# *Colonel Younghusband's mission to Lhasa 1904: parliament, the British government and the 'forward policy' in Tibet*

A.M.A. Hull

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# COLONEL YOUNGHUSBAND'S MISSION TO LHASA 1904

## Parliament, the British Government and the 'Forward Policy' in Tibet

This thesis takes as its focus the Mission led by Colonel Younghusband in 1904 and despatched to Lhasa by the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon; and places it in the context of British suspicion of Russia's ambitions in Central Asia at the close of the nineteenth and the opening of the twentieth century. It lays particular emphasis on British public and parliamentary perceptions of Russia and her intentions towards Britain's interests on the frontiers of India, and traces the devious tactics employed by the Unionist Government of A J Balfour in avoiding Parliamentary scrutiny of its Tibetan policy as long as possible. It demonstrates the embarrassment of Government spokesmen in both Houses, when finally debate had to be conceded, and argues that this was in itself a reflection of the Government's own deep anxieties about Curzon's 'forward policy' in Tibet. The role of a retired Indian civil servant, Sir Henry Cotton, in stimulating opposition and co-ordinating the agitation both in the press and in Parliament is explored, and finally the extent to which Cotton influenced the reversal of British policy in Tibet by the incoming Liberal Government of December 1905 is indicated. The main primary sources for the thesis are Hansard and selected organs of the newspaper and periodical press.

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—AUGUST 17, 1904.


# BUSINESS FIRST!

BRITISH LION (*to* GRAND LLAMA). "YES, THAT'S ALL RIGHT, MY FRIEND. YOU MAY GO AWAY FOR THREE *HUNDRED* YEARS, IF YOU LIKE. *BUT THIS HAS GOT TO BE SIGNED FIRST!*"

Mr Punch's view of the British Lion's determination to make the Grand Llama comply with his wishes. ('Grand Lama' in caption, but reference of course to the Grand Lama of Tibet.)

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## Parliament, the British Government and the 'Forward Policy' in Tibet

by

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A M A Hull

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# INTRODUCTION

> The Russian Convention is in my view deplorable. It gives up all we have been fighting for for years ... Ah me! It makes one despair of public life and the efforts of a century sacrificed and nothing or next to nothing in return.

So exclaimed a dismayed Lord Curzon of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention. (1) To the former Viceroy, Britain's rapprochement with Russia was little short of a national disaster. From Persia to Tibet, Britain and Russia had endeavoured to square their differences, apparently bringing the Great Game to an abrupt halt. Yet Britain had good reasons to court Russian amity; the Boer war had seriously exposed the weakness of Britain's international position - Balfour confessed during the War that Britain was 'for all practical purposes at the present moment only a third rate power' (2) - and Russia remained inveterately hostile to British policy everywhere in Asia. Given a British perception of her own international vulnerability, she could either attempt to strengthen her position against Russia whenever possible, or else adopt a more conciliatory approach. The former course offered the prospect of further sterile confrontation; the latter of a new security for the British Empire, above all in India.

Anglo-Russian tensions had been the dominant international rivalry in Central Asia throughout the 19th century. Central Asia represented British India's first defence or buffer against perceived Russian machinations. If the Great Game had become a barometer of the level of Anglo-Russian mistrust, Russia's seemingly inexorable southern advance into Central Asia had done little to reassure British anxieties about Russia's intent towards India. Yet the 1904 British Invasion of Tibet was to be something of a watershed in Anglo-Russian

relations; it showed fears of Russia in England were diminishing, if only because Mitteleuropa was beginning to offer more alarming progress than the Bear's shadow. A consideration of the Tibetan intervention in the perspective of Anglo-Russian relations explains both why the British felt the need to invade Tibet and, more importantly, why the Younghusband Mission was to be the last major British thrust in the Great Game.

By 1903 there had been strong rumours of Russian subterfuge in Tibet, and the Viceroy, Curzon, had become anxious that Russia was stealthily endeavouring to establish a Tibetan protectorate. Curzon, an indefatigable Russophobe, was very conscious of continued Russian expansion in Asia, and had no wish to have a second Manchuria on India's doorstep. Curzon realised that Russia ensconsed in Tibet would prove most hazardous to the prestige and security of the British Raj. To establish a British predominance in Tibet (which was still technically a Chinese vassal) and expunge any extant Russian influence, Curzon strongly advocated a British Mission.

But in Britain, the domestic response to British weakness in Tibet and circumstantial reports of Russian penetration showed a clear preference for avoiding any entanglement with Tibet; jeopardising the prospect of improved Anglo-Russian relations for some putative gain in the remoteness of Central Asia hardly seemed a pragmatic course. Although Curzon succeeded in inducing the Government to agree to a half-hearted authorisation of a Mission to Tibet, ostensibly to deal with Tibetan bad neighbourliness, London remained anxious to avoid needless provocation of Russia. Moreover the Younghusband Mission, engendered by Curzon's impulse of traditional suspicion towards Russia, was yet to be countered by the growing impulse to seek Russian friendship. Evidently both impulses were a response to perceived British weaknesses in the face of Russia; in either case the

Younghusband Mission can hardly be seen as evidence of an overtly aggressive Imperialism. British Imperialism was acting in response to Russia; Curzon was acting in response to alleged Russian penetration of Tibet in inspiring the Younghusband Mission, whilst the British Government remained so prepared to consider Russian sensibilities it repudiated much of Younghusband's Lhasa Convention.

If the Younghusband Mission should be seen in the light of Anglo-Russian relations, in Parliamentary terms it can only be seen as an unpopular and diplomatically embarrassing enterprise. The Government was to do its utmost to minimise debate on Tibet in Parliament. Government respect for Parliamentary etiquette all too often became expendable, as the Balfour Government determinedly endeavoured to prevent discussion on the fraught Central Asian issue.

An appraisal of British perceptions of Russia explains much as to how a keen sense of British insecurity in the Anglo-Russian relationship, both before and after the Boer War, led to an ambiguous British Tibetan policy. The episode of the Tibetan Invasion arguably reveals more about Britain's perplexed attitude towards Russia, than to Tibet.

It is the purpose of this thesis to attempt to elucidate these issues. To this end, the thesis will particularly draw upon the debates of the Houses of Parliament as printed in Hansard. It will also draw upon major journals of record and opinion of the day, notably The Times, but also the Westminster Gazette and Manchester Guardian. Moreover the thesis will make reference to other printed primary sources and contemporary literature of the period, as well as the relevant secondary literature on the subject. It is to be hoped that the thesis will shed some light on both the Russian and the domestic dimensions of Great Britain's activities on the Roof of the World in 1904.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Britain and the Struggle for Central Asia 1885 - 1903

If Russian influence invariably presented a threat to British interests, as Curzon believed, then how far was this fear prevalent in England, or justified? If the threat of Russia could largely be neutralised through friendship, would Britain's Imperial position be appreciably more secure? A brief survey of recent Russian attitudes towards England, and vice versa, is vital in establishing the necessity for an intervention against Russian influence in Tibet.

Tsar Nicholas II wrote a particularly revealing letter to his sister Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrova on October 21st 1899:

> You know I am not conceited, but I do like knowing that it rests solely with me, in the last resort, to change the course of the war in South Africa. The means are very simple - to telegraph an order for the whole Turkestan army to mobilise and to march to the frontier.

Nicholas well realised that Central Asia was England's Achilles Heel; he noted that 'even the most powerful navy in the world could not prevent us from settling our account with England in this spot, most vulnerable for her'. Fortunately for a Britain floundering in the Boer war however the time 'was not yet ripe for this. We are not sufficiently well prepared for serious action mainly because Turkestan is not as yet connected by continuous railway with the hinterland of Russia'. Finally, the Tsar observed that he had 'been carried away somewhat, but you will understand that, occasionally, the most cherished dream comes to the fore'. (1) If a major Russian blow against the British Raj was a 'most cherished dream' of the Tsar, in spite of logistical difficulties, Russia was well able to perturb the British. As the Russian Foreign Ministry astutely observed to its newly appointed Consul in Bombay in 1900:

> The fundamental meaning of India to us is that she represents Great Britain's most vulnerable point ... on which one touch may

> perhaps easily induce Her Majesty's government to alter its hostile policy towards us and to show the desired compliance on those questions where ... our interests may coincide. (2)

Russian conduct in the Boer War was hardly reassuring to the British. On 27th June 1900, the British Ambassador in St Petersburg forwarded to London a document, purportedly secret instructions to General Dukhowski, Governor of Turkestan, for use 'in the event of Complications in Afghanistan':

> Instructions are to wait until further Orders. In case of the course of events developing with such rapidity as to render imperative an earlier invasion of Afghanistan the whole army of the Turkestan military district is to, on receipt of telegraphic orders, place itself on the alert ... All the military supplies in provisions and ammunition for each division of the Military Districts must be forwarded to the Frontier ready for any eventuality at least at the end of June 1900 and be stored there. (3)

There seems little reason to doubt the authenticity of these instructions. A letter from the British Consul in Batum of 13th February 1900 to Lansdowne underlined that Russia was certainly preparing for an anti-British move while Britain fought in South Africa:

> All the important bakers in Tiflis are now engaged in preparing large quantities of biscuits for the Russian Military authorities, for troops which are despatched to Central Asia. (4)

Logistical preparations, such as an adequate bread supply for Russia's Central Asian forces, spoke for themselves.

If Russia viewed Afghanistan as a stage on which Britain could be humiliated, then did her ambition extend to conquering India? Salisbury believed that it would be 'enough for her if she can shatter our Government and reduce India to anarchy'. Certainly if Russia invaded Afghanistan, British prestige in India would be jeopardised; if the Raj appeared to be flagging Salisbury believed a 'spasm of sedition' would start 'from one end of India to the other'. (5) The Russian Minister for War, Kuroptakin, had spoken of 'la grande guerre des Indes'; in the event of such a war, Kuroptakin stated he would

place 100,000 men on the Afghan border, later rising to 350,000. (6) The prospect of a Russian invasion towards India's North West frontier and another Indian Mutiny rendered the British extremely anxious about any Russian activities on India's peripheries. Moreover, Kuroptakin made no secret of the Tsar's wish to add Persia, Manchuria and Korea to his domains, or of the Tsar's dream of bringing Tibet under Russian rule. Unless Britain was vigilant throughout Asia, Russia's expansionist urges would altogether eclipse British prestige. Britain had a fine line to walk; as long as Britain remained Russia's chief rival, opposition to Russia would be at the cost of India and Afghanistans' lying dangerously exposed to Russian ill will.

How avoidable an Anglo-Russian Confrontation in Central Asia might be remained a moot point for the British. Even Gladstone in 1885 had been forced to throw down the gauntlet after Russia's unworthy behaviour in Penjdeh. Lieutenant Colonel Waters, Military Attache at the British Embassy in St Petersburg, produced a most revealing report in October 1896; entitled 'a Survey of Russian Aims and Power', it gives an insight into how Britain perceived Russia's aspirations and motivations.

> On three points practical unanimity has undoubtedly existed for several years past (in Russian policy)
> (i) an unrestricted right of way for Russian warships from the Black Sea to Mediterranean
> (ii) efficient protection of the Western frontier
> (iii) extension of Russian influence in Asia.

As to how Russia might achieve her ends Waters observed that 'Russian statesmen prefer to let sleeping dogs lie, to do one thing at a time when possible, and under the most favourable conditions'. If the British position in Central Asia was to be challenged, Russia would make sure it was at a time that Britain could receive her undivided attention, and when Russia had the physical resources to impose her will.


# TILL FURTHER NOTICE.

Mr Punch felt that the Russian Bear's quarrel with Japan 'unavoidably' diverted him from 'performing' his 'programme' for India.

> Russia would prefer peacefully to attain her ends, but her military and naval preparations for years past, especially since the late struggle (Sino-Japanese War) amply demonstrate that she will not be obliged to rely on moral force in Asia ... It has been admitted to me by the Minister of War, among others, that on the death of the present Ameer of Afhanistan, the question of a coterminous frontier would probably come to a head.

That Russia failed to challenge Britain on this point when Abdur Rahman died in October 1901, said more about Russian priorities then lying in Manchuria than any inherent Russian goodwill towards Britain. Had Britain been defeated in the Boer War it is unlikely Habibullah's succession would have been so tranquil. Waters was alive to Russian policy seeking the most rewarding course; the prospect of confronting Japan in Manchuria was undoubtedly preferable to confronting England in Central Asia, for it would 'manifestly be most exhaustive to find herself face to face with England in Central Asia, and with England and Japan in the Far East, while success in the latter region alone would be much more quickly productive for her'. Waters concluded his analysis of Anglo-Russian relations with the equivocal reassurance that Russia desired peace with England in the short to medium term 'in order eventually to be more capable of emphasising words by deeds'. (7) Until such time as Britain achieved a rapprochement with Russia, the Russian challenge to Britain's position in Central Asia and India assumed the proportions of a sword of Damocles. Undoubtedly the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance was a sensible move in strengthening Britain's position agains Russia in Asia; Britain was no longer without a major ally in the region. Yet the Anglo-Japanese alliance was only a tonic, not a cure, to Britain's Russian predicament in Asia. Kitchener noted in June 1904, during the Russo-Japanese war, that Britain would have 'some time thanks to the Japs', but ominously added that 'at the end of the present war there may be a critical moment between us and Russia'. (8)

If therefore Britain had good reason to fear Russia's intentions

towards her in Asia, how capable was she of an effective military response? British strategy against a Russian advance into Afghanistan envisaged a British advance to a line stretching from Kabul to Kandahar. India could field a force of 31,700 British troops, 42,000 native and 240 guns, but would require an immediate reinforcement of 30,000 troops from Britain, followed by a further 70,000. (9) For the internal stability of the Raj it was crucial that the British should be seen to advance into Afghanistan, if Russia had advanced on Herat or Kabul; anything less and the Raj would appear to be flagging in the face of Russia. Yet the British advance to Kabul-Kandahar was seen as a defensive move in response to a major act of territorial aggrandisement by Russia.

Not only was India's insistence on 100,000 men to prove controversial in England itself, but it also underlined the weakness of the British Empire in confronting Russia. Britain simply did not have the resources, short of making major sacrifices, to confront Russia. Even before the end of a second month's campaigning, the War Office estimated Russia could have a total of 124,000 troops and 248 guns in action, and that was prior to the completion of the Orenburg-Tashkent railway (in operation as from 1905). Without the Orenburg-Tashkent line, by the fifth month Russia could have 150,000-200,000 men at the Central Asian front; once the line was completed, Russia would have 300,000 men in the field at this stage. Britain would therefore need 104,000 troops to hold the Kabul-Kandahar front following the opening of the Orenburg-Tashkent line; that figure excluded the further long term reinforcements of 70,000 men that would also be required. (10) Although there were glimmers of hope for Britain - the construction of a railway to Kandahar and Jelalabad would reduce the time for concentrating British troops on the Kabul-Kandahar line from 84 to 45 days - strategically Russia's position

seemed destined to improve, to Britain's undoubted detriment. A full scale Central Asian war would be a dangerous, if not perilous, undertaking for Britain; the very fact that British military strategy in Central Asia was largely designed in regard to perceived Russian intentions says much for which was the stronger power in the area. Thus war remained an ever-present possibility as long as Anglo-Russian relations were strained. Indicative of this is an anxious War Office intelligence report of 5th February 1900, which warned that Russia had moved up to 150,000 troops to Kushk in the previous two months. It is unlikely that these troop movements were altogether unconnected with a Russian memorandum submitted to Britain at the same time declaring her intent to establish relations with Afghanistan to discuss 'frontier matters'. Although these Russian troop movements in fact only involved 4,000 men, the important point is that the British, if only for a while, did believe that the Russians were moving up to 150,000 men. (11) Moreover, even though the Russians did not confront the British over Afghanistan on this particular occasion, or force a Central Asian crisis on Britain during the Boer War, it was not because they were averse to doing so; their abstinence can be explained in terms of Manchurian aspirations and a knowledge that time was on their side, in the shape of the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway.

If Britain was therefore condemned to a fraught position against Russia in defending Afghanistan and thus India, what hope was there for improved Anglo-Russian relations? In a memorandum written by J A C Tilley on relations between Great Britain and Russia in 1892-1904, it was noted that:

> There have also been persistent rumours of Russian concentration and intended aggression in Central Asia and the General Staff are convinced that although Russia may not contemplate any immediate attack, her preparations are such that one could be made in a very short period and with very little additional effort. (12)

If the prospects for future Anglo-Russian relations evidently did not appear auspicious, what grounds were there in hoping that Russia might feel well-disposed towards Britain? Waters' 1896 memorandum was not optimistic in what it predicted for the future of Anglo-Russian relations. He found Russia's 'distrust towards Great Britain ... fervent almost beyond all powers of comprehension'. He had been 'assured' that Britain was more unpopular in Russia than at the time of the Crimean War, and this antipathy was 'general and ... taught to, felt and expressed by schoolboys and schoolgirls, the rising generation'. Waters anticipated what the effect of any Anglophobe education might be:

> Some of the youths now growing up will eventually fill high and responsible posts, and their hostility to Great Britain implanted in them during their childhood may have far-reaching results.

If Waters saw no sign of abatement in Anglophobia, he saw at least one glimmer of hope: 'How often are we told: "I like the English, but hate their policy!"' (13) Evidently if there was to be a major Anglo-Russian rapprochement Britain would need to make important policy changes, as would Russia. For this to happen however, both powers (unless one completely caved in) would need to feel threatened more by one other power than they felt threatened by each other. This is precisely what happened. Britain's solution in Central Asia lay not in conflict on the Helmund but in a thawing of Anglo-Russian tensions.

In November 1901, Lieutenant-General Sir Montagu Gerard commented on what still appeared to be a downward spiral in Anglo-Russian relations:

> I was very disagreeably surprised to find how terribly Anglophobia had developed in Russia in the last few years. Ten years ago it was confined to the bourgeois class but now it seems to pervade all ranks of society and I was told that since the outbreak of the Boer War not a single member of our Embassy has been inside the Yacht Club - the one centre of St Petersburg life.

Gerard also tellingly remarked that if there were a popular Government in Russia there would surely have been a 'National War' against England, 'apparently now regarded as a sort of blot on humanity'. (14) Gerard's comments emphasised both the difficulty and yet urgency of achieving a better Anglo-Russian relationship. A rapprochement could only be achieved if there was a mutual willingness to compromise, but in view of Britain's difficulties in Central Asia, Russian antipathy should not be used as an excuse to avoid seeking at least a modest improvement in relations. However, as Cecil Spring Rice, British charge d'affaires at St Petersburg, clearly felt, the poor state of Anglo-Russian relations was a reflection of the nature of Russia itself:

> No one who lives here can doubt that Russia is a purely aggressive power - a growing organism convinced of its conquering mission - and that whatever we do in the way of friendliness in South-East Europe we shall never be forgiven the crime of possessing what Russia wants to have. (15)

Obviously there were potent reasons why Britain and Russia had been rivals for so long, particularly Russia's determination not to be eclipsed by any other power in Asiatic prestige or influence. Yet the weakness of Britain's position in Central Asia emphasised that sterile confrontation offered scant security to the British Raj.

If there seemed to be little enthusiasm in Russia for Britain, was there a corresponding dislike for Russia in Britain? British Parliamentary proceedings offer us powerful insights into the regard and esteem in which Russia was held. In a debate on the South Africa War on 15th February 1900, the Earl of Kimberley turned to the question of Central Asian security. He observed:

> I am not ascribing to Russia - I should be very sorry to do it - direct designs to attack us in India. I cannot overlook the fact that there is going on a movement of troops (to Kushk) which if not increasing, shows at least that the possibilities of the future are never far from the mind of the Russian Government.

If Russian activities in Central Asia were disquieting, what forces inspired a malign Russian countenance towards Britain? As Kimberley explained:

> There are in Russia three powerful motives which always activite the Russian Government in their conduct of affairs. One of these is the power of the Orthodox Church in Russia; the other is the strong Slav feeling and the third is the army; and there might easily arise a state of things when peaceful as might be the intentions of the ruler of the Empire, he might find it extremely difficult to resist the pressure put on him.

Kimberley's comments, depicting an unholy Anglophobe trinity forcing the hand of the Emperor, did not augur well for pacific Anglo-Russian relations; indeed he concluded his speech by stating of the climate created by Russian troop movements in Central Asia, that there would 'always be a feeling of insecurity and, in the present conditions of things, a feeling amounting almost to alarm'. (16)

If during the dark days of the Boer War Britons could not help but look at Russian policy with deep anxiety, even in more placid times British Russophiles remained uncommon. Henry Norman, the Liberal MP for Wolverhampton South, strongly favoured an Anglo-Russian rapprochement built on mutual respect. In 1902 Norman had his magnum opus on Russia published; entitled All the Russias, aside from describing his extensive Russian travels, it discussed the nature of Anglo-Russian relations. Citing Salisbury's remark that Britain had been 'putting our money on the wrong horse' in an anti-Russian, pro-Turkish Near Eastern policy, and Balfour's remark that 'Asia is big enough for both', Norman observed:

> Their words flew up, but their thoughts remained below, and officially we are as suspicious of Russia as ever, and Russia is equally disgusted with our informed, incalculable, spasmodic policy. Therefore she goes calmly ahead, doing what she pleases, knowing that in all probability when England alone desires or opposes anything, a few acid despatches and a little calling of names in Parliament will be the worst she has to fear.

Although of a distinctly charitable disposition towards Russia, Norman had no doubts that in diplomacy, 'Russia plays a strong game, and

plays it sometimes without scruples, but she both respects and likes an opponent who plays his own game strongly too'. (17) Norman was 'most earnestly in favour of a rapprochement with Russia'; (18) he well realised, as he noted in his earlier book The Far East, that 'if we ourselves are not in friendly alliance with her, we shall sooner or later have to face her as a member of a combination hostile to our interests'. (19) Norman had advocated Anglo-Russian rapprochement 'before its time'; his advocacy of warmer links was well shown on 22nd January 1902 when, in a debate on Persia, he expanded before the House on Russia, and her attitude towards Britain; Norman felt that beyond question an improved understanding could be achieved with regard to public opinion in Russia. By Russian opinion he did not mean popular opinion or the opinion of the Russian Press, neither of which counted for very much, rather 'some of the very few men who in Russia after the Emperor exerted real influence'. (20) Norman was perhaps mistaken in suggesting that press and popular opinion counted for little in their view of Britain, as compared to the opinion of those who ruled Russia. Rather the press and public opinion did matter because they frequently reflected the opinion of Russia's most influential men. In Waters' 1896 Memorandum, it was noted that General Maslov was 'chiefly responsible for the tone of the Novoe Vremya; similarly Prince Ukhtomsky was responsible for the tone of the St Petersburg Viedmosti. As Waters appreciated, 'in a country like Russia the Press directs rather than expresses public opinion'. (21) Press and public opinion were important barometers of leading Russian thought towards Britain. If leading Russian papers were calling for a belligerent policy towards Britain in Central Asia, it was because men such as Maslov or Ukhtomsky favoured such a course.

Nevertheless, Norman was a perspicacious observer of Russia; he argued that 'Russia's one political object was to gain access to the

warm water, not merely as an outlet of trade or as a strategic outlet, but as a sentimental outlet'. If his prognosis of Russian motivation was hardly reassuring for India's security, in view of Russia's undoubted interest in Afghanistan, Norman suggested that Russia should therefore not be denied 'warm water' forever:

> Not many years ago ... it would have been said that the complete absorption of Central Asia, and the development of the Russian railway up to the frontier of Afghanistan would not have been allowed without an entire reversal of the British Government. (But now) he (the Hon. Member) had recently been travelling among Eastern and uncivilised peoples now ruled by Russia, and he asserted without hesitation she was carrying on a great work of civilisation there - and he had seen a good deal of it ... he must testify his respect for it was truly a work of civilisation in the best sense of the word. (22)

Norman's warm feelings towards Russia were clearly unwelcome in some corners of the Commons. Hansard equivocally adds to the above that 'Earl Percy made a remark that was inaudible in the Press Gallery'. Sir Edward Sassoon, Unionist MP for Hythe, expressed concern that Norman 'seemed to display very decided proclivities and even tenderness to Russian sensibilities'. (23) In 1902 Norman's views on closer Anglo-Rusian relations were still outside the mainstream of British politics.

In the same debate, Sir Edward Grey, former Liberal Under Secretary at the Foreign Office and future architect of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, gave a well-reasoned discussion of how to handle Russia in Asia.

> There are three possible policies we may pursue towards the Russian Government. One is undesirable, the second I think is desirable and the third I regard as intolerable. The first possible policy is that of perpetual resistance to Russian expansion everywhere in Asia, on the grounds that somehow or other, it would endanger British interests. The second policy, which I think is a desirable one and I believe to be a practical one ... is that of an understanding between two Governments, which would result in a fair and frank interchange of views and adjustment of interests in Asia ... The third policy ... is a policy of drift. I think it is intolerable because Russia always gains by it. I would define it as a policy which combines in a most extraordinary way the disadvantages both of yielding and resistance without the advantage of either course ... We have made all the concessions in respect of Russian expansion in

> Asia that ought to have entitled us to reward and friendship in return, while we have incurred odium and enmity and friction, even though those concessions were made in the end. (24)

The logic of Grey's argument is clear; British endeavours to appease Russia in Asia, if they lacked the determination and ability to confront Russia if necessary, were a self-defeating exercise: Britain's position in central Asia was endangered for no benefit. Only an Anglo-Russian rapprochement offered the advantages of a new security for Britain in Central Asia and of Russian friendship.

However, if Liberals seemed particularly ready to achieve an Anglo-Russian understanding, there was by no means unanimity on how to win Russian goodwill. In the debate on the Foreign Office vote on 3rd July 1902, Sir Charles Dilke pointed out the differences between fellow Liberals Henry Norman and Joseph Walton (MP for Barnsley), and himself. Dilke 'confessed he could not understand Walton's position'; Walton desired an understanding with Russia, but approved of the Anglo-Japanese treaty, 'propositions which appeared to him contradictory'. Turning to the question of an understanding with Russia, he sought to know 'something a little definite'.

> What are we to yield? What to secure? At one time those who desired the understanding wished to offer Northern Afghanistan. Now his friend the Member for Wolverhampton South (Norman) wished to offer a port on the Persian Gulf (openly advocated in <u>All the Russias</u>), while the Member for Barnsley did not. Personally he was opposed to giving away things not ours. (25)

Certainly it seems that across the House there was a desire for less tense Anglo-Russian relations; differences of opinion would probably arise over how platonic these relations should be. Lord Charles Beresford, Unionist MP for Woolwich, expressed in the July 3rd 1902 debate on the Foreign Office Vote, anxiety about the prospects of a lasting Anglo-Russian agreement:

> They all wanted a better understanding with Russia, but how was it to be brought about? Russian policy was based on the giving of assurances, and there was no case in the history of Russia with regard to assurances where they had not been broken when Russia was in a position to do so.

Beresford did not blame Russian ministers for such behaviour; he blamed the Foreign Office for listening to their assurances. (26) Yet in spite of past Russian 'skulduggery', an Anglo-Russian rapprochement held out gains for Britain as Gibson Bowles, Unionist MP for Kings Lynn, noted in a debate on the Army Supply Estimate on 10th March 1903:

> If this country could come to an amicable arrangement with Russia, the whole question of the invasion of India would fall to the ground at once, completely and forever. (27)

Until such a time as Gibson Bowles hoped for actually arrived, Britain and Russia would remain cast as long-standing adversaries. If Britain remained in strategic difficulties against Russia in Central Asia, at least as Sir Charles Dilke observed, Russia's expansion in Manchuria exposed her to pressure from the Royal Navy; he noted that 'Russia was formerly invulnerable, but Russia by expansion has become more vulnerable'. (28) If Britain and Russia came to loggerheads in Afghanistan the Bear could at least be singed in Manchuria, but Britain would still remain at a severe military and strategic disadvantage against Russia in Central Asia. India's North-West frontier would continue to be the Raj border most exposed to Russian intrigue; and rather than the threat to the North-West receding, rumours of Russian penetration of the region adjacent to India's hitherto relatively tranquil North-Eastern border began to appear. By the early 1900's Tibet was to give the British in India great anxiety for the Raj's frontier security.

