediator'.[54] The Dalai Lama confirmed that he was not prepared to compromise; he advised the members of the mission that 'if the President will arrange with the British Government to open negotiations either at Lhassa or in India, and when they have appointed and furnished their representatives with full (diplomatic) powers, then the Tibetan Government will also appoint their representative.' With customary Tibetan etiquette he had concluded 'that it is not convenient to send any representative to Peking for the present'.[55]

The consequence of adopting this position was not underestimated by the Lhasa Ministers: 'As the Chinese are dissatisfied at our refusal, there is great danger of their attacking us. For the purpose of protecting our own territory, we request that we may be supplied (on payment) with 1,000,000 of rounds of ammunition and a few machine guns with an adequate supply of ammunition for the same'.[56]

The Kansu mission had also sent a ripple of fear through the Government in India. They had prevented the Tibetans from proceeding towards a bilateral agreement with China and now would be obliged to give the Lhasa government more than moral support. It was now crucial that a British representative go to Lhasa to determine the situation. Meanwhile, in Peking, Jordan was continuing with his efforts to get the Chinese to participate in renewed talks. In reply to a memorandum sent on 19 February 1920, inviting the Chinese government to consider the Tibetan question, the Wai Chiao Pu explained that 'in view of the many internal issues involved they recognise that the time is not yet ripe, and that for the time being they cannot but adopt an attitude of cautious invest'n, as has been explained verbally on several occasions to His Excellency'.[57] The tide had begun to turn against the British.

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53 PRO:FO535/F1489/22/10 Translation of letter from Dalai Lama to P.O.S, 7 May 1920, Encl. in letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 15 July 1920.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 IOR: L/P&S/10/833 Translation of letter from the Shapes of Tibet to D. Macdonald, 28 February 1920, Encl. in letter No. 47-P from Bell to Government of India, March, 1920.

57 IOR: L/P&S/10/716 Translation of Letter from Chinese Government to His Majesty's Government, 26 February 1920 encl. in letter from Sampson (Peking) to Foreign Office, 3 March 1920.

China's abrupt repudiation of the May 1919 offer to re-negotiate the Simla Convention left the British government in difficulty. During the war years those responsible for Tibetan affairs seemed to have forgotten that Britain's whole Tibetan policy was based on the offer of material support against China: this had been the catalyst of Tibet adopting a 'friendly' attitude toward India. Britain was pledged by the Simla agreement to supply arms and munitions to Tibet, and Lhasa was losing confidence in Britain's ability to force the Chinese to the table. Far from recognizing their now weakened diplomatic position in the Far East, Whitehall's reaction to the Chinese tactics was one of gross indignation: it was a slap in the face and offended the British sense of 'fair play'. Jordan was recalled to London 'as a means of showing His Majesty's Government's sense of lack of ingenuousness in the arguments and of courtesy in the procedure of the Chinese Government'.[58] The policy makers in London were slow to recognise that post-war politics was being played by a new set of rules. The Peking government, on the other hand, was very successfully adapting age-old Chinese political tactics into what the British called 'its game of procrastination' - waiting until the Tibetans despaired of a settlement, convinced that the British would be unable to bring one about. Jordan, at one of his final meetings with the Wai-chiao Pu had 'without authority from London', 'challenged' the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chen Lu, to 'submit' the whole Tibetan question to the 'arbitration of the League of Nations'.[59] Jordan reported: 'His Excellency replied - speaking with some bitterness- that he had no faith in the League of Nations; in this, as in other matters, might was still right'.[60]

The whole style and pace of British post-war diplomacy was in a state of confusion: the need for strong foreign policy was at odds with the moralising cliques who believed that morality rather than power ought to govern relations between states. According to the armistice agreement, peace was to be based on Wilson's Fourteen Points. Wilsonianism, as it came to be called, derived from the liberal internationalism that had captured large segments of the Anglo-American intellectual elite before and during the war. It associated war with authoritarian monarchy, aristocracy, imperialism, and economic nationalism. Such governments still practised the old diplomacy of secret alliances, militarism, and balance of power politics that bred distrust, suspicion, and conflict. The antidotes were democratic control of diplomacy,[61] self-determination for all

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58 PRO:FO371/3689/F4004/168008/10 India Office to Government of India, 13 December 1919.

59 PRO: FO371/3689/F4004/177338/10 Jordan to Foreign Office, 9 December 1919.

60 Ibid.

61 See H. Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase 1919-1925, op.cit., Chapter VII, 'Diplomacy by Conference', pp. 183-193.

nations, open negotitions, disarmament, free trade, and especially a system of international law and collective security to replace raw power as the arbiter of disputes among states.[62] This last idea, developed by the American League to Enforce Peace, founded in 1915, found expression in the Fourteen Points as 'a general association of nations' and was to be the cornerstone of the Wilsonian edifice. The expectation was that a functioning League of Nations would correct any errors and injustices present in treaties.

Out of this ideal came a yielding readiness to appease the wrath of other nations. British statesmen believed that no national interests were so opposed that they could not be reconciled by mediation and compromise. In his book The Collapse of British Power, C. Barnett observes: 'British statesmen enjoyed the pleasant illusion that they could be friends equally with all the parties to all the disputes of a distracted world. This assumption of benign impartiality further enabled the British to allot themselves the role of umpire, or honest broker, assiduously seeking to reconcile the irreconcilable'.[63]

In fact, moral force, or righteous indignation, was the only means the British left themselves with which to influence the course of world affairs. Barnett writes: 'The British approach to diplomacy was therefore rather like their approach to sex, romantically remote from the distressing biological crudities. They had insufficient understanding of the nature of the bargaining process; indeed they eagerly sought to open negotiations when and where their own bargaining position was feeble in the extreme'.[64]

The failure to take adequate account of the paramount role of power in international relations was equally reflected in the astonishing British faith in treaties. British statesmen really believed that seals, signatures and parchment had some inherent force that could regulate the conduct of nations. They were sincerely convinced that foreign statesmen would honour their country's signatures even if it became highly inconvenient to do so. 'Politicans were perfectly prepared to repose British interests and security in agreements that could never be enforced'.[65] Faith in parchment, belief in moral force and a denial of the reality of power all found their ultimate expression in British membership of the League of Nations. After 1919 the balance of power as the guiding principle of British policy was formally and finally given up in favour of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

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62 David Dilks, (ed) Retreat from Power: Studies in Britain's Foreign Policy of the Twentieth Centrury,Vol. 1. 1906-1939 (London, 1981), p. 11.

63 C. Barnett, op.cit., p. 241.

64 Ibid. p. 242.

65 Ibid.

It was the ambitious hope and intention of the British internationalists that a world society regulated by law instead of the power struggle would emanate. The League of Nations was destined to be ineffective from its inception owing to the exclusion of the defeated nations and the Soviet Union. The United States remained outside the organisation despite President Wilson's parentage of the institution.[66] Without the sanction of overwhelming force behind the new international morality, the League of Nations had no chance whatsoever of putting an end to the power struggle between nation-states. Nonetheless, the British governing circles placed their faith in the League. They were convinced that disputes between nations would henceforth be peacefully settled by means of conciliation.

In the long term, Britain's self imposed role of umpire, or 'honest broker', assiduously seeking to reconcile the irreconcilable between China and Tibet, was a disaster for Tibet. A foreign policy based on moral authority and the British credence that no national interests were so opposed that they could not be reconciled by mediation and compromise immobilized the Tibetans. The shortcoming of the Lhasa government was its continued dependence on the British and the Simla Convention ultimately to define Tibet's status. The blame, however, lies with the British government, which for ulterior purposes wanted to keep Tibet in a peculiar political status, treating her as fully independent of China in internal and external matters and yet fostering the myth of Chinese suzerainty.[67] Britain was not prepared to support Tibet's claim to absolute independence. The British believed that the recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet and not Tibetan independence would best serve their interests.

Tibet's aspiration for independence was premature. The apparatus for the formal internationalising of issues, the procedures for the formal recognition of national sovereignty, and an arbitration system to take the place of treaties were all ideals of the League of Nations. But the League system and many aspects of international law were uncertain in the aftermath of Versailles.[68] There was no international court competent to pronounce on claims to national sovereignty. By all standards of international law Tibet was independent.[69] Tibet possessed the accepted characteristics of a sovereign polity. It was in possession of defined territory, had an organised administration and government

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66 See G. Scott, The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations (London, 1973).

67 S. P. Sen, op.cit., p. xv.

68 The Abyssinian War and the Manchurian incident exposed the limits of the League of Nations as an international organization in charge of world order and peace.

69 See M. van Walt van Praag, The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law (Boulder,Colorado, 1987).

which despatched plenipotentaries abroad to negotiate. Tibet issued its own currency[70] and by 1923 had a flag.[71] What she lacked was international juridical recognition. Britain's trust and reliance in the mediation process meant that no move was made by Tibet to secure 'de jure' recognition from other countries.[72]

Tibet's status was for the Dalai Lama pre-eminent and he did deliberate the value of joining the League. However, according to Bell, 'the Dalai Lama did not want Tibet to join the League of Nations'.[73] Bell wrote: 'Tibetans call the League of Nations "The Assembly in Europe". Although Asiatic States belong to it, Tibetans look on it as governed by European ideas'. Letters from Sonam Wangyal [74] to Dr. Barbour [75] indicate that the Dalai Lama may have given Sonam Wangyal authority to make discreet enquires about the relation of Tibet to the League.[76] Barbour assessed the prospects in a reply to one of Sonan Wangyal's questions: 'If the Chinese should threaten to invade Tibet, would the League of Nations help Tibet?' He stated:

> I think in the event of your country being threatened, the League would certainly endeavour to protect her (see Article 10 of the covenant) but the remoteness of the frontiers of your country would probably make it impossible to send military help. The question whether effective moral pressure could be brought to bear on China, if she ever meditated aggression, is bound up with the doubtful future of China herself and the unknown character of the Government or Governments which she may have in the coming years.[77]

According to Bell, the Dalai Lama considered the dubious prospect of League assistance as too uncertain to risk Tibet's already hard-won independence. China would have objected to Tibet's admission. There was no assurance that Britain would support Tibet's claims and it was questionable whether Tibet would gain two-thirds of the votes

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70 See N. G. Rhodes, 'The Dating of Tibetan Banknotes', The Tibet Journal, Vol. 13 (1), 1988, pp. 57-60.

71 IOR:L/P&S/12/4167 Government of India to India Office, 15 August 1923. Includes original drawing of Tibetan flag.

72 S. P. Sen, op.cit., p. xv.

73 C .Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 394.

74 Also known as Palhese. Palhese was Bell's assistant in Tibet and after Bell retired from office Palhese obtained permission from the Dalai Lama to go to England to help Bell with his work on Tibetan translations.

75 Dr Barbour was associated with the League of Nations Union, an unofficial organization which promoted the cause of the League of Nations.

76 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5d.8 vi Letter from Palhese to Dr. Barbour, 5 December 1927.

77 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5d.8 vi Letter to Kusho Palhese from Dr. Barbour, 9 December 1927.

necessary in an assembly which included China.[78] Also at risk was Tibet's 'internal customs and religion'.[79] The Dalai Lama, said Bell, was concerned that:

> If Tibet joins the League, she must be friendly with the other nations that belong to it . . . travellers of other nations may wish to penetrate our country. These representatives and travellers may press inconvenient questions on myself and the Tibetan Government. Our customs are often different from those of Europe and America, and we do not wish to change them. Perhaps Christian missionaries may come to Tibet, and in trying to spread Christianity may speak against our religion. We could not tolerate that.[80]

Indeed, the Lhasa government would have needed a great deal of reassurance before seriously considering membership. The League of Nations, whose Covenant now supplied the place of strategy as the guiding principle of Britain's Tibetan policy, was an apparition that enticed the well-meaning 'honest brokers' into a contest where they found themselves vying with an oriental dragon determined to dominate the land of the snow lion.

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78 T. W. Shakya, 'Tibet and the League of Nations' Tibet Journal, Vol. 10 (3), 1985, p. 51.

79 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5d.8 vi Letter from Palhese to Dr. Barbour, 5 December 1927.

80 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 394.

CHAPTER 6

THE BLUFF THAT FAILED

> 'If British officer goes with machine guns and ammunition or takes permission for these the Chinese will become uneasy at the Tibetans being in a position to defend themselves especially by our again being in direct touch with the Tibetan Government and will be strongly impelled to negotiate'.[1]

Despite Lhasa's rejection of the Kansu mission, Whitehall was becoming increasingly apprehensive about Sino-Tibetan relations. China's spurning of Jordan's appeals for the resumption of talks was a considerable humiliation for the British diplomats. The British government's response to this rejection was to send a mission to Lhasa. The Foreign Office, now under Lord Curzon, was far more responsive to appeals for action in Tibet than before. It was now accepted that there was no need to consider the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which had been declared obsolete owing to the Bolshevik repudiation of Tsarist treaties. The miscalculation of British policy needed to be rectified and Britain's relations with Tibet stabilized. Stability was the key aspect of Tibet's buffer role and the status of Tibet, both territorially and politically, would have to be settled if India was to have a stable frontier along the Himalayas.

While the initiative in promoting a mission to Lhasa came from India, the later attempt to establish a more substantial relationship with Tibet came predominantly from Whitehall. It would seem that the Government of India became anxious lest its commitments in Tibet should expand to an embarrassing extent. While agreeing with the Minister in Peking that a British officer should visit Lhasa, the Viceroy and his advisers made it clear to the home government that the Government of India would not commit themselves to support the suggestion made by the new British Minister in Peking, Beilby Alston, for the permanent stationing in Lhasa of a British Resident'.[2] India would sanction 'only a temporary deputation'.[3] The Government of India wanted stability in Tibet but did not want to become 'responsible'.

The emerging possibility that Britain's days in Asia were numbered seems to have had little influence in the debate over Tibet. There is, however, no doubt that the recognition that Britain's possessions in Asia, particularly British India itself, were destined for self-governing status, inhibited moves towards a forward policy in Tibet. A

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1 IOR: L/P&S/10/716 P3256 Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 23 April 1920.

2 PRO:FO535/23/10 No. 20 Telegram from Alston to Curzon, 27 April 1920.

3 PRO:FO535/F850/22/10 Telegram from Viceroy to Montagu, 10 May 1920.

general awareness of Britain's shrinking position as a world power and her extreme military insecurity in Asia was a powerful deterrent to undertaking new adventures beyond existing imperial boundaries. There remains, however, an erroneous view that:

> Bell's visit to Lhasa in 1920 marked the resurgence of one of the key elements of the 'Forward' school of policy, which had fallen from official favour after the departure of Lord Curzon in 1905.[4]

This is incorrect. While the sending of a mission to Lhasa and the ultimate agreement to supply arms and aid to Tibet were viewed at the time as manifesting a 'new determination'[5] in British policy, Bell's mission to Lhasa in reality represented a diplomatic 'bluff' to coerce China into resuming negotiations, a bluff which failed. The principle architects of the diplomatic bluff were Sir Beilby Alston, who had taken over from Sir John Jordan in Peking, and Charles Bell, whose connection with Tibet went back to 1902.

Bell had begun his career in the Indian Civil Service serving in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, but owing to poor health he was posted in 1900 to Darjeeling and later became Sub-Divisional Officer in Kalimpong. In August 1902 he had his first glimpse of Tibet when on duty surveying a possible cart route from Bhutan to the Chumbi Valley [6]. During 1903-4 Bell surveyed a possible railway route from India to Tibet and from May to October 1904 he was Acting Political Officer in Sikkim in the absence of Claude White, who accompanied Younghusband to Lhasa. Late in 1904 Bell was appointed as administrator of the Chumbi Valley.[7] During 1906-7 Bell again acted as Political Officer in Sikkim, and on White's retirement was given permanent appointment as Political Officer in Sikkim, where he remained until 1918.[8] It was during 1910 that Bell became acquainted with the Dalai Lama. As Political Officer he was entrusted with the task of maintaining British-Indian government relations with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan political elite who had accompanied him into exile.[9] Thereafter Bell, to a unique extent, enjoyed the friendship and confidence of the Dalai Lama.

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4 A. C. McKay, 'The Cinderella of the Foreign Service: The Role of the British Trade Agents in Tibet 1910-1920', South Asia Review, London, Vol. 12, No. 2, November 1992, p. 132.

5 H. Richardson, op.cit., p. 123.

6 A small and strategically vital area of Tibetan territory adjoining Darjeeling and Kalimpong which was provisionally occupied by the British Government as a security for the Tibetan Government's compliance with certain terms of the 1904 convention.

7 British Library, 010055. i. 37 C. A. Bell, Chumbi Valley Notebook, pp. 61-64.

8 IOR: MSS Eur F80, V/12/12 C. A. Bell, 'History of Service'.

9 IOR: OC OR 12061 Bell, Tibet Notebook Vol. I, pp. 30-32, 42-46.

From his earliest days in the Himalayas, Charles Bell aligned himself with the 'Forward School'.[10] He became one of the leading advocates of the need for a British forward policy in the area. But during the period 1905-11 he was obliged to observe a policy of steady British retreat in the Himalayas, a policy for which John Morley, the Secretary of State for India from 1905 to 1910, was principally responsible.[11] Bell remained dedicated to his ideal of a forward policy in Tibet, both before and during the war years, and campaigned for a more energetic policy on the part of the Government of India, particularly in regard to the provision of mountain and machine guns for the Tibetan army.[12] After the First World War, however, Bell did not encourage the same degree of British intervention in Tibetan affairs that he had previously considered preferable. He was was no longer resolute on the need for permanent British representation in Lhasa. By 1921 he was advising the Government of India that 'I do not advocate a British Resident at Lhassa'.[13]

Part of the explanation for Bell's transition from 'hawk' to 'dove' seems to lie with the principle of eventual Indian home rule conceded by the British. There is no doubt that Anglo-Tibetan relations were influenced at this time by the Montagu Declaration of 20 August 1917, which stated that the 'progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire' was the aim of British policy in India.[14] This was followed by the reforms of 1919, according to which the declared policy of Parliament was for 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in British India',[15] which confirmed the direction of British policy towards India and embodied the British guarantee of eventual Indian self-rule. The Montagu-Chelmsford

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10 By 1840 the much debated 'forward policy' had emerged. Its origin lay not in the Russian threat, but in Napoleon's at the beginning of the century during the period of Lord Minto's Governor Generalship. It was decided that Iran was the key to any French threat and from then on Britain tried to bring Iran within the British sphere of influence. Later the policy was used in relation to Russian influence in Central Asia.

11 See A. Lamb, British India and Tibet 1766-1910 (London, 1960), pp. 256-284. Also P. Addy, op.cit., and Minto, Contess Mary, India Minto and Morley 19O6-1910 (London, 1934).

12 PRO: FO371/2904/F141/131446 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 18 March 1917.

13 PRO:FO371/6608/F1981/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 9 May 1921, Encl No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 27 May 1921.

14 Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 20 August 1917, Cd. 9lO9 (1918), para 6, C. H. Philips, H. L. Singh and B. N. Pandey, The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858 to 1947 Select Documents (London 1962), p. 264.

15 The Government of India Act, dated 23 December 1919, ibid., p. 273.

Act was hailed by liberals all over the world as a step forward. But in India opinion was divided. The leading Nationalists, under the leadership of B. G. Tilak, Annie Besant, and Gandhi, expressed bitter discontent, claiming that the reforms were far from being a fulfilment of the promise of August 1917.

By the end of the First World War, Britain was committed to a policy that would eventually lead to self-government in India, and therefore inevitably to a reduction of British influence and strategic interest in its defence. The government in India was obviously conscious of the implications of these long-term factors for Britain's policy towards Tibet. By 1920 neither Bell nor the government in India supported a forward policy in Tibet.

Bell was propelled into his new role of non-interventionist through the realisation that the reduction of British power in Asia, combined with Indian nationalist demands and Britain's reaction to those pressures, meant that Britain's role as an Asian power would in the future be limited. Consequently, he knew that the relationships between Britain and Tibet and the other Himalayan states would ultimately have to be reassessed. Bell believed that the British government nonetheless would be concerned with the security of India, and especially with the chief danger to that security, the long land frontier on the north 'for many years to come'[16] and was determined to promote a policy which would meet both British and Tibetan needs. What is evident, however, is that for Bell the overriding determinant was his conviction that while every effort should be made to forge Anglo-Tibetan friendship, too close a reliance by Tibet on British support was not in the long-term interests of either Britain or Tibet.

Ideally, Bell wanted to see Tibet within the orbit of the British Empire. He was, however, fully aware that the implications of the principle of home rule were fully understood by those Tibetans who argued that one day an Indian government might prove unable to help them against China. The Indianization of the army and the home rule issue were related. There was growing recognition within the Tibetan political elite that the grant of self-government to India would not affect Tibet provided that British military power was fully maintained there. A Tibetan who had considered this matter maintained that India by itself would not be strong enough to help Tibet materially against China, unless India's support included armed British assistance.[17] In a diary entry entitled 'Probable effect of Home Rule in India on Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim', written on 2 October 1917, Bell maintained that the association between India and Tibet depended solely on the British presence; only so long as Britain assumed responsibility, particularly

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16 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 246.

17 Ibid., p. 144.

military responsibility, for Indian affairs, could the amicable relationship between the Indian and Tibetan governments be sustained.[18] Later, Montagu, in his report of 1918, stated the difficulty:

> So long as India depends for her internal and external security upon the army and the navy of the United Kingdom, the measure of self-determination which she enjoys must be inevitably limited. We cannot think that Parliament would consent to the employment of British arms in support of a policy over which it had no control or of which it might disapprove.[19]

Bell believed that 'when Indians obtain self-government, Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim, differing as they do from India in both race and religion, will tend strongly to gravitate back towards China'.[20] While Bhutan had agreed to put her external relations under the British government it seemed to Bell that Bhutan would not have agreed to put them under a government controlled by Indians. A notation in Bell's Tibet Note-Book refers to a general 'dislike' of Indians. Quoting a Tibetan he writes: 'In Darjeeling the Bhutias and Gurkhas say, "Never trust a Bengali; he will get you into trouble sooner or later" '.[21] There appeared general concern that if the Indians were granted self-government they would treat questions on the frontier 'in such a way as to cause trouble'.[22] This issue was appreciated by Bell:

> When Indians have complete Home rule, it will hardly be possible for Britons to be in charge of India's foreign policy, to such an extent as to settle all matters of frontier politics, small as well as large, especially as such questions re-act on the internal administration. But, if Indians settle such matters, even small ones, there is sure to be friction between them and the races on this frontier, Tibetans, Nepalese and Bhutanese.[23]

This issue was made more significant when, in November 1919, Mahatma Gandhi presented his statement on 'Satyagraha' to the Hunter Committee,[24] which put forth his political idea of civil disobedience or civil resistance. In essence this meant that 'pursuit of Truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he

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18 British Library, 010055. i. 37 C. Bell, Tibet Note-Book, Vol. 2, p. 29.
19 Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms (1918) Cd. 9109, p. 130.
20 British Library, O19955. i. 37 C. Bell, Tibet Note-Book, Vol. 2, p. 30.
21 Ibid., p. 29.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Young India , November 1919, pp. 11-13.

must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy.'[25] The struggle mostly consisted in opposing error in the shape of unjust laws. 'Satyagraha' largely took the form of civil disobedience.[26] Gandhi and his idea of non-violence were admired by the Tibetans and his movement was closely monitored by officials in Lhasa. However, the growing civil unrest caused by the non-cooperation movement, culminating in the terrible Amritsar massacre, and Moslem Khilafat agitations preaching that 'the Government of India was Satanic and that Hindus and Moslems should unite to paralyse it',[27] caused considerable alarm in Lhasa.

It is clear that while Tibet may well have been geographically isolated, Lhasa was not isolated from the political realities of the period which were well understood by the political elite in Lhasa. During 1920-21 the Lhasa government's growing anxiety at the undermining of British power in India was not eased by anti-British reports spread by Lhasa Muslims who traded in Calcutta. These Muslims reported directly to the officials of the Lhasa government that India had rebelled against the British and had introduced new currency notes. As proof, some Khilafat currency notes issued by the Bengal Khilafat Committee were exhibited.[28] The anti-British feeling in India was very strong during this period and it was natural that it should spread to Lhasa also.[29] Anti-British sentiments expressed in press reports emanating from Kalimpong from Chinese sources were described by the Government of India as 'inaccurate, but mischievous'.[30] Later, when Bell was in Lhasa, two Indians, dressed as Sadhus, arrived in Lhasa. One Sadhu indicated he had left India because he was 'not satisfied with his treatment by the British Government.' Bell considered him a 'political agitator'.[31] The Tibetan government gave instructions for them both to be sent back to India and Bell instructed the acting Political

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25 Report of the Committee appointed to investigate Disturbances in the Punjab, Cmd. 681, 1920, pp. 29-31, 57-63, in Philips, Singh, Pandey, op.cit., p. 212.

26 This move by Ghandi was a reaction to the Rowlatt Bills that had been introduced into the Governor-General's Council in February 1919 which conferred upon the Government extraordinary powers for the suppression of anarchy.

27 Madras Publication Bureau, East India : (Moplah Rebellion), 'Malabar and the Moplahs': leaflet, Cmd. 1552, 1921, pp. 39-40.

28 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5d.7 News Letter No. 6 from Bell to Government of India, 28 February 1921.

29 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 199.

30 PRO: FO371/6608/Fl884/59/10 Letter from Deputy Secretary, Government of India to Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, 2 April 1921, Encl No.1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 18 May 1921.

31 IOR: MSS Eur F8O 5d.7. News Letter No.11 from Bell to Government of India, 29 April 1921.

Officer in Sikkim and the British Trade Agent in Gyantse to 'render necessary assistance in the matter'.[32]

Bell during this period was in a dilemma: 'I was continually urging our government to press on China the need for Home Rule in Tibet, while I was aware that they could not point to Home Rule in India.'[33] The Chinese government did not fail to make use of the discrepancy between the two positions.[34] But Bell was sure that whatever might be the requirements of India, 'my residence in the north-eastern frontier had impressed on me strongly the desirability of Home Rule in our States of Bhutan and Sikkim, as well as in Tibet itself'.[35] He argued that British recognition of the autonomy of Bhutan in 1910 and the restoration of the autonomy of Sikkim in 1918 had 'done much for our good name, and thereby increased our influence on the long Tibetan frontier and far beyond'.[36]

In a note entitled 'British destiny in Asia and importance of the Indian land frontier' [37] we get a rare glimpse of Bell's percipience. Unlike many of his colleagues in the Indian Civil Service, Bell was not only aware that the British Raj would not continue but believed it necessary:

> It is probable that the British race should retire as soon as may be from administering national affairs in Asia, whose peoples, both numerous and intellectual, are now too well educated in Western studies to permit for long the white man to order their forms of government. But it may be long before this fact is recognised; and even recognition of a principle may long precede its translation into practice. It is likely, therefore, that the British Government and people will be for many years concerned with the governing of India and with India's long land frontier, the maintenance of which insecurity is one of the greatest burdens, one of the heaviest anxieties that devolves on the British commonwealth. Of this frontier Tibet forms no inconsiderable part.[38]

The drift of Bell's thinking was also influenced by his conviction that the danger to the northern frontier not only came from Russia and China but also from Japan. The protection of Britain's vital strategic interests was the motive behind Bell's policy. During the Simla Conference Bell was instrumental in obtaining an agreement on the delineation of what became known as the McMahon Line between India and Tibet

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32 Ibid.
33 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit, p. 199.
34 Ibid., p. 200.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 British Library, O19955. i. 37 C. Bell, Tibet Note-Book , Vol. 2, p. 40.
38 Ibid.

through an exchange of secret notes with the Tibetans. The negotiations and the agreement were kept secret from the Chinese delegations.[39] Bell worked on the assumption that a resurgent China would try eventually to regain control over the mainland of Asia and that Japan would attempt to extend its influence over Central Asia and Inner Mongolia. Bell's policy was formulated around the buffer zone concept.

> We want Tibet as a buffer to India on the north. Now there are buffers and buffers; and some of them are of very little use. But Tibet is ideal in this respect. With the large desolate area of the Northern Plains controlled by the Lhasa Government, central and southern Tibet governed by the same authority, and the Himalayan border States guided by, or in close alliance with, the British-Indian Government, Tibet forms a barrier equal or superior, to anything that the world can show elsewhere.[40]

Bell was profoundly disappointed that Britain had not capitalised on the advantages they had gained from the 1914 Simla Agreement. This was, as noted earlier, due partly to Britain's reluctance to press the Russians for concessions on the 1907 agreement at a time when the Tibetan problem had become a minor issue in the light of the outbreak of the First World War. As we have seen, despite these restrictions, Bell had regularly urged throughout 1915-1919 that the Indian Government take measures to strengthen autonomous Tibet. His expectation was that Tibet would develop into a friendly independent state capable of her own defence. In fact, Bell's assessment of the results of such a policy were summed up thus: 'Tibet would promote Indian interest by promoting her own'.[41] It is clear that even before his Lhasa mission, Bell had formulated his own Tibetan policy, a policy which reflected a profound understanding of the future requirements of both Britain and Tibet. The question at issue was whether Bell was arguing for a course that was no longer possible.

In the hope that a 'temporary deputation' to Lhasa would be agreed upon, the Government of India in January 1920 induced Bell to return for twelve months to his old post as Political Officer for Sikkim.[42] Bell had retired on 15 March 1919 with the intention of spending one year in Darjeeling studying Tibetan culture and language before leaving for Britain in February 1920.[43] An opportunity to take a more active part must have constituted a triumph for Bell following years of discouraging reactions to his

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39 See P. Mehra, The McMahon Line and After, op.cit.

40 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 246.

41 Ibid., p. 194.

42 IOR: L/P&S/11/186 Minute Paper, F3367, 'Temporary reappointment of Charles Bell as POS', 22 March 1920.

43 R. Collet, Interview, 16 August 1992.

proposals to cement Anglo-Tibetan relations through visits to the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. Certainly it was a vindication of his long-held views. Bell wrote, 'it seemed that perhaps now there might be a chance of being permitted to go to Lhasa, and do something there towards the improvement of the position between Tibet and India.'[44]

A tone of urgency is evident in the telegram sent from the Viceroy to the India Office notifying them of the situation: 'For urgent reasons we have granted Major W. L. Campbell, PO in S leave pending retirement. Only officer available qualified to fill appointment is C.A. Bell, I.C.S. retired, who is in India and has consented to return to duty for one year only and we have appointed him provisionally. . . Appointment of Bell is in view of critical phases of our relations with Tibet essential. We trust you will sanction our action '.[45] The Viceroy's reference to 'critical phases' took shape in some 'very pressing letters' from the Tibetan government. The measure of desperation felt by the Lhasa government is exemplified in the warning that :

> Unless we are allowed to purchase soon about Rs 15 lakhs of rounds of rifle ammunition and a few machine guns according to request we have been making for months and months and years and years the case may become a matter of regret to Tibetans and a disgrace to the good name of British Government.[46]

The Tibetan government was beginning to doubt Britain's word and her capacity to force China to the point of an agreement. To the Viceroy these letters indicated that the Lhasa government was nearing the end of its patience and that a crisis was rapidly approaching. Consequently, the Government of India viewed the Tibetan situation with considerable alarm and they were in no doubt as to what was required. Their position was stated in a telegram sent from the Viceroy to the India Office on 23 April 1920:

> It is eminently desirable that a British officer should go to Lhasa if he can announce gift of machine guns and conveying permission for purchase of ammunition but not otherwise.[47]

The Tibetan government, they asserted, 'will expect either negotiations to be opened or at any rate ammunition and machine guns'.[48] The danger, as they saw it in India, was that if a British officer went to Lhasa and was unable to announce definite plans for

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44 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 245.

45 IOR: L/P&S/11/186 Telegram from Viceroy to India Office, 2 March 1920.

46 IOR: L/P&S/10/716 P3256 Letter from Tibetan Council to Government of India in Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 23 April 1920.

47 IOR: L/P&S/10/716 P3256 Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 23 April 1920.

48 Ibid.

negotiations with China or to supply military assistance Britain's inability to help Tibet would be exposed and might bring matters to a crisis. The despatch contained a prophetic warning: 'If they feel that we have betrayed them they might turn in desperation to the Chinese. I have already noticed various indications that they do not trust us as much as formerly.'[49]

The military and diplomatic advantages of such a mission were openly emphasised and represent the genesis of a policy of bluff:

> If British officer goes with machine guns and ammunition or takes permission for these the Chinese will become uneasy at the Tibetans being in a position to defend themselves especially by our again being in direct touch with the Tibetan Government and will be strongly impelled to negotiate.[50]

The objective of the Government of India was to avoid at all cost any major commitment to Tibet. The problem was that the Tibetan government wanted more than British moral support and the Government in India knew that nothing short of the supply of arms and ammunition would satisfy them. Expressing considerable anxiety, the Viceroy concluded, 'We earnestly hope a way may yet be found to fulfil our promise to do this for otherwise we fear that our whole Tibetan policy may fall and that situation will arise similar to that of 1910 involving us in grave political responsibility and possibility of heavy military expenditure on the N.E. frontier.'[51]

The implied 'urgency' of Campbell's 'leave, pending retirement' mentioned previously, masked a well orchestrated political manoeuvre by the Government of India and exemplified the tacit contest operating between the Government of India and the Peking Legation for control of Britain's Tibetan policy. Bell was not the only 'qualified' offical eligible to represent Britain at Lhasa. Louis King had taken up the vice-consul post at Tachienlu vacated by Eric Teichman and the Peking Legation was keen that either Teichman or King should go to Lhasa. This prospect posed serious problems for the Government of India. If a China Consular Service Officer negotiated with the Tibetans, then whatever resulted would remain under the auspices of the British Legation in Peking, whose opinions and sentiments were by no means appreciated by the Government of India. Bell was hastily brought back from retirement and endorsed as the principal candidate 'on account of his life-long acquaintance with and knowledge of

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49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.

Tibetan affairs'.[52] If Bell went to Lhasa the Government of India would retain control of the situation.[53]

The India Office agreed with the Viceroy that 'it is essential that the officer deputed should be in a position to reassure the Tibetan Government of the arms question'.[54] It was also Bell's initial opinion that it would be useless to go to Lhasa without authority to promise arms. However, Bell telegraphed on 26 August 1920 indicating that he had modified his former view on this point and was now prepared to proceed to Lhasa without waiting for a decision on the arms question.[55]

From the outset of his reappointment Bell, through an array of communications, unceasingly encouraged the endorsement of the new course to alter the isolationist policy. For months the Indian Government's decision to send Bell was held up in London while Whitehall considered the implications. Bell, frustrated by the delay, confirmed the modification of his views in another priority telegram stating that his earlier telegram had been sent from Sikkim, the latter from Tibet. Now 'after having come into closer contact with present Tibetan opinion I accordingly recommend strongly that I should proceed to Lhasa immediately'.[56] The measure of desperation expressed was also caused by his receiving another urgent invitation from the Dalai Lama for a British official to visit Lhasa.[57]

The question of Tibetan policy was considered at the end of July 1920 in London by an inter-departmental conference attended by Jordan. Two matters appear to have dominated the meeting. The Deputy Under-Secretary, Arthur Hirtzel, was concerned that the Tibetans were losing confidence in Britain and some form of assurance was necessary to persuade them that China would not attack. Additionally, there was considerable apprehension than an untenable situation might emerge in the future if Russian intrigue was to become active while the British persisted in operating in Tibet only through China.[58] Jordan's opinion was that a Chinese government less influenced by Japan would be more amicable to Britain and more complaisant in a settlement on the

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52 PRO:FO371/5315/F649/22/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 28 April 1920.

53 A. Lamb, Tibet, China and India 1914-1950: A History of Imperial Diplomacy (Hertingfordbury, 1989), p. 108.

54 PRO:FO535/F858/22/10 Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 15 May 1920.

55 PRO:FO371/5317/F2459/20/10 Telegram from Foreign Office to Viceroy, October 15 1920.

56 PRO:FO371/5317/F2918/22/10 Telegram 30-S from Bell in Yatung to Government of India, 19 October 1920.

57 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 176.

58 PRO:FO371/5316/F2441/22/10 Minutes of Interdepartmental Conference held Thursday 22 July 1920 attended by Jordan, Hirtzel,Wellesley,Wakely and Bentinck.

question of Tibet. Furthermore, Jordon considered that in supplying arms publicly to Lhasa, a situation would be created out of which both Japan and China would 'make capital'.[59] The result was yet another attempt at negotiation with China. The conference recommended as the most practicable course that an endeavour should be made to 'obtain from the Chinese government written assurances to Tibet of its peaceful intent'.[60]

By late 1920, however, opinion in the Foreign Office and the India Office had converged on the desirability of sending some form of mission to Lhasa. Authorisation for Bell to proceed to Lhasa was relayed by telegram to the Viceroy on 15 October 1920. He was to 'deal sympathetically with Tibetan applications for assistance etc. but without authority to promise arms or ammunition'[61] The interdepartmental conference, in deciding not to recommend the immediate supply or promise of arms to Tibet, was influenced not so much by the Arms Traffic Convention, which, except for Article VI, was in abeyance, but rather by the views of Jordan, who opposed supply on the grounds of 'expediency' and by the terms of the Peking Agreement of May 1919, by which 'principal friendly Powers undertook not to supply arms to China' pending establishment of a government which commanded general allegiance throughout the country.[62]

Undoubtedly, the main aim was to give a new impetus to British relations with Tibet. Bell's instructions were to acquaint the Tibetan government with the problems inherent in negotiating with the Chinese, now rendered even more difficult because of the 'disturbed and disunited conditions' of the country, which was 'riven into warring factions'. He was also charged with impressing upon Lhasa the desirability of preventing hostilities with China. He was to 'ascertain what actually took place' in the course of the Kansu mission's visit to Lhasa and estimate what 'risk really exists' if the British government were unable to arrange for renewal of negotiations with China. He was also to obtain such information as he could regarding Liu Tsan-ting's visit to Chamdo.[63]

Bell's prime responsibility was to function as a liaison officer with the Tibetan government in the event of a resumption of Sino-British negotiations. If this did not occur, then Bell would be in a position to clarify future British policy to the Dalai Lama. Bell was confident that when the British renewed contact with the Tibetan government the Chinese would abandon their obstructive attitude.

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59 Ibid.

60 PRO:FO371/5317/F2459/20/10 Telegram from Foreign Office to Viceroy, 15 October 1920.

61 Ibid.

62 FO371/5317/ F2663/22/10 P7327 Montagu to Viceroy, 18 October 1920.

63 PRO:FO371/5317/F2593/22/10 P7727 Telegram from Viceroy to Foreign Office, 22 October 1920.

It was a somewhat optimistic expectation, for during the year that Bell remained in Lhasa the Chinese made no attempt to resume negotiations. On the contrary, to each overture the Chinese remained uncompromising. A Foreign Office minute paper of 3 November 1920 ominously noted, 'I do not think the Chinese will ever resume negotiations over Tibet until the Shantung question has been settled in a manner satisfactory to them.'[64] Bell's optimism was based on Chinese actions in a different era, a period when British diplomacy reflected considerable British power.

From the very beginning the Lhasa mission created underlying tensions between Bell and the Government in India that became more evident as the year passed. Both the Viceroy and Clive in Peking were in favour of secrecy. The Government in India argued that the Chinese government 'should be confronted with fait accompli' and that they should not be informed of the despatch of Bell's mission, nor any public announcement made till he had been gone two weeks.[65] Alston argued that when sending a British representative to Lhasa it should be with the full knowledge of the Chinese government.[66] A compromise solution was found with the decision that once the mission reached Lhasa 'no further attempt should be made to keep the visit secret.'[67] However, before the official communique was issued on 14 November the Calcutta papers and *Pioneer* had already published the news of Bell's departure for Lhasa.[68] The Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs was informed on 17 November by Clive in Peking.[69]

Tensions were high and the Foreign Department in India was determined to be cautious. Bell had notified Simla that he intended to take to Lhasa 'for ceremonial purposes' an escort consisting of 'one N.C.O and twelve men from the mounted infantry detachment of the 73rd Carnatic Infantry', stationed at Gyantse.[70] The Government of India, however, felt 'a little doubtful of the advisability of your taking proposed escort of

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64 PRO:FO371/5317/F2617/22/10 Minute paper, 3 November 1920.

65 PRO:FO371/5317/F2593/22/10 Telegram from Viceroy to Foreign Office, 22 October 1920.

66 PRO:FO371/5317/F2600/22/10 Minute paper, 1 November 1920.

67 PRO:FO371/5317/F2663/22/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 17 November 1920.

68 PRO:FO371/5317/F2851/22/10, P8185 Viceroy, Foreign and Political Department to Foreign Office, 13 November 1920.

69 PRO:FO371/5317/F2865/22/10, P2865 Telegram from Clive (Peking) to Government of India, 18 November 1920.

70 PRO:FO371/5317/F3196/22/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 30 October 1920, Encl. 4 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 13 December 1920.

Indian soldiers to Lhassa'.[71] There was considerable concern that the escort could give 'rise under present conditions' to 'exaggerated rumours' on the frontier and of being misinterpreted as the 'advance guard of Indian troops' sent to aid Tibet against China'.[72] Bell acceded: 'In circumstances I will not take military escort to Lhasa'.[73]

Exasperated while the bureaucrats appraised the situation, Bell had waited in the Chumbi Valley, just inside the Tibetan frontier, until permission from London came allowing him to accept the repeated invitations of the Dalai Lama and proceed on his diplomatic mission.[74] During the seven years that had elapsed since the Simla Conference Bell had been extremely frustrated by both the home government and the Indian government's handling of the Tibetan question. He was especially critical of the lack of understanding of the need for contact on a personal level, which Bell knew was an important feature of Tibetan society: 'Each year I visited Tibet, and used to receive a letter of welcome from both the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. They sent also invitations to visit them at Lhasa and Shigatse respectively; during one year alone the Dalai Lama sent me three such invitations.'[75] 'Certainly', Bell lamented, 'it was necessary to keep Tibet friendly, but I had to do the best I could without visiting either of the two leading personages in Tibet. It was a peculiar position.'[76] Because of their sterilisation policy the British government's representative had to maintain friendly relations with Tibet, but was at the same time forbidden to visit the Tibetan Government in their capital. Bell maintained, 'It was as if an American representative in Australia was not allowed to go within five days' journey of Canberra'.[77]

In November Bell, whose patience at the India Office's continued delays had been tried to the utmost, started on his journey.[78] Exhibiting a sense of the solemnity of the occasion, Bell wrote: 'So on the first day of November, the day after my fiftieth birthday, I left the Chumbi Valley for the Holy City'.[79] Bell was due to arrive at Lhasa on 16 November, but his arrival in Lhasa was delayed one day as the Tibetan government

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71 PRO:FO371/5317/F3196/22/10 Telegram from Government of India to Bell, 1 November 1920, Encl.5 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 13 December 1920.

72 Ibid.

73 PRO: F0535/F3258/22/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 4 November 1920.

74 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 247.

75 Ibid., p. 238.

76 Ibid., p. 239.

77 Ibid.

78 PRO:FO371/5317,/F2863/22/10, P8233 Telegram from Viceroy to Foreign Office, 16 November 1920.

79 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 252.

'wished me to postpone my arrival until to-day, as it is exceptionally auspicious one in Tibetan calendar'.[80] Bell noted: 'Our entry into the Holy City resembles a triumphal procession.'[81] 'The greater part of Lhasa seems to have turned out to see these strange Europeans, who are coming to live for a time in the Tibetan capital without any of their soldiers to protect them. "That", they say, "is a new thing; they are coming like brothers".'[82]

Before his arrival in Lhasa Bell had conceded, 'As to length of my stay in Lhassa, forecast is difficult.'[83] We are left in no doubt as to his state of mind before his departure: 'I myself am tired of work; I have domestic matters to arrange in England, and have a passage booked from Bombay for end of January, so I should like to stay in Lhassa not more than one month'.[84] Initially, the Government of India informed Bell they had no particular wishes in the matter and that the 'length of his stay should be conditioned entirely by public interest' and, if necessary, the 'state of his own health'.[85] There was certainly no 'forward school' mentality in evidence.

Bell kept in regular touch with Simla and relayed by telegraph that on 19 November 1920 he had paid his ceremonial visit to the Dalai Lama and was very warmly received. His first business interview with the Dalai Lama was on 30 November, when he carried out the instructions issued to him by the Government of India. Bell hoped to receive the Dalai Lama's official reply by 10 December, when he expected to leave Lhasa.[86] But on 15 December Bell telegraphed that although his arrangements had been made with a view to leaving on the 10th, he had been pressed so strongly by the Dalai Lama, the Prime Minister, Council and the National Assembly to remain till April or May that he did not 'feel at liberty to insist on my personal wishes to leave as soon as possible

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80 PRO:FO371/5317/ F2949/22/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 17 November 1920, Encl No 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 26 November 1920.

81 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 252.

82 Ibid., p. 253.

83 PRO:FO371/5317/F2617/22/10 Encl in India Office to Foreign Office, 28 October 1920.

84 Ibid.

85 PRO:FO371/5317/F2617/22/10 P7798 Letter from Viceroy to Foreign Office, 26 October 1920. Also Interview with R. Collett, 16 August 1992. Bell's daughter confirmed that at the time Bell left for Tibet he was in poor health. During his stay in Lhasa his health improved.

86 PRO:FO371/5317/F3445/22/10 Telegram from Government of India to Montagu, 27 December 1920, Encl No.1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 31 December 1920.

and retire, and I am therefore staying on'.[87] This was confirmed by the Tibetan Prime Minister in a letter to the Viceroy, explaining that:

> At first he [Bell] fixed the date of his departure for Wednesday, and then for Friday, of this month (8th and 10 December respectively). Thereupon His Holiness the Dalai Lama, myself, the Prime Minister and the Council requested him in turn to prolong his stay in Lhasa. At last (we are glad to say) he has decided to stay for some time longer unless recalled by the British Government. The Tibet question is an important one, and our representations in this connection will be submitted through Lonchen Bell in due course.[88]

There were strong indications that the Tibetans were beginning to lose confidence in Great Britain owing to the latter's ineptitude in securing a settlement for them with the Chinese and an apparent unwillingness to give them material assistance. Consequently, the response to the British government's official communique given to the Dalai Lama by Bell on 19 November 1920 became 'a subject of much deliberation and careful consideration', with the result that the Abbots of the three monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden and the National Assembly of Tibet were 'now compelled to write this letter':

> We realise that the Sino-Tibetan question has so far remained unsettled owing to the disturbed state of China. We are, however, most grateful to the great British Government for making diplomatic representations to the Chinese government from time to time and we really cannot expect more than this in the existing circumstances. We will certainly follow the advice of the British Government to abstain from hostilities with the Chinese forces. We would, however, point out that if the settlement of the Sino-Tibetan question is thus allowed to protract indefinitely, the prestige of both the British and the Tibetans will be adversely affected now as well as in the future.
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> We would, therefore, request that necessary efforts may be made for bringing about the settlement of the Sino-Tibetan question in Lhassa. But if there is no immediate prospect of such arrangements being made, we must make an alternative request. Owing to her lack of sufficient military strength, Tibet is gradually losing the allegiance of her vassal States of Po, Goloks and other regions, the inhabitants of which are rising in large forces and committing wholesale robbery in defiance of all laws. To subdue such insurrections, military strength will have to be increased and improved. The help of the British Government is

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87 PRO:FO371/6606/F233/59/10 Telegram from Bell in Lhasa to Government of India, 15 December 1920.

88 PRO:FO371/6607/F519/59/10 Translation of letter from Prime Minister of Tibet to Viceroy, 10 December 1920, Encl No.5 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 February 1921.

> especially needed in this respect and it is hoped that it will not be denied.[89]

When Bell first arrived in Lhasa, Lord Curzon was attempting to coerce the Chinese Minister in London, Dr. Wellington Koo, to agree to resume negotiations about Tibet either in London or Peking. The Government in India now began to have second thoughts about their bluff tactics. Concerned that their representative's presence in Lhasa might prejudice the London talks, the Government of India warned Bell:

> The longer you stay the more difficult you will find it to leave and the greater the danger of Tibetan Government seeking to force our hands over permanent Envoy at Lhassa and of their taking umbrage at our inevitable refusal. Prolonged stay, moreover, might prejudice resumption of negotiations with Chinese, of which there seems now some slight chance.[90]

Far from exhibiting 'forward' tendencies this statement reflects the very real sense of panic at the possibility of permanent British representation at Lhasa. There seemed to the Viceroy no reason for 'prolongation of his stay at Lhassa beyond anxiety of Tibetan government to keep him and their dilatory course of procedure'.[91] The Government of India concluded that Bell should 'cut his visit short, if possible,' and informed him so.[92] Bell strongly disagreed: 'far from resumption of negotiations with Chinese being prejudiced by my stay here the exact reverse is the case'.[93] Bell explained:

> The Chinese Government now for the first time for over a year show sign of willingness to resume is in all probability mainly due to my being in Lhasa. It has invariably been our experience in past that when the British Political Officer comes into close relationship with the Tibetan Government in power the Chinese abandon their obstructive attitude and become ready to negotiate. Every Tibetan from the Dalai

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89 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 Translation of Joint Letter from Abbots of the Three Monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden and the National Assembly of Tibet to the Viceroy of India, 15 December 1920 Encl No. 7 in letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1921.

90 PRO:FO371/6607/F519/59/10 Telegram from Government of India to Bell, 31 December 1920 Encl 2 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 February 1921.

91 PRO:FO371/6607/F68/59/10 Telegram from Viceroy to Mr. Montagu, 31 December 1920, Encl in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 6 January 1921.

92 PRO:FO371/6607/F519/59/10 Telegram from Government of India to Bell, 10 January 1921 Encl No. 8 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 February 1921.

93 PRO:FO371/6607/F653/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 14 January 1921.

> lama downwards honestly believe this and we may well credit them with experience of Chinese methods.[94]

Bell added that 'if the Chinese do negotiate it is essential that I should be in Lhasa to carry on the negotiations with the Tibetan Government'. Exasperated, he continued, 'I would again venture to remind the Government of India that there can be no negotiations unless the Tibetan Government are consulted throughout. We have often made this mistake in the past. Do not let us repeat it.'[95] In an emotional plea, Bell reminded Simla that when the Foreign Secretary requested him to rejoin the Government Service it was with a view to his sharing in resumption of negotiations: 'To withdraw me now when our plans seem likely to fructify would not only be a keen personal disappointment but against public interest'.[96]

The antagonism between Bell and Simla reached a peak when, at about the same time the government was attempting to get Bell to return from Lhasa, they expressed their 'surprise' to hear that the Trade Agent, David Macdonald, was in Lhasa. In a sharp telegraphic message Bell was ordered to 'instruct him to return to Gyantse' if he had not already done so.[97] Bell's reply on 19 January 1921 was full of resentment. He 'assumed' that he would be 'allowed discretion in a matter of this kind' considering the 'delicate present Tibetan situation'. Moreover, 'It seemed to me very desirable that the present opportunity should be taken of allowing Macdonald to renew his friendship with leading Tibetans, for thus British-Tibetan friendship is promoted'.[98] Bell argued that 'His presence here is politically beneficial in other ways, also especially since my late personal assistant's death.'[99]

Simla had not told Bell why they were recalling Macdonald and consequently he felt that 'their orders allow me no discretion'.[100] Together with these instructions, Macdonald received an order telling him to go to Kalimpong. Bell, annoyed by this, wrote that 'such removal of my sole gazetted subordinate for Tibetan affairs would be highly undesirable. I have instructed Macdonald not to leave Gyantse without my

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 PRO:FO371/6607/F519/59/10 Telegram from Government of India to Bell, 11 Janurary 1921, Encl No. 9 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 February 1921.
98 PRO: FO371/6607/F643/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921, Encl. in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 21 February 1921.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.

permission.'[101] Bell obviously felt that Simla had not fully realised the diplomatic implications of his visit and that their view of the Tibetan situation was indeed shallow. What is obvious is that the Government of India was suffering from a bout of 'cold feet'. At this stage they wanted both Bell and Macdonald out of Lhasa as quickly as possible.

The primary motive for Bell's visit was to determine if there was any serious risk of the Tibetan government coming to such terms with the Chinese as might be detrimental to British interests in the event of Britain being unable to insist on a renewal of the tripartite negotiations. But the principal objective of the Lhasa mission was to get the Chinese to take an interest in Bell's visit with a view to stimulating a resumption of negotiations. It was a game of bluff and the Chinese government did not seem to be responding. There had been little reaction from Peking and Bell put this down to lack of press coverage owing to some misunderstanding about him having already returned to India.

Throughout 1921 it became increasingly clear, first, that the Chinese government were becoming less and less interested in reopening negotiations with Britain over Tibet, and, secondly, that their principal aim in Tibet was to attempt to draw the Lhasa government away from British tutelage. This was to be achieved through renewed diplomatic contacts such as the semi-official Kansu mission that had arrived in Lhasa in January 1920 and through diplomatic attempts like the Governor of Ili's visit. One of Bell's task was to assess what harm these visits had done to Anglo-Tibetan relations. It must have been exceedingly frustrating for him: on the one hand, he was trying to determine the damage caused by Britain's policy of sterilization and the wider implications of Peking's forward policy, and, on the other hand, he was encountering insensitive opposition from the Government of India to the vital need for close personal contacts to be made by those involved in Tibetan affairs with the Dalai Lama and Lhasa government officials.[102]

The Foreign Office felt that whether Bell stayed on in Lhasa was 'a question of general policy' and they would await further communication from Bell before expressing their views.[103] Lampson minuted, 'Mr. Bell is evidently determined to stay. The Legation at Peking are, we know, on his side'.[104] It was recognised in the Foreign

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101 Ibid.

102 The importance of this attribute in Anglo-Tibetan relations was accentuated when Charles Bell and David Macdonald, men who were close to the Dalai Lama and understood Tibetan society and culture well, had withdrawn from Tibetan Affairs. Col. Bailey replaced Bell as Political Officer Sikkim and was not generally liked by the Tibetans.

103 PRO:FO371/5317/F3445/22/10 Minute, 3 January 1921.

104 PRO:FO371/6607/F567/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 21 February 1921.

Office that the Tibetan question was largely dependent upon the policy of the Government of India and that 'things were best left to their decision unless they ask our views'.[105] Lampson added, 'So far the India Office have not asked our views and primarily it is a matter for their decision. Whether we shall or shall not have a man at Lhasa is more a matter of Indo-Tibetan than of Anglo-Chinese relations as things stand at present'.[106] A minute paper expressed Lampson's views: 'the Government of India consider that Bell's prolonged presence at Lhasa might prejudice the resumption of negotiations with the Chinese. I should have thought it might have been the other way round'.[107]

Bell attempted to allay the uneasiness of the Government of India by pointing out that his presence 'promotes friendliness with the Tibetan Government and people'. This friendliness, Bell argued, 'had decreased greatly during the last few years'.[108] Using his knowledge of the Tibetan situation, he was able to convince the Viceroy that a hurried exit might be seen by the Dalai Lama as a 'suspicious if not an insulting gesture'.[109] By 22 January 1921 the Viceroy, using a face-saving device, informed Bell that the Government of India had 'no desire that you should return at once if climatic conditions were unfavourable' and went on to say 'they think it necessary to agree to your remaining in Lhassa till April or May, if the climate prevents you from leaving earlier.' In a change of heart, Simla now felt 'sure that your stay will do much to reassure Tibetan Government and promote friendliness, which is one of the main objects of your mission'. The Viceroy was not hopeful of 'active resumption of negotiations at Peking by April' and considered that the prospect of Bell being able simultaneously to conduct negotiations with Tibetan government during his stay in Lhasa as 'exceedingly remote'.[110]

Wakely in the India Office realised that the waiting game was getting out of hand. Bell's letters from Lhasa had been asking for early orders pursuant to the requests for assistance made by the Tibetan government. The response by the Lhasa government to the discouraging stand on supply of arms was obvious and Bell was forthright in describing the predicament:

> Our refusal to permit the Tibetan Government to purchase ammunition has had a depressing effect on them, so much so that they have not so

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105 PRO:FO371/6607/F519/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 15 February 1921.

106 PRO:FO371/6607/F67/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 7 January 1921.

107 PRO:FO371/6607/F519/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 15 February 1921.

108 PRO:FO371/6607/F653/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 14 January 1921.

109 Ibid.

110 PRO:FO371/6607/F319/59/10 Telegram from Viceroy to Bell, 22 January 1921, Encl No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 27 January 1921.

