CHAPTER V
CHARLES BELL AND THE NORTH-EAST FRONTIER

While in India in exile from 1910 the Dalai Lama and his ministers wrote continuously to the Government pleading for assistance against the Chinese. These letters, forwarded through Bell are interesting as they give a long history of Tibet's relations with the Manchus in an attempt to show that Tibet was never under the political control of the Peking Government. A Tibetan uprising seemed imminent. And Bell warned that it might be necessary to strengthen the guards at the Trade Agencies. The Secretary of State enjoined strict neutrality in the Tibetan problem. All the while Tibetan representations continued. On 15 June the Tibetan ministers while submitting another letter to Bell told him that several of the “Tibetan gentry” and officials were constantly urging them “to appeal to Russia, to Japan, to France or a powerful neighbour to the South east of Tibet, or to Germany, but we (the ministers) have always abstained from doing so”. They wished, they said, to stand in the same relation to the Government of India as Nepal. If the Government of India did not approve of this, Bell should tell them “how the British Empire and Tibet should be connected.” If nothing of this sort was possible, then their stand would be, that in accordance with Article IX of the Lhasa Convention (1904) China must be considered as a “Foreign Power”, and “we are entitled to contract a new treaty without considering the Chinese, since the latter have broken the treaties relating to Tibet.” And finally:

If the Government of India accedes to our request, we will respond by giving land free at Gyantse and in future, whatever the Government of India acquire from us, whether land in Tibet or anything else, we will give it. Tibet will be like a dog chained outside the door of India, which will prevent marauders from coming in. Even if a weak man asked a powerful

---

1 FSEP August 1910: Nos 58-246: Bell to Foreign Secretary
neighbour for help, the latter always affords it. It is against custom that a country in distress should appeal to a powerful neighbour and receive no help.²

Tibetan argument so forcefully, if sentimentally put forward considerably moved Bell. Unhappy with the refusal of the Government of India and the Home Government to rescue the Tibetans he pleaded for a reconsideration of the policy of non-interference. The Dalai Lama, and the entire Tibetan Government were seeking British assistance. "According to Tibetan ideas, a request of this kind is not refused except from fear", he told the Indian Foreign Secretary a week later, and "The Tibetan Government would be willing to make Tibet into a British protectorate with freedom in internal administration". Bell gave reasons why the British should help the Tibetans.

If the Chinese get control over Tibet, later on they will pay special attention to the development and colonization of the present thinly populated but warm and fertile districts on the south east of Tibet, which are not far from Assam and from which districts when developed a considerable army could be fed. The Tawang district borders directly on Assam. The Chinese moreover are likely to intrigue with Indians for the undermining of British rule in India. Tibet will be hostile to us, and will work against us in every way in Tibet as well as in Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim.³

Bell also alluded to the possibility of the Tibetan Government offering protectorate over Tibet to "some other power" that does not recognize Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. The Political Officer, therefore, suggested that the Chinese Government be told (i) to restore the Dalai Lama to his former religious and secular position (ii) not to interfere in the internal administration of Tibet and (iii) to reduce the number of Chinese troops in Tibet to the number employed before 1904.⁴

To these proposals and to the Dalai Lama's representation the Government of India remained non-committal, non-intervention was not to be set aside. "In view of the

² Ibid. Bell to Secretary, 'Foreign Department, 10th June 1910
³ Ibid. Bell to Foreign Secretary, 17th June.
⁴ Ibid. Bell to Foreign Secretary, 18th June.
policy deliberately directed by the Majesty’s Government,” went a note in the Foreign Department, “I think the only course open to us is to make the best of the impending position, viz. the absorption of Tibet as a province of China, in fact, if not in name, and do our utmost to assist on the maintenance of treaty obligations”.5 The Viceroy, Lord Minto even remarked, “Bell’s suggestions as to policy are entirely opposed to the policy of his Majesty’s Government and are altogether beside the mark”.6 The only concern India had at this time was the safety of the Trade Agencies.