The question of alleged Russian penetration into Tibet was first raised in the House of Commons by the Russophile Henry Norman. As Norman had written in <u>All the Russias</u>, 'to deal with Russia on equal terms we must begin by regaining her respect. And we shall only accomplish this by holding our own wherever we come into contact with her'. (29) Tibet, bordering India, yet over one thousand miles from

the nearest Russian border, was undoubtedly a place where Britain ought not be eclipsed. On 30th September 1900 a Tibetan Embassy under a Buriat monk Dorjieff visited the Tsar at Livadia; and on 23rd June 1901 a further Embassy led by Dorjieff was met by the Tsar at Peterhof. This contact with Russia was undoubtedly disturbing to the British at a time when the Tibetans were rebutting all Curzon's efforts to establish friendly Anglo-Tibetan relations. On 21st June Norman questioned Viscount Cranborne, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, about the second Tibetan Mission to Russia, asking:

> Whether his attention had been called to the Embassy from the Dalai Lama of Tibet to His Majesty the Emperor of Russia, with the alleged object of soliciting the protection of Russia against British encroachments; and whether His Majesty's Government has made or proposes to make any communications to the Russian Government on the subject?

Cranborne provided only the most limited of answers:

> It has been recently reported in the Russian Press that a special Mission from Tibet consisting of seven persons headed by the Lama Daroshiyeff (Dorjieff) was on its way to St Petersburg, but His Majesty's Government have received no confirmation of this statement. (30)

If Norman's questioning of the Government in London was intended to awaken it to a potential difficulty in Anglo-Russian relations and on India's borders, the Government remained somewhat uninterested. On 2nd July 1901 Norman again questioned Cranborne:

> Whether seeing the so-called Tibetan Embassy has reached St Petersburg and is about to be received by His Majesty the Tsar (in fact the Tsar had already met the Embassy), he can now give the House any information upon the subject; and will he state whether any communications concerning the so-called Embassy has been addressed to the Russian Government?

Again Cranborne played a dead bat:

> We have heard that a Mission from Tibet has arrived in Russia, but we are without detailed information as to its character. His Majesty's Government has not addressed any communications to the Russian Government on the subject.

Pressed by Norman 'at a future time' to make a statement on the Tibetan Embassy, Cranborne merely suggested he lay a further question

on the subject. (31)

On 12th August 1901 Norman again enquired of Cranborne 'whether he can now give the House any information concerning the composition, the aims and the results of the recent so-called Tibetan Embassy to His Majesty the Emperor of Russia'. Cranborne replied:

> His Majesty's Ambassador at St Petersburg has reported that the Tibetan Mission consisted of two envoys, with their suite. The principle member of the Mission was the Lama Akban Dargiew, who had brought a complimentary letter from the Dalai Lama to the Emperor of Russia. His Excellency was assured by the Count Lamsdorff that the Mission had no political or diplomatic character. (32)

If it was hardly surprising that Lamsdorff should give such an assurance, Norman was nevertheless disappointed that such an assurance should be unquestioningly accepted by the Government. In a debate on 3rd July 1902 Norman remarked that:

> He had asked several questions with regard to the Mission of the Tibetan envoys who were sent to St Petersburg, and he was informed that it had no diplomatic significance. He could not help expressing surprise that the Foreign Office should accept a vague answer that the Mission had no diplomatic significance.

He also wondered whether the Foreign Office was aware that 'the Tibetan envoys had a certain relation to affairs in Mongolia'. (33) Russia was beginning to dominate Mongolia and had been especially aided by the culturally Russian, though Buddhist, Asiatic Buriat tribe. Dorjieff was an eminent Buriat, and as a Russian agent, was in close contact with both Russians and Lamas in Mongolia. Norman's dark hints of untoward Russian activities in Buddhist Central Asia anticipated much of the nature of (alleged) Russian involvement in Tibet.

With perhaps a certain irony, Norman, as the MP who had first raised the question of Russian-Tibetan relations in Parliament, was absent when on April 13th 1904 the Commons held its first full debate on Tibet, in an atmosphere of crisis provoked by the mission of

Younghusband into Tibet. The Daily Chronicle of April 15th 1904 reported:

> The reception of Mr Henry Norman MP by the Tsar ... was of an entirely private character, for Mr Norman was not introduced by our Ambassador or by any other official personage, and the audience, which lasted over half an hour ... was conducted by His Majesty's wish, with complete freedom on either side. The Tsar began by saying that he had read Mr Norman's book, kept it in his private library, and found it the best and fairest account in English of his country. Of course Mr Norman does not intend to publish the conversation. (34)

It is tantalising to wonder whether Norman and the Tsar discussed the question of Tibet, arguably the most contentious issue between Britain and Russia in April 1904, but more significantly the Tsar showed that he was prepared to receive one of the few British public men who openly advocated a closer Anglo-Russian relationship. Perhaps he even respected Norman's philosophy of an Anglo-Russian friendship built on mutual strength. The Anglo-French entente cordiale, of which the instruments were signed on 8th April 1904, showed Britain making terms with Russia's chief ally. Power-political logic suggested that Anglo-Russian relations should correspondingly improve. Indeed, in May and June 1904 encouraging diplomatic moves in that direction were being made. (35) Yet at the same time Russia was at war in the Far East with Britain's ally Japan; and British public and Parliamentary opinion were apparently bear-hunting in Tibet. Was the Younghusband Mission a wayward enterprise, foolishly jeopardising the future of improved Anglo-Russian relations, or was it a necessary move against an adversary whose designs on India had to be deterred by force? Coming at the specific moment that it did, the debate on the Younghusband Mission provided a useful focus for British opinion on this anxious question.

## A FREE CONVERSATION.

THE *Daily Chronicle*, of April 15, stated that "The reception of Mr. HENRY NORMAN, M.P., by the TSAR . . . was of an entirely private character, for Mr. NORMAN was not introduced by our Ambassador or by any official personage, and the audience, which lasted over half an hour . . . was conducted, by His Majesty's wish, with complete freedom of speech on either side. The TSAR began by saying that he had read Mr. NORMAN'S book, kept it in his private library, and found it the best and fairest account in English of his own country. Of course, Mr. NORMAN does not intend to publish this interesting conversation."

*Mr. Punch* thoroughly appreciates the nice instinct for reticence shown by Mr. NORMAN in respect to the details of his Imperial interview; and, if the facts have nevertheless leaked out, the public must draw its own conclusions as to the system of key-hole intrigue that obtains in the TSAR'S immediate *entourage*.

SCENE—*The* TSAR'S *Library.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ:

*Mr. Henry Norman, M.P.*
*Nicholas II., Emperor of Russia.*

*Nicholas II.* I have read your book. I keep it in my private library. I find it the best and fairest account yet written in English of my own country.

*Henry Norman.* Ha!

*N. II.* I like *Wee Macgreegor* too. And did you read that very ingenious feuilleton in the *Daily Mail*, called "Mr. Smith, of England"?

*H. N.* I read the *Chronicle*——

*N. II.* What a pity you missed that! The author is a Mr. ANDREW LORING. Now, if only *he* would call upon me!

*H. N.* I doubt if he is a publicist.

*N. II.* That is what I meant. Is there not a bill now interesting your House of Commons on the proper regulation and control of publicists?

*H. N.* Publicans, I think your Majesty must mean.

*N. II.* Very likely. These *nuances* of a foreign tongue take so much learning.

*H. N.* The Far East——

*N. II.* By the way, what horse-power is your motor-car? I understand you are one of the pioneers of the new locomotion.

*H. N.* Assuredly. I don't think the World's Work could go on without motors.

*N. II.* This is very interesting about the "ashes." It created a profound impression at our Court when the news of their recovery reached us. It is a great thing to be an athletic nation. I suppose you know Mr. FRY, C.B.?

*H. N.* Intimately. We are fellow Editors.

*N. II.* I was wondering if he could be tempted to settle here for a while and introduce cricket among my moujiks.

*H. N.* The claims of the English season are very exacting.

*N. II.* Ah, well, it was only an idea of mine, perhaps Quixotic.

*H. N.* There has always been a Quixotic strain in the Romanoffs.

*N. II.* Yes, indeed.

*H. N.* Japan——?

*N. II.* Oh, by the way, is the interest in London in Russian music still what it was? We look upon your great conductor Mr. HENRY J. TREE as one of the best of the English friends of Russia.

*H. N.* Not HENRY J. TREE, your Majesty; HENRY J. WOOD. Perhaps a not unnatural confusion. We have a TREE too, an actor. He played in an adaptation of TOLSTOI'S novel *Resurrection*.

*N. II.* Ah, yes. How foolish to confuse the names. But I often do not feel sure of them. Let me see, you are Sir ALFRED HARMSWORTH, are you not?

*H. N.* No, your Majesty; Mr. HENRY NORMAN, M.P.

*N. II.* Tut, tut, how *gauche* of me! Mr. NORMAN, of course. You have been here before, have you not?

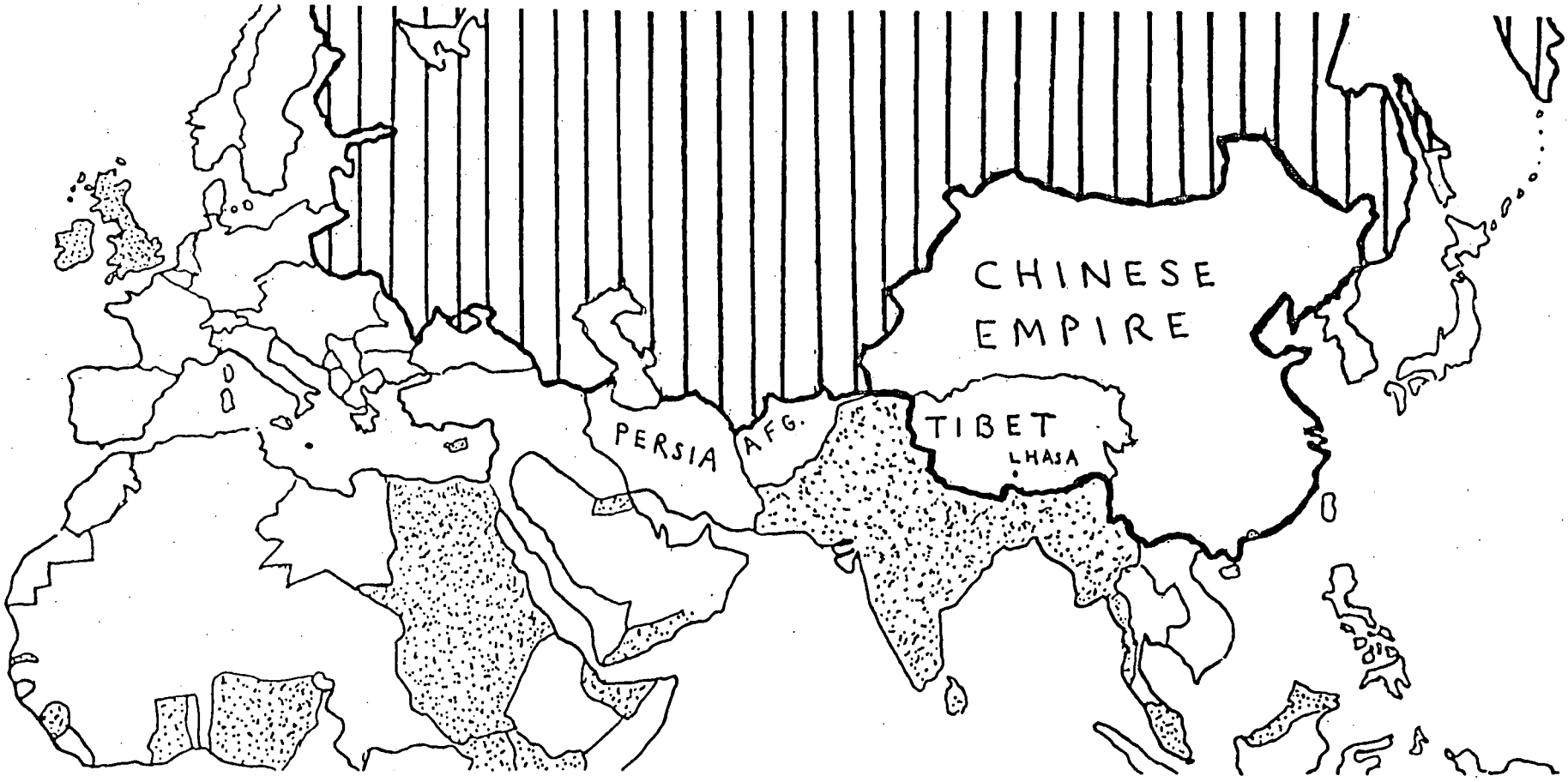
*H. N.* I am esteemed in England greatly on account of my intimacy with your Majesty.

*N. II.* Quite right, quite right. And what was the purpose of the present visit?

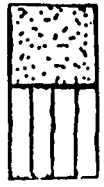
*H. N.* A few words on the situation, your Majesty.

*N. II.* The situation? Ah, yes. Charming, is it not? The view from this window always seems to me exceptionally fortunate. And now I must say Good-bye. [*Interview closes.*

Mr Punch's version of how Henry Norman MP's private conversation with the Tsar might have run.




Map indicating Position of Tibet relative to the British, Russian and Chinese Empires in 1900.



KEY.

British Empire

Russian Empire

# CHAPTER TWO

## Curzon and the Russian Threat in Tibet

'The school of politicians who described anxiety at Russia's advance as "old woman's fears" have closed the doors of their discredited academy', remarked George Curzon in his 1889 work Russia in Central Asia. (1) Ironically Curzon's Tibetan policy was to prove a powerful catalyst for admission to that 'discredited academy'; although the Viceroy was to achieve Government authorisation for an advance into Tibet, he singularly failed to convince Britain of the need for a Himalayan foray. Faced with rumours of Russian intrigue in Tibet Curzon was adamant that any Russo-Tibetan tryst should be frustrated, but in England sympathy for his Russophobia remained confined to convinced Imperialists and journals of a Unionist persuasion, notably The Times.

Naturally any responsible Viceroy would have to take strong action against a Tibet coquetting with Russia. Yet Curzon was arguably over-zealous in his desire to thwart Russian designs, particularly as the Home Government was anxious to achieve better Anglo-Russian relations. Curzon had little doubt as to Russia's overriding aim. In October 1901 he wrote:

> I assert with confidence - what I do not think any of her statesmen would deny - that her ultimate ambition is the dominion of Asia. (2)

In Russia's 'proud and not ignoble aim', he was convinced that:

> Acquiescence at Herat and in Afghanistan Turkestan will not secure Kabul. Acquiescence in the Pamirs will not save Kashgar. Acquiescence at Kashgar will not divert Russian eyes from Tibet. Each morsel but whets her appetite for more and inflames the passion for a pan-Asiatic dominion. (3)

Curzon remained perhaps too emotionally involved in Russophobe sentiment to view the defence of India dispassionately against the

wider interests of improved British relations with Russia. An understanding with Russia could do more for India's security than an advance onto India's glacis hunting for the Bear. Curzon was conscious that London did not share his priorities; as he wrote to Hamilton,

> I have a sort of consciousness that my arguments do not produce the smallest effect. If a Government means to sit down .... no amount of kicking, even on the most sensitive spot, will induce it to rise, and I contemplate now .... that we shall steadily throw away our trump cards. (4)

Curzon was unable to convince the Home Government that Tibet was a trump card at all, and London remained chary of any anti-Russian Tibetan Expedition. As Roberts was to put it:

> Either Lord Curzon should have been allowed to pursue his path [to Lhasa] unhampered, or the Cabinet should have refused to sanction any interference at all. (5)

London would have done better to deny any Curzon-inspired invasion of Tibet, or else fully support such an invasion, rather than the policy it adopted of a half-hearted but distinctly dubious backing.

Yet if Curzon was anxious to dispel alleged Russian influence in Tibet, were these viceregal fears justified? Dilke noted that:

> The reality of Russian relations with Tibet in 1902 is still unknown and will probably remain so; at the time, it was necessarily a subject for guesswork based upon snippets of intelligence. (6)

It is also important to remember that, even if Curzon's fears could be fully corroborated, a post-Boer War Britain was reluctant to confront Russia over an obscure corner of Asia. London's hope for an Anglo-Russian rapprochement could well be vitiated by the Viceroy's desire for a more forward policy.

Unfortunately the material available for assessing the extent of Russian involvement in Tibet remains problematical. It is clear that the Buriat Mongol Dorjieff (named by Cranborne in Parliament) was both influential in Lhasa, and favoured the Russian cause. Although, as

Mehra puts it, owing to 'the remarkable paucity of authentic source material, Dorjieff's figure remains shadowy', (7) it is still possible to attempt an appraisal of Dorjieff's past. Our principal source is Ekai Kawaguchi's Three Years in Tibet, and it provides us with an account of this Japanese Buddhist's 1900-02 sojourn in Tibet. Although in all probability Kawaguchi was a Japanese spy and may well have embellished his text, nevertheless he was an astute observer (he would need to be, if a spy) and provides us with an insight into early twentieth century Tibet. Kawaguchi had the advantage of actually being inside Tibet, an opportunity denied to Europeans by Tibet's isolationist policies; when The Times correspondent, Perceval Landon, was himself in Tibet with the Younghusband Mission, he encountered the same explanations of Dorjieff's past as Kawaguchi gives us.

According to Kawaguchi, Dorjieff rose rapidly in Tibet's Lama hierarchy, and when appointed Work Washing Abbot to the young Dalai Lama he was said 'to have virtually monopolised the confidence of the young Lama Chief'. (8) After the Dalai Lama's coming of age the Russophile Buriat, having acquired sudden riches to dispense in Tibet for prestige, extended his attention from leading Tibetan Lamas to the priestly class, 'due to the large share of attention they wield over the masses'. (9) Dorjieff, to Russia's benefit, had constructed a deep personal friendship with Tibet's de facto ruler, and established a system of patronage throughout the Lama hierarchy, thereby giving him influence over Tibet's masses. As John MacGregor has put it:

> Imperial Russia with considerable shrewdness or sheer luck devised a way of penetration which took full advantage of Tibet's religious occupation. (10)

If Dorjieff's intrigues would undoubtedly cause the British distinct unease, if they were cognisant of them, the jewel in the crown of Dorjieff's intrigue was a 'programme of conquest' which included a 'general plan for the masses'. (11) In ancient Tibetan

folklore the Tsong Kha-pa, the revered founder of the Yellow Hat sect, was to reappear to rule a capital called Chang Shambhala, far to the North of Tibet. Chang Shambhala was postulated some 3,000 miles North-West of Buddhagaya (Buddha's birth place) in India, by a long deceased prophet. Kawaguchi stated that Dorjieff had written a pamphlet, 'with the special object of demonstrating that Chang Shambhala means Russia, and that the Tsar is the incarnation of the Je Tsong Kha-pa'. (12) This pamphlet, the existence of which Kawaguchi learnt from 'trustworthy sources', argued that the sheer good nature of the Tsar, both in his domains and towards his neighbours, combined with the geographical coincidence between Russia and Chang Shambhala, 'proved that Russia must be the country, that anybody who doubted it was an enemy of Buddhism'. (13) Such was the success of Dorjieff's theological gambit, apparently raising the Tsar to a deity in the eyes of many Tibetans, Kawaguchi maintained that;

> Today almost every Tibetan blindly believes in the ingenious story, and holds that the Tsar will sooner or later subdue the whole world and found a gigantic Buddhist Empire. (14)

If the prospect of a Tsar converting to Buddhism, if only Tibet showed him fealty, was dangled before Lhasa's eyes, British interests were also endangered by the fact that Dorjieff was not the only prominent Anglophobe in Lhasa's counsels.

Shata, the eldest of Tibet's four premiers, remained keenly Anglophobe; whereas Dorjieff was a Russian agent, Shata probably represented a more traditional vein of Tibetan thought, namely the use of isolationism to ensure Tibetan independence. Certainly Kawaguchi depicts Shata as 'the best informed man in Tibet' in diplomatic affairs. (15) Kawaguchi tells how Shata, who had been exiled to India

prior to his ascendency in Lhasa, became 'filled with dreams of England':

> He was overawed by her power. He must have thought during his exile that Tibet would have to choose between Russia and China in seeking foreign help against the possible aggression of India. (16)

It was hardly surprising that a Tibetan such as Shata would turn to Russia for help, irrespective of Dorjieff's theological exercises against Britain; Chinese power was something of a broken reed whilst the activities of the Raj's Indian pundit Sarat Chandra Das in 1881 had clearly emphasised Britain's hostile intent towards Lhasa.

Kawaguchi believed that, 'should England ever want to transact any business with Tibet, she would be obliged to do so by force'. (17) If Tibet practised an isolationist policy against all Europeans, with an operative such as Dorjieff, Russia had clearly found an inspired means of circumventing this policy. It remains difficult to say when Russia actually recruited the services of Dorjieff, although it is plausible to suppose that he may have been enlisted on Prejvalski's fourth expedition, or else in 1885, as the German adventurer Wilhelm Filchner maintained. (18) Nevertheless, as Kawaguchi stressed, the exercise of this one Buriat gave Russia undoubted prestige in Tibet. Particularly damaging, from a British point of view were Dorjieff's two diplomatic missions to Russia. Dorjieff's Mission represented a bold attempt to establish a Russo-Tibetan dialogue; and these efforts were surely aided, if indeed not fostered, by Prince Ukhtomsky and Dr P A Badmaev. Ukhtomsky, aside from being the Anglophobe proprietor of the St Petersburg Viedmosti, was a close personal friend of Tsar Nicholas; he had accompanied him as personal secretary when, as Cesarevitch, Nicholas had toured the East. Badmaev, a Buriat, had access to the Imperial ear as Court physician and was an advisor to the Russian Foreign Ministry on Mongol Affairs; these two men were

most probably involved in abetting Dorjieff. Ukhtomsky was clear on the role the Buriats could play in aiding Imperial Russia in areas such as Tibet:

> Every year thousands of them go on pilgrimage to Mongolia and centres of Tibetan learning. Pioneers of Russian trade and good fame, representations of the Russian name in the depths of the 'Yellow' East .... Scarce anyone in Russia guesses what a valuable work is being carried on by the most modest Russian Lamaite.

Ukhtomsky felt that the 'true historic value' of these activities would be 'appreciated only by the generations to come'. (19) Ukhtomsky had a vision of Russian domination of Asia that Curzon would have understood; he included Dorjieff in his scheme as laying the foundations for Russian domination in Tibet. If by 1900 the Russians hoped to use Tibet as one theatre in the Great Game, should the British continue to ignore this growing Russian influence, a Russian protectorate might well materialise within the next ten years; this was Curzon's fear and Ukhtomsky's hope.

Certainly there were strong grounds for British anxieties. Curzon said of the first Tibetan Mission to Russia that Tibet was, 'much more likely in reality to look to us for protection than to Russia', (20) but Dorjieff's second Embassy confounded this prediction. Although Lamsdorff assured the British Government of the non-political and non-diplomatic nature of the Mission, as Candler remarked:

> We were asked to believe that these Lamas travelled many thousands of miles to convey a letter that expressed the hope that the Russian Foreign Minister was in good health and prosperous, and informed him that the Dalai Lama was happy to be able to say he himself enjoyed excellent health. (21)

Moreover, Dorjieff had brought Russia and Tibet sufficiently close that, according to Kawaguchi, and Filchner in his Sturm uber Asien, arms were sent from Russia to Tibet. Kawaguchi reported how in December 1901 or January 1902, a convoy of 200 fully laden camels arrived in Lhasa, which he subsequently learnt were from Russia.

Kawaguchi apparently learned from one indiscreet but reliable Government officer that, prior to this convoy of arms from Russia, 'another caravan of 300 camels arrived some time before', whose cargo 'consisted of small fire-arms, bullets and other interesting objects'. Indeed the Government officer 'was quite elated, saying that now for the first time Tibet was sufficiently armed to resist any attack England might make against her'. (22)

Filchner, although a less immediate source, and somewhat sensationalist, nevertheless has an interesting account of another Russian spy, Zerempil, bringing an arms convoy into Lhasa on November 12th 1902. Filchner reports that Zerempil, under the auspices of Dorjieff as War Minister 'started a factory of Martin Henry rifles'. (23) If Filchner's and Kawaguchi's accounts are substantially correct, Britain evidently had a seriously deteriorating security situation on the North-Eastern frontier.

Against this background of Russian intrigue in Tibet, it is hardly surprising that there were rumours of a secret Russian treaty concerning Tibet. In April 1902 Reuters had reported that the Russian Minister in Peking, de Lessar, had suggested to Prince Ch'ing that Tibet should become independent, while rumours of a secret Russo-Chinese agreement abounded in Peking, Nepal and India. (24) In May 1902 Kang Yu Wei told the Bengal Government that a secret treaty, granting Russia a protectorate over Tibet, had been reached between Russia and Jung Lu, head of the Chinese Grand Council. (25) By September 1902 Parr, the Chinese-employed Customs Official at Yatung in Tibet, and the British Ambassador at Peking, Satow, had reported eleven and twelve article Russo-Chinese treaties respectively. (26) Terms reputedly included a transfer of Chinese rights in Tibet to Russia, in return for which Russia would support the maintenance of Chinese territorial integrity, and would help suppress internal

disturbances in the Chinese Empire. Further measures of this secret treaty included Russia's winning the right to establish her Government's agencies in Tibet, and the granting to China of consular, commercial and extradition rights. Russia also undertook not to forcibly introduce Christianity, and to allow Chinese participation in Russian mining and railway activities. The twelfth clause, reported by Satow, saw a Russian assurance to respect sacred places during the construction of a railway line in Tibet; evidently Russia hoped to link Tibet with the Trans-Siberian Railway - a military nightmare for Britain. Indeed, from December 1902 into 1903, the Contemporary Review in London published a series of interesting and seemingly well-informed articles on the secret Russo-Chinese treaty; Alexander Ular, the author, sought to acquaint the British public with what he saw as the peril facing Britain in Tibet. Ular's background remains obscure, and his name may well be a nom de plume; in 1902, in Paris, his book Un Empire Russo-Chinois was published, which warned of Russian activities in China, including the secret treaty over Tibet.