> far ventured to inform the National Assembly of this decision. There is now a much stronger pro-Chinese element in the latter than before, and it might press for a treaty with China independently of British Government.[111]

Apart from the dispute between Bell and Simla over his extended stay in Lhasa, there were the inevitable differences of opinion between the Government of India and the Legation at Peking whether Bell should or should not prolong his stay at Lhasa. At this stage Beilby Alston confirmed his support of the diplomatic bluff. 'The attitude of this Legation', Alston declared, 'has been that the visit of Bell to Lhassa' would be useful in making the Chinese realise that 'we are in earnest, and that their obstruction to details of Tibetan question would not succeed in shelving it'. Alston believed that the longer Bell stayed the greater the effect on the Chinese. He argued that a 'too early departure' could certainly be misinterpreted by the Tibetans and 'risk undoing the good expected from his visit'.[112] He strongly endorsed Bell's remaining in Lhasa at least until April or May.

Bell's stay continued to be extended, primarily if not solely, because Alston favoured retaining Bell at Lhasa pending developments.[113] Alston was playing for time. He encouraged Bell to prolong his stay in the hope that Peking might be impressed with the fact that Whitehall was in earnest about negotiations. But nothing was moving in Peking. It was not until March that Alston fully disclosed his tactics. He informed Curzon that :

> I have been carefully watching the situation here, and, in view of continued quiet on frontier and of Minister for Foreign Affairs' calm in regard to Tibet generally, have considered it better to wait until Chinese Government have had time to get curious about what Bell is doing before reopening question of negotiations or of written assurances.[114]

Sensing at this point, however, that the diplomatic bluff was not working, he had to reconsider the situation: 'In view, however, of Bell's suggestion . . . that negotiations here should be timed to enable him to assist at Lhassa, I will take an early opportunity of asking Minister for Foreign Affairs whether he is yet in a position to discuss resumption.'[115] Alston now made it quite clear that in his opinion 'written assurances

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111 PRO:FO371/6607,F643/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 1 January 1921 Encl No. 2 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 21 February 1921.

112 PRO:FO371/6607/F67/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curson, 6 January 1921.

113 PRO:FO371/6607/F1427/59/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 28 April 1921.

114 PRO:FO371/6607/F835/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curzon, 5 March 1921.

115 Ibid.

should only be asked for in the last resort and on the assumption that Bell is satisfied that they will be of use in re-establishment of the grateful Tibetan confidence in us, which from his recent telegrams would appear to be doubtful'.[116] He was determined to be cautious: 'If I have to ask them now, on the top of Bell's visit, I fear Chinese government will regard the request as indicating willingness on our part to shelve main question, which is what we hope that visit will convince them we are not prepared to do.'[117] He was clearly in an invidious position, compelled to wait for some reaction from the Chinese government to Bell's visit before pressing for written assurances or suggesting the reopening of negotiations.[118]

On 26 March 1921 the Legation in Peking reported some small response from the Chinese government. The Minister for Foreign Affairs informed Alston that he had learned that 'Bell was very active politically at Lhassa'. The Minister went on to express the hope that Bell 'would not negotiate any agreement with Tibet, as China would be unable to recognise such'. According to Alston, it was thus evident that the Chinese Government 'is at last taking an interest in Bell's presence at Lhassa'.[119] This long awaited news was offset by Alston's pessimistic forecast that the Chinese defeat in Mongolia 'will probably influence Government against resumption of negotiations regarding Tibet.'[120] After the Bolshevik revolution the Chinese abrogated the Kiatka Convention, which guaranteed Mongolian autonomy. In June 1920, as conflict intensified between the powerful Chihli war lords and the Anhwei clique at Peking, Chinese forces began to withdrew from Urga. Disaffected Mongolian elites joined forces with the White Russian officer Baron Ungern von Sternberg, and his polyglot army ousted the Chinese from the Mongolian capital early in 1921. The Soviets helped establish the Mongolian People's Provisional Government in March 1921. By a treaty of November 1921, Moscow recognized the independence of Outer Mongolia from China. Chinese defeat in Mongolia was not a good omen for Tibet: the likelihood of the Chinese government relinquishing territory to Tibet was rapidly diminishing.

Indeed, time was running out. The reply to the Tibetan government and Bell's future arrangements were largely dependent on the attitude of the Chinese government towards the suggestion that negotiations should be resumed. Consequently, the India Office, sensing a stalemate, urged the Foreign Office that Alston be instructed to

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116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 The question of a written assurance from China was not openly pursued after this time.

119 PRO:FO371/6607/F1118/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curzon, 26 March 1921.

120 Ibid.

'approach the Chinese Government on the subject immediately unless he sees some strong objection'.[121]

Some in Whitehall seemed almost insouciant about the issue. According to Miles Lampson, the Legation was handling the matter with 'circumspection' and Alston, 'who is well aware of the leverage which Mr. Bell's presence in Lhasa may be presumed to give us, may be relied upon to keep the subject alive with the Chinese Government.'[122] Lampson was optimistic about Alston's news: 'it is evident that the Chinese Government are at last begging to interest themselves in Mr. Bell's presence at Lhassa. This is all to the good, as it may help to show them that it is to their interests as much as ours to have this long outstanding question definitely settled'. In Lampson's view, 'It looked as though at last there was some prospect of a reopening of the Tibet negotiations.'[123] Lampson felt that it might strengthen Alston's hand to know that 'we are pressing for renewal of negotiations and I suggest that we might send him a telegram on general lines'.[124]

Lord Curzon was not so optimistic. In his reply to the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, he noted that the alleged reason the earlier negotiations were so abruptly broken off in 1919 still existed and therefore he doubted 'the wisdom of acting with any precipitancy in the matter'.[125] Curzon, conscious of Britain's dilute diplomatic position suggested it might be advisable to 'confine the instructions to Sir B. Alston to an intimation that His Majesty's Government are anxious to proceed with the negotiations as soon as the moment is opportune'. Alston was to 'exercise his discretion' in keeping the matter before the Chinese Government.[126]

Eric Teichman had returned from China for a short assignment at the Foreign Office, where his knowledge of the situation strengthened Alston's and Bell's arguments for an extended stay in Lhasa. When Bell had reported from Lhasa that the Dalai Lama

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121 PRO:FO371/6607/F1210/59/10 Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 4 April 1921.

122 PRO:FO371/6607,F1210/59/10 comments by Lampson in Minute paper, 8 April 1921.

123 PRO:FO371/6607/F1118/59/10 comments by Lampson in Minute paper 31 March 1921.

124 PRO:FO371/6607/F1210/59/10 comments by Lampson in Minute paper, 8 April 1921.

125 PRO:FO371/6607,F1210/59/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 13 April. 1921

126 Ibid.

had been unwell for the previous fortnight and was being treated by his own physicians,[127] the Government of India informed the India Office that 'his condition is now causing a good deal of anxiety'.[128] Teichman minuted on Simla's telegram, 'Any mishap to the Dalai Lama, who is the centre of the anti-Chinese and pro-British party at Lhasa would be most unfortunate at the present juncture, when the Tibetans are becoming more and more impatient at our inability to effect any settlement for them and the danger of turning of their own accord to the Chinese is increasing from month to month'.[129] Teichman proposed decisive action: 'It is therefore more than ever desirable that we should make friends openly and definitely with the Tibetans and consolidate our position in Tibet in the manner advocated by His Majesty's Legation at Peking, if necessary independently of the Chinese.'[130]

This supported Bell's warning that in the event of the Dalai Lama dying there would be a strong risk of serious disorder: 'He is the one person able to keep Tibet in order. The monks would raise their heads again, and through them the National Assembly, which is permeated with a strong pro-Chinese element . . . a satisfactory solution of the Sino-Tibetan problem would be rendered far more difficult'.[131] Bell was keenly aware of the need to use every effort towards the settlement of the Tibetan question during the Dalai Lama's life-time and, while certainly an additional factor in the already complex set of circumstances, it may be argued that this was enough to frighten Simla into its more submissive stance regarding the extension of Bell's visit. However, the duration of Bell's stay in Lhasa, as the Foreign Office had pointed out in April, 'must depend largely on attitude of Chinese Government towards proposal that negotiations should be resumed'.[132]

In a despatch in April 1921, Alston was even more emphatic about Bell continuing to remain in Lhasa until a decision on the future policy was arrived at. As the ramifications of a changed policy towards Tibet were being thrashed out in seemingly perpetual discussions between Simla, the Foreign Office, the India Office, the Legation in

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127 IOR:MSS Eur F8O 5d.7. News Letter No.11 from Bell to Government of India, 29 April 1921.

128 PRO:FO371/6608/F1624/59/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 27 April 1921 Encl No.l in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 30 April 1921.

129 PRO:FO37l/6608/F1624/59/10 Minute by Teichman, 4 May 1921.

130 Ibid.

131 IOR: MSS Eur F8O 5d.7. News Letter No.11 from Bell to Government of India, 29 April 1921.

132 PRO:FO371/6607/F1210/59/10 Minute Paper summary, 4 April 1921.

Peking and Bell at Lhasa, the Government of India's patience began visibly to be exhausted. In a despatch on 11 May 1921, the Viceroy wrote to the Secretary of State: 'if it were proposed to keep Bell in Lhasa till China begins to move, he might have to remain there indefinitely. We cannot compete with China in a waiting game'.[133] The situation had effectively reached a stalemate.

133 IOR:L/P&S/10/833 P2241 Letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 May 1921.

CHAPTER 7

'RAKASHAR'[1] AGENT OF BRITISH POLICY AND ADVOCATE OF TIBETAN AUTONOMY

> 'Unless we can find some means of prevailing on the Chinese Government to settle early this long-outstanding question, the Tibetan Government will conclude an independent treaty with China'.[2]

The diplomatic bluff to get the Chinese to take an interest in Bell's visit had not worked. Bell, nonetheless, extended his stay in Lhasa in the hope that the Chinese could be brought to the negotiating table. The Chinese were not tempted; the British government had failed to induce China to come to terms on the lines desired. Further indefinite delay, coupled with a continuation of the policy of self-denial, would involve the risk of the Chinese regaining control over Tibet, as had happened in 1910. What the British most feared was that the Tibetan government would conclude an independent treaty with China that would be detrimental to British interests. They were therefore faced with the choice of continuing to work for a settlement on existing lines, and running that risk, or of taking other measures to protect British interests by adopting a new and more liberal policy towards the Tibetans which would ultimately entail the eventual opening of Tibet and the development of its resources under British auspices.

As one of Bell's main objectives was to make an assessment of the effect of the Kansu mission on the Lhasa government, a summary of its influence was forwarded in the envoy's second news letter from Lhasa. He reported that 'The Mission pressed the Tibetan Government to conclude an agreement independently of the British, promising to give Tibet liberal terms. The Tibetan government expressed willingness to make a settlement, but not without the presence and co-operation of a British Representative at the negotiations and conclusion of the Treaty.'[3] Bell confirmed that the Tibetan government and the Kansu mission had agreed that the Chinese and Tibetan troops on the frontier would not attack each other. They had also agreed that the mission would

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1 The Tibetan Prime Minister told Laden La that Bell had been given a nickname - 'Rakashar'. 'There was formerly a Cabinet Minister from the Rakashar family - one of the two oldest families in Central Tibet - who used not to speak much but when he did, spoke wisely; he did not laugh often. He was thin of body; his heart was kind. Everybody feared and respected him even more than they did the Regent. C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 354.

2 IOR:L/P&S/10/971 Letter from Bell Political Officer on Special Duty in Tibet, to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

3 IOR:MSS Eur F8O 5d.7. News Letter No. 2 from Bell to Government of India, 24 January 1921.

urge on the President of the Chinese Republic both to send a representative and to request the British government to depute a representative. The Lhasa government would also urge the British government to depute a representative.[4] The first two points were recorded in a written agreement and signed by both parties. This information, warned Bell, had wider implications as 'agreement on certain points was signed by the Tibetan Government, independently of us and without informing us'.[5]

In a full report, based on information given to Bell from Kusho Kenchung, the Tibetan Trade Agent at Gyantse, it became clear to Bell that the five member team of the Tibetan National Assembly who were appointed to handle the whole affair were not backward in declaring to the Chinese mission the Tibetan position.[6] After describing how the Chinese troops in eastern Tibet had plundered the country, desecrated monasteries and killed people indiscriminately, including Tibetan officials, they revealed how the Tibetans had 'now lost all confidence in the Chinese and were unable to negotiate for peace unless a powerful State like the British acted as a mediator between them'.[7]

The Kansu delegates maintained they were unaware that the Tibetans were so badly treated by the Szechuanese and were quite sure 'that the Peking government never knew anything about these matters'.[8] If everything were properly explained to the Peking government, they were sure that all would be set right. They therefore suggested that a Tibetan delegation should be sent to China to explain matters and try to settle Sino-Tibetan affairs. The Tibetans' response, more than likely influenced by Bell's advice, was that they would prefer to negotiate for peace either in Lhasa or in India with the British government as a mediator. The emissaries implied that they would return and explain everything to their government and encouraged the Lhasa government to send delegates to negotiate for peace in November or December.[9]

As noted earlier, Chinese efforts at a bilateral settlement came to nought, partly because of Bell's written response to the Dalai Lama. The failure of the mission caused Peking to disown its sponsorship and repudiate its proposals. In Bell's view, 'That was the way that China used to proceed in such matters. If a mission failed, they said that it was merely some provincial move, if on the contrary it succeeded, they described

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 PRO:FO371/5317/F2881/22/10 Report from Bell to Government of India, 24 September 1920, Encl in letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 18 Nobember 1920.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.

it as a mission from the Supreme Government of China, and claimed the full result'.[10] In this way they reaped all possible advantage, and when they were unsuccessful felt they still 'saved face'. Bell observed, 'The Dalai Lama had explained this procedure of theirs to me several years earlier, and I found that it happened so every time'.[11]

Irrespective of the results, the Kansu mission was a resolute Chinese effort at a bilateral settlement with Tibet. The major significance of the Kansu mission was that it served as a timely indication to the British of the need to formulate a fresh policy. The visit of the Chinese Governor of Ili was another attempt at a direct settlement between China and Tibet.[12] Bell informed the Government of India that 'I have now been able to ascertain beyond doubt' that the Governor of the Ili from the province of Chinese Turkestan came with the intention of 'inducing the Chinese and Tibetan Governments to conclude an independent agreement with each other. My coming here', said Bell, 'upset his plan, which has been dropped for the present'.[13] In a report to Bell, David Macdonald wrote: 'I think your arrival was most opportune and that it prevented the Chinese making another effort to negotiate direct with the Tibetan, which, if successful, would have been injurious to British interest'.[14] The situation was looking increasingly dangerous. Bell warned those back in India that a 'powerful Mongolian lama, who stands high in the favour of the Chinese, proposes to come to Lhassa for the same purpose'.[15] As well, 'Dorjieff has an agent here who is watching the situation'.[16]

The political balance at Lhasa was delicate. Bell reported that 'the existence of a pro-Chinese faction in the National Assembly of Tibet is very much in evidence, and it is becoming more and more powerful as the settlement of the Tibetan question drags on. Were it not for the influence of his Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is strongly pro-British, this faction would probably have succeeded long ago in coercing the Tibetan Government into concluding an independent agreement with China.'[17] Bell's assistant, Norbu Dondup, had earlier reported that:

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10 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 246.

11 Ibid.

12 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 comments by Lampson in Minute paper, 21 March 1921.

13 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921 Encl No. 3 in letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1921.

14 IOR:MSS Eur F8O 5a 42 Confidential note on the Amban of Ill by David Macdonald.

15 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921, Encl No. 3 in letter from India Office to Foreign Office 12 March 1921.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

> There is already said to be a pro-Chinese element even in the National Assembly working for undermining the British influence with certain high officials of Tibet with a view to coercing the Tibetan Government into concluding an independent agreement with China . . . It is reported that one high Tibetan official at least has received a communication from the Chinese Government pardoning him for his past anti-Chinese actions and promising him large rewards if he could be instrumental in restoring the Chinese influence in Tibet'.[18]

Bell was determined not to equivocate and in his concluding remarks he warned 'when all the circumstances are considered, I should reckon it as highly probable that, unless we can find some means of prevailing on the Chinese Government to settle early this long-outstanding question, the Tibetan Government will conclude an independent treaty with China.'[19]

Bell was fully aware of his unique position as British envoy: 'from my fifteen years experience of Tibetan affairs including a close connection with the Dalai Lama and his Government in India, the Simla Conference of 1913-14 and my present residence in Lhasa, I have had unrivalled opportunities for learning the details of the Sino-Tibetan question.'[20] Giving some idea of his scholarly character, in a marginal note Bell asked that 'this self-praise may kindly be excused, as it is relevant to the issue.[21] Bell's historic visit to Lhasa was witnessed by Rinchen Dolma (Mary) Taring, then about 10 years old. She recalls the occasion: 'He was the first European I had ever seen. Everyone was interested. We children were interested because our relatives had told us he had a long red nose'.[22] Recalling his initial meeting with the Dalai Lama, Bell explained that 'The date of my first call on him had already been fixed, a day of especially good omen, but the hour had still to be settled'.[23] Bell was determined to comply with the necessary Tibetan traditions and to respect the Tibetan culture. This played an important part in enabling him to gain the necessary support and confidence of all strata of Tibetan society. 'When dealing with Tibetans', Bell emphasised, 'one should be careful to utilize dates of good omen as far as possible, for it is a matter to which they attach great importance'.[24] It must have been quite an emotional moment

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18 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5a 42 Report from Norbu Dondup to Bell, 26 January 1921.

19 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921 Encl No. 3 in letter from India Office to Foreign Office 12 March 1921.

20 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5e 21 Bell to Government of India, 21 February 1921.

21 Ibid.

22 Interview with Rinchen Dolma Taring, 10 November 1990.

23 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 258.

24 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 179.

when on the following day, more than eight years since they had last seen each other, Bell had his first interview with the temporal and spiritual leader of Tibet in his own capital.[25] As Bell pointed out, it was significant that 'He was not seated on his throne in accordance with a Dalai Lama's custom. As I entered the room, he came forward to meet me. I gave him a scarf of ceremony.'[26] Fully aware of the diplomatic implications, Bell noted that, 'he took it over his wrists as it is taken by one equal from another, and gave me his scarf over my wrists. Then he grasped both my hands in his own, and held them for a time, smiling happily at me. "What a pity you could not come in the summer, when the flowers are out! Now there are no flowers, and the trees are nearly all bare".'[27]

Bell wrote: 'What a contrast between the Chinese Mission to Lhasa of 1919-20 and mine seven months later'.[28] The degree of faith placed in Bell by the Dalai Lama was demonstrated by the contrast in his reception and that of the Chinese, when 'each member was unceremoniously searched, to make sure that he was not secreting arms on his person. They were kept waiting at the Jewel Park palace for two hours, while this search was made, and were then conducted into the Precious Sovereign's presence, and conversed through an interpreter.'[29] During the four and a half months of their stay they had only two interviews with the Dalai Lama.[30]

Bell's first weeks in Lhasa were largely occupied in receiving and paying visits, and exchanging lunches, teas and evening meals with new and old friends.[31] Rinchen Taring recalled that 'a luncheon was given for Bell and David Macdonald at Tsarong House.'[32] 'Everybody was very excited and the servants were whispering and giggling. We children had to stay quite'.[33] Apart from the more formal visits, Bell 'had time also for quiet rides and walks, observing the country and people and talking with all and sundry. We also visited many monasteries.'[34] The diplomatic advantage of sending Bell as the British envoy was evident from the beginning: 'By reason of my friendship with

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25 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 259.

26 Ibid. See PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 for list of presents from the Viceroy to the Dalai Lama and return.

27 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 261. For official report of this meeting see PRO:FO371/6607/F289/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 18 December 1920, Encl No. 2 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 24 January 1921.

28 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 263.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Interview with R. Collett, 16 August 1992.

32 Interview with R. D. Taring, 18 November 1990.

33 Ibid.

34 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 270.

the Dalai Lama and many others, all were willing to converse. . . so I learned the views of Lhasa and Tashi Lhunpo, of monks and laymen, of civil and military, of official, merchant and peasant'.[35]

However, as noted earlier, this realization was not shared by those back in India. Bell recalled: 'When I had been only three weeks in Lhasa the government of India ordered me to come away again. Now that I had come to their capital, the Tibetans were hoping that we would give them some substantial help against Chinese aggression on Tibet.'[36] The Dalai Lama and his government expected that when Bell was in their capital the political relations between Tibet and Britain would be examined thoroughly. Accordingly, the prospect of Bell's departure had thoroughly alarmed the Tibetan government. From his vantage point in Lhasa, it was not difficult for Bell to grasp the political consequences of such a move. 'The old Prime Minister said "Everybody will say that you are annoyed with us" or "that the British Government has fallen out with the Tibetan Government". "If you go now " you, my old friend, "will be rubbing my face in the dust".[37]

The incident caused considerable turmoil in Lhasa. The four members of the Cabinet called and pressed Bell to stay on. The chief representatives of the Parliament, monk officials and laymen impressed on him the need to remain in Lhasa. Indeed they thought it essential that Bell should remain for several months longer, until their problems had been eased. The degree of concern felt by all at the prospect of Bell's early departure from Lhasa was expressed in a desperate solution put forward by the All Covering Abbot, who told a mutual friend, 'We will first beg Lonchen Bell with folded hands to stay. If he does not agree to stay, we will throw our arms round him next to keep him. If he still insists on going, we will hold on to him with our teeth, so that he will have to knock our teeth down our throats before he will be able to get away'.[38] By May the Government of India saw the wisdom of Bell remaining in Lhasa in the event of the Chinese responding to their diplomatic pressure. Bell had convinced the government that the benefits of remaining in Lhasa outweighed any disadvantage his stay might have on the London talks.

The complications of Lhasa politics were early drawn to Bell's attention. During one conversation the Tibetan Prime Minister gave Bell a piece of thoroughly sound advice: 'I advise you to conduct all your business direct with His Holiness the Dalai Lama; not with the Cabinet, and not even with me. Otherwise all sorts of people will

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35 Ibid.
36 Ibid. pp. 275-6.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid. pp. 276-277.

come to know secrets which should be kept from them, and harm will result.'[39] 'Working in this way,' Bell maintained 'secrets were better kept, matters were dealt with promptly, and often settled finally; for the Dalai Lama was an unquestioned autocrat, and one that knew his own mind'.[40]

One of the contributing factors to the later cooling of relations with the British was attributed by Bell to his successors conducting their business with the Cabinet: 'Such would have to be referred to the Prime Minister, who would pass it on to the Dalai Lama.'[41] The contrast did not go unnoticed. Rai Bahadur Norbhu Dhondup, who served in the British Political Agency for thirty years, noted that 'in the case of Bell's successors the Dalai Lama sat above them on a raised dais.'[42] When Bell retired from his post as Political Officer for Sikkim, Norbhu or Kushog Ringang interpreted for both Bailey and Weir, who later took over his position. Commenting on this Bell, makes an important point: 'Excellent interpreters they must have been, but it is still better to have none at all.'[43] The advantage Bell had in this respect cannot be underestimated. In the period following Bell's mission lack of direct communication between the British officials and the Tibetans was undoubtedly one of the reasons for strained relations. There was no direct contact until Bailey's visit in 1924 and, although claiming to understand the Tibetan language, his empathy with the Tibetan culture was not as profound as Bell's.

Bell made an exceptional effort to comply with Tibetan traditions.[44] 'The Dalai Lama honours me, and I am gaining the goodwill of the people by studying and observing Tibetan customs, as well as Tibetan etiquette, which to them is so important.'[45] Bell gives an example of the effect of this approach and its wider implications. After one ceremony, 'on his way out the Dalai Lama stops the procession, while he turns round to give me a friendly smile. Further down the hall he repeats this action. This is considered an unprecedented honour; he has never done it to anybody before. Several Tibetans come and speak to me about it.'[46] The implications were evident: 'Such a gesture on the Dalai Lama's part may seem a small matter, but it was, in fact, a help to me in my mission. I had aroused hostility among a number of the

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39 Ibid. p. 264.
40 Ibid. p. 265.
41 Ibid. p. 264.
42 Ibid. p. 263.
43 Ibid.
44 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5d.7. News Letter No. 10, Bell to Government of India, 22 April 1921.
45 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 329.
46 Ibid. p. 308.

influential monks by recommending the Dalai Lama to increase the army; but was able to turn much of this hostility aside by learning Tibetan customs and observing them carefully and here was the Dalai Lama's public recognition of my doing so.'[47]

A new dimension was added to Bell's visit when he was brought into personal touch with the Tibetan doctrine of reincarnation. The Tibetans implied that in his last life he was a high Tibetan lama who prayed that he might be reborn in a powerful country so as to be able to help Tibet. 'That explains why', wrote Bell, that 'I a Briton in this life, have worked so long for Tibet, and though weak in bodily health, have been preserved during the long, hard winter, contrary to general expectation.[48] While seemingly an unimportant fact which could be consigned to the dark mystery of Mahayana Tantric Buddhism, viewed politically it becomes significant. The recognition of Bell as a reincarnation was symbolic: Tibetan use the device of recognising foreigners as incarnations to incorporate foreign friends and acquaintances into their social life. These procedures neutralize alien and potentially disruptive influences, and make sense of and incorporate any intrusions.

One of Bell's first letters sent from Lhasa in January 1921 stated that the Lhasa government believed that the 'time was never so opportune as now for concluding a treaty with China'.[49] China currently appeared disunited and weak to the Tibetans. They argued, quite rightly, that a China reunited and strong would be more difficult to come to terms with. Underlying this conjecture was the belief that a treaty concluded by the existing government of China would not be repudiated by a future Chinese government, 'especially when the British Government acts as an intermediary in it.'[50]

From the very beginning of his stay in Lhasa, Bell emphasised the fact that the Tibetan question had 'dragged on for some twelve years without any final result' and the Tibetans 'are weary beyond measure at this great delay'. He made it abundantly clear to the Government in India that the Tibetans 'are sorely tried in finding the expense incurred in maintaining a large number of soldiers for the last ten years'.[51] At this early stage in his visit Bell summarised the requests for assistance from the Government of India:

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47 Ibid.

48 Ibid. pp. 354-5.

49 PRO:FO371/6607, F928/59/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921 Encl No. 3 in letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1921.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

> that pressure may be brought to bear upon the Chinese Government for an early settlement of the Tibetan question on the basis of the Simla Tripartite Conference (1913-14); that facilities may be afforded for further training of the Tibetan army and supply of arms and ammunition and that facilities may also be afforded for engaging mining prospectors, and for buying machinery from India for mining purposes.[52]

The reluctance of the British to supply arms and ammunition had been a sore point with the Tibetans since 1914 and Bell's first news letter on 24 January to the Foreign and Political Department in India noted that during the 'last nine years about 2,000 small firearms' have come from the North to Lhasa. Mongolia was said to be 'flooded at present with Japanese rifles, which the Japanese have exported to enable the Siberians and Mongolians to resist the Bolshevists'.[53] To Bell the solution was obvious:

> It would seem desirable that, as the Tibetan Government is in real need of arms and ammunition, they should obtain these from us rather than from a Japanese source, for we shall thus exercise some measure of control over the military strength of the country.[54]

Bell was concerned that Japanese pressure on Tibet might increase. Indeed, Japanese influence was already evident in Lhasa. He revealed that now there was only one Japanese, named Tada, in Lhasa who had been studying in the Sera Monastery for some years. 'So far', Bell disclosed, 'there is no sign of political activity on his part. But Japanese, as a rule, find it difficult to abstain from politics, and it would therefore be unsafe to assume that he will not at any time take part in them'.[55] He reported also that there was no sign of any Bolshevist activity in Tibet: 'The whole trend of feeling in Tibet - even more than in Mongolia - must, I think, be against Bolshevism. It is against their religion and their customs and they will not easily depart from either'.[56] Bell concluded that 'As far as one can see, there is no danger of Bolshevisim in Tibet.'[57]

Bell's first thorough assessment of Lhasa's politics was not sent to the Government of India until he had been nearly three months in the capital.[58] On 21

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52 Ibid.

53 IOR: MSS Eur F80 6d.7 News Letter No. 1 from Bell to Government of India, 24 January 1921.

54 Ibid.

55 IOR: MSS Eur F8O 5d.7 News Letter No. 5 from Bell to Government of India, 6 February 1921.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5e 21 Bell to Secretary to the Government of India, 21 February 1921.

February 1921, when it was becoming increasingly obvious that the Chinese government was not going to reopen negotiations, Bell submitted to Simla his recommendations on future British policy towards Tibet. 'Now that I have been three months in Lhasa, in close touch with the Tibetan Government and people, and have gained such an insight into Tibetan feeling, as can be afforded only by a residence in the capital, I hold it to be my duty to place my views before you.'[59]

As for the British, Bell held them verifiably responsible for most of the predicaments with which Lhasa was now faced. Bell worked from the assumption that the Simla Agreement formed the foundation for the existing relationship between Britain and Tibet, and would remain so unless China was persuaded to renegotiate the Simla Agreement. Bell therefore urged that the Indian Government should take active steps to strengthen autonomous Tibet so that it could develop into an amicable independent state capable of her own defence. In particular, he thought it expedient that the arms embargo that British India had imposed on Tibet during and since the war to avoid offending China be lifted. Underlying the motive of strengthening and developing Tibet was the expectation that it would coerce the Chinese government to cooperate and come forward and complete the negotiations in a tripartite settlement.

As part of his strategy to achieve this new policy, Bell conveyed graphically the advantages gained for Britain which had accrued from the Simla Convention:

> (a) Chinese troops and colonists are practically debarred from Outer Tibet. Thus Chinese pressure is withdrawn from the northern frontier of India from Kashmire to Assam, a frontier 1500 miles in length.
> (b) The Chinese and Tibetan Governments are debarred from entering into negotiations or agreements regarding Tibet with one another, except through us and under the Conventions, of 1904 or 1906.
> (c) We can obtain concessions in Tibet, if necessary. (By the cancellation of Article III of the 1906 Convention. Foreign Powers cannot do so without the previous consent of the British Government. (Article IX of the 1904 Convention).
> (d) The same treatment for British commerce as for that of China or the most favoured nation.
> (3) The right of the British Agent at Gyantse to visit Lhasa, whenever necessary.
> (f) An excellent frontier line between India and Tibet. To fix this the Tibetan Government ceded to us the Twang district with an area of 2000 square miles, largely low-lying fertile country, and adjoining the plains of India. They also ceded other tracts bordering on the tribal territories north of Assam. This adds immensely to the security of the North-Eastern frontier of India, as we have now an unbroken belt of mountain territory about a hundred miles deep.
> (g) Direct dealings with the Tibetan Government without the medium of the Chinese.[60]

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59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.

Bell further described the British gains from the new trade regulations:

> (a) The right to export Indian tea to Outer Tibet free of duty instead of, as before, under a prohibitive duty of five annas a pound.
> (b) The abolition of monopolies in Tibet. Trade is frequently strangled by monopolies in Tibet and neighbouring countries.
> (c) The enlargement of our Trade Marts in Tibet and their improvement in various respects.
> (d) The cancellation of the previous undertaking to withdraw our escorts and our rights of extra-territoriality.
> (e) The withdrawal of the previous restrictions on British subjects travelling in Tibet. [61]

The advantages to Britain and India were clear:

> (a) A northern frontier for India of unparalleled strength and security. No other land frontier in the world can in these respects approach the great Northern Plateau of Tibet to the north, buttressed by the Himalayas to the south.
> (b) The fullest possible commercial advantages in Tibet.
> (c) A position in Tibet, which enables us to safeguard our position here, while leaving to the Tibetans the autonomy which they so richly deserve and for which they are well fitted. [62]

Adding icing to the cake, Bell stated that 'in addition to the above advantages we have in Tibet an ideal barrier against Bolshevist influence'.[63] Quoting from Teichman's 'Report on a Visit to Urga', of August 1920, he substantiated his views: 'China and India can have no better buffers against Russian Bolshevism than the lamaistic populations of Mongolia and Tibet, provided they are trusted and treated as friends and not antagonised'.[64]

Bell bluntly concluded that an atmosphere of distrust had begun to characterise Anglo-Tibetan relations: 'There is general weariness both of the Government and of the people. All feel that we are not acting up to our promises, direct or implied, to enable Tibet to strengthen and establish its autonomy.'[65] Bell added a sober warning: 'this weariness manifests itself in various ways. They recall former prophecies, to which, in this religious land, great importance is attached. "The British are the road-makers of Tibet" is one, meaning in effect that we shall come to Tibet, stay for some years and then go away. Another prophecy says, "The sheep put their trust in the meadow, and were

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.

hurled down the precipice below". The meaning of which is sufficiently obvious',[66] stated Bell. In a rhetorical question he asked, 'What will be the result if we continue our present policy of aloofness? He warns, . . . as the prophecies put it, they will find us useless and in despair will turn to China.'[67] This policy, according to Bell, was pursued with consummate skill by the Chinese and 'Sir John Jordan . . . has noted that this is what the Chinese are waiting for.'[68]

Bell's greatest fear was that if the British delayed in offering qualified commitments to Lhasa, 'Japan and China combined will gain the power in Tibet'.[69] He was forceful in his condemnation: 'We, after having encouraged the Tibetans for so many years, will be regarded by them as their betrayers and we shall meet with scorn that falls on those who do not fulfil their promises'.[70] The blame was squarely placed on the shoulders of the British government: 'For our Government, having definitely promised them machine guns and other munitions of war, not only refuses now to supply them, but actively prevents Tibet from obtaining them'.[71]

In Bell's final report he summed up his position: 'it appeared to me desirable to place our relations with Tibet on a firmer basis, so as to obviate future causes of misunderstanding. Accordingly, when I had been three months in Lhasa and was thus able to test in the capital my previous fifteen years experience of Tibetan politics, I formulated proposals for our future policy towards Tibet.'[72]

The basis for his proposals were forcefully outlined:

> We should wait no longer for a China that does not intend to negotiate, until she finds it definitely in her own interest to do so. We should recognise that Tibet, a well-governed country, does not wish that her internal administration should come again under the misgovernment and oppression of China. We should recognise that she has for ten years maintained troops at great sacrifice on her eastern frontier to keep out the Chinese invaders. Finally, we should recognise India's vital interests in this problem and the dangers that threaten her in our present policy of inaction. [73]

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66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 IOR:MSS Eur F8O 5f Lhasa Mission, November 1920 to October 1921, Final Report.
73 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5e 21 Bell to Secretary to the Government of India, 21 February 1921.

'Recognising these things then' Bell stated 'we should help Tibet to help herself'.[74] Bell set out what he considered India's future policy towards Tibet should be: 'The Indian Government should agree to let the Tibetans import munitions in reasonable quantities, to help train their troops at Gyantse, and allow British experts to teach them the mechanics of making gunpowder and mining prospectors should be despatched to assist in discovering and working mines.'[75] Proceeding along these lines, Tibet would be economically and militarily dependent on Britain, but 'only to just that extent that is desirable, and they will promote our interests by promoting their own.'[76] There was no suggestion that the Tibetans be persuaded to undertake anything they did not want. The report concluded:

> We cannot continue any longer to profess friendship for Tibet, while treating it in the way we do. The Tibetans are a civilised people, - more so than is generally realised, - and they will not wait much longer. China is pressing, Japan has begun to press. We cannot bury our heads in the sand, like the ostrich, trying to prevent dangers by ignoring them. Our only chance of keeping out Japan and China is by establishing our influence in the country first. Government have an exceptional, possibly an unique, opportunity of settling this question now, while I am in Lhasa.[77]

As if sensing he might have overplayed his hand, Bell added that 'I would most particularly request that I may be informed on what points, if any, they [the Indian government] disagree with me and their reasons for such disagreement'.[78]

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74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.

CHAPTER 8

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW POLICY

> 'We have no wish to dominate Tibet. That would truly be a foolish policy. We wish Tibet to have internal autonomy, under the lightest possible form of Chinese suzerainty, . . . We want her to be free to develop on her own lines'.[1]

The response to Bell's report of 21 February was encouraging. The new Viceroy, Lord Reading, in a communication to the Secretary of State, 'endorsed' what he termed Bell's 'constructive' and 'admirably restrained' policy. 'Bell is clearly right in saying that we cannot hope to keep Tibet satisfied with mere protestations of our friendship or even with written assurances from China (supposing we could obtain them) that she will not molest her'.[2] The Viceroy accepted that what Tibet wanted was either China's acceptance of the tripartite agreement or the Government of India's assistance in developing her own powers of self-defence in order to keep China at arm's length.[3]

The 'pith of it is', said Reading, 'that we should help Tibet to stand on her own'. Nor in his opinion could the pace be forced in Tibet: 'all she really wants is to live her own life'. For as 'long as Tibet wishes to keep her doors shut, we do not see any reason in self-defence or otherwise to attempt to force them'. To do so would be to 'jeopardise our influence over her', which 'springs largely from our forbearance to foist ourselves upon her'.[4] 'True', he conceded, 'Tibet may at present possibly wish for a British Envoy at Lhasa as sort of insurance against Chinese aggression, but we firmly believe that as soon as she has proof that we are going to help her strengthen her military position, question of British Envoy will not trouble her'.[5]

This is precisely what many Lhasa officials wanted from Britain: a tangible form of protectorate agreement whereby Britain would provide a mantle of military security for Tibet without at the same time interfering in internal matters. It was contended by many of the Lhasa aristocracy that if a British-Tibetan relationship was to be of any worth to Tibet, Britain should furnish the essential military defence against China.[6]

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1 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5e 21 Bell to Government of India, 21 February 1921.
2 IOR:L/P&S/10/833 P2241 Letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 May 1921.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 247.

Considering the altered post-war conditions in Asia, especially the British withdrawal from Asian commitments, Bell considered that this form of protection would be inconceivable.[7] There is no doubt that it was recognized in India and Britain that a 'protectorate policy' similar to the one in Sikkim would be inappropriate for Tibet. Such a policy would have devolved far too heavy a burden upon the Government of India and they were determined not to assume it. In later years Bell maintained that this decision 'reckoned in some measure to our credit' as showing that Britain did not covet Tibetan territory.[8]

To a large extent the decision not to fortify Tibet with unabridged military support placed considerable strains on internal Tibetan politics. Bell had supported Tsarong's plan for the expansion of the Tibetan army, albeit gradually.[9] It was the conflict over military requirements which was at the root of the dissension between the various factions within the Tibetan political system. The underlying issue was the notion that the powerful monasteries might be taxed to finance such a scheme. The tensions exploded in August 1921 in what has become known as the Loseling affair. The climax to the whole episode came when the Dalai Lama resorted to extraordinary measures and brought the military into Lhasa.[10] These events were of considerable concern for Bell. It was evident to him that if civil war broke out the pro-Chinese faction might manipulate the situation and arouse anti-British sentiments. The wider political repercussions of the internal incident were also clearly understood by Bell. He knew it could provide the Chinese government with the plausible argument that the Tibetans were incapable of governing themselves. More importantly, it would put at risk London's confidence in the feasibility and stability of an independent Tibet. Although Bell was fully aware that the Government of India would not consider any form of military protectorate, he feared that if Britain refused to permit the Lhasa government at least to purchase arms and ammunition, they might conclude an independent treaty with China.

Simla fundamentally agreed with Bell's proposals and conceded they were 'the result of critical analysis on the spot of conclusions formed on a life-long study of the

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7 British Library, 010057.l.3 C. Bell, Diary Vol. VII, pp. 70-71.

8 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 247.

9 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5a 42 Letter from David MacDonald, Camp Nyethang to Bell, 20 January 1921.

10 Bell's account of this incident is in News Letter No. 9, 'Threatened outbreak in Lhasa' IOR:MSS Eur F80 5d 7. PRO:FO371/6608/F1884/59/10 POS to Government of India, 5 April 1921.

problems'.[11] In May 1921 they recommended to the home government that Bell's 'constructive policy' be adopted.[12] Officials in India wanted the British government's recognition of Tibet's autonomy to be less ambiguous and Bell's proposals would sanction the 'special position' the Government of India had gained by the Anglo-Tibetan Agreement, a position they were intent on preserving.

The response from Lampson in the Foreign Office to the India Office's submission of Bell's report was non-committal:

> What Mr. Bell urges has much weight, and no doubt the Government of India and the India Office are considering his arguments. But if they wish an expression of opinion from us they will ask for it and they have not so far done so. I would merely note therefore in passing that the main point under discussion - the supplying of arms - turns upon two questions: (a) whether Tibet is to be considered as part of 'China' for the purposes of the enforcement of our Arms Embargo and (b) whether we are prepared to face (l) the wrecking of the Arms Embargo generally by other Powers in China, that would very probably ensure (2) the anti-British reaction throughout China proper which would almost certainly follow any such move on our part in Tibet.'[13]

The whole Tibetan question had assumed a new aspect when it was decided in 1919 that Britain was precluded by the Arms Convention from affording the Tibetans the further material support on which Britain's case for their Tibetan policy rested. The problem which now had to be solved was how to give the Tibetans support, in accordance with Sir Henry McMahon's assurances to the Tibetan government in 1914, without violating principles of international equity and without so offending the Chinese as to prejudice Sino-British commercial relations.[14]

The question of arming Tibet against a possible threat from China was, obviously, a matter of serious concern at the highest levels of government. This was shown by the intensity of the debate. The reason for such intense controversy and apprehension was that the question of arms supply could only be considered as an integral part of a larger problem: a radical change in the policy of isolating or insulating Tibet that had been followed previously. In the development of a new policy, the question of arms supply was pivotal. In Bell's view the provisions and wording of the

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11 PRO: FO371/6608/F2142/59/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 11 May 1921 Encl No. l in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 9 June 1921.

12 IOR:L/P&S/10/833 P2241 Letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 May 1921.

13 PRO:FO371/6607/Fl238/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 14 April 1921 relating to papers communicated by India Office, 7 April 1921.

14 IOR: L/P&S/10/716 P3495 Letter from Alston to Curson, 27 April 1920.

Arms Traffic Convention were sufficiently flexible for Lhasa to be supplied with its defence needs. The solution to the problem was, however, a protracted process.

The reason behind the Entente decision to institute an arms embargo was primarily the protection of ordered communities against armed attack. Wakely argued that if China could be regarded as a 'stable political organism' then the case against supplying the Tibetans with arms which might be used against them would be 'unanswerable'.[15] This was not, of course, the case, as it was the very inability of Peking to control the aggressive tendencies of their own local officers in Tibet's eastern border area that compelled the Tibetans to remain in a defensive position.

A number of alternatives were put forward. Wakely pointed out that Tibet did not lie within the 'zone of prohibition' as defined in Article VI of the Convention, and that Tibet's affairs were of little interest to any of the signatory Powers except Great Britain and China and the latter, considering the internal disunity, was hardly in a position to take exception.[16] Edwin Montagu's suggestion that Tibet might be invited to adhere to the Arms Convention, and so become eligible under Article I to be supplied with arms for her own governmental requirements,[17] would have required Tibet first to obtain admission to the League of Nations. The alternative of inviting the Lhasa government to adhere to the Arms Convention did not seem, from Wakely's point of view, possible, 'for Tibet, as has been formally recognised by His majesty's Government, is under the "suzerainty" of China, and presumably does not enjoy a status qualifying her to participate as a principal in an international Convention of the kind.'[18] In essence, the 1919 Convention defined 'suitable' as referring either to fully sovereign states, internationally recognized as such, or such states which enjoyed the equivalent of dominion status, as in the British Commonwealth where the right to acquire arms for the purposes of self-defence and internal security was not questioned.[19] Wakely summed up this invidious situation very well:

> It is not reasonable that the Tibetan Government should be debarred by a technical inferiority of status from the means of protecting themselves, while their nominal suzerain - itself a signatory of the Arms Convention- not only affords them no assistance, but even allows its

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15 IOR: L/P&S/18/344 B.344 P5833,'Question of Supply of Arms' letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 15 October 1919.

16 Ibid.

17 IOR:L/P&S/18/344 B.344 P1409 Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1920.

18 IOR:L/P&S/18/344 B.344 P5833 Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 15 October 1919.

19 A. K. J. Singh, op.cit., p.89.

> subjects to threaten them with just the kind of danger that the Convention was primarily intended to avert.[20]

Bell's opinion in this connection was that the prohibition in China was rendered necessary on account of the disunion between North and South. In Tibet, he pointed out, 'there is no disunion' and 'though the Tibetan Government may be backward as a Government, from the point of view of the European nations, it is quite capable of making its authority recognised throughout the whole country.'[21]

Thinking along the same lines, Beilby Alston ventured to suggest that a solution might be found on the basis of regarding Tibet as a self-governing dominion of the Chinese Commonwealth standing in the same relation to China as Canada to Great Britain.[22] Lord Curzon agreed that the 'carrying out of our obligations to Tibet would be in no way incompatible with status of that country as self-governing dominion of Chinese Commonwealth. From the India government's perspective, Tibet was clearly entitled to a self-governing dominion's position and status'.[23] Moreover, he argued that the Chinese government were explicitly informed in 1914 that owing to their failure to sign the Simla Convention they 'had lost the privilege of provision therein included for the recognition of their sovereignty over Tibet'.[24] In the negotiations at Simla the British government had been prepared to recognize Chinese suzerainty over Tibet only as part of a bargain involving specific undertakings by the Chinese. Until the Chinese gave those undertakings, by accepting the whole convention, recognition remained one of the advantages denied to them unless they actually signed it, and the Tibetans had continuously and resolutely refused to acknowledge China as suzerain.

While a solution to the problem was being sought in Whitehall, Bell, in an early report from Lhasa, made the position in Tibet quite clear: 'We have prevented them from obtaining ammunition either from ourselves or from Japan, by blocking the route through India. But without serviceable ammunition - their own, as Lieutenant-Colonel Kennedy and I have seen in the little arsenal here, is very crude - they can neither

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20 IOR:L/P&S/18/344 B.344 'Question of Supply of Arms', letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 15 October 1919.

21 PRO:FO371/6606/F928/59/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India 19 January 1921, Encl No. 3 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1921.

22 IOR: L/P&S/10/716 P3495 Letter from Alston to Curson, 27 April 1920.

23 PRO:FO535/ F660/22/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 23 April 192O.

24 Ibid.

maintain internal order nor defend themselves against external aggression.'[25] Bell did not mince his words: 'By barring Tibet from buying munitions in India we are breaking promises which were made to her in the name of His Majesty's Government, we are undermining her hard won freedom and we are jeopardising the security of the northern frontier of India.'[26]

The risk involved in continuing to deny a supply of arms to Tibet was emphasised by Bell. On 21 January 1921 he wired that he had been informed by a Tibetan friend that the Lhasa government was now considering importing 'some thousands of rifles from Mongolia'.[27] A few days later Bell reported that 'A machine gun, said to be of Hussian make, seven Japanese rifles, and a box of bombs arrived in Lhasa a few days ago from Mongolia. It is said that the machine gun has been tested here and found satisfactory.' [28] And in February Bell advised the Government of India that the 'Dalai Lama has written to his agent in Mongolia to buy as many machine guns as possible'.[29] Enormous quantities of Japanese arms were 'smuggled' into Mongolia during this time and used to defend the country from the Bolsheviks. Bell believed that an equally dangerous consequence of this was the 'growing admiration for the Japanese', whom Tibetans viewed as having 'helped Mongolia against the Bolsheviks'. In Bell's view, Japan was a 'strong power steadily advancing near to Tibet'.[30] Bell wrote:

> It would seem desirable that, as the Tibetan Government is in real need of arms and ammunition, they should obtain these from us rather than from a Japanese source, for we shall thus exercise some measure of control over the military strength of the country. Otherwise, we shall

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25 PRO:FO371/6606/F928/59/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India 19 January 1921, Encl No. 3 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1921.

26 IOR:MSS EUR F80, 5E 21/26, Bell to Government of India, 21 February 1921.

27 PRO:FO371/6607/F643/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 21 January 1921, Encl No. 3 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 21 February 1921.

28 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 News Letter No. 3 from Bell to Government of India, 29 January 1921.

29 PRO:FO371/6607/F1241/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 21 February 1921, Encl No. 2 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 6 April 1921. Tsarong was also importing Japanese rifles, as were other traders. See IOR:MSS Eur F8O No. 42 Note from Norbu Dhondup to Bell, 28 January 1921.

30 PRO:FO535/24/22/10 Bell to Government of India, 10 January 1921. Tibetan affinity with Japan was based on the fact that they were both Buddhist countries.

> be faced with a growing Japanese influence in Tibet, and this is perhaps not a prospect that we can afford to regard with equanimity.[31]

Like other British issues in Central Asia, the question of arms for Tibet needed to be related to its effect on Japanese expansion. Whitehall feared Japan would use British military aid to Tibet as an excuse to break the agreement of May, 1919 not to supply China with arms and for further aggression in Manchuria and Shantung. 'The Chinese' maintained Lampson, 'are not slow to invoke the trade boycott, and with our important commercial interests in China it is not a risk we should run without full consideration and prior consultation with the Legation at Peking.'[32]

Miles Lampson's explanation was emphatic: 'We would gladly supply the arms necessary for her self-protection against Chinese aggression if we were in a position to do so. But we are not.'[33] The position of the Foreign Office as he saw it was clear: 'Under the arms embargo we are precluded from sending arms or ammunition into any part of China; and if we sent arms into Tibet, however justified by circumstances we might be in doing so we should certainly be accused of breaking our pledges by Japan, America, and Italy'.[34] Lampson argued that the Japanese and Italians would seize on any excuse to resume their shipments of arms to China. 'With both Japan and Italy we have already had trouble in keeping them up to the mark in the matter of the embargo, and we have enlisted the support of America. Our position would be impossible were we now ourselves to go back on our word and send rifles or ammunition to Tibet'.[35]

The assistant secretary, Victor Wellesley, agreed that the supply of arms to Tibet was 'not so much a question of legalities as of political expediency'.[36] While he thought that the arms embargo did not apply to Tibet, Wellesley maintained that this would not prevent any attempt on the part of Britain to supply arms to Tibet from being interpreted by the Japanese, Italians and Americans as a violation of the arms embargo. According to him, they would be only too ready to seize on it as a welcome excuse for regarding the embargo as no longer binding. That would be 'fatal from the point of view of restoring order and peace in China.'[37]

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31 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5d.7 Newsletter No. 1 from Bell to Government of India, 24 January 1921. See also IOR: L/P&S/10/971/F1263.

32 PRO:FO371/6607/F1238/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 14 April 1921.

33 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 21 March 1921.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 Minute by Wellesley, 22 March 1921.

37 Ibid.

Newton was aware that other Powers might make the supply of arms to Tibet a pretext for breaking the embargo, but was inclined to think 'that if they were to do so in face of the strong justification for our action, it would mean that they were determined to break the Embargo, if not on one pretext, then on another.[38] 'After all', he argued 'it is a general interest and not merely a British interest that the Embargo should be maintained, while the pressure to break it comes mainly from arms merchants who have large stocks to dispose of, and whose interest would scarcely be aroused by the small quantities sent to Tibet.'[39]

Eric Teichman's views were more in accord with those of Bell's. When one considered that:

> the relative efficiency of the Tibetan and Chinese Governments, and contrasts the comparative law and order prevailing in Tibet with the anarchy prevailing in the brigand-infested districts under nominal Chinese control, it is obvious that we are fully justified in giving the Tibetans the means of policing their own country, and protecting it against irresponsible raids from the Chinese border.[40]

Teichman displayed no uncertainty. According to him, 'the only obstacles are the China Arms embargo understanding and the possible reaction on our trade with China'. As regards the former, he considered it to be unreasonable as Tibet has 'enjoyed absolute de facto independence for the past 10 years'. As regards the latter, 'I submit that if we proceed tactfully in the matter we need not fear a boycott of our trade'.[41]

During 1921, while Bell was in Lhasa, the search for a solution to the arms problem continued in Whitehall. The emphasis, however, began to be laid upon indentification of Tibet's status. Commenting on this issue, Lampson minuted that 'as to whether Tibet is or is not a part of "China", it would seem difficult to maintain that it is not.'[42] In the abortive negotiations with China of 1914, Britain went on record as admitting China's suzerainty in Article 2 of the 'tripartite agreement'. It is true, noted Lampson, 'that China refused eventually to sign and that we have formally declared that she is debarred from anything accruing to her under that agreement. . .'[43] According to Lampson, China had refused to sign, not on account of any difference as to principle, but simply and solely because China would not accept the Sino-Tibetan frontier prescribed in the Agreement. He maintained that 'many authorities hold that China was

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38 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Minute by Newton, 28 May 1921.
39 Ibid.
40 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Minute by Teichman, 23 May 1921.
41 PRO:FO371/6608/ F1854/59/10 Minute by Teichman, 18 May 1921.
42 PRO:FO371/6607/Fl238/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 14 April 1921.
43 Ibid.

right on this'.[44] Lampson was typical of those in the Foreign Office who believed 'We should find it difficult to argue that Tibet is not subject to Chinese suzerainty - and if so, is Tibet not part of 'China'? [45]

Malkin's observations from the point of view of international law were somewhat different: 'The fact, if it be a fact, that China is suzerain over Tibet does not necessarily make the latter country part of the former.'[46] Taking a 'western' view of the term 'suzerainty' Malkin maintained that:

> Suzerainty is a relation between two different states, in virtue of which the suzerain exercises certain rights, usually of an international nature, over the vassal, but suzerainty is not the same thing as sovereignty. There have been cases, e.g. Egypt, where the vassal state was on the whole regarded as forming part of the territory of the suzerain, but there are more examples to the contrary.[47]

He concluded, 'I should say the fact of China's being suzerain over Tibet is rather an argument against the contention that Tibet is part of China than one in support of it.'[48] Edward Parkes consolidated this position with his deposition that Great Britain had entered into direct treaty engagements with Tibet, whilst admitting Chinese suzerainty. According to him, 'Para 1 of the British Declaration to the Chinese Government embodied in Sir J Jordan's memo of Aug 17 1912' defined 'British policy'.[49] British policy in 1912 had been to regard Tibet as 'an autonomous state between India and China under Chinese suzerainty'.[50] Parkes maintained that while HMG had formally recognised the 'suzerain rights' of China in Tibet, they had never recognised and would not be prepared to recognise the right of China to intervene actively in the internal administration of Tibet, which he claimed 'should remain as contemplated by the treaties, in the hands of the Tibetan authorities, subject to the right of Great Britain and China under Art 1 of the Convention of the 27 April, 1906.'[51]

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44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 PRO:FO371/6607/F1238/59/10 Minute by Malkin, 14 April 1921 comments on papers communicated by India Office, 7 April 1921.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 PRO:FO371/6607/ F1238/59/10 Minute by Parkes, 15 April 1921 comments on papers communicated by India Office, 7 April 1921. See IOR:L/P&S/18/B191 Extract from Memorandum communicated to Wai-chiao Pu by Sir J. Jordan, 17 August 1912.
50 PRO:FO371/6607/F1238/59/10 Minute by Parkes, 15 April 1921.
51 Ibid.

In India, the government had also found some difficulty in following the arguments of London's inter-departmental conference held the previous year.[52] It seemed to them that it had proceeded on the assumption that as the import of arms to China had been stopped under international agreement, the import of arms to Tibet must be ruled out, as Tibet was being held as being a Chinese province. The Viceroy was quick to point out the flaw in this argument: such an assumption would, of course, have destroyed 'the whole fabric of our Tibetan policy.'[53]

While the debate continued in London, the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India brought the issue into perspective by pointing out that 'there is the significant and unpleasant fact that Tibet is already ordering Japanese arms from Mongolia, and is considering doing so on a large scale'.[54] They therefore recommended 'that in fulfilment of our promising Tibet . . . Tibet should now be allowed to import munitions in reasonable quantities from India'.[55] The Government of India agreed with Bell: 'Nothing could be more detrimental to our relations with Tibet than definite promise unfulfilled'.[56]

The arms debate was drawing to a close. By 11 May 1921 the Government of India were recommending that Tibet should now be allowed to import from India munitions in reasonable quantities, provided that 'she gives in writing a strict undertaking that they would be used only for self-defence'.[57] This would, they argued, be in 'accordance with our promise to Tibet and our warning to China after her repudiation of the Tripartite Convention'.[58] Considering that relations would be most adversely affected by failure to fulfil a definite promise, they were now more that happy to 'make good the definite promise made during the war of a gift of one or two machine-guns'.[59] They 'earnestly trust His Majesty's government will see their way . . . to revise their decision on this point'.[60]

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52 PRO:FO535/F2441/22/10 Interdepartmental Conference held Thursday 22 July 1920 attended by Jordan, Hirtzel, Wellesley,Wakely and Bentinck.