The Agency: Proposed Expansion

In this new and disturbing situation that was allowed to develop across the frontier Bell saw certain administrative requirements for the Agency. His primary functions, it will be recalled, related to Sikkim and Bhutan. In the former state the work involved the supervision of revenue, police, judicial, excise, education, public works, both of the Government of India and the State, and forests. As regards the last, forests were being demarcated for the first time and rules for felling timber, grazing, fodder and fuel were being framed and put into force. Though the Maharaj - Kumar was incharge Bell had to control his work carefully in view of its being an unpopular reform. A census for the first time was underway. The operations were most difficult in Sikkim than in the neighbouring districts of Darjeeling, which, though it had a larger population, was much smaller and less extensive. Finally, there was the necessity of guarding against Chinese intrigues in Sikkim in consequence of the non-interference policy in Tibet. In Bhutan, now that friendly relations had been established there were several new responsibilities: the development of the country by Nepalese cultivators along the borders of India, the adaption of new methods of administration and the requirements of the new Treaty.7

In addition to all these was Bell’s advisory functions in matters relating to Tibet affairs. Apart from the Trade Agencies, there were political questions raised by the presence of the Dalai Lama in British territory (in Darjeeling ), the care of his party, and

---

5 Ibid. See Note by E. H. S. Clarke
6 Ibid. Note by Minto, 20 June
7 FEBP September 1910: Nos 268-69; Bell to Foreign Secretary, 2 August 1910.
the arrangements on the security of the Sikkim-Tibet frontier. Bell listed three matters of importance by which his work had vastly increased:

(1) By work in connection with the appeal of the Dalai Lama to the Government of India.

(2) By questions connected with the posting of troops on the frontier, matters of transport, roads, sanitation and camping grounds which had to be arranged both in Sikkim as well as in Tibet, and

(3) By the Chinese forward movement and the numerous important and related questions to which it had given rise.

In addition to all the work in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet Bell pointed out that:

New and very important questions of policy have arisen in consequence of the Chinese forward movement in Tibet and their intrigues along our Indian frontier. The situation requires to be watched much more carefully than before, and these new questions need to be thought out. The whole frontier between Tibet and India-cum-cis-Himalayan states is affected, a distance of some 1,400 miles. The portion from Sikkim to the Khampti country, east of Assam, at any rate is very vulnerable. We are now in fact confronted with a real North East frontier problem, where formerly we were concerned with nothing beyond the occasional raids of petty border tribes. 8

For all the vast work Bell wanted an Assistant added to the Sikkim Agency. At Gangtok, the state engineer and the civil surgeon were his only assistants, for the Trade Agents had nothing to do with Sikkim, Bhutan or even Tibetan affairs. His complaint was that he had to do a considerable amount of work himself.

Bell detailed the kind of work an assistant would be required to discharge for Tibet: routine correspondence, such as returns of the Trade Agents at Gyantse and Yatung for correction, bills and accounts incorrectly prepared- “this will mean but little work”. As regards Bhutan, these were petty matters between Bhutan and the British

8 Ibid.
districts bordering on Bhutan and between Bhutan and Sikkim, such as judicial and police cases. The assistant would be required to tour in Bhutan, at least for three months of the year, to guard against Chinese intrigue or to set the Political officer free for such touring when that became necessary. It may also be necessary to make arrangements soon to raise Bhutanese levies, for constructing new roads, and such proposals which will have to be examined on the spot in Bhutan.9

For Sikkim itself Bell saw four important duties for the proposed assistant:

(i) trial of those original cases, civil and criminal, in Sikkim, except serious cases like murder. Appellate cases and serious original cases would continue to be tried by the Political Officer. At present owing to his frequent and lengthy absences from Sikkim (at that time he had been away for over seven months) it was not possible for him to examine the evidence in ordinary cases himself.

(ii) Census work in Sikkim. This would necessitate prolonged touring in the interior of Sikkim, which it was unlikely that he could undertake with so many duties elsewhere.