In his December 1902 article, Ular discussed the implications of the Russo-Chinese agreement over Tibet - an agreement whose existence seems probable, even though it was never admitted by Russia or China. Ular commented that it was 'really wonderful to see how little impression the Tibet Convention has made on English public opinion', in view of 'the sudden apparition of an Anglo-Russo frontier of more than two thousand miles'. (27) He also warned:

> The connivance of the Tsar and Dalai Lama opens, for the future of Asia, a curious prospect of common, temporal and spiritual domination over the greater part of the East. (28)

Ular was undoubtedly (if not particularly) alarmist; yet his anonymous sources were either very well-informed in Russo-Chinese diplomacy, or else Ular was a capable but inventive writer. However, as the Contemporary Review was a respected publication, it seems improbable

that Ular's writings were complete invention. He argued that in establishing herself in Tibet, Russia was reserving a region for her future commercial and industrial expansion. Her inability to compete successfully with western commerce made it essential that Russia took territory for her future benefit, wherever she could. Ular believed that economic superiority would be the 'ultima ratio' in Asia's future affairs, (29) and for that reason England could be more confident of her future in Asia than Russia. Ular's solution to the Russian ascendancy in Tibet was based on this belief:

> At this moment the two great British Empires in Asia, the political one, India, and the purely commercial one, Central China, are separated from each other; and the Tibet Convention, together with French projects of colonisation in Yun-Nan and Sze-Chuan, are apparently intended, to a large extent, to prevent any chance of remedying such isolation. (30)

Ular recommended that:

> If an intimate connection between those Empires could be realised, the effect of the Tibet Convention would be virtually neutralised. (31)

In a further article in January 1903 concerning the implications of the Russo-Chinese agreement over Tibet, Ular argued that:

> If the moral and political situation of England in Asia has remained disastrously stagnant in the face of the White Tsar's splendour, this is to a large extent an effect of our European habits, which oblige us to accept Oriental statements as true. (32)

Asian diplomacy was 'the art of bringing about <u>faits accomplis</u> without giving the adversary any opportunity of retaliation'. (33) Ular praised Curzon's recognition of the need to employ Asiatic methods in Tibetan diplomacy, using the 1890 Anglo-Chinese Sikkim treaty 'as a pretext for tearing the veil' off Russian, Tibetan and Chinese relations. (34) That Curzon had succeeded in despatching a Mission

augured ill for the Russo-Chinese treaty. Ular argued that Russia had made two fatal errors in her Tibet policy:

> The first blunder consisted in continuing to keep secret the real results of Russian policy, forgetting that the results of Asiatic methods must nowadays be ratified by European rivals .... the second blunder, which made the first irreparable, was the dismissal of M Witte, the great architect of Asiatic Russia. (35)

Certainly under Plehve Russia's Asiatic policy missed Witte's experience, and Ular believed that Curzon, in a 'masterpiece of Asiatic policy' had 'obliged Russia, without striking a blow to avow tacitly her impotence to maintain her present standard of power' in Tibet. (36)

If Ular's insights into the question and ramifications of the secret Russo-Chinese treaty concerning Tibet were undoubtedly bold in both evidence and judgement, and though he may have appeared an unsubstantiated sensationalist to contemporaries, his writings nevertheless convey the crucial importance Tibet was assuming in Anglo-Russian relations. Further reports of Russian diplomatic machinations towards Tibet continued in November 1902. Hardinge in St Petersburg learnt of a secret understanding between the Russians and Tibetans; (37) in return for certain religious privileges for Russian Buriats, the Dalai Lama had apparently agreed to the residence of a secret Russian agent in Lhasa, one Badengieff (Badmaev), and to the entry of Russian Orthodox Missionaries. One further treaty was reported on 27th February 1903 involving the Chinese Amban and Licoloff, a Russian Emissary. (38)

Against such a background of alleged Russian intrigue both with Peking and Lhasa, it was not unreasonable for Curzon to fear that Russia was active in some form in attempting to establish a sphere of influence in Tibet. Indeed, given the uneasiness in the Anglo-Russian relationship, it would have been surprising if Russia had not been interested in Tibet. An Anglophobe Tibet, largely free of Chinese

tutelage, represented a natural and potentially profitable direction for Russia's attentions. If the British remained uninterested in intervening in Tibet, there was every reason to suppose that Tibet could become a valuable addition to the Russian Empire. Britain's abstention would be Russia's opportunity.

Yet Britain's non-interventionist policy towards Tibet could be maintained only as long as Tibet appeared a secure buffer for her North-Eastern frontier, immune from Russia's destabilising influence. Moreover, Russia's position in Tibet still remained tenuous; the activities of a Dorjieff were of lasting value only while they continued to be discreet. If Russia overplayed her Tibetan hand, by unwittingly revealing evidence of her diplomacy to the British, she could still snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Certainly Curzon thought he had caught the drift of the Russian game; he saw a shady Russian endeavour to establish a protectorate at India's backdoor. However, if Curzon was to argue for a positive intervention in Tibet, how had Anglo-Tibetan relations reached such a nadir that a British invasion seemed the only means to prevent Tibet from nestling under Russia's arm?

On June 11th 1900 Curzon had noted of the salient problems in Britain's relations with Tibet:

> It is really the most grotesque and indefensible thing that at a distance of little more than two hundred miles from our frontier, this community of unarmed monks should set us perpetually at defiance; and that we should have no means of knowing what is going on there; and that a Russian protectorate may, at no distant date, be declared without our having any inkling of what was passing. (39)

Curzon's remarks point to the failure of India to achieve any effective means of contact with Tibet; this situation was to lead to further misunderstanding, and encourage Tibet to look towards Russia. Anglo-Tibetan relations had been strained by British domination of Sikkim, a Tibetan feudatory, and these tensions were well-expressed in

Britain's eviction in 1888 of Tibetans occupying the Gnatong area of Sikkim. Tibet had traditionally pursued an isolationist policy, and Britain's encroachment on Sikkim did not reassure her about the Raj's intentions, a sentiment underlined by the discovery of Sarat Chandra Das's secret Mission of 1881 to Tibet. If Tibet looked to her suzerain China to defend her interests against Britain she was to be disappointed; the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, which recognised British predominance in Sikkim, and the 1893 Tibetan trade regulations, emphasised that Tibetan isolation from India could not be underwritten by China. Tibet chose to ignore the 1890 and 1893 agreements, and trade was frustrated, border posts were uprooted and Sikkimese pastures overrun by Tibetans. However, these were only symptoms of Anglo-Tibetan misunderstanding; if Britain could apparently tolerate such irritants, the advent of a Russian dimension in Tibet changed the Tibetan question from that of a minor border difficulty into a Great Game trial of strength.

Kawaguchi had remarked of Tibet that:

> England had opportunities to score a greater success than that achieved by Russia, and had she followed the Russian method her influence would now have extended far beyond the Himalayas. (40)

Even if Kawaguchi overrated the possibilities for Indian Intelligence, nevertheless a skil ful Indian Buddhist, armed with gold, might have done much to frustrate Dorjieff in Lhasa; the British failure to find such a man did much to necessitate a 'forward' response by India.

If Britain was to counter Russian intrigue in Tibet she desperately needed means of communication; without contact with Lhasa Britain simply could not compete with Russia. Curzon endeavoured to write to Lhasa: Captain R L Kennion attempted to forward a viceregal letter to Lhasa through Western Tibet, apparently without success. Vakil Ugyen Kazi, the Bhutanese Minister in Darjeeling, who claimed to have met the Dalai Lama in 1898, was chosen to write to Lhasa on

Curzon's behalf, expressing viceregal hopes for improved relationships. Vakil Ugyen Kazi wrote two unsuccessful letters, yet evidently retained some goodwill in Tibet, for in June 1901 he was asked to escort a train of animals to Lhasa. Whilst Dorjieff continued to entrench his position in Lhasa, Vakil Ugyen Kazi took Curzon's second personal letter to the Dalai Lama; the viceregal letter was returned on the grounds that tradition forbade the Dalai Lama from receiving letters from foreigners, except with the Amban's approval.

Curzon's frustrated attempts to even secure a hearing in Lhasa's counsels contrasted sharply with Russian success in Tibet. Curzon keenly felt that conciliatory attempts to counter Russian intrigues had been exhausted, and scathingly branded Vakil Ugyen Kazi 'as a liar and in all probability, a paid Tibetan spy' in the light of alleged indiscretions in Lhasa. (41) Ironically, following a major investigation into Tibet policy, Curzon learnt that such had been Britain's failure in thwarting Dorjieff and Russian intrigue, that both of Dorjieff's Missions had actually travelled through the Raj, unknown to Indian intelligence.

The Viceroy was determined to take Tibet policy closely in hand; resolved to suffer Tibetan bad manners no longer, in June 1900 Captain J C White reclaimed the Sikkimese pasture of Giaogong from the Tibetans. Although Curzon proposed that Tibet's Chumbi Valley should also be occupied and new frontier posts raised, the India Office felt this approach unnecessarily provocative. Moreover, although Britain could of course apply pressure on the Tibetan frontier, such pressures were equally likely to push Tibet further into Russia's influence, as Tibetan fears of Britain were substantiated. The India Office favoured a less overtly hostile British response to Tibet, the Lee-Warner Plan. Thus Nepal would act as British surrogate, and would

take action against Tibet, on the grounds that Russian penetration of Tibet threatened Napalese security. Curzon viewed this plan as distinctly undesirable, as, to his mind, it exposed London's temerity in the face of Russia, and would encourage Napalese pretensions.

Unlike London, ever anxious to consider St Petersburg's sensibilities, Curzon remained steadfast in his resolve to frustrate Russia in Tibet. Curzon believed that British policy towards Tibet had been inhibited for too long by China's nominal status as Tibet's suzerain; 'the whole thing is a farce' argued the Viceroy 'each party alternately parading and disavowing the other'. (42) On 8th January 1903, in a major despatch the Viceroy contended that the possibility of Russian domination over Tibet demanded a radical new approach. Although China would be informed that Britain would begin talks with Tibet in early 1903, the myth of her suzerainty was to be exposed. China's role as intermediary would be forfeit. Britain would therefore commence talks in the Spring of 1903 at Lhasa, which would encompass not only the Sikkimese frontier, but 'the entire question of our future relations, commercial and otherwise, with Tibet'. (43) This British Mission would be accompanied by an appropriate armed force. The Viceroy did not seek to deny that the situation in Lhasa, a product of Russian machinations and the (reputed) Sino-Russian agreement, had eclipsed trade as India's foremost Tibetan concern.

Although Curzon's despatch persuaded the India Office of the need for a British Mission to Tibet, at Cabinet on 19th February 1903 Balfour and Lansdowne remained unconvinced of the need for a Mission. Balfour doubtless felt that Curzon's proposals were typical of an Imperial proconsul; as he once noted:

> The rulers in its [the Empire] outlying portions have great local knowledge, but no responsibility and little thought for the general situation. (44)

Nevertheless it was apparent that developments in Lhasa were becoming increasingly serious: faced with Curzon's approach of confronting Russia if necessary, the Government sought the more moderate path of a diplomatic solution. Thus on 8th April 1903 Lansdowne exchanged denials of any intent to alter the status of Tibet with Russia's Ambassador in London, Benckendorff. Indeed on 11th and 18th February 1904 Lansdowne was able to extract from Benckendorff an acceptance that, as the British shared a common frontier with Tibet, they had the right to ensure Tibet respected her treaty obligations by force if necessary. Yet how reliable were Benckendorff's initial assurances? St Petersburg itself was unable to corroborate whether or not Russia had a secret agreement with Tibet, and, in any case, remained unwilling to endorse its representative's admissions. Curzon remained unsatisfied; on 8th January 1904 he wrote to Hamilton:

> If you ask me whether Benckendorff's apparently categorical reply denying Russian activity removed my suspicions, I say emphatically no. (45)

Yet, having accepted Benckendorff's assurances, the British Government could no longer intervene in Tibet on the grounds of Russian intrigue. Curzon was probably right in his belief that, although Britain had prevented an impending Russian protectorate in Tibet for the interim, Russian interest in Tibet remained unchanged. Certainly if Dorjieff and Russian influence in Lhasa were to be dislodged, a Mission would have to be sent; such a Mission would be justified on the old issues of the frontier and trade.

Rather than attempt to confront Cabinet opposition to a mission, Curzon believed re-opening negotiations on the border would emphasise the impossibility of negotiating with the Tibetans anywhere other than Lhasa. The Mission would become necessary by default. Any failure on the part of the Tibetans or Chinese (whose suzerainty the Cabinet, unlike Curzon, wished to respect) to send suitably accredited

delegates would surely necessitate the advance of the British Mission to Gyangtse. In May 1903 Francis Younghusband was selected to lead the Mission. The very fact that Younghusband's first negotiating site, Kamba Jong, was clearly inside Tibet established a precedent - the issue at stake was not whether the Mission should advance into Tibet, but where should it stop?

By November it had become apparent that the Kamba Jong negotiations were unsuccessful; on 6th November 1903 London acceded to a British advance as far as Gyangtse, should it prove necessary. The sentiments expressed in this November 6th telegram, sent to Curzon authorising such an advance, were to become the Balfour Government's stated Tibetan policy. The telegram affirmed that although the Cabinet had sanctioned an advance,

> They are clearly of the opinion that this step should be taken purely for the purpose of obtaining satisfaction; that it should not be allowed to lead to occupation or to any form of permanent intervention in Tibetan affairs: and that it should withdraw as soon as reparation is obtained. They consider the action proposed necessary, but the question of enforcing trade facilities must be considered in reference to the above decision, and His Majesty's Government are not prepared to establish a Mission in Tibet permanently. (46)

Although a temporary occupation of Tibet's Chumbi Valley was also allowed for, there was clearly to be no question of a permanent British occupation of Tibet, or the establishment of a permanent British Mission in Tibet. Yet Curzon had finally achieved the means, namely a British advance into Tibet, to put Dorjieff and all his works to flight. At last the British Government had accepted the need for an intervention in Tibet - yet whereas London saw the Mission as a limited operation to achieve satisfactory relations with Tibet, Curzon saw the Mission as a major foray against Russian designs on Lhasa. Indeed Curzon remained hopeful that, once a Mission had been despatched, the pace of events would force the 'timorous' Home Government into condoning a permanent British presence is Tibet. Of

course, Curzon was right to be anxious about securing the Raj's interests in Tibet, yet he was undoubtedly insensitive to seeing Britain's, as opposed to India's, point of view on the Tibet question. Confronting Russia in Tibet would do little to help wider Imperial security, whereas an Anglo-Russian rapprochement held out the prospect of major security gains. Extricated from Anglo-Russian rivalries, Britain could strengthen her position against the incoming menace of German power. Many Britons questioned the wisdom of a foray into Tibet, which, in spite of Government protestations to the contrary, appeared inspired by the Russian 'bogey'. Indeed, had the Government shown the same strength of purpose in the face of Calcutta that it showed in thwarting Parliamentary debate on the fraught diplomatic issue of Tibet, it is unlikely the Younghusband Mission would ever have happened. It was one thing for the Government to authorise an advance into Tibet, but another to justify it at home.

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—NOVEMBER 25, 1903.


# FORCED FAVOURS.

THE GRAND LAMA OF THIBET. "NOW THEN, WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS?"
BRITISH LION. "I'VE COME TO BRING YOU THE BLESSINGS OF FREE TRADE."
THE GRAND L. "I'M A PROTECTIONIST. DON'T WANT 'EM."
BRITISH LION. "WELL, YOU'VE *GOT TO HAVE* 'EM!"

["The advisers of the Dalai Lama, having ignored their obligations to us under the Convention of 1890, have now ignored the British Mission;" . . . "an advance is to be made into the Chumbi Valley on the frontier of Thibet."—*Daily Paper.*]

Mr Punch clearly believed that the British Lion would no longer suffer Tibetan intransigence.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Agitation Against the Younghusband Expedition: Debate Frustrated

From its very inception, the Younghusband Mission was viewed by many British MP's in a dubious light; Unionist backbenchers, Liberals and Irish Nationalists were all to share a deep concern at a Tibetan enterprise primarily designed against Russia. Following the South African imbroglio, parliamentarians were particularly restive at the prospect of overseas military interventions, and could see little point in provoking Russian animosity over an issue as obscure as Tibet. Younghusband himself retrospectively 'quite realised the difficulty which any Government at home has in securing support from the House of Commons in a matter of this kind'. (1) Younghusband was well aware that Central Asian forays were domestically unpopular; of September 1903, when his Mission was stationed at Kamba Jong, he remarked 'it was high treason for me to whisper the word Lhasa to my nearest friend, such agitation did the sound of it cause in England'. (2) Younghusband retained little sympathy for that parliamentary and domestic opinion which held back British responses to Russian intrigues:

> As long as what an officer may do is contingent on the 'will' of 'men in the street' of grimy manufacturing towns in the heart of England, so long must our action be slow, clumsy and hesitating, when it ought to be sharp and decisive. (3)

Yet parliamentary and domestic opinion remained the ultimate arbiters of Central Asian policy; unfortunate and unpopular undertakings could politically prove hazardous (if not a virtual 'kiss of death') to the fortunes of a Ministry, [as had befallen Beaconsfield's administration over Afghanistan]. If Younghusband perceived parliamentary and popular sentiment as unhappy indulgences which aided Russia in Central

Asia, it was perhaps ironic that MP's were particularly concerned about the constitutional propriety of the Mission; certainly MPs such as Gibson Bowles were more vexed over its constitutional implications than over Russian intrigues in Lhasa. Sections 54 and 55 of the Government of India Act 1858 were explicit:

> Except for preventing or repelling actual invasion of Her Majesty's Indian possessions, or under other sudden or urgent necessity, the revenues of India shall not, without the sanction of both Houses of Parliament, be applicable to defray the expenses of any military operation carried on beyond the frontiers of such possessions by Her Majesty's forces charged upon such revenues.

Given that the Younghusband Mission enjoyed a sizeable military escort under General MacDonald, and that Indian revenues were paying for these forces, the Younghusband Mission was in clear breach of this Act of Parliament. The Unionist MP for Kings Lynn, Gibson Bowles, strongly resented the Government's convenient ignoring of Sections 54 and 55 of the 1858 Act so that the Viceroy could bear-hunt in the Himalayas. On 3rd December 1903 he wrote to The Times:

> Is it intended to obtain the consent of both Houses of Parliament before applying the revenue of India to this particular military operation beyond the frontier?(4)

With Parliament in recess the Government could afford to ignore such criticisms; although the Government's position remained clearly unconstitutional, the Government was more concerned that parliamentary sanction of the Mission's military nature would actually jeopardise its aim of minimising the Mission's military dimension. A low-key invasion of Tibet would be less likely to arouse Russian ire, and would help diminish Tibetan resistance. Were the Tibet Mission to become a major military undertaking, in any subsequent Anglo-Tibetan treaty, a British presence would probably be required to uphold its terms; for the Government to seek Parliamentary approval of the Mission's military aspects was to play Curzon's game of long term involvement in Tibet coupled with intended insensitivity to Russia.

However, Gibson Bowles rightly remained attached to the need to uphold the 1858 Act; any other course was clearly illegal. On February 2nd in the House of Commons he observed that if there were 'concurrence' of Tibet, then it was a 'Mission'; if not, it was an 'invasion', stating his belief that in this invasion the relevant sections of the 1858 Act had 'been disobeyed and the Law broken'. (5) Yet the Government continued to flout the 1858 Act until April 13th; and even then its decision to seek Parliamentary approval for its military involvement in Tibet was not inspired by a concern for constitutional propriety. Rather, the deaths of 700 Tibetan soldiers in a battle with the Mission at Guru on March 31st 1904 had exposed the Government's false position beyond repair. Although Gibson Bowles might have been the Unionists' constitutional conscience, clearly the Government had been an unrepentant sinner, only unintentionally redeemed by Guru and its aftermath.

If the Younghusband Mission had been born constitutionally illegitimate, with a Russophobe birthright, the British public viewed it with a mixture of ill-ease and quiescence. Opposition to the Mission would centre on Radical circles. The Boer War had certainly left an anti-imperialist imprint on the public mind, but would that sentiment apply to intervention in Tibet? Radical hopes of arousing public indignation focused on a retired Indian civil servant of radical tendencies, the former Chief-Commissioner of Assam, Sir Henry Cotton, who had become a Knight Commander of the Star of India in June 1902. Cotton was to mount a virtual one-man campaign against British involvement in Tibet; the obscurity of the Tibet question doubtless made other Radicals shy away from organising similar campaigns, which added to Cotton's authority as the foremost extra-parliamentary critic of the Government.

Younghusband and Curzon would have found it particularly galling that Cotton, as a former employee of the Indian Civil Service, was organising a campaign that saw Britain as posing a greater threat to Tibet than anything Russia had to offer. Cotton had no sympathy for the Russian bogey; and his commitment to radicalism was well shown in 1904 when he headed an Indian National Congress delegation that sought, and was refused, access to the Viceroy. Cotton was adopted in the Spring of 1903 as Liberal candidate for Nottingham East and the Tibet question doubtless brought his career much needed publicity, although his sheer vociferousness and singlemindedness in condemning Government policy have brought him excessive notoriety. Nevertheless Cotton succeeded in arousing the interest of parliamentarians and the public in the Tibet issues. Cotton particularly used The Times letters page, and public meetings, in his endeavour to politicise public perception of the Younghusband Mission. As he himself noted:

> The use of The Times in my Tibetan campaign was invaluable. I was able to state the case against the invasion of Tibet in the most prominent and public manner possible and, though I fought practically single-handed, there can be no doubt my letters attracted considerable attention. (6)

In attempting to create a climate of domestic opposition to intervention in Tibet, Cotton realised that Parliament was the pivotal public forum. Although he was not to become an MP until 1906, he was in close contact with Opposition parliamentarians, and advised them on Tibetan concerns. Cotton later recalled:

> The late Lord Spencer asked me to go and see him at Spencer House, and I coached up other noble Lords and Members of Parliament over the matter. (7)

The Opposition, of which Spencer was Leader in the Lords, had little sympathy with an 'unnecessary' Tibetan policy implicitly directed against Russia, and was willing to make use of Cotton's help. Cotton was also closely involved with members of the Commons, particularly Thomas Lough, Liberal MP for Islington, who on January 28th 1904

co-hosted an anti-Government Tibet meeting at the Westminster Hotel, London, with Cotton. As the Liberals initially knew little about Tibet it is likely that Cotton was consulted by Campbell-Bannerman, Trevelyan and Bryce; and other keenly interested Liberals such as Roberts, Weir, Lambert and Lawson. Cotton may also have been consulted by Irish Nationalists who were active on this issue, such as O'Neill and Flynn.

Cotton, by his own account attended the Tibetan debates in the Lords and Commons(8), and was present in the gallery of the Commons on April 13th when Brodrick paid him the ultimate compliment of publicly refuting his writings in the press, and endeavouring to discredit him as a critic. Certainly Cotton felt the Government had been insufficiently brought to task in Parliamentary debates:

> My Lords and Gentlemen were slaves of the Blue-book - small blame to them, considering the profusion and confusion of information therein supplied - and had no mastery of its contents. (9)

If Balfour's government took a dim view of Cotton's attempts to challenge its policy of a limited Tibetan intervention, it took an even dimmer view of backbench restlessness on the Tibet issue. Gibson Bowles certainly demonstrated an unwelcome liveliness on the backbenches, and his attitude to the Government's evasion of the 1858 Government of India Act was a further instance of this. Following rumours in the press that in the forthcoming session (1904) certain members of Parliament would 'not be treated by the party whips as followers of the Government', Gibson Bowles wrote to Acland-Hood, Chief Government Whip, to discover the truth about these allegations. Although Acland-Hood had 'no hesitation' in reassuring Gibson Bowles that the rumours did not apply to him, and were untrue, it was clear enough that the Government wished to discourage backbench

insubordination. (10) A less independent MP than Gibson Bowles might have taken the hint.

Of course many Unionists, particularly as there was a whiff of Russia in Tibet, favoured an invasion. As Cotton remarked:

> The imputation of Russian intrigue anywhere is generally sufficient to rouse the indignation of Englishmen. And so the Russian bogey was deliberately trotted out in the case of Tibet. (11)

A Unionist such as E R P Moon, MP for St Pancras North, favoured a robust policy towards Russia; on the Council of the Central Asian Society, and closely concerned about the affairs of the Chinese Empire, he was particularly interested in Tibet. On 23rd July 1903 he had stated in the House of Commons that:

> In taking measures to meet the Russian advance in Asia we must be on our guard at every point ... Not only should we treat Afghanistan as a buffer state, but we should treat Persia as a buffer state, and also all these outlying dependencies, which the Chinese called Colonies, such as Eastern Turkestan, Mongolia and Tibet.

Moon clearly favoured Tibet as a buffer against Russian expansion, and warned that as regards Tibet and Mongolia Britain should do all it could to help China 'consolidate its rule over those parts of the world'. (12)

Moon represented a strand of Unionism that was out of sympathy with an over-conciliatory attitude towards Russia. Indeed in assessing the motivations for the Mission on April 13th 1904, he saw three overriding reasons: the protection of British 'prestige and honour', the resumption of Anglo-Tibetan trade, and 'to protect India against attack'. (13) For Moon and many other Unionists with a Curzon world-view, Russian subterfuge in Central Asia was no mirage but a chilling reality.

Indeed the Balfour Government was hampered in its Tibetan conduct by an uncertainty as to what its policy should be; the November 6th telegram was in fact stated Government policy, a limited intervention

with no long term British involvement. But there were to be sharp differences of emphasis in the Government as to the purpose of intervention. Brodrick, the new Secretary of State for India, saw the Mission as a clear means of demonstrating British might to Tibet (and Russia). Foreign Secretary Lansdowne felt that intervention in Tibet could be used as a quid pro quo with the Russian Government, for instance in securing Russian adherence to the Anglo-French understanding on Egypt. (14) Curzon, however, remained convinced of the necessity of obtaining some permanent means of British influence in Tibet, such as a Resident; he hoped that the pace of events in Tibet might make the appointment of a British Resident inevitable. The Unionist Government lacked the confidence of Curzon in Tibetan affairs or the conviction of Cotton's anti-interventionist beliefs. Balfour, who inclined to a moderate approach to Tibet out of deference to Russia and China, found his Government caught between the contradictory advice of a Viceroy and a former Chief Commissioner of Assam.

Defending the Government's conduct in Tibet was largely the responsibility of the Secretary of State for India; unfortunately Brodrick lacked the necessary parliamentary flair to be an inspired speaker or defender of government policy in the House. Hamilton, his predecessor at the India Office, had predicted that Brodrick's 'never failing gaucherie' would prevent him from 'ever becoming a popular or a really capable Minister'. (15) Similarly Balfour's private secretary Sanders believed Nature had endowed Brodrick with 'a strange and unhappy genius for producing strained relations in the course of public business'. (16) Brodrick was symbolic of the dearth of talent in Balfour's Cabinet; the lack of first class debaters in the Government must have had some bearing on the Unionists determination to frustrate Commons debate on Tibet wherever possible. In the Lords

where, under Lansdowne, the Unionists had more capable orators, debates on Tibet were more readily acceded to. Gibson Bowles likened the Unionist front bench, in the face of sallies from Campbell-Bannerman, to 'the Lords of the Philistines [who] sit on the roof making sport, [while] there is beneath them a blind Samson bowing himself beneath the pillar to bring down the whole structure on their heads'. (17) Yet if Brodrick can be defined in terms of mediocrity, so can much of the post-Salisbury Cabinet. Brodrick was a mediocrity within a mediocrity.

The opening rounds in the controversy over Tibetan policy, and how it affected Britain's international relations, came towards the close of 1903. The outgoing Hamilton had stated, in response to a Parliamentary question from Herbert Roberts on 6th August 1903, that, as regards Younghusband at Kamba Jong, it would be 'contrary to the public interest at this stage ..... to lay on the table the instructions to the British Commissioner'. (18) On November 6th the Government at last sanctioned a major advance into Tibet; with Parliament in recess there were limited opportunities to discuss the implications of Britain's dramatically changing relations with Tibet. It fell to Sir Henry Cotton to be the first to publicly challenge British involvement in Tibet.

The eminent geographer Douglas Freshfield had written to The Times on November 3rd about both the geography and the history of the North-Eastern frontier, and had noted how the Indian Government had decided not to submit to the 'premeditated insult' of the Tibetans' failure to send suitably empowered plenipotentiaries to meet Younghusband. He warned, quoting from Joseph Hooker:

> We forget that all our concessions to these people are interpreted into weakness. (19)

Replying from his St Johns Wood home on 2 December, Cotton was 'true to his salt', when he expressed his innate radical sympathies, and his aversion to using alleged Russian intrigues as an excuse for attacking the Tibetan underdog. He robustly defended the Tibetans' wish to avoid trade with India:

> The trade of Tibet is with China .... The sentiment of Imperial reciprocity of which we hear so much nowadays is very strong at Lhasa. (20)

Cotton clearly wished to defend Tibetan rights in the face of an aggrandising Viceroy and a bullying Britain.

That Cotton was read by Parliamentarians, and helped stir debate on Tibet, was shown by Gibson Bowles then writing to The Times stating his anxieties over the Government's unconstitutional position over the 1858 Act. (21) An unhappy Freshfield also contributed to that issue; he viewed Cotton's 'hypothetical criticism' of British policy as 'somewhat premature' and calling 'at least for the present, for no reply'. (22) The Times Editorial thought Cotton's letter deserved a response; it inveighed against 'irresponsible commentators at home' who, 'with the smug self-sufficiency characteristic of the Little Englander .... deal with the rest of the world with as much confidence as if it were the village green or a neighbouring football field'. (23) Thus were laid down the parameters of the Tibet debate which, inspired by Cotton's controversialism, took place in The Times over the proper direction of Britain's policy in Tibet.

On December 4th Cotton again wrote to The Times:

> We have sent an armed mission into Tibet, and because the Tibetans have ignored its existence we are waging war against them. (24)

He believed that the real reason for the military campaign lay in the desire to increase India's trade with Tibet; certainly Russia did not appear in Cotton's explanation for the British intervention. Cotton's

letter ensured that Tibet, as a controversial issue, would not quietly slip out of the public consciousness.