53 IOR: L/P&S/10/833 P2241 Letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State 11 May 1921.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 PRO:FO371/6608/F2142/59/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 11 May 1921, Encl No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 9 June 1921.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

Some form of agreement appeared to be evolving. Teichman noted that 'the "firm and open attitude towards China" now recommended by Indian Government is on the lines of the proposals put forward by His Majesty's Minister at Peking. . .'[61] except that 'the Legation did not contemplate making such a point of telling Chinese that we were going to supply arms. . .'[62] In fact, the Government of India were indeed being 'firm' in proposing that after a final ultimatum to the Chinese government to resume negotiations, Britain should deal directly with Tibet on a bilateral basis 'without reference to China'.[63] The Legation's proposal was less decisive. They proposed that the British government should bring pressure to bear on the Chinese by telling them that they were tired of waiting and intended going ahead openly with the Tibetans and entering into close relations with them independently of China by sending a permanent representative to Lhasa.[64] This was to be made explicit while at the same time continuing to offer the Chinese a settlement on the basis of their own offer.[65] Either way, this amounted to a definite rejection of the sterilization policy.

As early as May 1920 Alston maintained that the sterilisation of Tibet was a policy which had outlived its usefulness. Alston argued that 'Tibet, with a British agency at Lhassa and the country thrown open to British enterprise and developed under our auspices, would no longer have anything to fear from secret Chinese intrigues or open Chinese aggression.'[66] The determining factor, as Alston pointed out, was that:

> if we are to avoid exposing ourselves to the charge of monopolising Tibet or seeking to exercise a protectorate over her, we must contemplate the abandonment of our policy of sterilisation of that country, and its eventual opening of foreign residence and trade as the natural result of our adoption of a more active policy. Such a reversal of our traditional attitude towards Tibet must, I fully realise, be open to many objections, but continued adherence to our present policy is, I believe, unless the Chinese come to terms in the near future, fraught with far greater dangers to the future of the Tibetan question.[67]

The British government was, he said in an invidious position. For 'the policy of sterilising Tibet is, I venture to submit now out of datc and places us in the wrong in the

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61 PRO:FO371/6608/F1854/59/10 Minute by Teichman, 18 May 1921.
62 Ibid.
63 PRO: FO371/6608/F2142/59/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 9 June 1921.
64 PRO:FO371/6608/1854/59/10 Minute by Teichman, 18 May 1921.
65 Ibid.
66 PRO:FO371/6609/F2994/59/10 Letter from Alston to Curzon, 21 May 1920 Appendix No. 8.
67 Ibid.

eyes of third parties such as America: while it cannot but appear out of harmony with any proposals for referring the question to international arbitration or the League of Nations.'[68] Britain's awkward position was defined with lucidity and conviction by Alston:

> I recollect that in a conversation with the United States Ambassador at Tokyo the latter, in explaining the reasons for the present anti-British attitude of so many Americans referred . . . to the case of Tibet; many Americans had . . . hoped to see a new order of things arise as a result of the war, and were disappointed to see us continuing our old policies and apparently engaged in secret negotiations with China, which seemed to have for their object the monopolising of Tibet in our interests to the exclusion of those of other powers.[69]

Alston implied that the entry of other nationals into Tibet could not be prevented in the long run and it was 'quite possible that were the Chinese to recover control over the country they would throw it open to international trade, in the same way that China and Mongolia are open, without consulting our wishes.'[70] The Legation's message was clear: 'our wisest policy would be to establish now such relations with the Tibetan Government that we should be able in future to control the entry of other foreigners into Tibet, and to view their residence there with equanimity owing to our preponderating influence'.[71]

In other words, strengthen the bilateral ties between Simla and Lhasa and open Tibet to the outside world as an insurance against the probability of its reconquest by China. From his vantage point in Lhasa, Bell had responded with a strong warning against these proposals emanating from the British Legation in Peking which recommended the 'opening up' of Tibet from the Indian side. As might be expected, Bell urged extreme caution in developing bilateral economic and political relations with Tibet and respect for Tibet's isolationist tendencies. He had in the past fully realised the advantage of the proposed policy of 'throwing open of Tibet to ourselves and foreigners' but now was resolutely against it.[72] He had learnt from his extended stay in Lhasa that a very strong sense of isolationism still existed in Tibet, and that overt

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 PRO:FO371/6608/F1981/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 9 May 1921, Encl No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 27 May 1921.

displays of British influence would be likely to give a stimulus to this latent anti-foreign feeling. Bell wrote from Lhasa:

> But, as I do not advocate a British Resident at Lhasa, still more strongly do I deprecate others being allowed to come to Lhasa except such as come to do work for the Tibetan Government. They would be apt to fall foul of Tibetan susceptibilities and especially of the monks. When he was here recently even an officer of the Government of India caused great offence at Lhasa. Still more will others.[73]

Bell emphatically maintained that this was a question for Tibet to settle alone: 'One has to live in Lhassa to realise the intensity of religious feeling . . . Any Christian missionary criticising Buddhism would be attacked and possibly killed.[74] Bell proposed, however, that Tibet be opened gradually as far as Gyantse by the Indian route, both to British and foreign visitors on equal terms. This would thus 'meet the criticism of foreigners, and to put us right with the world at large', and would have the desired effect of allowing the Tibetans to 'gradually become accustomed to the ways of British and other foreigners, and after a few years a further advance in this direction could be made'.[75]

Before Bell's arrival in Lhasa the Viceroy had been emphatic regarding the 'throwing open of Tibet': 'We could not view with equanimity the inevitable practical consequences of this, viz., the entry into Tibet of Japanese, and possible later on of Russians'.[76] Bell noted that 'It may be that the collapse of the Anglo-Persian Agreement has rendered the Government of India averse from trying what might be alleged to be a similar experiment in Tibet. . . It may be said that India has had enough of attempting to help backwards peoples in their development.'[77] On this possibility Bell put forward two points:

> Firstly, it would be entirely wrong to draw any analogy between Tibet and Persia; the people of the two countries are as unlike as Japan from Turkey. Persia is ill-governed, Tibet is well-governed, far better than Persia or China. She is also far better fitted for self-protection that Persia is; her people are more virile and her country offers greater difficulties to an invader. . . Secondly, our proposals for Tibet are on

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73 PRO:IOR MSS Eur F80 5e 22 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 9 May 1921.

74 Ibid.

75 PRO:FO371/6608/F1981/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 9 May 1921, Encl No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 27 May 1921.

76 PRO: FO535/F850/22/10 Letter from Viceroy to Montagu, 10 May 1920.

77 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5e 21 Bell to Government of India, 21 February 1921.

> an entirely different basis. The Anglo-Persian Agreement contemplated a large measure of British interference in Persia; one might perhaps say the British domination of Persia. We have no wish to dominate Tibet. That would truly be a foolish policy. We wish Tibet to have internal autonomy, under the lightest possible form of Chinese suzerainty, . . . We want her to be free to develop on her own lines.[78]

However, by May 1921 the Government of India was advocating Bell's policy of the gradual opening-up of Tibet: 'we now think time has come to revert gradually to former policy of ordinarily allowing visitors, whether traders or others, to proceed to marts along the trade routes, and if His Majesty's Government agree, will discuss details and procedure with Bell on his return. Missionaries and sporting men will have to be excluded in any case for obvious reasons.'[79] Undoubtedly, this about-face was a reflection of the growing international criticism of Britain's policy in Tibet whereby other governments and individuals considered that Britain had no right to restrict other nationals from entering the country.

Whereas in 1913 Bell had pressed strongly for the stationing of a British representative in Lhasa, by May 1921 he was advising the Indian Government against this precisely because of the sensitive and potentially dangerous political situation he had witnessed there. Bell was not in 'favour of this for the present'. Lhasa, he said 'is isolated nearly a month's journey from [the] Indian frontier, and 20,000 unruly monks are always a potential source of danger, for, as the Dalai Lama himself says, they are liable to precipitate outbursts. . .' He argued that a British Resident at Lhasa, 'would increase our commitments greatly'.[80] To his mind the British Government should send a British officer 'temporarily' to Lhasa 'whenever the British or Tibetan Government desire this for any necessary purpose'.[81] He thought that the British government should 'tell the Chinese clearly' that this would be the case, and hoped it would 'hold them in check'.[82] However, if the Chinese did post an Amban in Lhasa he thought that it should be countered by the posting of a British Resident in Lhasa. This, he felt, was what the Tibetan government wanted and would certainly be necessary under these circumstances.[83] Richardson noted in his Tibetan Precis, 'It was considered that, so

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78 Ibid.

79 PRO:FO371/6608/F2142/59/10 P2336 from Viceroy to India Office, 16 May 1921.

80 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5e 22 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 9 May 1921.

81 PRO:FO371/6608/F1981/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 9 May 1921, Encl No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 27 May 1921.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

long as there was no Chinese representative, it was not only unnecessary to post a British officer at Lhasa but that such a step would have given a false impression both to the Tibetans and the Chinese.'[84] Unanimity marked the response of the Government of India to Bell's latest views.

Teichman, who was on duty in the Foreign Office, commented on Bell's recommendations but was not as insistent that a British representative should not be sent to Lhasa. 'With all deference to Mr Bell's superior knowledge and experience, I cannot believe that a British agent at Lhasa would ever be in any danger as long as the British Raj in India continued'.[85] His view was augmented by the argument that 'The history of Chinese activities in Tibet has always been one of military failure, retrieved by successful diplomacy and political chicanery and intrigue with the Tibetans'.[86] He was, however, in agreement with Bell in his view that 'it would be fatal to allow the Chinese Amban; even with only three hundred soldiers, (as provided for by the 1914 convention,) to return to Lhasa, while the British representative remained a subordinate official (Trade Agent) at Gyantse'.[87] Bell's suggestion that in any proposed communication with the Chinese government they should be told that the British government intended to send a British officer to Lhasa 'temporarily' whenever the need arose, would have two clearly differing effects:

> By making it clear to the Chinese that we intend to take independent action in Tibet we may strengthen to some extent the inducement to them to take part in the proceedings and enter into negotiations in order not to be left out in the cold, yet . . . the argument against stressing any of our actions which the Chinese dislike is even stronger, namely, that the less we called pointed attention to any action of a kind annoying to the Chinese the less likely are the possible dangers of boycotts, etc. to materialise.[88]

Wellesley thought that it would be 'rather needlessly provocative' to make any statement to the Chinese 'at this juncture' and that Alston in Peking would be the best judge.[89]

Meanwhile, Alston had been getting little response from the Chinese government. On 10 March 1921 he reported back to the Foreign Office: 'His Excellency reproduced old arguments of consulting border provinces concerned and of difficulty of

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84 IOR: L/P&S/20/D222, H. E. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, p. 122.
85 PRO:FO371/6608/F1981 Minute by Teichman, undated (approx. 27 May 1921).
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 PRO:FO371/6608/F1981 Minute by Newton, 4 June 1921.
89 PRO:FO371/6608/F1981 Minute by Wellesley, undated.

effecting a permanent settlement in absence of a parliament.'[90] The Chinese Minister proceeded to enquire into the progress of negotiations for renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, and repeated the request of the Chinese government to be consulted. Alston noted: 'Enquiry may have been fortuitous, but gave me impression that Minister for Foreign Affairs wished to link the two questions.'[91] Lampson was indignant about such a suggestion: 'There is no conceivable connection between the Tibetan question and the Anglo-Japanese alliance, and it was impudent of the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs to make this suggestion'.[92]

As noted earlier, the Great War signified a powerful strengthening of Japan's status. For the first time in the history of the alliance, Great Britain was more dependent on Japan than Japan on Britain. During the war Britain's position was infinitely delicate and the Foreign Office had to tread very warily. The British objective during the war had been to protect their interests in China, Tibet and the areas bordering India and Tibet, and to prevent the Japanese securing a footing where their exclusion was considered essential to British political interests. Any other policy was considered unwise and in particular a general agreement with the Japanese government about their aims in China had been ruled out 'as impracticable and dangerous'.[93]

By the end of the war dislike of Japan was general in the British Foreign Office and among British diplomats. In 1918 Jordan wrote that the situation in China had never been worse 'and it will be a glaring moral delinquency on the part of America and Great Britain if they do not proceed to rectify the situation which the war has produced in China, more especially as it has been very largely the direct consequence of the action of one of their allies, Japan'.[94] Lord Curzon, when he became Foreign Secretary in 1919, took a noticeably tougher line with Japan than had previously been adopted. He expressed to the Japanese ambassador with conspicuous frankness his dislike of certain trends of Japanese policy, including intervention in Britain's negotiations with China over Tibet.[95]

For strategic reasons it was highly desirable for Britain to continue the Anglo-Japanese alliance, or a least somc agreement with Japan. But dissension with Japan had developed increasingly since 1913 and it could not be pretended that genuine amity

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90 PRO:FO371/6607/F889/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curzon,19 March 1921.

91 Ibid.

92 PRO:FO371/6607/F889/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 12 March 1921.

93 PRO:FO410/66 Balfour to Green, 13 February 1917, cited in P. Lowe, Britain in the Far East, op.cit., p. 306. Also War Cabinet 142, 22 May 1917, Cab. 23/2.

94 PRO: FO410/224 Jordan to Balfour, 23 October 1918, P. Lowe, ibid. p. 309.

95 See for instance DBFP vi, nos 429,436,484, Ibid.

existed any longer.[96] The ideal solution would have been the replacement of the Anglo-Japanese alliance with an Anglo-American alliance but this could not be attained owing to the strength of isolationism and general suspicion of British motives in the United States. At the same time the United States was profoundly hostile to the Anglo-Japanese alliance and wished to see it end. America resented and opposed the Japanese penetration of China, partly because of chivalry about China's freedom and independence and partly because Japanese penetration was mostly directed into Manchuria, the principal area of America's own investment in the country.[97]

The belief developed in the Foreign Office that the Anglo-Japanese alliance had no future and that it should, if possible, be merged in a Far Eastern agreement involving Britain, the United States and Japan. This was urged by Victor Wellesley in a memorandum written in June 1920. The same opinion was voiced by a small subcommittee, consisting of Jordan, Greene, Tyrrell and Wellesley appointed by Curzon to consider the question of the alliance. The committee reported in January 1921 that 'A careful consideration of all the arguments both for and against the renewal of the Alliance has resulted in the unanimous conclusion that it should be dropped, and that in its stead should, if possible, be substituted a Tripartite Entente between the United, Japan and Great Britain'.[98] The chance to achieve an agreement that promised to reconcile Japan and the United States, while simultaneously affording Britain continued friendship with Japan, came in July 1921 when Lord Hardinge, following up the British initiative, issued the invitation for what became the Washington Conference.[99]

Meanwhile, in March 1921 Lampson was still doubtful whether any definite move should be made: 'Unless the Government of India press for the resumption of negotiations, I submit we should go slow.'[100] Lampson's view bordered on the contemptuous: 'Let China give the required written assurance' and 'let her intimate that she repents of her gross bad-faith of 1919 when at the last moment she repudiated her own offer to us.'[101]

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96 See D. Dignan, 'London's Dualistic Perspective of the Far East', op.cit., p. 269-276.

97 C. Barnett, The Collapse of British Power, op.cit., p. 253.

98 DBFP xiv, no. 212, cited in P. Lowe, op.cit., p. 309 A four power agreement was initialled in Washington on 13 December 1921. France adhered owing to American pressure to which Britian and Japan bowed unenthusiastically. The agreement provided, under article IV, for the temination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance as soon as the treaty had been ratified. This provision was eventually satisfied on 17 August 1923 when the alliance formally ended.

99 See M. D. Kennedy, The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan, 1917-35 (Manchester, 1969), pp. 56-9.

100 PRO:FO371/6607/F889/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 12 March 1921.

101 Ibid.

On 17 May, however, Alston responded to Bell's proposal to make a final attempt to secure settlement with the Chinese government. Bell had suggested that if the attempt failed, the Chinese be informed that the British government would definitely recognise Tibetan autonomy and would therefore allow imports of arms.[102] While Alston entirely agreed that the Chinese, 'by usual method of procrastination', would attempt to delay settlement of the Tibetan question indefinitely, he was hesitant in presenting China with what amounted to an ultimatum.[103] He maintained that the recent combined Russian-Mongolian action had destroyed all vestige of Chinese authority in Outer Mongolia, with a consequent loss of prestige: 'No one takes seriously Chinese talk of military expedition to recover Urga.' This, he believed, was merely to 'save her face'. However, he drew the Foreign Office's attention to the fact that the Chinese government had made a fresh protest against any renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance so far as it concerned China without first being consulted. Alston was 'unaware whether His Majesty's government would be willing to give China any such assurance'.[104] 'If not', he warned:

> in view of loss of prestige in Mongolia and failure so far to get any satisfaction in Shantung question, an ultimatum to settle Tibetan question would be serious blow to Chinese Government, in which they would have sympathy of United States Government. Moreover, Japanese might start active press campaign as in 1919 with a view to promoting anti-British feeling, possible boycott.[105]

Alston put forward his compromise proposal in a lengthy telegram. As he saw it, the solution to the problem was to give the Chinese a more subtle ultimatum: 'If it is clear within a reasonable time, say, one month, that Chinese government do not intend to negotiate, His Majesty's Government might decide that Government of India are justified in keeping their promise to supply reasonable quantity of arms under proper guarantees.'[106] The import of uncontrolled Japanese arms through Mongolia, he argued, would afford additional ground for allowing this. Most importantly, he noted that, 'pending ratification of Arms Convention, His Majesty's Government are, I understand, under no obligation to prevent supply of arms to Tibet.'[107]

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102 PRO:FO371/6608/F1902/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curzon, 17 May 1921.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 FO371/6608/F1912/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curzon, 20 May 1921.
107 Ibid.

The Anglo-Japanese alliance was rapidly becoming an issue. Alston informed Curzon that the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs referred again to the Anglo-Japanese alliance, calling it 'a foregone conclusion'. He asked that a written protest from the Chinese government be forwarded to the British Government.[108] The Chinese antagonism to a renewal of the alliance was making the situation increasingly awkward for British diplomats. On 20 May the Minister, Dr. Yen, informed Alston that 'definitely . . . it was impossible to settle matter now'.[109] The explanation seemed to lie in the fact that Parliament was due to meet, and there would be great agitation over any arrangement which gave to Tibet any of the districts which were now to be represented in Parliament. Consequently, there would be difficulty over settling the Kokonor question on any basis proposed by the British.[110] In regard to Kokonor, Teichman indignantly noted that 'we practically offered in 1919 to leave it all in China. . . rightly so, for it never belonged to Lhasa, and has always been, and is still, in Chinese occupation'.[111] Teichman believed that Dr. Yen's remarks about Parliament were merely excuses, since 'he evidently does not mean to resume negotiations if he can help it.'[112] Alston, obviously frustrated by the political manoeuvres, called Curzon's attention to the fact that while 'outwardly friendly' the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'is not at all reliable'. He warned Curzon that it 'will be difficult to bring him to point'.[113] Procrastination had become a stalemate. There seemed no solution to the problem in Peking and Alston, with no more moves available, considered it would be politic for Curzon to exert pressure on the Chinese Minister in London.

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108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Minute by Teichman, 23 May 1921.
112 Ibid.
113 PRO:FO371/6608/F1912/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curzon, 20 May 1921.

CHAPTER 9

THE CARROT AND THE STICK

'Assistance to Tibet on these lines will be a most potent inducement to the Chinese Government to abandon their obstructive attitude and to conclude the settlement of the Tibetan question'[1]

Anglo-Tibetan relations were conditioned by the wider circumstance of British domestic and foreign policy in the inter-war years. Seven British governments held office between 1920 and 1933: the Lloyd George coalition, the Conservatives twice, Labour in a minority twice and two 'National' governments, effectively conservative. Beneath them the apparatus of government remained undisturbed.[2] The shape of British politics, however, changed markedly over the period.

As peace gradually returned to a fragmented world in the early 1920s Britain had to determine the evolution of her policy and interests in the far east. Considerable uncertainty clouded her relationship with both China and Japan. In the early 1920s the Far East remained relatively quiet. Economic considerations took precedence over political and military considerations and this was conducive to an atmosphere of equanimity among the major powers interested in China. It was even considered that Japan might be used to maintain stability in China so that international commerce could prosper. The Far Eastern Department and Sir John Jordan, who continued to advise the Foreign Office on Tibetan affairs after his retirement from Peking in March 1920, promoted the view that Britain's continued friendship with China was more important for Britain's future in Asia than upholding the buffer status of Tibet. Having played a poor hand not unskilfully, the Foreign Office found itself expected to continue playing great power diplomacy in the far east without any trumps.

The Minister at Peking's recommendation that Bell should be kept in Lhasa until China reopened negotiations, relying on his presence there to force her to do so, was not working. There did not appear to be any prospect of agreement and the British policy makers were forced to resort to carrot and stick methods to reverse the stalemate. The eventual decision to provide Tibet with military assistance and aid did not represent a bold British initiative, but symbolised her inability to coerce China into accepting an ultimatum.

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1 IOR: L/P&S/20/971 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

2 The only major change was the formal incorporation into the foreign-policy-making process of the military advisers, the Chiefs of Staff, in a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. D. W. Watt, Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place 1900-1975 (Cambridge, 1984), p. 45.

The Indian government was forced to concede that 'It is now nearly six months since Bell arrived at Lhassa, yet China, though showing a mild interest in his visit, shows no overt disposition to reopen negotiations'[3] The decision had been finally made, 'as we cannot in a waiting game compete with China, [we] advise adoption of constructive policy recommended by Bell.'[4] Commenting on Alston's proposal, the Viceroy conceded that 'from Tibetan point of view, we should, of course, prefer definite pronouncement to China regarding Tibet's autonomy',[5] but he recognised the force of the Minister's objections on 'wider grounds'.[6]

Provided that Bell, on his departure, could give the Tibetan government definite assurance that, 'unless China reopens negotiations, say, within month of his return to India, they may import arms in reasonable quantities',[7] the Government of India considered their main requirements would be met. However, as a further inducement the Government of India agreed with Alston that the indications alluded to previously by the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'to secure consent of His Majesty's Government to Chinese consular representation in India,'[8] could be effectively used as a "carrot" and they favoured pressing the Chinese government 'in return for proposed appointment of Chinese consular representatives in India, to come to an agreement on Tibetan question'.[9]

But Teichman, at this time working in the Foreign Office, decided it was time to use the "stick" and call the final bluff. In response to Alston's telegram suggesting that a renewed appeal to the Chinese be made without threatening them with any alternative, he concluded, 'this is what we have been doing fruitlessly for the past seven years' and was sure that 'there is not much hope of achieving anything in that way at present'.[10] While admitting that it was necessary to have some alternative strategy with which to pressure the Chinese, he felt it 'unnecessary and impolitic to tell them in so many

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3 PRO:FO371/6608/F2142/59/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 11 May 1921, Encl No. 1 in letter from Wakely to Foreign Office, 9 June 1921.

4 Ibid.

5 PRO:FO371/6608,F2981/59/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 24 May 1921, Encl No. 1 in letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 3 June 1921.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 PRO:FO371/660/F889/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curzon, 19 March 1921.

9 PRO:FO371/6608/F2142/59/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 1 June 1921, Encl No. 5 in letter from Wakely, to Foreign Office, 9 June 1921.

10 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Minute by Teichman, 23 May 1921.

words that we mean to arm the Tibetans, which would only given [sic] them a handle for rousing anti-British propaganda.'[11]

We might justifiably address the Chinese somewhat as follows, said Teichman:

> We regret our inability to wait any longer for a tripartite settlement, and if the Chinese Government cannot see their way to resume negotiations, there is no alternative left to us, in fairness to the Tibetans, but to deal with Tibet as an autonomous state, without further reference to China. But, at the same time, we remain ready and anxious to use our good offices with Tibet in negotiating a settlement on the basis of the 1904 Convention, modified to meet China's present wishes as expressed in her offer of 1919.[12]

That, according to Teichman, meant 'Tibetan internal autonomy, Chinese suzerainty, and an equitable frontier line. . . We should then be prepared to go ahead with Tibet, independently of China. This would mean, first and foremost, permanent British representation at Lhasa'.[13] In Teichman's view, the exact meaning of dealing with Tibet as an autonomous state entailed:

> stationing a representative at Lhasa, developing Indo-Tibetan commercial relations, assisting the Tibetans in the economic development of their country, and permitting them to purchase what they need in India, including arms for the purpose of defending their frontiers and policing the interior of Tibet, with the strictest guarantees against their being used for the purposes of aggression against anyone else.[14]

Teichman was well acquainted with the Chinese attitude and his frontier experience qualified him to exert pressure on others in the Foreign Office. He argued that 'China fully realises that procrastination is all in her favour, as long as we continue to hold the Tibetans at arm's length, and refuse their request for assistance.'[15] He was consistent in his opinion, for he had always believed that if the British government was to modify its policy and cement a relationship with the Tibetans, then the Chinese would respond rather than allow Tibet to reorientate towards British India. The assumption underlying this notion was that, even if it had no other effect, such a course of action would at any rate enable Britain to carry out its obligations to the Tibetans,

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.

and 'prevent them in despair at our inability to do anything for them, from turning of their own accord back to the Chinese.'[16]

The most cogent argument in favour of making the statement about Tibetan autonomy directly, as the Foreign Office suggested and not as Alston and the Indian Office favoured, was that it would in fact justify HMG's action in supplying arms and bring pressure to bear on the Chinese to resume negotiations.[17] However, Teichman conceded that 'the whole business principally concerns India', and advised that if they were satisfied with the milder programme suggested by Peking, it would be advisable for the Foreign Office to concur, 'provided we are satisfied that we do not need to make any statement to justify supply of arms'.[18]

Teichman suggested that preparation of a White Book about Tibet would 'justify our actions in the eyes of America and the rest of the world'. If presented appropriately, he believed that 'we have a very good case'.[19] Teichman found backing for his idea from Newton who thought that a White book ought to be 'in readiness for issue'. He hoped nonetheless that the actions of HMG would 'excite less interest in the world than has been feared'.[20] Newton argued that a publication might actually be 'undesirable' for the moment as it could tend to invite 'undue attention to the matter'.[21]

In the Foreign Office much of the groundwork for the eventual British response was provided by Newton, who noted succinctly:

> It seems to me . . . that for H.M.G. and for the government of India, and indeed for the Tibetans themselves, the supply of arms is of considerably more immediate and practical importance than the promotion of a general settlement. Once Tibet has arms and can defend what she now holds, procrastination in coming to a settlement ceases to be to China's advantage; in fact, China can only expect to recover the territory occupied by Tibet in excess of the area acceptable in 1919 by reverting to her 1919 offer. On the other hand, until Tibet has arms, China may hope to recover her ascendency so soon as her internal troubles become less acute, while Tibet, conscious of her weakness and increasingly doubtful of our good faith, may experience a revulsion of feeling which will indefinitely postpone the present favourable opportunity. China may now think that she can postpone the supply of arms by burking proposals for a general settlement. Even if she

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16 Ibid.

17 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 'Outline of Tibetan Question by E. Teichman', 11 June 1921.

18 Ibid.

19 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Minute by Teichman, 23 May 1921.

20 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Minute by Newton, 28 May 1921.

21 Ibid.

> consented to negotiate, she might try to use the negotiations as a means of preventing or delaying the supply of arms.[22]

Newton recommended therefore that 'without further ado' the British government set about providing a supply of arms to Tibet, 'the fulfilment of which lies entirely within our own discretion'. This would then 'expedite the accomplishment' of a general settlement of the whole question, the fulfilment of which 'depends on China'.[23]

By June 1921 there was at last agreement on Bell's proposals between the the Government of India, the India Office and His Majesty's Minister at Peking. It only remained for Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, to agree. In Montagu's opinion, considering that no objection now stood in the way from the provisions of the Arms Traffic Convention, the time had come for allowing Tibet, 'in the absence of any insuperable obstacle', to import munitions in reasonable quantities from India,'[24] and he put forward a course of action for Lord Curzon to consider. The India Office proposed that:

> the Government of India should be authorised to instruct Mr. Bell, on his departure from Lhassa, to give the Tibetan Government a definite assurance that, unless China reopens negotiations within one month of his return to India, they will be allowed to import from India munitions in reasonable quantities. . . on the strict and written understanding that they will be used for purposes of defence only. The opportunity might also be taken, as proposed by the Government of India, to fulfil the promise of a gift of one or two machine-guns.[25]

It was further proposed that 'His Majesty's Minister at Peking should be instructed to address a communication to the Chinese Government . . . as soon as he receives an intimation that Mr. Bell is leaving or has left Lhassa.'[26] The communique would represent the British government's last card: 'if the Chinese Government do not reopen negotiations within one month of Mr. Bell's return to India, the Government of India should then, without any further communication to the Chinese Government, proceed with arrangements as proposed for the supply of munitions to Tibet'.[27]

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 PRO:FO371/6608/F2142/59/10 Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 9 June 1921.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.

Wellesley was not able to share Alston's sanguine hopes of a Sino-Tibetan settlement.[28] He believed that it was obvious from Alston's most recent telegram 'that a final attempt to effect a general settlement is doomed to failure'.[29] He was, however, inclined to think that it should be made. The urgent need for a settlement and the possible pernicious effects of an ultimatum on British interests generally in the Far East inclined him 'to think that the present is as favourable a moment as we are ever likely to have for getting a move on and for settling at any rate the question of more immediate importance viz the despatch of arms to Tibet if not that of the frontier.'[30] He was, however, more forceful in his doubts regarding the ultimatum:

> Alston leaves us in some doubt as to what his real attitude of mind is. On the one hand he warns us of the consequences to which an ultimatum may lead - an anti-British press campaign, a boycott of British goods, American displeasure, etc., etc. while on the other he appears to acquiesce in the ultimatum being sent after the final attempt at a general settlement has failed. I take this to mean that he thinks that these risks can safely be taken.[31]

While he thought that this was indeed the correct view, Wellesley felt 'bound to point out that if these fears should be realized the injury done to British interest in the Far East generally will far outweigh any advantages obtained in Tibet'.[32] Assuming that the British government was justified in taking this risk, Wellesley was in agreement with Teichman and Newton and considered that 'no mention need be made of our intention to supply Tibet with arms which will merely follow as the natural consequences of our recognition of Tibetan autonomy'.[33]

The debate over, the Foreign Office decision was communicated to the India Office on 24 June 1921:

> Lord Curzon shares the views expressed by the Government of India that the time has come for His Majesty's Government to adopt a firm and open attitude towards China on this question, and considers that, if the Chinese Government continue to refuse to resume negotiations, we should be justified in permitting the Tibetans to purchase a reasonable amount of arms and ammunition from the Indian Government for the purpose of policing the interior of their country and protecting their

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28 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Minute by Wellesley, 1 June 1921.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.

> frontiers, subject to the strictest guarantees against these arms being employed for aggressive purposes against a third party.[34]

However, Lord Curzon agreed with Wellesley that 'it would be impolitic to tell the Chinese government in so many words that we intend to arm the Tibetans'.[35] He was convinced that such a course would only provide an excuse for rousing an anti-British agitation in China. He believed therefore that a final attempt should, in the first instance, be made to induce the Chinese Government to resume negotiations.[36] Alston agreed, but suggested that text of a note be prepared in London and telegraphed to him for presentation to the Chinese government and a copy be given to the Chinese Minister in London.[37] Alson was not naive enough to suppose that the Chinese would accept in silence such a patent demand. He knew that it was likely that the Chinese government might 'on receipt of [the] note' suggest that the Tibetan question form a subject for the forthcoming Washington Conference. He forewarned Curzon that it 'might be well to warn the Chinese Minister in advance that this cannot be admitted'.[38]

Undoubtedly, Alston was aware that there was a 'certain risk' that the United States might encourage the Chinese government 'to make capital out of the Tibetan question'.[39] But he felt this risk, in the final analysis, would have to be faced in the interest of getting the question settled without further delay. To allay Alston's fears of American intervention, Bell put forward the argument that the policy which was being proposed went 'no farther than to accord to Tibet such treatment as she may rightfully expect from a neighbour with whom she is on terms of friendship.' China, he suggested, had 'greatly oppressed Tibet in the past, and there can hardly be any objection on the part of the United States to latter maintaining her hard-won autonomy over that portion of her territory which she has succeeded in rescuing from Chinese troops'.[40]

Britain's post-war position made cooperation with the United States or at least avoidance of American displeasure the sine qua non of any successful policy.

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34 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 24 June 1921.

35 Ibid.

36 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 24 June 1921.

37 PRO:FO371/6608/F2596/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curzon, 14 July 1921.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 PRO:FO371/6608/F2619/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 1June 1921, Encl No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 18 July 1921.

American financial strength, her moral gains from the war, a powerful navy, and the relative weakness of the British economy during the years of recovery from the war made this imperative. Britain's predicament in 1920-21 lay in the fact that she had continued to decline as a world power and now required both American and Japanese backing. Britain had no money to develop its concessions in China independently. Because Japan's financial situation also began to deteriorate after the collapse of the wartime boom, Britain was forced to seek American capital for their Yangtze Valley concessions. The loss of British overseas investments and the heavy burden of war debt and reconstruction left Britain in no financial position to reject the American proposal to join the New Consortium which was fostered by American politicians and businessmen as a means of preventing Japan from creating a closed sphere in which American enterprise would be excluded.

Distasteful as it was to many Britons, including Lloyd George, who believed that eventual loss of an independent position for the British Empire and loss of leadership in the world English-speaking community would grow out of excessive deference to the Americans, Britain's Far Eastern policy had necessarily to be marked out in terms inoffensive to the United States, particularly in China, where American isolationism was unlikely to operate.[41]

The employment of what some British policy makers believed as being almost Machiavellian actions by the Peking government in their diplomatic game of 'procrastination' had resulted in a stalemate. The only solution left to the British was to inform the Tibetan government either that negotiations were to be resumed or that they could import the arms that they had been promised for so long.[42] In early June Bell had declared 'it appears that [the] Chinese Government has no intention of negotiating'. In those circumstances Bell believed that it would be essential to remain 'until I can make some such definite pronouncement' to the Lhasa government.[43] It was agreed that Bell should remain at Lhassa until one month from the date of making the final communication to the Chinese government.[44]

The Government of India agreed with HMG on the understanding that if China had not resumed negotiations within one month from the date of communication, Bell

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41 C. B. Davis, Partners and Rivals:Britain's Imperial Diplomacy Concerning the United States and Japan in China 1915-1922 (New York, 1987), pp. 390-391.

42 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 24 June 1921.

43 PRO:FO371/6608/F2619/59/10 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 1 June 1921, Encl No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 18 July 1921.

44 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 24 June 1921.

'will be authorised to give a written assurance to Tibet that His Majesty's Government will permit the import of a reasonable quantity of munitions.'[45] The proviso was that the Tibetan government in their turn would have to give an undertaking in writing that such munitions would be for self-defence and for no other purpose.[46] Bell had been emphatic that the assurance be given to the Tibetans in writing. Unless this was the case, he feared the Lhasa government would suspect that the British were once again merely trying to 'put them off with a fresh promise'.[47]

As to the diplomatic means of advising the Chinese of this final ultimatum, Teichman was inclined to think that it would be advantageous to take action in London instead of Peking.[48] Lampson suggested that 'a communication from the Secretary of State direct to the Chinese Minister in London would almost certainly be more effective than representations at Peking alone'.[49] The view was that if Lord Curzon could reinforce the statement in person it should serve to convince the Chinese government 'that HMG are in earnest' and Alston, being kept informed, could be instructed to make identical representations in Peking.[50]

This last card had to be dealt skilfully. Lampson considered that if the actual text of the memorandum to be handed to the Chinese Minister in London was not sent to Alston in Peking 'it could greatly detract from the effect which we seek to ensure'.[51] Lampson was determined to get it right. While the memorandum was being drafted and re-drafted Lampson 'felt bound' to point out that:

> If Sir B. Alston were in a position to hand to the Minister for Foreign Affairs at Peking an actual copy of the memorandum handed to the Minister here by Lord Curzon personally, with suitable explanations and emphasis as to the desirability of adopting reasonable attitude on Tibet, the chance of getting the Chinese Government to listen to us seems to me greater.[52]

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45 PRO:F0371/6609/F3142/59/IO Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 16 August 1921, Encl No. 1 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 22 August 1921.

46 Ibid.

47 PRO:FO371/6608/F2619/59/10 Telegram from Bell to the Government of India, 1 June 1921, Encl No. 1 in India Office to Foreign Office, 18 July 1921.

48 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 'Outline of Tibetan Question by Teichman', 11 June 1921.

49 PRO:FO371/6608/F19O2/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 13 June 1921.

50 Ibid.

51 PRO:FO371/6608/F 2596/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 25 July 1921.

52 Ibid.

The potential danger was conspicuous: 'As it is we are only going to give Sir B. Alston the substance, and obviously it would be unsafe for him to put anything in writing, for otherwise there might be some discrepancy between the text of the two communications here and in Peking.'[53] Wellesley agreed.[54]

The Foreign Office also agreed that the Chinese government would be informed 'in a verbal explanation' that on the Tibetan question being settled, the Government of India would 'give consideration' to the proposal from the Chinese government to the appointment of a Chinese consul. The Peking Legation believed that a Chinese representative would give no more trouble than the Russian consul had given in the past. At the same time, Alston thought it might prevent the Chinese government 'receiving wild reports from secret agents in India as they do at present'.[55]

On 4 August the Chinese Minister, Wellington Koo, called on Curzon to enquire whether there was any truth in a report that British troops had been sent to Tibet from Bhutan and Sikkim. He was informed that 'this was the first that had been heard of any such movement, which seemed in the highest degree improbable'.[56] No mention was made of the ultimatum. Koo proceeded to 'deplore the fact that no settlement had been reached about Tibet' and was bluntly told by Curzon that it was 'not from lack of effort on the part of His Majesty's Government; an agreement had virtually been reached, but the Chinese Government had gone back on their word'.[57] Koo responded by suggesting that 'His Majesty's Government did not sufficiently realise the difficult position in which the Chinese Government had been placed as a result of the Shantung question, which had so aroused public opinion in China that no government would have dared sign the agreement'.[58]

When the Chinese Minister called again on Lord Curzon on 26 August he was this time presented with the trump card in the form of a memorandum:

> Two years having now elapsed since the interruption of the negotiations of 1919, which, it was explained at the time by the Chinese Government, were only temporarily postponed, His Majesty's Government now invite the Chinese Government to resume these negotiations either in London or Peking without further delay.

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53 Ibid.

54 PRO:FO371/6608 F 2596/59/10 Minute by Lampson, 25 July 1921 signed by Wellesley, 26 July 1921.

55 PRO:FO371/6608/F2596/59/10 Telegram from Alston to Curzon, 14 July 1921.

56 PRO:F0371/6609/F2888/59/10 Letter from Foreign Office to India Office, 8 August 1921.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

> In view of the commitments of His Majesty's Government to the Tibetan Government arising out of the tripartite negotiations of 1914, and in view of the fact that the Chinese Government accepted, with the exception of the boundary clause, the draft convention of 1914, providing for Tibetan autonomy under Chinese suzerainty, and formally reaffirmed their attitude in this respect in their offer of 1919, His Majesty's Government do not feel justified, failing a resumption of the negotiations in the immediate future, in withholding any longer their recognition of the status of Tibet as an autonomous State under the suzerainty of China, and intend dealing on this basis with Tibet in the future.
> At the same time, His Majesty's Government, who remain as heretofore most willing to do all in their power to promote an equitable tripartite settlement, would view with great regret the continued inability of the Chinese Government to co-operate with them in this matter, and in the event of a resumption of negotiations would be prepared to make every effort to induce the Tibetan Government to accept a settlement satisfactory to China on the basis of the draft convention of 1914, modified in accordance with China's wishes as expressed in her offer of 1919.[59]

It had been proposed at this meeting also to inform Koo in an oral explanation 'that HMG had sincerely hoped that China would settle her differences with the Tibetans and cooperate with her in the work of promoting the development of Tibet.'[60] However, the Secretary of State for India felt that an offer of such co-operation would be the cause of 'nothing but embarrassment both to the Tibetans and to ourselves'[61] Consequently, both Koo and the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Peking were to be told that they hoped the Chinese government would 'do nothing calculated to hinder the development of Tibet'.[62] Curzon told Koo that:

> if the Chinese Government still find themselves unable to resume the negotiations for a tripartite settlement without further delay, say within one month, we shall reluctantly be compelled, in fairness to the Tibetan Government, to proceed in the matter alone. In that case we shall regard ourselves as having a free hand to deal with Tibet as an autonomous State, if necessary without further reference to China, to enter into closer relations with the Tibetans, send an officer to Lhasa from time to time to consult with the Tibetan Government whenever the latter or the British Government consider it desirable to do so, open up intercourse to an increased extent between India and the Tibetan Trade

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59 PRO:FO371/6609/59/10 Memorandum to Chinese Minister, 26 August 1921.

60 PRO:FO371/6608/F2596/59/10 Minute paper, 26 July 1921.

61 PRO:F0371/6609/F3142/59/10 Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 22 August 1921.

62 Ibid.

Marts, and give the Tibetans any reasonable assistance they may require in the development of their country.[63]

In a letter to Alson, Curzon wrote 'I explained to Dr. Koo that I had fixed the period of a month because Mr. Bell, the representative of the British Government in Lhasa, could not stay there indefinitely, and it was necessary to know definitely what the future position was to be before he returned to India.'[64] It was also explained to Koo 'that HMG would be glad to give favourable consideration to the proposal of the Chinese Govt to appoint a Consular representative to reside in India as soon as a settlement of the Tibetan question has been reached'.[65]

Curzon, giving no indication that Britain's tenuous diplomatic position might affect the Chinese response, rather naively proclaimed: 'I think that the Minister ended by realising that His Majesty's Government were in earnest and that the game of shily-shally could no longer be pursued.'[66] On 27 August 1921 Alston in Peking was instructed to deliver an identical communication to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. An oral explanation was to accompany the memorandum in the same sense as that given by Curzon to Wellington Koo on the 26 August.[67]

However, the need to appease the Americans by not seeming to coerce China meant that the Foreign Office began to feel the diplomatic noose tighten. Curzon complained: 'Only three weeks ago the Department urged me to send for Mr. Koo and bring the matter to a head by giving a sort of ultimatum to China. I did so in language the emphasis of which was unmistakable. Now because the Chinese whine, as they were bound to do, it is proposed that we should back down.'[68] The Chinese were convinced that the British intended to detach Tibet from China, if not to annex the country, and, partly owing to the secrecy in which the Tibetan question has been shrouded in recent years, other countries, such as America, also viewed Britain's Tibetan policy with great suspicion.[69] The Chinese government, as Alston predicted, took advantage of the role the United States had undertaken as China's 'political ward'

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63 PRO:FO371/6608/F2596/59/10 Minute paper, 26 July 1921. Also PRO:FO371/6609/F3142/59/10 Telegram from Curzon to Alston, 27 August 1921.

64 IOR:MSS Eur Fll2/302, Curzon to Alston, 26 August 1921.

65 PRO:FO371/6608/F2596/59/10 Minute paper, 26 July 1921.

66 IOR:MSS Eur Fll2/302, Curzon to Alston, 26 August 1921.

67 PRO:F0371/6609/F3142/59/10 Telegram from Curzon to Alston, 27 August 1921.

68 PRO:FO371/6608/F3380/59/10 Minute by Curzon, 12 September 1921.

69 PRO:FO371/6609/F2994/59/10 Memorandum by Teichman, 10 October 1921.

and threatened to raise the Tibetan question at the forthcoming Washington Conference.[70]

The Tibetan question was plainly a thorn for the Foreign Office and Whitehall's inclination was to evade international, and especially American, criticism. In a lengthy evaluation of Tibetan affairs included in the Washington series of memoranda, Teichman maintained that 'Great Britain has a very good case provided the Government of India abandon their policy of sterilising Tibet.'[71] The only weak point was that 'in the tripartite negotiations of 1914 the British plenipotentiary was unfortunately led to support the somewhat exaggerated territorial claims of the Tibetans'.[72] This, he hoped, had been rectified by Britain's acceptance of the boundary the Chinese themselves proposed in 1919, and offering 'to do our best to induce the Tibetans to accept it also'.[73] He concluded: 'Our only real object is to establish Tibetan autonomy, and that is the great desire of the Tibetans themselves; the Chinese, being incapable of managing their own affairs, are not justified in claiming the right to control the Tibetans, who have given abundant proof during the past few years of their ability to rule themselves.'[74]

All the cards were now on the table and the Chinese began their manoeuvres. The Chinese government sent its formal reply on 8 September 1921.[75] They remained non-committal. Referring to Minister Koo's conversation with Lord Curzon on 26 August and his Lordship's *aide-memoire* on the Tibetan question, the Legation had received a telegraphic reply from the Wai-chiao Pu:

> The Chinese Government would be glad to accede to Lord Curzon's wishes by taking up the Tibetan question at once, but for the fact that it is a very important question and one in which the present situation in the provinces might be seriously affected. Moreover, the Pacific Conference is approaching and the Government are obliged to give their entire attention to the preparation for that conference.
> In view of these circumstances the Chinese Government wish that His Majesty's Government will not press this question on the Chinese Government at this moment. They will be glad to take it up as soon after the Pacific Conference as possible.[76]

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70 PRO:FO371/6607/F3268/59/10 Alston to Curzon, 26 August 1921.
71 PRO:FO371/6609/F2994/59/10 Memorandum by Teichman, 10 October 1921.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 IOR: L/P&S/10/717 P4279 Alston to Curzon, 8 September 1921.
76 PRO:FO371/6609/F2994/59/10 Memorandum from Chinese Legation in London, 12 September 1921, encl No. 7.

At present, the Wai-chiao Pu argued, the government exercised no control over Szechuan and Yunnan, both of which were directly involved in frontier settlements concerning Tibet.[77] The existing Chinese government was in no way as effective as it had been during the rule of Yuan Shih-k'ai and Tuan Chi-li and the salient point was made by Alston that neither of these forceful leaders had been able to gain a settlement.[78]

When China failed to respond to the final call for negotiations, and with the ultimatum to Peking having expired on 26 September 1921, the Secretary of State authorised the Viceroy on 4 October to direct Bell to notify the Tibetan government of the substance of the Chinese reply and convey the decision regarding ammunition.[79] The Dalai Lama was informed of these developments in general terms, but without reference to the question of Chinese suzerainty. As Richardson rightly pointed out in his Tibetan Precis, 'the Tibetan government were not consulted about the reference to Chinese suzerainty in His Majesty's Government's memorandum to the Chinese Government nor were they informed about it in the written communication by Sir Charles Bell.'[80]

Alastair Lamb, commenting on this period, insists that the crucial issues of Anglo-Tibetan relations, the nature of British involvement in the Sino-Tibetan argument and the preparedness of the British to give Tibet military aid were not capable of solution when Bell reached Lhasa because the British Government had not yet decided what its policy on these matters was. Lamb writes: 'The truth of the matter was that at this moment there existed no clear British policy as to Tibet, merely a number of conflicting opinions'.[81] He concludes: 'to a great extent the story of the Bell Mission was that of an envoy who was filling in time while waiting instructions'.[82] What Lamb has not fully acknowledged is that Bell was a vital part of the policy making process.

Although Lamb acknowledges that the longer Bell stayed on in Tibet the more 'worried the Chinese would become', he fails to recognise that the new policy was a policy of mere bluff. Lamb's assessment of the situation underestimates the fact that Bell, Alston, Curzon and Wellesley all believed that the Chinese would be frightened by Britain's announcement to consider themselves as having a 'free hand' to deal with Tibet. Curzon's verbal explanation to Dr. Koo, threatening to 'develop' Tibet if the

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77 IOR: L/P&S/10/717 P4279 Alston to Curzon, 8 September 1921.
78 Ibid.
79 IOR: L/P&S/10/717 P4406 Foreign Office to India Office, 29 September 1921.
80 H. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p. 28.
81 A. Lamb, Tibet, China & India 1914-1950: A History of Imperial Diplomacy, (Hertingfordbury, 1989), p. 112.
82 Ibid., p. 114.

Chinese government did not resume negotiations, was a calculated bluff. Not only was the bluff unsuccessful, but the implication of adopting such an "off the record" diplomatic approach caused complications for the Foreign Office during the early 1930s when it became necessary for Britain to validate its supply of munitions to the Lhasa government. The significance of Curzon's agreement to give arms and aid to Tibet rests not in the direct effect on Japanese policy or Chinese attitudes, which was negligible, but as a symbol of Whitehall's tacit acceptance of its inability to obtain an agreement with China in the near future. The Chinese cleverly used the forthcoming Washington Conference as a diversion. Clearly, the Peking government would not negotiate a Tibetan settlement while the British could not use more potent diplomatic weapons. The Dalai Lama advised Bell that any Sino-Tibetan negotiations could only be discussed at Lhasa or in India. The Foreign Office and the Government of India agreed to postpone discussion of Tibet till after the Washington Conference.

On 11 October 1921, just before his departure from Lhasa, Bell communicated the news that His Majesty's Government would now 'in pursuance of their policy of granting the Tibetan Government assistance in the development and protection of their country allow [the] Tibetan Government to import munitions in instalments at adequate intervals'.[83]

In late 1920 the Tibet Council had put forward their proposals for a programme of self-development:

> The welfare of Tibet, both spiritual and temporal, demands that police and military improvements should be made. We, therefore, propose to obtain from India some really good mechanics as instructors for making gunpowder and the machinery required for the purpose. We also propose to obtain the services of a good mining instructor to impart practical instructions in gold-mining, silver-mining and coal-mining, as well as the machinery required for the purpose. In these connections we are thinking of sending the student Ringang to India as soon as possible. We further propose to send some five Tibetan students to each of the different factories in Western and Eastern India.[84]

The Dalai Lama was explicit in his expectation of Britain's commitments to Tibet:

> The great British Government, the hope and help of Tibet, are now requested to consider well and with a genuine sense of responsibility how best to assist Tibet for the improvement of her civil and military

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83 IOR: L/P&S/10/717 P4406 Foreign Office to India Office, 29 September 1921.

84 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 Translation of Letter from Tibet Council to Bell, 25 December 1920, Encl No.8 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1921. See also IOR:L/P&S/10/971, Encl in Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

> matters as well as other matters beneficial to her interest, and issue very early orders accordingly.[85]

Bell assessed the needs of the Lhasa government:

> Tibet needs soldiers equipped with the necessary arms and ammunition both for maintaining her frontiers against external aggression and for the preservation of internal order. The Tibetans are a peace-loving people; they threaten nobody, but merely wish to keep their country to themselves. At the same time, internal order is maintained far better than in China, provided that reasonable means - a few soldiers- are forthcoming. Any attempt to create a large army would be resisted by none more strongly than the Tibetans themselves. All the monasteries would raise a cry of 'The Holy Religion is in danger.[86]

Bell's stay in Lhasa had made him aware how powerful that opposition could be. He maintained that Tibetan history and literature during the previous seven hundred years showed this 'through and through.'[87]

Ideally, the Dalai Lama would have liked one or two British officers to train the Tibetan troops in Lhasa. The Tibetan government was prepared to meet their pay and other expenses.[88] Bell considered that this would 'hardly be permissible'.[89] In his opinion there would be a danger of friction between the officers and the Tibetans, as they would be in Lhasa without a British political officer to advise them in the various intricacies of Tibetan etiquette and good manners. In default of such an arrangement, Bell suggested that the Tibetan government 'might welcome a renewal of the permission to send some soldiers to Gyantse for training in the same way as they did some years ago'.[90] Bell considered that the request for training in the manufacture of rifles and ammunition by mechanics imported from India should be granted. 'They are perhaps free to obtain what mechanics they choose, and the government of India will, I trust, afford them reasonable assistance in this matter.'[91]

The attitude of the Government of India was well expressed by the Viceroy:

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85 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 Translation of letter from Dalai Lama to Viceroy, 17 December 1920, Encl No4 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1921. Also in IOR: L/P&S/10/971, F1263.

86 PRO:FO371/6607/F928/59/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921, Encl No.3 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1921.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

> The practical difficulties are great. They centre round the lack of most elementary technical knowledge on the part of Tibetan mechanics and dangers of friction with (people of the district) sending up mechanics, mining experts, prospectors, whether Indian or British into hyper-sensitive atmosphere of Tibet. Hence, while Bell should assure Tibetan Government of our readiness to train further batches of their troops and of our anxiety to continue to help in development of their resource, we are loth to raise undue expectations by subscribing a definite programme with might lead Tibet into considerable expense (without) any prospect of adequate result. . . At present we incline to the opinion that only real hope (for) Tibet's economic development lies in sending her would-be mechanics and experts at an early age and in large numbers to India for thorough technical grounding. Without such a foundation to work upon it would seem visionary to expect real results for Tibet importing either technical experts or elaborate machinery from India. As matters now stands, we could wish for no better neighbour on our North-East Frontier than present day Tibet, keeping China at arms' length and leaning towards us for her modest requirements.[92]

The difficulties involved were well understood by Bell:

> With reference to the sending of their mechanics to factories in India to learn the work there, the Government of India will remember that this was done some years ago, but the men returned partly because they became ill, but more because the machinery they saw was on so large a scale that they despaired of making use of anything of the kind in Tibet.[93] I am assured that a precipitate return of that kind will not be repeated. But it would be well that they should go to factories where the machinery is as simple as possible.[94]

Bell knew that the Tibetans were very anxious to raise revenue to pay for an army by developing the mines in Tibet. He insisted that this was a matter in which the Indian government could render substantial assistance, to the mutual advantage of India and Tibet. But, he warned, 'care should be taken to keep the mines under Tibetan ownership. If Indians or British own mines in Tibet, we shall extend our responsibilities into the heart of this difficult country, whose proper function, at present at any rate, is to act as a protection to India, a second rampart behind the Himalaya.'[95] Bell was acutely aware that with any kind of foreign ownership friction was bound to ensure. It was his opinion that what the Lhasa government really needed was some

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92 IOR:L/P&S/10/833/P2241 Letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 May 1921.

93 Reference to this incident is in PRO: FO371/3181/F2567/14382/10 Letter from Government of India to Bell, 2 March 1918.

94 IOR: L/P&S/19/971 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

95 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 159.

prospectors at first to locate mines and, later, one or two mining engineers to start work on the most promising mines and to train Tibetans to help them. He advised that Ringang, one of the Rugby boys who had been trained in England, be sent to India to consult 'such experts as the Government of India may be able to place at his disposal.'[96]

Bell's vision for Tibet was clear: 'We must avoid any tendency to Indianize or Anglicize Tibet. Let the country develop quietly on its own lines, taking from the outside only those things which will aid in such development'.[97] Bell's earlier forward policy approach was no longer in evidence: 'Her people do not desire the rapid opening up of their country by means of railways or roads, nor a large settlement of British or Indian or other foreign merchants in Tibet. The gradual development of the county is, however, wanted; especially on such lines as will increase the revenue to the extent necessary to pay for the army and for improvements in the civil administration'.[98]

There is no doubt that the Anglo-Tibetan relationship Bell desired was one of mutual advancement: 'As Tibet gradually develops under an autonomous regime, India should benefit by an increase of trade and by Tibet's dependence on her, partially at any rate, for military supplies. Openings may arise for Indians and Britons who can aid Tibet in her development and, in so doing, show themselves friendly to Tibetan aspirations'.[99] His vision incorporated long-term benefits: 'As the food-producing areas of the world are more and more exhausted by the growing populations, Tibet is likely to supply beef and mutton in larger quantities. The possibility too of finding gold, silver and other minerals, whose value will pay for the cost of transportation, is not to be disregarded'.[100]

The political ramification of such a policy was amplified by Bell:

> Assistance to Tibet on these lines will be a most potent inducement to the Chinese Government to abandon their obstructive attitude and to conclude the settlement of the Tibetan question. For they will realise that Tibet is gradually becoming stronger and stronger, and better able to resist aggression on their part. And then they will in all probability hasten to conclude an agreement before they are too late.[101]

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96 PRO:FO371/6606/F928/59/10 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921, Encl No. 3 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 12 March 1921.

97 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 261.

98 Ibid., p. 248.

99 Ibid. p. 268.

100 Ibid. p. 269.

101 IOR: L/P&S/10/971 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

This statement, in essence, represents the logic behind the bluff. Unfortunately, Bell was wrong and quite the reverse transpired. The Chinese government considered Tibet to be an integral part of China and was prepared to extend indefinitely the waiting game to reclaim Tibet. In the meantime, during the inter-war years of the 1920s and 1930s it was China, not Tibet, that became 'stronger and stronger' by increasing its own military strength. Britain reversed roles in the 'procrastination' game; its new policy was never subsequently consolidated but, on the other hand, it was not dismantled or repudiated. The Dalai Lama was ultimately forced to consider a policy of accommodation with the new China and in the long term the ambiguous status of Tibet left an unenviable legacy for independent India.