(iii) Routine administrative work, connected with land revenue, excise, police, judicial, European tourists and the like.

(iv) Transport, camping grounds, etc, for the new troops posted to Sikkim.10

Bell suggested the appointment of a "quite junior officer" of the Political Department. The duties which he proposed to hand over to an assistant were simple and mostly of a routine nature and it would therefore be quite unnecessary to depute an officer of more than two or three years service in the Political Department. An officer of greater seniority than he now proposed would find such a work irksome and would be less ready to fall into ways of the work in this part of the frontier, which was different from the work elsewhere. Such an assistant could relieve others in similar postings when required, or be posted to Bhutan if necessary. He would acquire an experience that may later be useful to the Government of India. He could also be interchanged with the British Trade Agent at

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
Gyantse and would thus have an opportunity of learning something about the Sikkim and Bhutan work and so increase his sphere of usefulness.\textsuperscript{11}

A careful examination of the proposal would show what Bell sought was relief from his work in Sikkim and to a lesser extent in Bhutan. It was his job as adviser to the Government of India for Tibet affairs that seemed to interest him and which he considered, despite the declared non-intervention policy, the most important functions of the Sikkim Political Agency. Behind this was the problem of the Chinese.

### Chinese Encroachments: Bell’s August 1910 Memorandum

“The treaty with Bhutan secured our needs over this portion of the frontier”, Bell later wrote in his \textit{Tibet Past and Present}, but, “it had always seemed to me that his was not enough”.\textsuperscript{12} Bell’s book published in 1924, is rather thin on the details of the Tibetan difficulties and the consequent North-East Frontier problem covering just two pages, but in his official communications he gives full expression to his fear’s of China. East of Bhutan lay the extensive hills, seventy to hundred miles in depth inhabited by diverse tribes in various stages of development. The danger that he foresaw to Bhutan loomed equally, if not more ominously over these hills. “The present position in Tibet has made it more necessary to see these border tribes”, he noted to the Foreign Department on 9 March 1910, and:

> If we wait till Chinese presses on them, our difficulties will be greatly increased, and we may be too late to avert Chinese designs. In Bhutan we were only just in time. If my recent mission had failed, it is probable that we should never have had another chance and that an effective Chinese control over Bhutan would have followed before long and a very serious menace would have been established on our north-eastern frontier.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{12} Bell, \textit{Tibet, op cit}, pp 107f. Bell went on to say: “I feared Chinese intervention and influence - and eventually a measure of control in these tribal territories. They cover seven hundred miles of the Indian frontier, a hundred miles farther than from London to the Orkney Islands. The Indian Government had constituted me their adviser on Tibetan affairs. It seemed to me therefore that although these tribal areas lay outside my own charge-Tibet, Bhutan, and Sikkim-I ought to point out the danger.
Tibetans and Bhutanese look on these tribes as parts of Tibet, and as being included in the Tibetan province of Pe-ma-ko-chen, Lho and Dzayul, thought it appears clear that in the places near India at any rate there is no attempt at control by Tibet.

What we want at present is to find out more about these tribes, as our information at present is not enough for our purpose.¹³

By the middle of 1910 it became increasingly certain that Bell’s worst fears about Chinese encroachments in the tribal areas of the Assam or North East Frontier were beginning to be real. In May the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam informed the Government of India that a thousand Chinese troops had arrived in Rima, across the Mishmi hills. They had demanded taxes from the Tibetans of that place and had issued orders to the Mishmi chief of Pangun to “cut a tract from Tibet to Assam broad enough for two horseman”¹⁴. The chief had declined, saying that he was a British subject, a claim that the Lieutenant Governor was at pains to point out, was made “without authority“. The Mishmis, he explained, however were not subjects of the Tibetans, and still less of the Chinese, but that the British Government was entitled to hold the tribes under its protection and prevent the Chinese and Tibetans from interfering in any way in their internal affairs. Bell learned of all this, and more. Dr. Gregorson, a medical officer of a tea company in Upper Assam, who was to lose his life along with the Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya, Noel Williamson at the hands of the Abors a year later, had told Bell during a visit to Darjeeling of Chinese activities in these remote hills.