On January 9th Cotton renewed his campaign; he expressed the hope that when Parliament met, 'some further light' would 'speedily be thrown upon what appears to be a remarkable instance of wanton aggression'. Citing Gibson Bowles and Sir Charles Dilke as MPs already deeply concerned over the unconstitutional evasion of the 1858 Act, he warned The Times readership:

> A clearer evasion of this statute than the present military operations involves can hardly be imagined.

Yet it was his observation that The Times had 'practically abandoned the hollow pretence that our advance is a countermove against Russia' that stirred most debate. (25) British greed rather than Russian designs, Cotton believed, had inspired the Younghusband Expedition. The Times strongly refuted Cotton's suggestion that it no longer held Russia as a factor in the Tibet invasion; its Editorial on January 16th asked whether Cotton had ever heard of the Tibetan missions to Russia, and Russian Missions to Tibet, and affirmed its view that 'Russian intrigue' had been 'busy in Tibet for some years past'. (26) Although Cotton did not believe so, clearly Curzon in handling Tibet had been reacting in response to Russian intrigues at Lhasa. A Viceroy, no matter what his sympathies or otherwise towards Russia, had to be vigilant on India's glacis; as The Times noted:

> Even Sir Henry Cotton must admit that it would not be to the advantage of India to have a repetition at Lhasa of the underground efforts we have been able to overcome at Kabul. (27)

Other readers rebutted Cotton's remarks on the 'hollow pretence' of Russian involvement in Tibet; 'Spectator' on January 11th questioned whether, if the Russian Government cherished hostile designs towards Tibet, it was 'likely that they would inform Sir Henry

Cotton?' (28) Tsebu Chu, a reader evidently acquainted with the region, confessed:

> I can hardly imagine Sir H Cotton is as ill informed as would appear from his letter. (29)

Nevertheless Cotton's letters were maintaining a high public profile in The Times; the invasion of Tibet would not go unchallenged.

On January 18th Cotton wrote again to The Times re-stating his conviction of the illusory nature of the Russian 'phantom' in Tibet. As regards Russian intrigues, Cotton maintained, there was 'no limit to the gullibility of a certain class of Englishman in these matters:

> It is the idlest delusion to suppose that the Tibetan authorities have given or will give any more encouragement to Russians than they do to Englishmen.

A comparison of Dorjieff's mission to Russia with Curzon's frustrated attempts to achieve a dialogue with Lhasa clearly would not support this assertion of Cotton's. Cotton ended his letter by assuring The Times readership that Russia already had her hands too full to engage in 'schemes of aggression in Tibet', confidently adding that 'history records no attempted invasion of India across the Himalayan frontier'. (30)

The following day 'Sikkim', corresponding from the St James Club, wrote to The Times challenging Cotton's remarks. He was not inclined to be as generous as Cotton in considering alleged Russian intrigues; as to whether there had been a Russian Mission to Lhasa, 'Sikkim' believed that the fact that there was no Russian political officer in Lhasa was 'no proof that such negotiations have not been carried on'.

> The first reports of Russo-Chinese negotiations with regard to Port Arthur and Manchuria were also dismissed as 'wild statements' by politicians of no less sagacity than Sir Henry Cotton.

Finally, as a parthian shot to Cotton, 'Sikkim' noted how in 1793 a Sino-Tibetan army had actually crossed the Himalayas, descending on Nepal with 70,000 men. (31) Even so, Cotton remained unconvinced of

any potential for a Russian threat to India from Tibet. Indeed, it would be surprising if the Contemporary Review did not have Cotton among others in mind when it condemned those politicians, 'who fervently worship radicalism at home, and humbly sacrifice at the shrine of absolutism abroad'. (32)

Cotton had succeeded in maintaining Tibet as a controversial issue in the public eye during the Parliamentary recess; he was particularly keen to fire the interest of MPs, with the 1904 session of Parliament due to commence on February 2nd. Suitably close to Parliament, Cotton held a public meeting on January 28th at the Westminster Palace Hotel. (33) The meeting was convened by the New Reform Club in concert with the British Committee of the Indian National Congress and the London Indian Society. Radicals present included Mr T Lough MP, Mr Humphreys-Owen MP and Mr J A Hobson. It was perhaps fitting that J A Hobson should be present; inspired by his detestation if imperialism, his magnum opus, Imperialism was published in 1902; it warned:

> Vast countries in Asia such as Persia, Tibet, Siam, Afghanistan are rapidly forging to the front of politics as likely subjects of armed controversy between European powers with a view to subjugation. (34)

If Tibet was not to prove an area of 'armed controversy' between Britain and Russia, thereby proving Hobson's prediction concerning Tibet unduly pessimistic, it was simply that Tibet was not worth the risk of a major dispute to either party. Hobson moved the motion which was so worded as to prove controversial:

> That this meeting protests against the invasion of Tibet by a British armed force on the grounds
>
> (1) that the Government has published no information to show that it is other than an unwarranted act of aggression upon a neighbouring state, and

(2) that a heavy burden of expenditure is being placed upon the already overtaxed people of India for an enterprise beyond the frontier dictated not by the necessities of Indian policy, but by the pursuit of some undisclosed Imperial project.

And that this meeting calls upon Parliament to exercise its authority and to insist the Government shall either show an adequate cause for this expenditure or withdraw its forces from beyond the frontier without delay.

As Chairman, Lough stated that the failure of the Government to provide an offical explanation for the Mission or to obtain any Parliamentary sanction rendered such a protest necessary. Lough could only see the Mission as 'part of a recrudescence of a bad spirit of warlike enterprise'; but, as the main speaker, it fell to Cotton to inveigh against the Government's invasion of Tibet. He feared that India's apparent forward policy was 'traceable to the desire of officials to attain glory and distinction by adding to His Majesty's Dominions, to KCB-mania, as Lord Lawrence called it'. He resolutely espoused the Radical belief that the fear of Russian aggression 'was never less reasonable than in the case of Tibet'. Turning to the Government's 'palpable and gross violation' of the 1858 India Act, he remarked that, 'if it were argued that this was not a military campaign, he could imagine no baser subterfuge'. Following Cotton's speech the resolution was passed unanimously; only one note of dissent had been sounded in the meeting when Mr J D Rees 'took exception to the language of Mr Hobson', who had referred to the 'diabolical policy' practised by Curzon and his frontier agents. It was somehwat ironic that Rees should have been the sole voice of protest at Cotton's meeting; when Cotton retired in 1910 as MP for Nottingham East, he was succeeded by fellow Liberal J D Rees.

The Times gave further publicity to Cotton's meeting in its editorial, criticising it as a 'little group of politicians who are always "agin the Government"'.(35) Although The Times pointed to

Dorjieff's rumoured activities as refuting Cotton's view of events in Tibet, it must be given credit for providing Cotton's anti-interventionist Tibetan campaign with the oxygen of publicity. Without Cotton's contributions, the Government's Tibetan intervention would surely have been less controversial.

When Parliament at last met on February 2nd 1904, MPs and Lords were keen to question the Government over the implications of the advance into Tibet, particularly as regards its constitutional and Russian ramifications. In the Lords Earl Fitzwilliam sought to reassure the Opposition:

> The policy involved in the Mission .... is not to acquire territory, neither is it conceived in any aggressive spirit. The object in view is to obtain assurance that treaty obligations will be observed and that encroachment may not be renewed. (36)

However, Earl Spencer remained concerned over the Government's non-observance of the 1858 India Act, and questioned whether the Mission constituted 'a mere friendly group of visitors' sent by the Government of India, or did it mean more?(37) Both from a constitutional view and from the need not to provoke Russian hostility, Spencer's question deserved a clear answer. Lansdowne replied that the Government did not admit 'that the Tibetan Mission which is described in the (King's) Speech as a political mission, is a military operation'. (38) Lansdowne's reply was less than honest; as MacDonald's military force was accompanying the Mission into Tibet, inevitably his forces were on active duty. Had there been no question of forcing the Tibetans into better neighbourliness towards Britain, and had there been no Tibetan resistance anticipated, a military operation alongside the Mission would not have been required.

The Mission was clearly a military operation if only to provide a secure environment for Younghusband to negotiate in; to pretend otherwise was misleading. In the Commons Gibson Bowles insisted that:

> If there is concurrence of Tibet, then this is a Mission: if not it is an invasion. (39)

As Younghusband's expedition lacked Tibet's concurrence, it was transparently an invasion based on military power. Gibson Bowles remained implacably hostile to the Government's evasion of this simple truth as regards the 1858 India Act. Indeed he challenged 'any Gentleman on the front bench to answer his contention that the 1858 Act had been broken'; (40) his offer was declined. On February 4th, when Brodrick failed to give an honest reply to his question as to whether the British had been invited into Tibet, Gibson Bowles angrily retorted:

> That is no answer to my question, whether the Tibetan Government have given permission for this expedition to enter their territory. (41)

Clearly the Government had a malcontent on Tibetan policy uncomfortably in the midst of its backbenchers. Yet the Government maintained its dishonest attitude; on February 17th, in answer to a question from Herbert Roberts, Liberal MP for Denbighshire West, on the Government's constitutional impropriety, Brodrick stated, in a triumph of legerdemain:

> The fact that an escort accompanied the political mission does not necessitate any action under Clause 54 and 55 of the Government of India Act. (42)

The first major opportunity to scrutinise Government conduct came in the Lords on February 26th 1904. Opposition Lords chose to concentrate on the Russian dimension of the Tibet question and Lord Reay, former Governor of Bombay, proposed that 'a humble address be presented to His Majesty for further papers relating to Tibet' (the first Tibetan Blue Book having been published in February). Reay

delivered a capable speech, although the detail of his speech, culled from the Blue Book, lends weight to Cotton's belief that Parliamentarians were in danger of becoming 'slaves to the Blue Book'. Reay was unconvinced that Tibet's refusal to receive or send letters, the removal of the boundary pillars, or the usurpation of grazing rights could 'justify an advance into the heart of Tibet'. Reay also believed that the frustrated export efforts of the Indian Tea Association to Tibet could not explain such a Mission. Rather he turned to the question of Russia, stating his belief in how remote was the 'direct contact of Russia with Tibet'. Reay fully accepted Lamsdorff's July 8th 1901 assurance of the non-political nature of Dorjieff's Mission, as well as Benckendorff's assurances to Lansdowne, of which he remarked:

> I cannot conceive that any declaration could be clearer or more definite than the declaration of the Russian Government.

Reay suspected that British mistrust of Russia lay behind the Mission:

> It is inherent to our political position that wherever we advance, there should be mistrust in England.

In view of this Anglo-Russian mistrust, rather than permit sterile misunderstandings to continue, Reay hoped Lansdowne would show a willingness to enter into 'amicable discussion' with the Russian Government to attempt to remove, 'once and for all, the cause of reciprocal suspicion of motives'.

Reay concluded his speech by seeking an assurance from Lansdowne that:

> Colonel Younghusband will in no circumstances be allowed to advance beyond Gyangtse, and whether the Indian Government has been informed that an occupation or advance upon Lhasa will not be authorised by His Majesty's Government. (43)

He was clearly concerned that the November 6th telegram would be but a staging post on the road to Lhasa. Reay's speech also voiced the Opposition fear that the foray into Tibet, inspired by the Russophobe

Curzon, could threaten the prospects for improved Anglo-Russian relations. Reay's concerns remained very real dangers.

Hardwicke, for the Government, argued that the Government could have abandoned all hope of having any relations with Tibet at all. That it had decided to pursue a policy of positive intercourse with Tibet proved that it was now carrying out 'the one policy' that had been adopted towards Tibet by Viceroys as disparate as Elgin and Curzon. But if Hardwicke detected a clear continuity in Anglo-Tibetan relations he was mistaken; prior to 1900 Anglo-Tibetan relations had been a localised affair on the Raj's peripheries, yet after this time, as Hardwicke himself put it, there were 'matters of far more importance .... to be considered'. Russian contacts with Tibet meant that Anglo-Tibetan relations became siphoned into the whirlpool of Great Game rivalry. Hardwicke's speech went on to become an admission of the changed nature of Anglo-Tibetan relations.

Hardwicke contrasted Tibet's unwillingness to have 'intercourse' with Britain to her willingness to have 'intercourse with another power':

> We do not care whether the object of the mission sent from Tibet to St Petersburg was commercial, political or religious, it makes no difference to us. But we know the result of that Mission and the result of the intercourse has been to inspire the Tibetans with the feeling they have the power of Russia behind them. They have said openly "We do not fear England, we have Russia behind us".

However, the Government, although prepared to admit a clear Russian dimension to the Tibetan problem, was anxious to disassociate the Russian Government from these difficulties. Tibet's erroneous perception of Russian intentions lay at the heart of the question; however for Russia's benefit, Hardwicke made clear, that in any Anglo-Russian 'amicable discussions', the matter of Tibet would not arise as the British Government did not recognise the Russian Government to have 'any <u>locus standi</u> in Tibet'. Unfortunately for the British

Government, Russia did have a de facto locus standi in Tibet through Dorjieff; had Russia enjoyed no locus standi in Tibet, the Younghusband Mission would never have existed. Hardwicke was unable to offer any definite announcement as to whether the Mission would advance beyond Gyangtse (if only because the Government did not know itself), and ended his speech by offering the curious prospect that should the Buddhist potentate, the Dalai Lama, prefer to appeal 'to the arbitrament of the sword and to provoke hostilities', then Britain 'must necessarily accept that challenge'. (44) Hardwicke's readiness to pick up the Dalai Lama's gauntlet came at a time the Government was emphatically denying that the Younghusband Mission could be considered a military enterprise.

However, the intervention of a former Viceroy, Ripon, was to provide a major indictment of Government conduct towards Tibet. Ripon's criticisms were particularly effective as being the first occasion 'throughout the whole of the Government of Lord Curzon' on which, 'either in Parliament or out of it', he had ever said 'a word of criticism'. Ripon claimed to find it 'not a pleasant task' to criticise his successor, but Curzon's Tibetan foray demanded he speak out, as 'every step in that policy' had been 'inspired by a Russian scare'. In the case of Russian involvement in Tibet Ripon believed:

> We have now nothing more than rumours of a Russian agent. There is no proof .... that any Russian agent has been to Lhasa.

Even of the Tibetan Mission to St Petersburg Ripon felt, somewhat generously, that it could not be maintained that it had been sent 'with the authority of the Government of Lhasa'.

If Curzon can be accused of excessive zeal in seeking to oppose Russian influence at Lhasa, Ripon can equally be accused of an excessive willingness to give Russia the benefit of the doubt as regards Russian penetration of Tibet. However, Ripon was justified in

expressing his anxiety at Curzon's plans for long term British involvement in Tibet; he believed that the demand for a permanent British agent (at Lhasa) would be 'the most fatal of all proposals'. Furthermore, Ripon warned:

> If you get to Lhasa and force your treaty upon the Tibetan people you will throw their sympathies to the opposite direction, namely to Russia.

Ripon undoubtedly believed a forward policy in Tibet to be inherently flawed; yet he remained worried about its wider implications. He warned that those 'animated by hostility to this country' should not be given the chance to misinterpret British intentions in Tibet as a pretext 'to embroil us with Russia'. Ripon felt this fear particularly justified at a time when the Russian people were 'naturally excited' about the Russo-Japanese war, for any idea that Britain was 'attempting to start a march on them' would be a 'grave danger'.(45) Although Ripon believed Russia had no right in Tibet, nevertheless she had an interest in Tibet, and he clearly felt that Britain ignored Russian sensibilities at her peril. Certainly he provided a distinguished drubbing of the Government's behaviour in the Tibetan question; Ripon's speech can only be criticised on the grounds that in his eagerness to denounce the forward policy in Tibet, he failed to give the instances of Russo-Tibetan contacts a fair hearing.

Rosebery, however, gave a particularly effective speech on the Tibetan question; although unenthusiastic over a forward move, he was more sympathetic as to its causes. Confessing himself to find 'so melancholy a resemblance' to the onset of the first Afghan War, nevertheless he felt it no longer possible to withdraw the Mission without 'some substantial result' and to make 'a firm impression on the Tibetan mind and imagination'. Rosebery was in no doubt that fear of Russia had inspired the Mission; of the border and treaty

difficulties with Tibet he perceptively observed they were 'very suitable causes for a quarrel if you want to pick one':

> There is only one justification for the policy of His Majesty's Government, and that is the question of whether there is any understanding between Russia and Tibet which might be of a character dangerous to our interests in Asia.

Certainly Rosebery was not one of those who held that 'because the Asiatic dominion of Russia and Tibet are a thousand miles apart, that altogether deprives them of their significance': he was prepared to accept that Russian activities were more than a figment of Curzon's imagination. He realised that distance in Central Asia was relative; he believed that the Dalai Lama and his authority was to Russia, as well as to Britain and China, 'a matter of great significance and importance'.

Rosebery's speech was both conciliatory and firm on the question of Russo-Tibetan contact; although categorically accepting Russian denials of any Russo-Tibetan agreement, nevertheless he plainly attached 'considerable weight to the Tibetan Embassy to St Petersburg', viewing it is an act 'unwarranted by consolidation of neighbourly amity', which therefore assumed 'a political significance which it is not easy to overlook'. He felt this Embassy to be 'a serious symptom' and expressed the hope that Lansdowne could reveal more about the relations between Russia and Lhasa. Rosebery's observations and criticisms were intelligent and pertinent; he was not a 'hostile critic' and he gave Government policy fair consideration, although he did accept that to such a critic reading through the Blue Book, forcing Indian tea on Tibet might appear the Government's real objective. (46)

It fell to Lansdowne to state the Government's position, particularly since, as Rosebery had hinted, Russo-Tibetan relations might not be entirely platonic. Lansdowne refuted suggestions of a

'forward policy' and argued that British relations with Tibet over the frontier question had been a 'history of British patience and forbearance'. In answer to Rosebery's remark that some critics might see the intent to force Indian tea on Tibet as the real reason for the Mission, Lansdowne noted that so little was British pressure on this issue that, in 1893, 'at the request of the Chinese .... we dropped the question of tea, for .... no less than five years'. Similarly Britain's good relations with Nepal and Bhutan, so Lansdowne argued, meant it was not necessary to impute 'sinister designs upon our Tibetan neighbours'. As Lansdowne realised, Russia lay at the heart of the Tibet question; he stated the Government's view of Tibet's status thus:

> Our view is that the Independence of Tibet should be recognised, but that if any power is to exercise a preponderance in that country, that power can only be Great Britain.

In other words, there was no room for Russia in Tibet. So as not to embarass St Petersburg, Lansdowne diplomatically added:

> Whether there had been any question of communications between Russia and Tibet or not, it would, in my belief, have been none the less necessary that some step should be taken to bring the Tibetan Government to reason.

In arguing that the Russian dimension of the Tibet question had no bearing on the decision to enter Tibet, an entirely specious argument, Lansdowne sought further to disassociate Russia from collusions in Lhasa by firmly blaming the Tibetan Government:

> What seems to me to aggravate our difficulties in this case is not so much anything which the Russian Government has done, as what the Tibetans imagine the Russian Government to intend or to have in contemplation.

Although Lansdowne sought to dispel 'idle rumours' of Russian troops or Russians in Lhasa, nevertheless he did not seek to deny the 'indisputable evidence' that the Tibetans were 'deeply convinced that 'they may count upon Russian support'. The point Lansdowne's speech conveniently avoided was <u>how</u> the Tibetans had come to believe they

could rely on Russian support. As Dorjieff and his Mission to Russia indicated, the Russian Government was hardly a blameless party. Lansdowne concluded his speech by stating that in view of Tibetan behaviour 'no other course seemed open to us' but to send a Mission. (47) Yet as a former Viceroy and Foreign Secretary, Lansdowne recognised that Russia's role in Tibet had not been entirely incidental, even though his speech, for obvious diplomatic reasons, encouraged that impression. Indeed whether Tibet was Russophile because of what she imagined Russia would do, or was Russophile because of a definite Russo-Tibetan compact, the effect was still the same: within three hundred miles of Calcutta was a Russophile and Anglophobe state. The Younghusband Mission was the Viceroy's attempt to lance the Russian boil on India's glacis; if anything, Tibet was the incidental party.

In the House of Commons, anxieties about the Government's ultimate intentions in Tibet persisted. Brodrick had given the Commons an assurance on February 4th:

> The object of the Mission is not to annex any portion of Tibetan territory, but to prevent a recurrence of the difficulties arising from the attitude of the Tibetan Government in respect of the Convention of 1890. (48)

MPs, however, remained restive about the Government's Tibetan policy, and they were alive to the fact that, should the Tibet Mission begin to use force, the Government would be seriously embarrassed on both Russian and constitutional grounds. The Opposition backbenches continued to ask awkward questions of Brodrick; Irish MPs such as Redmond, Swift MacNeill and Flynn also endeavoured to discomfort the Government. On 9th March Redmond, Nationalist MP for Clare East, asked Balfour 'whether he will arrange that the House of Commons shall have an opportunity of considering the question of the expedition to Tibet before the expedition makes further advance'. Unsurprisingly,

in view of the political and diplomatic delicacy of the issue, Balfour refused:

> At the present moment I do not think anything would be gained by a discussion of this question and I do not propose to make any arrangement as suggested in the question. (49)

If the Opposition front bench preferred to hold its fire on the Government's Tibet position, presumably until such time as Tibet policy could be criticised without appearing unpatriotic, Gibson Bowles had no such armistice with the Government. On 17th March he sought to know if an 'order' had been sent to the Government of India 'directing hostilities to be undertaken in Tibet'. Brodrick replied that no such order had been given, though the Mission was instructed to defend itself in the event of an 'attack'; Brodrick also informed Gibson Bowles, who had also asked if Tibet had assented to the Mission, that the Government 'did not make the advance of the Mission dependant on their consent'. An angry Gibson Bowles retorted:

> Then does my Right Honourable Friend say that to send an armed expedition into that country is not an hostile act?

Brodrick was saved from the embarrassment of answering Gibson Bowles' question by the Speaker's intervention, ruling the supplementary question out of order as a 'debatable matter of opinion'. (50)

However, pressure in the Commons on the Government's position was to grow; that Britain should have invaded Tibet at the instigation of a Viceroy renowned for his hostility to Russia, and that the Commons should be denied the opportunity of debate, remained clear proof of continued Government bad faith towards the Lower House. On 28th March Trevelyan, Liberal MP for Elland, sought an assurance from Brodrick that 'if fighting takes place .... the Government will recognise the expedition as a military one, and take the necessary steps to secure the consent of both Houses of Parliament, as required by Law'. Although Brodrick promised the Government would 'undoubtedly comply

with the Law as expressed in Sections 54 and 55 of the Better Government of India Act', it was evident enough that the Government would avoid the issue until it was no longer avoidable. (51) On the same day, Lough asked Brodrick when the House would have the 'promised opportunity' of debating the matter (Tibet), to which Brodrick replied that no such promise had been given; in apparent frustration the Nationalist MP for Cork County North, Flynn, (though 'out of order') endeavoured to repeat Lough's question. (52) It was clear that the Government intended to thwart a major Tibet debate in the Commons for as long as possible.

However, Parliamentary custom provided that, prior to the Easter recess, MPs could raise any matters of interest to them; thus during the Consolidated (No 1) Bill, also on 28th March, Trevelyan addressed the Tibetan question. The Government could not prevent him discussing the Tibetan issue; for his part Trevelyan insisted that it was 'the duty of the House to consider why they were moving forward in a quasi-military manner'. As the first MP able to discuss the Tibetan invasion in the Commons, he approached the matter 'in a spirit of inquiry', noting the absence of any 'explicit statement of the reasons why the Mission was going forward at all'. He did not consider that the catalogue of 'small incidents and annoyances on the borders' of India, or Lhasa's policy of isolation, justified the invasion; rather it was the 'old bugbear of Russia' that had inspired the British intervention. Trevelyan believed that, as regards the fear of Russia, there was less occasion for it than had 'ever occurred in the history of England'. If invading Tibet was strategically flawed, neither could Trevelyan believe the rumours of Russian envoys in Lhasa, particularly as Lansdowne had accepted Benckendorff's assurances.

Thus he could only conclude:

> It seemed a very strong measure, with the small evidence of Russia's intention, and the immense territory that the Russians would have to traverse to send an armed force into a harmless country.

Trevelyan was certain of the effect British intervention in Tibet would have on Russia:

> It was obviously, if anything, a challenge to her, an irritant, an attempt to steal a march upon her, just at the moment she was engaged elsewhere.

Yet even if Britain was endeavouring to steal a march upon Russia during her difficulties with Japan, that was exactly what Russia had done in North China during the Boer War. Trevelyan, however, could not accept the British invasion was a justified response to Russian penetration; rather the Mission would simply create 'hostility in Russia where none previously existed'. (53)

Not only had Trevelyan concluded this speech with a clear censure of British behaviour in Tibet, he continued to pressurise the Government on Tibet by submitting a question for 29th March. Trevelyan sought 'information regarding the intention of the Government' concerning the Mission's advance. The Government, however, had every intention of rebutting unhelpful questions by over-curious MPs; after Trevelyan uttered a few words outside the scope of his question, conduct which was 'out or order', the Speaker interjected with a highly revealing remark:

> Mr Speaker called the Hon. Member's attention to the fact that there was a notice on the paper dealing with the question of Tibet which precluded the merits of the expedition being now discussed. (54)

To prevent embarrassment to itself, and its relations with Russia, the Government was not only verbally denying the House the opportunity to debate Tibet, but was employing underhand parliamentary tactics to frustrate the possibility of any such debate. Sir Robert Reid,

Liberal MP for Dumfries Burghs, spoke immediately after Brodrick's reply to Trevelyan's question:

> He very much regretted that the House was prevented from discussing the subject of the Tibetan expedition by reason of the fact that a Motion dealing with the question had been set down by a Private Member on the other side. The result of the Rule was that the House might be prevented from discussing questions of the most vital importance by the uncontrolled caprice or design of an individual member. (55)

The Rule to which Reid referred is explained by Redlich as:

> An application of the rule of procedure which forbade motions of an anticipatory nature; it is out of order to introduce a bill or a motion which appears to cover all or part of the ground taken up by a motion or bill already among the orders of the day, even for a later date.

Thus the Government could be 'protected from all discussion' of an unwelcome subject such as Tibet if an MP, 'by arrangement with the Government, or even without any formal communication with them', set down a bill or motion at an opportune time, either for a 'distant day or leaving the date for discussion right open' (56); thus as long as such a bill or motion remained amongst the orders, the Government could thwart unwelcome discussion on Tibet. Although ignorant of the source of the blocking motion, Reid pointedly remarked:

> They might fairly assume the Government could have some little influence in preventing its being on the Paper if they desired to exercise it.

Reid expressed the hope that the Government might do this 'if some responsible member of the Opposition, not necessarily on the front bench, desired to raise a discussion'. (57) It was no coincidence that Redlich, writing of the 1904 session, observed of the Government's tactics:

> The Balfour Cabinet managed with the help of blocking motions to elude all discussion of the delicate questions of Protection and of the employment of Chinese labour on the Transvaal - arousing by so doing much indignation among the Opposition. (58)

It is salutary to think that, had there been no Guru disaster, Tibet would surely have joined this list.

At Guru on March 31st 1904 the Government's contention that the Younghusband Mission was a peaceful enterprise was exposed beyond repair; a heavily outnumbered, though well armed, Younghusband Mission came to blows with the Tibetans, leaving seven hundred Tibetans dead. The Government stood in clear constitutional breach of the 1858 India Act, with the military nature of the Mission self-evident. However, the Government remained fortunate in that the Parliamentary recess lasted until April 12th; it had almost a fortnight for passions to cool following first reports of Guru reaching the press on April 1st. The Times felt little sympathy for the Tibetan plight, believing that the 'ignorant recklessness of the Tibetan leaders at Guru finds its counterpart in the entire policy of Lhasa', and remained convinced that only Great Britain of the Powers had the right to 'exercise a preponderance in that country'. (59) However, there was a great feeling of revulsion in Radical circles at the Guru incident, as well as unease in the country. It fell to Cotton to express Radical dismay. On April 8th he forthrightly condemned the 'recent slaughter of Tibetans' and castigated the Government's Tibetan conduct. Cotton also sought to raise the spectre that Younghusband said was to haunt his Mission, that of Cavagnari:

> Do we intend to follow our precedent of Sir Louis Cavagnari at Kabul and establish a permanent British envoy at Lhasa?