Bell wrote, 'The political arrangements now concluded marks a new step in the relations between Britain and Tibet'.[102] Although these agreements did not amount to the kind of military protectorate that many of the Tibetan elite would have preferred, to the Dalai Lama they represented a considerable advance on the discouraging policy that Britain had pursued since Simla. Bell was very pleased with himself: 'My ideas have gone through in a flood; not one has been rejected.'[103] He wrote, 'For several years I have struggled to push through my ideas for the betterment of our relations with Tibet, but with small success, though I have returned again and again to the charge'.[104] Justly so, Bell considered that 'apart from this settlement, my Mission had been able to smooth away misunderstandings and to re-establish confidence between the British and Tibetan Governments.'[105]

With his mission fulfilled, Bell left Lhasa on 19 October 1921, almost eleven months after he had arrived for a one-month stay. Right to the very end, Bell was intent on continuing his unique diplomatic approach: 'I choose the life day of the Dalai Lama as our day for departure from Lhasa. The life day of the Inmost One is of universal application; its selection gives great pleasure to the people of Lhasa, and is expected to insure us against illness and accident.'[106] A translation of a Tibetan song composed by the Tibetans and sung in Lhasa on the day of Bell's departure for Indian

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102 IOR:MSS Eur F8O 5f Final Report, Lhasa Mission, November 1920 to October 1921.

103 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 376.

104 Ibid.

105 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 203.

106 C. Bell, Portrait of Dalai Lama, op.cit., pp. 379-80.

in his honour gives some measure of the esteem with which he was viewed by the Tibetans:

> The guest who comes from a long distance, who has white hair,
> Outwardly he wears Foreign dress - and shows a stern face.
> Inwardly he helps our religion and our Government.
> We have come to know that he is Great Minister Bell.
> May he live long! May he be free from illness!
> May he be successful in his undertakings
> And may he always possess the three good ones:
> grace glory and health! [107]

Bell's extended domicile in Lhasa had enabled him to make a considered decision of what was most needed by the Tibetans. On his return from Lhasa, he took immediate action, in consultation with the Indian Foreign Department, to fulfil the Government of India's promise of assistance to Tibet. By December 1921 he had a 'development scheme' confirmed and replied to the Tibet Council:

> The Government of India have done their best to meet the request of the Tibetan Government to help them in the manufacture of rifles, and ammunition and, since my arrival in Delhi, I have given my personal attention to this matter and have consulted the chief military authorities as to the feasibility of establishing a modern factory in Lhasa for the purpose. [108]

The final conformation of the development 'scheme' might have been a disappointment for the Lhasa Council. Bell wrote:

> I was however disappointed to find out that it would be impossible to open such a factory in Lhasa, at least for the present. The machinery required, even for a small factory of this kind, will cost several lakhs of rupees, and it cannot be worked without electricity. Making gunpowder of the kind used for rifles cartridges is also a very difficult task. There are no factories even in India where such gunpowder can be made.
> It appears, therefore, that the Tibetan Government must give up, for the present at any rate, the idea of getting skilled mechanics from India for making rifles and ammunition. These mechanics can do nothing in Lhasa without machinery, and they cannot make the improved gunpowder.[109]

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107 IOR: MSS Eur F8O No 42 Note, 30 November 1921.

108 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5e 25 Translation of letter in Tibetan from Bell to Tibet Council, 12 December 1921. See also IOR:L/P&S/10/718 Encl in P434.

109 Ibid.

The alternative offered was indeed miserly. The Government of India offered 'to train Tibetan mechanics in Gyantse for doing minor repairs to rifles. When properly trained for about a year, they will be able to repair rifles that have been slightly damaged, and will look after the rifles in the different regiments, seeing that the soldiers keep them clean and in good condition.'[110]

The Commander-in-Chief of the army, Tsarong, had requested that 250 Tibetan soldiers be trained at a time at Gyantse. Bell explained that it would be difficult to arrange the training of so many men at Gyantse where there were only 50 Indian soldiers. He reported that: 'Some of our military officers think that it would be better to give a good training to 100 men at a time. Then these men can teach others in the Tibetan army.'[111] The Tibetan government would be allowed to import up to a total amount of 3 mountain guns, 6 machine guns and 3000 rifles the first year and 1 mountain gun, 2 machine guns and 1000 rifles each following year for seven years.'[112] The Government of India was willing to train 20 Tibetan officers in the use of mountain guns. Three of the Lewis machine guns were free of cost in order to redeem the promise made by the Government of India in 1917 'to give the Tibetan Government one or two machine guns.'[113] The understanding was that the Government of India would permit the Lhasa government to import munitions on payment for which they would submit a declaration[114] that the munitions would be used solely for self defence and internal police work. They were allowed to import up to 100 rounds of ammunition for each gun the first year and up to 50 rounds for each gun each following year.

Sir Henry Hayden, who had recently retired as the head of the Geological Survey Department in India, was willing to examine mines in Tibet for the Tibetan government if Lhasa agreed to the survey as part of a private tour of Tibet from the Nam Tso to Ladakh. Bell was opposed to the choice of Hayden but his objections went unheeded.[115] Bell also submitted to the Lhasa Council as estimate of the cost of establishing an English school at Gyantse: 'Yearly recurring charges Rs. 15,208 and Initial charges Rs.2, 200 not including cost of house or firewood.'[116]

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110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 IOR:L/P&S/10/718 Encl in P2794 Translation of declaration from Tibetan Government to Government of India, 14 May 1922.
115 IOR: L/P&S/11/210 P2229 'Economic results of Sir Henry Hayden's visit to Tibet'.
116 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5e 25 Translation of letter in Tibetan from Bell to Tibet Council, 12 December 1921.

When Bell submitted his report in November 1921, he believed that he had regulated future relations with Tibet. Summarising the results obtained by the mission, Bell wrote, 'The confidence of the Tibetan Government in us has been thoroughly restored. The friendship they feel towards us is probably greater than ever before'. . . I do not think friendliness could possibly have been greater'.[117] One of his principal aims had been achieved: the adverse influence of the Kansu mission was more than counteracted.[118] Optimistically he stated, 'The probability of China negotiating a tripartite Treaty with Britain and Tibet has been increased.'[119]

The Chinese, however, were far from willing to oblige and when exaggerated reports of Bell's 'treaty' with Lhasa began to be filter out from Tibet and appear in newspapers, Peking made it clear that the Chinese government would not recognise any agreement which Great Britain might have entered into with the Tibetans. A Reuters extract from the Peking Daily News on 2 November 1921, under the heading, 'Tibet Afraid of Bolshevik Aggression', stated:

> According to Bell's report the Tibetans now appear anxious to open up their country to modern civilisation and are willing to enter into a semi-direct treaty with Britain as they are alarmed at the approach of Bolshevist emissaries through Chinese Turkestan, the deposition of the Hutukhtu of Mongolia and the growth of the Soviet influence in Mongolia. It is reported that Mr. Bell outlined the terms of a treaty which would satisfy the aspirations of the Tibetans for wider intercourse with India and allay their fears of Bolshevist aggression.[120]

It was not long before the Chinese Foreign Office responded:

> A Reuter's telegram of 1 November states . . .that Mr. Bell drew up in outline the terms of a semi-direct treaty between India and Tibet such as would widen intercourse between the two countries and afford means of resisting Bolshevist infiltration. The Wai Chiao Pu have the honour to point out that when the Pacific Conference is over China and Great Britain must certainly take steps to concert an early and satisfactory settlement of the Tibetan question, and hereby state in order to obviate further misunderstandings that the Chinese Government will be unable to recognise any agreement of whatever nature into which Great Britain may at present enter with the Tibetans.[121]

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117 IOR:MSS Eur F8O, 5f Lhasa Mission, Final Report, 29 November 1921.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 IOR L/P&S/10/718/P598 Extract from Peking Daily News, 2 November 1921.
121 IOR:L/P&S/10/718/P598 Wai Chiao Pu Memorandum, 4 November 1921 Enclosure 3 in Peking Despatch No 655, 9 November 1921.

Bell left for England in December 1921 and arrived in London on New Year's Day 1922.[122] He must have been hopeful at the prospects for the new year and his continued involvement in the Tibetan question: 'Over and over again the Dalai Lama, his Ministers and other officials kept saying that if and when there were negotiations with China I must conduct them. Towards the end of my stay such remarks became increasingly frequent.'[123] But, as time was to prove, Bell's Lhasa mission represented the end of his career as an Indian government official and consequently his official involvement in the Tibetan issue. Bell devoted the rest of his life to writing books in which he sought to make Tibet intelligible to the world and to vindicate the right of Tibet to independence.

Eric Teichman was adamant that Bell's visit to Lhasa 'has been a great success, and will, it is to be hoped, eventually be followed by permanent British representation at Lhasa and the opening up of closer relations between India and the Tibetan Government, who', as he put it, 'ever since the Chinese were expelled from the country, have desired to be friendly with us and develop their resources with our assistance.'[124] However, the new policy was defective from the beginning. With a situation of uncertainty regarding Britain's long-term future in India and in Asia as a whole it was obviously impossible for the British to do much more than mark time while simultaneously attempting to preserve India's security without incurring new responsibilities.

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122 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 207.
123 IOR:MSS Eur F8O, 5f Lhasa Mission, Final Report, 29 November 1921.
124 PRO:FO371/6610/F4OO1/59/10 Comment by Teichman, 2 November 1921.

CHAPTER 10

A POLICY OF WAIT-AND-SEE

'As the case stands, we have little to lose, and perhaps something to gain, by leaving well alone'.[1]

Bell's mission to Lhasa was an attempt to induce the Chinese government to abandon their obstructive attitude and conclude a settlement of the Tibetan question. But despite the diplomatic bluff, the Peking government remained singularly unresponsive. While the consensus at the time was that the Bell mission had been a great success, in reality the Mission was a failure. The fundamental objective of Bell's visit, namely, to force Peking out of its tenacious refusal to resume negotiations[2] was not realized.

Undoubtedly, the civil war in China, which had reduced the country to near chaos, and Japan's increasing dominance, provides between them part of the answer. Part of the answer also lies in the fact that a radical transformation in the framework of Far Eastern diplomacy took place during the First World War. The Washington Conference of 1921-1922 was an expression of the powers' interest in redefining their relations and involved a reassessment of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

The Japanese alliance had been of immense value to England in the immediate past, but with the disappearance of the threats from Germany and Russia the original reasons for the alliance had become redundant. Nevertheless, there was a possible danger that some combination between Russia and Germany might eventually evolve which would threaten Britain. Unfortunately, renewal of the Japanese alliance carried with it the certainty of American ill-will. Britain had to make a choice between the disadvantages of incurring either Japan's active hostility towards the vulnerable British Empire in the East or America's unfriendliness. It was one of the most crucial national-strategic decisions England had ever had to reach in her history.[3] The problem of the Japanese alliance was exhaustively debated at the 1921 Imperial Conference. The debate split the empire. Australia and New Zealand were whole-heartedly in favour of renewal, Canada, on the other hand, was wholly against renewing the alliance. The idea of continuing an exclusively Anglo-Japanese alliance was already spiritless by the

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1 PRO: FO371/8014/F3314/226/10 Minute by Carr, Foreign Office, 30 October 1922.

2 IOR: L/P&S/20/971 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

3 C. Barnett, op.cit., p. 254.

time British delegates, under the leadership of Arthur Balfour, attended the Washington Conference.[4]

The Washington Conference was really three conferences in one: a 'nine-power conference' on a general political settlement of Far Eastern problems, a 'five-power' conference on the limitation of naval armaments and a 'four-power' conference on the Pacific area. Disarmament and the avoidance of a naval race were seen as essential ingredients for British post-war policy. Britain's prosperity, briefly and delusively restored in a post-war boom, had now finally collapsed. Her traditional exporting industries had succumbed to foreign competition. Imports from German and American competitors had crippled Britain's new industries. Unemployment reached two million. Only two years after Lord Curzon's triumphant celebration address in the House of Lords,[5] the British power brokers found that they were conducting policy not from strength, but from weakness. Barnett concludes: 'weakness so far disguised from other nations by the outward show of imperial pomp and power'.[6]

By the resulting Nine-Power Treaty the signatories agreed to respect the commerical Open Door allowing equal opportunities for all powers to trade and invest in China. Adherence to the Nine-Power Treaty completely destroyed Britain's own freedom of political action in the Far East. In essence, the Washington Conference converted Japan from an ally into a potential enemy, and British conciliatoriness at the conference had not necessarily averted American ill-will. British appeasement at the Washington Conference was rewarded in general by America's continued retreat into isolationism. Post-war friction and mutual suspicions between Britain and the United States restricted effective policy in the Far East.

The major Anglo-American conflicts between 1919 and 1923 revolved round the issue of Britain's war debt to the United States and US naval domination.[7] One section of the British policy makers regarded the United States with distrust while another was committed to the idea of a special relationship between the two countries.[8]

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4 C. J. Lowe & M. L. Dockrill, The Mirage of Power: British Foreign Policy 1914-22 (London, 1972), p. 302.

5 See Chapter Five

6 C. Barnett, op.cit., p. 269.

7 There was also a covert struggle over oil concessions and over cable and radio communications. 1924 to 1926 saw a period of co-operation with the United States when the first Labour government temporarily removed from power the British nationalists. The second Baldwin government did their best to cultivate good relations with the Americans but resulted in 1927 in an almost total breakdown of Anglo-American relations.

8 Phillip Darby, Three Faces of Imperialism: British and American Approaches to Asia & Africa 1870-1970 (New Haven, 1987), p. 82.

For most of the 1920s Anglo-American relations were dominated by the Anglophobes in the United States and the imperial isolationists in Britain. Darby maintains that: 'The situation was one in which Britain's leaders found themselves with little capacity to adjust policies in the light of changed circumstance'.[9] In many cases the ultimate result of this political atmosphere was stagnation of policy with political leaders preferring, as in the case of Tibet, to 'wait and see' in the hope that the situation would become clearer and the prospects more promising.

On 14 February 1922, soon after Bell's return to London, an 'informal' discussion regarding Tibet took place at the Foreign Office. Present were Newton and Wellesley, Charles Bell, Wakely representing the India office, and Eric Teichman.[10] As the Washington conference had finished it was thought desirable:

> to put His Majesty's Minister at Peking in a position to take the first available opportunity of resuming the negotiations which the Chinese Government had promised to reopen as soon as possible after the Conference.[11]

Bell suggested that as it was undesirable that the Tibetans should go to China, where they would be at a disadvantage, and as the Chinese representatives would probably be unwilling to go to India, the negotiations might take place in London. He did not, however, press the suggestion, and Wellesley pointed out that the 'only practicable course at the present moment seemed to be to pick up the threads of the negotiations where they had been dropped in 1919'.[12] While it was recognised that there would be 'many difficulties in securing the assent of the Tibetans to any settlement negotiated without their participation', Bell and Teichman clearly believed that the difficulties of negotiating a settlement, at any rate in the preliminary stages, would be greater if the Tibetans and the Chinese were both present.[13]

It was agreed that a telegram authorising Alston to press the Chinese to resume negotiations on the basis of the their offer of 1919 should be drafted and submitted to the India Office for their concurrence.[14] This was to be dispatched to Alston in Peking indicating that the first 'favourable moment' should be taken for inviting the Chinese government to resume Tibetan negotiations and 'to select moment to press to Chinese

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9 Ibid.
10 PRO:FO371/8014/F795/226/10 Minute paper by Newton, 16 February 1922.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.

Government to settle'.[15] 'The 'general line' to be taken by the Foreign Office was 'that His Majesty's Legation at Peking will try to extract the most favourable terms they can from the Chinese Government for submission to the Tibetans'. It would be left to the India Office and the Government of India to consider at what stage and how to consult the Tibetans.[16]

The India Office assumed that the Tibetans would prefer settlement on the basis of the Chinese offer of May 1919 to the alternatives subsequently proposed, under which parts of Inner Tibet would be added to Outer Tibet at the expense of absorption of part or whole of the remainder of Inner Tibet in China.[17] Bell's opinion was that on resumption of negotiations the British should suggest, firstly, retention of Inner Tibet as in the Simla Convention of 1914 and, secondly, that the boundary between Inner and Outer Tibet should follow more or less the status quo, leaving Derge to Tibet and Nyarong to China. Bell was emphatic that alterations in proposals should not be made until Tibet had been 'consulted on them.'[18] Bell also stressed that Tibet should be consulted before any alterations in the proposals were accepted.[19]

The Government of India agreed with Bell, on practical grounds and in view of the 1914 declaration, that without first consulting Tibet and obtaining her consent the acceptance of any alteration of the Simla Convention would be out of the question. Their reasoning was political rather than principled: 'an absolute repudiation of the negotiations by Tibet would follow any substantial modification of the Simla Convention which might be the result of one-sided negotiations with China.'[20] The determining factor in the India Office was the belief that the 'chance of settlement with China would be seriously jeopardised by attempting to start negotiations on new basis'. Consequently, they proposed that the only practical course was 'to pin Chinese down to proposals they made in 1919.'[21]

In a telegraphic message of 24 April 1922 the Viceroy expressed the Government of India's view that, in spite of China's present condition, settlement was still feasible. 'We feel strongly that the actual basis of negotiations should be the Simla

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15 PRO: FO371/8O14/F795/226/10 Draft telegram, 18 February 1922.

16 PRO:FO371/8014/F795/226/10 Minute paper by Newton, 16 February 1922.

17 PRO: FO371/8014/Fl025/226/10 Copy of Telegram from India Office to Viceroy, 10 March 1922.

18 Ibid.

19 PRO: FO371/8014/Fl939/226/10 Telegram from India Office to Viceroy, 10 March 1922, Encl No.1 in letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 2 June 1922.

20 Ibid.

21 PRO:FO371/8014/Fl025/226/10 Copy of Telegram from India Office to Viceroy, 10 March 1922.

Convention of 1914, which was initialled by the Chinese representative'.[22] In view of the fact that Tibet and the Government of India were bound by the Simla Convention on account of the declarations attached to it, the Viceroy argued: 'this attitude seems to be the only one possible vis-a-vis Tibet.'[23] The Government of India considered that the 'formula handed to China last autumn could, for practical purposes, hardly be bettered'.[24] It was worded thus: "We are prepared to make every effort to induce Tibet to accept settlement satisfactory to China on the basis of draft convention of 1914, modified in accordance with China's wishes as expressed in her offers of 1919".[25]

'It is true', conceded Lord Reading, 'that a request for a consideration of these modifications, or, indeed, any at all, met with a point-blank refusal from Tibet, but it is believed, nevertheless, that Tibet realises that substantial concessions alone can buy Chinese acquiescence.'[26] At this stage, therefore, the Viceroy 'felt strongly that the Simla Convention and China's offer should 'mark the limit to which we should go'.[27] It must be remembered that the Lhasa government had not been consulted regarding the proposed enlargement of Outer Tibet at the expense of Inner Tibet. The Viceroy feared that 'if the total extinction of Inner Tibet were involved, Tibet would in all probability never agree to the Proposal except on terms unacceptable to China'.[28] He did not see that anything would to be gained 'by ventilating either this or Bell's proposal in advance, although, with the development of negotiations, they might prove worth consideration'.[29]

The implications resulting from the paralysis during the previous seven years were all too obvious: 'This would leave us, as now, with an agreement between three parties, of whom one repudiated the agreement which ourselves and the other accepted. At present there is a deadlock. On the one hand, we do not know whether China still abides by the offer she has made us, and, if so to what extent she is prepared to come down. On the other hand, Tibet, although our mediation is persistently sought for by her, stands out for the Simla Convention in its entirety, and China's offer has been

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22 PRO:FO371/8014/Fl939/226/10 Telegram from Viceroy to India Office, 24 April 1922, Encl 2 in letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 2 June 1922.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.

rejected, though we do not know to what extent pressure would induce her to compromise.'[30]

The Viceroy concluded that bilateral negotiations through British mediation seemed the only way out of the deadlock. Fundamentally this involved a choice between the meeting being held jointly at Simla or London. This was based on the assumption that Lhasa would presumably be rejected by China, and Peking, owing to the danger of their representative being overwhelmed, would certainly not be acceptable to the Tibetans. An alternative suggestion was that discussions might be held simultaneously, but separately, at Lhasa and Peking through the medium of a British officer and the British Minister respectively. The thinking in the Government of India was that Simla would be preferable and would readily be assented to by Tibet, 'but should China strongly object, as a compromise, negotiations in London might be accepted.'[31]

Bell at this stage was being primed to take part in the negotiations: 'If Tibet were assured of Bell's presence for the purpose of assisting their representative, she would be unlikely to demur'.[32] For the Government of India there was theoretically a satisfactory solution to the Tibetan problem: 'We should propose, in the event of agreement to this extent and if China consents to use last autumn's formula as the basis for resumption of negotiations, to inform Tibet that China has been induced by us to resume negotiations, and, having told her that she must be prepared, as the only chance of ending the present dangerous uncertainty, to make substantial concessions on the lines of the Chinese offer, to invite her to join in the negotiations. If some personal advice from Bell would at the same time be given her she would probably be influenced considerably thereby.'[33] The Earl of Balfour wrote to Clive in Peking confirming that His Majesty's Government were anxious to reach a settlement of the Tibetan question.[34] The precise form in which the matter should be broached to the Chinese government was to be left to the discretion of the Legation subject to the general policy of His Majesty's Government.

The policy being pursued was to secure a settlement on the basis of the Chinesc offer of 1919, and on the lines laid down in Lord Curzon's telegram No. 358 of August of that year.[35] Clive was to 'make it clear' that the policy indicated in that

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 PRO:FO371/8014/F1939/226/10 Letter from Earl of Balfour, Foreign Office to Clive, Peking, 6 July 1922.
35 Ibid.

telegram was not a basis for further negotiations. This 'presents the most favourable settlement, from the Chinese point of view, which His Majesty's Government could recommend the Tibetan Government to accept'.[36] It represented the acceptance in principle of the offers made by the Chinese government in 1919 and which Tibet at that time categorically refused to consider.

It offered a considerable advantage to China over the *status quo,* even from the territorial point of view, and the Foreign Office concluded that China 'should therefore have every reason for desiring an early settlement on these lines.'[37] The memorandum to Peking exhibited the paradoxical position of the Foreign Office: 'make it clear to the Chinese Government that His Majesty's Government, while anxious to tender their good offices to bring about an agreement, are neither able nor willing to force on the Tibetan Government a settlement contrary to the interests of the latter, and that it is only with a certain amount of give and take on both sides that a solution will be possible at all.'[38]

Balfour concluded that Peking would be best to judge whether it would be advisable in the first instance, as suggested by the India Office, to propose the territorial *status quo* as the basis of discussion. This could be done with the intention of backing down later if necessary. Clive was authorised to do so if he thought it would be advantageous, 'and would not have the result of jeopardising the whole negotiations at the outset.'[39]

A reply to Balfour's memorandum was sent from Peking late in September. Alston lucidly defined the invidious situation with which the British were faced:

> With regard to the question as to the moment at which the Chinese Government might advantageously be approached on the matter, it must be admitted that the present time when the political situation is more complex than ever, the country still disunited, and the authority of the Central Government at its lowest ebb, appears quite inopportune for raising the question.[40]

The fundamental significance of this realization was that if Britain deferred until a stable government controlled a united China before broaching the subject of Tibet, they might well have to delay doing so for years. Alston appraised the situation:

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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 PRO:FO371/8014/F3314/226/10/ Letter from Alston, Peking to Foreign Office, 18 September 1922.

> In the first place I venture to deprecate any attempt to open a further tripartite round table conference, either at Peking, Lhasa, Delhi or London. Apart from the very great difficulty which would probably be experienced in inducing the Chinese to take part such a conference would, I anticipate, be fruitless and serve merely to re-open old sores. The attention drawn to the question by the fact of such a conference taking place would produce the usual deluge of telegraphic and other manifestoes from individuals and public bodies in China making use of the opportunity to show their patriotism and to attack their Government for truckling to the foreigner, with the result that the former would be afraid to come to terms, while the Tibetans would assuredly do nothing but shelter themselves behind our commitments to them under the 1914 Convention, leaving to us the impossible task of bringing the Chinese into line.[41]

Alston considered that in the light of these developments the Foreign Office should not, 'at the present stage at any rate', contemplate the necessity of prolonged discussions, whether tripartite or bilateral, with either Chinese or Tibetans.[42] In his view, all the relevant points with regard to territorial and other claims of the two parties had been 'already thrashed out at great length'. Alston was of the opinion, therefore, that Britain would have the best chance of reaching a settlement if Whitehall professed to regard the whole question as essentially settled. This was demonstrated by the fact that, firstly, China accepted the unsigned Convention of 1914 with the exception of the boundary clause, and, secondly, that China subsequently in 1914 made an offer of a modified boundary which Britain considered in the main equitable. Britain subsequently undertook to submit to, and gain the acceptance of, the Tibetans.[43]

Two main difficulties remained to be surmounted should Whitehall follow this course of action. The Chinese would have to be induced to reaffirm their previous offer and it would be necessary to persuade the Tibetans to accept the modified boundary.[44] Alston made the salient point that 'unless the Tibetans are willing to modify their 1914 attitude at least to this extent no tripartite settlement can ever be reached with the Chinese.'[45]

There would remain certain 'minor difficulties' requiring adjustment, such as the question of Tibetan representation in the Chinese Parliament, which Alston thought would best be dealt with by 'deleting all reference thereto in the settlement'.[46] The

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41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.

presence of Chinese trade agents at the Marts, the right to permanent British representation at Lhasa, which according to Alston would be essential as soon as the Chinese Amban returned to Lhasa, and the inclusion in the convention of a statement that Tibet remain an 'autonomous' portion of the Chinese Commonwealth would all have to be dealt with. Alston was 'confident' that these points could be 'satisfactorily arranged once the boundary question is settled.'[47]

If this policy was adopted, then it only remained to adopt a diplomatic approach. Alston proposed to give the Chinese government to understand that Britain assumed that any negotiations would be simply a resumption of those interrupted in 1919. What would then be expected would be a definite request from the Chinese to transmit their previous offer again to the Tibetans. Alston thought it might then perhaps be possible and desirable to inform them that this offer had been badly received by the Tibetans and that it would be difficult to induce the latter to accept it unless at least Derge were included, or some special arrangement made in regard to that territory.[48] This approach would have to be exercised with care to avoid giving the Chinese the idea that their offer had been categorically rejected by the Tibetans. The fear was that the Chinese government might use the opportunity of declaring the offer cancelled. Alston was sure that any reference to the Inner Tibet of the 1914 Convention would be 'extremely prejudicial to the success of the negotiations.'[49]

Alston's summary of the situation reflects vividly the post-war status of British diplomacy at Peking and the increasing need to consider the new international ethos:

> I advocate that we should endeavour to give the impression that we are now merely offering ourselves as a medium for transmitting China's offer of a modified boundary to the Tibetans, and that once the latter accept the same, the question will be to all intents and purposes settled. Similarly we should endeavour to avoid giving the impression that we are pressing the Chinese to negotiate with us on the subject of Tibet, an impression which has so far been prevalent and which has been responsible for much of the opposition in this country. Such an attitude on our part is nowadays regarded by the Chinese as a slight on China's acknowledged position as Suzerain of Tibet, and is indeed difficult to justify at the present time in the eyes of the world.[50]

Alston's appraisal made explicit the internal political constraints: 'The present Chinese Government, like its predecessors for some years past, is principally concerned with

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.

maintaining its precarious position, and it is not improbable that they will be unwilling to risk unpopularity in the country and give an opportunity to their opponents to agitate against them by making what the latter will profess to regard as concessions to foreign aggression.'[51] Appeals to reason and friendship and international obligations, Alston considered, 'would likely to be in vain'. In the final analysis, he believed, Britain should be prepared for a further indefinite postponement of a settlement for years.[52] To emphasise this point, Alston attempted to portray the situation as seen by the Chinese:

> If I might venture on a somewhat far fetched comparison, we should very much resent the claim of any Power to negotiate with us on the subject of a Dependency of the British Empire with which a misunderstanding had arisen. Such a comparison may well sound absurd, but the fact remains that such ideas do occur to the foreign educated young Chinese who now to a large extent control the foreign relations of the Chinese Republic.[53]

The situation in this respect was indeed very different in 1922 to the pre-war years. Although China was now weaker and more disunited than ever, the spirit of chauvinism which had evolved rendered China increasingly difficult to deal with. The chaos and disunity in China undoubtedly made constructive efforts difficult, and the British followed what Fung refers to as a 'policy of drift'. Fung writes: 'Unfortunately, until 1926, none of the Washington powers was prepared to treat the China problem as a matter of urgency, despite their professions of goodwill to the Chinese. They all turned a blind or uncomprehending eye to the march of events in China and to the seething discontent of the educated Chinese with Western domination of their country.'[54] The failure on the part of the powers to take Chinese nationalism seriously only helped to sustain an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust between the Chinese and the West. Ultimately, in the mid-twenties, this led to a conflagration with British imperialism.[55]

To Alston the situation was straight-forward: 'We have now provided the Tibetans with the means to withstand material Chinese aggression, the danger of which is in any case not great' and 'we can afford to regard such a prospect with equanimity if we are prepared to tell the Tibetans openly that there is for the time being no prospect of

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51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 E. S. K Fung, The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat: Britain's South China Policy, 1924-1931 (Oxford,1991), p. 29.
55 Ibid.

the Chinese coming to terms'.[56] This, then, would only require Britain to consolidate its relations with Tibet independently of China. And, according to Alston, the 26 August 1921 Memorandum would justify Britain in doing so if the Chinese continued to delay carrying out assurances contained in their reply which offered to resume the negotiations as soon as possible after the Washington Conference.[57]

Alston believed that one factor in Britain's favour was the presence in office, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, of Dr. Koo, whom Alston considered was genuinely anxious to do all in his power to settle this and any other outstanding questions between Britain and China.[58] In an interview with Dr.Koo[59] the fact that Parliament was now once more a factor to be dealt with in China was revealed.[60] Alston confirmed that 'the Chinese Parliament, futile as it has shown itself in the past, does unfortunately present a very real difficulty, which if it can be overcome at all, can only be dealt with by frank explanations on our part'.[61] This situation was further compounded by the fact that Jao Meng-jen, 'a native of Kiangsi,' claimed to be a Member of Parliament for Tibet.[62] The British Legation in Peking had frequently protested in the past against Tibetan representation in the Chinese Parliament. The Chinese, however, had always resented Britain's action in doing so as an unwarranted interference in their internal affairs and the Legation now thought it inadvisable to challenge Jao Meng-jen's right to call himself the Member of Parliament for Tibet.[63] It seemed that all that could be done was to impress on Jao Meng-jen the importance of ensuring that the Constitution contained 'no impracticable provisions in regard to Tibet, since the Tibetans, not being consulted, would certainly not agree to any provisions infringing their completely autonomous status.'[64]

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56 PRO:FO371/8014/F3314/226/10 Letter from Alston to Foreign Office, 18 September 1922.

57 PRO: FO371/6609/F2994/59/10 Memorandum from Chinese Legation in London, 12 September 1921, encl No. 7.

58 PRO:FO371/8014/F3314/226/10 Letter from Alston to Foreign Office, 18 September 1922.

59 PRO:FO371/8014/F3314/226/10/Minute of Wai Chiao Pu Interview between Alston and Dr. Koo, 13 September 1922.

60 The re-convocation of Parliament had taken place in August 1916. A draft of the Permanent Constitution had been practically completed when Parliament was dissolved in June 1917.

61 PRO:FO371/8014/F3314/226/10 Letter from Alston to Foreign Office, 18 September 1922.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

Alston considered that the question of Tibetan representation in the Chinese Parliament was 'of course mere make-believe on the part of the Chinese' but was 'of great importance to Chinese face' and the home government 'should be well advised to ignore' the issue.[65] The re-convocation of Parliament had wider implications. The drafting of the permanent Constitution would be commenced, that is to say, the Parliament would not be prepared to settle the Tibetan question before the Constitution has been finalized. In fact, Dr. Koo 'proposed to sound the views of Parliament on the subject before proceeding further'.[66]

In response to Alston's long analysis of the situation, Carr minuted: 'The upshot of this is indefinite delay. Dr. Koo is "bearing the matter in mind", but nothing can be done till Parliament has been sounded. There the matter is likely to rest until something happens to bring it to a head or until we stir it up again.'[67] He acknowledged the merit of inaction: 'As the case stands, we have little to lose, and perhaps something to gain, by leaving well alone'.[68]

Carr conceded that the 'territorial status quo is probably more favourable to Tibet than anything we could get the Chinese to give their formal assent to'. He argued the 'mere lapse of time strengthens the existing de facto independence of Tibet and our close relations with her'. According to Carr, 'the only real disadvantage of the present indeterminate situation' was the danger of the occasional frontier incidents developing into a more serious dispute. This, he argued, 'would not really be removed by an agreement with the Peking Government in the present impotent condition of the latter'.[69] Newton asserted: 'Now that we have supplied arms to Tibet we can better afford to wait'.[70] Wellesley agreed. Consensus reigned in the Foreign Office in favour of 'letting matters drift for a time'.[71] The Foreign Office left the India Office with the delicate question of whether to tell the Tibetans that 'for the time being' there was 'no prospect of the Chinese coming to terms'.[72]

As a result of Alston's report no further pressure was put on the Chinese government. It was considered that there would most probably be a long delay as the Peking government would certainly refrain from any action which might incur criticism

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65 Ibid.

66 PRO:FO371/8014/F3314/226/10 Minute of Wai Chiao Pu Interview between Alston and Dr Koo, 13 September 1922.

67 PRO: FO371/8014/F3314/226/10 Minute by Carr, 30 October 1922.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 PRO:FO371/8014/F3314/226/10 Minute by Newton, 31 October 1922.

71 PRO:FO371/8014/F3314 /226/10 Minute by Carr, 30 October 1922.

72 Ibid.

from their opponents. Having supposedly provided Tibet with the means of withstanding Chinese aggression, there seemed to be no alternative but to 'wait-and-see'. The diplomatic bluff had ultimately run its course.[73]

This was the situation in September 1922. The Tibetan government might have been told openly that there was no chance of coming to an agreement with China for the time being, but no communication relating to Sino-Tibetan negotiations was made to the Lhasa government until July 1924 when Colonel Bailey visited Lhasa.[74] Indeed, Bell must also have been frustrated at the lack of movement. No sooner had Bell arrived in London on New Years Day 1922, when a letter dated 13 January 1922 from the Tibetan Council arrived:

> In whatever way we look it appears that the Chinese will sure to advance into Tibet. Therefore the National Assembly waited on you for reminding the great British Government and the necessity of the early conclusion of the treaty between China and Tibet and the people were entertaining great hope that your reports will produce the desired effect; but no reply has yet been received, the National Assembly is pressing the matter. . We further request that wherever you may be, that you will not disregard the affairs of Tibet.[75]

During 1923, in the absence of an official communication concerning resumption of negotiations, Bell received a number of letters from members of the Tibet Council asking him 'to continue to help and keep the affairs of Tibet without letting them slip off from your mind'.[76] Bell wrote to the India Office from his home in Silchester on 8 January 1923: 'I have received a letter from the Tibet Council at Lhasa. . . they write':

> "The Chinese are keenly desirous of negotiating exclusively with the Tibetans. But, as the Great British Government has hitherto acted as intermediary and it is on them that the hopes of Tibet are centred the Tibetans are still anxiously waiting in earnest hope that the British Government will arrange with the Chinese Government for the opening of negotiations and inform the Tibetan Government accordingly. Up till now we have heard nothing about negotiations and we know that you take great interest in Tibetan affairs. We request you kindly to remind

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73 The Chinese official version of Anglo-Chinese negotiations was set forth by an official of the Waichiaopu and published in the 1921/2 edition of the China Year Book.

74 Even then the Tibetans only received a verbal message.

75 IOR:MSS Eur F8O 81b Translation of letter from Tibet Council to Bell, 13 January 1922. Also PRO:FO371/8014/F1168/226/10.

76 IOR: MSS Eur F8O 5a 83 Letter from Parkhang Tasagh, Asst Minister to Council of Tibet to Bell, 12 February 1923 also letter from Ngapoai Shapai to Bell, 14 February 1923.

> the Great British Government about the negotiations and to favour us with your important instructions as before. Please do not forget Tibetan affairs".[77]

Obviously Bell had not been advised of the Foreign Office's decision to 'let matters drift'. Bell wrote to the India Office: 'Can you very kindly inform me what, if anything, has been done during 1922 in respect of reopening negotiations between Great Britain, China and Tibet, and what the present position is? If there is no objection, will you please let me know the outcome of Sir Henry Hayden's examination of the mines? '.[78] Lieutenant Frederick Bailey, who had taken over from Bell as Political Officer Sikkim, must have been advised of these communications, as he wrote to the Government of India:

> Might I suggest that Sir Charles Bell be discouraged from corresponding with the Tibetan Government on official matters. Of course the Tibetan Government cannot easily be prevented from writing to him, but I would suggest that a polite reply be sent to Sir Charles, and that the replies to the Tibetan Government be sent through the Government of India and myself. It is natural that Sir Charles after dealing with Tibetan affairs for fifteen years should dislike giving up the work, but that is the position of most of us when we retire and it makes my position difficult here if the Tibetan Government are encouraged to expect to get their affairs settled more directly by Sir Charles in London. I feel very much the need of personal acquaintance with the Dalai Lama and other high Tibetan Officials, and the excellent opportunity which occurred when Sir Charles was in Lhasa was allowed to pass on his objecting. Owing to the difficulty of finding money, and the inadvisability in my opinion of going without considerable expense, I have not proposed that I should go to Lhasa this year, but I still think it most essential that I should go at the first opportunity.[79]

The Government of India wrote to the India Office requesting that it be suggested to Bell that he should discourage the Lhasa government from addressing him on official matters and that all correspondence should be conducted through Bailey and the Government of India.[80] It was not till October that the India Office approached Bell. No doubt it was considered a delicate matter:

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77 IOR: L/P&S/10/718/P124 Letter to India Office from Bell, 8 January 1923.

78 Ibid.

79 IOR:L/P&S/10/718/P1690 Letter from Bailey to Government of India, 1 March 1923.

80 IOR: L/P&S/10/718/ P1960 Letter from Government of India to India Office, 18 April 1923.

> . . . You will remember reporting in January that the Tibet Council had written to you as to the possibility of re-opening negotiations with China. The Government of India subsequently drew attention to the embarrassment that would be caused by the adoption by the Tibetans of this procedure and suggested that you should discourage the Tibetan Government from addressing you on official matters and convey to them that correspondence in regard to such matters should be conducted in the regular course through the Political Officer in Sikkim and the Government of India. Perhaps you have already done this. I do not know what reply you sent to the Tibet Council, or whether you have had any further communication from them; but if occasion arises you will no doubt inform the Tibetan Government in the sense suggested.[81]

Bell replied, obviously angry:

> It has long been the custom for the Tibetan Government to write to various people to help them in their affairs; and the Government of India must I think, be well aware of this.
> Before I left Lhasa, the Dalai Lama expressed very strongly the desire that he and I should write to each other in Tibetan. I can see no reason why he or any other Tibetan should be prevented from writing to me, if they wish to do so. Such communications are not likely to be frequent. Have the Government of India or the Political Officer in Sikkim done, or do either of them contemplate doing anything towards stopping such letters on either side?? [82]

In his book Portrait of a Dalai Lama Bell observed: 'The India Office seemed very nervous about my corresponding with any Tibetans; they told me they were afraid that my influence would overshadow that of my successor. Their attitude evidently became clear to the Dalai Lama also, for the correspondence between His Holiness and myself became fitful, and did not deal with matters of importance. He and his Government could not afford to displease the British Government or the Government of India'.[83] Bell expostulated: 'I thought, then, and think still, that their attitude was wrong. The friendship between the Dalai Lama and myself would not have harmed Britain or Tibet; on the contrary, it would, in some small degree at any rate, have helped them both.'[84] Indeed, he was right. 1924 ushered in a host of diplomatic problems, many directly related to this lack of communication and inadequate personal contact between British officials and the Lhasa government.

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81 IOR: L/P&S/10/718/P3782 Encl in P4920 Letter from India Office to Bell, 5 October 1923.

82 IOR: L/P&S/10/718 Encl in P4920 Letter from Bell to India Office, 10 December 1923.

83 C. Bell Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 409.

84 Ibid., p. 417.

Bell believed that one of the reasons Britain aroused adverse reactions from other countries in regard to their Tibetan policy was that the Government of India was not prepared to keep the general public well informed. After leaving the Indian Civil Service Bell was therefore outspoken about what he obviously believed to be Britain's legal and moral responsibility toward Tibet. In his book Tibet: Past and Present, published in 1924, he wrote: 'By barring Tibet from buying munitions in India, the British Government were breaking their definite pledges, were undermining Tibet's hard-won freedom, and were jeopardizing the security of the northern frontier of India'.[85] Bell's attitude embodied the discord between pre-war argument in favour of secrecy at international conferences and post-war 'open diplomacy'.

It was generally maintained at the time that the conduct of foreign affairs required a high degree of freedom from public scrutiny, whether in Britain where it was believed that the majority of people were incapable of appreciating the intricacies of diplomatic manoeuvres, or abroad where premature disclosures might prejudice Britain's interests. Diplomatic negotiations and transactions were therefore conducted beneath an umbrella of secrecy, while the Foreign Office 'abstained assiduously' from creating any machinery that would encourage greater public participation in the realm of international politics.[86]

Between 1914 and 1918 the establishment of formal relations between Whitehall and the press had become a necessary expedient. After the war some enlightened officials argued that, as a direct consequence of the war, the Foreign Office now had a moral responsibility to inform and explain its policies to an audience, both at home and abroad, whose opinions and actions were becoming increasingly important with the broadening base of political power. The argument was developed further on the assumption that public opinion had now become a important factor in the making of policy. Such views belong in the context of a much wider body of opinion outside the Foreign Office which had been profoundly affected by the widespread social and industrial unrest which had accompanied the return of peace, and which now called for the democratic control of foreign policy.[87]

Tibet: Past and Present was undoubtedly used by Bell as a political instrument. In the introduction he stated:

> I have set down these biographical details in the hope that they may justify this attempt of mine to write about the history and politics of this

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85 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 175.

86 Philip Taylor, 'Publicity and Diplomacy: The Impact of the First World War upon Foreign Office Attitudes towards the Press', in David Dilks, op.cit., p. 43.

87 Ibid., pp. 57-58.

> land that is so little known. We live in a democratic age. The British electorate and those who lead them have to decide questions of foreign policy. It seems therefore essential that they should have at their disposal - whether to accept or to reject - the facts and opinions put forward by those who have been long connected with foreign relationships.[88]

The failure of the Bell mission symbolized Britain's reduced prestige within Anglo-Chinese relations and, consequently, diminished British power in the East. While contemporary British government documents suggest that this 'wait-and-see' tactic was caused by the 'disturbed' political conditions in China, the fact is that a weakened Britain was now dealing with a new China. This new China was more than ever determined to reclaim what was traditionally considered part of China's 'buffer-zone'.

With the May Fourth Movement, the Chinese intellectuals had deserted the faltering regime of the warlords and set the stage for the founding of both the Kuomintang and the Communist Party as mass movements in China. Chinese nationalists of many shades discovered that revolutionary Russia, itself an international outcast since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, was prepared to help them achieve national unity and power. The theses put forward at the Comintern's Second Congress in 1920 stated that the nationalist movement in the colonial and semi-colonial countries was "objectively, fundamentally a revolutionary struggle, and as such it formed a part of the struggle for world revolution". The Comintern's Fifth Congress, of 1924, resolved to devote more attention than it had previously to work in the East.[89] This policy was then launched in China. Agents of the Russian-dominated Communist International travelled to China in the early 1920s and helped reorganize the faltering Kuomintang Party (KMT) of Sun Yat-sen. The Peking Legation reported: 'The progress made recently by Chinese anarchism has been greatly due to the open action of General Chen Chiung-ming and secret support of Sun yat Sen. . . [who] was in close touch with leading Chinese Anarchists, and was constantly visited by Bolshevik agents'.[90] While assisting the KMT, Comintern agents also sponsored the formation of a small Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In 1924 a "United Front" was formed with the shared programme of anti-imperialism and national unity. Nationalist sentiments on the issue of Tibet's status as an integral part of China increased as the rhetoric of Chinese nationalism intensified. The Washington Powers were frustrated by an active anti-imperialist campaign of Soviet diplomacy which was intent on defining another

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88 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., Introductory. p. 4.

89 A. P. Thornton, Imperialism in the Twentieth Century (Minnesota,1977), p.159.

90 IOR: L/P&S/11/183 P8706 His Majesty's Minister, Peking to Foreign Office, 26 September 1921.

alternative system of Sino-foreign relations. Between 1922 and 1927 the Soviet Union was the most active agent of change in the Far East, and the Russian-inspired Nationalists successfully conquered half of China.

The Washington Conference was a major catastrophe which had a cumulative and decisive effect on the future of British power. With the Government in Peking incapable of exercising any authority, and Japan resentful at what she assumed to be an Anglo-American conspiracy, the ground was well prepared for future problems in the Far East. Impressed with Soviet initiative and believing the Washington powers uninterested in challenging it, Japan adopted its own policy of unilateral action. It sought a new era of Sino-Japanese co-prosperity as a guarantee for protecting Japanese interests in China and Manchuria. The failure to implement actively the programmes formulated at the Washington Conference, especially the modification of the unequal treaty rights, fueled Chinese nationalism and led to serious anti-British violence in 1925. In sum, the Washington alliance added to the number of uncertainties with which British diplomacy had to contend in the inter-war years, but brought no advantages.[91]

It could well be argued that the 1921 Bell mission and the 1921 Washington Conference represented the crossroads of British Anglo-Tibetan policy. The war had necessitated a search for a new order in the Far East. The old order was gone, and the Washington Conference had set up the framework for a new order. Bell's policy for Tibet was now passé. After the Washington Conference 'economic diplomacy' became the keynote of Far Eastern British policy.[92] Continued civil war in China made it difficult for the powers to implement their idea of a new order and maximize their economic benefits. Britain was obliged to wait for a central government with whom she could negotiate. The Washington Conference had committed Britain to respect the independence and integrity of China and to refrain from taking advantage of China's troubles for her own benefit. British statesmen had reached the point of no return but were reluctant to abandon their belief in the efficacy of Britain's moral authority. They preferred to continue to enjoy the pleasant illusion that they could eventually coerce China into coming to an agreement on Tibet.

Britain's 'policy of drift' meant that the issue remained suspended with Tibet's status politically vague and legally undefined. It is not difficult to understand why the Dalai Lama became concerned that the British seemed quite ambivalent in their dealings with his country. Indeed, it was to become apparent by 1925 that the Dalai Lama was

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91 P. Kennedy, The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980 (London, 1981), p. 263.

92 A.Iriye, After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921-1931 (Massachusetts, 1965), p. 25.

not anxious to enhance either commercial or political links with British India. Trouble was brewing in eastern Tibet and Lhasa needed more assistance than India was prepared to give. Britain's new Tibetan policy proved impotent, and from 1922 the Government of India was forced to adopt a 'dormancy' policy.[93]

93 Coined by author.

CHAPTER 11

BRITAIN'S DORMANCY POLICY

'The Government of India had not lost sight of the importance of getting Sino-Tibetan affairs settled, but regret that in the present disturbed state of China nothing can be done'.[1]

Hugh Richardson, reviewing the Tibetan question in his Tibetan Precis, maintained that the effect of Bell staying on 'was a revision and enlivenment of our policy towards Tibet.'[2] But British aid to the Tibetans symbolised not a new tenacity of purpose, as Richardson would have us believe, but an incapacity to gain a settlement with China. The principal result was supposedly to demonstrate that the British government intended to 'treat Tibetan autonomy as a reality by strengthening Tibet's ability to defend itself and by helping to develop the country's resources'.[3] The underlying motivation, however, was the expectation that China would be induced by this change of policy to resume negotiations.

Tibetan self-development and autonomy would, it was hoped, intimidate the Peking government into submission. Failing this, Britain wanted a Tibet strong enough to discourage a Chinese invasion. The Government of India's interest lay in maintaining the integrity and autonomy of Tibet with an effective Tibetan government able to establish peace and order and free from the influence of Russia or any foreign power, and this included China. From the point of view of the Government of India, the exclusion of Chinese administration from Tibet was paramount because of the possibility that at some time in the future the Government of China, and hence Tibet, might fall under Soviet or Japanese control.

In 1923 it appeared as if the vision of Curzon and Younghusband had eventually taken shape: the implementation of Britain's new policy and the consolidation of Tibet as a buffer state to India's north ensured the predominance of British influence at Lhasa and fulfilled India's strategic needs. The official letter sent by the Viceroy, Lord Reading, to the Dalai Lama after Bell's return read:

> That this visit of a British official to the capital of Tibet has helped to cement still further the cordial relationship already existing between Great Britain and Tibet, is a matter of great gratification to me, and I

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1 IOR: L/P&S/10/718 P4769 letter from Government of India to Bailey POS, 19 November 1924.

2 IOR:L/P&S/20/D222, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p. 25.

3 Ibid, p. 122.

> trust that the friendship thus strengthened between the two countries will always remain.[4]

The Dalai Lama replied:

> As the great Minister Bell whom Your Excellency sent to Tibet as your Agent possesses great experience of the duties of both the British and Tibetan Governments and is very wise, all the people of Tibet and myself have become of one mind and the British and Tibetans have become one family.[5]

However, the optimism felt by Alston that once:

> we get down from the fence and show the Tibetans that we are really prepared to make friends openly with them and assist them in strengthening their country and developing its resources, we can trust them to keep the Chinese at arm's length,[6]

was not to be the case. This was mainly a reflection of Tibet's growing dissatisfaction with the nature of the relationship with Britain. Despite the cordial relations which Bell had done so much to secure, what was most clearly apparent to the Lhasa government, not least the Dalai Lama, was that Britain was not prepared to provide unabridged military protection against China.

With British support, the year 1923 seemed, however, to promise a transition for Tibet: a breaking away from old traditions and movement towards the development of rudimentary technological, economic and military features which would enable Tibet to become a self-sustaining independent state. It appeared that Tibet was being drawn more firmly under the umbrella of British influence. Yet, as Bell wrote, 'By 1925 the Dalai Lama was turning strongly away from Britain towards China'.[7] Undoubtedly, the major factor in this realignment was Britain's failure to gain Chinese adherence to the 1914 Simla Convention upon which Tibet's hopes for a guaranteed independence rested.

After Bell's mission and the formulation of the development programme and with no possibility of the Chinese finalising the 1914 negotiations, Tibetan affairs became of little importance. Bell wrote: 'Tibet is the Cinderella of the Indian Foreign Department,

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4 PRO:FO 371/8014/F227/226/10 Letter from Viceroy to Dalai Lama, 15 December 1921.

5 PRO:FO371/8014/F1168/226/10 Letter from Dalai Lama to Viceroy, 14 January 1922, Encl in Letter from Bailey, to Bray, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, 1 February 1922.

6 PRO:FO371/6609/F2994/59/10 Letter from Alston to Curzon, 21 May 1920, Appendix No. 8.

7 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 415.

but the patience of even a Cinderella may wear out.'[8] China in internal disarray was considered to be no immediate danger. This assumption was undoubtedly reinforced when, in 1923, returning from a tour of eastern Tibet and Lhasa, General Pereira expressed the opinion that the Chinese 'could not make a move against Tibet for five years'.[9] The Government of India appeared to think that they had supplied Tibet with adequate means of defence. They were carrying out limited assistance and their obligations were being fulfilled. It was now up to the Lhasa government. Richardson referred to this stage of Anglo-Tibetan relations as 'the period of aloofness'.[10] Commenting on the Tibetan attitude during the period from 1923, he wrote that it was 'if not anti-British, was certainly not in our favour'.[11]

This state of affairs was more than usually complex. As discussed earlier, the changed international situation weakened Britain's resolve to support Tibet adequately in its quest for strength and independence. Britain's professed policy of non-interference in internal affairs paralysed any effective support they might have been able to give the Dalai Lama in his efforts to mould Tibet into a self-sustaining state. Whitehall's sensitivity also arose from increasing international accusations that Britain was dominating and exploiting Tibet and resulted in a half-hearted attempt to establish Tibet as a buffer within their sphere of influence. The ultimate result was a 'dormancy' policy.

William McGovern, speaking at a meeting of the Central Asian Society on 8 November 1924, after returning from his notorious 'trip to Lhasa'[12], rightly predicted that 'the present condition, and the probable future condition of the country, will depend very largely upon the result of the policy which Sir Charles Bell has himself initiated'.[13] The programme of protection and development introduced by the British after 1921 was, however, inadequate. In fact, they actually impeded attempts made by the Lhasa government in their own programme of self-development. The British refusal to agree to tariffs during the early 1920s, a crucial period in Tibetan politics, forced the Dalai Lama to adopt measures which impinged on traditional rights, strained internal politics, and generated considerable animosity toward the Tibetan military. The implications were significant. Ultimately, this caused a weakening of the administrative system and limited

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8 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 268.

9 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P2679 Bailey to Government of India, 18 July 1925.

10 IOR: L/P&S/20/D222, H. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p. 40

11 Ibid.

12 IOR:L/P&S/10/1088 P1820 D.Macdonald to Government of India, 13 March, 1923. See also W. M. McGovern, To Lhasa in Disguise (New York, 1924).

13 Dr. W. M. McGovern, Address given at a meeting of the Central Asian Society held at the Royal United Services Institution, Whitehall, London on Thursday, 8 November 1924, Central Asian Society Journal, Vol. 11, 1924, p. 46.

the Dalai Lama's attempt to strengthen Tibet's military position against Chinese aggression.

The British held firmly to their illusion of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet while at the same time recognizing Tibet's autonomy. The inadequacy of such a 'half-way' policy was obvious. McGovern argued in 1924 'we have to make up our minds in the next few years whether we are going to support the Dalai Lama and his claims to be an independent Sovereign, or whether we are to side with China as to Tibet being a part of her own empire.'[14] This, in fact, was a decision that Whitehall wished to avoid.

Britain was for the time being content to adopt a 'wait-and-see' approach. So long as the Tibetans were able to defend themselves from Chinese invasion, aided by Chinese instability and the tacit support of British representation in China, Tibet remained a satisfactory 'second rampart behind the Himalayas'.[15] While Tibet was threatened by China the Dalai Lama was unlikely to return to his earlier anglophobia. What the British wanted above all in Tibet was tranquillity. Unfortunately, the British government followed the same policy as they did after the 1904 Younghusband mission. The desire for tranquillity in central Asia led to a stagnation of policy in Tibet. In 1904 Lord Curzon's hopes of Tibet as a buffer had not been built upon. And when in 1921, as Foreign Secretary, he supported the change of policy which he hoped would fulfil his long-held dream of Tibet as an effective buffer, the opportunity was once again squandered.

Younghusband, writing in 1912 about his 1904 mission, stated: 'what I looked upon as of more importance than any treaty on paper was gaining the good will of the people, without which no treaty would be of the slightest value. . . Thanks in a very special degree to the skill, tact, and enthusiasm of my secretary and interpreter, Major O'Connor . . . that object was achieved. Much else that we secured in 1904 has been thrown away. Let us beware that this also we do not wantonly cast aside'.[16] It was not till 1924 that it was realized that the gains made by Bell had been squandered. Unfortunately, the adoption of the wait-and-see approach by Britain resulted in the collapse of the friendly relationships. As a result, the chief object of the 1924 Bailey visit

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14 Ibid.

15 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 159.

16 The Times,'The Situation in Tibet - Sir Francis Younghusband's Views', September 1912. After the 1904 mission, Tibetan frustrations were compounded by the British Government's policy of sterilization which inhibited communications between the two parties. Even after Bell's mission and the change of policy by the British government this lack of communiction caused considerable problems.

to Lhasa[17] was to 'make the acquaintance of the Dalai Lama and the High Tibetan Officials' and 'to improve our relations generally with Tibet'. The aim was 'to work for the continued exclusion from Tibet of Bolsheviks and anti-British agitators and to investigate the progress of Japanese intrigue'.[18]

Lack of personal contact between British and Tibetan officials was a major factor in strained relations. Britain's political ambivalence was matched by the ambivalence in western attitudes towards Tibetan culture.[19] Lack of knowledge and interest in Tibetan polity and culture on the part of British policy makers and officials placed the relationship in jeopardy. Richardson commented: 'rumours of real or imaginary grievances were sometimes heard'.[20] Bell reported: 'The Tibetan Government feel also that in minor matters the Government of India's dealings with them are apt to be - though no doubt unintentionally- somewhat lacking in courtesy.'[21]

The relationship between Britain and Tibet reveals a multitude of misunderstandings stemming from cultural differences.[22] Each side proceeded to treat the other according to its own perceptions of what was called for, and consequently the behaviour of each often provoked the other to act in ways detrimental to the development of good relations and mutual understanding. Writing in 1909, Ekai Kawaguchi in his book Three Years in Tibet made this assessment of the relations between Great Britain and Tibet:

> The Tibetans are on the whole a hospitable people, and the unfavourable discrimination made against England is mainly attributable to mutual misunderstanding . . . [Britain] would have saved much of the trouble and money she has subsequently been obliged to give in consequence of her too hasty policy, occasioned by her ignorance of the temper of the Tibetans and the general state of affairs in their country.[23]

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17 See IOR: MSS EUR F157 Bailey Lhasa Diary and IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 for Bailey and Weir missions.