Greatly alarmed by these reports Bell submitted a lengthy memorandum to the Government of India on 20 August drawing their attention to the situation in the North East Frontier.¹⁵ He once again pointed out how in the last five years China had relentlessly pushed forward in Tibet, and during the last few months had gained an

¹³ FSEP January 1911: Nos 211-240; Note Bell, 9 March 1910
¹⁵ FSEP January 1911: Nos 211-240; Bell to Foreign Secretary, 20 August 1910, Very Confidential.
effective control on the country: "our policy of non interference in Tibetan affairs has removed the last obstacle to Chinese control", he had lamented. Until Younghusband and the resulting growth of Chinese power in Tibet it was not considered necessary to pay much attention to the 1800 mile long Indo-Tibetan frontier. China had very little power and there were no signs of her being aggressive on the Indian frontier. That position had now completely changed. China was becoming every year more formidable as a military power; she had seized the power in Tibet and was increasing her military strength there more and more. Only a narrow stretch of territory intervened between her conquest and the plains of India. Over 800 miles of the frontier there were but few troops. "It is of vital importance to keep China and all foreign powers out of the narrow stretch of territory". Bell wrote and:

By our Tibetan policy we do not endeavour to prevent China from establishing herself strongly in Tibet. It is the natural corollary of that policy that we should maintain inviolate the narrow zone of country that still intervenes between India and China. Two things are essential as regard this zone. The first is to keep China out of it. The second is to keep British and Indian vested interests out of it as far as possible, and to avoid the responsibilities in its internal administration....by allowing British and Indian vested interest to grow in the zone, at any rate with anything that could be construed into a Government guarantee for the security of those interests, we destroy our buffer states and create those very difficulties which we should endeavour to remove. Moreover, what these border states prize above all is the right to manage their own affairs. We need, therefore, something as near as possible to that which we have recently obtained in Bhutan, namely, the control of their external relations, coupled with our guarantee of non interference in their internal administration.16

"We cannot avoid this North East frontier problem", Bell added. To emphasise the vulnerability of this frontier Bell repeatedly referred to what had been achieved in Sikkim and Bhutan. "In Sikkim we are firmly established", British capital has been allowed into the country and Nepalese settlers have been encouraged to settle there and look to the Political Officer for protection.

16 Ibid.
In this respect Sikkim’s position was different to that of a real buffer state, where the British Government had some responsibilities as regards internal administration. Important advantages, however, had been achieved, and “we hold Sikkim as a watchtower across Tibet, a place where information can be obtained and influence exercised, where such are shown to be necessary”. As regards Bhutan the Treaty had removed the danger of Chinese aggression on the most vulnerable portion of the frontier. The tribal areas of the North-East frontier bordering on Tibet were less fertile, but those closer to the plains of Assam could support large bodies of Chinese troops. This being so, Bell said it was necessary to protect these territories from coming under the power of China, especially as they border on the fertile rice-fields and tea gardens of Assam.

To drive home his arguments Bell drew the attention of the Foreign Department to a military report on Assam prepared by the Chief of Staff’s Division at Army Headquarters showing how vulnerable the frontier was and quoted extensive passages from it in his letter. The main burden of that Report was to emphasise that since it have never been considered likely that Assam should ever be invaded by a “civilized military power” it defences had not been attended to. As a result:

There exists at the present moment no strategical scheme for the defence of Assam against a civilized enemy, no plan for organising supply and

---

17 This was the Military Report on Assam, Chief of Staff Intelligence Division, Calcutta 1908. See also “Memorandum by the General Staff Regarding our Military Policy on the North East Frontier of India from the Bhutan Border to the East of Burma”. (1911)
18 *Ibid*. As the Report pointed out: “That Assam would ever stand the slightest chance of being invaded by a civilized military power has never been contemplated, and in consequence no strategic plan, no defences, no organization whatever exists to repel a serious invasion. All these would have to be elaborated in haste and under extreme pressure, that is to say, under the worst possible conditions for achieving any satisfactory results. Even with many months of previous warning, it is idle to imagine that the province could be put into a state of defence, which would even faintly approach the favourable conditions under which the defenders would meet an enemy attacking the North-Western Frontier.