Cotton was not convinced by Government protestations of no annexations or protectorate in Tibet, noting that it would not be the first time that 'circumstances have been held to alter cases'. (60) As Cotton's fear was Curzon's hope, Cotton wrote again to The Times on April 11th. In an endeavour to expose the Government's version of the diplomatic background surrounding the Tibet invasion, he called into question Hardwicke's and Lansdowne's assurance of February 26th to the Lords, of China's 'full cognisance and consent', and 'knowledge and

concurrence' of the British intervention. In what The Times called his 'quixotic earnestness in the defence of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet', Cotton also questioned the truth of a reference in the King's speech to 'the concurrence of the Chinese Government' in the Tibet intervention:

> I hope my language will not be considered too strong if I say these statements are devoid of foundation .... We have literally ignored the Chinese protests and have spurned their suzerainty. Is it not a very dangerous policy calculated to throw China into the arms of Russia?(61)

These charges against Government assurances were undeniably serious, and were designed to encourage increasing scrutiny by MPs of the whole question of Tibet. The Times Editorial replied to Cotton's charged in deep displeasure:

> Sir Henry Cotton's language is not strong, in fact it is not strong at all. It is excessively discourteous but that is quite a different thing.

It concluded by wishing Cotton 'a more respectable client and Tibet a less maladroit advocate'. (62)

Cotton's views did not go unchallenged by other letters. A H H MacClean chided Cotton for practically giving the lie to 'the statements contained in the King's speech and the speeches of the Earl of Hardwicke and Marquis of Lansdowne'. (63) 'Sikkim' criticised Cotton's robust defence of Chinese suzerainty; he remained unconvinced of the substance of Chinese suzerainty in Tibet, and questioned Lhasa's behaviour as a loyal Chinese feudatory, particularly in view of her contacts with Russia. (64) Cotton's real achievement lay, not in the popularity of his arguments outside Radical circles, but in his ability to stir discussion on the Tibet issue. In the period after Guru and prior to the House's re-assembling, Cotton's letters ensured

that the columns of 'the Thunderer' remained alive with debate on the invasion of Tibet; MPs reading The Times during the Easter recess would want explanations for British conduct in Tibet from a Government in clear violation of the 1858 Government of India Act.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Debate Achieved: the Tibet Revenues Bill of April 1904

On April 13th 1904 Brodrick wrote to Curzon that:

> A number of our Members went to the Whips early in the afternoon, and told them that they intended to vote against the Government, unless it was made clear that we adhered to the policy laid down in the telegram of November 6th, and did not intend to keep a permanent mission in Tibet.

Brodrick recognised that:

> The slaughter ten days before naturally barbed the contentions of those who urged that the Tibetans were an inoffensive people who only wanted to be left alone. (1)

There was also a strong precedent for voting against a Government in violation of Sections 54 and 55 of the 1858 India Act; as Gibson Bowles had noted on February 2nd, in 1878, over the declaration of war in Afghanistan 'the Member for West Birmingham, Lord Hartington, and Lord James of Hereford all voted against the Government on this very ground'. (2)

Clearly, both in the eyes of the backbenches and the Opposition, Government conduct towards Tibet had been reprehensible; yet the Government proved sufficiently able to mollify MP's anxieties that in the April 13th debate on Tibet, it achieved a handsome majority of 209 (Ayes 270, Noes 61). The motion presented to the House was:

> That this House consents to the revenues of India being applied to defray the expenses of any military operations which have or may become necessary beyond the frontiers of His Majesty's Indian Possessions, for the purposes of protecting the Political Mission which has been despatched to the Tibetan Government.

If the retrospective nature of part of the Motion was itself an admission that the Government had been outside the Law, MPs displeasure at the Government's unconstitutional conduct was not reflected in the division of the House; only an unequivocal Government promise of upholding the November 6th telegram had allayed the

Common's restiveness. Certainly the Government's new-found concern for constitutional propriety and reiteration of the November 6th telegram did induce Gibson Bowles to vote in the 'Aye' lobby; otherwise Gibson Bowles would surely have led a Unionist revolt. Yet, although those in the 'Noes' lobby had only constituted a 'bakers dozen' of Liberals and 49 Irish, it was the Opposition Front bench's decision to walk out, rather than vote in either lobby, that ensured the Government's undeserved success in the vote on Tibet. Certainly, in view of the Government's majority of 209 in the Tibet division, one would not have guessed the Government's trepidation at the prospect of a debate it had hoped would never happen.

The 'Political Notes' of The Times on April 13th provide an insight into the Government's post-Guru Tibetan difficulties:

> The fact having leaked out that Mr Lough contemplated moving the adjournment of the House of Commons yesterday in order to call attention, on the grounds of public urgency, to the question of Tibet, Sir Alexander Acland-Hood (Government Chief Whip) made special mention of the matter in his 'Whip' as a reason for the prompt return of Ministerialists after the Easter holiday. Consequently Unionist members were present at the commencement of business in greater numbers than would otherwise have been the case. (3)

Lough, as demonstrated by his chairing of Cotton's protest meeting at the Westminster Palace Hotel, had been in the forefront of efforts to oppose Government Tibetan policy. Evidently Lough had helped 'bounce' the Government into calling a debate at long last. Parliament reassembled after Easter on April 12th, Balfour announced that on April 13th the Government would propose a motion on Tibet; in effect the Government had acknowledged that parliamentary pressure and public concern had made a Tibet debate inevitable. The Political Correspondent of The Times noted how both sides were 'issuing urgent whips in view of an important division on party lines' (4); that the Opposition would abstain could not have been predicted by the Government.

It is therefore of particular interest to note how the Opposition anticipated the debate; a study of the Westminster Gazette, as representative of mainstream Liberalism, and the Manchester Guardian as exponent of a more radical Liberalism, is especially useful in understanding how the Government's Tibet conduct was perceived. The Westminster Gazette on April 13th commented that whereas, previously the Government had 'steadily denied' that the Mission was the 'kind of military operation' requiring Parliamentary sanction under the 1858 India Act, now

> The sudden discovery that the attack on the Mission and the engagement which followed (Guru) brings it under the definition is in itself a sharp criticism of the whole affair and the manner in which the Act of Parliament is commonly evaded.

Clearly unhappy with Government policy the Westminster Gazette turned to the question of Russia's attitude to the intervention in Tibet, expressing the hope that 'some steps' had been taken to consider Russian sensibilities. The Westminster Gazette believed that since

> Both Russia and Great Britain profess to have no other designs on Tibet other than to procure trade facilities and to prevent the spiritual influences which radiate from the sacred city of Lhasa being used to their disadvantage amongst the Buddhists of Asia. If these professions are honest, the right solution is that they should agree with each other to leave Lhasa alone.

The Westminster Gazette also gave warning that

> If it is the control of spiritual influence that we are thinking of, we may be quite sure that we are not at all likely to supplant Russia in the affection of the Tibetans or of Buddhists generally by an armed expedition against their holy places.

Wisely the Westminster Gazette further maintained that 'we must relate this expedition to the whole of our policy'; the Gazette particularly held improved Anglo-Russian relations at a premium.

> A bad mistake in a matter like the Tibet expedition, which causes the same kind of exaggerated suspicion in Russia as supposed Russian designs do in this country, might give a disastrous set-back in this direction and go far to neutralise the good effects of the French treaty. (5)

Clearly the Westminster Gazette was unenamoured with the excesses and risks of the Government's Tibetan involvement; there was nothing in the Westminster Gazette to indicate a Liberal readiness to abstain on a Tibet motion in the Commons.

If the Westminster Gazette foresaw a 'dangerous, fruitless and undignified' future for the Mission, the Manchester Guardian shared even less enthusiasm for this 'invasion of Tibet'. As Cotton had demonstrated, Radicals were unwilling to compromise in the face of a British Imperialism 'amok' on the Roof of the World. The Manchester Guardian of April 13th believed the Government's introduction of a Tibetan bill to be an ingenuous attempt to 'legalise' the invasion of Tibet, and noted that this 'filibustering expedition' had been 'organised by those Indian Officials who would also have had the organising of a lawful war against Tibet, if such a war had been authorised and declared'. Certainly the Guardian felt that Tibetan 'imperfections' in conforming to European diplomatic methods had provided Indian expansionists with convenient casus bellorum to 'round off our estate'. The Guardian could only conclude verbal legerdemain was all that stood between the Government and an illegal violation of the 1858 Act. Such was the Guardian's mistrust of the Government's intentions that it believed, with the 'necessary resolution once obtained' Tibet 'will be gloriously harried and taught we are in earnest' and 'made to hate us more than Russia'.(6) The Little Englander instinct of the Guardian viewed the Government's conduct in Tibet with a bitter cynicism; the Government had no hope of engaging any Radical sympathy. Radicals, not unreasonably, saw the Younghusband Mission as evidence of a bellicose Imperialism; Sir Wilfred Lawson, the Liberal MP for Cambourne, demonstrated this point

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# CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS

(The *Times* leading article on Christmas Day announced that though we are at peace with "Christian Communities," we are still engaged in fighting with "Savage Tribesmen."

THANK God that on this Christmas Day
There's someone whom we still can slay!
"Christian Communities" at best
Should never quite from slaughter rest.
A year ago, 'tis scarcely more,
We soaked the veld with Christian gore.
Two nations showed their prowess then—
"Communities of Christian men";
It would be sad indeed to-day
If no one there was left to slay.
But, Christians, keep your spirits up,
You still may drink of rapine's cup;
Still Savage Tribesmen to our joy
Remain for Christians to destroy;
"Mad Mullahs" roam about the world,
Who to perdition must be hurled;
And in the Transvaal is there not
Still found the wicked Hottentot?
Then there's that Llama who won't fight,
Whom therefore we must shoot at sight.
We'll shoot all tribesmen, black or white—
It is our duty and our right.
Somaliland and far Tibet,
There, there is work for Christians yet.
So thankful on this Christmas Day
We feel there's someone left to slay.

*28th December* 1903.

Sir Wilfred Lawson MP's Christmas 1903 'reflections' on the 'unchristian' nature of Unionist Foreign Policy, of which he believed, Tibet was but a further victim.

## TIBET

"The conduct of the Chumbi people continues excellent. They take off their hats and bow to the Mission."
*Daily Paper.*

Oh, the men of Tibet
Are a glorious set;
In a battle they know the way how,
When the foemen appear,
To let them draw near,
And take off their hats with a bow.

Good humour prevails
In those hills and those dales
Where the "Mission" at present is set;
And our troops all declare,
Though they'd fight anywhere,
They prefer it by far in Tibet.

Now what a delight
Is in this way to fight,
Avoiding all worry and row;
No killing and stabbing,
No looting and grabbing,
You off with your hat and you bow.

It's nice for the Mission
To hold the position,
Of being a popular pet;
And charming, indeed,
Of its exploits to read,
But *why* did it go to Tibet?

*December* 1903.

Sir Wilfred Lawson MP questioned why it had been necessary for the Younghusband Mission to enter Tibet at all.

when on April 12th he called out to (an unresponsive) Brodrick 'Are we at war with Tibet or not? I see the Viceroy speaks of "the enemy"'. (7)

However, Liberals of a less Radical disposition, although prepared to criticise the policy and motivations that caused the despatch of the Mission, were unwilling to be cast as unpatriotic or ungrateful to the Younghusband Mission. The Liberal Front Bench realised there was little popularity in criticising a British military endeavour, and had no wish to leave the party open to charges of an unhealthy Little Englander stance. Although Opposition leadership naturally remained unprepared to support the Government in any division, a walk-out had the advantage of registering Liberal displeasure but not at the cost of being seen to 'undermine' the Mission. The Opposition decision to walk out at the end of the Tibet debate was prudent; for the Government, such a Liberal manoeuvre could not have been predicted.

It fell to Brodrick to open the debate on Tibet for the Government. He began his justification of Government conduct to the House by noting, with no intended irony, that the Government's motion was purposely designed 'in accordance' with the 1858 India Act. Citing legal advice (which unsurprisingly supported Brodrick's defence of the Government's record), Brodrick maintained that no parliamentary sanction had been required for the despatch of a Mission 'accompanied by an armed protecting force'. Rather he argued that had Parliament been asked for revenues for the Mission, it would have made what was only a negotiating mission appear otherwise. Thus, regrettable as the Guru incident was, nevertheless it was the responsibility of the Mission's forces to defend themselves; had the Mission not done so, the outcome of Guru might well have been reversed, and the Guru incident ought at least to prove a powerful incentive for the Tibetans

to negotiate. Brodrick's justification for the Government's tardiness conveniently ignored the fact that the Younghusband Mission had invaded Tibet; British military forces on operational duty were the backbone of that invasion, a circumstance in sharp violation of the 1858 Act.

Brodrick sought to add strength to his arguments by countering the vigorous Press campaign launched against the Government's Tibet policy by its inveterate Tibetan critic, Cotton. Brodrick held:

> Sir Henry Cotton has written with great knowledge and with great resource on this subject, but with an entire want of sympathy apparently with the objects of the Viceroy and Government of India.

Not only were Cotton's efforts to warrant a public rebuttal from Brodrick, but Cotton was actually present in the Commons during this debate and had also had a letter published by The Times on this same day. In his letter Cotton not only supported his previously published assertion that 'statements from the King's Speech and from Lord Lansdowne and Lord Hardwicke .... were without foundation', but insisted The Times also publish an annexed note (using the Blue Book as his evidence) proving that 'even stronger language' in his criticisms would have been 'justified'. (8) The Government had every reason to want to discredit Cotton; Brodrick had the means to attempt to do this. Brodrick noted that in a despatch of June 25th 1894 Cotton, then Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, had pointed out that the Tibetans were levying a 10 per cent ad valorem tax on Indo-Tibetan trade, in violation of the 1893 Anglo-Chinese Tibetan Free Trade agreement. Moreover, as Cotton's despatch disapprovingly noted, the Tibetans had also closed the town of Phari, thereby preventing merchants from reaching the Tibetan mart at Yatung. Brodrick remarked how:

> Sir Henry Cotton in very pregnant language, points out that this was inconsistent with the terms of the treaty and a matter for serious consideration.

Yet if Brodrick had exposed Cotton, the great defender of Tibet, as accepting, whilst on the spot, the recalcitrant nature of the Tibetans, he still felt there was a 'more important' point to consider. Tibet's policy of denying the Sikkimese their age-old right of access to the Chumbi Valley was viewed by Cotton as a 'very serious matter'. Cotton concluded in his June 25th 1894 despatch, that in view of all these difficulties, the Government of India should consider the weakness of Chinese authority in Tibet. Brodrick also noted that Cotton, the self-appointed defender of Chinese suzerainty in Tibet, in a 'subsequent letter', actually authorised 'that Mr White, who was then demarcating the frontier, should proceed to do so without regard to the Chinese representative'. Brodrick had certainly made a bold attempt to embarrass Cotton, whose actions did contradict opinions expressed in his writings. Brodrick mischieviously added that 'although all weight should be given to the opinion of a distinguished public servant' so long as Cotton was 'the man on the spot' it was he 'perhaps, of all others, who was most engaged in calling the attention of the Government of India to the serious nature' of Tibetan affairs. (9) The Government had certainly discredited Cotton's criticisms to some extent through Brodrick's speech. It is worth considering how Cotton refuted these charges; in April 14th's Times Cotton felt 'surprised that political capital should be made out of letters signed by me in my official capacity ten years ago, which express opinions very different from those I am now well known to hold'. Cotton explained that 'the policy indicated in the letters quoted by Mr Brodrick in the House of Commons was not mine, but that of my official superior'. Although Cotton accepted that 'the position is a difficult one' nevertheless 'a secretary cannot be held personally responsible for all he signs'. (10) If Cotton's explanation of his apparently contradictory behaviour towards

Tibet when in India represented a brave attempt to limit the damage done to his reputation, nevertheless Brodrick's attentions were a compliment to Cotton's efforts. Brodrick's determination to embarrass Cotton showed that Cotton's writings had been noted by the Government; unfortunately for the Government, Cotton may have been bloodied by Brodrick's speech but would still remain unbowed in the Press.

Having made a bold attempt to discredit Cotton's standing, Brodrick turned to Tibet's disregard for good neighbourly relations; Anglo-Tibetan relations had not been helped, he argued, by the Dalai Lama's sending of a deputation to St Petersburg 'on a so-called religious mission to which it was perfectly clear the Tibetans attached very considerable political significance'. Brodrick was keen to approach the Russian dimension of Tibet in a firm but diplomatic manner: he observed how Lansdowne and Benckendorff had 'threshed out' the whole Tibet issue, but was at pains to add:

> Lhasa is not a place in which we are moved by any jealousy of a foreign Government or by the desire to establish anything at the expense of a foreign Government. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that Lhasa is within 300 miles of the Indian frontier and that Tibet does not touch on any portion of Russian territory at a distance of less than 1,000 miles.

Certainly the Government wanted to make clear that Russian involvement in Tibet was distinctly unwelcome; it was preferable to speak firmly to Russia than to permit Tibet to degenerate into a misunderstanding impeding a rapprochement. Historically Brodrick noted, Tibet had only enjoyed relations with three powers - her suzerain China, Nepal and India - and any extension of influence by another power could hardly be viewed by the Government 'without concern'. As the Secretary of State confessed:

> I cannot imagine anything that would be less desirable than that in any portion of the Chinese Empire which abuts on British territory, we should be exposed to those (border) negotiations through a more or less inanimate third party which have so far occupied the diplomatic mind of Europe in some other portions of the Chinese Empire during the last few years.

Following Brodrick's discourse on Anglo-Russian relations over Tibet, he turned to the breakdown of Anglo-Tibetan relations. Brodrick warned that the British Government's 'earnestness', in the face of Tibetan provocation, was not to be 'mistaken or trifled with'. In the light of the failure of the Kamba Jong negotiations (an advance initially being sanctioned as far as Gyangtse by Hamilton on October 1st 1903 should negotiations demonstrably break down), Brodrick explained that the November 6th telegram had 'strictly' limited the Mission's objects - namely no British occupation of Tibetan territory or establishment of a Permanent Mission in Lhasa. The Younghusband Mission was to obtain 'satisfaction for the past' and a 'modus vivendi for the future'; unfortunately there was little unanimity between London and Calcutta on these questions. Certainly Curzon continued to intensely dislike the abstentionist declarations of the November 6th telegram ('that fatal telegram' as he termed it) and, in private, Brodrick was to write to Ampthill:

> I believe that Curzon would have declared a protectorate over Tibet without a moment's hesitation. (11)

For his part Curzon was frustrated by the Government's constantly committing itself to the November 6th telegram. On August 4th 1904 Curzon remarked:

> Brodrick in particular has pinned his faith in so many Parliamentary answers and Primrose League speeches that it (the November 6th telegram) has attained in the eyes of the Government an almost canonical sanctity. (12)

Clearly, for the Government, the November 6th telegram not only represented a policy, but a suitable leash for the Viceroy.

Nevertheless, in Parliament, Brodrick was cast in the role of Viceroy's defender. Indeed his speech sought to make a case for Curzon's pacificity. 'I have' he stated 'seen it suggested in various quarters that His Majesty's Government have been impelled forward, and unduly harried into action by the acquisitiveness of the Viceroy'.

Rather he contrasted Curzon's viceroyalty's use of 9,000 troops in 3 expeditions (up to 1902), with Dufferin's use of 43,000 troops in 5 expeditions, or Elgin's use of 53,000 troops in Tirah and Chitral alone (Elgin's viceroyalty saw 7 other expeditions). If Curzon suffered by appearing a more bullish Viceroy than his actions actually indicated, Brodrick's defence of Curzon was also somewhat deceptive. In his memoirs, Brodrick took exception to Winston Churchill's description in Great Contemporaries of Curzon's viceroyalty as pursuing 'an essentially pacifist frontier policy, carrying with it a definite anti-military outlook'. (13) Brodrick in fact believed that such was the inherent 'aggressiveness of his policy as regards both Tibet and Afghanistan' that if in practice an 'essentially pacifist frontier policy' had been employed, the credit 'was due to A J B and his colleagues'. (14) Brodrick remained convinced that 'Curzon's special obsession as to the advance of Russia in Central Asia' marred his judgement. (15) Unfortunately Brodrick's view of Curzon was too partisan, and was reflected in a perverse satisfaction at endeavouring to frustrate Curzon's Tibetan objectives. Frustrating Curzon may well have been a sound course for British policy, but Brodrick clearly appreciated having a constitutional veto over the Viceroy as Secretary of State for India. Brodrick had been a close friend of Curzon since Eton and Balliol days, and although Brodrick wrote 'There was no question of jealousy or competition as our paths were wholly different' (16), it appears likely Brodrick may have been inspired by elements of rivalry or pride, if not jealousy. Assuredly he had no intention of being Curzon's protege as Secretary of State for India (a position constitutionally superior to that of Viceroy), and as Fleming pertinently observed:

> Men who knew them both might have predicted that their lifelong friendship would not emerge altogether scatheless from the stresses to which the tug of war between India and Whitehall was bound to subject it. (17)

It was no coincidence that Brodrick and Curzon ceased to be friends during this period, and by 1905 Curzon was convinced that his erstwhile associate had been 'unsleeping in his malevolence' (18).

If Brodrick had been less than sincere in defending Curzon in the House he was at least correct in identifying a root cause of the actual Tibetan problem; namely Tibet's interpretation of Russia's actual intentions. The question was not so much:

> What Russia proposed to do, but of what the Tibetans were under the impression they would obtain from the Russian Government in the way of support against the legitimate demands of His Majesty's Government.

Hence British policy should be, Brodrick's speech concluded, that 'If we lay down that any power is to be dominant, that power must be British'. (19) Brodrick's speech was undoubtedly a suprisingly competent performance. It had reassured the Commons that the November 6th telegram remained Government policy, it had severely embarrassed Cotton, and it had justified Government conduct both to Tibet and Russia. It was regrettable however that the speech failed to openly admit that the Government had been in clear breach of the 1858 India Act.

As Leader of the Opposition it was quite natural for Campbell-Bannerman to seek to expose the inadequacies and inconsistencies of the Government's Tibet policy. If Campbell-Bannerman was uncertain as to whether the November 6th telegram represented Government policy, he was certain that 'that despatch does not express or convey the policy approved and suggested by Lord Curzon'. He remained anxious that the Viceroy 'exaggerates for what he may consider a great stroke of policy events of comparatively small importance' in Anglo-Tibetan relations. Campbell-Bannerman was concerned that Curzon's views might have 'an evil effect' on some of Britain's neighbours; this appraisal of Curzon's behaviour tallied with Brodrick's. Confiding to Ampthill, Brodrick remarked:

> But the truth is that Curzon's attitude about this and Afghanistan frightened the Cabinet to death.

Clearly many in both Government and Opposition found it difficult not to view the Viceroy as something of a 'bull in the China Shop' of Imperial policy.

Campbell-Bannerman considered the three main areas of alleged border difficulties with Tibet. He saw the question of pasture disputes on the Sikkim-Tibet border as little more than a case of wandering sheep. He also believed the knocking down of British border pillars in a 'wild country' to be unremarkable. Campbell-Bannerman further held that although there had been trade difficulties with Tibet, an invasion and slaughter of that 'reclusive' land's inhabitants would be unlikely to increase trade. Rather he turned to the issue that most MPs must have seen as the real motivation behind the Mission, namely to prevent Russia's 'coquetting with Tibet'. If Anglo-Tibetan border troubles were an excuse for intervention to thwart this tryst, then obviously, as Campbell-Bannerman sought to learn:

> Is it the opinion of His Majesty's Government, as is stated by Lord Curzon, that the Russian Government have established relations with the Tibetan Government which are intended to be to our detriment?

Certainly he believed Curzon to have broken down 'the scruples and hesitations' of the Home Government in invading Tibet, and held that Curzon's desire to establish a permanent British Resident at Lhasa had 'associations connected with the name of Cavagnari'. Although Campbell-Bannerman accepted that it had been impressed on Curzon that the November 6th telegram was Government policy, nevertheless he believed that Tibet policy remained a trial of wills between 'the Government of the King in this country' and 'Lord Curzon and his Government of India'. Indeed, Campbell-Bannerman's remark closely

echoed sentiments that Balfour himself had already expressed to the King; on that fateful day of November 6th 1903 Balfour admitted:

> The Cabinet are apprehenisve that the Viceroy entertains schemes of territorial expansion, or at least of extending responsibilities which would be equally detrimental to Indian interests and the international relations of the Empire. (20)

Naturally Balfour would be unprepared to publicly acknowledge the strains between London and Calcutta. Nevertheless, as Campbell-Bannerman doubtless intended, this volley must have struck home. Campbell-Bannerman then suggested that the Motion might be made subject to the November 6th telegram since 'such a move would be a "guarantee and pledge" of the Government's good faith as regards the future of Tibet, not only to the House but also to Russia and China'. However he remained at pains to assure the Government that the Opposition would not 'do anything which will either endanger the Mission' or 'diminish the dignity and authority of the Indian Government and Imperial Government in that quarter of the world'. (21) If this remark hints at the Liberal decision to walk out of the Chamber when the division came, it also emphasised the Liberals' wish to be supportive of the Mission itself. Campbell-Bannerman had given a capable speech; The Times, however, of April 14th took strong exception to this speech. Accusing Campbell-Bannerman of 'a flippancy which is unworthy of his position' The Times chided him for endeavouring 'to entrap the Ministry into a pledge, not as he was careful to say, merely to Parliament', but to 'the great states which we have brought into the matter or are necessarily interested in the matter - Russia and China' regarding the future of Tibet. The Times believed 'A more mischievous proposal it would be difficult to conceive'. Somewhat unfairly The Times pressed home its attack by arguing that in achieving an Anglo-Russian rapprochement:

> Few things, we imagine, could do more to increase those difficulties than the habit of a certain radical school amongst us to defend the pretensions of Russia against their own country. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's discovery that Russia has a right to be consulted in the future of Tibet is an exaggerated example of this tendency. Her own Government have disclaimed this right, but the Leader of the Opposition is apparently more Russian in this respect than the Russians themselves. (22)

If Campbell-Bannerman had made an important contribution to the Tibet debate, Lord George Hamilton's speech proved of equal merit. As Secretary of State for India from 1895 - 1903 Hamilton's views were of special interest; although he accepted the minor nature of Anglo-Tibetan border difficulties he believed:

> The gravity of the situation is such that Tibet has wilfully and deliberately for nearly ten years past ignored a treaty (the 1890 Anglo-Chinese Convention) which with the utmost deliberation was entered into on her behalf (by China).

He rightly felt that a 'definite arrangement' with Tibet was essential, but pointedly added that 'while I was at the India Office I think we perhaps erred on the side of patience and forbearance'. Turning to the question of Russia and Tibet, Hamilton defined himself as one who believed there was sufficient room for both Russia and Britain in Asia; however, 'if there is one spot in Asia which is absolutely outside the sphere of Russian influence, it is Tibet'. Whilst expressing the hope that Britain and Russia could come to terms in Asia, Hamilton was conscious that:

> It is exceedingly difficult to accept without reserve the assurances we receive from high Russian officials .... It happens again and again that an assurance is given by the Ministers of one department of which the Ministers of other departments are utterly unaware.

If this was true within Russia, it was doubly true of Ambassadors isolated abroad such as Benckendorff. Hamilton would have been right in thinking that Benckendorff's assurances were only valid in London; for all his assurances Benckendorff had no control over what other Russian agencies might be undertaking in Tibet. Taking his line of argument further, Hamilton postulated the possibility that if:

> Some irresponsible agent of Russia in Lhasa hoisted the Russian flag in Lhasa, would not the situation become very difficult? It is easy enough for a great country like Russia to undertake not to hoist her flag; but if one of her officials does hoist it, it becomes very difficult to remove it; and, if the Russians did not do so, the Tibetans would suppose they had the support of the whole power of Russia.