18 IOR: L/P&S/12/4175/P898/35 Tabular statement in letter from Cleary to Rumbold, undated.

19 For an insight into this see Peter Bishop, The Myth of Shangri-La (London, 1989).

20 H. Richardson , Precis, op.cit., p. 35.

21 IOR: L/P&S/10/344/P3609A No.167EC letter from Bell to Government of India, 6 August 1915. Bell maintained that the 'stipulation of the Government of India that the Government of Tibet should give a written guarantee to pay regularly the expenses of the four Tibetan boys in England was an instance of this . . . the Tibetan Government paid the bill as soon as they received it and the demand for a written guarantee put them into what they considered an undignified position.'

22 IOR: L/P&S/11/245 F1309 'Assault on British officer by Tibetan Lama', 14 November 1923.

23 E. Kawaguchi, op.cit., p. 509.

The encounter between Britain and Tibet was an encounter between two very different cultures. The conceptual boundary within which the British were operating was one drawn by imperial politics, which Peter Bishop in his book The Myth of Shangri-La describes as 'concerned with contesting, controlling, reordering and redefining geographical space.'[24] British culture, he concluded, was an 'extroverted, aggressive, expansionist culture'.[25] The Tibetans on the other hand possessed a reclusive, inward-looking, pacifist culture. These two diverse cultural realities produced complex and contradictory impressions.

Richardson refers to Bailey's visit as 'evidence of the new era of easier and more natural neighbourly relations between the Government of India and Tibet which had been inaugurated by Bell's mission.'[26] The Bailey era, while representing an increase in diplomatic activity, also brought about a slow dissolution of the strong understanding that Bell had brought to the situation. David Macdonald wrote to Bell: 'Bailey is not popular with the Tibetans. . .The Tibetans think that he is stubborn and refused the request of the Dalai Lama on several occasions and he is very much hurt because the policy which he followed was so different from yours'.[27] The British were always one step behind the needs of Tibet. By this time the Lhasa government had realized that the British were not prepared to become Tibet's 'protector' yet the Dalai Lama and his 'progressives' were having difficulty establishing their own programme for self-defence and development.

Just before Bailey's departure from Lhasa the Tibetan government gave him a letter expressing anxiety about keeping a standing army on the eastern front and their fears that the Chinese might use the Panchen Lama as a casus belli. They asked if His Majesty's Government could effect a settlement with China:

> The Tibetan Government has been put to great expenditure by keeping troops to guard the frontiers for many years. Besides that our subjects have also been suffering great losses by supplying transport and other necessities to the troops on the frontiers. We would mention here that most of the revenue of the Tibetan Government goes towards religious expenditure and the remainder goes towards the maintenance of the troops. Thus the Tibetan Government and their subjects are in financial difficulties. His Serenity the Tashi Lama left Tibet and is said to have gone towards China. The Tashi Lama himself seemed not to have had the intention of leaving Tibet, but was persuaded by his evil servants. It is very likely that the Tashi Lama with the advice of his evil servants may represent matters to the Chinese Government. It is well known to you that the Chinese are looking for an opportunity to injure the

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24 P. Bishop, op.cit.,

25 Ibid.

26 H. Richardson, History of Tibet, op.cit., p. 125.

27 IOR:MSS Eur F80 5a 92 Private letter from Macdonald to Bell, 15 August 1928.

> Tibetans. We are therefore very much afraid that the Chinese might at any time despatch troops into Tibet. Your arrival in Lhasa has given great comfort to us and also to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
> We shall be very thankful to you if you would kindly see your way to approach the Government of India with a view to the final conclusion of the Simla Treaty at Lhasa through the mediation of the British Government. You have now come to Lhasa and we would request you to advise us on matters which we may have to discuss with the Chinese at the time of the conclusion of the treaty, as we have only British Government to trust and consult about affairs of Tibet .[28]

It was only at this point that Bailey was directed to inform the Tibetan government officially that the Government of India had not lost sight of the importance of getting Sino-Tibetan affairs settled, 'but regret that in the present disturbed state of China nothing can be done'.[29]

Bell had warned in 1921 that if the British did not give adequate support, then the Tibetans 'will certainly regard us as having betrayed them, and the influence and power of China on the northern and eastern frontiers of India will in time become greater than ever before'.[30] The Soviet threat was beginning to show itself and the Dalai Lama not unwisely began to consider a concessionist policy toward China and an accommodation policy with Britain. In his Last Testament, prepared by him in the year of his death, the Dalai lama wrote to his Council, 'You must develop a good diplomatic relationship with our two powerful neighbours: India and China.'[31] One of Bell's chief tasks on arrival in Lhasa had been to impress on the Dalai Lama and his Ministers that Britain did not intend to abandon them to an attack from China. When China was weak the deficiency in British support was not important, but as China increased in military strength in the inter-war years of the 1920s and 1930s, the Tibetan government was forced to take the view that there was no alternative but a policy of accommodation with the 'New China'. Ultimately, this obliged the Dalai Lama to follow a non-alignment policy. It should not be assumed that the Dalai Lama was ever necessarily pro-British. He tried to adjust himself to the changing situation created by the British invasion of 1904 and the Chinese and Russian revolutions. The Dalai Lama must have felt that his country had lost more than it had gained. Tibet had lost Sikkim, Bhutan, Lhadak and Twang to the British.

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28 IOR: L/P&S/10/718 P4674 No. 638-P Translation of letter from the Shapes of Tibet to Bailey POS, 7 August 1924, Encl in letter from Bailey to Government of India, 20 October 1924.

29 IOR: L/P&S/10/718 P4769 Letter from Government of India to Bailey POS, 19 November 1924.

30 IOR L/P&S/10/971 Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

31 Lobsang Lhalungpa (translator), The Last Testament of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876-1933) cited in F. Michael, op.cit., pp. 171-174.

And while the Lhasa government had patiently waited for the British to gain Chinese acceptance of Tibet's sovereign status, Nepal had been granted sovereign status under the 1923 Anglo-Nepalese treaty.

What is clear, and it has been noted by most scholars, is that from 1923 the friendly relationship between Tibet and the British government diminished considerably. Richardson noted: 'This period saw a plentiful crop of difficulties, of which a management of affairs, arbitrary in manner and uncertain of direction, if not wholly the cause was at least an aggravation'.[32] The diplomatic support which was so generously offered by the British was viewed by the Tibetans as of very little use in their difficulties with China. The British 'promise of reasonable assistance in the protection and development of Tibet'[33] was seen by many Tibetan officials for what it was - a bait: to keep Lhasa pro-British and to frighten China into an agreement. There was a considerable gulf between the Lhasa government's needs and what the British were prepared to offer. The hope of the Dalai Lama and his team of 'progressives' was that the British would fulfil their promise of 1914 to give them military protection. They wanted what the British would not give: an undertaking to protect Tibet from external aggression and to send troops for the purpose to the eastern frontier if necessary.

In essence, the Dalai Lama was looking for a 'protector', a new patron to replace the traditional Manchu patronage. The British had offered, however, only a small measure of assistance in a self-development programme which now allowed them to import limited military equipment on payment. Britain had agreed to become involved, to a limited extent, in the training of Tibetan soldiers and also to supply technical help in constructing a telegraph line from Lhasa to Gyantse. The Lhasa government was offered the services of Hayden to assess mineral resources[34] and a headmaster for an English school at Gyantse.[35] It had also been decided that there should be no British Resident in Lhasa but that a British officer should visit Lhasa 'whenever the British and Tibetan Governments so desired'.[36] In other words, very modest assistance indeed, especially considering that these activities were to be paid for by the Tibetan Government. Not long before his death in 1991 Taring Jigme Sumtsen Wangpo, a highly respected Tibetan

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32 H. Richardson, Precis, op.cit., p. 35.

33 PRO:FO371/6609/F3142/59/10 Telegram from Curzon to Alston, 27 August 1921. Also IOR: L/P&S/18/B448 PZ6650/35 Secret statement by Political Department of India Office, 27 June 1935.

34 PRO: FO371/8024/F462,/462/10 'Sir Henry Hayden's proposed scientific tour in Tibet - Tibetan request for geological expert'. Also PRO: 371/8924/F1714, F2575/462/10 'Mineral development in Tibet'.

35 IOR:MSS Eur D979 Ludlow Collection. PRO:FO371/8914/F229/229/10.

36 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5e 25 Translation of letter in Tibetan from Bell to Tibet Council, 12 December 1921. See also IOR:L/P&S/10/718 encl in P434.

government official, concluded: 'The British were not concerned about Tibet. Their only aid was in the form of token mediation and arms'.[37]

The philosophical basis of Britain's new policy seemed precarious. Bell wanted a non-interference policy, but at the same time he wanted the British government to help develop Tibet in a way that would enable Tibet to retain its independence while serving British interests. Bell believed this would entail opening the country and developing its resources under British auspices. There is, however, considerable variance between the policies Bell promoted and those the British government adopted after 1921. The question at issue is how did the British think it would be possible to keep Tibet as a buffer and bolster Tibet's internal strength and machinery of defence without interfering or giving adequate aid and support? Without effective development or interference in the internal administration how was development to come about?

The major reason for the more active programme of development in Tibet was undoubtedly the fact that the British government's diplomatic strategems throughout the period 1919 to 1921 had been unsuccessful. The notion underpining Britain's new policy was that assistance to Tibet would now be the most effective incentive to the Chinese government to discard what was viewed as 'their obstructive attitude'[38] and complete the settlement of the Tibetan question. Why, then, did Britain's 'new policy', which seemed to offer some hope for the Tibetans, never amount to anything? Firstly, it must remembered that the threat to 'develop' Tibet was part and parcel of the tactic to unhinge the Chinese in their so-called game of procrastination. Although Bell might have envisioned a special type of long-term support for Tibet, neither the home government nor the Government in India shared his vision. Secondly, Anglo-Tibetan relations were conditioned by the wider circumstance of British domestic and foreign policy in the inter-war year.

When, by late 1922, it had become obvious that the Chinese government was not going to continue negotiations, neither Simla nor London wanted to establish a bona fide buffer-state. The international arena was very different in 1922 compared to 1881, when the buffer-state concept was used effectively on the North West Frontier. Bell's supposition that 'the collapse of the Anglo-Persian Agreement has rendered the Government of India averse from trying what might be alleged to be a similar experiment in Tibet'[39] appears to hold merit. However, this is only part of the answer. Chinese nationalism, Japanese aggression, Soviet influence in Asia, political changes in India,

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37 Interview with Jigme Taring, 22 November 1990.

38 IOR: L/P&S/20/971 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

39 IOR: MSS EUR F80 5e 21 Bell to Government of India, 21 February 1921.

and international pressure were all, over the next ten years, to alter dramatically what the weakened British government could hope to achieve in Tibet.

The focus of the international community after 1914, when the Anglo-Tibetan treaty had been signed, had been on the all-encompassing problem of world war. Scant attention was paid to Britain's role in Tibet. The situation changed markedly during the early post-war period as power politics established a new set of rules. On 16 January 1922 at the eighteenth session of the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armaments, which devoted a large portion of its time to the solution of the Chinese question, Balfour had made the following pronouncement: 'The British Empire Delegation understood that there was no representative of any Power around the table who thought that the old practice of "sphere of influence" was either advocated by any Government or would be tolerable to this Conference. So far as the British Government were concerned, they had in the most formal manner publicly announced that they regarded this practice as utterly inappropriate to the existing situation'.[40] Because the Nine Power Agreement [41] did not apply to territories already ceded or leased or to the interests already acquired, Britain did not consider its special rights in Tibet at risk. After the Washington Conference, however, the question of the status of Tibet became an issue. Article I of the Nine Power Treaty on Chinese Integrity stated: 'The Contracting Powers . . . agree to respect the sovereignty, the independence and the territorial and administrative integrity of China.'[42] Increasingly the question was being asked: Is Tibet an integral part of China? Taraknath Das represents one contemporary viewpoint during the early post-war period:

> The existing Anglo-Tibetan Agreement confers on Great Britain exclusive economic diplomatic and territorial control over the country in contravention of the equal opportunity for all nations principle. China has the right according to sections 1,2,3 and 4 of Article 1 of the Chinese Integrity treaty, to call upon the United States and other powers to use their influence to make the obligations of the treaty effective. If China, America and other nations fail to make effective protests against the virtual control of Tibet by Britain, then it would mean that they agree to the fact that the Spheres of Influence may any time become spheres of domination, and there is nothing to stop it but the strength of the sword of the nation whose territory is being diplomatically stolen. Unless there is a double standard of international morality, one to be

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40 Reports of the Conference on Limitation of Armaments (Washington) 1922 p.1220, cited in T. Das 'British Expansion in Tibet: The Washington Conference and Tibet' The Modern Review', 1926, Chapter VI, p. 257.

41 Signed by the United States of America, Belgium, the British Empire, China, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and Portugal, at Washington on 4 February 1922.

42 T. Das, op.cit., p. 256.

> applied for the Asiatic nations and the other for Europeans, the United States Government, which took a definite and defiant stand against Japanese encroachment in Shantung, should take the leadership to aid China to regain her sovereignty in Tibet from British encroachment.[43]

This comment reflects the metamorphose in attitudes apparent since the First World War. The conduct of orderly diplomacy on the basis of power politics had become increasingly complex because of the social processes taking place within Asia itself. Among many other factors, the effect of the war and Woodrow Wilson's concept of political self-determination deepened grievances and gave Asian nationalism an external orientation.[44] During the 1920s and early 1930s China's independence from western domination became the symbol for Asian liberty. It was argued that the future of China was intimately bound up with the rest of Asia. A free, strong China would be a source of security for all Asia from unjust European domination. With the publication of the doctrines of President Wilson concerning self-determination, independence and self-government, this movement became a vital force. The Indian Congress conveyed its sympathy to the Chinese people in their fight for national unity and freedom from the western stranglehold. The idea of Asian solidarity and federation was developing and was forcefully expressed. It was argued that all Asian powers should be directly interested in China recovering sovereignty over Tibet from imperialist Britain. To encourage Tibet to claim full independence from China would have undercut Britain's own position in many parts of the world - Egypt, Africa and India.

European political and economic dominance was no longer acceptable. Before the War the European powers joined in a movement to claim for themselves important strategic locations and influential trade centres. The political communities of the five continents had been engaged in schemes of expansion and national development with little thought of anything beyond the horizon of their own needs and ambitions. The world war aroused a desire for international confidence, cooperation, and control to ensure the proper development of national and international life and intercourse.

A new period of internationalism evolved, which placed an emphasis on the establishment of a just, honourable, and mutually beneficial relationship between the East on the one hand and Europe and the Americas on the other. The early 1920s saw a movement to overcome antipathies which existed not only between Orientals and Occidentals, but also between nationalities all over the world. The concept of 'backward nations' was being reconsidered. So too were the complications arising out of the

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43 Ibid. p. 259.

44 P. Darby, op.cit., p. 97.

indiscreet attempt of some ambitious states to colonise, or control for the purposes of their own expansion, certain territories in Asia.

During the 1920s and 1930s, therefore, a major quandary was how to secure an efficient administration for 'backward peoples' and adequate protection for the life and property of foreign subjects without depriving Asiatic communities of their natural initiative, their national self-respect and their independence. There was growing opinion that while Oriental countries might need the assistance of Occidental states to reorganise on a modern basis and to develop their national institutions and life, such aid must come through friendly co-operation rather than through any scheme of imperial expansion or the imposition of foreign control. Where conditions were so complicated and unstable as to justify foreign interference, it was considered that governmental control should be exercised only with the consent and in the interest of the community concerned. This new strain of thought held that such a relationship must not possess the taint of unscrupulous political force which would rule, control or Europeanise Asia for profit. In the long term, this situation was viewed as only temporary and an honest effort would have to be made to prepare the people to take over the administration of their own affairs as soon as conditions permitted. These ideals were encompassed in the 'open door' principle.[45]

It had also become evident that the East was losing its respect for, as well as its fear of, the West. In the post-war period the East no longer felt any sense of inferiority, but had also come, with good reason, to doubt the sincerity, the good-will, and even the word of the European. Nothing illustrates this situation better than the way in which Britain, whose reputation for fair dealing and integrity had won for it an enviable position and influence in the Near and Middle East, had forfeited this position completely after the War. The diminishing strength of the West was also reflected in the growth of Pan-Islamism and the breaking of Europe's grip on Islam's natural resources through the termination of concessions in lands, mines, forests and railways. The old practice of procuring concessions, privileges or special rights through force of arms, intrigue or diplomatic pressure was now frowned upon. Theoretically, real progress and ideal international cooperation in the future would come only through mutual confidence, respect and reciprocity among equals.

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45 The 'open door' principle can also be viewed strictly from an economic viewpoint in which case it is possible to see the 'open door' as only a 'front door' to economic imperialism. Thomas J. McCormick, 'A Fair Field and No Favor: The Structure of Informal Empire, op.cit., gives an analysis of John Hay's open door notes as an instrument of this policy, which enjoyed a remarkable continuity into the twentieth century. George F. Kennan, American Diplomacy, 1900-1950 (New York, 1951), gives an alternative account from an American viewpoint.

In essence, an international conscience had come into being. President Wilson in his message of 8 January 1918 stated:

> It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in. . . and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by other peoples. All the states of the world are, in effect, partners in this interest; and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others, it will not be done to us.[46]

These issues, and heightened public awareness, brought with it an increase in allegations about Britain's intentions in Tibet. The debate on whether Britain's aim was the eventual annexation of Tibet reached a peak during the 1920s. Newspaper and journal articles began increasingly to question the role of the British in Tibet. In 1924 a minor storm blew up over a tactless article by the leader of the Mount Everest expedition, General Bruce, on Britain's new policy in Tibet. American, Russian and Chinese papers took up the cry of 'British domination and exploitation of Tibet'. It was suspected in the Foreign Office that this publicity campaign was subsidised by the Chinese government.[47] The British Legation at Peking transmitted copies of two 'violently anti-British articles which appeared in the Peking Leader [48] under the headline "Extraordinary revelations made about British penetration in Tibet: Head of Mount Everest Expedition gives facts showing grave violations of China's rights".[49] The theme of the articles was a signed statement by General Bruce,[50] which, it was alleged, was published simultaneously in the New York Times and The Times of 28 January. Statements that Tibet had become an "independent country" and that Britain had for some time a "Post Office and Postal Officials residing in Lhasa" were seized upon to accuse Great Britain of violating Treaty obligations in Tibet.[51]

The Legation considered the articles as 'merely an example of sensational anti-British journalism' on the part of the American editor, Mr. Grover Clark: 'This

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46 Cited in N. G. Levin, Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution (New York, 1968). Describes Wilsonian foreign policy as an attempt to restructure the world on a non-revolutionary basis.

47 IOR: L/P&S/20/D222 H. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p. 33.

48 The Peking Leader was a Chinese owned newspaper published in the English languge under American editorship and management.

49 IOR: L/P&S/10/718 P2113 Encl in Letter from British Legation Peking to Foreign Secretary Mcdonald, 12 March 1921.

50 For information see PRO:FO371/6601/F30, F244, F929, F2203, F4881/30/10 'Exploration of Mount Everest'.

51 IOR: L/P&S/10/718 P2113 Encl in Letter from British Legation Peking to Foreign Secretary Mcdonald, 12 March 1921.

gentleman, a teacher by profession, belongs to a certain type of narrow-minded American from the interior States of the Union, who, with little knowledge of world affairs, seem so often to develop anti-British tendencies as soon as they reach the Far East, probably more through jealousy of a predominant position in Asia than for any other reason.'[52] The Legation's opinion that Grover Clark was anti-British might well have been true but in his book Tibet, China and Great Britain, published in 1924, Clark supported the British denial of any intention to annex Tibet. He stated: 'The charge that annexation is planned is frequently made; but there is no clear proof of any such desire among responsible British officials in recent years and the logic of the situation all points the other way'.[53] He further stated: 'certain ill-advised public statements by prominent British authorities - notably the one by General Bruce . . . lent color to the charge'.[54]

The subject of Post Offices had come to the forefront when on 5 February 1923 the Japanese Legation in Peking enquired whether Britain 'were with-drawing any Post Offices' they had in Tibet in consequence of the Washington resolution regarding foreign Post Offices in China.'[55] The British Foreign Office insisted that the Washington resolution concerning foreign post offices did not apply to the agencies in Tibet not only because the Chinese postal administration did not function there, but also for the additional reason that the resolution applied only to China. They argued that the agencies in question, unlike those in China, were specifically provided for by treaty. Article V of the Tibetan Trade Regulations allowed:

> The British Trade agents at the various trade marts now or hereafter to be established in Tibet may make arrangements for the carriage and transmission of their posts to and from the frontier of India.[56]

The Government of India admitted that 'Though the Tibetan Trade Regulations, provides for maintenance of a 'courier service' only, we have since 1908 maintained regular Post Offices performing various postal functions, but Tibetan Government have raised no objection to this extension of Treaty rights'.[57] They advised the Foreign Office that they had no intention of withdrawing them in the absence of complaint by the Lhasa

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52 Ibid.

53 G. Clark, Tibet, China and Great Britain: notes on the present status of the relations between these countries (Peking, 1924), pp.,39-40.

54 Ibid.

55 IOR: L/P&S/11/232/ P1638 Letter from British Legation Peking to Foreign Office, 5 February 1923.

56 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 Anglo-Tibet Trade Regulations.

57 IOR: L/P&S/11/232 P1638 Telegram from Government of India to Foreign Office, 21 June 1923.

government until an efficient postal service could be established by the Tibetans. 'We agree with Foreign Office view that resolution is not applicable to Tibet. We cannot consent to its suppression until efficient postal service is established by China.' [58]

The Post office incident demonstrates the sensitivity prevailing in India, Peking and London regarding Tibet. So much so that the India Office was asked to consider the desirability or otherwise of deleting the Tibetan portion of an Indian Post Office film due to be screened at the Wembley Exhibition because of 'the recent agitation in the Chinese and American presses'. The film had been referred to in the Pioneer newspaper 'as illustrating the difficulties of carrying mails to Lhasa'.[59] This affair was just one during the period in which British activities in Tibet were questioned. On the one hand, the home government came under attack for imperialist aggression and the desire to annex Tibet, and conversely, were considered by some as 'restrained Galahads without the slightest touch of imperialistic desires'.[60]

The fact that Tibetan soldiers were armed with British rifles and uniforms, trained by the British army and commands given in English and not in Tibetan[61] led to allegations that the Tibetan army was to be incorporated into the British forces after annexation. At the time few observers could have realized the limited number of Tibetans involved. Between 1922 and 1926 only four officers and some 350 non-commissioned officers and men received infantry training at Gyantse. At Quetta four officers and 29 men were trained in the use of mountain guns, and 12 men as armourers. Some of the officers received additional training in gunnery, infantry and cavalry work at Quetta and Shillong and some of the men at Gyantse were taught signalling and heliography.[62]

There were also allegations that the British had constructed a motor road from the Indian border across Tibet to near the Szechuan-Yunnan frontier and stationed some 3,000 troops along the road for use in case of another Chinese armed attack on Tibet.[63] Chinese reports at the time stated most emphatically that the road had been built.[64] The existence of the road and the stationing of the troops were denied, though it was admitted that the Tibetans had been doing some road improvement work in various parts of the

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58 Ibid.

59 IOR: L/P&S/11/232 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 21 May 1924.

60 G. Clark, op.cit., p. 38.

61 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3344 Bailey to Government of India, 19 August 1925.

62 IOR:L/P&S/20/D222 H. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p. 29.

63 IOR: L/P&S/10/833 P3869 Government of India to India Office, 23 August 1921.

64 G. Clark, op.cit., p. 38.

country.[65] At this time the British authorities in Tibet began a motor mail service between Pa-ri and Gyantse in order to quicken the mails.[66] Transport of mails and rations by car and lorry had been under discussion for some time.[67] Macdonald wrote: 'While I was in Tibet I was against the introduction of such vehicles, as I knew that their use would lead to friction with the Tibetans. It was however, decided that the experiment should be tried'. Three Dodge cars were purchased and taken to Pharijong. Macdonald's explanation of the situation is worth quoting at length.

> These ran satisfactorily, but the cost of maintaining the postal service and of carrying the rations was far greater than by animal transport. Before long, Tibetans along the trade route found that they had lost their principal market for their grain and fodder, of which they had been supplying large amounts to feed transport animals. Pony and mule owners found that they could not longer hire out their animals. The result was that these Tibetan peasants were unable to meet the taxation they had been paying to their Government. The latter also soon realised that, if the cultivators could not sell their produced, the whole revenue of that part of Tibet would shrink. Accordingly, representations were made to the Government of India, which, after looking into the matter, abolished the use of cars for this work. Everything is now carried as before, by animals. The cars were sent back to India and sold by auction, for what they would fetch. I was told recently by a high Tibetan official that his Government did not object to the cars because they were an innovation. He intimated that had they been handed over to the Tibetans to run on a contract basis, and hire paid by the Political Department, no resistance would have been raised, as the revenue would not have suffered to any great extent.[68]

Further charges of British penetration were based on the close association between various Indian British subjects and the Lhasa government. Sardar Bahadur Laden La of the Darjeeling police was employed by the Tibetan government for two years in order to organise a police force.[69] The presence of several Indians in the postal, telegraph and other services, while no foreigners of non-British nationality were employed, led to further allegations of British penetration. The fact that telegraph and postal services between Lhasa and India were in operation while there was no telegraphic or postal communication directly between China and Tibet was considered a direct

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65 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P4536 Letter from British Legation Peking to Grover Clark, 28 July 1924.

66 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P4246 Williamson, POS to Government of India, 8 November 1926.

67 IOR: L/P&S/1O/1088 P4675 Williamson, to Government of India, 25 October 1924.

68 D. Macdonald, Twenty Years in Tibet (London, 1932), pp. 308-9.

69 IOR:L/P&S/10/1088 P1183 David Macdonald to Government of India, 22 January 1924.

indication of Britain's future intentions. The Chinese and anti-British elements argued that there was proof that Britain was indeed in a position to make these connections gradually more intimate until a British protectorate over Tibet was established.

Clark concluded, 'there is no clear evidence that responsible British officials now want to see British authority extended over Tibet'. He summed up Britain's position thus: 'Britain now has the treaty right to deal direct with the Tibetan authorities, she has ample opportunities for trade with Tibet and there is peace along the Indo-Tibetan border. Also, Britain has serious troubles on her hands in India. And there is growing national feeling in Tibet which, in the case of a British annexation move, would break out against domination by any outsider and would take from Britain the trade and border peace which she wants'.[70]

Indeed, Clark was correct. Britain could not seriously consider a 'forward' policy in Tibet when she was being shouldered out of her sub-continental base in India. The most outstanding feature of the previous decade in India was the enormous change in the political life of the country. In few lands of the world had development along political lines been so rapid. The Indian political movement underwent a radical transformation after 1919 and this development was reflected in the attitude towards world events. No longer was the Indian National Congress prepared to subserve British imperial interests. Taking a critical view of British foreign policy in Asia, it proclaimed in 1921 that a self-governing India had nothing to fear from the neighbouring states or any state and repudiated any hostile intentions towards any of them.[71] The Government of India's policies, to be expected in the existing political relationship between India and Britain, did not reflect public opinion in the country, but, rather, were in diametric opposition to it. In respect of foreign policy the press as well as the Indian political leaders were critical of British policy, which they openly declared to be motivated by imperial interests and demanded that Indian resources should not be expended on their realization. Public opinion refused to be frightened by the prospect of Russian invasion of India and therefore could not reconcile itself to the pursuit of the forward foreign and frontier polices.

The political relationship of India to the British Empire, as well as the economic and commercial, was in a process of transition. In fact, imperial defence had become a

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70 G. Clark, op.cit., p. 38.

71 Perhaps British-Indian policy in the region may have been strengthened if the British had won the support of the Indian National Congress. Instead of a political partnership the Indian National Congress evolved into an opposition party. It should be noted that even the liberals took a critical view of British foreign policy in Asia.

major issue in Indian politics.[72] The Indian people resented being taxed to support the Indian army. The British felt it necessary to keep a large military force in India for imperial defence; and this army had been a charge, not upon the home government, but upon the revenues of India. To the mass of Indian people, the defence of the Khyber and northwest passes did not have the importance that it had in the eyes of the British. Bitter complaints were consequently made against the British Raj which, the Nationalists declared, had 'encumbered the country with militarism'.[73] The publication of the Esher Report, which proposed a programme of defence involving a further increase in the annual cost of the army in India, was met with a storm of protest.[74] While in 1923 the Inchcape Committee recommended a very substantial reduction in military estimates there was, nonetheless, strong resentment at being taxed to support and 'civilize' the Wazir and Mahsud tribesmen. No doubt these issues had a sobering effect on any development plans being considered by the Government of India for Tibet.

By the time of Montagu's resignation as Secretary of State for India in 1922 the British in India had been placed in the worst of all possible predicaments. While they were still in India, and would be for decades, 'they no longer stood there with the assured ease of the conqueror, but stuck like a gum-boot in a bog'.[75] Indian nationalism was now firmly locked in a struggle with Britain for the possession of India.

The Government of India had no intention of becoming more involved in Tibet than absolutely necessary. Owen Lattimore's thesis therefore holds some validity. He maintains that the prestige indispensable to the rule of the British over India demanded that Britain's subjects should not be allowed 'to see on any horizon the rise of a power even remotely comparable to that of the British'[76]. This precept, Lattimore argues, also governed British policy in Tibet. During this period Chinese rule over the whole of Tibet would not have greatly threatened India militarily, but Lattimore points out that the British in India believed the idea that 'native' peoples could gravitate away from the British and into the orbit of an Asiatic country like China needed be kept out of Indian

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72 The schemes of frontier defence and the steady advance of Indian forces into the tribal territories in the last few years of the 19th century were condemned by the politically conscious Indians. Later, Indian opinion did not favour the invasion of Tibet . See B. Prasad, op. cit.

73 The cost of the army still remained at the high figure of 49,573,000 British pounds in a total budget of 127,300,000 three years after the First World War. See N. D. Harris, International Politics (London, 1926), p. 278.

74 The Esher Report, British Parlimentary Papers Cmd. 943/1920 East India (Army in India Committee, 1919-20).

75 C. Barnett, op.cit., p. 154.

76 O. Lattimore, op.cit., pp. 236-7.

minds.[77] Lattimore contends that British policy in Tibet aimed at keeping 'Tibet inert under the unchanging rule of native potentates'[78] who would look to the British for support against any encroachment by the Chinese or others.[79]

Certainly by the mid-1920s the original 'development' scheme had dissolved into a joint venture, with Britain the 'silent' partner and Tibet bonded to the partnership by expectation of pledges to come. Whitehall constructed its Tibetan policy in accordance with Britain's imperial interests. British officials, acutely aware of American government and public opinion which harboured anti-imperial and anti-British feelings, were reluctant to approve of any ideas for developing Tibet which might be interpreted as exploitation.

In the years between the wars moral considerations provided much of the vocabulary of Western discussion of Asia. The future of these areas and the policies to be adopted towards them could not be considered without recourse to ideas about responsibility and guidance. Approaches which earlier had been seen as natural and right increasingly posed ethical problems for which no simple solutions were available. Moral pretensions also sprouted vigorously in an international climate of idealism. The prompting of nationalism in Asia and the sensitivities of public opinion in Britain and America brought forth new considerations. Even those unmoved by progressive ideas about the claims of the colonial world found more need than before for moral justification because of the ideological challenges of America and the Soviet Union.[80]

Taraknath Das, strongly anti-British, argued: 'The signatory Powers of the Chinese Territorial Integrity Treaty are nations, which are holding other peoples in subjection. It is too much to expect that they would take the initiative to aid China to regain all her lost territories, unless they can gain something by doing so. The United States and other nations will not fight for China, but they will aid China, if by doing so they can gain some advantage in winning the goodwill of the Chinese people and thus a fair share of the Chinese market. In this connection it may be noted that the virtual annexation of Tibet by Great Britain, will not be to the interest of the United States and other nations which have surplus capital to invest, and which seek world markets. So it is expected that China would seek the co-operation of the United States and other interested nations to recover her own territory of Tibet.'[81] Beneath the political surface there were currents of doubt and anxiety. Changing values in British society made the imperial

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77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 See also Taraknath Das,'British expansion in Tibet' Modern Review, Vol. 39 (Calcutta, 1926), for an explanation of the method adopted by the British government to establish protectorates over weak nations.

80 P. Darby, op.cit., p. 101.

81 T. Das, 'British Expansion in Tibet' op.cit., p. 260.

venture appear less secure, less effective and less rewarding. The British government's relationship with Tibet was increasingly becoming a handicap.

At issue also was the fact that the Washington Conference had agreed that the Chinese should not be supplied with arms. The professed purpose was to secure peace in China and stop the civil war. In contrast, Britain was supplying arms to the Tibetans and training Tibetans so they would be able to oppose China in her efforts to reassert her sovereignty in Tibet.

Attitudes to the employment of force had changed substantially since the First World War, and largely in response to it. The views of the electorate weighed on government officials, generally working to induce caution and restraint. Majority opinion was set against anything that smacked of the old diplomacy or involved the exercise of naked force. An attempt was made to construct a path towards open diplomacy, collective security and disarmament, leaving behind any major reliance on the military. In their attempt to maintain Britain's position overseas, policy-makers showed a clear preference for indirect leverage over outright assertion. Military action was avoided if at all possible.[82] In general, Britain was less willing than before to resort to force, and increasingly military power was viewed as a general backstay of diplomacy rather than as a specific instrument of coercion. Writing in 1928, a Foreign Office official declared that Britain's China policy was founded upon 'a strong and widely held belief that from every point of view forcible intervention in the affairs of China cannot safely or decently be contemplated'.[83] It was therefore inconceivable that Britain would have supplied troops to intervene in any conflict between Tibet and China.

Thus altering international economic patterns, changing imperial priorities, rising nationalism in the East, and the growth of new ideologies all induced Britain to withdraw from close relations with Tibet. After the United States couched its renewed interest in China in terms of the 'New Diplomacy', British policy decisions were restrained by a complex of changing social attitudes. These considerations, along with the problem of how to fulfil McMahon's commitments to the Lhasa government without at the same time having a detrimental effect on Sino-British commercial relations, resulted in a dithering and perfunctory Tibetan policy.

Britain was not interested in the annexation of Tibet. Retention of Tibet as part of its informal empire made more sense. Britain had no intention of establishing a protectorate or even ensuing a 'forward' policy. There is no doubt that after 1914 Britain's policy was to secure Tibet within its informal empire. Tibet was always

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82 P. Darby, op.cit., p. 97.

83 A. Willert, Aspects of British Foreign Policy (New Haven, 1928), p. 91.

considered an ideal buffer for India. The establishment of a protectorate or the annexation of Tibet was, however, never official British policy. The military aid and development programme, as Bell argued, would 'render Tibet sufficiently dependent on us to guarantee that she will be a good neighbour to India'[84]

The British were not prepared to supply the Tibetans with more military equipment or assistance than was necessary for self-defence. In fact, Britain wanted military control over Tibet. A strong Tibet able to assert her territorial claims would have been an embarrassment to Britain and an irritant to Anglo-Chinese relations. The aim was to create a balance: just enough support so Tibet could protect India's Himalayan border without the British having to commit themselves to a costly defensive initiative, while at the same time, allowing the Tibetans to pay for the honour of doing so. The idea was to give just enough development support in the hope that China could be bluffed into thinking that Tibet was becoming self-sufficient. The ultimate aim was to get the Chinese to sign an agreement which would secure for the British stability in central Asia.

The Government of India's reluctance to become excessively involved in the Dalai Lama's effort to build a self-sustaining state meant they did not consolidate the gains made through Bell's mission. The programme of development that was embarked upon, and the assistance which the British government offered the Tibetans, fell far short of what was considered in Tibetan circles as being their major requirement: a British commitment to provide military protection for Tibet against Chinese aggression.

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84 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5e 22 Telegram from Bell to Government of India, 9 May 1921.

CHAPTER 12

THE STRUGGLE TO BECOME A SELF-SUSTAINING STATE

'They will certainly regard us as having betrayed them, and the influence and power of China on the northern and eastern frontiers of India will in time become greater than ever before'.[1]

Britain's Tibetan policy during the 1920s and 1930s was, in essence, to have 'no policy' - to 'drift': a symbolic act which reflected the decline of British imperialism. Bell was representative of this decline: a man passing through and out of one era into an era that no longer held certain assumptions as important. The principles on which Bell had formulated his recommendations were admirable. There is no doubt that Bell's intention was clearly to help Tibet retain its independence through a programme which would enable Tibetans to maintain their cultural and political integrity. However, although Bell had produced the whole programme, he was now relegated off stage unable to put the finishing touches to the drama. Bell's assistance was intended as only the beginning: his vision for Tibet, as it had been for Sikkim and Bhutan, was gradually to accustom its people to the ways of the modern world. The principle which emerges in all his work is 'gradual development along natural lines'.[2]

Indeed, analysis of both documents and Bell's own writings establish him as a 'man on the spot' whom British government officials often disdainfully referred to as having 'gone native'. There is little doubt that Bell, in his role as Political Officer responsible for Tibetan affairs, supported Tibet for intrinsic personal reasons.[3] He knew that the requirements of Tibet would count for little in India and London if they were not connected to Britain's wider foreign policy. Bell used the fear of Japanese and Russian expansion to its full, incorporating tantalising implications into his reports to sway opinion. There is little doubt also that despite Bell's conviction that a 'forward' policy was inadvisable, he considered that Britain had not fulfilled its role as 'protector' of Tibet.[4]

Bell was a reserved man, an unassuming person and a man of 'equality and courtesy'.[5] He was above all, 'a man of modern thoughts'[6] who, during the early

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1 IOR: L/P&S/10/971 Bell to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

2 Unknown author, 'Sir Charles Bell and Tibet' (Obituary) Asiatic Review, XLI, No 147, 1945, p. 295.

3 Interview with R. Collett, 16 August 1992.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

post-war period of turmoil and transition, attempted to walk the tightrope between his allegiance to the crown and his commitment to the Tibetans. Political, social and economic changes in the international realm prevented the fulfilment of Bell's long-term plans for Tibet. What remains is a myth, perpetuated by writers, and even today fostered by the British government: namely, that Britain was Tibet's 'patron protector' and 'benevolent moderniser'.

It can be argued that had the British been prepared to adopt a more interventionist policy then it might have been possible to bring about modest reforms. This, then, would have enabled Tibet to be an effective sphere of influence for Britain and Tibet would have been strengthened and retained its independence. Britain's dormancy policy not only weakened the relationship with Tibet but actually hindered attempts being made by those progressives with the foresight to realise that certain innovations were necessary if Tibet was to retain its independence without the assistance of British troops.

As argued in Chapter One, the primary aim of the Dalai Lama's attempt at reform was the strengthening of his power and position and thus the strengthening of the centralised political system in Tibet. The reforms of the Tibetan monastic system, the improvement of monastic discipline, the standards of scholarship of the monastic colleges, and the quality of the appointed abbots [7] went hand in hand with organisational reforms and were intended to reduce the power of the monasteries. Having achieved this, the Dalai Lama's idea was to initiate changes, political as well as social, which were necessary if his country was to remain independent. Tibet's capacity to retain its independence was directly linked to its ability to conduct a quick programme of development. Disillusioned with the patronage of the British government, and with his trusted friend Charles Bell ostracised by the Foreign Office, there was no choice for the Dalai Lama but to construct his own blueprint for the reform and protection of Tibet.

The crucial years for the 'reformation' were the 1920s when the 13th Dalai Lama and a few progressives, including Tsarong, were attempting to strengthen Tibet. The progressives in Lhasa wanted to be able to affirm Tibet's independence. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to embark on a programme of development that would build the foundation for a sound financial organisation, an effective defence system and an education system with an emphasis on improving technical skills.[8] All

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7 F. Michael, op.cit., p.165.

8 The proposed subjects to be taught were: 'English, Engineering Military training, Carpentry, Weaving, Working in leather, Working in iron, Utilization of horns and bones'. C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p.196. See also K. Dhondup, 'The Thirteenth Dalai Lama's Experiment in Modern Education', The

these reforms were needed ultimately to enable Tibet to remain independent and minimise excuses for external interference. In his political testament, the Dalai Lama confirmed this: 'Unless we learn how to protect our land, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, the Father and the Son, the upholders of the Buddhist faith, the glorious incarnations, all will go under and leave no trace behind'.[9] The reform group believed that if Tibet was to have any future, then administrative efficiency would need to work side by side with religion. The Dalai Lama's view on this is clear: ' I, on my part, will protect and hold dear to my heart those who devote themselves to serve honestly in keeping with my wish for the common cause of religion and polity'.[10]

Contrary to many writers' interpretations, these reforms did not amount to a 'modernisation' or 'westernisation' of the country,[11] nor were they meant to. It was an attempt to mould Tibet into a 'self-sustaining state'.[12] As noted above, there has evolved within Tibetan studies an erroneous conviction that Britain's opening of Tibet during the 1920s entitles Britain to be designated 'moderniser of Tibet'. Although Tibet was not a British protectorate, it must be conceded that British influence in Tibet was considerable. It is evident, however, that the Dalai Lama and the traditional Tibetan elite were not interested in the political ideas, techniques of government or social structure that the British could offer. Western mechanisation and western knowledge were viewed simply and perhaps naively, as a means of using foreign technology and expertise to protect Tibet's independence. While undoubtedly the Dalai Lama and a few progressives had a broader outlook which encompassed a full development programme which they hoped would enable Tibet to comprehend and adapt to the encroaching world, the reforms were set within the confines of the traditional Tibetan social system. The Dalai Lama wanted to bring about 'extensive long-term progress in the religious and political system' of Tibet.[13] Bell wrote:

> There is no wish among the people to utilize any foreign agency in order to "develop" Tibet, as the ingratiating western word runs. They know that the foreigner will exploit the resources of their country. . . The foreigner may talk about the advantage of development and trade, but they know well that in actual fact what he will achieve will be to

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Tibet Journal, Vol. 1 (3), 1984, pp.38-58. Also T. Dorjee, 'Education in Tibet', The Tibet Journal, Vol. 2 (4), 1977, pp.31-37.

9 Lobsang Lhalungpa (translator) 'The Last Testament of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama', op.cit.

10 Ibid.

11 See Samphel, 'Tibet and the Modern World: Tibet's Failure at Modernisation (1904-1949), Tibetan Review, Vol. XV No. 1, January 1980, pp.12-16.

12 This term has been used as other commonly used terms are inappropriate.

13 Lobsang Lhalungpa (translator) 'The Last Testament of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama', op.cit.

throw the whole country out of gear. Tibet, indeed, wishes to develop, but to do so on its own lines and at its own pace. Above all, it wishes to live its own life, and preserve its own religion'.[14]

Modernisation as an historical concept comprises specific aspects of change such as the industrialisation of the economy and secularisation of ideas. It also includes the identification of modernisation with social change, with westernisation, capitalism and with constitutional and democratic forms of government based on Western European models. Development, on the other hand, in its true sense means growth or systematic evolution from the existing foundation and, in the most general sense, implies a process of improvement. It is within the context of development that the Dalai Lama's reforms and innovations must be viewed. There is little evidence that the Dalai Lama had any intention of introducing those elements which have come to constitute modern society: new forms of political organization, new social classes or new ways of life which would have removed the traditional Tibetan society from the patterns that had been theirs for centuries. It was a programme of self-development which the Dalai Lama initiated. The programme was based on his belief that with internal strength his aim of resisting foreign intervention could be achieved. The introduction of mechanical westernisation in the form of modern weapons, the telegraph,[15] coin-minting machines[16] and hydro-electric machinery for the manufacture of artillery[17] were all vital to his long-term plan to strengthen Tibet and remain independent. He recognised the need for development and change but any innovations which the Dalai Lama considered were not a necessary part of the process were given little support. Bell maintained that the Dalai Lama 'favoured modern ideas when, after enquiry and due consideration, he thought they were likely to help Tibet.'[18] Smoking, playing mahjong and football were banned in Lhasa. Wearing spectacles was disapproved of as un-Tibetan; no European clothes could be worn in the Summer Garden of the Dalai Lama; modern dances like the samba were frowned

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14 C. Bell, 'Tibet and its Neighbors', Pacific Affairs, Vol X, No. 4, 1937, p. 433.

15 W. H. King, 'The Telegraph to Lhasa', Geographical Journal, Vol. 63, 1924, pp. 527-531.

16 IOR: L/P&S/11/248 F2966 POS to Government of India, 11 June 1924.

17 See IOR: L/P&S/10/971 F1263 'Purchase of electrical machinery 1921-31'.

18 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 424.

upon.[19] Yet electricity,[20] telephones,[21] radios and cinema shows were welcomed[22] and even encouraged as important contributions to the development of Tibet.

To understand this attitude, and indeed to be able to understand some of the limitations placed on the 'progressives' during the development process, it is necessary to consider briefly the process of cultural change. One of the issues the social scientist examines in the process of cultural change is the variance in transformation time: why it happens so quickly in some parts of the world and so slowly in others. One explanation given is that the responsibility lies with the nature of national leadership and that individual persons in a position of authority are convinced of the necessity for change. This phenomenon appears to be particularly striking in the case of Tibet. There appears to be some evidence here in favour of the old theory of the role of the 'great man' in history, of changes in the character of nations that result from the character of their leaders. There is no doubt that in Tibet the Dalai Lama was the prime mover initiating change. The issue is too complicated, however, to be put in exactly those terms. In the first place a leader must have followers. In other words, for a thorough change to take place there must be a large number of people to take up the challenge of westernisation or modernisation to make the process work. There must be people whose values are near enough to those of the West so that the new patterns may be made to fit into the existing cultural framework. Correspondingly, there must be people who are willing to give up those of their old values which constitute barriers to change. In Tibet, the Dalai Lama found himself without the support of the majority. The Tibetan peasantry had no voice in the reform process. There was no strong public opinion or consciousness as the general population had little understanding or knowledge of the Dalai Lama's development plans. The elite, on the whole, were more concerned with protecting the status quo. The monks were apprehensive about the growing dominance of the military over the religio-political system, and there was no understanding on their part of the urgency and need for military professionalism.

Change may also be brought about not as the result of the leadership of a single individual, or even of a small group, but because there is a widespread realization of what it may contribute, and a general willingness to make the necessary adaptations even if this might create temporary hardship and possibly a degree of maladjustment.

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19 R. D. Taring, Interview, 10 November 1990.

20 See, Unknown, 'Electricity in Tibet', The Far Eastern Review, Vol. 20. September, 1924. p. 547.

21 See, Unknown, 'Hello Central -Give Me Lhasa!' The Far Eastern Review, Vol. 20, September, 1924, pp. 442-444.

22 Interview with R.D.Taring, 17 November 1990.

In the case of Tibet this realisation did not exist. Michael observes that 'the problem remained of fitting such a program into a system that, because of its isolation, fell behind in its understanding of the needs of the time and opposed any diminution of the religious preeminence'.[23]

Another task for the social scientist is to examine what there was in the society, its values and institutions, its traditions and goals, which facilitated the process of change. Kosaka maintains that in the case of Japan it was in the people generally, and not in the accident of individual leadership. He refers to the early acceptance of many aspects of Chinese civilization and the attempt to combine the Japanese spirit with Chinese knowledge, which made borrowing from others an acceptable tradition. He suggests also that the Japanese emphasis on *this-worldliness* made it easier for them to accept Western technology. There was an intellectual pattern which developed a curiosity not only about Western science, but also Western philosophical and ethical concepts. Kosaka argues that while government played a part, there apparently was a widespread willingness and capacity to learn from those who, even though they were considered to be 'strange and terrible barbarians', still had something solid and substantial to offer.[24]

To understand why a country like Japan changes more readily than a country like Tibet it is necessary to identify more adequately the personal qualities which prepare the way for such capacity and willingness. Ayal, in his study, places the stress on value systems as having a definitive influence on development. Ayal identifies in the Japanese value system a stress on the active fulfilment of obligations, class status and loyalty, asceticism and frugality, development of expertness in carrying out one's tasks and diligence in performing these tasks. The most important characteristic of the Japanese value system, according to Ayal, was the fundamental emphasis on activism or the need for achievement.[25] The Tibetan value system, on the other hand, is centred upon personal rather than socio-political attitudes. There is a great preoccupation with 'merit-making', the highest form of which is to spend one's whole life as a monk, removed from the outside world. Morality, shaped by Buddhism, means that one should spend assets to win merit, rather than for investment; there is a stress on equanimity, which involves impartiality and

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23 F. Michael, op.cit., p. 166.

24 See Masaaki Kosaka 'The Intellectual Background of Modern Japanese Thought,' Journal of World History, Vol 3,. (1957). Also 'The Rebirth of Japan and the Impact of the West', Journal of World History ,Vol 3 & 10, (1960), passim.

25 E. B. Ayal, 'Value Systems and Economic Development in Japan and Thailand' Journal of Social Issues, XXI (1963), pp. 35-51.

non-attachment. Importantly, there is a form of individualism with few obligations for the furtherance of social goals. Ayal concludes that an understanding of the value system supplies the best explanation for the nature and rate of social and economic development. Richardson wrote: 'To the outside world Tibetan life may appear to be rugged and backward and the Tibetan Government may seem to have been a repository of curiously slow-moving and archaic customs; but a civilization and a government deserve to be seen in proper perspective and judged by their results. Simplicity and deliberateness are not the same as stupidity and inefficiency nor are ancient customs and institutions necessarily bad.'[26]

The question whether there were elements inherent in the religio-political order of Tibet that would have permitted an internal modernisation of the system to take place is outside the scope of this study. Michael maintains, however, that 'lack of communication, isolation, and lack of time spelled disaster for the continued political independence of the unique Tibetan order, not any basic incompatibility between Tibetan Buddhism and a modernized society'.[27] In principle, he concludes, 'Tibetan Buddhism could have adjusted well to the modern world'.[28] Goldstein is of the same opinion.[29]

What becomes very obvious, however, is that during the reign of the 13th Dalai Lama the Tibetan society was not yet ready to accept even the limited reforms being introduced. The utter pervasiveness and dominance of the traditional Tibetan culture made it virtually impervious to change. This was most obvious in the opposition from monastic groups. There were enormous political difficulties in bringing internal changes about, for many threatened the bases of power of influential men in the government and in the monastic orders. Tibet, of course, had never really been isolated or immune to outside influences. Indian and Chinese culture had changed the country in the past and continued to influence it in modern times. However, Bell's mission and the changes introduced as a result of this visit were seen by the monasteries as a threat to their religion and their place within the traditional religio-political system. Because of his development plans, the Dalai Lama found himself having to contend with the constant rivalry between what Singh calls 'the

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26 H. Richardson, Tibet and its History, op.cit. p. 27.

27 F. Michael, op.cit., p.167.

28 Ibid.

29 See M. C. Goldstein, 'Ethnogenesis and Resource Competition Among Tibetan Refugees in South India: A New Face to the Indo-Tibetan Interface', in J. F. Fisher (ed), Himalayan Anthropology: The Indo-Tibetan Interface, (The Hague and Paris, 1978), pp. 395-420.

clerical no-changers and his more forward-looking nobles'.[30] Indeed, the Dalai Lama's foresight was not duplicated by many of his ecclesiastical or secular officials. 'Most of the attempts led to political strife, became mired in factional and power struggles among the leading figures of the religio-political elite, and subsequently failed'.[31]

The hostility towards the introduction of change must be viewed in a Buddhist historical context. It is important to examine the composition of Tibetan Buddhism to be able fully to understand why the monastic orders were so powerful, not only in regard to political decision making but also in the eyes of the Tibetan public.[32] Because of the unique culture of Lamaism, Tibetans regard their country religiously as something unique and had, over a long period, developed an attitude of exclusiveness in relation to non-Tibetans. This exclusivism is the result of a monastic idealisation of their country.[33] It is motivated by a religious idea, rather than by the desire for territorial possession and rests on the belief that Tibet is the most congenial home for Buddhism.

Tibetans claim that Tibet is the Pure Land of Avalokitesvara, the patron deity of Tibet. Traditionally, they believe in a revelation that is recorded in the *Manjusri-paramartha-namasamgiti* which proclaims that Buddha Sakyamuni spoke to Avalokitesvara, saying 'Beyond the Himalayas there live people to be saved. Go there instantly and save them'.[34] Tibetans maintain 'the land beyond the Himalayas' is Tibet and hence Tibet is the world entrusted to Avalokitesvara. In what is considered by Tibetans to be his proclamation of independence, the Dalai Lama stated:

> I am speaking to all classes of Tibetan people. Lord Buddha, from the glorious country of India, prophesied that the reincarnations of Avalokitesvara, through successive rulers from the early religious kings to the present day, would look after the welfare of Tibet.[35]

Embodied in this concept is an emphatic belief that, through the Buddha's grace, this pure land will always be secure, and that, even if misfortunes occur, they will be effortlessly surmounted. Incorporated in this notion is the conviction that if foreigners intrude, the pure Buddhist land would be instantly spoiled, the people

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30 A.K.J. Singh, op.cit., p. 93.

31 F. Michael, op.cit., p. 160.

32 See Per Kvaerne, 'Tibet: the Rise and Fall of a Monastic Tradition' in The World of Buddhism, (eds) H. Bechert & R. Gombrich, (London, 1991), pp. 253-270.

33 H. Nakamura, The Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples (Honolulu,1964), p. 331.

34 Ibid.

35 W. D. Shakabpa, Tibet: A Political History (New Haven, 1967), pp. 246-247.

would lose their happiness, incur the Buddha's punishment and fall into misery forever.[36] This profound principle formed the basis of the exclusivism which underpinned the antipathy of the monasteries towards the introduction of Western ideas and innovations. It seemed both logical and rational for the monastery lamas to encourage the government to prohibit the entrance of foreigners into Tibet.

As the political influence of the Manchus began to decline in Tibet, an attempt to exert influence through religious channels was made. Chinese monks in residence in the main Tibetan monasteries persuaded the Tibetan monks that foreign travellers would pose a threat to the Buddhist religion. Under pressure from the monks of Lhasa's main monasteries, the government issued instructions to all district officers on the borders to prevent foreign travellers from entering Tibetan territory. This policy had such an effect on the minds of many Tibetans that even in later years it was believed by some Tibetans that one's faith would be endangered by eating sweets or using soap imported from India.[37]

Before 1904 Tibet was open only to the Newar merchants and craftsmen of Nepal, Ladakhi merchants and tradesmen, many of whom were Muslims, Mongolian pilgrims, and to the Chinese, whose 'suzerainty' was generally recognised in the person of the Manchu emperor who lavished gifts on many of the important Tibetan monasteries. All these various neighbouring peoples, except for the small Muslim minority in Lhasa, were generally regarded by the Tibetans as subscribers to, if not actual practitioners of, their religion, thus posing no threat to traditional values. The Younghusband invasion created a foreboding that Tibet's Buddhist religion might be threatened from outside. The monastic orders consequently became more than ever determined to protect Tibet. For them religion was the aim and objective of the state. The people and the administration were subordinate to the faith. Buddhism taught that the world was one big illusion. Man, through many transmigrations, could acquire knowledge and merit which would in turn enable him to rise above the illusions of existence and enter Nirvana, which is the state of absence of striving.[38] In the face of such unalterable destiny episodes such as national catastrophes were irrelevant. The human condition would remain the same as before and could not be changed by the introduction of some petty foreign ways.

Despite the Dalai Lama's attempt to limit the power of the monasteries, monastic opinion gradually began to reassert itself more decisively. Two centuries of

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36 H. Nakamura, op.cit. p. 332.

37 F. Grenard, Tibet: The Counry and its Inhabitants (London,1904), p. 135.

38 H. Bechert and R. Gombrich, (Eds) The World of Buddhism (London, 1991), passim.

Gelugpa administration, especially when combined with the total closure of the country against any foreign ideas and influences, had developed a sense of power and self-sufficiency within the large monk-bodies, especially within the monasteries of Gaden, Sera and Drepung. The monasteries wielded a large amount of political power and exercised almost complete economic authority over vast areas of Tibet. Since the mid-eighteenth century they had dominated the whole administration of government. They were a powerful group resisting changes desired by the Dalai Lama and holding fiercely to all the special privileges that they had gained for themselves.[39] From their perspective, Tibet's unique religio-political system and the dominant position of the monastic class were at risk.

These three monastic Seats and the thousands of scattered smaller *Gelugpa* monasteries, for which they acted as expositor, believed that they personified the fundamental interests of Buddhism and thus were obliged to preserve the religious values of the state. The monasteries were convinced that their function within the government was to prevent modernisation, which they asserted was deleterious to both the economic health of monasticism and the sect's version of Tibetan Buddhism.

The formation of a modern army and police force was intended by the 13th Dalai Lama to be a direct challenge to the monastic power and independence. Each of the three monasteries had a proportion of sturdy monks called ldab-ldob, known colloquially as 'dop-dop,' who were maintained more or less as a monastic army.[40] It was recognised by the monastic orders as an unwelcome development that a lay army with noble commanders, which could neutralize their influence, was being nurtured.

Monks were not completely against strengthening of the military, but failed to understand the urgency. The rapid growth of the army which Tsarong organised resulted in the apprehension of growing dominance of the army over the religio-political system. It was the 'establishment of a political role for the professional army' that was a threat to the monks' power.[41] There was no objection to strengthening the military if it was under traditional authority, but the creation of a modern military organization that would be in competition with the traditional power structure was considered unacceptable.

This apprehension was increased when during one session of the National Assembly (*Tsongdu*), relating to the raising of income for the new military, several military officers confronted the National Assembly to demand representation for the

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39 Snellgrove and Richardson, op.cit., p. 230.

40 M. Goldstein, 'A study of the Ldab Ldob' Central Asiatic Journal, Vol. 9, (2) 1964, pp. 123-141.

41 Interview with J. Taring, 22 November 1990.

army.[42] To confront the National Assembly about the choice of delegates was unprecedented and highly provocative. The incident was seen as a challenge to the government's authority and only served to increase the growing apprehension about the pro-British military group. It was the military confrontation with the Assembly and Tsarong's desire, as Commander-in-Chief, to be fully and personally in charge of the military, including discipline, that lay behind the strong opposition from monastic circles. The greatest fear of the monasteries was that Britain might encourage restoration of a secular government and Tsarong's request for representation for the military in the National Assembly was construed to imply that a military assumption of power was imminent.[43] Michael concludes that there need not have been any obstacle to a solution based on the equivalent of what in Western parlance would have been civilian control over the military: monastic authority over and even monastic participation in the military reorganization.[44]

Ultimately, the struggle for power within Tibetan officialdom diminished the strength of the government's policies. Many aristocrats, from whom the ministers were selected, tended to alienate themselves from the pro-modern clique under Tsarong's leadership and to ally themselves with the conservative under the influence of the monks. These conservative government officials, led by the powerful Chamberlain, Dronyer Chempo Temba Dargye (Ara gaapo) or 'white beard', were resolved to preserving, if not actually strengthening, the central government. They were also committed to the view of Tibet as a religious state under the Dalai Lama.[45] Consequently they were extremely apprehensive about the pro-British military faction. While antagonistic to the inordinate power of the monastic segment, they shared the monastic anxiety that a large and powerful army would create economic adversity and tip the balance of power toward the young radical group of officers who promoted western mores.[46]

During 1924 and 1925 a major political altercation took place at Lhasa which resulted in the weakening of the military. Britain's most powerful and influential advocate was Tsarong Shape. Tsarong's power emanated primarily from his unique position: concurrently, he held the three important posts of military Commander-in-

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42 IOR: L/P&S/10/218 P2845 Annual Report on the British Trade Agency, Gyantse, year ending 31 March 1921.

43 H. Spence, 'Tsarong II, The Hero of Chaksam, and the Modernisation Struggle in Tibet, 1912-1931, The Tibet Journal, pp. 34-57.

44 F. Michael, op.cit., p. 166. For information on Tibetan Military see T. Ping, 'History of the Military in Tibet', op.cit., pp. 180 -207.

45 M. Goldstein, A History of Modern Tibet, op.cit., p. 92.

46 Ibid. p. 93.

Chief, senior cabinet minister and head of the Tibetan mint and armory.[47] There were many at Lhasa who viewed Tsarong as 'a mere tool in the hands of the British'[48] and sought his downfall. The opportunity arose when a fracas between the military and the police erupted. Tsarong, in order to avoid further trouble and in the presence of the majority of the military and police officers, punished one soldier 'by having his leg cut off above the knee'[49] and another by 'cutting off his ear'.[50] The incident was cleverly manipulated by the conservative factions to undermine Tsarong and the military. It was asserted that the disciplinary action was an example of Tsarong's growing independence. The fact that he had punished the soldiers without reference to the civil magistrates, was considered a slight on the civil administration.'[51] Furthermore, he was accused of defying the Dalai Lama in carrying out prohibited punishments. Amputations, as a form of punishment, had been banned by the Dalai Lama since 1913 when he proclaimed his formal declaration of independence. Article III stated: 'the amputation of citizens' limbs has been carried out as a form of punishment. Henceforth, such severe punishments are forbidden'.[52] This incident was the impetus for a much more ominous and potentially dangerous situation. A group of senior military officers apparently met to consider a plan to 'deprive the Dalai Lama of his temporal power, ceding only religious affairs to his authority'.[53] The plan supposedly also included a stratagem to assassinate the Dalai Lama's chamberlain, Dronyer Chempo.[54] The details of the events are clouded by multiple and differing versions. One version from the Political Officer Sikkim, Frederick Williamson, based on a report by Kusho Khenchung, the Tibetan trade agent, reported:

> Tsarong Shape left for India in September 1924, and, shortly before his departure, an agreement was drawn up by Tsarong Shape, Mr Laden La and other officers, to the effect that they would to deprive the Dalai Lama of his temporal power . . . The agreement was signed by Tsarong

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47 Interview with R. D. Taring, 14 November 1990.

48 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3344 British Legation Nepal to Government of India, 20 August 1925.

49 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P2599 Macdonald to Government of India, 12 May 1924.

50 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P2843 Macdonald to Government of India, 30 May 1924.

51 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3870 Report by Rai Bahadur Norbhu Dhondup on Tibetan affairs in letter from Bailey to Government of India, 4/6 October 1925.

52 W. D. Shakabpa, op.cit., p. 248.

53 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3398 Williamson, POS to Government of India, 27 August 1926.

54 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P1741 Telegram from Trade Agent, Gyantse to POS 27 April 1925.

> and a number of others. Some however refused to sign, and the matter was reported to the Dalai Lama.[55]

It is not clear whether the military officers intended that the temporal power should be administer by Tsarong, 'but this would appear to have been their intention'.[56] There is insufficient evidence to confirm the validity of this report.[57] Tsarong's former wife, Rinchen Dolma Taring, denies the allegation. 'Tsarong was an intensely patriotic Tibetan, and would never have done anything to hurt the Dalai Lama'.[58] If indeed there had been a formal arrangement sanctioning any ambition to reduce the power of the Dalai Lama the plan was abandoned. Shortly afterwards in September 1924, Tsarong was sent by the Dalai Lama to inspect the national mint at Yatung.[59] He was allowed six months leave by the Dalai Lama[60] and proceeded to India with other family members where they visited the sacred Buddhist pilgrimage sites of Buddha Gaya, Benares and Kushinaga.[61] During his extended stay in India Tsarong visited the Viceroy of India, Lord Reading.[62] Laden La left Lhasa on 9 October.[63] The Morning Post under the heading 'The Trouble in Tibet' reported: 'the populace is becoming divided on General Laden La's schemes, the monks being jealous of his growing powers'.[64] In a personal letter to Bell written in September 1925, Laden La wrote: 'I broke down completely and had to return to India on six months leave . . . I had a bad attack of nervous breakdown'.[65]

The conservative faction took advantage of the absence of Tsarong to consolidate their influence with the Dalai Lama. The military was 'accused of demanding money to excuse persons from military service'.[66] On his return from India Tsarong received orders that he had been relieved as Commander-in-chief of the

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55 This report was given two years after the event. IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3398 Williamson to Government of India, 27 August 1926.

56 Ibid.

57 Another version of this incident can be found in IOR: MSS Eur. F.157/240 letter from Norbhu Dondup to Bailey, 1 September 1927.

58 Interview with R. D. Taring, 10 November 1990.

59 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P4675 Williamson to Government of India 25 October 1924.

60 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P4968 Williamson to Government of India 24 November 1924.

61 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P4967 Government of India to Foreign Office 9 December 1924.

62 Interview with R. D. Taring, 16 November 1990.

63 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P4467 Press Communique.

64 Morning Post, 13 October 1924.

65 IOR: MSS Eur F80 5a 97 Laden La to Bell, 5 September 1925.

66 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P1741 British Trade Agent to POS, 27 April 1924.

army.[67] All the British trained officers who had supported Tsarong were removed from their positions.[68] The British Trade Agent reported: 'I have been reliably informed that it is believed that the real reason for the recent degradations of Military Officers is a plot headed by Tsarong Shape to murder the Dronyer Chempo'.[69] Later, in October 1925, Rai Bahadur Norbhu Dhondup on his return from Lhasa told Bailey: 'There was absolutely no proof of any plot'.[70]

Although the Dalai Lama realised the importance of the military both for national defence and for control of the rambunctious monks, he had thought a strong and professional military under the control of his reliable favourite Tsarong would be subordinate to the government. He now realised that this had been an unrealistic expectation. The Political Officer in Sikkim reported: 'I do not think that this move is a general expression of disapproval of the people with the Dalai Lama's policy. It is much more a personal move against the members of military party and more especially against the Tsarong Shape'.[71] Urged on by the Dronyer Chempo and others jealous of Tsarong's power, the Dalai Lama came to view the military not as the source of his power, but as another threat to his position and chose in the end to weaken the military.[72] Tsarong was duly demoted from his position of *Shabs pad* to his former rank of *Dzasag* and in 1929-30 his seat in the *Kashag* (Cabinet) was withdrawn.[73]

Bailey wrote: 'If it is considered of great importance to keep the Tibetan army in a state of efficiency I think that the situation developed by the recent degradation of military officers must be considered as serious'.[74] Most of the senior police force was disbanded in the wake of Tsarong's fall from power[75] and the army and police force

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67 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P1629 POS to Government of India, 28 April 1925.

68 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P2679 Bailey to Government of India, 18 July 1925.

69 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P1741 British Trade Agent to POS, 29 April 1924.

70 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3870 Bailey to Government of India, 4/6 October 1925. The Chamberlain, Dronyer Chempo died at Lhasa on 14/15 April 1926. IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 Telegram from POS to Government of India, 22 April 1926.

71 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P2679 POS to Government of India, 18 July 1925.

72 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3870 Report of visit by Rai Bahadur Norbhu Dhondup to Lhasa in letter from Bailey to Government of India, 4 October 1925.

73 Interview with R. D. Taring, 18 November 1990.

74 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P2679 Bailey to Government of India, 18 July 1925.

75 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 Memorandum from Sir Chandra Shumshere to British Legation, Nepal, 20 August 1925.

were ultimately left to deteriorate.[76] In London the Daily Telegraph reported: 'Civil War in Tibet: Modernism v. Lamaism.'[77]

From the complex of causes came an unmistakable reaction against the programme of development and, ultimately, estrangement from Britain. Mehra, in somewhat exaggerated terms, states that: 'most of these measures, if not all, so vital to development, would have been termed innovations in many Asian lands; in Tibet, they partook of the nature of a revolution. A lama-ridden, tradition-bound land which for centuries had been a cesspool of political, if also religious stagnation must have felt their earth-shaking impact'.[78] Richardson writes that:

> It must be concluded that the Tibetans accepted their long-established way of life and their social inequalities not merely with passivity but with active contentment. That may seem surprising, even reprehensible, to those who are unable to value or tolerate the ideas and standards of other people and who long to level out all variety by the diffusion of material benefits which they take to be synonymous with progress. That does not mean that the Tibetans were opposed to changes of every sort but that they valued the right, enjoyed in other countries, to progress in their own way and were determined to resist attempts to impose changes on them from outside.[79]

Faced with serious threats to their fragile independence, Tibetans had to come to terms with the fact that a decision had to be made between trying to survive by conservatively clinging to every aspect of their tradition or by selective self-development. The reforms were 'harbingers of new attitudes, hopes and fears among Tibet's population'.[80] The transition, in reality, was not easy. The 1923-33 period was full of turmoil, much of it a direct result of Britain's policy on free trade and tariffs.

To a large extent the financial weakness of the Lhasa government was the most dangerous internal complication creating instability in Tibet. The programme of self-development required increased revenue to support new infrastructures. The collection of revenue for the military, police force and school caused considerable tension throughout all sections of the Tibetan community. It was not generally understood by the population, or for that matter many of the Dalai Lama's officials,

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76 Rai Bahadur Norbhu Dhondup reported that the police force was 'reduced from 275 to 100 and their pay reduced by about half'. IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 Bailey to Government of India, 4 October 1925.

77 The Daily Telegraph, 31 July 1925. See also Morning Post,'Reported Plot Against lamaism', 31 July 1925.

78 P. Mehra, op.cit., p. 42.

79 H. Richardson, Tibet and Its History, op.cit., p. 27.

80 The Observer, 'The Modern Spirit in Tibet', 23 November 1924.

that the formation of a modern army and police force was an important component of a wider political strategy. The Dalai Lama believed that it was crucial to demonstrate to both Britain and China that Tibet was under the control of a stable central government and consequently entitled to self-government. In contrast to practically all other pre-modern governments, the authority of the Lhasa government was traditionally based on religious faith and commitment, not on any police or military force. It is not difficult, therefore, to see why many in Lhasa saw the introduction of incongruous methods of enforcement as superfluous.

The common explanation that the monastic system was the chief constraint on Tibet's entry into the 'modern' world is not altogether convincing. Lack of finance was also a primary reason. For example, tensions between the police and military revolved around the issue of inequality of pay.[81] There is evidence to suggest that Ludlow's school closed primarily because of lack of funds,[82] no doubt monastic pressure was the nail in the coffin.[83] While there certainly was monastic resistance to many of these changes, it was not resistance to change in toto but the threat these reforms, particularly the military, could bring to their established position within Tibetan society which the monasteries feared most. Goldstein rightly concludes that although external forces precipitated the 'demise' of Tibet, internal forces created the conditions under which these external forces could prevail.[84] It is, however, important to recognise that the British government's refusal to allow the Tibetans to levy a customs tariff on exports from Tibet to India, or to raise new revenue through import tax duties, was a major cause of these disruptive internal forces.

As early as 1914 Bell was aware of the Lhasa government's financial difficulties. He reported: 'The Tibetan Government are at their wit's end to find the revenue necessary for paying their troops and administering their country. Their treasuries are depleted. For the last few years, until the current year, the crops were bad and the State granaries were depleted likewise. They have taken no loan from us as Mongolia has from Russia. It is imperative that they should raise funds immediately'.[85] According to Shakabpa, during the Chinese occupation of Lhasa in

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81 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P1129 Bailey to Government of India 11 March 1925.

82 D. Macdonald, op.cit., p. 223. Also IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P4604 Bailey to Government of India, 'Report on visit to Lhasa, 1924', 28 October 1924, p. 6.

83 See K.C. Nyima & L. T Dorjee, 'Establishment of British School in Lhasa and its closing down', Materials on the Culture and History of Tibet (Lhasa, 1985), Vol. 2, pp. 55-72.

84 M. Goldstein, A History of Modern Tibet: The Demise of the Lamaist State, (Berkeley, 1989), Preface p. xx.

85 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 P671 No. 291EC letter from Bell to the Government of India, 28 October 1915.

1910-11 the Dalai Lama's personal effects, which were still on their way back from China, were confiscated at Nagchukha. 'His property in the Potala and Norbulinka (the summer palace), as well as the vast treasury of the Tibetan government, were removed by the Chinese'.[86]

The Lhasa Convention of 1904 specified free trade between India and Tibet.[87] Before this the Tibetan government levied customs duties on goods and on persons passing both ways.[88] Article IV of the Lhasa Convention bound the Tibetan Government 'to levy no dues of any kind other than those provided for in the tariff to be mutually agreed upon'.[89] This loss of revenue encumbered the Tibetan Government, especially at a time when their administrative needs were increasing. The introduction of free trade caused considerable friction in various ways among the officials and a general population accustomed to trade dues of different kinds. The Tibetan administrators profited from trade and taxes, official and unofficial, hence there was no incentive for them to encourage the free trade sought by the British.

One important effect of British commercial penetration was not only the dominance of the Anglo-Indian rupee in Tibet, but also the establishment of the Indian route as the main mode of entrance and exit from the country. A number of restrictions on trade and on British activities in Tibet, which had existed in the previous 1890 regulations, were cancelled by the Trade Regulations of 1914.[90] Commercially, Britain gained by acquiring the right to export Indian tea to Outer Tibet free of duty. Article IV presupposed the arrangement of a customs tariff: 'if found desirable, a tariff may be mutually agreed upon and enforced'.[91]

In September 1915 the Dalai Lama sent Tsarong in his capacity as Finance Minister to discuss 'the levy of tax on wool to meet the expenses of war'.[92] They sought economic assistance from the Government of India to agree to 'a tax levy of 1.4

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86 W. D. Shakabpa, op.cit., p. 233.

87 For information pre-1904 see A. Deb, 'Tibet and Bengal: A study in Trade Policy and Trade Patterns (1775-1875) Bulletin of Tibetology, Gangtok, No.3, 1984, pp. 17-32.

88 'Wool, the chief export from Tibet, paid at a rate of one shilling and tenpence per hundredweight. Goods from India to Tibet paid the usual Ten Tax; ie. ten percent. And every Tibetan passing through certain of the trade marts paid one penny. C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 256.

89 Article IV, Convention Between Great Britain and Tibet, Signed at Lhasa on 7 September 1904. Ratified at Simla on 11 November 1904.

90 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 Anglo-Tibet Trade Regulations.

91 'Regulations of 1893 Regarding Trade, Communication, and Pasturage to be appended to the Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890'. Signed at Darjeeling on 5 December 1893.

92 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 Translation of letter from Dalai Lama to Bell, 15 September 1915.

rupees per load of wool, yak hair and yak tails [93] as tax on the profits accruing from rearing sheep and cattle.'[94] In an attempt to gain the Tibetans temporary relief from their financial problems, Bell had already written to the Government of India outlining what he believed to be a solution:

> The question then arises whether we are doing all that is possible in the present circumstances to give the Tibetans their dues under this Convention, which we ourselves have concluded. It seems to me that there are at least two things we can do. Firstly we can allow them to levy a simple customs tariff on exports from Tibet to India at (say) one rupee per maund of wool and on other articles at similarly moderate rates. The Tibetans feel they have a better right to tax their own commodities going out than foreign commodities coming in. The tariff would be temporary and would be terminable whenever the Government of India so decreed. Its object would be to help the Tibetan Government to tide over this period, during which - from no fault of their own - their finances are subjected to an exceptionally severe strain. We should, therefore, offer them a tariff to the above extent. The war and its consequences have radically altered the state of affairs that obtained at the Simla Conference, when we refused to agree to a customs tariff.[95]

As evidence, Bell argued that the export of Tibetan wool, the country's chief staple, from India had been prohibited, making the 'Woollen Mills in Cawnpore the sole purchasers.' Consequently the war-price of Tibetan wool had become depressed. It seemed, therefore, that the Government of India while objecting to a Tibetan monopoly had established a monopoly of its own in India.[96] The Indian Government's response was indifferent. They replied to Bell:

> As regards the actual proposals which you put forward, the Government of India are not inclined, at the present time of grave preoccupation, to take up so complicated a question as the levy of a customs tariff on exports from Tibet to India. This question would not only involve the examination of all the conditions along the whole length of the Indo-Tibetan frontier, but would necessitate a consideration of the trade relations between Tibet and Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Further, if a tariff were to be permitted, the Government of India would require some guarantee that it would be levied in such a manner as to preclude abuse and corruption, which could only result in

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93 This was made into ropes and tents.

94 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 P671 No. 291EC letter from Bell to the Government of India, 28 October 1915.

95 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 P3609 Letter from Bell to Government of India, 6 August 1915. See also IO: MSS Eur F8O No. 167.

96 Ibid.

> hardship to individuals and the strangling of Indo-Tibetan trade. Such a guarantee would not in all probability be forthcoming.[97]

They were unable to see 'any necessity for action at present'. After all, they admonished Bell, 'the Tibetan Government have apparently made no recent request to you . . . in regard to a tariff.[98] In further correspondence Bell made the appropriate point that: 'All the wool, yak hair, yak tails, etc., will be taxed, whether consumed in Tibet or exported to China, India or elsewhere. The tax will therefore be in no sense a customs duty, but will be a tax on pastoral produce, just as the land rents, which the Tibetan Government, in common with other Governments, realise, is a tax on agricultural produce'.[99] Bell argued:

> It is purely a matter of internal administration, against interference with which the treaties, new and old, guarantee them, even had we wished to interfere.[100]

Bell wrote later: 'it seems to me that we should in equity agree to the imposition by the Tibetan government of a customs tariff on moderate and clearly-specified lines.'[101] Bell argued that during recent years India had taken to imposing a substantial customs tariff on all goods imported overseas. This was paid on merchandise imported to Tibet from countries outside India. If India takes dues, he argued, 'why should not Tibet do so?'[102] At this time the Government in India had received confirmation that China and Tibet were engaged in secret negotiations with a view to concluding a separate agreement. It was argued that 'spontaneous concessions' on the part of Britain at this juncture could be misinterpreted as 'a sign of anxiety', and might lead the Tibetans to make more 'embarrassing demands'.[103]

As a means of strengthening the centralised system one of the most pressing needs was to put the country's finances in order.[104] Tsarong was at the forefront of

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97 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 No 448 Letter from Government of India to Bell, 3 September 1915.

98 Ibid.

99 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 P671 No 291-E Letter from Bell to Government of India, 28 October 1915.

100 Ibid.

101 C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present, op.cit., p. 257.

102 Ibid. p. 256-7.

103 IOR: L/P&S/10/344 No. 448 E-B Letter from Government of India to Bell, 3 September 1915.

104 For a survey of the Tibetan economy as it existed prior to the Chinese take-over see W. Wiley, 'Macro Exchanges: Tibetan Economics and the Roles of Politics and Religion', The Tibet Journal, Vol. 11 (1), 1986, pp. 3-20.

this in his position as Finance Minister. Much credit is given to Tsarong in regard to his military achievements, but little recognition is given to his efforts to lay the foundation for a sound financial policy. It was not simply a case of bringing into the Treasury the money that was finding its way in to the pockets of extortionate officials, but of controlling expenditure, setting up a proper system of audit and account, and reorganising Customs and the Inland Revenue. The establishment of a gold reserve and the minting of coins was also an important part of the scheme. Unfortunately, the Lhasa government was left to work out its own path for financial development. The British government's determination not to interfere in internal affairs meant that when the Lhasa government asked for someone to be allocated to give financial assistance this request was refused. It would seem that the British government, on the one hand, viewed financial affairs as 'internal administration' and, on the other, viewed tax matters as falling outside their 'non-interference' policy. It must also be remembered that the meagre results of Hayden's geological tour was a major set-back for the Tibetan government. High hopes had been held for the supposed mineral wealth of Tibet.[105]

The economic implications of an increased military establishment soon became apparent and the Dalai Lama found it necessary in 1920 to constitute a new institution, the Revenue Investigation Office, to investigate the various sources of government revenue and devise alternative means of raising income for military expenditure.[106] Because of the British government's refusal to allow the raising of new revenue through import tax duties on Indian goods this new office instituted a number of reforms that were designed to increase the Tibetan government's income.[107] A new tax law called *amtram* was introduced. With the exception of monks, every Tibetan was compelled to pay a tax of two trangkha (one silver coin).[108] The National Assembly, under considerable duress, agreed to extract new revenues by taxing the large estates of the noble families and the estates held by the monasteries, including those in Tsang province belonging to the Panchen Lama. There was strong opposition

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105 IOR: L/P&S/11/210 P2229 Note by Sir Henry Hayden on the Economic results of his visit to Tibet.

106 Lungshar was at the forefront of these investigations. Interview with Gelong Lobsang Dhondhen, Dharamsala, 12 December 1990.

107 Ibid.

108 T. Tada, op.cit., p. 7O. Dawa Norbu, Red Star of Tibet (London, 1974), writes: 'emergency taxes were sometimes imposed. During my parents' lifetime, only one such tax was collected - the 'ear tax'. Every citizen was required to pay two *tankas* if he still had both ears! It was levied by the thirteenth Dalai Lama to pay for rifles purchased from the British government in India', p. 196.

to these plans from the nobility and from the general public, both of which were firmly supported in their opposition by the monasteries.

London and India, exercising their rights gained from the Lhasa Convention and the Simla Agreement, steadfastly refused to permit the Lhasa government to impose custom duties and levies. A 1924 exchange between the *Kashag* and the British reveals this clearly. The Kashag sent Bailey a letter on 28 December 1924:

> In order to make Tibet, which is the country of Buddhism, stronger, we have been enlisting new troops every year. To meet the heavy expenditure of the maintenance of the army and communications (road making, etc) and for the benefit of both the British and Tibetan Governments, we find it absolutely necessary to levy customs duty. Article 9 of the Trade Regulations, which was concluded on the 3 July 1914 (corresponding to the 10th day of the 5th month of the Wood Tiger Year) between Britain, China and Tibet says that if any of the contracting parties desire to revise the said Regulations, notice to this effect should be given within six months after the end of the first 10 years and that if none have any desire to revise them the Regulations will remain in force for another ten years. When you came up to Lhasa and met us in person we requested you to make an arrangement by virtue of which we can collect customs duty from all traders who import merchandise from India into Tibet. To this you had been good enough to reply that you would for the benefit of Tibet, send a report to the Great British Government and would write to us on the subject later, but so far we have not been favoured with any intimation about the matter. The Tsarong Shape, who is there at present, might remind you about this. We therefore pray that you will kindly submit at an early date such a report to the great British Government as we can attain our object.[109]

The Government of India again 'sympathetically considered the question', but regretted that they had 'found no way of getting over the difficulty of allowing the Tibetan government to charge an import duty without compromising the right to most favoured nation treatment which India possesses under Article VI of the Convention of 1914.'[110] The question of a tariff on the Indo-Tibetan frontier, according to the the Government of India, was specifically governed by Article IV of the Convention of 1904. Under this article the Tibetan Government undertook 'to (a) levy no dues of any kind' or alternatively (b) 'dues provided for in the tariff to be mutually agreed upon'.

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109 IOR: L/P&S/12/4186A Translation of letter from the Ministers of Tibet to Bailey POS, 28 December 1924.

110 IOR: L/P&S/12/4186A 318-X Memorandum from Government of India to Bailey, 31 July 1925.

Under Article VII of the Convention of 1914 the Lhasa government negotiated with the British government for new trade regulations to give effect to Article IV of the Convention of 1904. These trade regulations were duly negotiated and provided for no tariff. In other words, as the regulations were specifically negotiated to give effect (among others) to Article IV of the Convention of 1904 and had adopted alternative (a) of the Article, 'no dues of any kind', this accordingly barred resource to alternative (b), so long as the regulations remained in force. It was argued by the Government of India that this question could only be raised when the Regulations became liable to revision, after a term of, in the first place, ten years and subsequently after every five years.[111] Thus the first period ended in 1924 and therefore strictly speaking Tibet was barred from raising the question of a tariff until 1934.[112] It should be noted that the Tibetan request was first made during Bailey's visit in July 1924, exactly a decade after the July 1914 trade regulations were signed.[113]

In March 1926 the Lhasa government wrote again asking to be allowed to levy duties. They could 'not understand the actual meaning of Article VI of the treaty'[114] and argued that formerly when Tibetan traders went to China and Mongolia for trade it was not the custom to impose taxes or levy duties on their goods nor had it been the custom to levy duties on the goods that came from China to Tibet. The disturbed state of their eastern frontier meant that these traders could not go by the overland route and consequently merchandise from China now had to be brought by sea. The problem was that duty was levied on this trade at Calcutta. Their argument was that if goods imported from China into India paid duty to India then goods imported to India to Tibet should similarly pay duty to Tibet. This, they argued, 'has put the traders to great difficulty'.[115] They therefore maintained that 'the duties on merchandise which the British Government are exporting to other countries, should likewise be levied'.[116]

Bailey commented, 'These arguments could only be put forward by people like the Tibetans, who are entirely ignorant of the complications and intricacies of a

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111 H. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p.119.

112 IOR:L/P&S/12/4186A/P5213 No F249-X/30 Memorandum from Government of India to Political Officer Sikkim, 19 July 1930.

113 IOR: L/P&S/12/4186A Translation of letter from the Ministers of Tibet to Bailey, 28 December 1924.

114 IOR: L/P&S/12/4186A Translation of letter from Ministers of Tibet to Bailey, 19 March 1926.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid.

customs tariff'.[117] Nonetheless, he called upon the Government of India to 'help the Tibetan Government to increase their revenues especially if the Sikkim Durbar are allowed to levy duty.'[118] Considering that the Government of India was determined not to waive their rights of the most favoured nation, Bailey suggested the Lhasa government should be allowed to increase the wool tax to 15 tankas per maund of wool.[119] As Bell had pointed out in 1915, this tax was purely a matter of internal administration and the Lhasa government could have levied it without any reference to Britain.

Although this issue was partially resolved in June 1929, when the Government of India decided in theory to permit Tibet to impose a customs tariff of up to '5 percent ad valorem on the Indo-Tibetan border'[120], the final details were still being 'thoroughly threshed out' in 1930 during Weir's visit.[121] The Government of India had graciously decided to 'waive their rights under Article IX which restricted Tibet to raising the question of a tariff until 1934 'out of consideration for the needs of Tibet'.[122] By then too much damage had been done. During the period of the early 1920s, which can be seen in hindsight as a crucial period for the self-development programme, the Lhasa government was forced to take actions that impinged on traditional rights because they could not increase their revenue through import duties. The new taxes had a far-reaching detrimental effect on the programme. They strained internal politics and caused considerable animosity towards the military. As Mehra aptly wrote, 'Not long after Bell had left these shores, Tibet reverted to its traditional state of inertia; the much-trumpeted 'new' Tibet dying still-born in the womb!'[123]

Britain's dormancy policy had fractured Anglo-Tibetan relations. Political ambivalence on the part of Britain meant that Lhasa's ability to progress was inevitably contingent on international conditions. In China, the events of 1925-6 had a profound impact on the thinking of the Foreign Office. The May Thirtieth incident, the Canton

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117 IOR: L/P&S/12/4186A P38 Letter from Bailey to Government of India, 6/8 July 1926.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 IOR: L/P&S/12/4186A P4565 Letter from Government of India to POS, 29 June 1929.

121 IOR:L/P&S/12/4186A/P5213 No. F249-X/30 Memorandum from Government of India to Political Officer Sikkim, 19 July 1930.

122 Ibid.

123 P. Mehra, 'Tibet on the Imperial Chessboard: A Select Bibliographic Survey,' India Past and Present, Vol. 3 (2), 1986, p. 267.

Crisis, and the boycott of Hong Kong forced the British government to re-examine its China policy. By 1926 it was recognized that there could be no end to British troubles in south China without taking full account of the Nationalist movement and political realities there. This realization gave birth to a new British policy in China which had a considerable effect on Anglo-Tibetan relations.

CHAPTER 13

BRITAIN IN RETREAT IN CHINH HAI (NEW CHINA)

> 'China has not yet gained unity and strength. In time she may do so; the Powers are exerting all their influence to give her unity. When she is united, she will wish to regain control over the countries on the mainland of Asia, peopled by her kith and kin. For that is China's way, and prominent Chinamen make no secret of her ambition in this respect'.[1]

The change of policy that resulted from Bell's mission was due mainly to Britain's fear of Tibet giving way and negotiating independently with China. By 1933, however, Britain's Minister in China, Miles Lampson, was advising the home government to urge Lhasa to come to an independent decision with the Chinese. The about-face was caused by Britain's new China policy. For a variety of reasons, in connexion with loans and with the treaty-port system, Britain fell foul of the nationalist movement in China and suffered a severe commercial boycott, which had a serious, though temporary, effect upon trade. A direct outcome was the adoption of a conciliatory and liberal policy by the British Government,[2] or what Edmund Fung refers to as a 'policy of retreat' in China.[3] Britain's new policy of retreat meant that the Tibetan issue was subordinated to the more important task of gaining Chinese friendship for wider economic gains.

Alastair Lamb, in his chapter dealing with this period,[4] makes little attempt to place Anglo-Tibetan policy within the wider orbit of Britain's China policy.[5] Without doing so, one cannot fully appreciate how Britain's wider economic and political considerations at this time influenced its Tibetan policy. By 1927 British policy makers, both in the Foreign Office and in China, had decided to nurture Chinese nationalism.[6] The Foreign Office and the British diplomats in China were more concerned with such specifically Chinese questions as trade and the future of Hong Kong than with the British Indian border. This was a direct consequence of

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1 IOR: L/P&S/10/971 Letter from Bell Political Officer on Special Duty in Tibet to Government of India, 19 January 1921.

2 E. Gull, op.cit., p. 115.

3 E. Fung, The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat, op.cit..

4 A. Lamb, Tibet, China & India, op.cit., Chapter VII, 'The Weir Missions, and the Crisis in Eastern Tibet, 1928-1933', op.cit., pp. 177-213.

5 A.K. J. Singh, op.cit., also places little emphasis on British economic and political relations with China during this period.

6 PRO: FO371/ F6172/7/10 Minute by Pratt, undated, August 1932.

Britain's postwar foreign policy, which replaced the old mercantile theory of national monopoly with the principle that the prosperity of the individual nation must depend upon the prosperity of other nations in direct proportion to its reliance on commercial contracts with the outside world. It was acknowledged that since the War the system of commercial interchange had been interrupted, impeded and in some cases shattered. Sir Arthur Salter, Head of the Economic Section of the League of Nations during this period, summed up the problem of postwar trade:

> if in following the history of the last eight years, we wish to arrive at accurate conclusions, we must always bear in mind the conception not of destruction but of disorganization, the idea not of too little production, not of the inadequacy of man or of nature but of the impediments to the interchange of goods between one set of specialists and another.[7]

Britain's trading position in China had been built on sea power in the nineteenth century. But the foundations on which this position had been built had silently crumbled away since the First World War. Not only was Britain slowly declining as a military and naval power, but her share of the China trade had also been decreasing for many years owing to intense competition from the Japanese and Americans.[8] To recapture the major share of the trade it was important to express good will to the Chinese and to remove the sources of friction between the two countries.

The foundation upon which the trade and investment of Great Britain, as well as of other foreign powers, had developed was an intricate system of legal and vested rights built up over a long period of time. These were the privilege of extraterritoriality; the opening of 'treaty ports' to foreign trade, and in some cases the establishment of 'settlements' and 'concessions' at these ports; the privilege of leasing certain areas; the right to navigate the coastal and inland waters of China with merchant ships and to police them with foreign men-of-war; the right to maintain military garrisons; and the right to engage in missionary activity.[9]

These rights and special privileges which the British possessed in 1927 were all part of that elaborate structure which the Chinese have often called the 'unequal treaties'. In the post-war spirit of national self-determination, Britain's leaders

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7 Sir Arthur Willert, op.cit., p. 16.

8 An outstanding feature of the period 1914-1933 was the growth of the United States' commercial interests in the Far East. Prior to 1915 the United States' share of China's total foreign trade rose above 10 per cent only three times - in 1902, 1905, and 1906. Between 1915 and 1931 it rose from 10.90 to 18.73 and continued to increase. E.Fung, op.cit., p. 241.

9 I. Friedman, op.cit., p. 3.

gradually came to recognise the injustice of the anachronistic and anomalous treaty system and also the moral unacceptability of a policy based on coercion. Such a policy, moreover, was unpopular with the war-weary public in Britain. Above all, it was fraught with danger: it was ineffective, counter-productive, and, in any case, impracticable without the support or co-operation of the other powers.

In 1928, Sir Arthur Willert, Chief of the Press Bureau in the Foreign Office, stated that 'the three chief planks upon which any British foreign minister must now stand are: "Peace, security, and trade":[10]

> Peace and security are to all nations the first essentials, but to us perhaps more than to any other nation they are a means to an end as well as an end in themselves. We need a peaceful world, because we are above everything a trading nation. We want security for other nations as much as for ourselves because a feeling of settled safety among nations not only minimizes the danger of war but stimulates trade.[11]

The stimulus for adopting such an approach in China came in 1924 with the reorganization of the Kuomintang (KMT) and the beginning of an anti-imperialist movement in the south which soon forced the British government to undertake a reappraisal of its China policy. There were two aspect of the new China policy - force and conciliation - which, Fung maintains, led to Britain 'beating an orderly retreat in a war-torn China.'[12] The period 1924-31 spanned three British administrations: the short-lived Labour government of 1924 was followed by five years of Conservative rule and, in 1929, by a second Labour government until late in 1931 when a coalition National government took over. It was the Baldwin government which made the decision to 'beat a retreat'. The policy enjoyed the support of the Labour Party and was followed by the MacDonald administration, helped by the continuity in office of the two influential Foreign Office officials dealing with China, Sir Victor Wellesley and the adviser Sir John Pratt. There were personnel changes in the Far Eastern Department, but these changes did not affect the general lines of its new China policy, the implementation of which in China was the responsibility of Sir Miles Lampson.

On the Chinese Nationalist side, the same period also spanned three regimes: Canton, Wuhan, and Nanking. The short-lived Wuhan regime marked the last phase of the Kuomintang- Chinese Communist Party (CCP) united front and the beginning

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10 Series of lectures by Sir Arthur Willert published in Aspects of British Foreign Policy, op.cit.., p. 2.

11 Ibid.

12 E. Fung, op.cit.

of the end of Bolshevik influence in China. For a time during the decade from 1927 to 1937 it appeared that China might be reunited. The prospect of centralized rule under the Kuomintang was seen by most Chinese political observers as an advance over the war-lord period, but in actual fact provincial leaders continued to have considerable autonomy. Chiang Kai-shek, however, began to emerge as a national figure[13] and during the Nanking period there was a considerable improvement in Anglo-Chinese relations, even though for non-political reasons the share of British trade in China continued to decline.

Clearly, the 'retreat' was forced upon the British. As I have argued, the failure of the diplomatic bluffs during the period 1919-1921 were representative of diminished British power in the East. From 1927 the compelling consideration was self-preservation. The British faced a major crisis in their relations with the Chinese in the mid-1920s. Fung argues that the retreat, designed by the Foreign Office with Cabinet approval, was 'aimed at meeting Chinese nationalism, at least half way, so that a more peaceful and friendly atmosphere conducive to the expansion of British trade in China could be restored'.[14] He maintains that it was in essence a course of gradual adaptation of the pre-war status of British subjects and interests in China to post-war conditions, a policy John Gittings calls 'ameliorative imperialism'.[15] The emphasis was on long-term economic and commercial advantages that would accrue from a friendly relationship with the Chinese. Moreover, the conciliation of Chinese nationalism, while significant in itself, was part of Britain's global retreat from power since the First World War. Slowly but surely Britain was declining as a great power because of her inability or unwillingness to match her resources to the risks involved.

Apart from economic and commercial considerations,[16] there were cogent political reasons why Britain wished to come to terms with Chinese nationalism.

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13 L. Pye, op.cit., p. 136.

14 E. Fung, op.cit., p. 8.

15 J. Gittings, The World and China, 1922-1972 (New York, 1974), p. 33.

16 Of at least equal importance with trade and shipping were British investments in China. British holdings of government obligations in 1931 included loans for the general purposes of the Chinese government; Chinese government railways, communications, unsecured loans, and obligations of foreign municipalities in China. The British share of the loans for the general purposes of the Chinese government amounted to about $US79,575,090 at the end of 1930. I. Friedman, op.cit., p. 7. British business investments in China included, in the order of their importance, import and export and general trading, real estate, manufacturing, banking and finance, transportation, public utilities and mining. Banking and finance constituted another group of important investments. The total of British business investments in China was about 178 million pounds, of which over 150 million pounds was in Shanghai, an indication of the

Capturing the nationalist movement by sympathizing with it and endeavouring to get it on the 'right line' could assist in the formation of a Chinese government that would look upon the West as a friend rather than as an enemy. Ultimately this would prove to be the most effective way of dealing with the Bolshevik influence in China which Britain regarded as the fundamental cause of their troubles in Asia.[17] If and when the Russians lost ground in China, their menace to India and Afghanistan would also diminish. Conversely, continued confrontation with Chinese nationalism would drive the KMT further into the communist camp and intensify anti-British and anti-imperialist feelings around the country.

By sympathizing with Chinese nationalism, Britain was staking its position in the Far East on economic co-operation with an independent and modernising China. The improvement of bilateral relations after 1927 had been greatly assisted by the rise to power of the moderate and anti-communist elements within the KMT. As the Nationalist movement entered upon a new phase, much store was set by good relations with the West, particularly the United States and Britain, whose co-operation and assistance were desired.[18] Above all it was important that the British pullback was not seen by the Chinese, the British communities in the treaty ports, or any of the foreign powers as a sign of weakness, least of all a defeat for the British empire. In other words, no British prestige should be lost, otherwise there would be disastrous repercussions on British standing in the colonies. An effective withdrawal would restore British prestige not only in China but also in India, 'where a different retreat, but a retreat none the less, was being conducted'.[19]

The Foreign Office took the long-term view that an expansion of British trade was possible only if Britain could count on the goodwill of the customer and make their goods more competitive and more suited to Chinese needs and conditions.[20] In other words, as Fung notes, Britain 'broke the ranks in an effort to provide international leadership in the quest for a better and more constructive relationship with the Chinese'.[21] Fung concludes: 'British interests in China, while vast and important, were not vital to Britain's security and economic existence . . . The lack

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overwhelming importance of Shanghai to the British, whose total investment in China in 1931 amounted to about 236 million pounds. I. Friedman, op.cit., p.9.

17 See Akira Iriye, 'The Soviet Initiative in China', After Imperialism, op.cit., pp. 37-56.

18 R. T. Pollard, 'The Rise of Nationalism', China's Foreign Relations 1917-1931 (New York, 1979), pp. 288-329.

19 E. Fung, op.cit., p. 244.

20 Ibid., p. 243.

21 Ibid.

of vital interests in China made it easier for Britain to make a partial withdrawal calculated to protect as much as possible of her overall trading position in a way less offensive to China's *amour-propre.'* [22] Going back one step strategically could well be the best way of advancing two steps in terms of trade.[23]

The anti-British movement of 1925-7 was the turning-point which prompted this realignment in Sino-British relations. This movement, as noted, was the result of Chinese nationalist reaction to the policies pursued by the powers, especially Britain, after the First World War. The nationalist movement in China under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen had grown for the most part in the southern part of China, but by 1925 had gained adherents throughout China. Large sections of the population, including intellectuals, professionals, students, businessmen and labourers were eager that China should be completely independent of foreign control. Great Britain, as the leading foreign power in China, and Japan, because of the Twenty-One Demands, were regarded as the main obstacles to the achievement of this aim. The Nationalists pointed to the denial of the demands made by China at Versailles and the Washington Conference, and to the failure of foreign powers to fulfil the promises made at Washington, as evidence that these powers intended to keep China in a 'semi- colonial' status.[24]

Anti-foreign feeling was given organisation and direction as the result of the alliance effected in 1923 between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party in China. The structure of the Kuomintang by 1925 was completely reorganised and the Nationalist Party built up an effective army. Furthermore, the Communist International at this time regarded their aid to China not only as a logical consequence of their policy of supporting colonial nationalist movements, but as being especially aimed at Britain, which they regarded as their chief antagonist.

By 1925 anti-foreign feeling was running high throughout China. It came to a climax after a clash between the Shanghai Municipal police and Chinese demonstrators on 30 May 1925. 'May 30' became a slogan throughout China and

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22 Ibid.

23 The direct trade of the United Kingdom with China (excluding Hongkong) amounted to about 18 million pounds in 1930 or about 7.8 per cent of China's total foreign trade. Imports from the United Kingdom amounted to 8,573,923 pounds or about 8.3 per cent of China's total imports, while exports to the United Kingdom totaled 9,888,819 or about 7 per cent of China's total exports. There were 13, 000 British citizens resident in China, an important factor in British policy. I. Friedman, op.cit., p. 6.

24 The only important exception to the general failure to implement the Washington Treaties were the withdrawal of the foreign post offices from China early in 1923 and the restoration of Shantung by Japan.

the anti-British movement ignited. The boycott weapon was used more effectively and consistently than ever before. Hong Kong appeared to be on the verge of ruin and British shipping on the Yangtze seriously declined. The Nationalist armies under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek marched victoriously from Canton to the Yangtze, and the capital of the Kuomintang Government was established at Hankow. Clashes between British forces and Chinese occurred and war between Nationalist China and Britain seemed possible. The climax came in January 1927 with the taking of the British concession at Hankow by the Nationalists.

The British communities in China, especially those in Shanghai, demanded strong action. The British government, however, adopted a dual policy. On one hand, it dispatched a large expeditionary force to Shanghai; on the other, it indicated its willingness to make concessions. In the Chamberlain Memorandum of 18 December 1926, it declared its willingness to negotiate on treaty revision and in February 1927 an agreement was signed providing for the rendition of the British concession at Hankow. At this time the Kuomintang was divided into three factions - the conservatives under General Chiang Kai-shek, the centre, and the radicals who favoured and practised close co-operation with the Communists. The conciliatory policy [25] of the British strengthened the position of those Nationalists who wanted to weaken or end the anti-British movement. By the summer of 1927 the anti-foreign Kankow Kuomintang government had collapsed and Chiang Kai-shek's faction was in complete control. The anti-British movement came to an end and, as stated by Eric Teichman, 'before the year was out it was more dangerous to be a Russian or a

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25 British concessions to China took place in several fields, but the most important was the recognition of China's tariff autonomy. In 1928 the United States concluded a treaty with the new Nanking government conceding unconditional tariff autonomy as from January 1929. The British, not to be outdone, concluded a similar treaty on December 20, 1928. When Japan followed suit in 1930, China was finally free from treaty restriction on her tariff-making power. The grant of tariff autonomy was followed up by the restoration to the Naking government of the leased port of Wei-haiwei in 1930, after 32 years. The British government also surrendered the British concessions at Kiukiang, Amoy and Chinkiang, while retaining those at Tientsin and Canton. I. Friedman, op.cit., p. 15.
Another example of the new British policy was the agreement on the Boxer indemnity funds. In 1931 the Chinese Salt Administration, which had been under foreign administraton since 1913, passed into the control of the Chinese Government. In 1929 the embargo on the shipment of arms to China, which had been maintained by the Treaty Powers since 1919, was dropped. Finally, in 1931 an agreement was concluded with the British government for a British naval mission to train and reorganize the naval forces of the Nanking government. I. Friedman, op.cit., p. 196.

red in South and Central China than it had ever been to be the most die-hard of Imperialists'.[26]

There appeared to be no special excitement in Lhasa about affairs in China despite rumours there of fighting between the British and Chinese. The North China Herald was available at Lhasa, so it may be presumed that the Tibetan government obtained authoritative information about anti-British events in China.[27] From the Tibetan point of view, as long as China was involved in some form of internal turmoil, Tibet's independence was not in any immediate danger.

The period from 1927 to 1933 could be called the Lampson period. During this time Sir Miles Lampson, who became British Minister to China in 1926, directed British policy in China in such a distinct fashion as to leave a marked imprint on the history of China as well as on Sino-British and Anglo-Tibetan relations. Britain now took the lead in supporting the new Nationalist government, which was no longer the anti-British Kuomintang of Canton and Hankow. By pursuing a policy of concession and conciliation Lampson built up British prestige in China to a point it had not held since before 1914.

The new policy was, in Foreign Office parlance, one of 'patient and liberal conciliation', patient because the process of redressing Chinese grievances was a gradual one and liberal because for the first time since the days of the Opium War the British government was prepared to make changes to the treaty system and to abandon a policy of gunboat diplomacy.[28] At a lecture given in 1928 to an American audience, Sir Arthur Willert stated:

> Our whole Chinese policy is based today upon a strong and widely held belief that from every point of view forcible intervention in the affairs of China cannot safely or decently be contemplated. We are prepared now, as always, as I said in my last lecture, to use force locally to protect our nationals wherever we can. . . we at home have suffered and are still suffering far too much from one war to be willing to risk another military adventure which might grow to almost any size and which, moreover, would be very generally considered to be as unjustifiable from the moral point of view as it would be unfruitful from the material point of view.[29]

In relation to Britain's Tibetan policy this meant avoiding actions that could be interpreted by the Chinese as a slight on China's acknowledged position as suzerain

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26 Sir Eric Teichman, Affairs of China, op.cit., p. 49. During this period Teichman was Chinese Secretary to the British Legation at Peking.

27 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/ P3889 Bailey to Government of India, 6 June 1927.

28 E. Fung, op.cit., p. 10.

29 Sir A. Willert, op.cit., p. 91-93.

of Tibet. Consequently, the 'wait-and-see' policy adopted in 1922, followed by the period of dormancy, now became a 'leave-well-alone' stance as part of Britain's conciliation policy toward China. Between 1924 and 1930 no British officer visited Lhasa. Theos Bernard wrote in 1939: 'To maintain the precarious equilibrium between the hostile powers, the interested countries have adopted a keep-hands-off or, if you like, closed-door policy, mutually exclusive. For only thus could peace be maintained.[30] But as Sir John Jordan so aptly observed in 1924, 'the Tibetans know they are a shuttlecock between two battledores, and, as always happens in such cases, the friendship is, to a certain extent, a lively sense of present needs and of favours to come. Although China is disorganized now, they have not altogether forgotten Tibet. If there is anything the Chinese will never give up, it is any remnant of suzerainty over any other country.' [31]

While it is important that Britain's Tibetan policy be viewed in the wider context of Anglo-Chinese relations, the implications can only be fully appreciated when connected with an assessment of internal affairs in Tibet. The implementation of Britain's new China policy during the late 1920s coincided with a period of internal political turmoil in Tibet. Not surprisingly, the advancement of Chinese nationalism ran parallel with an increase in Tibetan nationalist tendencies. This growth of national self-consciousness among the politicized section of the Tibetan population was initially a help to the Dalai Lama in his political ambitions but soon became an ever increasing hindrance. The so-called 'progressives' were ardent advocates of autonomy for Tibet and much of their effort was directed toward placing the Lhasa government in a position to resist outside pressure, particularly from China. As we have seen, others outside that group, including the politically-aware lamas, were also becoming nationally sensitive and had considerable misgivings about the close association between the progressives and the British. Many believed that if Tibet had to be subordinate to any country then the traditional relationship incorporating Chinese suzerainty should re-established. This group was intent on repressing what they considered to be the dangerously pro-British tendencies of the reformers.

While the Tibetan state espoused a religious ideology, there was no clear uniformity of purpose among the key religious elements: the Dalai Lama, the three Monastic Seats, and the monk officials. The rule of the 13th Dalai Lama was never

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30 Theos Bernard, 'The Peril of Tibet' Asia (New York), Vol. 39, 1939, p. 500.

31 Sir John Jordan, Address given at a meeting of the Central Asian Society, 8 November 1924 , published in Central Asian Society Journal Vol.11, 1924, p. 47.

easy or stable. Sven Hedin maintained that in 1904 and 1910 the Dalai Lama fled as much from his own entourage as from the Chinese.[32] The most important circumstance which needs to be emphasised, however, is that a considerable variety of motives were compelling many Tibetans to unite against the Dalai Lama's administration. The figurehead for this faction became the Panchen Lama, officially the Dalai Lama's spiritual superior but his temperoral subordinate.

This was a revival of the centuries-old struggle for political power between the two powerful groups of Tibetan lamas. The Dalai Lama's group had held almost undisputed control for half a century and a challenge to its power was developing. The Dalai Lama, realising the strength of the group being formed around the Panchen Lama at Tashilumpo, felt that before the disaffection of the Panchen's group could reach a stage of active opposition he would have to deprive the Panchen of effective power by taking from him any surplus funds which he might have. His method was simple but effective. He issued a decree accusing the Panchen of being too actively in connivance with the British, an odd charge since it was against the pro-British tendencies at Lhasa that the opposition at Tashilumpo was developing, and ordered him to pay a heavy fine.[33] The Panchen Lama administered autonomously certain provinces to the south of Lhasa, towards the Indian frontier. The autonomy of the Panchen Lama's districts had already been encroached upon by the relations with Britain. When Gyantse became a Trade Mart following the 1904 agreement with Lhasa, the Dalai Lama's administration supervised the mart and appointed its own officials. In the course of time ministers from Lhasa began visiting the province, to the great discontent of its inhabitants, who protested bitterly against the necessity of supplying free transport and other services to Lhasa officials in addition to their own officials. When later demands came from the Dalai Lama for increased money for military purposes,[34] it was not long before the Panchen Lama found himself in an impossible situation. He appealed to the British agent to act as mediator, but Britain 'adhered to its non-interference policy'.[35]

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32 Sven Hedin, 'The Policy of the Dalai Lama', op.cit., pp. 140-156.

33 See P. Mehra, Tibetan Polity, 1904-37: The Conflict Between the 13th Dalai Lama and the 9th Panchen (Wiesbaden 1976). Also, By Observer (P. Mehra), 'The Dalai and the Panchen: Tibet's Supreme Incarnate Lamas', India Quarterly, Vol. 15, 1959, pp. 262-289.

34 'The Lhasa Government pressed the Tashi Lhunpo Government to bear one-fourth of the expenditure incurred in connection with the maintenance of the Tibetan troops &c., since the outbreak of hostilities in 1911 and until such times as the troops are disbanded'. IOR: L/P&S/10/344 P3710A Letter from Macdonald to Government of India , 30 August 1915.

35 F. Godwin, 'Britain's Hand in Tibet' People's Tribune 4, 1933, pp. 280-281.

The Panchen Lama had written to Bell during his stay in Lhasa requesting that he visit Tashilumpo on his return to India.[36] Bell had received numerous invitations from him during the previous twelve years but had not been authorised to accept any of the invitations. Bell's request to visit the Panchen Lama on his return from Lhasa was rejected by the Government of India. Simla thought it better to adhere to the established policy towards the Panchen and that 'a polite letter expressing regret at being unable to accept the invitation would suffice'.[37] There is little doubt that the Panchen Lama must have felt that the British were rejecting him. Following Bell's diplomatic line might well have altered the course of Anglo-Tibetan relations. In 1923, after failing to supply the increased funds called for by the military programme, the Panchen Lama fled to China.[38] His desertion to China was a major source of concern for the British during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The Chinese exploited the Panchen Lama with considerable skill to counter the Dalai Lama's influence in Lhasa. After 1928 the Panchen Lama showed an increasing tendency to improve his position by enlisting Chinese support.[39] Bell wrote: 'The Tashi Lama's presence in China gives the Chinese a powerful lever for regaining her authority over Tibet, for Tashi Lhunpo has always had ambitions towards independence. A feudal state in Asia is constantly liable to fall back under the rule of independent princelets. And the past history of China shows that in her dealings with Tibet and Mongolia she has always proceeded on the principle of "divide and rule".' [40] The elimination of the Panchen marked a further step towards centralization of authority in Tibet, the Lhasa government putting its own officers in charge at Tashilumpo.[41] However, his departure considerably strengthened the hands of the pro-Chinese ultra-conservatives in Tibet, [42] as it was mainly the development of the army which was responsible for the break between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

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36 PRO:FO371/6608/F1959/59/10 Letter from Tashi Lama to Bell, 14 January 1921, Encl No. 2 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 24 may 1921.

37 PRO:FO371/6608/F1959/59/10 Letter from Government of India to Bell , 25 April 1921, Encl No.3 in Letter from India Office to Foreign Office, 24 May 1921.

38 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P1065 Macdonald to Government of India, 18 January 1924. Also P2843 Mcdonald to Government of India, 30 May 1924.

39 PRO:FO371/160/10/F716 Report from Consulate Chungking to Legation Peking, 28 November 1928.

40 Sir Charles Bell, 'The North-Eastern Frontier of India', Central Asian Society Journal, Vol. 17, 1930, p. 223.

41 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P938 Macdonald to Government of India, 8 February 1923. Also P1065, 18 January 1924.