In concluding his speech, Hamilton made clear he was 'strongly opposed' to 'any movement which would result in the annexation of a portion of Tibet or making ourselves responsible for any portion of the administration'; nevertheless he felt the Government was right in declining 'to allow any foreign influence to enter into or interfere with Tibetan affairs'. (23)

If Hamilton had given an undeniably competent speech, particularly alive to the dangers of ignoring Russia in Tibet, Cotton's ally, Thomas Lough, saw more danger in British activity in Tibet. He remarked 'The whole country has received with the most profound feeling of remorse the news of the slaughter' at Guru, and was anxious to know whether the Government was still bound by the November 6th telegram. Lough also felt that the Government had failed to consider the Tibetan perspective of border difficulties. He noted that the Indian Government (under Elgin) had previously recognised a claim to Sikkimese pastures; that trade marts were problematical to establish; and he also contended that the erection of border pillars by the Indian Government was itself a provocation. Having addressed the question of localised difficulties with Tibet, Lough turned to the Russian dimension: he wanted to know:

> Was it because Russia had done something to our detriment or was it because of a frontier difficulty that this armed Mission had been sent into Tibet?

With the Tibetan Mission to St Petersburg in mind, Lough remained sceptical that such contacts had been anything other than religious, and challenged the Government to speak 'with greater plainness on the subject'. In ending his speech, Lough roundly condemned the 'military

character' of the Government's Tibet 'enterprise' and confessed himself perplexed as to what was Government policy in Tibet. (24)

The next speaker, E R P Moon, was less inclined than Lough to give Russia the benefit of the doubt. As evidence of Russia's bad intent he quoted the Novoe Vremya of June 17th 1903 which argued that 'a rapprochement with Russia must seem' to the Dalai Lama 'the most natural step as Russia is the only power capable to counteract the intrigues of Great Britain'. Moon also considered the 'rather suspicious character' Dorshieff (ie Dorjieff) who according to The Times' Tibetan correspondent 'exercises a predominant influence in Lhasa': he noted this was the selfsame individual who had led the Mission from Tibet to Russia. Indeed Moon, who also approvingly quoted Curzon in his speech, remained in no doubt that 'this Mission must be sanctioned'; to do otherwise would only serve Russia's purposes. (25)

C P Trevelyan, from the Liberal benches, rightly argued that 'sufficient attention had not been given to the way in which the House had been treated by the Government' over the Tibetan issue:

> Prior to the Easter vacation the House had had no real opportunity of discussing it and had been treated in a very cavalier way.

Trevelyan complained that:

> Now, however much the House might object to this Mission, its power had been altogether nullified .... all the House could do was raise its protest.

Trevelyan proceeded to deliver a stinging criticism of the way the Government had evaded its 'constitutional obligation to obtain the consent of Parliament' for 'any military expedition outside the frontiers of India'. Trevelyan claimed that this evasion 'had been deliberately decided on; Parliament was actually sitting; and for weeks and months the military expedition was waiting to advance into Tibet'. The Government's explanation for its conduct 'was that it was

a political Mission', but as Trevelyan added 'it was accompanied by an armed force of 1,000 or 2,000 men'. With justification Trevelyan insisted, 'Obviously the expedition was a military expedition and it was playing with words to call it a political Mission'. Events had proved Trevelyan right.

As to the motivations that inspired the Mission, Trevelyan was quite sure that neither trade difficulties nor the removal of boundary pillars represented convincing explanations. Indeed, he noted that trade between India and Tibet had increased from 7 lacs in 1890 to 9 lacs in 1902. Rather, Trevelyan believed:

> The chief reason why the Indian Government had brought this question (trade) to the front was their alarm at the action of Russia in Tibet .... the real gist of the matter was whether Russia had such relations with Tibet which would justify our Government in believing they had designs of establishing themselves (in a manner that would) constitute a danger to the Indian Empire.

Trevelyan saw little significance in Dorjieff's Mission to St Petersburg: he noted Lamsdorff's assurance to Sir C Scott that any suggestions in the Russian Press of this Mission having a political or diplomatic nature were 'ridiculous and unfounded'. Rather he over-generously believed Dorjieff's Mission to be 'similar in character to that which was sent out by the Pope to the faithful in foreign countres'; in this instance the Dalai Lama was the Buddhist Pope. Trevelyan also gave no credence to rumours of a Russian agent or treaty at Lhasa; rather he sought to learn what were the Government's intentions in Tibet, 'Was it the intention of the Government to ask for a British agent to be permanently established at Lhasa?' he asked, 'If so, that was a very disputable proposition'. In ending his speech he could only conclude that the Tibet invasion was a 'somewhat ignoble little raid'. (26) Although this speech was insufficiently prepared to consider that the Russians might have been engaged in untoward activities in Tibet, nevertheless Trevelyan had delived an inspired

attack on the Government's cynical manipulations of Parliament. Certainly the Government earnestly deserved the criticisms Trevelyan made of its shabby Parliamentary conduct.

Gibson Bowles also did not hold back from criticising the Government's Tibetan record; he felt that the debate dealt 'first of all' with whether the 1858 India Act had been broken. Gibson Bowles had no doubt that the Government had broken the Act, and believed the Tibet 'expedition had never been anything else other than a military expedition', against another state. Moreover he was particularly critical of Brodrick's citing of legal advice as justification for the Government's tardiness in requesting Parliamentary sanction for the Mission; he remarked that Brodrick's legal authority 'was probably instructed by the person desiring the opinion'. As it was, Parliament's subsequent consent 'was now required for the Mission'; the Government had 'made nonsense' of the 1858 India Act.

As regards Russia, Gibson Bowles expressed the belief that there was room for both Russia and Britain throughout Asia. Even in Persia Gibson Bowles was certain that an Anglo-Russian agreement could be reached, and 'if an agreement was possible in Persia, how much more possible was it in regard to Tibet!'. Although Gibson Bowles was prepared to accept that 'it should be object of the policy of the Government to keep Russia out of the country', he did not believe there to be 'the slightest danger' of a Russian occupation in Tibet. Gibson Bowles had little doubt as to the motivation of the Younghusband Mission, believing 'a fear of Russia lay at the bottom of the whole business'. Disinclined to give credence to rumours of Russian intrigue in Tibet, Gibson Bowles took the view that 'the only thing' Russian Ministers 'had at heart was the progress of Russia in the East'. Certainly Gibson Bowles 'shrewdly suspected' that Anglo-Russian hankerings for control of the Dalai Lama, and his great

authority amongst Asia's Buddhists, had inspired the Mission; the desire 'was entertained to some extent by Russia and very strongly by the present Viceroy of India'.

Holding that Curzon had been 'anxious' to invade Tibet, Gibson Bowles was concerned that the pace of events in Tibet might force the Government to Curzon's remedy of a Permanent Resident in Lhasa. If the Government would strictly adhere to the November 6th telegram, and Balfour could assure the House that there would be no annexations or Resident in Tibet then, Gibson Bowles explained, 'it would be the duty of Hon. Members to pass this Resolution'. (27) Gibson Bowles' readiness to support the Mission must have been a great relief to the Government; the potential leader of a Unionist revolt against Tibet policy had given a recommendation to support the Government's Motion. Of course, Gibson Bowles had been stridently critical of the Government's breach of the 1858 India Act, sceptical of Russian involvement in Tibet and hostile to the Viceroy; but he had supported the Government. There was now no question of a backbench revolt.

In the penultimate speech of the debate, the Liberal Henry Fowler contended what must have been apparent to the House:

> That there have been two currents of opinion on this question ... one at Whitehall and another at Calcutta.

Fowler emphasised the need to maintain Parliamentary control over the Viceroy's powers; to do otherwise would be 'a great blunder'. Fowler also looked to the Prime Minister to state unequivocally the Government's future Tibet policy. As regards Russia, Fowler believed 'Asia is vast enough for Great Britain and Russia', and felt sure that Russia had no 'serious aggressive designs on India'. Fowler remained convinced that 'There is no reason to fear any aggression from Russia as far as Tibet is concerned'. However, if Fowler was dubious as to any Russian threat to Tibet, nevertheless he was emphatic that, as far

as the Mission was concerned 'The country will not allow them to be deserted'. Fowler's position reflected the Liberal dilemma; although critical of Government policy, he had no wish whatsoever to 'undermine' the Mission. Believing a non-interventionist policy represented the best hope for future Anglo-Tibetan relations, Fowler ended his speech by requesting the Prime Minister 'to tell us whether he adheres to the despatch of 6th November'. (28)

As Prime Minister, it fell to Balfour to defend the Government's Tibetan record; he began his defence by chiding Opposition criticisms. He attacked 'a disposition to minimise the causes that had produced the Mission in Tibet' on the part of Campbell-Bannerman and Opposition MPs. Balfour believed 'that kind of political arithmetic is rotten from the beginning', particularly as 'the Indian Government depends absolutely on the opinion held of them by their own subjects'. If Balfour believed that India could not afford to ignore Tibetan bad neighbourliness, he also maintained that after 14 years of negotiations, the Indian Government could hardly be accused of undue haste. Indeed Balfour expressed the opinion 'that unless the Mission were sent into Tibetan territory no negotiations were possible at all'. Clearly, Balfour had not been intimidated by Opposition criticisms. However, in turning to the Russian aspect of the Tibetan problem Balfour had to maintain the utmost discretion: affirming his commitment to the maintenance of British prestige in Asia, he took a phlegmatic view of the 'peculiarity of the Central Asian position'. Balfour felt that Anglo-Russian relations were complicated by:

> The character, I will not say of the Russian Government, but of the ambitions of many of the officers .... in the outlying parts of the Russian Empire.

Certainly Balfour felt:

> I am not one of those who in the year 1904 think the Central Asian question can be so easily disposed of by reference to the large maps as it was in 1874.

However, Balfour saw no advantage to Britain (or his Government) in adopting a 'forward' stance in Tibet. Balfour thus affirmed that the November 6th telegram represented 'in very precise terms' the policy of the Government. As for MP's fears that events in Tibet would force the Government to change that policy, Balfour reassured the House 'I contemplate no such unhappy contingency'. Balfour was emphatic that any possibility of a British annexation of Tibet would be 'one of the greatest misfortunes that could possibly happen to the Indian Government or to this country'. Nevertheless, in a veiled warning about Russian interest in Tibet, Balfour remarked that:

> It must be distinctly understood that if Tibet were, by any unhappy accident, to become the centre for intrigue and influence of any power other than Tibet, our difficulties and our responsibilities would not be diminished, but greatly increased by leaving Tibet alone.

If this comment was a discreet justification for the Mission, Balfour was at pains to make clear that 'I do not want anything to do with the Tibetans in a political sense'. However, Balfour stated that his Government could no view with indifference a situation in which the Tibetan 'will to exclude foreign influence' were 'used against us, but is not to be used against others'. Balfour concluded his speech by fully accepting Russian assurances of disinterest in Tibet, and assuring the House that no contingency would 'compel the Government to abandon .... the November 6th telegram'. (29)

Although Balfour paid fulsome tribute to Curzon in his speech, (if not in private) his assurances of the Government's adherence to the November 6th telegram were so unequivocal that any hopes Curzon might still have entertained of events in Tibet changing Government policy were now politically impossible. Balfour's speech had irrevocably nailed the Government's colours to the mast [it also cleverly avoided any mention of the Government's constitutional impropriety toward the 1858 India Act]. Indeed, the House received

Balfour's reassurances well; with the possibility of a revolt eliminated, the Unionists fully backed the Government in the 'Aye' lobby. The Liberals had little wish to vote against Balfour's assurances, and by deciding to walk out were able to register displeasure with the Government's conduct of relations with Tibet, whilst in no way being stigmatised as undermining the Mission. Some Liberals voted with the Government including Sir Charles Dilke, whilst what The Times called 'a handful of extreme Little Englanders' (30) including Sir Wilfred Lawson, voted with the Irish against the Government. Certainly The Times Political Correspondent felt 'It could not be foreseen that so many Liberals would refrain from opposing the Motion'. (31) Plainly the Government had achieved a clear victory in the division on Tibet, if only by default.

The 'Political Notes' of The Times of April 14th had no difficulty in interpreting the outcome of the Tibet debate as proof that 'no shadow of doubt' was now left 'concerning the British people's warm approval of Lord Curzon's Tibetan policy'. (32) The Westminster Gazette however, reflected Liberal anxiety that the Government's large majority on Tibet should not be misconstrued as a clear Parliamentary acceptance of Unionist Tibet policy. Only Liberal abstentions had given the Government its handsome victory; indeed April 14th's Westminster Gazette roundly refuted The Times' analysis of the vote, stating 'We do not believe it showed anything of the kind' (namely approval of Curzon's Tibet policy). Rather the Westminster Gazette argued:

> It is one thing, now that the Mission has become an expedition for Parliament to say that it consents to our soldiers being supported in the position in which they had found themselves, but a very different thing to say the Mission ought ever to have started. (33)

If Unionists had good reason to be content with the Government's fortunes and the Opposition's dilemma in the Tibet debate, at the

other end of the political spectrum, Radicals were despondent. Not only had Brodrick succeeded in embarrassing Cotton, but Parliament had effectively accepted the Government's 'flat violation' of the 1858 Act in a 'very unsatisfying debate'. (34) The Manchester Guardian noted on April 14th how the 'celebrated clause 55' of the 1858 India Act had originally been designed to 'prevent India developing a most objectionable form of Home Rule', whereby 'a narrow bureaucracy independent alike of Indian and English public opinion' would conduct its own forward policies. Since Curzon had [apparently] frustrated this intention, abetted by the Government, clearly Parliamentary rule had also been compromised. The Manchester Guardian could only conclude:

> If the consent of Parliament, which is thought necessary now, was not necessary last Autumn, the Government must admit we are now at war. If, on the other hand, the deaths of the Tibetans made no difference to the character of the expedition, as Mr Balfour says, then yesterday's resolution was tantamount to a demand that Parliament should sanction a filibustering expedition after the event. (35)

Certainly to many of a Liberal or Radical perspective the Government's intervention in Tibet would have appeared as incomprehensible as it was dishonourable; the Government had invaded a far-off land, ignored Parliament, violated the Law and been dangerously insensitive to Russia. The Tibet Mission was a strange and unhappy enterprise inspired by a maverick Viceroy; as the Westminster Gazette wryly noted of Curzon:

> Had he been a Liberal Viceroy we should have said that he had been misled by a desire to fight against clericalism. Is not the (Tibetan) Golden Army one of monks?(36)

That at least would have been explicable.

* * * * * * *

With the advantage of a clear Commons majority, the Tibet Revenues Bill passed into the Lords for debate on April 19th 1904. On an altogether calmer occasion than that of April 13th, not least because of the Unionist preponderance in the Upper Chamber, Hardwicke delivered the opening speech for the Government. Claiming that the incident at Guru was the 'real reason' for the Motion before the House, he questioned (regarding the need to observe the 1858 India Act) 'Why did not His Majesty's Government come to Parliament earlier? He argued that:

> By doing so we should ipso facto have defeated our own object. We should have turned out what we earnestly desired to be a peaceful Mission into a military Mission.

If Hardwicke believed such a course, albeit constitutional, would have undermined Government assurances of Younghusband's 'pacific movements' not least to Russia, nevertheless had the Tibetans 'not allowed their troops to attack Colonel Younghusband's escort, we should not have had to come to Parliament with any motion of this kind'. (37) Hardwicke made a competent, if Somewhat A sophistical case for the Government being a victim of Tibetan circumstances, even though, through failing to dampen viceregal ardour, it was as much architect as victim.

For the Opposition, Spencer held to his previously stated belief that 'it seemed impossible to conceive that a Mission with an escort of such dimensions .... could be considered a wholly peaceful Mission'. Spencer was also convinced that the Government's appraisal of the Tibetan question had been 'over-sanguine and self-deceiving'. Spencer's speech registered Liberal dismay at the Government's capacity for embroiling Britain into avoidable and indulgent colonial wars. A resigned Spencer could only conclude that the resolution ought to have been 'proposed to Parliament long ago'. (38)

Yet it was the speech of former Viceroy Northbrook that lent a badly needed element of credibility to the Government's Tibet Motion. The shibboleth of Northbrooke's viceroyalty in India had been

'masterly inactivity': he was the perfect candidate to give the Government's Tibet policy some moral standing, a quality it conspicuously lacked. Northbrooke believed that the Tibet Revenues debate was:

> One of those occasions on which the Parliament of the country has the responsibility put upon it of protecting the improper application of the revenues of .... Empire.

Emphasising that since his departure from India he had taken 'every occasion that has presented itself to advocate the interests of India in this House', Northbrooke announced:

> I have to inform your Lordships .... you can accept this resolution with perfect propriety. The Mission is undoubtedly taken in the interests of India.

Northbrooke went as far as to commend the Government for its 'moderation' in handling the Tibet issue; one despatch Northbrooke believed to be proof of the Government's good intentions was from Hardwicke to Spring-Rice for communication to the Russian Government (quoted in the Blue Book) stating:

> This step [despatching the Mission] must not be taken as indicating any intention of annexing or even permanently occupying Tibetan territory.

Certainly Northbrooke considered this despatch a valuable surety of Government non-interventionist intentions. Inclining to the Government's view rather than Curzon's, of future Anglo-Tibetan relations, he also contended that Britain should avoid any Resident in Tibet ('a dangerous thing'), at least until such time as Tibet was more familiar with diplomatic convention. Plainly, the former Viceroy shared the Government's hopes of a completely platonic relationship with Tibet.

As regards Anglo-Russian relations and the Tibet question, Northbrooke believed:

> Plain speaking to Russia is the right way to treat affairs of this kind. I believe that difficulties and perhaps, even war, might have beenided if we had spoken perfectly plainly to Russia in former years in somewhat similar circumstances.

It was essential, Northbrooke held, that 'Russia must perfectly well understand our position with regard to Tibet'. Nevertheless Northbrooke was anxious that an issue such as Tibet should not preclude Anglo-Russian goodwill, and hoped that 'at some more favourable time than the present' Britain and Russia might 'enter into a similar arrangement' as the Anglo-French Entente. (39) Clearly Northbrooke had provided an eloquent defence of Government conduct in Tibet; and above all, though it was Northbrooke's record in India, and readiness to have an Anglo-Russian Entente built on mutual respect, that meant Northbrooke's speech could not be idly dismissed by critics. The Government's battered moral standing could only benefit.

Lansdowne, in closing the debate for the Government, recognised the importance of Northbrooke's endorsement of Government policy by remarking that Northbrooke's speech must have removed 'any lingering doubts' over the Tibet Motion's 'propriety'. Lansdowne contended that the 'only question' now at stake was at what moment the Mission assumed a 'military complexion'. Studiously ignoring the fact that a powerful escort had accompanied the Mission throughout its Tibetan sojourn, Lansdowne professed to believe that the Mission could have maintained 'its political character to the last', achieving its object 'without a single shot being fired'. However, Lansdowne acknowledged that the 'unfortunate collision' at Guru had left the Government with no alternative but to 'regularise' its unconstitutional position.

Lansdowne was keen to answer suggestions made by Spencer of Curzon's 'antagonism towards His Majesty's Government'. Lansdowne assured the House that the Government and Viceroy 'were completely at one' and then admitted that the 'only point of difference of opinion' was 'whether negotiations should or should not be conducted at Lhasa, and whether a British agent should be left at that place'. In effect, Lansdowne had publicly acknowledged that the Government and Viceroy

were in disagreement over the entire direction of Tibet policy. Perhaps for Curzon's benefit, rather than for the House, Lansdowne assured his audience that the Viceroy 'loyally accepted the policy of His Majesty's Government and has given effect to it'. The Government would expect no less from the Viceroy in the future. Lansdowne affirmed that Government policy would remain explicitly as set down in the November 6th telegram; however, perhaps as a conciliatory gesture to Curzon, and unlike Balfour, he would not give an assurance that 'whatever happens, we are never to move an inch beyond the limites therein laid down'.

Finally Lansdowne turned to the fraught question of Russian relations with Tibet, arguing that 'we have to consider not only the attitude of Russia towards Tibet, but Tibet towards Russia'. Thus:

> Comings and goings between the monks of Lhasa and the Buddhist subjects of the Tsar have resulted .... in creating in the minds of these extremely ignorant and superstitious people a belief that they might rely on Russian sympathy and assistance.

The Foreign Secretary felt that such an impression 'must have been rudely dispelled by events'. (40) Clearly a little (though not unwarranted) Russophobia helped justify the Mission in the Lords.

With the conclusion of the debate, on Question, the Motion was agreed to. The Tibet Revenues Bill had legitimised the Government's circumvention and evasion of the 1858 India Act; its passage had also seen the Government make a capable, if occasionally disingenuous, defence of its entire Tibet conduct. The Government had endeavoured to refute suggestions that its Tibet policy had been 'a kind of Rake's progress .... egged on by a militant Viceroy'; (41) however the Government had behaved in an exquisitely rakish manner, both in its deliberate frustration of Parliamentary requests for an opportunity to debate

Tibet policy and in its subsequent introduction, of a bill which justified its violation of the 1858 India Act. Clearly the Government had shown itself to have the cunning, if not the skill, of a rake - or even a Dorjieff.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Government, Parliament and the Lhasa Convention

Following the Government's successful defence of its Tibetan conduct in mid-April 1904, the question of British intervention in Tibet no longer enjoyed the sense of impending crisis that had been evident in Parliament and Press at Easter. The Mission had been constitutionally legitimised, a repetition of the Guru incident had been avoided, and the Russo-Japanese war had eclipsed Tibet as the major foreign news event. Unfortunately for the Government, by mid-May 1904 it was becoming apparent that the Tibetans would not negotiate at Gyangtse. Tibet was not about to fade as a political issue. Tibetan intransigence was not only rendering the November 6th telegram more difficult to uphold (after Gyangtse negotiations could only be held at Lhasa), but the Mission itself was increasingly subject to Tibetan 'hit and run' tactics; the Mission's security in Tibet inevitably presented the Government with a military headache and a political liability. It was therefore only a matter of time before the Government would have to authorise an advance to Lhasa or recall the Mission.

An unchastened Cotton sensed that events in Tibet were once again 'coming to a head' and re-opened the question of Tibet in The Times letters page on May 11th. Cotton believed that Britain now lay at a 'critical position' in her relations with Tibet, and decried how 'already the ban-dogs of the Press are whooping on the Government to advance to Lhasa and to assume the permanent control of the foreign affairs of that country'. Although Cotton acknowledged the Government's reticence at being embroiled in Tibetan affairs, nevertheless he feared that the 'imperious Viceroy' was about to

achieve his designs.

Cotton was convinced that the April 13th debate in the Commons had been of a 'profitless character':

> Mr Balfour succeeded in his object of allaying the Opposition; no doubt he believed the assurances he gave, and the House in its ignorance accepted them.

Yet Cotton felt these assurances had little practical value, for in the face of continued Tibetan opposition, any settlement would be enforced 'at the point of a bayonet'. Cotton pessimistically believed that the Government would prove 'as wax' on the high road to fulfilling Curzon's ambition of establishing British primacy in Tibet. Cotton believed Curzon's prospects to be good, noting that the press generally supported him, and public opinion on the subject was 'as pathetic as the House of Commons'. Remarking that for obvious reasons Britain could now afford to ignore the 'uneasiness of Russia', Cotton questioned whether it was too late to check Curzon's policy and to insist on adherence to the 'wishes, desires and intentions of His Majesty's Government(1). In fact Cotton seriously underestimated the Home Government's determination to stand firm against Curzon's wishes to exercise British authority over Lhasa, particularly as Balfour had given his word to the House that the Government entertained no such ambitions. Nevertheless Cotton had undoubtedly addressed the current crux of Tibet policy: was Younghusband to advance on Lhasa? In its editorial of May 11th The Times considered the Tibetan issues raised by Cotton; it concluded:

> There are today, as Sir Henry very truly declares, but two alternatives before us. We must either go to Lhasa, or we must withdraw our Mission and re-open negotiations on the frontier. To state these alternatives is to make clear which of them the nation will expect the Government to adopt. (2)

Once again Cotton had been successful in raising the question of Tibetan policy; and Parliament also sought to pressurise the Government for an announcement on future British policy towards Tibet.

On May 12th Brodrick was closely questioned by MPs, including Gibson Bowles, who asked Brodrick whether the Government still intended to prohibit the advance of the Mission as far as Lhasa, as did Lambert in a similar question. For once, Brodrick gave MPs a clear answer:

> His Majesty's Government have arrived at the conclusion that recent events in Tibet make it inevitable that, unless the Tibetans consent to negotiate at Gyangtse, the Mission must advance to Lhasa. If necessary, we shall take steps to negotiate at Lhasa itself.

Radicals such as Cotton would have been justified in interpreting this announcement as clear evidence that the Government was succumbing to Viceregal pressures; the Russian Government would also have been justified in doubting British assurances of disinterest in Tibet. Brodrick concluded his announcement with a self-contradictory statement, confirming that the Government did not intend 'in any way to depart from the policy laid down in the telegram to the Viceroy of the 6th November last' (3) - even though it had just authorised an advance on Lhasa!

Even The Times had its doubts about a Tibetan policy that denied Britain the fruits of victory a la Curzon, or the advantages of a withdrawal from Tibet, namely the Mission's safe return and an end to armed Anglo-Tibetan confrontation. The Times believed that the Government's adherence to the November 6th telegram had been 'couched in terms that are too positive', and felt that events in Tibet 'might have warned Ministers that it is not always prudent or expedient to announce their intentions too precisely beforehand'. The Times of May 13th also affirmed its belief that in any British imposed treaty on Tibet there had to be guarantees 'and it is not easy to see how such guarantees can be secured without some form of intervention of a more or less permanent character in the affairs of Tibet'. (4) Unlike the Government, The Times was clearly prepared to accept the application of Viceregal logic to British policy in Tibet.

Nevertheless radicals remained implacably opposed to any advance on Lhasa; their frustration was demonstrated when Flynn unavailingly asked Brodrick on 16th May, whether:

> In view of the despatch dated 6th November 1903, sent to the Viceroy of India, the contemplated armed expedition to Lhasa will be delayed until this House has had the opportunity of deciding on the propriety of taking such action.

Unsurprisingly the Government had no intention of acceding to any such debate and Brodrick coldly informed Flynn that the advance on Lhasa had actually been sanctioned, 'unless, within a period to be fixed by the Government of India, the Chinese Amban arrives at Gyangtse accompanied by a competent Tibetan negotiator'. A frustrated Flynn demanded:

> Have the Government dropped the policy enunciated by the Prime Minister and adopted Lord Curzon's forward policy?

Although the Speaker's intercession of 'Order! Order!' ended Flynn's outburst(5), it was clear that to those of a radical persuasion the advance on Lhasa was anathema. Flynn did have a valid point though; the House was entitled to discuss the implications of an advance on Lhasa. Winston Churchill echoed Flynn's sentiment on May 16th:

> He trusted that an opportunity would be afforded before the Whitsuntide adjournment for discussing not only the immediate security of the forces employed in Tibet, but the moral and political considerations involved in that most unworthy and unprovoked act of aggression and crime. (6)

Churchill was to be disappointed, for the Government was determined to deny any opportunity for the Commons to debate its amended Tibet policy. Government intransigence was well shown on May 18th when Lambert (Liberal MP for South Molton, Devon) asked Balfour whether in view of the fact that the House was at present debarred from discussing the Tibet expedition, he would give a Parliamentary day for 'the discussion of the new development which has taken place'. Somewhat smugly Balfour replied:

> There is no new development of which I am aware, nor can I promise the day asked for. If any real reason for discussing this question were to arise, no doubt an occasion would be found.

A justifiably truculent Flynn then demanded that the Prime Minister should 'advise his friends to remove the blocking motion on paper'. Although Hansard records that 'no answer was returned' (7), it was evident that the Government preferred to use blocking motions to gag Parliamentary debate, rather than defend the advance on Lhasa to the House. Clearly the Government had no wish to explain to the Commons how it had allowed its avowed policy of the November 6th telegram to be superseded. MPs however were well aware of the Government's volte face, as Theodore Taylor demonstrated on May 16th, when he remarked:

> Only the other day he heard the Prime Minister state that the country was going to withdraw from Tibet; but now they were told the expedition would advance. (8)

Yet if the Government's ingenuous desire to prevent a further debate on the invasion of Tibet was achieved in the Commons, at least in the Lords under Lansdowne a debate was conceded. On May 17th what was to be the last of the Tibetan debates occurred in the Lords; although intended as a debate of inquiry with no set motion or vote, the Opposition was anxious to use the opportunity to ascertain Government intentions, now that Younghusband had authorisation to advance to Lhasa. Spencer contended that events had proved right past Opposition criticisms of Government Tibet policy, and sought to know whether the Government stood by Balfour's and Lansdowne's previous assurances despite Brodrick's announcement of an advance to Lhasa. Spencer rightly believed Brodrick's announcement had constituted a 'rapid change' in policy, and remained anxious about the Mission's prospects in view of 'similar occurrences in India in years gone by which had led to serious disaster'. (9)

In defending what many of the Opposition would now see as a forward and Russophobe policy approaching fruition, Hardwicke

endeavoured to justify an advance on Lhasa on the grounds 'were we to have no redress simply because we could not get into communication' with the Tibetan authorities. Hardwicke professed to believe there was nothing contradictory between an advance on Lhasa and previous policy declarations. Hardwicke supported this curious line of thought by remarking:

> Nothing has ever been said, so far as I am aware, by any member of His Majesty's Government that debars us from going to Lhasa if all our efforts at negotiating at Gyangtse fail.