42 A.K. J. Singh, op.cit., p. 93.

During Major Bailey's visit to Lhasa in 1924 he was urged by Tsarong Shape and others to use his influence to persuade the Government of India to act as intermediary in persuading the Panchen Lama to return and thereby remove a means of Chinese and Bolshevik intrigue.[43] The British viewed direct assistance to the Panchen Lama from Russia as a possible danger. Bailey found that the Tibetans were most anxious to have the Panchen Lama back.[44] The Dalai Lama, however, viewed the British interest and action in the case of the Panchen Lama as interference. He believed the British were too 'sympathetic' towards the Panchen Lama.[45] The Dalai Lama's reaction might, to some degree, be interpreted in terms of what Bailey described as an 'attitude of independence'.[46]

Towards the end of Bailey's term as Political Officer he was asked to submit a full appreciation of the attitude of the Tibetan Government. He reported that, having being relieved of the threat of the Chinese invasion owing to the disturbed state of China, the Tibetan government were able to moderate their attitude of 'dependence' on the Government of India which had been adopted since the Dalai Lama's flight in 1910.[47] An India Office minute read: 'The gist of it is that while Tibet is no less friendly than in the past, she is more independent of us'.[48] To some extent this was no doubt true. Clearly, Bailey felt the Tibetan government had acted in an uncompromising manner on many issues, for example, the 'two unfortunate and unavoidable' boundary disputes in Ladakh and Tehri.[49] These disputes were the first boundary disputes between Tibet and India for 25 years. The previous boundary dispute with India in 1902, relating to the Sikkim frontier, was one of the main reasons for the Younghusband Expedition in 1904.[50]

This 'independent spirit' was also reflected in relations between the Garpons[51] and the British Trade Agent in Gartok, Western Tibet. Relations had been strained largely on account of an order by the latter that Ladakhi British

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43 IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P4604 'Major Bailey's report on his visit to Lhasa, 16 July -16 August 1924'.

44 IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P4604 Minute by Gibson, 3 December 1924.

45 Weir reported during his visit to Lhasa that the Dalai Lama 'implied that it was an internal affair of Tibet' PRO: FO371/50/F5998/10 Telegram from Weir to Government of India, 29 September 1930.

46 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P3336 Bailey to Government of India, 6 June 1927. See also PRO: FO371/1822/F6095/10.

47 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P3336 Bailey to Government of India, 6 June 1927. Also PRO: FO371/1822/F6095/10.

48 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 Minute, 15 July 1927.

49 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P3336 Bailey to Government of India, 6 June 1927.

50 Ibid.

51 Tibetan government official.

subjects should not pay a 2 per cent tax recently imposed by the Garpons until it had been sanctioned by the Government of India. The Garpons also had their own views on the interpretation of the trade regulations with regard to the trial of joint cases. The result was that the Garpons refused to hear any cases pending in the joint court at Gartok until they had received orders from Lhasa about the 2 per cent tax. In his deliberations on the subject, Richardson wrote, 'Their attitude was haughty and uncompromising, and their reception of Mr. Wakefield, I.C.S, who visited Western Tibet in 1929 to to examine trade conditions there, was little short of insolence'.[52] In addition to this, there was a dispute in which the issue of the nationality of Sonam Wangdu was contested. The Tibetan government claimed him as Tibetan, but the British authorities treated him as a Sikkimese and refused Lhasa jurisdiction over him.[53]

Tibetan grievances were apparent in the issue of British rights over the British Trade Agency and Mart at Yatung, the substance of which was that the British had built a fort there without permission. There were accusations that they had taken possession of the surrounding forest, ceased to pay rent, and interfered with the collection in it of wood and fuel by the Tibetans.[54] Bailey thought that the Lhasa government was probably resentful at seeing Yatung, the most flourishing bazaar in the valley, out of which they could probably extract a comparatively large revenue, beyond their control in this respect. 'They probably feel that we are deriving revenue from it which might go to them.' [55] In the judgement of Bailey, the dissension would be overcome if the Tibetan government were paid an annual sum to represent the revenue which they might otherwise derive from the bazaar: 'They would, I think, acquiesce in our control over the site, and it would avoid trouble and friction and be advantageous to us in many ways to do this'.[56]

Considering the situation as a whole, Bailey concluded that the hands of the 'anti-British' faction in Lhasa were probably strengthened by the action of Dr. McGovern in going to Lhasa without permission from either the Government in India or Lhasa,[57] and by the episode in which Captain Noel had taken monks to

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52 H. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p .40.

53 IOR: 12,061A Corrections of Report on Government of Tibet made in August and September 1927 by Kusho Pa-lhe-se.

54 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P4110 POS to Government of India, 28 July 1927.

55 Ibid.

56 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P5475 Bailey to Government of India, 22 October 1927.

57 IOR: L/P&S/10/1033 F3971(3) 'British Buddhist Mission.' Also IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P4604 'Major Bailey's report on his [McGovern] visit to Lhasa', 28 October 1924. See also W. M. McGovern, To Lhasa in Disguise, op.cit.

Europe secretly. [58] 'They have no doubt let it be thought that both of these incidents occurred with the connivance of the Government of India, although I have made it clear on every possible occasion that this is not so'. [59]

Although Bailey viewed the closing of Frank Ludlow's school at Gyantse in 1926 [60] and the dismissal of the officers trained by the British as 'matters entirely concerning Tibetan internal affairs', he pointed out that at the same time the government of India 'were at considerable pains' to assist the Tibetan government in these matters and it 'must have been obvious to them that the action they took in these matters would not be welcomed by the Government of India.' [61] The refusal to allow the running of motor cars for British postal work was yet another incident that seemed to display Lhasa's spirit of independence.[62] An entry in Ludlow's diary reveals the confusion and animosity which characterised Anglo-Tibetan relations during these years. On receiving his letter of dismissal on 28 October 1926, Ludlow wrote:

> It seems that the Indian govt can do nothing right for Tibet. We lend them Laden La to train their police and they allow all his good work in Lhasa to rot. We train officers for their army and they are dismissed wholesale. We try to run a school for them and they throw it to the dogs. Tibet plays like a child at new ideas and like a child gets tired at its plaything and casts it aside. They will regret their decision one day when they are Chinese slaves once more as they assuredly will be.[63]

The answer to Tibetan actions might be found in the following statement by Kusho Pa-lhe-se: [64]

> Many Tibetans think now [1927] that the British authorities look down on their country as of small account. Tibetans on the contrary, now that their country has established its independence, regard their

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58 See IOR: L/P&S/11/244/ P1198 'Tibetan Dancers in Europe', 1924.

59 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P3336 Bailey to Government of India, 6 June 1927.

60 For full account of the school established by Frank Ludlow see IOR: MSS D979, Ludlow Diaries 1923-1926. Also IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P4604 Bailey to Government of India, 'Report on visit to Lhasa 1924', 28 October 1924.

61 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P3336 Bailey to Government of India, 6 June 1927.

62 This incident is referred to in Chapter Eleven.

63 IOR: MSS D979 Ludlow Diaries, entry on 28 October 1926.

64 Kusho Pa-lhe-se was Bell's clerk during his time as Political Officer in Sikkim. He went to Britain to help Bell edit a book on Tibet. See IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 News Report from Bailey to Government of India, 17 April 1926. Also IOR: MSS Eur F80 5a 88 letter from Bell to Dalai Lama, 31 January 1928.

country as of more importance than before, and resent the attitude - as they believe it to be - of the local British authorities.[65]

There was no undue concern on the part of those in the India Office. Bailey reassured them that it would require only a slight revival of pressure from China or from Russia to restore the former relationship with India.[66] While there is little doubt that the Dalai Lama was exhibiting a 'spirit of independence,' what needs also to be recognised is that at the same time he was under considerable pressure. Political machinations during this period created long-term political instability.[67]

The appointment in 1926 of Lampson as British Minister in China had coincided with the death of Lonchen Shokang, the old Prime Minister of Tibet. He was one of the most influential of those who accompanied the Dalai Lama to India in 1910. His advice and opinion carried great weight. He also exercised a restraining influence on the National Assembly,[68] and his death created a general instability in the Lhasa administration.[69] He was replaced by the Dalai Lama's nephew, an inexperienced 26-year-old.[70] Bailey reported: 'His holiness is therefore left very much to himself with no official advisers on whom he depends.' He noted that 'Neither the Kasha[71] nor the Prime Minister give any opinion at all, and, when the Dalai Lama receives a case for order, he usually calls in one or two monks who are in his confidence, or Lungshar[72] and consults them.'[73] According to Bailey, Lungshar had 'the ear of the Dalai Lama' and was now 'entirely under Lungshar's influence. . . he is entirely anti-British'.[74] He concluded: 'I do not think that his influence will last long and I am doing my best to undermine it'.[75] In the India Office Bailey's report was minuted: 'The influence of Lungshar will no doubt be

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65 IOR: 12,061A Corrections of Report on Government of Tibet made in August and September 1927 by Kusho Pa-lhe-se.

66 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 Minute, 15 July 1927.

67 The reported plan to deprive the Dalai Lama of his temporal power in 1924, mentioned in Chapter 12, meant that the Dalai Lama tightened his control and came to depend upon one or two advisers.

68 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P3336 Bailey to Government of India, 6 June 1927.

69 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/ P5839 Minute, 9 January 1928.

70 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P2097 Bailey to Government of India, 13 May 1926. Also P323 Bailey to Government of India, 'News Report', 23 December 1925.

71 Also 'Kashag': Principle executive body of the Lhasa government.

72 Current 'favourite' of the Dalai Lama.

73 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P5839 Bailey to Government of India, 20 November 1927.

74 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/ P2961 POS to Government of India, 4 April 1927.

75 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/ P3336 Bailey to Government of India, 6 June 1927.

exercised against rather than for us; but in endeavouring to undermine it Col. Bailey will need to watch his step.'[76]

There was unquestionably general unrest within the Lhasa administration, as Bailey reported: 'None of the officers are working with any zeal. The four shapes especially feel that they are being ignored'.[77] What concerned Bailey was that this all resulted in an inefficient and unsteady conduct of affairs, especially foreign affairs: 'The relations with Nepal are bad. Relations with us are not what they were a few years ago. . . It is difficult to suggest a remedy for such a state of affairs.'[78] Nevertheless, Bailey made the salient point that 'greater influence might be exerted by the Political Officer were he to visit Lhasa more frequently'.[79] The result of this state of affairs, further compounded by financial pressures on the Lhasa government, was mistrust, suspicion and general discontent. Bailey reported:

> The troops in Lhasa drill daily but their uniforms are very ragged and some of them even appear on parade wearing only one boot, and they openly beg for alms in the streets. The state of the police, who now number 100, is even worse. Recently, 5 men deserted from the Army and Police but they were caught, flogged and imprisoned.[80]

He noted in November 1927: 'The sanitation of Lhasa city was put in order by Sardar Bahadur Laden La when he raised the police force there in 1924, but the police force is disintegrating and all sanitary measures are now being abandoned.' [81]

The political instability of Tibet was not assisted by a prophecy, rife in Lhasa, to the effect that in 1928 the Bolsheviks would come to Tibet and the British would enter Lhasa again.[82] The genesis of this prophecy was probably the arrival in April 1927 of a Mongolian mission which stayed until December 1927.[83] News of this mission caused considerable concern in the Foreign Office and led to a renewed fear

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76 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 Minute, 15 July 1927.

77 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/ P5839 Bailey to Government of India, 20 November 1927.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088/P4788 News Report Bailey to Government of India, 7 September 1927.

81 IOR: L/P&S/IO/1088/P5716 News Report Bailey to Government of India, 12 November 1927.

82 PRO: FO371/296/F5660/10 POS to Government India, 18 September 1928.

83 The Lhasa government refused the mission's proposal for the reciprocal reception of accredited representatives at the courts of Tibet and Mongolia and for the establishment of telegraphic connections between the two countries. PRO: FO371/269/F661/10 POS to Government of India, 10 January 1928.

of Russian influence on the Dalai Lama.[84] The British Trade agent at Gyantse believed, however, that a more active Soviet policy in regard to Tibet was perhaps to be found in the expeditions of Sven Hedin and of the Roerichs.[85] He speculated that Russian influence was evident in the presence of Trebitsch Lincoln at Peking with plans for penetrating to Tibet and also in the proposed expedition of Kozloff to the sources of the Yangtse.[86] Communist influence was, however, certainly behind the "Hands-Off-Tibet" propaganda reported from China.[87]

Colonel Leslie Weir, who had taken over from Bailey in 1928, was inclined to agree that Bolshevik ideas met with no sympathy in Lhasa. He reported that the Dalai Lama was fully aware of the danger of Bolshevik penetration 'which is a menace to him and to his people and he employs spies in the monasteries'.[88] Even more than the disruptive influence of internal reforms, the altered international situation held no promise for the Dalai Lama or Tibet. In Mongolia, the third great incarnated Lama, Djebtsung Damba Hutuktu Khan, the so-called 'Living Buddha' of Urga, had been arrested in 1921 and deprived of this throne by the Soviets. He was temporarily reinstated by the victorious White Russian Army under Baron Unberg von Sternber, but they were soon defeated and the 'Living Budhha' was deposed. In 1924 the Mongolian People's Republic was established and lamaism was ruthlessly crushed. According to Weir a communist regime in Tibet was remote, as 'Tibet is a feudal country and until her feudal system breaks down communism cannot take its place'.[89]

Although this appraisal must have been reassuring to the Government of India, Tibet's precarious political situation threatened to disrupt the stability of India's own border areas. The Lhasa government was also having difficulty in

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84 IOR: L/P&S/11/277 F2305 P4789 'Soviet Mission and Intrigues at Lhasa, March-April 1927'.

85 See PRO:FO371/269/F661/10 Report from Trade Agent in POS to Government of India, 10 January 1928. This opinion was supported by Weir's wife who after her 1930 visit to Lhasa wrote a long unofficial report on the 'Roerich Question' and submitted it to the Government of India. She maintained Roerich was not an American but a a Russian and 'he is presumably in the pay of the Soviet and as such he requires the keenest supervision and investigation'. Thyra Weir, Journal of visit to Lhasa 1930 held in private Weir papers of J. M. Jehu, London.

86 See PRO:FO371/269/F661/10 Report from Trade Agent in POS to Government of India, 10 January 1928.

87 PRO: FO371/296/ F4076/10 Annual Report of British Trade Agency at Gyantse 1928.

88 PRO: FO371/50/F3604/10 Weir to Government of India, 25 May 1930.

89 Ibid.

retaining its hold over its vassal state of Po-me.[90] Fighting in Po-me started in late 1927 over non-payment of taxes to the Lhasa government. The conflict resulted in the Po-me Raja seeking asylum in Sadiya, Assam in 1929.[91] Apparently, the inhabitants of Po-me, rather than pay taxes to Tibet, wished the Government of India to take their country over.[92] In 1929 the Raja officially solicited assistance and called on the Government of India to 'bring my country under your control and protection'.[93] It was reported that the Lhasa government lost a large number of troops, some hundreds of rifles and much ammunition in the conflict.[94]

The less dependent attitude of the Dalai Lama towards Britain did not fail to impress favourably the Kuomintang, which was successful in its anti-militarist cause under the banner of 'San-min-chu-i' (for nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood). A major adjustment had taken place within China. The Kuomintang, under Chiang Kai-shek had, by the end of 1928, established in Nanking a relatively secure National government from which Soviet influence had been eliminated. After Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925, Chiang Kai-shek outmanoeuvred several rivals to assume leadership of the KMT. Despite his training in Moscow, Chiang emerged as a bitter foe of the Communists and began to limit their role in the United Front. In 1926 the KMT armies and the CCP's political organizers launched the Northern Expedition, a military campaign designed to crush the regional warlords and unify all China. Once Chiang had captured the city of Shanghai, he felt free to jettison his Comintern advisers and CCP allies. In April 1927 Chiang ordered the massacre of thousands of Communists and their sympathizers and ejected the Russians from China. Only a handful of Communists, including Mao, escaped to the countryside. Chiang Kai-shek's purge of the CCP not only brought him supremacy in the KMT, but eased the fears of foreign governments. He had proven himself a responsible nationalist, both anti-communist and willing to compromise with the rich and powerful in China and abroad.[95]

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90 Traditionally a 'vassal state' of the Lhasa government.

91 PRO:FO371/160/F1424/10 letter from Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, to Government of India, 4 February 1929.

92 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 POS to Government of India, 19 September 1927. See also PRO: F0371/296/F5100/10 POS to Government of India, 21 August 1928.

93 PRO:FO371/160/F1424/10 letter from Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, to Government of India, 4 February 1929.

94 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 POS to Government of India, 19 September 1927. See also PRO: F0371/296/10 F5100 POS to Government of India, 21 August 1928.

95 M. Schaller, op.cit., p. 39.

China with a Nationalist government now seemed less of a threat to the Tibetans than a Soviet-dominated China. Now that the Tibetan link with Britain had weakened, rapprochement with China seemed the only alternative. The Dalai Lama understood clearly that as soon as China was re-united and an efficient administration worked out for the central government, one of the first things that would claim the government's attention would be the re-organization of the government of Mongolia, Sinkiang, Chinghai and Inner Tibet.[96] Tibet was turning towards China not through choice but out of necessity.

The consolidation of the KMT promoted a revival of official interest in Tibet and the Chinese slowly began to take advantage of the situation in Tibet. Official confirmation of the Nanking government's desire to re-assert its dominion over Tibet took the form a note to Lampson on 9 October 1928, which he sent to the Foreign Office on 13 November. The note suggested that China and Britain should consider the present conditions and conclude a new treaty relating to Tibet and India. The object, according to Dr. Wang, would be to develop 'the trade of Tibet and India' and strengthen 'friendly relations between the two countries'.[97] Lampson had not acknowledged the note and put forward a strong argument to the Foreign Office that it should be ignored altogether. He argued that relations between China and Tibet 'are as nebulous as ever they were and we can safely await developments there before worrying about Chinese shadowy suzerain rights'.[98] The Foreign Office agreed to leave the matter to his discretion.[99] This decision seems to have caused some commotion within the India Office.[100] The proposal also invoked considerable interest from the Political Officer in Sikkim. A Foreign Office minute on the subject noted that the Political Officer Sikkim 'takes the question very seriously'.[101]

Weir was decidedly apprehensive. Like his predecessor, Charles Bell, Weir believed that the Chinese might secure agreements with Tibet that would be to the disadvantage of India. He saw no need to raise an objection to the proposal of the Chinese government provided that Tibetan interests were safeguarded and China's ambitions did not constitute a danger to the northern frontier of India. In his view such a danger could be averted by a tripartite treaty between Great Britain, China

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96 N. D. Harris, op.cit., p. 346.

97 PRO: FO371/296/F6198/10 Translation of note from Dr. Wang, 9 October 1928 in letter from Lampson to Foreign Office, 13 November 1928.

98 PRO:FO371/296/F6201/10 Lampson to Foreign Office, 13 November 1928.

99 PRO: FO371/296/10 F6201 Foreign Office to Lampson, 20 November 1928.

100 PRO: FO371/296/F6597/10 'Proposed Anglo-Chinese Treaty relating to Tibet and India'.

101 PRO: FO371/296/F7116/10 Minute, 1 January 1929.

and Tibet. The sooner such a treaty was concluded the better terms would be obtained regarding Indo-Tibetan interests: [102]

> We are, after all, in a peculiar position with regard to Tibet; she looks to us for hope and protection against her suzerain, China. While admitting China's suzerainty we, by our action in the past and more particularly by Sir Charles Bell's visit to Lhasa in 1920-21, have made ourselves morally responsible for safeguarding, with our diplomatic assistance, the interest of Tibet vis-a-vis China in any negotiations with China regarding Tibet.[103]

In Weir's opinion, the Chinese government's desire to entirely ignore the Tibetan government as a party to any negotiations was a 'pure piece of bluff'.[104] The Foreign Office, adhering to its 'leave-well-alone' policy, did not 'propose to deal with the matter at present' but noted that the Tibetan question which had been 'slumbering since 1919' might 'now be stirred up again'.[105]

This was certainly the case. And Chinese overtures were not only emanating from official Nationalist government sources. A Buddhist mission established itself at Tachienlu in the hope of receiving an invitation to visit Lhasa.[106] The Panchen Lama established an office at Chengtu with the intention of asking for the 'assistance of the Chinese in driving out the 'imperialists' who, in league with the Dalai Lama, were so shamefully ill-treating the Tibetans'.[107] There appeared to be rivalry between Szechuan province, acting from Tachienlu, and Kansu Province, acting from Jyekundo, for the control of relations with Tibet. It was reported that the Azechuan Republican committee had addressed the Tibetan government as follows:

> Both Russians and British have at different times tried to lay hands on Tibet whose wealth in mines and forests they covet, but the real friend of Tibet is Szechuan province and Tibet should not have anything to do with anyone else - not even with other provinces of China, such as Kansu.[108]

In 1928 Ma Chi, the Muslim governor of Sining, was in communication again with the Dalai Lama and was proposing to send an agent to Lhasa. By the end of the year

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102 PRO: FO371/296/10 F7116 Weir to Government of India, 27 November 1928, Encl in India Office to Foreign Office, 29 December 1928.

103 Ibid.

104 PRO: FO371/269/10 F7116 Weir to Government of India, 27 November 1928.

105 PRO: FO371/296/10 F7116 Minute, 3 January 1929.

106 PRO: FO371/296/10 F2646 Consulate-general Chungking to Lampson Peking, 28 March 1928.

107 Ibid.

108 PRO: FO371/296/F2646/10 Bailey to Government of India, 13 April 1928.

the encroachment of General Feng Yu-hsiang's troops and the outbreak of a Tungan revolt in Kansu seem to have put a stop to this plan. News was also received of a "Save Tibet" Society at Chungking, which was indulging in lurid anti-British propaganda.[109]

The British Consulate in Chungking reported that there was abundant evidence that the Chinese hoped to derive advantage both from the general cry against British imperialism and from their claim to be the protagonists of Buddhism. A notice posted up in North Szechuan read:

> Alas, our country, majestic seat of divine Buddhism, has been poisoned by a few foreigner with Christian abominations. Is not this a disgrace to us? Will not English rule gradually encroach on our native Szechuan?[110]

We need not dwell here on the wider issue of British imperialism in China, only to establish that there was some justifiable reason for Chinese anxiety. When Whitehall officials described their China policy in terms of the security of British life and property, the maintenance of the 'open door' and equal opportunity for all, and a desire to see a united, well-ordered and prosperous China, they were talking in generalities. Specifically, their concern had always been for Britain's interest in the Yangtse region, and their China policy was, to all intents and purposes, formulated with south China in mind. In this sense the Yangtse region, as distinct from the whole of China, was part of Britain's informal empire.[111] It was understandable that there was widespread apprehension within China about the prospect of Britain's future expansion into the areas bordering Tibet. As will be disclosed in the next chapter, during 1932 and 1933 the Nanking government made all the capital they could out of reports accusing Britain of expansionist tendencies.

The greatest impact of the Chinese forward movement on Lhasa came when the 'communist' general, Feng Yu-hsiang, published a threatening manifesto about his intentions to create a new province in Kokonor.[112] It was reported from Lhasa that the Dalai Lama had received a report from a Tibetan in Peking to the effect that

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109 H. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p. 36.

110 PRO:FO371/160/ F716/10 Report from Consulate Chungking to Legation Peking, 28 November 1928.

111 PRO: FO371/1932/F270/24496/10 'Railway Scheme by Mr. Moore Bennett - political reasons,' encl. No. 1 in Jordan to Grey, 18 May 1914.

112 PRO: FO371/196/F4895/10 POS to Government of India, 12 August 1929, 'There is no doubt of Feng's pro-Bolshevik tendencies. He is being financed by the Soviet government'.

the Nanking government was marching '50,000 soldiers towards Tibet accompanied by the Private Secretary of the Panchen Lama'.[113] Weir reported:

> The General commanding these troops on this northern route, from Kokonor, is said to have written to the Tibetan Government that war will follow unless Tibet acknowledges her subordination to China.[114]

It would appear that the general Chinese policy was to compel Tibet to accept a state of subordination to China before agreeing to any long-term peace agreements. There is no doubt that Weir believed that China, whether under the Nationalist government or not, would eventually re-enter Tibet either by force or on amicable terms with the Tibetan Government.[115] It would not be difficult, he argued, for China to re-assert by force her former dominance over Tibet if Tibet remained in its present state of political instability. There was, however, one hopeful prospect. If the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government could settle their differences with the Panchen Lama, the Chinese government would be faced by a united Tibet. In his opinion, the Chinese would probably then be content with a vague assertion of their rights over the country, symbolised by the presence of an Amban in Lhasa with a moderate escort, and 'every body's "face" would be saved'.[116]

Obviously, the establishment of a stable government and the settlement of the internal troubles in China worried the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama also recognised that it was now only a matter of time before China would gain strength and look towards bringing Tibet under its full control again. Weir revealed: 'Much uncertainty prevails in Lhasa regarding the future of Tibet'.[117] There was a dominant undercurrent of feeling among many Lhasa officials that Tibet would be unable to retain her independence from China indefinitely and that steps needed to be taken to make friendly overtures to China. If such overtures were made, they expected that a semi-independence might be achieved which would be preferable to complete absorption by China. In July 1929 Weir reported: 'It is generally acknowledged that the independence and present aloof attitude of Tibet cannot be maintained and that she must come under the sway of some foreign power - Russia, China or India.'[118]

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113 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3537 Weir to Government of India, 15 April 1929.
114 IOR:L/P&S/10/1088 P6104 Weir to Government of India, 13 August 1929.
115 PRO: FO371/160/F1867/10 POS to Government of India, 7 March 1929.
116 Ibid.
117 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P5426 Weir to Government of India, 19 July 1929.
118 Ibid.

It seems likely that inducement for this disposition came from the knowledge that a new provisional Chinese Constitution, adopted in October 1928, had resulted in the creation of a special Department of State devoted to Inner Asian Affairs: the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission. The chairman, General Yen Hsi-shan, the vice-Chairman Chao Tai-wen, and their committee of twelve[119] proclaimed that they intended to pursue a 'consistent and sustained policy' towards Tibet.[120]

The Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission deployed a two-pronged assault. While attempting to exhort an attitude of subservience from the Tibetans, an attack on British objectives in Tibet was pursued. Committee statements, broadcast through the Central Radio Station, proclaimed that British ambitions in Tibet could be traced back to the first years of the reign of the Emperor Kuang Ksu (1875-1908). This was a era when the Manchu government paid little attention to defence measures on the Mongolian and Tibetan frontiers, aiming only at the maintenance of a state of peace:

> Since those days Great Britain has watched Tibet as a tiger watches his prey, awaiting the slightest opportunity to devour it.[121]

As part of this 'consistent and sustained' policy, organised by the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, the principles of the Kuomintang and the philosophy of Sun Yat Sen (Sanminism) were to be established in a 'New Tibet' with the hope that the Tibetans could then 'resist the imperialists' encroachment and oppression'.[122] A new weekly journal, the Tibet-Mongolian Weekly News was issued, announcing:

> To the north and the west of China dwell the people of Mongolia and Tibet. They have lived in the darkness for a long time. Are they not asleep? This newspaper, containing good news, and written in Tibetan and Mongolian, will be like a big drum to awaken them, and will be as the morning sun dispersing the mists.[123]

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119 The committee members included several Mongols and four Tibetans: the Panchen Lama, Lo Sang Nang chia, Ko Sang Tse Jen, and the No Na Hubukletai.

120 PRO:FO371/50/F2995/10 British Legation Peking to Foreign Office, 9 April 1930.

121 PRO:FO371/50/F2995/10 Broadcast by Mr. Lo-Sang-Chien-tsan, director of the Tibetan Affairs Department of the Committee for Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs, Shanghai 25 March 1930 in Lampson to Foreign Office, 9 April 1930.

122 Ibid.

123 PRO:FO371/50/F8352/10 Reuters government summary of Tibet-Mongolian Weekly News in Weir to Government of India, 16 November 1929.

This propaganda policy was consolidated by a National Assembly agreement in 1929 which required both the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama to send representatives to China to consult the government regarding the conducting of Tibetan affairs. All questions affecting Tibet and Mongolia were now to be referred to the Chinese government for decision.[124] The Chinese government, for the benefit of Tibet and Mongolia, would depute special officials to conduct State affairs, and would formulate rules by which Tibet and Mongolia could conduct their own affairs. Written orders would be issued to all Tibetan and Mongolian officials ordering them to establish schools in different parts of their countries, in which the rules and regulations of the Chinese republic would be taught. In short, 'the Department for Tibet and Mongolia will attend to all things in due course, and will decide how Tibet and Mongolia shall be ruled.'[125] In early 1930 a school for Tibetan students was established in Nanking. According to the Nanking office of the Panchen Lama, 'cultural aggression', was the main feature of British imperialistic policy in regard to Tibet and Tibetan students had been encouraged to go to India in large numbers. It was estimated that the establishment of special school in Nanking would counter this and encourage the Dalai Lama to send students to China.[126]

The culmination of the Chinese forward policy was the sending of a diplomatic mission to Lhasa. The Nationalist government made a determined effort to improve its position and induce Tibet to join as one of the five Nations of China.[127] The Nanking government sent, as special emissary to the Dalai Lama, the Yungon Dzasa, a Tibetan official who had been living in Peking.[128] He arrived at Lhasa on 16 January 1930 and was greeted with uncustomary honour.[129] At about the same time a Chinese-Tibetan women, Liu Man Chin, was also on a diplomatic mission to Lhasa. She was bearer of letters from the Nanking government to the Dalai Lama.[130] According to Laden La, who was in Lhasa at that time, both applied

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124 PRO: FO371/50/F8352/10 Weir to Government of India, 16 November 1929.

125 PRO: FO371/50/F8352/10 Reuters Government Summary No. 32 cited in Weir to Government of India, 16 November 1929.

126 PRO: FO371/50/F2995/10 Summary of Gazette of the Executive Yuan No. 130 to Ministry of finance, 5 March 1930 in British Legation to Foreign Office, 9 April 1930.

127 PRO:FO371/50/10 F3604 Weir to Government of India, 25 May 1930.

128 A relative of Tsarong Shape.

129 Laden La reported 'the Dalai Lama rose from his seat, when three large drums of honour beating and trumpets blowing at the same time. This was an unprecedented function in the history of Tibet'. IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3943 Report from Laden La to Weir, 26 May 1930.

130 See IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P1792. In an interview with Liu Man Chin at Kalimpong the Daily Mail's correspondent reported that these letters were a

great persuasion to the Dalai Lama and officials at Lhasa. The Yungon Dzasa was reported to be the bearer of a letter from the Chinese government which offered help on behalf of China in case of Bolshevist aggression, and urged a return to friendship and membership of the five Nations of the Chinese Empire.[131]

Laden La was shocked at the extent to which the proposals of Yungon Dzaza appeared to have appealed to the Dalai Lama.[132] In accordance with the National Assembly Agreement, Tibetan officials had been selected by the Dalai Lama to proceed to Nanking as representatives of Tibet. Weir reported that the timely presence of Laden La in Lhasa, and his explanation of the danger of Tibet losing her independence once she became a member of the Chinese Republic, had delayed the despatch of the Tibetan representatives.[133] On his return to China, however, Yungon Dzaza was reported to have brought renewed pledges of Tibet's loyalty to the Central Government. The China Weekly Review, commenting on Liu Man Chin's official visit to Tibet, reported that this was quite clearly an indication that China was now:

> mindful of her frontiers and is giving them full protection - regarding them not as a means for protecting China Proper (as it was the conception of the Manchu rulers) but counting them as parts of China Proper which are entitled to due protection.[134]

The status of Tibet had once again become a major element in Chinese politics and a metaphor in the rhetoric of Chinese nationalism.

Considering the period as a whole, it is evident that from 1926 up to the early 1930s, there was substantial turmoil in Tibet. The Dalai Lama had to contend with general internal unrest, he was having difficulty keeping his vassal states in order, being badgered by the Chinese nationalists and in 1929 was also confronted with the Tibeto-Nepalese crisis. The crisis was precipitated by the murder of Gyalpo Sherpa, a Nepalese subject.[135] The incident was taken as a grave insult to Nepalese honour and the existing tension in Tibetan-Nepalese relations was increased almost to

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response, as the Dalai Lama had 'approached the Chinese for aid'. The Daily Mail, 29 July 1930.

131 H. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p.37.

132 Ibid.

133 PRO:FO371/50/ F3604/10 Weir to Government of India, 25 May 1930.

134 PRO: FO371/50/F6486/10 Report from The China Weekly Review by C. Y. W. Meng, 6 September 1930.

135 For full account see H. Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., pp. 38-40.

breaking point. Preparations for war were being made by both sides.[136] British relations with Tibet fell to its nadir at this time as Britain was suspected of supporting Nepal.[137]

Weir realized that the political situation in Tibet was one of 'precarious equilibrium'. He reported that the concentration by the Dalai Lama of all power in his own hands is a 'potential danger'. He was growing old and placed considerable reliance on his current favourites, Lungshar and Kumpen La.[138] There is no doubt that there was general discontent, not openly expressed, with the Lhasa administration. It was Weir's opinion that on the death of the Dalai Lama a revolution in Lhasa was inevitable and that the first victims would be the his two favourites. He thought that power would in all probability be seized by Tsarong Shape and believed that after bloodshed a government would be established which would take over the temporal power.[139] Tsarong Shape was indeed coming back into favour. Weir reported: 'He is now consulted by the Dalai Lama on all important matters'.[140] And, as Alastair Lamb rightly points out, an administration controlled by Tsarong was, in fact, the only remotely possible prospect for a sustained programme of Tibetan development and the only hope the Government of India had for an enduring Tibetan buffer.[141]

The apathy displayed by the British in regard to Tibetan affairs generally was altogether as inexplicable as it was mistaken. The adoption of a 'dormancy' policy had resulted in the Chinese regaining their influence at Lhasa. In no uncertain terms, Weir submitted his verdict:

> A policy of aloofness breeds mistrust and suspicion. If such a policy is maintained by us there will be an end to our open door to Tibet and the entire value of the Tibet Mission of 1904 will be nullified.[142]

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136 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P1651 News report from Weir to Government of India, 3 February 1930.

137 IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P8573 Letter from POS Weir to Government of India, 18 November 1930. For information on the Tibeto-Nepalese crisis see IOR:L/P&S/10/1088 P1651 News report from Weir to Government of India, 3 February 1930: P7548, 26 October 1929: P1792, 21 February 1930: P2796, 25 March 1930: P1651, 3 February 1930. Also PRO: FO371/50/F1459/10. PRO:FO371/50/F3604/10Weir to Government of India, 25 May 1930.

138 See IOR: FO371/50/F3604/10 Weir to Government of India, 25 May 1930 for information on Lungshar and Kumpen La.

139 Ibid.

140 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3006 Weir to Government of India, 16 March 1929.

141 A. Lamb, Tibet, India and China, op.cit., pp. 183-4.

142 PRO:FO371/160/F1867/10 POS to Government of India, 7 March 1929.

Weir concluded that the time had now come for a personal interview by a British officer with the Dalai Lama to point to the dangers towards which Tibet was heading. There might still be time to repair the damage: 'The Tibetan boil has been gathering slowly for some years. I do not expect it will burst until at least 1930 and then only if the present China holds together for so long.'[143] Events in Manchuria in 1931,[144] however, demonstrated all too clearly the actual growth of Japanese power in China just as they demonstrated that Britain had neither the means nor the disposition to oppose Japan.

Japan's overwhelming success destroyed the illusion of co-prosperity among the powers in China and revealed her as the dynamic factor in the Far East. The unresolved problem of Japan's position in China exposed the fact that Britain's presence in the Far East was sustained by a huge confidence trick: the outward show of imperial pomp and power. The difficulties of Britain's situation after 1931 were compounded by the very success of her confidence trick in the past. She was the victim of a false image, the British public on the one hand and the community of nations on the other, having an entirely inflated idea of the role that Britain had the capacity to play in China.

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143 PRO:FO371/196/F1425/10 POS to Government of India, 12 February 1929.

144 The Mukden Incident, of 18 September 1931. Within five months, despite the condemnation of the Great Powers and in defiance of the League of Nations, the Japanese had established control over the whole of Manchuria.

CHAPTER 14

THE CHARADE IS OVER

'Sheep that trusted in the pasture
O'er the precipice were hurled'[1]

Britain's China policy during the period 1925 to 1930 was in its transitional stage. The years from 1930 to 1933, however, exemplified the consolidation of their policy. In many ways this period represents the final struggle in what had been, since 1914, a contest between British officials in India and China to direct British policy on Tibet. In 1933 the policy promoted by British diplomats in China prevailed: British commercial interests in China made it necessary to subordinate Indian policy towards Tibet to the wider British approach to China. This political compromise did not fully manifest itself until the end of 1933. During the intervening years from 1930 the Government in India, with the assistance of their most able political agent, Colonel. Leslie Weir, endeavoured to counter the Chinese forward movement; for India, as had always been the case, the security of the northern and eastern frontiers was paramount. Not surprisingly, unresolved questions from the past continued to plague British policy makers. Weir had been unable to visit Lhasa in 1929[2] and it had become evident by the middle of 1930 that serious Sino-Tibetan discussions were in progress which required attention from the Government of India. Weir was in no doubt that active steps were being taken by the Nanking Government to induce Tibet to return to the Chinese fold and that the Dalai Lama did not now seem averse to being on better terms than before with the 'suzerain' power.[3]

During 1930 Laden La had been at Lhasa for two-and-a-half months and had carefully studied the political situation.[4] He reported to Weir that he was:

> thunder-struck how Chinese influence has so suddenly been established here, probably owing to ourselves keeping away from Lhasa, while the Chinese seized the opportunity and pushed forward their policy. Pro-

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1 Tibetan proverb cited in C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 359.

2 Weir thought the Dalai Lama's reluctance to send him a formal invitation to visit Lhasa was due to fear that pressure might be brought to bear on the Lhasa government for similar invitations to Russian or Chinese officials, with possible disastrous results to Tibet.

3 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 F938 P1792 News report from Weir to Government of India, 21 February 1930.

4 See IOR:L/P&S/10/1088 P3943 Sardar Bahadur Laden La's report on his mission to Lhasa, 26 May 1930.

> British Tibetan officials support my opinion, out of sight out of mind . . . It is high time for us to cease from keeping away from Lhasa, and to follow closely final suggestion by Sir. C. Bell regarding visits to Lhasa. Last visit was made in 1924 by Colonel Bailey.[5]

By 1930 Weir verified what Bell had understood implicitly, that 'personal contact in dealing with Tibetans is of supreme importance'.[6] Weir advocated: 'The opportunity of maintaining personal contact . . . I think, should not be missed'[7] Laden La maintained that if it had not been for 'his own timely arrival' Chinese influence in Lhasa would have 'risen very high to the detriment of our interests in Tibet'.[8] Weir reported that he is 'firmly convinced of the necessity of early visit of Political Officer to Lhasa in order to counteract the influence of the Chinese now active there, also to consolidate the ground already gained by his visit'.[9] As a counter to the influence of Nanking's female envoy, Liu-Man-Chin, he strongly recommended that while Weir made personal acquaintance with the Dalai Lama's ministers and important officials, his wife should 'mix with the Tibetan ladies.'[10] 'Tibetan ladies', Laden La proclaimed, 'have much influence over their husbands'.[11]

According to Laden La, 'pro-British Tibetans' alleged that 'a feeling of aloofness has developed' in consequence of the Political Officer's absence from Lhasa for so many years.[12] Weir, in attempting to assess the situation, admitted it was not easy to 'assign definite reasons' for any particular action of the Tibetans.[13] He believed that during the previous few years the monastic, or conservative, group had gained the supremacy in Tibetan politics.[14] It was his view that the 'too rapid advance towards civilisation on Western lines', which involved an unforeseen expenditure of Tibetan money, had

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5 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3639 Telegram from Laden La to Weir, 7 May 1930.

6 IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P8573 Letter from Weir to Government of India, 18 November 1930.

7 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 Telegram from Weir to Government of India, 4 May 1930.

8 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3639 News report from Weir to Government of India, 30 April 1930.

9 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3943 Telegram from Weir to Government of India, 26 May 1930.

10 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3639 Telegram from Laden La to Weir, 1 May 1930.

11 Ibid. It should be noted that both Charles Bell and Bailey had wanted their wives to go to Lhasa for this very reason but the Government of India would not give its permission.

12 IOR: L/P&S/10/1088 P3943 Telegram from Weir to Government of India, 26 May 1930.

13 PRO: FO371/50/10 F3604 Weir to Government of India, 25 May 1930. See also IOR:L/P&S/10/1088 P4010.

14 J. M. Jehu, Interview, London, 4 September 1992.

received a set back and the 'repercussion has acted to our disadvantage'.[15] He concluded that a feeling 'which can hardly be called anti-British, but which is certainly not in our favour, gradually developed'.[16] The continued absence from Lhasa had, in his opinion, contributed to this. Noting wryly that 'The Tibetan is adept at sitting on the fence and he has not decided which way he should jump', he thought, nonetheless, 'the pendulum would appear to be swinging again in our favour'.[17] Even Bell was compelled to comment publicly on the issue in the Central Asian Society Journal:

> we have a solid basis for an excellent relationship with Tibet, and such a relationship was in full force eight years ago. Is it still in force? That is the question. I am not in the confidence of the Government, but such information as reaches me makes me feel that it is not.[18]

Colonel Weir, who was accompanied by Mrs. Weir[19], Captain Sinclair, I.M.S., and Rai Sahib Bo Tsering reached Lhasa on 4 August 1930.[20] The Weir mission was concerned with three major issues: the nature of Sino-Tibetan relations, the possibility of Bolshevik penetration of Tibet and the measures that needed to be taken to reconcile the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. Above all, it was an to attempt re-establish personal contacts and to keep alive the practice of periodic visits. 'Our policy towards Tibet must continue to be one of sincere friendliness and every effort should be made to bring back the happy relations existing in 1921.'[21]

Weir confirmed his earlier supposition, that there were no signs of sympathy with Bolshevism to be found in Lhasa, and he concluded that the danger of an outbreak of Bolshevism was 'remote and need not at present be feared'.[22] The Dalai Lama failed to respond to Colonel Weir's proposals regarding the Panchen Lama and the Government of

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15 PRO: FO371/50/10 F3604 Weir to Government of India, 25 May 1930.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Sir Charles Bell, 'The North-Eastern Frontier of India" Central Asian Society Journal, Vol. 17, 1930, p. 222.

19 Mrs. Leslie Weir is given credit as being the first 'Englishwoman' to visit Lhasa. She was, however, from New Zealand. See 'The Impressions of the first Englishwoman in Lhasa' Lecture on 8 October 1931, Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,1932, p. 239-241: Also confirmed in interview with Mrs. J. M. Jehu, op.cit.

20 IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P8573 Letter from POS to Government of India, 18 November 1930.

21 PRO: FO371/50/10 F3604 Weir to Government of India, 25 May 1930.

22 IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P8573 'A report on my tour and visit to Lhasa in 1930' in letter from Weir to Government of India, 18 November 1930.

India saw 'no course at present but to leave the question of his reconciliation with the Tashi Lama to find its own solution'.[23]

The Government of India and the Foreign Office agreed that, although there were no very tangible or immediate results in questions of major importance, Weir's visit was 'justified by the restoration of mutual understanding and improved cordiality.'[24] The report of the Weir mission verified, however, that there was a pro-Chinese slant in the general trend of Tibetan foreign policy. There was, 'without doubt', wrote Weir, a strong undercurrent of feeling among many officials that Tibet would not be able to retain its independence of China indefinitely. It was generally felt that if friendly overtures were made to the Kuomintang some form of Tibetan autonomy might be achieved which would be preferable to complete absorption by China.[25]

This opinion appears to have been the prevailing temper at Lhasa in late 1930. Events in eastern Tibet, however, persuaded the Dalai Lama that his current approach to foreign policy would have to be reconsidered. The change in attitude was due to the collapse of the 1918 Teichman truces on the Sino-Tibetan frontier and was precipitated by a conflict in 1930 between two monasteries in Eastern Tibet, the Yellow Sect (Gelugpa) monastery at Dargye (Tachieh) and an establishment of the Red Sect (Nyingma) in the Hor state of Beri (Pei-li).[26] The Teichman truce line actually ran between Dargye and Beri. Any hostilities between these two places were bound to involve a major disturbance of the 1918 agreements. Tensions increased and fighting between the Tibetan and Chinese Nationalist government occurred in 1931 and 1932, as the Kuomintang tried to assert authority over the territories of Amdo and Kham. The Szechuan troops, with the professed intention of arranging an armistice, had renewed hostilities with the Tibetan forces. The Sino-Tibetan border conflict was a major concern for the British.[27] The possibility of a full-scale Central Asia war would certainly not be conducive to their espoused foreign policy of peace, security and trade.

It is apparent from a review of material already considered, that, especially from the time of the 1920-21 Bell Mission until 1930, the Dalai Lama was testing his own power and the limits of Tibet's political independence. By August 1932 the experiment

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23 PRO: FO371/562/10 F6127 Government of India to India Office, 3 October 1930.

24 H, Richardson, Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p. 42.

25 IOR: L/P&S/10/1113 P8573 letter from Weir to Government of India, 18 November 1930.

26 See C.Y. W. Meng 'Quarrel Between Two Temples Starts Central Asian War' The China Weekly Review, 11 April 1931, pp. 199-200.

27 Corredpondence relating to the Sino-Tibetan border conflict can be found in IOR: L/P&S/10/844 File 876 (2).

was rapidly terminating. The Dalai Lama was now indicating that a 'secret treaty' with the Government of India 'could be arranged'.[28] As we have seen, during the 1920s political machinations and financial constraints had put a severe strain on the Lhasa government and the Dalai Lama. By 1931 the Dalai Lama contemplated giving up not only his temporal power, but his ecclesiastical authority as well. Bell wrote, 'He felt that he should spend the short remainder of his thirteenth Incarnation in religious exercises, in spiritual devotion. However, he could not bring himself to give up the work, and in some ways even increased his control'.[29] In 1931, the Chinese Nationalist government had declared Tibet to be a province of China. The Dalai Lama's accommodation policy towards the Chinese appeared to be floundering. With renewed hostilities by the Chinese on the eastern border, his dependence on the British for support again became clearly apparent.

Weir believed that the Dalai Lama was now prepared to put himself in a treaty relationship with British India very similar to that established with Bhutan some two decades earlier, one which had apparently done the traditional Bhutanese way of life no damage:[30]

> There is little doubt that a treaty could be concluded with Tibet whereby she would agree to surrender her foreign relations to our care, as Bhutan has done, She would, however, expect material, as well as moral support, in protection of her frontiers. This we could not possibly give. Apart from obvious impossibilities, world opinion and our commitments in China debar any secret treaty with Tibet against her suzerainty.[31]

The Government of India agreed with Weir. Any Anglo-Tibetan treaty would involve serious commitments in Eastern Tibet and would also create difficulties with the Chinese government which would have a detrimental effect on British trade with China. The notion was not to be encouraged.

In May 1932 Weir received an urgent telegram from Dalai Lama requesting a further supply of arms and ammunition from the British.[32] The request coincided with

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28 PRO:FO371/7/F6172/10 Telegram from Dalai Lama to POS in telegram from Weir to Government of India, 9 August 1932. Also letter from Government of India to India Office, 10 August 1932.

29 C. Bell, Portrait of a Dalai Lama, op.cit., p. 425.

30 In 1910 when the Dalai Lama was in exile in India his officials had pushed for the British to accept a similar treaty. See British Library 010057.1.3. Bell Diary Vol. IV 1909-1910 entry, 4 June 1910.

31 PRO: FO371/7/F6172/10 Telegram from Weir to Government of India cited in letter from Government of India to India Office, 10 August 1932.

32 PRO: FO371/7/F4636/10 Decypher of telegram from POS encl in Government of India to India Office, 29 May 1932.

news of a serious set-back to the Tibetan forces fighting in Kham.[33] The Government of India was once again worried that refusal to supply the munitions might not only alienate Tibet, but could cause the Dalai Lama to turn to the Soviets for support.[34] After reference to the India Office, the Government of India decided that the request should be fulfilled under the 26 August 1921 obligations arranged by Bell, and agreed to supply the balance of the consignment of arms promised to the Tibetans in 1921.[35]

The British Legation in Peking was far from pleased about the situation. According to reports sent through Chungking, active hostilities were still in progress and the Chinese press was openly accusing Britain of supplying arms to the Tibetans.[36] Towards the end of July 1932 the Wai-chiao-pu expressed the 'earnest hope' that arms would not be supplied by the British.[37] From the Foreign Office point of view, the situation was embarrassing. It was widely believed in China, and above all in Szechuan, that the Tibetans were receiving active British support. The Foreign Office could hardly deny that British arms were being used in the border conflict; during the fighting in the first half of 1932 the Chinese captured several machine guns of British manufacture.[38] This was not something the Legation could lightly brush away. It did indeed place both the British Legation and the home government in a very embarrassing position. The supply of arms to Tibet was certainly not the most effective way Britain could procure Chinese good will. In addition, it implied a disregard for the Cabinet decision of 1930 that arms to Tibet should be used for self defence only.[39]

The Government in India did not think that the issue was calamitous. If the Chinese Government suggested that Britain was showing special favour to Tibet in order to enable them to attack Chinese territory, then it need only be pointed out that the

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33 PRO: FO371/7/F4636/10 Telegram from POS repeated in Government of India to India Office, 25 May 1932.

34 PRO: FO371/7/F6020/10 Government of India to India Office, 30 July 1932.

35 PRO: FO371/7/ F4636/10 Government of India to India Office, 27 May 1932.

36 PRO: FO371/7/F5850/10 British Legation in Peking to Foreign Office, 27 July 1932.

37 PRO: FO371/7/F6020/10 Foreign Office minute. See also IOR: L/P&S/12/2175 Ingram to Foreign Office, 24 August 1932 and Chinese Legation to Foreign Office, 4 October 1932.

38 IOR: L/P&S/12/4170, Ingram to Sir John Simon, 1 August 1932.

39 Wedgewood Benn, Secretary of State for India, after consultation with the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson, persuaded Ramsay MacDonald's second Labour Ministry to agree to the idea of supplying the Tibetans with more arms. PRO:FO371/50/F3784/10 Government of India to India Office, 25 June 1930, Encl No. 1 in India Office to Foreign Office, 9 July 1930. These would be 'subject to a written undertaking by the Tibetan Government that they would be used solely for self-defence and for internal police work'. PRO: FO371/50/F3963/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 19 July 1930.

Government of India had recently agreed to grant facilities for the import of arms both by the Chinese government through Burma and by the Sinkiang government through India. There was therefore no discrimination in favour of Tibet.[40] The immediate response of the India Office was that the issue had wider implications, which touched on the delicate subject of the status of Tibet. If the Chinese response to the charge regarding the arms in any way implied that India was not entitled to deal with Tibet as an autonomous State, then they suggested Peking's attention should be drawn to the communications made to them in 1921.

As mentioned in Chapter Nine, the Agreement of 1921[41] was made in order to provide 'reasonable assistance in the protection and development of Tibet'.[42] This policy was adopted largely because of dissatisfaction with the dilatory tactics of the Chinese over the resumption of tripartite negotiations and their subsequent spurning of Curzon's ultimatum bluff. The Foreign Office had, at the time, informed the Chinese government in writing that Britain 'intended to recognise the status of Tibet as an autonomous State under the suzerainty of China and to deal with her on that basis in future'.[43] Whitehall had only informed the Chinese officials orally that 'they would regard themselves as having a free hand to deal with Tibet as an autonomous state, if necessary without further reference to China'.[44] Consequently, the fact that future dealings with Tibet might include giving the Tibetans 'any reasonable assistance they may require in the development or protection of their country' had never been officially communicated to the Chinese.[45]

The bureaucratic wheel had been left to rust and was in danger of causing a nasty accident. The India Office, while not wanting to be drawn into controversy regarding the status of Tibet, thought it 'undesirable to pass without challenge' any suggestions by the Nanking government that Tibet was not an autonomous State or that Britain was 'not entitled to enter into arrangements with her as such in matters as giving facilities for the import of munitions'.[46] The 1921 Agreement had, after all, been drawn up for precisely this purpose and the Government of India were evidently determined to stand by the agreement. Not surprisingly, the Nanking government did not accept Britain's

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40 PRO: FO371/7/10 F6020 Letter from Government of India to India Office, 30 July 1932.

41 PRO:FO371/6609/59/10 Memorandum to Chinese Minister, 26 August 1921.

42 PRO:FO371/6609/F3142/59/10 Telegram from Curzon to Alston, 27 August 1921.

43 PRO:FO371/6609/59/10 Memorandum to Chinese Minister, 26 August 1921.

44 PRO:FO371/6609/F3142/59/10 Telegram from Curzon to Alston, 27 August 1921. Emphasis added.

45 PRO: FO371/7/F6455/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 29 August 1932.

46 Ibid.

explanation that the military aid was slight or that restrictions for its use had been stipulated. When a request for a copy of the 1921 agreement was made by the Chinese minister, Dr. Chen, the Foreign Office refused to supply copies. No doubt they realised they were on very shaky ground. The documents had presumably never been published and the Chinese government had only been informed verbally of the 'assistance and development' section of the agreement .[47]

On 10 August 1932 the Dalai Lama telegraphed a request that the Political Officer, Sikkim, should visit Lhasa to discuss with him the 'urgent political' problems of Sino-Tibetan relations and the question of the Panchen Lama'.[48] Weir duly declared that the 'position now is definitely dangerous and it becomes more so with every fresh Chinese success'.[49] A visit to Lhasa at this moment had its own dangers. It might be regarded by the Chinese government as evidence of Britain's intention to interfere in the Chinese-Tibetan dispute and be viewed as an indication of support for Tibet against its 'suzerain' power. On the other hand, to refuse the Dalai Lama's request would alienate him and weaken the pro-British group in Tibet.[50] This dilemma was easily overcome: Weir's visit would be 'undertaken solely with object of assisting in restoration of peace'.[51]

Colonel Weir and his party reached Lhasa at the beginning of September 1932. It appeared that a transformation had taken place since Weir's last visit.[52] The 'progressives' had since his visit in 1930 gained ascendancy over the more conservative pro-Chinese Tibetans. This he believed was to some extent a response to the Government of India's readiness to supply munitions.[53] Kusho Kumbela[54] had taken Tsarong as his chief associate and the new alliance had apparently gained the confidence of the monks.[55] Weir reported that their objective 'is to move steadily on progressive lines by adoption of such western ideas and inventions as will be most readily accepted by Tibetan people'.[56]

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47 PRO: FO371/7/F6311/10 Foreign Office minute (undated).

48 PRO: FO371/7/F6142 10/ No. 7 (ii) P/32 telegram from Dalai Lama, 10 August 1932 in telegram from Government of India to India Office, 12 August 1932.

49 Ibid.

50 PRO:F0371/7/ F6142/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 13 August 1932.

51 Ibid.

52 Interview with J. M. Jehu, 4 September 1992.

53 Ibid.

54 Monk official - one of the Dalai Lama's 'favourites'.

55 IOR: L/P&S/12/4165 PZ4510 Telegram from POS to Government of India, 16 July 1932.

56 Ibid.

Originally, Weir intended to stay in Lhasa for about six weeks but stayed for three months. In fact, the Weir mission took on many similarities with Bell's mission of 1921. Weir's proceedings in Lhasa became inextricably involved with negotiations in China, which were occurring simultaneously. Once again the Foreign Office attempted to use the presence of a British officer in Lhasa as a means of bluff. A Foreign Office official minuted: 'From every point of view I think Col Weir should stay for the present. If he now goes back to India, the Chinese may cease to be alarmed and may renew fighting'.[57] The fact of his being at Lhasa together with probably exaggerated stories of the number of arms being sent to Tibet from India was seen as 'an excellent deterrent to Chinese aggression'.[58]

It was almost exactly two years since Weir had last been at Lhasa and in contrast to his 1930 visit, when the Tibetan attitude to the British visit was conspicuously reserved, he was greeted with the utmost hospitality and friendship.[59] This, no doubt, reflected the atmosphere of apprehension in Lhasa. Reports issuing from eastern Tibet suggested that the Chinese were victorious and it was only a matter of time before troops would be in Lhasa. Of particular concern for the Dalai Lama was the defection of his troops in eastern Tibet. These troops were the elite of the Tibetan army. In some instances Tibetan soldiers were actually joining the Chinese forces. Weir surmised that this was not only due to lack of regular pay and general war weariness but apparently because many of them had sympathies for the cause of the Panchen Lama. Many of the soldiers were recruited from Tsang, the Panchen Lama's own province, and it was generally rumoured that the Panchen Lama's officials were with the Szechuan forces.[60]

As far as relations with the British were concerned, the Dalai Lama had two major anxieties. If serious fighting was once again to break out, the Tibetan army would require further supplies of arms and ammunition. He also knew that without British mediation, by way of its diplomatic representation in China, it would be difficult to solve the problem of the Panchen Lama: a solution could, he hoped, also result in some settlement of the Sino-Tibetan border in the east. The Dalai Lama was in a unenviable position. If a major military conflict was to take place in eastern Tibet he knew he would get no support from Britain. Even if the British were prepared to sell small amounts of arms for defence purposes he would find it difficult to find the money to pay. The only prospect was to persuade China to agree to the signing of the Simla Convention. The

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57 PRO: FO371/7/ F7776/10 Foreign Office minute, 5 November 1932.