Hardwicke certainly gave the impression that the November 6th telegram had faded in importance. Arguing that 'we are ... at war with Tibet', he was unable to offer Lords opposite 'any definite pledge as to the exact form the settlement will take when hostilities are concluded'. (10) If Hardwicke's speech was at something of a variation with Balfour's assurances to the Commons, it is quite plausible that he was acting at Lansdowne's behest in 'softening' domestic opinions for concessions to Britain's advantage to be wrung from the Tibetans. Thus Lansdowne would have a quid pro quo from Tibet to exchange for Russian co-operation in Egyptian finance. Unfortunately for Lansdowne, Balfour, undoubtedly mindful of his assurances to Parliament, wished for no other benefits from Tibet other than for his Government to successfully extricate itself from the siphon of Tibetan politics.

Following Hardwicke's speech, Tweedmouth for the Opposition expressed exasperation at the Government's embarking 'on the Mission without fully realising what it was certain to lead to' maintaining that 'the chances of difficulty and danger were far greater than any possible benefit that could be gained by the Mission'. Tweedmouth remained highly critical of Government conduct and rightly believed that should 'the Government call for the support of men of all parties to get them out of this trouble, the least they can do is to take the

country into their confidence and tell us exactly the position and policy they mean to pursue'. (11) Tweedmouth's request was not unreasonable; the degree of confidence the Government was prepared to show the country had unfortunately already been shown in its behaviour towards the Commons.

Closing the debate for the Government, Lansdowne argued that the Tibetans were now reaping the 'cumulative effect' of their bad neighbourliness. Throughout, Lansdowne explained, the Government had been aware of the 'seriousness of the task' Younghusband had to perform, which was why he had been provided a 'considerable escort, the presence of which was so much criticised by noble Lords opposite as inconsistent with the peaceful character of the Mission'. Regretably, the Foreign Secretary seemed unaware that this 'considerable escort' had clearly contradicted the 'peaceful' nature of the Mission from its very inception.

Believing that the Opposition had sought this debate to elicit 'a declaration of our Tibetan policy .... so far as the future is concerned', Lansdowne assured the Opposition that when His Majesty's Government 'have deliberately adopted and announced a policy that they should be driven from it merely because their Mission has been attacked by a lot of ragged barbarians' was inconceivable. Unfortunately Government policy had been indelibly altered by 'ragged barbarians'; the Guru incident had forced the Government to acknowledge before Parliament its evasion of the 1858 India Act, and the Tibetan refusal to negotiate with the Mission had led to an advance on Lhasa, thereby breaching the policy of the November 6th telegram. Lansdowne asserted:

> It seems to me that whether at Gyangtse or at Lhasa, the policy remains the same - the policy of obtaining a satisfactory settlement from the Tibetans and the injuries they have done us.

By its own admission, Government policy had constantly been stated as the November 6th telegram; the telegram clearly denied the possibility of any British advance beyond Gyangtse. The advance to Lhasa had obviously changed British policy, and in pretending otherwise, Lansdowne was not truthful. Indeed, virtually in his next breath, Lansdowne endeavoured to distance the Government from the intentions expressed in the November 6th telegram. Emphasising Hardwicke's non-committal comments about the precise nature of any settlement, Lansdowne reserved for the Government a 'certain amount of discretion' in achieving 'an honourable and satisfactory conclusion' to the Tibet expedition(12). Clearly Lansdowne remained hopeful that the November 6th telegram would become sufficiently eclipsed for the Mission to obtain a bargaining chip against Russia.

Balfour, however, had no wish to go back on his word to the Commons; on May 19th Samuel Smith, Liberal MP for Flintshire, demonstrated Commons anxiety as to:

> Whether the Prime Minister could tell the House if, under the altered conditions in Tibet, he was still able to renew the pledges given a short time ago that nothing would induce the Indian Government to establish a protectorate in Tibet nor send an expedition to Lhasa?

Parliament clearly remembered the Prime Minister's previous assurances; however Balfour did not have to answer Smith's question as the Speaker interjected:

> I am bound to say that the Hon Member (Smith) will be precluded from discussing that question in consequence of the Motion that now stands on the Paper(13).

Once again, the Blocking Motion had provided a convenient way out for the Government.

However, the Government remained unable to prevent extra-parliamentary criticism. On May 17th Cotton wrote to The Times expressing deep concern that there could now be no guarantee for a British convention with Tibet without 'some form of intervention'.

Should Britain be forced to take 'Curzon's remedy', Cotton foresaw a British Resident in Lhasa and commercial residents at Gyangtse, Phari and Yatung supported by hundreds of troops. Cotton was in no doubt that such an intervention would lead to a protectorate and 'in the natural course merge into annexation'. Cotton also remained apprehensive about the international ramifications of such a policy; British actions in Tibet would not only be 'throwing China into the arms of Russia', but 'I need say no more of Russia than that our interference is not likely to be regarded as a friendly act'. Clearly Cotton saw Curzon's 'forward' designs on Tibet approaching a disastrous fulfilment. Unfortunately Cotton's impassioned appeal at the end of his letter suggests that Cotton and other Radicals had yet to stir public opinion strongly against intervention in Tibet. Cotton asserted:

> Our policy has been a crime and a blunder from the hour when the advance to Gyangtse was sanctioned, and the blood of more than a thousand slaughtered monks and husbandmen calls upon Parliament, on the Church, on all ministers of religion, to rise from their apathy and prevent the further perpetration of avoidable wrong(14).

The Times dryly commented that Cotton's call to arms expressed remarks 'of the kind with which he has already made us familiar'(15). Clearly Cotton's criticisms of Government Tibet policy were struggling against Unionist disdain and public indifference.

On May 23rd, however, Bryce expressed Opposition frustration and dismay in a blistering attack on the Government's Tibet record at Aberdeen. Denied an opportunity to speak on the matter in Parliament, the former Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs claimed that the Tibetans had 'asked nothing better than to be let alone' adding 'they valued their splendid isolation; they wished, like Mr Chamberlain, to exclude foreign goods, and like the Government, to exclude alien immigrants, except Chinese'. On the question of Russian influence in

Tibet, Bryce sophistically contended that 'the Government had declared that they accepted the assurances of the Russian Government so that the matter was out of the question'. Rather Bryce believed that the situation had become such that 'if it was hard to retire now, it might be still harder to leave Lhasa without maintaining a Resident there, and a Resident meant a garrison - perhaps a protectorate - endless expense, endless annoyance'. Bryce concluded his speech with a sentiment that most MPs would have shared; the Government's Tibet policy was 'a curious instance of the truth that the troubles men bring on themselves were often worse than those which fortune sent'. (16)

If Bryce had clearly demonstrated Opposition displeasure at the drift of Tibet policy, The Times shared little sympathy for such criticisms; rather it accused Bryce's speech of rhetoric 'constructed on the most narrow party lines'. The Times had particularly taken umbrage at Bryce's 'flippant' attitude towards the question of Russian intrigue, believing 'Mr Bryce's experience at the Foreign Office ought to have suggested to him that no question of foreign policy is in fact so simple'. (17) Indeed, Russian activity in Tibet was an issue The Times had been clearly vexed about, as reports of Dorjieff's intrigues in Tibet had been relayed from the Mission throughout May by Times correspondent Perceval Landon. On May 17th, The Times devoted an editorial to Dorjieff, and while it wished to believe Russian assurances nothing other than 'perfectly sincere', the Thunderer still believed 'the Russian propaganda in Tibet, whether at present in abeyance or not, has been active enough in the past, and this kind of activity, once started, usually gains fresh momentum as it goes'. (18) On the same day (May 24th) as it had denounced Bryce, The Times considered reports that Dorjieff had led the Tibetans to believe that the Tsar would become a great Buddhist prince; it commented 'The

methods employed on the banks of the Neva are beyond the pale of praise or blame, but surely no shrewder or more daring bait was ever offered in the annals of diplomacy'. (19) The Times knowingly added:

> We know the varying degrees of independence which the Russian Government sometimes finds it convenient for its agents to assume; and we know also the ease with which such a method lends itself to repudiation, when repudiation becomes essential for the supreme authority. (20).

Plainly The Times had its doubts concerning Russian behaviour in Tibet; however only one of The Times' readers took issue over the unattributable nature of Landon's reports of Russian intrigue. Cotton wrote to The Times on May 31st questioning 'How far that information is based on fact, and how far on the wild Asiatic rumours which our Indian officers swallow as Gospel truth'. Rather Cotton believed that 'Dorjieff is the Russian bogey who must be "exorcised"', and entirely declined to accept 'the fantastic narrative of your correspondent' until evidence was produced. (21) The Times was unmoved by Cotton's objections; Cotton's demand to see proof of Russian intrigue was 'a condition which men with much less experience of public affairs know may well be impossible'. (22)

Clearly the truth or otherwise of reports of Russian subterfuge in Tibet had become an issue of public controversy; it was no coincidence that on June 8th, Schwann, MP for Manchester North, asked Brodrick:

> Whether, looking to the declaration of Lord Lansdowne and the First Lord of the Treasury that they accept the assurances of Russia that there has been no Russian interference in Tibet, he will state whether the Government are in possession of any information, not contained in the Blue Book, implicating Dorjieff as the authoritative representative of Russia.

Cryptically Brodrick replied:

> The statements to which the Hon Member refers represent the views of His Majesty's Government. It would be contrary to the public interest to add anything to them. (23)

Conspicuously, Brodrick did not deny that Dorjieff had been involved in the services of Russia. For the Government to allow such reports to continue either suggests that the Government had clear evidence of Russian complicity with Dorjieff, or else the existence of such rumours gave its decision to advance to Lhasa some badly needed justification. Certainly, in the interests of better Anglo-Russian relations, it is surprising that Brodrick did not scotch such rumours. On June 11th Cotton wrote to The Times repeating Schwann's question and Brodrick's answer, and made a specific accusation against the Thunderer:

> You have, through your special correspondent, not only added very remarkably to these (Lansdowne's and Balfour's) declarations, but have affirmed that the assurances of the Russian Government were false.

Cotton felt that so serious were these imputations of Russian intrigue that before the public could accept the information as true, 'some evidence should be furnished of the authority on which it rests'. (24) Unsurprisingly, in view of the necessarily shady nature of Dorjieff's activities, The Times was unable to comply with Cotton's request.

However, Cotton was unwilling to let the matter rest; on June 20th at a Council meeting of the Metropolitan Radical Federation, Cotton addressed the question of Tibet, but particularly in the light of alleged Russian involvement. The motion moved reflected the Russian dimension of the meeting:

> That this Council protests against the invasion of Tibet by this country. The Government, in accepting the Russian Government's assurances on the matter, have admitted that they have no pretence for intervention, and such intervention is a violation of the rights of nations which can only result in disaster for the people of Tibet and involve the Indian tax-payer in ruinous expense.

In considering the 'question of fear of Russia in Tibet', Cotton did not believe Russia to be 'inimical to our Indian Empire'. Therefore 'he could not conceive', particularly in view of the Himalayan divide

between India and Tibet, how 'anyone should think Russia ever contemplated sending considerable force into India by way of Tibet'. As for Dorjieff, Cotton contended 'No Russian had ever been to Lhasa' (Dorjieff was a Russian Buriat). Cotton believed any Russian explanation for the Mission to be implausible; rather the British Government had committed 'an act of the grossest morality' in invading Tibet which would ultimately lead to 15,000 or 20,000 (!) troops being stationed in that country. (25) If Cotton's figures were more improbable than Russian intrigue in Tibet, Cotton's audience was not overly concerned and the resolution was passed unanimously. Although Cotton could not single-handedly sustain the controversy over the precise nature of Dorjieff's activities, nevertheless The Times had been unable to produce evidence to support reports of Russian intrigue in Tibet. Certainly, this lack of evidence would have confirmed Radical suspicions that Dorjieff was a red herring, intended to cover the scent of British expansionism.

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With the Mission fully empowered to advance on Lhasa, it was inevitable that anxious Liberals and Irish Nationalists would seek further Government assurances of no annexations in Tibet. On 21st June Charles Devlin, Nationalist MP for Galway, asked Brodrick 'If in the event of success attending the Mission, it is the intention of His Majesty's Government to annex Tibet'. Brodrick's reply was hardly reassuring in view of the Government's departure from the November 6th telegram, namely 'There is no change of policy on the part of His Majesty's Government'. (26) It was perhaps not surprising that the question would be asked again, albeit rephrased; Liberal Herbert Samuel questioned 'whether the Tibetans had been made fully aware that

it is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to annex the country'. A vexed Brodrick answered 'Yes, Sir, in every way in which the Government could make it clear'. (27) Indeed Brodrick was to become increasingly testy with the House as the Mission prepared to advance on Lhasa, a condition doubtless caused by the difficulty of defending the ad hoc development of Government Tibet 'policy'.

On July 6th Dalziel, Liberal MP for Kirkcaldy Burghs, asked Brodrick for information concerning the outcome of the latest military operations in Tibet. Airily Brodrick replied 'If there had been any important communication to be made to the House he would not have failed to be present' at the despatch box. (28) Unfortunately he did not realise that Balfour had already read a telegram to the House from Younghusband, announcing an attack on the Tibetans at Gyantse fort; (29) Dalziel had sought to learn the conclusion of these operations. Brodrick compounded his poor manners towards the House by adding that if 'any information' was received 'he would communicate it through the Press (loud cries of 'To the House of Commons')'. An angry Lough spoke immediately after Brodrick, stating:

> The point he wished to draw attention to was, that if the Government had received no special news from India, how was it that the Prime Minister had possessed himself of a telegram which he read to the House that afternoon?

Lough was emphatic that 'when serious warlike operations of this kind were being undertaken, the Government ought to afford the House some information'. (30) However, Brodrick remained unchastened by Lough's criticism of his poor conduct towards Parliament. Later, on this same occasion, Brodrick remarked:

> An Hon Gentleman (Flynn) had asked a question as to the policy of His Majesty's Government. He thought it too late an hour - (loud Opposition cries of "No, No!") to enter on a disquisition as to the works of His Majesty's forces in Tibet.

Clearly, Brodrick had little desire to mend his ways, so far as defending the Government Tibetan policy was concerned; evidently

prevarication rather than explanation would remain characteristic of the Government's behaviour towards the House.

On July 18th Swift MacNeill, Nationalist MP for Donegal South, submitted the last major Tibetan question of the 1904 session to Brodrick. If MPs had previously believed the Government's Tibetan policy to be somewhat ad hoc, Brodrick's reply could only corroborate that sentiment. MacNeill asked whether:

> An understanding had been arrived at between the British and Russian Governments regarding the British Expedition to Tibet, on the basis of an undertaking by Lord Lansdowne that the Mission will be withdrawn from Tibet as soon as its object had been accomplished.

He also desired to know if:

> The Russian Government had been assured that if the object of the Mission can otherwise be obtained no occupation of Lhasa is intended.

Brodrick equivocally replied, in the most vague terms possible:

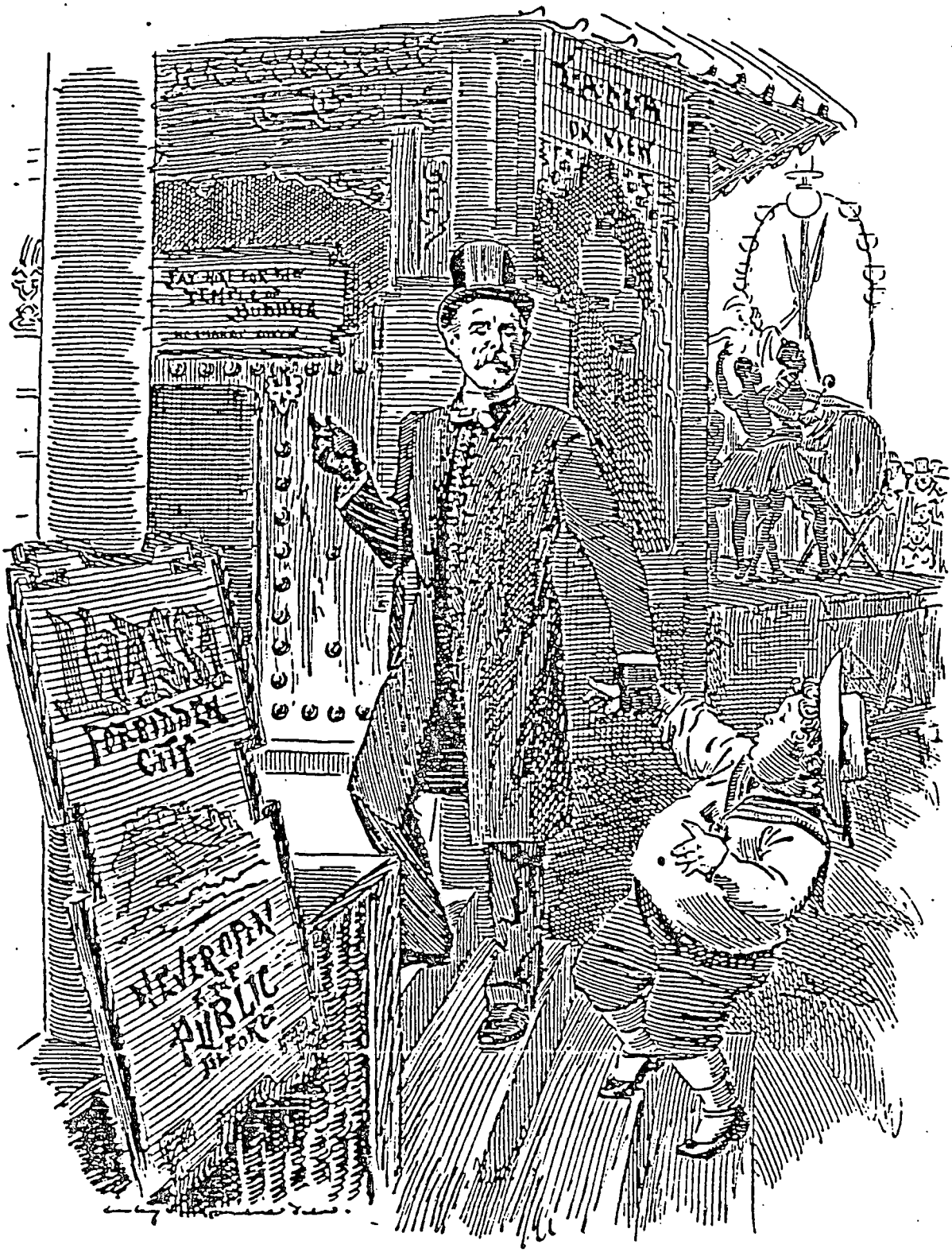
> His Majesty's Government could not undertake that they would not depart in any eventuality from the policy that commended itself to them. (31)

Clearly such an assurance would satisfy the Russian Government as little as the British Parliament. All Brodrick could promise Parliament and Russia was that:

> So long as no other power endeavours to intervene in the affairs of Tibet they would not attempt either to annex it, to establish a protectorate over it, or to control its internal administration. (32)

Apparently, only the assurance of no British involvement in Tibet's government remained of the November 6th telegram. Moreover, Brodrick's answer, significantly or otherwise, did not preclude the possibility of a British Resident in Lhasa; either this omission was considered unnecessary to include in Brodrick's (pre-written) answer, or else the Government was inclining to Lansdowne's (and of course, Curzon's) view that Britain might need guarantees in an Anglo-Tibetan settlement. A British Resident in Lhasa would be an obvious guarantee

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—MAY 25, 1904.




# ANOTHER SIDE-SHOW.

MASTER JOHNNY BULL. "NEED WE GO IN HERE, SIR?"
MR. BR-DR-CK. "YES, MASTER JOHNNY. YOU MUSTN'T MISS *THIS* ON ANY ACCOUNT."
MASTER J. B. "OH, ALL RIGHT. I SAY, IT ISN'T ANYTHING LIKE THE SOMALI ONE, IS IT?"

Mr Punch depicted Brodrick leading Great Britain into another Imperial 'side show'. However, it might have been closer to the truth to have portrayed Curzon as 'ringmaster' of the Tibetan spectacle.

for such a settlement. Certainly Brodrick's statement lacked the clarity of Balfour's assurances of Government policy to the House; MPs could but speculate as to the state of Anglo-Tibetan relations when Parliament re-met in February 1905. The Opposition, including prospective candidate Sir Henry Cotton, might only hope that the result of a forthcoming General Election would enable them to salvage Britain's relations with Lhasa.

* * * * * * * * * *

At the close of the 1904 session of Parliament, it was apparent that the Government had made an inglorious defence of its Tibet policy, based on its entrenched aversion to debate and unwillingness to concede information. It says much for the Government's behaviour that a Tibetan debate was only granted in the Commons after the Government's glaring violation of the 1858 India Act had been exposed beyond repair. Admittedly Lansdowne in the Lords demonstrated a greater readiness to allow debates on British policy in Tibet; however, Unionist behaviour in the Upper Chamber should in no way exonerate Unionist conduct in the Lower Chamber. Moreover, the Government also remained undeservedly fortunate in its unchivalrous defence; even when forced to concede the debate in the Commons, it still enjoyed ten days parliamentary recess for passions from the Guru disaster to subside, and then it savoured the unexpected windfall of an Opposition walk-out. Yet the most exaggerated example of Government good fortune, in terms of escaping a parliamentary reckoning over the Tibet intervention, was that the 1904/5 Parliamentary recess coincided with Younghusband's conclusion of the Lhasa Convention.

Following his successful advance on Lhasa from Gyangtse, on

September 7th Younghusband achieved a Convention with the Tibetan authorities which, if accepted by the Government, would make a mockery of all previous assurances to Parliament and Russia. Article vii of the nine point Convention provided for a British occupation of Tibet's Chumbi Valley until a 750,000 Rupees (£50,000) indemnity had been paid over a 75 year period. Effectively Younghusband had achieved an occupation, if not annexation, of Tibet's strategic southern valley for at least three quarters of a century; so much for Government assurances of territorial abstinence in Tibet. Moreover, in a separate agreement appended to the Convention, a British Agent at Gyangtse would henceforth have the right to visit Lhasa 'to consult with high Chinese and Tibetan Officials on such commercial matters of importance as he had found impossible to settle at Gyangtse'. Clearly Younghusband had won a British Resident in Tibet, with a right of access to Lhasa, and Government assurances of a British resolve to avoid political contact with Lhasa stood exposed as hollow promises. Although the Government did not have to face a Parliamentary furore over the Convention, as Parliament remained in recess until February 1905, nevertheless it was evident that the Government in London had lost control of Younghusband. Chosen to lead the Mission by the Viceroy, there was little doubt that Younghusband was Curzon's man; for this reason the Home Government could never entirely trust Younghusband, a suspicion that events proved right. For his part, Younghusband deeply resented the incoherence of the Government's Tibet policy, and believed the Government's politicking with the Mission frequently compromised its security. Having risked his life to reach Lhasa, Younghusband held that something worthwhile should come from the Mission's exertions. Younghusband negotiated in extremely difficult conditions a Convention which he hoped would prove acceptable to the Government and achieve something concrete for

Britain. No doubt he overstepped his powers; but in the face of an unconstructive Government attitude, he still managed to negotiate an outcome to the Tibet Expedition which would have appeared inconceivable in the dark days of April 1904.

Naturally, above all else, the Government was concerned at the effect the Convention would have on Russia; how far did the British occupation of the Chumbi Valley, and the British Agent at Gyangtse, undermine British promises to Russia? In concluding the Convention Younghusband believed that these controversial provisions had been couched in terms that did not go against previous British assurances to Russia. As he later wrote:

> The question was whether they can counter to any pledge we had given Russia, and I had a private and very confidential letter from Lord Curzon written from England after an interview with Lord Lansdowne saying that in Lord Lansdowne's opinion the pledge we had given Russia not to occupy Tibet did not prevent us from accepting the Chumbi Valley. (33)

Even if Lansdowne's contention is correct about Chumbi, the appointment of a British Resident at Gyangtse was clearly in violation of British assurances to Russia.

Certainly Balfour's reaction was more characteristic of the Government's response to having had its assurances to Russia clearly broken. Balfour believed that Younghusband's Convention was insupportable. He could not see how Britain was to avoid the imputation - 'greatly unjust' though he felt it to be - that in disavowing one portion of the Treaty which Younghusband had negotiated, they were acting 'not in obedience to the principles of International good faith, but to pressure from Russia'. Plainly Balfour believed Younghusband had acted irresponsibly; he opined:

> The only chance of any permanent arrangement with that power in Central Asia depends upon the mutual confidence that engagements will be adhered to, and if, as I fear, Colonel Younghusband, in acting as he has done, wished to force the hand of the Government, he has inflicted upon us an injury with which any loss to our material interests affected by our Tibetan policy is absolutely insignificant. (34)

Balfour was right to be anxious about how Russia might interpret such a clear instance of 'perfidious Albion'. It was only sensible that Balfour disallowed Britain's controversial gains by the Lhasa Convention, otherwise Britain would be little better than Russia in Manchuria, and would jeopardise her chances of an eventual understanding with Russia. Brodrick shared Balfour's view; unfortunately, doubtless as part of his increasing antipathy towards Curzon, Brodrick endeavoured to victimise Younghusband, as his squalid efforts to deprive Younghusband of any Honours for leading the Mission indicated. Such was Brodrick's desire to 'blacken' the reputation of the Lhasa Convention that in his autobiography he wildly claimed:

> Had Curzon been allowed to ratify the proposed treaty with Tibet .... the suspicion of Russia would have rendered loyal co-operation in the Great War most difficult. (35)

In an effort to allay Russian anxiety, the Government therefore reduced the indemnity to Rs 250,000 to be paid over 3 years; it was possible that British forces could vacate the Chumbi Valley by the end of 1908. Article ix, which sought to preclude all foreign interference in Tibet, remained Britain's chief guarantee against a resumption of Russian intrigue. It was ironic that, in the controversy surrounding the Lhasa Convention, it was largely overlooked that, when the Mission had approached Lhasa, Dorjieff (accompanied by the Dalai Lama) had taken flight. If nothing else, Younghusband had driven from Lhasa the one individual who had done so much to spur Curzon into advocating a Tibet expedition. Yet neither Dorjieff's departure from Lhasa, nor the proposed Lhasa Convention, provoked a violent remonstration from Russia; obviously St Petersburg could not protest over the fate of its secret agent, and clearly wished to apprise how the British Government would react to Younghusband's unauthorised sanctioning of a British Agent at Gyangtse and an occupation of the Chumbi. Although placated by the

Government's disallowing of the Convention in its original form, Russia did register a protest over Article ix, (36) on the basis of a report in The Times of 17th September 1904. The Times had failed to make clear that this Article, designed to prevent foreign penetration of Tibet, also applied to Britain. Mistakenly believing Britain to be excluded from this Article, Russia protested that the Convention amounted to a British Protectorate. Russia cited the (temporary) British occupation of Chumbi, and the construction of a telegraph line to Gyangtse from the Indian frontier, as evidence that Britain considered herself exempted from Article ix. Nevertheless, Russia's reaction to the conclusion of a Mission that she must have suspected, if not known, was directed against her influence in Lhasa, was demonstrably mild. Immersed in the Russo-Japanese War, Russia had no wish to encourage British antipathy to her; moreover, the Government's maladroit conduct of Tibet policy culminating in Younghusband's insubordination, showed that the British Government (if not Curzon) lacked a master strategy in Tibet. Clearly, in St Petersburg's (and London's) eyes, a minor issue such as Tibet could not justify a breach in Anglo-Russian relations; in any case, China's refusal to ratify the amended Lhasa Convention would frustrate the legitimacy of the Convention for the immediate future.