58 Ibid.

59 Interview with J. M. Jehu, op.cit., 4 September 1992.

60 PRO: FO371/7/F6172/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 10 August 1932.

Tibetans were, however, in no position now to bargain and they were no longer pressing claims to Tachienlu or Batang. The Dalai Lama was well aware that he would probably even have to accept as permanent the Yangtze boundary. What he needed now was British mediation. The Dalai Lama's accommodation overture had withered and without British mediation he knew the Chinese would have little difficulty in compelling Tibet to return to its former state of subservience to China. The Dalai Lama had one thing in his favour. It was fully appreciated by policy makers in India that for the future peace of Tibet the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama would need to be reconciled. According to Weir, the Panchen Lama's continued absence from Tibet 'was a perpetual menace to the peace of Central Asia'.[61]

Weir demonstrated his anxiety by implying that the British should try once again to use their representation in China to bring about some settlement of the Sino-Tibetan conflict. Echoing Bell, he reminded Whitehall that a peaceful and contented Tibet was the cheapest and most efficient safeguard of India's North-East Frontier. Weir hinted that representation, with a view to cessation of hostilities, should be made to the Chinese government through the British Legation. He expressed the hope that the British might also act, albeit with extreme caution, as intermediary between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

The British Legation in China was not in a particularly strong diplomatic position. As pointed out in Chapter Five, by 1932 the Nanking government was disregarding all orders from the Diplomatic Body. A wave of anti-British propaganda was not making their situation easier. Any representations would have to be made very tactfully as the environment had altered considerably since 1921 when the Chinese government had expressed some willingness to discuss the Tibetan question.[62] Of some concern was the question of whether even to notify the Chinese about this latest Weir mission to Lhasa. The Foreign Office considered this might have advantages: the Chinese would eventually hear about it and, if the British were forthright about their plans, Nanking might not regard the new mission as evidence of British anti-Chinese activity. A more open approach, they hoped, might also counter the current wave of anti-British propaganda.

Throughout late 1931 and 1932 there was a constant press campaign against the British.[63] The Hsin Shu Pao reported:

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61 PRO:FO371/7/F6142/10 Telegram from Weir to Government of India, 10 August 1932.

62 PRO:FO371/7/F6133/10 Ingram to India Office, 13 August 1932.

63 PRO:FO371/7/10 F271 Copies of Chungking Despatches No 86 and 87, 9 November 1931 and 19 November 1931.

> According to a reliable report the English, with the object of increasing their influence in Hsikang, have made an agreement with the Dalai Lama. Capital is to be subscribed for the construction of a highway from Gyantse to Yatung. Once this road is built, then commercial communications and the transportation of military supplies will be greatly facilitated; the English will be able to advance far into the country and carry out their evil scheme for the annexation of Tibet and Hsikang.[64]

There were also allegations that the British were in the process of carrying out, in agreement with Japan, a policy of occupation in Tibet.[65] The Japanese press attempted to show that Britain was doing in the West exactly what Japan has been doing in Manchuria.[66] On 20 June 1932 Pravda carried the headline: 'Japan in Manchuria-England in Tibet'. The article charged: 'British imperialism hopes to increase its influence in the western provinces of China, especially in Sinkiang, which marches directly with the frontiers of the USSR!'[67] There were all types of rumours in China during this period, not least that the British were sending Lawrence of Arabia to Lhasa to support the Tibetans against Chinese suzerainty just as he had inflamed the Arabs against the Ottomans. During the last few years his wraith had materialised wherever there was trouble that could be attributed to the Machiavellian designs of the imperialistic British.[68]

Both Weir and the Government of India hoped for a major conference between Tibetan and Chinese delegates, preferably with British representation. Preoccupations of the Government of India with constitutional and other problems at this time made the prospect of convening a conference in the disputed eastern border area more convenient than holding one in Delhi.[69] For this to happen, however, the British Legation would have to open discussions with the Nanking government and offer some proposals for a compromise agreement on the disputed Sino-Tibetan border. Weir had obtained from the Dalai Lama and his ministers some idea of the boundary they would accept.[70] The India

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64 PRO:FO371/7/F271/10 Translation of article in the Hsin Shu Pao, 29 October 1931.

65 PRO:FO371/61/F7379/10 Copy of Chungking Despatch No. 80, 22 October 1931.

66 See IOR: L/P&S/10/1228 PZ3869 British Embassy Moscow to Sir John Simon, 21 June 1932.

67 PRO: FO371/7/F4636/10 Translation, Pravda 29 June 1932.

68 PRO:FO371/7/F6141/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 19 August 1932. See also IOR L/P&S/12/4170 F611 Foreign Office to India Office, 18 August 1932.

69 PRO:FO371/7/10 F7050 Letter from Government of India to India Office, 25 September 1932.

70 The Tibetan government suggested that the boundary should run in accordance with the Treaty of Eight Articles arrived at between Tibetan representatives and two Commissioners appointed by China in 1931. See PRO:FO371/7/F7050/10 Telegram from POS in Lhasa to Government of India, 20 September 1932, in

Office agreed with the Government of India that they should make diplomatic representations to the Central Chinese government with a view to arranging an armistice and preventing further fighting. Sir Samuel Hoare accordingly suggested that the Legation 'should be instructed to use all His Majesty's Government's influence with the Nanking Government in order to achieve these objects'.[71]

Discussions in China at this stage were conducted by Ingram, the Charge d'Affaires in Peking, and by Holman, his representative at Nanking. It is interesting to note Richardson's remarks on the subject: 'The firmness and personality of a Minister such as Sir John Jordan were sadly missed at this time.'[72] It would seem that trepidation had enveloped the British Legation. Despite instruction from the Foreign Office to inform the Nanking government of Weir's intention to visit Lhasa,[73] the Legation's representative in Nanking deemed it unwise to tell the Wai-chiao-pu.[74] When Ingram reported to Sir John Simon in the Foreign Office that Holman had not made 'a special point of mentioning Colonel Weir's invitation' to Lhasa, he concluded, 'it would have been like a red rag to a bull, and productive of more harm than good'.[75]

The British Legation was reluctant to act as mediator. Ingram, in a report to Sir John Simon wrote, 'I trust we may be brought into the picture as little as possible as every point bristles with difficulties and there is little scope for any discussion on such a

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letter from Government of India to India Office, 22 September 1932. Weir suggested that Derge, Nyarong and Hor States should form a demilitarised zone. 'The Tibetan troops should not advance beyond the Yangtze and the Chinese troops should be withdrawn to the Tachienlu Batang line. The debatable area be administered by civil authorities in accordance with the boundary agreement of 1918'. See PRO: FO371/7/F7050/10 Telegram from POS in Lhasa, 20 September 1932 in Government of India to India Office, 22 September 1932.See also PRO: FO371/7/F7485/10 Telegram from Weir, 14 October 1932 in letter from Government of India to India Office, 16 October 1932.

71 PRO: FO371/7/F6172/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 11 August 1932.

72 H. Richardson Tibetan Precis, op.cit., p. 44.

73 PRO: FO371/7/F6208/10 Foreign Office to Peking Legation, 17 August 1932. In August the Foreign Office had instructed the Legation to inform the Nanking government of Weirs intention to visit Lhasa. By 15 September the Foreign Office 'proposed to instruct Ingram not to inform the Chinese government of Weir's visit officially at this stage,' but to suggest that this information should be conveyed in some informal manner. See PRO: FO371/7/F6803/10 Foreign Office to Government of India, 15 September 1932.

74 The Legation's representative, Holman, maintained he had not received copies of the Foreign Office telegram at the time of his interview with Mr. Hsu Mo, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs at Nanking. See PRO: FO371/16/10 F1356 Report from Ingram to Sir John Simon, 9 January 1933.

75 PRO: FO371/7/10 F993 Ingram to Sir John Simon, 15 November 1932.

delicate subject with Chinese Government without possibility of being drawn into deep water'.[76]

The Foreign Office was also dubious about representation. The main danger in making the proposed overture to the Nanking government lay in the fact that the Chinese forces appeared to have the upper hand in the border dispute and might be disposed to reassert their control over Tibet.[77] In the Foreign Office concern was voiced that the Chinese government might attempt to make British representation an occasion for extracting some recognition of Chinese rights. Pratt thought they might demand as a condition of their agreeing to an armistice an undertaking that neither His Majesty's Government nor the Government of India would in the future supply Tibet with arms without the consent of the Nanking government, as was the case with the provincial Chinese governments.[78] The more important question at issue was, however, the extent to which Britain recognized, in practice, China's claim to suzerainty over Tibet. Above all, the Foreign Office did not want to be put in a position in which they would have to support their stand on the suzerainty of China over Tibet.[79]

Pratt acknowledged that the Government of India held 'very strong views about the maintenance of the de facto autonomy of Tibet' and conceded that they 'would never consent to any undertaking which would tend to threaten it.'[80] Consequently everything possible was to be done by way of diplomatic representations to arrange an armistice but the controversial and delicate question of the status of Tibet was to be avoided.[81] The Foreign Office was obviously intent on playing down the Government of India's interest in Tibet. The Government of India, on the other hand, was intent on maintaining the position bequeathed to it by the 1921 Agreement. They were anxious that any obvious disinclination to enter into discussions on the status of Tibet would allow their rights and interests there to go by default.

The subsequent British offer of mediation failed to bear fruit and because of the cold reception given to their first approach[82] the Foreign Office was anxious about

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76 IOR:L/P&S/12/4170 Ingram to Foreign Office, 6 September. See also IOR: L/P&S/12/4169 Ingram to Sir John Simon, 24 September 1932, enclosing the full text of the minute of Holman's meeting with Hsu Mo the Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs on 31 August 1932.

77 PRO: FO371/7/F6172/10 Minute by Pratt, 11 August 1932.

78 Ibid.

79 PRO: FO371/7/F6172/10 Minute by Pratt, 12 August 1932.

80 PRO: FO371/7/F6172/10 Minute by Pratt, 11 August 1932.

81 Ibid.

82 PRO: FO371/7/F7993/10 Minute by Holman in relation to interview with Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hsu Mo on 31 August 1932, encl No 1 in Ingram to Foreign Office, 15 November 1932.

further representation. They proposed to make 'no further representations to the Chinese government at this stage'.[83] In August, a report from Ingram in Peking to Sir John Simon in the Foreign Office had recommended that in the interest of Sino-British relations 'we should avoid, if possible, giving any handle for accusations that we are supporting the Tibetans against their suzerain, China'.[84] It was recognised in the Foreign Office that the situation had changed since the events of 1914-18 and that the present Kuomintang regime needed to be even more insistent than its predecessors on any question affecting Chinese sovereign rights. For her part, Britain was bound by the undertaking to respect Chinese sovereignty in the Nine Power Treaty. Further complications were introduced by the possibility of the Japanese propagandist effort, mentioned earlier. It would be particularly difficult for a Chinese government which had already lost face over the Manchurian incident to take any action in Tibet which might be interpreted as loss of face, especially at a moment when Chinese troops had been victorious. Concern was also felt in the Foreign Office that Britain's position at Geneva might be prejudiced when the Lytton Report into the Manchurian incident came up for consideration.[85]

Pressure from the Government of India, through the India Office, convinced the Foreign Office of the need to urge the Peking Legation to continue raising the issue with the Chinese. Weir thought that with so much Tibetan territory currently in Chinese hands any peace now negotiated without British representation would be disadvantageous to the Tibetans.[86] The Dalai Lama made it clear to Weir that he regarded a satisfactory settlement with China as impossible unless the British employed diplomatic intervention on his behalf.[87] The India Office pressed home the point that Britain's representatives in Peking should be careful to:

> avoid giving the Chinese authorities the impression that it is in any way open to question that we have the right to send to Lhasa a British official at the invitation of the Tibetan Government, and to give advice and diplomatic or other assistance to that Government.[88]

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83 PRO: F0371/7/10 F6803 Foreign Office to Government of India, 15 September 1932.

84 PRO: FO371/7/F6848/10 Report from Ingram to Sir John Simon, Foreign Office, 1 August 1932.

85 PRO:FO371/7/F6884/10 Minutes, 22 September 1932.

86 PRO:FO371/7/F6757/10 Government of India to India Office, 13 September 1932 repeating telegram from POS in Lhasa.

87 PRO: FO371/7/F6803/10 Government of India to India Office, 16 September 1932.

88 Ibid.

None of these steps, they argued, appeared to stand in any need of justification to the Chinese. In his despatch to the Foreign Office, Sir Samuel Hoare at the India Office cautioned that if there was no longer any immediate prospect of 'exercising our good offices at Nanking with a view to the cessation of hostilities', then it 'may presently become impossible, out of regard for the susceptibilities of the Nanking Govt to avoid such matters as the existence of a legitimate British interest in the autonomy and integrity of Tibet'.[89]

In view of the Dalai Lama's appeal for intervention and the possibility of a Chinese advance on Chamdo,[90] by late September the Foreign Office had also come around to this way of thinking. Persuaded by the India Office to acknowledge the fact that Britain was bound by the terms of the Simla convention, which 'we regard as binding upon ourselves and Tibet', and also by the 1921 Agreement, the Foreign Office saw no alternative but to intervene in order to protect Tibetan autonomy. The stage had been reached at which it was no longer desirable to exclude the question of British interest in Tibet: 'we cannot abandon Tibet in the present dispute or risk seriously prejudicing our position by taking no further action'.[91]

There were now two distinct questions: mediation with a view to permanent settlement and mediation with a view to preventing a further Chinese advance into Tibet. Ingram was instructed to renew the offer of mediation and remind the Chinese that Britain was:

> interested in the maintenance of the integrity and autonomy of Outer Tibet and of an effective Tibetan Government able to maintain peace and order in the neighbourhood of the frontiers of India and adjoining States and free from the influence of any foreign Power (excluding China from that term).[92]

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89 PRO:FO371/7/F6803/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 16 September 1932.

90 The Tibetan Government received information that Chinese forces from Kokonor had overwhelmed the small Tibetan units in the neighbourhood of Jyekundo and had reached Nangchen. Messages to the Tibetan officials at Jazamka and Riwoche apparently threatened that unless the Tibetan troops were withdrawn from these places the Chinese would continue their advance on Chamdo. See PRO: FO371/16/F1356/10 Report from Ingram to Sir John Simon, 9 January 1933. This report had not been confirmed but the Foreign Office could not afford to ignore it since Chamdo was regarded both at Simla in 1914 and during the 1918-1919 negotiations as definitely Tibetan and its alternate capture and recapture by Chinese and Tibetans, during the years 1905-1918, marked the periods of Chinese aggression and Tibetan recovery. See PRO: FO371/7/F6884/10 Minutes, 22 September 1932.

91 PRO: FO371/7/F6884/10 Minutes, 22 September 1932.

92 PRO:FO371/7/F7050/10 Telegram from Foreign Office to Ingram, 29 September 1932.

Ingram was, 'in such language as may appear most suitable', to imply that if China should challenge the autonomy of Outer Tibet or appear to threaten the integrity of the country by an advance on Chiamdo or otherwise, 'His Majesty's Government would be bound to take a most serious view of the matter'.[93] It was also thought wise to notify the Chinese authorities informally of Weir's presence in Lhasa while avoiding any implication that his visit was in need of justification to the Chinese government.[94]

The fundamental issue to the Government of India was whether China was mistress of her own house. If the Nanking government could not control the action of the Szechuan troops on the Sino-Tibetan border, Tibet would be justified in taking measures to protect herself from unjustifiable aggression. This, however, was not the view taken by the Nationalist government. The Chinese reply to Britain's offer of mediation was resolute: 'the Sino-Tibetan boundary question was a question of internal Chinese politics'[95] and, as such, of no direct concern of the British.

The Chinese retort was not unexpected, considering, as Ingram noted with reference to a 1919 despatch, that 'this is the attitude which they have adopted fairly consistently over a number of years'.[96] Ingram was nonetheless disappointed. He had hoped that the imminence of a League of Nations session to discuss the Manchurian situation might have induced a desire to conciliate the British.[97] Instead, it was a trenchant rebuff to Britain. Ingram's frustration was embodied in a telegram sent in October 1932: 'I do not think the Chinese government are likely to modify this attitude or that there is anything to be gained at the moment by pursuing matter of mediation any further'.[98]

The Foreign Office, in the light of these developments, considered the various alternatives which faced them. A Foreign Office minute emphasised their predicament:

> Theoretically the Chinese, as suzerain power, have more right to intervene in Tibet than we have, and for that reason I am a little doubtful of the expedience <u>at present of</u> advertising in the press and in League of

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93 <u>Ibid.</u>

94 <u>Ibid.</u>

95 PRO:FO371/7/F7513/10 Ingram to Foreign Office, 11 October 1932.

96 PRO:FO371/7/F7440/10 Telegram from Ingram to Foreign Office, 12 October 1932.

97 <u>Ibid.</u> The idea, apparently advanced by the Dalai Lama, that the whole question be referred to the League of Nations, aroused no enthusiasm either in India or in London. See IOR: L/P&S/12/4170 India Office to Foreign Office, 1 October 1932.

98 PRO: FO371/7/F7440/10 Telegram from Ingram to Foreign Office, 12 October 1932.

> Nations circles our justifiable annoyance at the way in which the Chinese are behaving on the Tibetan border.[99]

Above all, they needed to avoid reviving the suspicions of the Chinese that Britain was aiming in Tibet at a paramount position for themselves somewhat similar to that which Japan had achieved in Manchuria: 'our critics at Geneva might think they have discovered in our preoccupation over Tibet a motive for what they consider our lukewarm attitude over the Japanese aggression in Manchuria.'[100] It was still remembered in the Foreign Office that in 1919 when Britain was on the point of an agreement with China over the Sino-Tibetan frontier negotiations were broken off as a result of agitation engineered by Japan in China over Tibet. It was generally accepted that this was contrived in order to draw public attention from the Shantung award.[101]

The very fact that the British appeared to be so interested in the Sino-Tibetan issue was providing valuable material for both Chinese and Japanese anti-British propaganda. On 26 October Ingram spoke to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who warned that any intervention on Britain's part 'might have serious consequences'. The Minister thought the matter was 'all the more delicate in that Japanese in their usual way were making capital of Weir's mission and our alleged design and Chinese press was beginning to grow suspicious'.[102] The Foreign Office's anxiety was vindicated when in early November the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Naking confronted Ingram with the news that Japan had approached the British Conservative Party for the purpose of negotiating an Anglo-Japanese alliance. They implied that Great Britain's intention was to give tacit recognition to Japan's occupation of Manchuria, in consideration of which Japan was to assist Britain in her activities in Tibet and also to give facilities to British trade in Manchuria.[103]

On 2 February the British Foreign Office produced a statement denying that any agreement existed by which Britain was to work for a free hand for Japan in Manchuria in return for a free hand for Britain in Tibet. The statement added, among other things, that 'a free hand in Tibet' was not and 'never has been the ambition of His Majesty's government of the United Kingdom nor of the Government of India.'[104] The China Weekly Review, under the heading 'British Foreign Office Denies Facts of Tibetan

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99 PRO: FO371/7/F7441/10 Foreign Office minute by Waller, 21 October 1932.

100 Ibid.

101 PRO: FO371/7/ F7614/10 Foreign Office minute by Bowther, 26 October 1932. See Chapter Five for reference to Japanese agitation over the Shantung issue.

102 PRO:FO371/7/10 F7441 Ingram to Foreign Office, 26 October 1932.

103 IOR: L/P&S/12/4173 Waichiapou, Nanking to Ingram, Peking, 1 November 1932.

104 PRO: FO371/16/10 F2597 Foreign Office statement, 18 February 1933.

Policy',[105] carried a stinging attack demonstrating that Britain not only aspired to, but had actually secured, a free hand in Tibet. The evidence was to be found in the Foreign Office's own Handbook No. 70 which stated that 'outer Tibet would become an autonomous state under Chinese suzerainty and British protection'.[106] The Foreign Office confirmed that 'the unfortunate phrase about British protection over Tibet *does* occur',[107] but maintained that the reference to "protection" was really based on nothing more than the fact that the Convention of 1914 did mean protection against Chinese interference. The article was described by the Foreign Office as 'a dangerous piece of propaganda'.[108]

There is no doubt that the press campaign had a restraining effect on the diplomats in the Peking Legation. Ingram reported 'our relations with Tibet were receiving a very distorted and undesirable publicity in the Chinese and Japanese press, and there was always a danger that this publicity might be exploited to our detriment if we pressed the Chinese too hard'.[109] A Pravda 'comment' on 13 October 1932 stated:

> Tibet is practically occupied by England. English officers, missionaries and capitalists direct the Tibetan army, control the economic life of the country, implant in the schools "English principles of education". . . English imperialism having reorganised and re-armed the troops of the Dalai Lama, threw them into Sikan (the region separating Tibet from the Chinese province of Szechuan) with the object of uniting Sikan with Tibet. In order to divert attention from the preparations for a Tibetan, (in reality an English) occupation of Sikan, English agents organised a new militarist war in the Szechuan province.[110]

On 18 October another Pravda headline read: "A Greater Tibet" Illustration of the Lytton Report". It accused Japan of running a press campaign designed to bring England to support the Japanese position in North China and Manchuria.[111]

After his October meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ingram concluded: 'I do not think we shall gain anything by pursuing matter any further for the

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105 Unsigned, 'British Foreign Office Denies Facts of Tibetan Policy', China Weekly Review, Vol. 63, 18 February, 1933.

106 PRO: FO371/16/F2530/10 Extract from Foreign Office Handbook No. 70 Historical section of the Foreign Office, published by the Stationery Office, 1920, p. 43.

107 PRO: FO371/16/F2530/10 Foreign Office to Sir Miles Lampson, Peking, 20 May 1933. Emphasis added.

108 Ibid.

109 PRO: FO371/16/F1356/10 Report from Ingram to Sir John Simon, 9 January 1933.

110 Pravda 13 October 1932. PRO:FO371/7/10 F7614.

111 Pravda 18 October 1932. PRO: FO371/7/10 F7614.

moment'.[112] The Foreign Office agreed. So did the Government of India.[113] Weir, on the other hand, was extremely disturbed. He emphasised that :

> If we accept Chinese contention that the present Chinese-Tibetan dispute is purely domestic issue of China, we accept Chinese diplomatic victory with far reaching consequences for the future. Our acquiescence in Chinese view would ipso facto debar us from professing assistance in any further dispute between the two countries. It is not difficult to visualise Chinese domination again in Tibet similar to that in existence prior to 1912. Frontier of India would be threatened and good results of our policy of last 20 years would be nullified.[114]

In view of the Political Officer's misgivings, Weir was instructed to stay on in Lhasa[115] until he was sure Chiang Kai-shek's orders[116] that there was to be no more fighting were carried out. Both the home government and the Government in India endorsed Ingram's conclusion that nothing was to be gained by making further formal representations to the Chinese Government. Ingram was, however, to make it clear that 'His Majesty's Government do not acquiesce in Chinese contention that the dispute is a purely domestic issue for China'.[117]

By this time the Dalai Lama obviously understood that British diplomatic influence on its own would not bring the Chinese to the negotiation table. In early November the Dalai Lama telegraphed directly to General Chiang Kai-shek.[118] He suggested that the best solution to the future conduct of Sino-Tibetan relations still lay in the Chinese adhesion to something very like the Simla Convention of 1914 to which the Chinese had agreed, except for the precise definition of the Sino-Tibetan border.[119] Chiang Kai-shek's reply on the 26 November was not a very pleasant one:

> keeping in mind the friendly and brotherly relations between Tibet and China every perplexity should be dealt with in a straightforward manner without entertaining any suspicions, and all matters should be settled between ourselves without the intervention of an outsider. Therefore,

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112 PRO: FO371/7/F744/10 Ingram to Foreign Office, 26 October 1932.

113 PRO: FO371/7/F7441/10 Foreign Office Minutes, 31 October 1932.

114 PRO: FO371/7/F7776/10 Telegram from POS to Government of India in Government of India to India Office, 3 November 1932. See also IOR: L/P&S/12/4170 Weir to Government of India, 1 November 1932.

115 PRO: FO371/7/F7854/10 Foreign Office to India Office, 10 November 1932.

116 See PRO: FO371/7/10 F7441 Ingram to Foreign Office, 26 October 1932.

117 PRO: FO371/7/10 F7854 Telegram to Ingram from Foreign Office, 9 November 1932.

118 According to Ingram the Dalai Lama would not correspond with any other Chinese official except General Chiang Kai-skek, whom alone he trusted.

119 PRO: FO371/16/10 F1356 Report from Ingram to Foreign Office, 9 January 1933.

> to agree to the request for the treaty, with the British Government as an intermediary Power, to be resumed and concluded would be absolutely impossible as it would be like agreeing to one's own body being dismembered.[120]

Weir paid his formal farewell visit to the 'seriously troubled' Dalai Lama two days later on 28 November. According to Weir, the Dalai Lama 'again suspects double dealing on the part of the Chinese and anticipates the resumption of fighting when Szechuan civil war is ended'.[121] Any agreement between China and Tibet without British mediation, the Dalai Lama believed, 'would certainly be broken by China'.[122] What the Tibetan government wanted was a peace conference with China, preferably with Weir acting as intermediary on behalf of the British.[123] Considering the tone of Chiang Kai-shek's telegram this was highly improbable. To secure long-term peace the only choice open the Dalai Lama was to agree to become a member of the Chinese Republic. Weir reported, 'to this he would not consent as China would then inevitably re-assert her former dominance and Tibet as a nation would disappear'.[124]

The Government of India had calculated that, despite the firm rebuff from the Chinese government, some benefit might be achieved if Weir stayed on in Lhasa until some encouraging developments had come from the Dalai Lama's offer of reconciliation with the Panchen Lama.[125] From Ingram's telegram sent on 16 November it was evident that there was no immediate prospect of this happening.[126] Ingram was fearful that the return of the pro-Chinese Panchen Lama to Tibet would increase Chinese influence there.[127] Weir believed Ingram's apprehensions were unfounded: 'There appears to be

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120 PRO: FO371/7/F8380/10 Telegram from Government of India to India Office, 29 November 1932 repeating POS Telegram, 27 November repeating Telegram from Chiang Kai-shek to Dalai Lama received 26 November 1932. See also IOR:, L/P&S/12/4170 Ingram to Sir John Simon, 9 January 1933.

121 PRO: FO371/7/F8380/10 Telegram from POS to Government of India, 27 November 1932.

122 PRO: FO371/16/F326/10 POS to Government of India, 29 November 1932.

123 PRO: FO371/16/10 F269 Letter from Tibetan National Assembly to Government of India, 6 December 1932. Also PRO: FO371/7/10 F8380 Telegram from POS to Government of India, 27 November 1932.

124 PRO:FO371/16/10 F326 POS to Government of India, 29 November 1932.

125 The Dalai Lama had been persuaded, with some difficulty, to release the Yabshi Kung and other supporters of the Panchen Lama from their imprisonment in Lhasa; and he also agreed to Weir's suggestion that he write a letter to the Panchen Lama, using conciliatory languge, which should be handed over to the Panchen Lama by the British Legation in Peking.

126 PRO: FO371/7/F8964/10 Telegram from Ingram to Foreign Office, 16 November 1932.

127 Ingram reported that: 'He has been so long in Chinese territory and has been subjected to Chinese influences and flattered by the Chinese Government to such

greater danger to Chinese Tibetan peace if he remains in China. There is also possibility of internal trouble in Tibet should he remain away'.[128] Weir concluded: 'Atmosphere is now more favourable to Tashi Lama's return than at any time since his flight. I consider that to miss present opportunity would be irrevocable political blunder'.[129] The Government of India agreed. Everything possible was to be done to encourage the Panchen Lama to return to Tibet. By the end of November it was clear that the fighting on the Sino-Tibetan border really was coming to an end with a cease-fire line more or less along the Yangtze, which posed no immediate threat to the Indian border. Weir's services were required elsewhere: he had been appointed Resident in Baroda.[130] He was accordingly instructed to leave Lhasa in the first week of December.[131]

It was now 'abundantly clear' to the Government in India that the Chinese government was not prepared to accept mediation in settlement of their dispute with Tibet. There was little that could be done. Whitehall was obviously not in a position to force them to agree and, unless they changed their attitude, there was no hope of arranging an early peace conference of the kind desired by the Dalai Lama.[132] Only two courses of action remained open. One was to wait and see what the Chinese did next; this left the tricky question of the supply of arms and ammunition to Tibet the main concern of both London and the Government of India. The feeling in the Foreign Office was that if the Chinese government admitted having difficulty in controlling the war-lords in Szechwan[133] then the Foreign Office would be fully justified in encouraging the Government of India to supply further arms to Tibet. A Foreign Office minute noted: ' I agree but I much doubt whether the Chinese will present us with this easy way out'.[134] The second course of action was to try to bluff the Chinese. The India Office observed that if the Chinese government were to propose a conference and the Tibetan government

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an extent that it seemed to me that it was more than a possibility that if he returned to Tibet he might become a tool in Chinese hands and facilitate the spread of Kuomintang influences in that country in a manner which might subsequently prove very embarrassing to the Government of India.'
PRO: FO371/16/F1356/10 Ingram to Foreign Office, 9 January 1933.

128 PRO: FO371/7/F8233/10 Telegram PZ7078 from Weir, 16 November 1932 in Government of India to India Office, 18 November 1932.

129 Ibid.

130 Interview with M. Jehu, op.cit. 4 August 1992.

131 IOR:L/P&S/12/4170 India Office to Foreign Office, 24 November 1932.

132 PRO: FO371/7/F8420/10 Telegram PZ7299 from Government of India to Secretary of State for India, undated.

133 Civil war had broken out in Szechuan, making it all the more difficult for the Chinese central government to secure obedience to its instructions, which, at the best of times, were liable to be disregarded if they did not suit local militarists.

134 PRO: FO371/7/10 F8420 Minute by Orde, 7 December 1932. Some further arms were in fact sent to Tibet on very favourable terms in 1933.

declined pending British participation, it might then, perhaps, be possible to suggest to the Chinese that, in order to secure Tibetan co-operation, the presence of a British officer as observer should be accepted.[135] With this in mind, Ingram was asked to ascertain whether steps had been taken towards securing a settlement of the frontier problem,[136] which the Chinese Ministry for Foreign Affairs had indicated would happen once fighting had stopped.[137]

Although Ingram 'concurred generally' with these views he was unwilling to 'commit' Sir Miles Lampson, to 'a course of which he might disapprove'. He proposed to take no action until Lampson returned to China at the end of January 1933. In the meantime he placed on record his own conclusions:

> we shall find the Chinese Government willing to meet us in a conciliatory spirit as long as we keep our representations on the plane of a friendly interest in the peace and order of a neighbouring country, but that we shall obtain no satisfaction whatever unless we re prepared to use very much stronger language than I conceive the present policy of His Majesty's Government would permit - by harping on the integrity and independence of Tibet - or by continually citing the Simla Convention, which . . . the Chinese have never really accepted and no National Government of China could now be induced to recognise. I feel, too, that we are chasing a will-o'-the-wisp in trying to induce the Chinese to accept our co-operation or even mediation in the settlement of the frontier dispute. The Chinese would, I believe, far sooner it were never settled than they would admit our claim to intervene. In this connection I would point out that the only two occasions on which we have intervened were in the Simla negotiations of 1913-14 and in Mr. (now Sir Eric) Teichman's negotiations of 1917-18. In both cases the negotiations were accepted with the greatest reluctance by the Central Government of the day, and in neither case was the frontier settlement ratified, in spite of considerable pressure by His majesty's Government. Since then the Government of China has fallen into the hands of the Kuomintang, nationalist feeling has intensified and public opinion is a factor which the Government , as well as the foreigner, has to take into account to an increasing extent.[138]

Soon after his return to China and resumption of his duties as Minister, Sir Miles Lampson, in what can only be described as one of the most controversial communiques

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135 PRO: FO371/16/10 F1356 Ingram to Foreign Office, 9 January 1933.

136 PRO: FO371/7/10 F8420 Foreign Office to India Office, 20 December 1932.

137 Dr. Lo Wen-kan had indicated to Ingram that the Chinese government would first get all the interested parties together to talk things over, and would, as soon as possible, send one of their most influential members to the frontier to try and settle the matter once and for all. PRO: F0371/16/F1356/10 Report from Ingram to Sir John Simon, 9 January 1933.

138 PRO: FO371/16/F1356/10 Ingram to Sir John Simon, 9 January. See also IOR: L/P&S/12/4170.

of 1933, advocated what amounted to a radical change of policy. He informed the Foreign Office that he had not resumed discussions with the Nanking government: 'I am convinced it would be most unwise to provoke any sort of controversy here on the subject at present time'.[139] He was definitely opposed to giving the Dalai Lama any encouragement to think the Chinese government would ever agree to British mediation: 'I submit we should . . . encourage, not discourage, the Dalai Lama to come to terms with China by direct negotiation'.[140] According to Lampson, the Chinese traditional attitude towards Tibet was 'that of a preoccupied parent towards a naughty child which will one day return to the fold whether as a result of the parent's chastisement or of its own accord'.[141]

It was Lampson's view that, providing the British did not occupy Tibet as the Japanese had Manchuria, there was no reason why the Chinese government should really care what happened there or on the frontier so long as rights claimed by China, albeit theoretical, were not called into question. Considering the 'geographical propinquity of India to Lhasa', Lampson believed the best solution lay in maintaining British influence by promotion of free economic relations 'without official intercourse'.[142] Lampson concluded that the policy which had been followed by His Majesty's government for the past twenty years was obsolete: 'I cannot see that it is going to lead us anywhere except into eventual loss of face with China'.[143]

The Foreign Office was now faced with two conflicting lines of policy. On the one side, Lampson advocated that the Tibetans be encouraged to come to terms with the Chinese by direct negotiations because Britain had 'no means of perpetuating Tibet's complete reliance' on the British,[144] and, on the other, the Government of India wanted the Lhasa government to withstand any pressure from the Nanking government to negotiate directly. Weir feared that to fail to do the latter would prejudice the very strong position which Britain had acquired in Tibet as a result of his mission to Lhasa. The new Political Officer in Sikkim, Frederick Williamson, who had taken over from Weir, concluded that if the Chinese succeeded in forcing the Dalai Lama to negotiate direct then

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139 PRO: FO371/16/F865/10 Lampson, Nanking, to Foreign Office, 7 February 1933. See also IOR: L/P&S/12/4170, PZ 803 Telegram from Lampson, Nanking via Peking to Foreign Office, 6 February 1933.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

142 IOR: L/P&S/12/4170 PZ 803 Telegram from Lampson to Foreign Office, 6 February 1933.

143 PRO: FO371/16/F865/10 Lampson to Foreign Office, 7 February 1933.

144 PRO: FO371/16/F944/10 Minute by Bowker, 13 February 1933.

the policy 'as regards Tibet and China, which we have maintained since 1912 would be entirely stultified and our position in Tibet will be reduced to nothing'.[145]

The Government in India was 'somewhat perturbed', indeed shocked, at the suggestion that London's policy should undergo a radical change. Lampson's recommendation that British influence in Tibet be 'without official intercourse' became the key issue. The differing views of Lampson and those in India aptly demonstrate the broad divergence of view that had characterised the Tibetan question. It appeared to the officials in India that the British Legation in Peking had finally forsaken them. They had never considered that British diplomats in China were particularly amicable towards the Indian approach to Tibet, but they had usually in the past been prepared to back the Government of India. Now Lampson was in effect saying that further support would be a waste of time which he could not endorse. This was doubly caustic, coming at the very moment when Chiang Kai-shek was proposing to send his own representative to Tibet to endeavour to settle the shape of Sino-Tibetan relations without the presence of any British representative.[146]

It was going to be a difficult job for the Foreign Office to harmonise the two very different policies. In fact, the debate only emphasised what had been a difficulty since 1914: British policy with regard to Tibet had always been marked by a division of opinion. The Government in India had continually claimed that Tibet should be free from the influence of other foreign powers including China. Conversely, the prominent view, in theory at least, in the Foreign Office and the Peking British Legation had always been that Chinese influence in Tibet was legitimate but needed to be defined. India Office correspondence vacillated between considering China a 'foreign power' and 'excluding' China from that term. On 14 February 1933 the India Office maintained:

> our objective is to secure a friendly Tibetan Government which is strong enough to exclude external influences, *including Chinese*, which are likely to cause trouble on the Indian Frontier. For the last 20 years we have been trying, with the approval of His Majesty's Government, to reach this objective by supporting the Dalai Lama in his claim of integrity of outer Tibet and to freedom from Chinese interference in that area.[147]

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145 PRO: FO371/16/ F944/10 Williamson POS to Government of India, 10 January 1933.

146 PRO: FO371/16/F944/10 Telegram from Dalai Lama to Williamson, 8 January 1933.

147 PRO: FO371/16/F1064/10 Telegram PZ900 from India Office to Foreign Office, February 1933. Emphasis added.

This view prevailed among most officers directly responsible for the conduct of relations with the Tibetans. However, what could be called 'pro-Chinese' and 'pro-Tibetan' factions had also developed in the British diplomatic service. During 1921 and 1922, for example, there developed considerable tension between the allegedly 'anti-Tibetan' Louis King, British Consular Officer at Tachienlu, and Sir Charles Bell.[148] In an over-indulgent lengthy report, written in April 1921, King accused the Tibetans, among other things, of 'misrule', of being 'brutal' and 'a violent race'.[149] King's despatch appeared to Bell 'to accord so ill with the facts of the case' that he felt 'bound to comment on it', as King's 'inference might be used to the detriment of the Tibetans and ourselves'. In what was essentially an attempt to vindicate Britain's Tibetan policy, Bell 'in justice to the Tibetan government' undertook to 'place the true position' before the Government of India.[150] As mentioned in a previous chapter, Jordan, too acquired a reputation for his seemingly strong anti-Tibetan attitudes. Teichman, on the other hand, was not only sympathetic to the Tibetan position, but campaigned for a 'forward' approach in Tibet.

Within the sphere of Anglo-Tibetan affairs, there had also been a crucial adjustment in diplomatic roles. After the failure of the 1919-1921 diplomatic bluff the role of the British Legation in Peking, which had been at the forefront of Anglo-Tibetan policy decisions during the Jordan years, had dissolved into little more than a provider of intelligence on Chinese attitudes. In diplomacy, affairs of state came to be conducted increasingly by politicians meeting in grand conferences or at the League of Nations rather than by experts communicating with precision through written notes. Politicians replaced diplomats at these conferences. Technological developments, the telephone and the radio, tended to reduce the role of professional ambassadors to that of messengers.

The decay of Peking as a diplomatic centre coincided with the decline and fall of the Peking government of the Republic. In the years after the war the government, challenged on all sides by rival war-lords, became a mockery and a handicap for the foreign diplomats. The Kuomintang, finally triumphant in 1928, proclaimed Nanking to be the capital of Nationalist China. Peking, renamed Peiping, became reduced to the rank of a provincial city. The Diplomatic Body, formerly all-powerful in the affairs of China, was left stranded in the capital, embracing the shadow of a government no longer there.[151] Over this period direct management of relations between British India and Tibet

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148 See IOR: L/P&S/11/204 P5360 'Complaints against King'.

149 IOR: L/P&S/10/833 P3230 Report from King to Government of India on 'Tibetan misrule of the regions overrun in virtue of those hostilities [1917-18]', 28 April 1921.

150 IOR: L/P&S/10/833 P4402 Bell to Government of India, 19 August 1921.

151 E. Teichman, Affairs of China, op.cit., pp. 284-5.

became the monopoly of officials of the Government of India with the Political Officer, Sikkim, serving either directly or through subordinates as the de facto British envoy to the Government of Tibet. Consequently, what appeared now to be a move by Lampson to direct British policy on Tibet was, quite understandably, not greeted with elation by those in India.

It is clear that both the Government of India and the India Office decided that the best way to modify what seemed to be an extreme policy being put forward by the Legation was to compromise. This meant giving up their original proposal, which was tantamount to encouraging the Dalai Lama not to negotiate directly. Instead, they insisted that there were two distinct questions which were in danger of getting mixed up: the question, which was immediately at issue, of the stabilisation of the eastern frontier of Tibet and the larger, but more nebulous, question of Chinese recognition of Tibetan autonomy, and of their recognition of the natural and legitimate British interest in Tibet.[152]

They asserted that Britain's current policy, announced to the Chinese government in 1921, 'to deal with Tibet as an autonomous state and to give her any reasonable assistance required for her development and protection' would not be affected or diminished by the question whether or not the Dalai Lama should enter into direct negotiation with the Chinese government on the isolated matter of the Sino-Tibetan frontier.[153] The solution, they argued, was to inform the Dalai Lama that Britain could not press mediation and that if he decided to negotiate direct he would be assured of diplomatic support. The onus was on the Dalai Lama. This solution suited Lampson nicely. He agreed that it was a 'matter of adapting our tactics to the situation and psychology of the moment'. This 'excellent maxim' he maintained would be applicable to 'our dealings generally with the Chinese and their affairs'.[154]

From open antagonism during the first half of the year, a restored spirit of cooperation between Britain's triumvirate of decision makers appeared to have emerged. In what might well be interpreted as a face-saver, Lampson now claimed that there never had been any suggestion in his communique of 7 February that 'we should discontinue our official relations with the Tibetan government'. He could not see how the Secretary of State for India could have 'placed such an interpretation' on it.[155] He had simply advocated the 'promotion of free economic relations and official intercourse' across the

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152 PRO: FO371/16/F5548/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 18 August 1933.

153 PRO: FO371/16/F2205/10 Letter from India Office to Foreign Office cited in letter from Foreign Office to Lampson, 15 April 1933.

154 PRO: FO371/16/F5343/10 Lampson to Wellesley in Foreign Office, 2 June 1933.

155 Ibid.

Indo-Tibetan border as the best means to maintain British influence in Lhasa. The words 'without this', in the original text, had now been replaced by 'and', causing the whole meaning of the original passage to change.[156] It seems highly unlikely that this was 'an error in the transmission of his telegram';[157] after all, in the original telegram Lampson had clearly stated his objection to the Tibetan policy :

> I know the arguments in favour of policy we have pursued for the past twenty years but frankly I cannot see that it is going to lead us anywhere except into eventual loss of face with China when latter is in a position to impose her will on Thibet'.[158]

It seems more likely that Lampson had, on reflection, decided that it would be unwise to take such conclusive action by discontinuing official relations with the Tibetan government. By June Lampson had come to the conclusion that despite the exigency of Britain's new China policy, they could still continue to operate within the bounds of their ambiguous Tibetan policy as long as the controversial and delicate question of the status of Tibet was avoided. The important point was to appear to support the Tibetans without being held responsible for the consequences or, indeed, being placed in a position whereby the British would be promising more than they were prepared to carry through. Lampson argued that if Britain allowed 'things to take their natural course', which meant letting the Dalai Lama come to terms direct with China, and at the same time took 'full advantage of the geographical position' of Tibet proper, then 'we should, I believe, stand a better chance of maintaining at the same time our influence in Tibet and our friendly relations with China'. Lampson's final statement on the matter, that 'we do not want to purchase the one at the price of the other', seems to embody his attitude.[159] A Foreign Office minute supported this stance:

> I feel sure that Sir. M. Lampson recommends the right course. We cannot force mediation on the Chinese without envisaging measures which neither we nor the Government of India would be prepared to take . . . to encourage the Tibetans now to come to terms with China by direct negotiation would not mean that we are leaving the Tibetans in the lurch. We have not, since the beginning of the present trouble, given

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156 PRO: FO371/16/F5343/10 Lampson to Wellesley, 2 June 1933.

157 PRO: FO371/16/F5548/10 India Office to Foreign Office, 18 August 1933. Mehra in his book The McMahon Line and After, op.cit., refers to it as an 'unfortunate textual error' p. 408. A. Lamb, Tibet, China and India , op.cit., does not make any reference to this 'error'.

158 PRO: FO371/16/F865/10 Lampson, Nanking to Foreign Office, 7 February 1933. See also IOR: L/P&S/12/4170, Telegram PZ 803.

159 IOR:L/P&S/12/4170 PZ803 Lampson to Wellesley, 2 June 1933.

> them to understand that we were prepared to force mediation on the Chinese.[160]

Lampson, while agreeing with the India Office's course of action, was nonetheless not prepared to shift his ground. While asserting he was not 'advocating a policy of scuttle in Tibet'[161] it was clear that the British envoy was intent on forcing the policy makers, both in Delhi and London, to face the facts. He was forthright in his view that Britain's Tibetan policy was futile:

> What I do deprecate is our trusting to artificial barriers of our own creation for keeping the Chinese and Tibetans apart. These barriers will break down one day - the traditional bonds between China and Tibet are too strong and too longstanding - and if at that time we are still found to be trying to prop the barriers up, the results will be a loss of face in Lhasa and a hostile China in Tibet . . . It is as much in the interests of the Tibetans and the maintenance of our position in Tibet as in those of our good relations with China, that I urged the futility of encouraging the Dalai Lama to think that we can coerce the Chinese Government into accepting our mediation. It is, I presume, a cardinal point in our Tibetan policy that we are not prepared to intervene in that country by force; and, as we know by abundant experience, there are limits to what can be accomplished by diplomatic pressure in China.[162]

The Foreign Office also found the India Office's solution appealing. The Dalai Lama was subsequently informed in March 1933 that:

> Owing to the political situation in China, time is not opportune for pressing Chinese Government to enter into general negotiations for confirming the Simla Convention of 1914. Chinese government is not at present prepared to agree to mediation of His Majesty's Government on frontier question . . . if Your Holiness should decide to agree to direct negotiations, His Majesty's Government would be ready with friendly advice at all times during and after such negotiations whenever you required it. If any proposal which was acceptable to the Tibetan government should emerge from the discussions, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to offer diplomatic assistance to induce the Chinese Government to conclude an agreement.[163]

While, on the surface, Lampson's agreement with the India Office's compromise seems to indicate something of a reverse manoeuvre, it was in fact an astute tactic. He had placated officials in India, but by persisting with his forthright assessment of the situation he forced the Government of India to re-appraise its relationship with Tibet.

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160 PRO: FO371/16/F865/10 Foreign Office Minute by Bowker, 9 February 1933.
161 IOR:L/P&S/12/4170 PZ803 Lampson to Wellesley, 2 June 1933.
162 Ibid.
163 PRO: FO371/16/10 F1973 Government of India to India Office, 18 March 1933.

There is little doubt that Lampson's 7 February telegram and 2 June memorandum occasioned a firm policy adjustment. The India Office, on 18 August 1933, now stated that one of the ultimate objectives of their policy was:

> the maintenance of the integrity and autonomy of Tibet and of an effective Tibetan Government able to maintain peace and order near our frontier and free from the influence of Russia or of any foreign power *other than China*'.[164]

The re-establishment of full sovereignty by the Chinese, however, was still viewed as as an event in which the Government of India 'could not remain disinterested'.[165]

Fourteen years had passed since the original 1919 attempt to use British diplomatic pressure to force the Chinese to negotiate over exactly the same Sino-Tibetan issue. It had come full circle, but the political circumstances were now very different. British government officials in China were well aware of their diplomatic weakness: they were dealing with a 'new' China which was just as determined as the 'old' China to bring Tibet back into the fold. Britain's foreign policy, with peace, security and trade as its nucleus coupled with Britain's wider commercial interests in China, made it necessary to subordinate Indian policy towards Tibet to the wider British committment to China. The Tibetan government was left with no alternative but to 'enter into direct negotiations' with the Chinese.[166] This was indeed a significant anomaly, since one of the main aims of the 1921 Bell mission had been to deter the Tibetan government from coming to a separate agreement with the Chinese. In those days, the British were adamant that the Tibetans avoid basing their policy on a path detrimental to British interests. British interests now followed another path. By the time Lampson finished his term as Minister to China in 1933 he was able to review his work there with satisfaction:

> We can, I think, justly claim that Sino-British relations are on an eminently satisfactory footing and indeed that they are, for the moment, as good as they have ever been.[167]

The main threat to the British position in China no longer came from Chinese nationalism but rather from Japanese imperialism and, ultimately, Chinese Communism. Britain 'played' at being Tibet's protector. By the early 1930s it was of no concern to Britain that Tibet was unable to defend herself. It is important to recognise that British

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164 PRO: FO371/16/10 F5548 India Office to Foreign Office, 18 August 1933. Emphasis added.

165 IOR: L/P&S/12/4177 Minute by Walton, 12 February 1934.

166 PRO:FO 371/16/F2582/10 Dalai Lama to POS, 27 March 1933.

167 E. Fung, op.cit., p. 245.

officials, both in China and London, did not believe that China would ever re-establish and strengthen itself. After all, the policy of the Great Powers had always been to stablize China but not to strengthen her. Few forsaw that China had the capacity to unite and become a great power in such a short time. The lifting of the arms embargo in 1929 went some way to allowing China to do so.

On 17 December 1933 the Dalai Lama died.[168] The Nanking government saw in the 13th Dalai Lama's death the opportunity to send a 'condolence' mission to Lhasa.[169] When the mission returned to China two 'liaison' officers with a wireless transmitter remained at Lhasa. In a counter-move, a rival British Mission with its own wireless transmitter was quickly established at Lhasa by Hugh Richardson.[170] The Chinese had regained a foothold in Tibet and Tibet's struggle to maintain its position among the powers was over.[171]

Although there was still much dissension within the Tibetan government, the majority did not now see British India as the hope for the future. Neither did Charles Bell. While on tour in Tibet,[172] only six months after the death of the Dalai Lama, Bell wrote in his diary: 'Tibet should now turn to China, and admit a Chinese representative in Tibet, but not admit Chinese soldiers'.[173] Bell's re-entry, at this point, into Tibetan affairs has received little scholarly attention.[174] He was, in fact, advising the Tibetan government.[175] In November 1934 Bell wrote, 'in their last three or four letters, the Tibetan government always asked me to advise them on their negotiations with China,

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168 British Library 01057.1.3, Bell's Diary Vol. 15, p.17. At this time Bell was in Kalimpong. He had intended to visit Lhasa to see his 'old friend' the Dalai Lama.

169 On 12 January 1934 a senior Chinese General, Huang Mu-sung, who had been Chiang Kai-shek's Vice Chief of the General Staff, was appointed to head the mission.

170 A. C. McKay, Transcript of Interview with H. Richardson, London, 29 November 1990.

171 See L. Wangchuk, 'Political situation after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama', Materials on the Culture and History of Tibet (Lhasa, 1985), Vol. 3, pp. 1-15.

172 British Library 010057.13, C. Bell, Diary Vol 18 'Tour in Tibet' 12 June to 12 November 1934.

173 British Library 010057.13 C. Bell, Diary Vol. 17, 1 June 1934 to 31 August 1934, entry, 23 June 1934, p. 8.

174 A. Lamb, Tibet, China & India, op.cit. for instance, only refers to his being refused permission by the Tibetan government to go on to Lhasa. According to Lamb 'If ever there had been a symbol of the British connection, it was Charles Bell; and the implications of his exclusion from the Tibetan capital were clear for all to note and reflect upon when, a month later, an impressive Chinese mission arrived in Lhasa. The Chinese could go in Tibet where the British could not.' p. 232.

175 British Library 010055 i 37, C. Bell, Tibet Note Book Vol. 1, 1934, 20 February 1934 to 16 January 1935, 'Tibetan Politics' p. 21.

and on their general relations with China . . . I always sent the advice asked for; and in their dealings with the Chinese Mission, they appear to have been guided by it'.[176] The advice Bell was offering was clear-eyed: 'now that Great Britain is giving India self-government, this will mean the weakening of British control over India, and therefore the British will have less power through their army and otherwise, of helping Tibet'[177]. Bell concluded, 'Nor will India desire them to do so'.[178] His daughter said of Bell: 'His life was Tibet. He loved Tibet'.[179] It was undoubtedly out of love but surely with some regret that Bell ultimately accepted that 'Tibet is not strong enough to stand alone. She must have a helper, and in present conditions China is the best helper for her'.[180]

Attempts were made during the late 1930s and 1940s by Frederick Williamson, Hugh Richardson, Sir Basil Gould and especially Olaf Caroe, in his position as Deputy Foreign Secretary, to revive interest in and salvage something from Britain's Tibetan policy for the strategic benefit of the Government of India. While acknowledging that the wider British approach to China made it essential to restrain Indian policy towards Tibet, Caroe argued that because of the dangers of Soviet and Chinese Communism there should be a sustained British policy towards Tibet.

The 1935 India Act,[181] and the Second World War only helped to solidify the Foreign Office's 'leave-well-alone' policy. Chang Kai Shek realized that the Atlantic Charter[182] would open the door for Tibetan independence, so he refashioned the debate to the line that the Tibetans and Chinese were of the same race. The decision made in the 1920s to 'leave well alone' was formalized with the Transfer of Power in 1947. By now

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176 British Library 010057.1.3, C. Bell, Diary Vol. 19, entry, 4 November 1934, p. 9.

177 British Library 010057. 1.3, C. Bell, Diary Vol. 17, 1 June 1934 to 31 August 1934, entry, 23 June 1934, p. 8.

178 British Library 010055 i 37, C. Bell, Tibet Note Book Vol. 1 1934, 29 February 1934 to 16 January 1935, p. 21.

179 Interview with R. Collett, 16 August 1992.

180 British Library 010055 i 37, C. Bell, Tibet Note Book Vol. 1 1934, 29 February 1934 to 16 January 1935, p. 21.

181 Based on the decisions of the London Round Table Conferences of 1931-2 and the 'White Paper' of 1933. The Act proposed the transformation of the Indian Empire into a federation which would include native states as well as the provinces of British India. The Act gave greater authority to the provincial assemblies, allowing eleven of them fully responsible government within their areas.

182 Joint declaration issued on 14 August 1941, by British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A section of the manifesto called for every people's right to choose their own form of government and wanted sovereign rights and self-government restored to those forcibly deprived of them. It also desired no territorial changes without the free assent of the peoples concerned.

the Government of India, despite the arguments of their Tibetan specialists, had also come to terms with the view in London:

> To prejudice her relations with so important a Power as China by aggressive support of unqualified Tibetan independence . . . is a policy with few attractions. It follows that while the Government of India are glad to recognise and wish to see Tibetan autonomy maintained, they are not prepared to do more than encourage this in a friendly manner and are certainly not disposed to take any initiative which might bring India into conflict with China on this issue.[183]

Many Tibetophiles, including Charles Bell, had hoped that when the British withdrew from India they would retain some form of representation in Lhasa. Bell had written in 1930:

> India is advancing towards the goal of self-government. Should this involve the withdrawal of British troops from India, the latter country would be unable to help Tibet; it would not be strong enough. The Tibetan Government would then, of necessity, fall under the influence of either China or Russia, and turn away from India. . . on this hypothesis the whole Indian frontier from Baluchistan to Burma stands or falls together; all would be changed. We must assume that British military power will be maintained, and, as a natural corollary, a British control in foreign relations.[184]

This was not to be the case. In June 1947, with the transfer of power in India all the affairs which constituted the British relationship with Tibet were assumed by India.[185] It is perhaps appropriate that Sir Charles Bell should have the final word:

> It is necessary that those who are responsible, for British-Indian policy should visualize not only the barren highlands of Tibet, but also the strong and sleepless forces that are working behind them.[186]

With increasing concern, the Tibetans observed the intensifying disintegration of Nationalist China and the growing influence of the Communists. The Tibetans lost their independence when Chinese Communist forces entered Tibet in 1950. The reclaiming of Tibet was for the Chinese Communists a symbol of their new nationalism and new-found

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183 L. A. C. Fry, Deputy Indian Foreign Secretary- later translated to the U.K High Commission in New Delhi, cited in Lamb, Tibet, China & India, op.cit., p. 508.

184 Sir Charles Bell, 'The North-Eastern Frontier of India', Central Asian Society Journal, op.cit., p. 222.

185 Hugh Richardson was retained at Lhasa as India's representative. Transcript of Interview with H. Richardson by A. C. McKay, London, 29 November 1990, op.cit.

186 Sir Charles Bell, 'The North-Eastern Frontier of India', Central Asian Society Journal, op.cit., p. 225.

military power. The collapse of Britain as one of the influential Powers in China, which I have contended began in the early years after 1918, was complete. The so-called 'peaceful liberation of Tibet' by the Chinese Communists was the conclusion of a struggle which had been continuing for the greater part of the present century. It was a struggle the Tibetans could have won had the British government been prepared to honour its role as 'protector of Tibet' during the 1920s and 1930s.

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