Indeed, the efforts the Balfour Government made to allay Russian anxieties over Tibet provide a marked contrast with its casual attitude to Westminster. The Unionist Government was clearly more concerned to avoid reneging on the assurances it gave to the Tsarist regime than those it had given to the British Parliament. Rather, with Parliament in abeyance, and with no recall due until February 1905, Westminster could be conveniently ignored for the duration; there was to be no question of an emergency debate in which the Government justified its Tibetan conduct. Indeed, there was only

limited scope for domestic criticism of the confusion that had come of the Government's Tibet policy; once again it fell to Cotton to lead extra-parliamentary opposition to intervention in Tibet. Writing to The Times on September 19th Cotton did pay tribute to Younghusband's Tibetan work, confessing:

> It must be admitted, indeed, that we have got more by dealing with the Tibetans than we should ever have attained by diplomacy with the Chinese.

However, as to the terms of the revised Lhasa Convention, Cotton remained inveterately hostile; on the occupation of the Chumbi Cotton believed British forces would stay in situ 'until the Greek Kalends! Is any one so fatuous as to suppose that the Tibetans will be able to pay Great Britain Rs 7,500,000?' Cotton also expressed dismay that 'the pledges of His Majesty's Minister should have been so completely set aside'. (37) The Times was sceptical of Cotton's belief that Tibet would be unable to pay the indemnity, remarking 'We require something more than Sir Henry's assertion on this point, when we remember how constantly his predictions have been refuted by events'. (38) Cotton wrote once more to The Times, on February 10th 1905; clearly Cotton chose this occasion to coincide with the opening of the 1905 Parliament, and doubtless to remind MPs of the Government's Tibetan difficulties. Cotton congratulated Brodrick 'on the firmness with which he has withstood the insistence of the Government of India and Colonel Younghusband, carried to the verge of insubordination, to adhere to the policy of Lord Curzon'. He also noted, with a touch of irony, that since Britain was now negotiating with China for China's recognition of the Lhasa Convention 'we have come back to the point from which we ought to have begun'. Finally, the Government's arch-Tibetan protagonist concluded the end of his Tibetan correspondence with an appeal that, since the Tibet issue was wider than Indo-Tibetan relations, would it not be an 'act of dubious justice' for the

Government to bear a substantial proportion of the Mission's cost. (39) Cotton was to be disappointed; on February 17th Weir, Liberal MP for Ross and Cromarty, questioned Balfour on this very point. Balfour assured Weir that since the Tibet Mission 'was essentially an Indian interest' clearly 'it was was neither just nor expedient' that Britain should foot any of India's bill'. (40) It was ironic that the Government had used precisely the opposite argument - that India must take account of Imperial interests - in seeking to curb the Viceroy's enthusiasm for a Tibetan expedition.

Indeed, as Cotton had shown, whatever one's political hue, there was a definite respect for Younghusband's endeavours in Tibet; unfortunately for the Government, there was little sympathy for its distressingly gauche handling of the Tibet question. Upon publication of a third and final Blue Book, The Times captured the public mood by stating:

> It will be an evil day for the Empire when Ministers at home shall set about to discourage by churlish strictures the readiness of public servants abroad to assume responsibility in cases of extreme difficulty and urgency. (41)

Having had ample time to reflect on Tibetan difficulties, a re-convened Parliament also affirmed its sympathy for Younghusband, whilst finding the Government's overall conduct lamentably wanting. In the Commons, Campbell-Bannerman was in no doubt that the Tibetan intervention had been a 'tragic comedy from beginning to end'. He refused to accept that Younghusband alone was culpable for the Lhasa Convention melee 'But why rebuke the agent? Why was not your censure carried higher to the Principal?" Clearly Campbell-Bannerman viewed the Government's wayward Viceroy as entirely deserving of censure. Campbell-Bannerman also believed Younghusband to have been 'well aware of the reasons of the enterprise, and evidently regarded the permanent occupation of the Chumbi Valley as the minimum to be obtained'. The

Leader of the Opposition could only conclude that Government tales of 'naughty and recalcitrant' Tibetan behaviour as justifications for the Mission had been a ruse; an aggrandising of Chumbi and any other advantages that could be won had been the Government's intent all along. Campbell-Bannerman added 'I do not think that is treating the House fairly'. (42) Although Campbell-Bannerman ascribed darker motives to the Government than necessary, nevertheless, the occupation of Chumbi certainly gave the impression that Britain had viewed the valley as a suitable reward for her Tibetan exertions.

Yet the most trenchant observant of the Government's Tibetan vicissitudes came from its own backbenches, in the person of Gibson Bowles. He was despondent that:

> When they went into a country like Tibet and destroyed the moral authority, the physical power of the Government of that country, and in fact the Government itself, they incurred a responsibility which in the end would force them to take further steps, and eventually to send a Resident and occupy territory.

Gibson Bowles saw 'a very ambitious Viceroy' as culpable for the state of affairs'. He imagined the Viceroy, surveying all the Great Powers annexing territory, and thinking:

> I will go one better, I will annex not territory but the incarnate Buddha; I will have a divinity in my service. That is what I will do for my country.

In pursuing such a policy, Gibson Bowles accused the Viceroy of endeavouring to force down the Government's throat a treaty 'contrary to their policy'. Thus he could only conclude that 'the hard words of "defiance", "disobedience" and "disregard of authority"' ought to have been applied to the Viceroy rather than the 'able and gallant officer who conducted the expedition'. (43) Clearly Gibson Bowles' criticism of the Viceroy reflected a sincere frustration and annoyance amongst less imperialistically orientated Unionists at the needless difficulties Curzon's Tibetan designs had caused the Government.

Balfour himself remained unwilling to blame the Viceroy (at least in public) for embroiling the Government in its Tibetan melee. In answer to a suggestion that 'the Government at home should have passed a censure motion on the Government of India', he laconically stated:

> I see no ground for that suggestion. The Government of India recognised, as I am sure they will always recognise, that the Government at home must be supreme. (44)

Nevertheless it was unfortunate the Government proved incapable of exercising its supreme authority in either an effective or intelligent development of Tibet policy; its achievement was to embarrass itself and frustrate Curzon.

As for reaction in the Lords to the Government's Tibetan difficulties, Spencer, in a much less impassioned speech than Campbell-Bannerman's, held that 'Sir Frank Younghusband exceeded his instructions in many respects, but he did fine work and deserves our thanks'. Spencer believed that Younghusband 'may have been somewhat badly treated, considering the enormous difficulties with which he had to contend, and the manner in which he overcame them'. (45) If Spencer was alluding to Brodrick's mean-spirited vendetta against Younghusband, a generous Lansdowne accepted that Younghusband had acted 'as he believed best ... we regretted in any way to discourage so valuable and brilliant an officer'. Nevertheless Lansdowne expressed the questionable belief that 'before the whole world, we have scrupulously and strictly adhered' (46) to the November 6th telegram. Lansdowne was too intelligent a man to believe such a sentiment, and it is also unlikely any one else in the Chamber took it literally.

# THE IMAGE OF BUDDHA

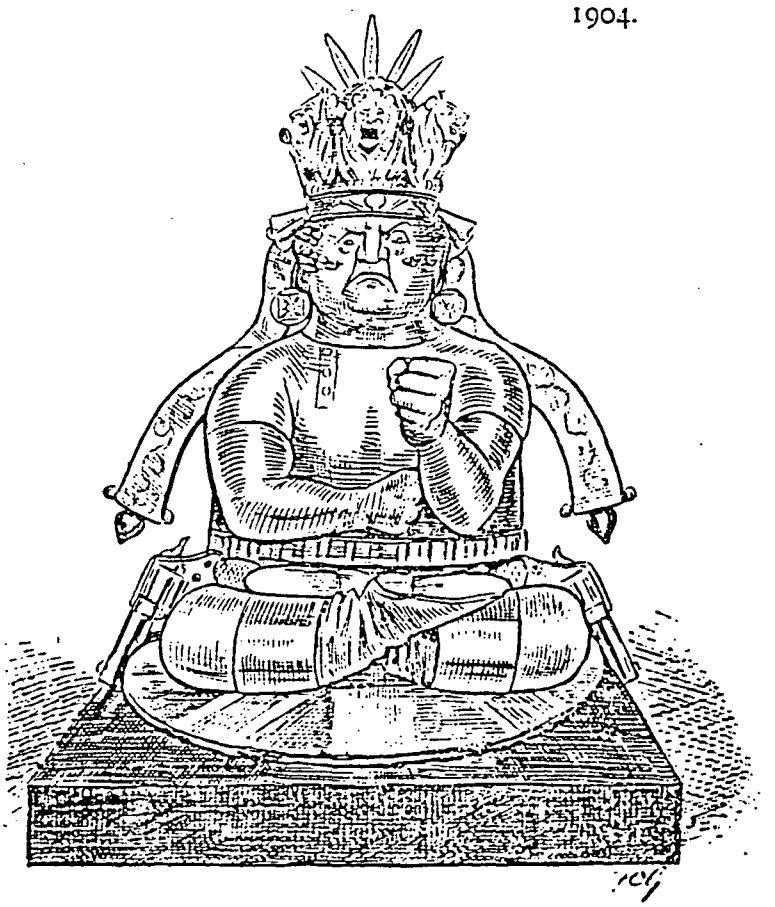
(When the English left Lhassa an old monk—affected to tears—presented Colonel Younghusband with a golden image of Buddha.)

WITH tears in his eyes
The old monk cries,
"Farewell, my most Christian brudda.
But, ere you depart,
Accept from my heart
This beautiful Image of Buddha.

"You have worried our land
With your famed 'Mission' Band,
And you've spilt a good deal of our blood, ah!
But though we must sever,
Remember for ever
To cherish this Image of Buddha."

So now with one voice,
Let us sing and rejoice
With delight at this gift from our brudda;
As the statue's of *gold*,
Sure it needn't be told
Henceforth we shall all worship Buddha.

1904.



*"This beautiful Image of Buddha."*

Sir Wilfred Lawson MP had his own suspicions as to why Britain was interested in Tibet.

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—October 5, 1904.

## "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE."

Llama. "HAS HE GONE? THAT'S ODD; I DON'T REMEMBER SIGNING ANYTHING. WELL, ANYHOW, I'M GOING BACK HOME."

Mr Punch's view of Tibet's likely attitude to the Lhasa Convention.

# EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSIONS

There can be little doubt that its behaviour over Tibet proved detrimental to the Balfour Government's standing with the electorate. For many voters who had followed events in Tibet, irrespective of their political persuasion, Government Tibetan policy would surely have seemed to be an ungainly, and confused, rearguard action against Curzonism. To more progressive and radical voters, once again the bankruptcy of Unionist rule had been demonstrated. Even Unionist supporters were perplexed; many Unionists considered Younghusband's Lhasa Convention to be a national triumph, and were dismayed at the Government's disavowal of so much of what it had achieved. Moreover, it might have occurred to those Unionist who remained ambivalent about the whole Tibetan episode, since the Government had already taken the political flak for going to Lhasa, where was the logic in throwing away the Convention? It was perhaps as well that the Unionist rank and file did not know the extent to which their leaders were prepared to go to accommodate Russian sensitivities.

It would of course be overstating the case to argue that the Government's inept handling of Tibetan policy was an issue in determining the outcome of the 1906 election. However, it would not be wide of the mark to maintain that the Balfour Government's conduct of Anglo-Tibetan relations did contribute to that national climate of opinion which was becoming thoroughly disenchanted with the Unionists. In that sense, Lhasa was clearly a staging post on the road to the Liberal landslide.

Fittingly, the Liberal victory in the 1906 election was to see Sir Henry Cotton, the Balfour Government's arch-opponent over Tibet,

come out of the wilderness. Not only did he win Nottingham East, but many of the views he had expressed during his Tibetan agitation, were to be adopted as Liberal Government policy. The new Secretary of State for India, John Morley, shared Cotton's whole-hearted aversion to British interference in Tibet's internal affairs. Morley had no time for 'adventurism' on India's borders; rather his belief was that it endangered the real basis of India's security:

> In a poor country like India, Economy is as much an element of defence as guns and forts, and to concentrate your vigour upon guns and forts, and upon a host of outlying matters in Tibet, Persia, the Gulf etc., which only secondarily and indirectly concern you even as a garrison, seems to me a highly injurious dispersion from the other and more important work of an Indian Government. (1)

In office, Morley was intent on redressing the balance in Indian Government from that of frontier 'excesses' to a more internally concerned regime. In effect, the advent of Morley at the India Office heralded the fruition of Cotton's Tibetan views into British Government policy. And Morley was not alone in working for British disengagement from Tibet; rather he worked alongside Sir Edward Grey in this endeavour. As Foreign Secretary, Grey was anxious to follow through the logic of the recent Anglo-French entente; namely an entente with France's ally, Russia. Tibet had clearly been an example of how a marginal diplomatic question could erupt and jeopardise the prospects for such a rapprochement. Balfour had plainly voiced deep concern at the Lhasa Convention's likely repercussions on Anglo-Russian trust, and Grey was determined that, in future, foolhardy enterprises on India's frontiers could not be allowed to destabilise Anglo-Russian relations. Therefore if he could achieve a diplomatic arrangement with Russia, the need for forward moves into areas such as Tibet would fall to the ground. Indeed, as Grey said of the negotiations leading to the 1907 Anglo Russian Convention:

> The cardinal object in these negotiations was to secure ourselves for ever, as far as a treaty could secure us, from further Russian advances in the direction of the Indian frontier .... The gain to us was great. We were freed from an anxiety that had often preoccupied British Government. (2)

In effect, if Grey could deliver a Convention that moved Anglo-Russian relations in Asia beyond their point of entrenched antagonism, then mutual goodwill could begin to develop. Given such a diplomatic revolution, calls by radicals and Liberals for a British evacuation of Tibet were pressing not only on moral and financial grounds; rather such calls could also reinforce the view that a prompt departure from Tibet would be a useful token of British good faith to Russia. In fact, insofar as Tibet was concerned, there was a genuine convergence of official British foreign policy with the views that Cotton had canvassed. So, not only did the Anglo-Russian Convention on 31 August 1907 represent the consummation of Grey's efforts for a new understanding between London and St Petersburg, it also held out a non-interventionist future for Tibet. Under the terms for the Tibetan Convention, Britain and Russia proclaimed a mutual disinterest in Tibet, agreed to observe Chinese suzerainty over that country, and to enter into negotiations with Tibet only through Chinese channels. There was also to be a moratorium for three years on any 'scientific mission' entering Tibet from British or Russian territory. Clearly, in the wider interests of the Anglo-Russian rapprochement, the Campbell-Bannerman Government had given up whatever 'morally dubious' advantages it had inherited in Tibet from its Unionist predecessor.

Yet, from a Russian and a radical perspective, the acid test of Britain's real intentions towards Tibet remained whether the British Government would evacuate Indian forces from Tibet's strategically vital southern flank, the Chumbi Valley. Deprived of the Chumbi, Indian forces would lack the obvious entry point into Tibet; British India would thus lose its key pressure point on Lhasa. The Campbell-

Bannerman Government did accept, in an annexe to the Convention, that Indian forces would evacuate the Chumbi as soon as Tibet had paid, according to the revised Lhasa Convention, her indemnity in three instalments; the one other condition of British withdrawal was that Tibet's trade marts should be functioning correctly. Unsurprisingly Curzon, who had already resigned as Viceroy before the Liberals took office, was implacably hostile to a British evacuation of the Chumbi, and using tactics not dissimilar to those of the Balfour Government, Morley sought to abandon the Chumbi when Opposition criticisms would be least effective; namely whilst Parliament was in recess. Even when Tibet had finally 'satisfied' the Lhasa Convention, Morley was still concerned at the domestic reaction to the British departure from the Chumbi. On 20 December 1907 he reflected on the forthcoming session of Parliament:

> The business of the Chumbi Valley and its evacuation will be settled, I hope before Parliament meets, and if Curzon were there we should hear his voice against us for certain. (3)

Yet where Morley and Grey really differed most from the Balfour Government was in the simple fact that they had a strategy for, and a vision of, Tibet's future. Both men appreciated the significance of evacuating the Chumbi, not only as a pledge of British goodwill to Russia, but also as an unequivocal declaration of British intent towards Tibet. Indeed it is important to recognise how mutually interwoven were Morley and Grey's Tibetan policies. This symbiosis was well shown on 17 February 1908 in the debate on the Anglo-Russian Convention. Rejecting Opposition criticisms of the British evacuation of the Chumbi, Morley stated that, since Tibet had fulfilled her obligations under the Lhasa Convention, and as Britain had promised Russia that the Chumbi would be evacuated at this juncture:

> Therefore we were bound, if we were to face Russia or to maintain our own self respect in Asiatic politics, to come out of the Chumbi, and come out we have. (4)

It must therefore appear that the Tibetan policy of Morley and Grey represented the final emergence of a coherent Liberal strategy for Tibet. Indeed, had the Balfour Government ever achieved a similar degree of decisiveness on Tibet, it might have been considerably more successful in handling Tibetan affairs. One particularly significant area of Liberal Tibetan policy was the weight it was prepared to attach to Russian sensitivities; by a more sensitive understanding of Russia's Tibetan position, Britain could at least try to solve the question of Tibet by diplomatic rather than military means. Grey, indeed, sought to explain Russia's attitude to Tibet to the Commons:

> Although Tibet is near to India and far from Russia it has to be borne in mind that the Russian interest in Tibet is a real one. Russia has many Buddhist subjects in Lhasa, and if we had pushed a forward policy in Tibet and had occupied a predominant political influence over the internal affairs of Tibet, we should have been in a position to make trouble with Russian subjects at a distance through our holding the centre. (5)

Thus the hallmarks of Liberal Tibetan policy after the 1906 election clearly included British withdrawal and abstention from Tibet, respect for Chinese suzerainty and a willingness to understand Russia's perspective on Tibet. It is therefore not unreasonable to conclude that it was Morley and Grey's efforts at the India and Foreign Office respectively that realised Cotton's hopes for Anglo-Tibetan relations. But if Cotton should be regarded as the progenitor of Liberal policy on Tibet, how did he himself view the Campbell-Bannerman Government's Tibetan record? In the debate of 17 February 1908, Cotton spoke of the Anglo-Russian Convention and its effects on Tibetan policy:

> He regarded with complacency those clauses (pertaining to Tibet) for substantially they gave effect to the identical position which he had preached in the Press and on public platforms three or four years before at a time when he was not supported by any official sympathy. (6)

Cotton also held that the Convention's Tibet provisions were 'the death knell of the policy followed by Lord Curzon when he embarked on that ill starred expedition'. Yet the Tibet policy pursued by the

Campbell-Bannerman Government signalled more than simply the demise of Curzonism. Rather it was a vindication of Cotton's role as the conscience of Liberal Tibet policy. Cotton's single minded interest in this issue (in the 1906 Parliament alone he submitted 18 questions concerning Tibet) made it virtually impossible for Liberals not to have an opinion on this topic. Through his public crusade against British intervention in Tibet, he had helped to transform a dry and obscure foreign policy question into a potent political issue. In short, Cotton was central to the establishment of a Liberal agenda for Tibet. Even though at times he may have been imprudently vociferous and impulsive, nevertheless Cotton can be seen as the unofficial spokesman for the Government's Tibetan policy in the years following the Liberal landslide. Morley and Grey gave effect to the ideas that Cotton had canvassed, and made real the British evacuation of Tibet. Thus, Sir Henry Cotton may now be acknowledged as the progenitor of Liberal policy in Tibet.

Yet if overall Cotton and the Campbell-Bannerman Government can be said to emerge with an appreciable amount of consistency on the question of Tibet, the same cannot be said for the Balfour Government. Unlike its Liberal adversaries, the Balfour Government never really had an agreed Tibetan policy. Admittedly, it did claim that the November 6th telegram was a policy, yet the telegram was intended to restrain Curzon's forward impulses in Tibet rather than to represent a genuine Government position. Unsurprisingly, nowhere was the Unionist lack of a Tibetan policy more obvious than in Parliament, and the Government's shabby attempts to frustrate Tibetan debate paid eloquent witness to their policy void. Indeed, the Government was patently guilty of breaking an Act of Parliament, the 1858 Government of India Act; it apparently preferred to remain in a constitutionally illegitimate position until, at last, the April 1904 Tibet Revenues

Bill provided it with a convenient fig leaf. Yet, judging from contemporary political comment (especially the Political Notes of The Times), it would seem that the Government was reluctant to grab even that fig leaf; it believed that to admit to Parliament that Younghusband's expedition was of a military character would be to further Curzon's 'master plan' of an ever-deeper Tibetan involvement, primarily aimed against Russia. Only when it was obvious that MPs of all parties had been so outraged by the Guru massacre did the Government finally move the Tibet Revenues Bill; and even then, it was reacting to the prospect of Lough moving the adjournment of the House, to call attention to Tibet, 'on the grounds of public urgency'. Many Unionists were deeply unhappy about the Government's whole Tibetan conduct; had it still sought to frustrate a debate after the Easter 1904 recess, and had it failed to provide assurances of no long term British involvement in Tibet, it is clear that Gibson Bowles would have led a backbench revolt.

Unfortunately the Balfour Government still retained an innate aversion to parliamentary debate on Tibet, and supported this lamentable tendency with a widespread use of the blocking motion. As Sir Robert Reid suggested, it lay within the Government's power to remove such motions preventing debate on Tibet; nevertheless, as MPs were all too aware, the Government used blocking motions as a substitute for debate. Even after the Tibet Revenues debate, use of the blocking motion remained the Government's preferred method of Tibetan 'business', as far as the Commons was concerned. In short, the Government's behaviour towards the lower House was no more honourable than its untoward treatment of Younghusband. However, at least its conduct in the Lords was somewhat different. Under Lansdowne's auspices, debates on Tibet were more readily conceded, and Unionist peers proved more able in debate than Brodrick. Yet even so,

as speeches by Lansdowne demonstrate, Government 'policy' towards Tibet was really only justifiable by sophistical contortions. Indeed, overall the Government's Tibetan record in Parliament involved a considerable degree of furtiveness and evasion.

Of course the extent to which the Unionist's Tibetan foray, inspired by an anxious Curzon, was a justified response to Russian intrigue remains open to question. Certainly Curzon would have been failing in his viceregal duties if he had dismissed out of hand reports of Russian intrigues in Lhasa. Similarly it is worth remembering that he was not alone in his suspicions about what Russia might be up to in Tibet; indeed some of the sparse intelligence which Curzon received also reached sympathetic domestic journals. Ular's reports of Russian involvement in Tibet, published in the Contemporary Review, reached a sizeable audience, and may have encouraged many in their suspicion of Russia in Asia. It also has to be admitted, as Curzon himself argued, that Russia's past record in terms of encroaching southwards towards India, was profoundly worrying. When Ular reported that a new Anglo-Russian border hundreds of miles long (the Indo-Tibetan border) had emerged, readers were naturally intrigued to know what substance lay behind such assertions. But, if we want evidence that Ular's reports were read by eminent figures in British politics, we need look no further than Rosebery's speech in the Lords on 26 February 1904:

> Now of course I accept the denial of the Russian Government that there is no agreement or treaty between Russia and Tibet. There is an article in one of the monthly magazines, I think it is the Contemporary Review, signed by a name (A Ular) which is not known to me, which categorically states that such a treaty has been signed and that a friend of the author's was actually present at the signature. (7)

Even though Rosebery could attach 'no authority to a statement of that kind' since he did not know 'the position of the person who makes it', nevertheless he did not discount the possibility of there being truth

in the report. It is, with hindsight, easy to criticise Curzon for being over exercised about developments beyond India's frontiers; yet given the magnitude of the events that were claimed to be unravelling in Tibet, and given the probability that there was at least a grain of truth in the rumours, then the despatch of the Younghusband Mission becomes a comprehensible response. Certainly Curzon did ensure, through Younghusband's efforts, that by August 1904 it was the Union Jack rather than the Russian Standard that flew over Lhasa. Indeed, had it been the Russian flag that had been hoisted in Lhasa instead, Curzon would surely have faced severe Parliamentary censure for failing to defend India's interests.

In fact, there seems to be little doubt that Dorjieff <u>was</u> a Russian spy; the only issue at stake is how injurious were his activities to Britain. Assuredly Dorjieff's counsels had worked to Britain's disadvantage by aligning, in the Lamaist hierarchy's eyes, Tibeto-Russian friendship with the Tibetan's natural desire to be independent; Shata, according to Kawaguchi, very much subscribed to this line of thought. Since the Tibetans had come to believe Britain to be a threat to their independence, a view which was reinforced by British encroachment in Sikkim, Dorjieff's intrigues had the potential to cause great difficulty for Britain on the North Eastern frontier. Moreover, if Dorjieff's theological justification for Russo-Tibetan friendship became commonly believed amongst Tibetans, (namely that Russia was the Chang Shambhala of Tibetan folklore and the Tsar was its ruler), it would only be a matter of time before Tibet's Lamaist hierarchy acceded to Russian 'protection' from Britain. Indeed the prospects for Britain in a situation in which the Dalai Lama, the pontiff of the Buddhist world, clearly became a Russian ally, were worrying. At the very least Asia's Buddhists would look to Russia as the ally of Buddhism, and at the very worst, Russian domination of the

Dalai Lama would convince Buddhists (and others) that British power was waning; not only would this last scenario be unsettling to British influence throughout Asia but in a restive country, such as Burma, it could be particularly dangerous to British rule. In short, it can be argued that, with Dorjieff installed in Lhasa, there were cogent reasons for the Younghusband Mission.

Ultimately though, the question of Anglo-Tibetan relations came down to the question of Anglo-Russian relations. If Grey and Isvolsky were able to defuse Tibet as a point of mutual controversy, it was primarily because shifts in great power politics to the advantage of Mitteleuropa had rendered obsolete the solutions which Curzon or Ukhtomsky would have preferred. Anglo-Russian confrontation over who was top dog in Lhasa was an indulgence neither side could afford when Germany's power in Europe seemed menacing. Even so, given the mistrust that had long existed between Russia and Britain, the Anglo-Russian Convention was an impressive change of direction. Whereas in 1907 Tibet was an issue to be discussed in a cautious but constructive manner by both Governments, three years before in 1904 it was still very clearly a symptom and cause of Anglo Russian mistrust. Indeed in 1904 it would not have been unreasonable to assume that Anglo-Russian suspicion would continue indefinitely; in this mutual suspicion both sides would ascribe all manner of intentions to the other, with a combination of neurosis and occasional truculence. An example of such thinking can be found in Ukhtomsky's journal in 1896:

> England threw obstacles in our path in China and Japan, in Chitral and Armenia, and now her conduct in Egypt is growing ever more hostile to Russia. The trouble created by Englishmen in the Armenian province of Turkey (ie the Armenian Massacres!) were planned in view of many objects, among others the establishment of direct communications overland between India and the Mediterranean. (8)

Clearly if such absurd levels of suspicion in Anglo-Russian relations had, ten years later, been successfully exorcised, at least

in Government circles, then the climate of mistrust that led to the British invasion of Tibet no longer existed. Naturally this exorcism was not an easy task; an unexpected incident, such as that at the Dogger Bank, could at any time bring Britain and Russia to the brink of war. Indeed Grey knew that even though the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention was a watershed in improving relations, many in Parliament would still oppose him; it was no coincidence that the Convention was signed just into the long parliamentary recess. Even if this was arguably a questionable tactic, more reminiscent of Balfour's than of Campbell-Bannerman's treatment of Parliament, it is clear that had such a convention existed five years previously, the Younghusband Mission would never have happened. In the event, the Younghusband Mission turned out to be the last major British thrust in the Great Game before 1917. If nothing else, it is evident that this British enterprise ultimately but overwhelmingly owed more to British insecurity and uncertainty about Russia's intentions towards Tibet than to any substantial quarrel with Lhasa. In short, the resolution of Anglo Tibetan difficulties lay not on the road to Lhasa but by the banks of the Neva, and in the reorientation of British as well as Russian policy.

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