“The hypothesis of the invasion of Assam by a civilized power requires consideration in some detail, because as long any danger appears remote or improbable it is a popular fallacy to conclude that it is impossible. If, however, the possibility of any given contingency is admitted, it may be laid down as a certainty that its probability is merely a question of time, circumstances, or favourable opportunity. If we wait until the contingency arises to guard against a danger which requires not months but years of previous preparations, in order adequately to meet the requirements of the case, the probability of a complete breakdown, followed by a disaster of unparalleled magnitude, will no longer be a matter of academical speculation, but a portentous fact which will tax the utmost resources of the Empire to cope with.”
transport on the scale which would be required, no permanent defence
works which could resist even the feeblest artillery, no arrangements of
fixed sites for the concentration of large bodies of troops: most of its main
roads are unmetalled and to a great extent unbridged, the Assam – Bengal
railway has only a single track and is of limited capacity, and finally, the
weak garrison of the province is limited to the smallest dimensions
compatible with maintaining security against risings or raids of the wild
tribes both within and without the border. With the exception of a few
police battalions, there is only one local regiment which possess any
extensive practical knowledge of the country, and even that regiment is
likely to be removed within the next two years, if not sooner.

Assam’s one and only protection, the Report continued, “is the chain of hills surrounding
her frontier,” even this could be breached, in which case it would lead to border
uprisings all over India’s northern frontier and so on.19

Having thus given a clear exposition of the problem on the North-East frontier Bell
suggested that control somewhat on the lines of the treaty with Bhutan would secure the
region. This would prevent “forever” the establishment of Chinese agents or the
stationing of Chinese or Tibetan troops. “It would in fine” he said, “prevent any Chinese
menace on this part of our frontier, a part, which in years to come is certain to be of much
greater importance than at present”. Before a definite policy was formulated or
arrangements made with each of the tribes he felt detailed information was necessary on
several points:

(a) How far the territory of the tribe stretched towards Tibet from the Indian frontier.
(b) How far the country was cultivable, i.e. how far it would be able to support
troops, if and when the lands were fully cultivated. It was probable, as was in
Bhutan, that there were large areas of good land and under cultivation.

19 Ibid. Bell also quoted the Englishman of 1 August: “incessant watchfulness, inflexible determination,
and a clearly settled policy is required. There has, so far, been a conspicuous lack of these. Nor must
this energy and alertness be confined to Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, and our frontier lands west of the
Chumbi valley. There is a vast region of forests, hills and rolling downs inhabited by the Daflas, Miris,
Abors and Mishmis through which access can be had into the Assam valley without too much difficulty.
It will not be long before Chinese activities manifest themselves in that region at present practically
unregarded by us.”
(c) To what extent the tribal territory could act as a barrier to invaders, i.e., its physical difficulties, the breadth to be crossed and the supplies (when the lands were cultivated as fully as possible) obtainable en route.

(d) Whether the tribe had in any way recognized the suzerainty of Tibet or China. The claims of these countries to suzerainty were often so shadowy that it would be well to clear up the point as far as possible.

(e) The possibility of inducing the tribe to agree to the treaty. Bell understood that the use of the bazaars in the plains provided a good hold over the tribes, and there were other measures of bringing pressure to bear on them. It needed to be ascertained for each tribe how far it had any central authority or separate chiefs with whom satisfactory arrangements could be made. Of these only the Khamtis seemed to Bell to have a certain amount of central authority.

If no treaty on the lines of that with Bhutan was possible some other arrangements would still be necessary, for “to let things remain as they are is to invite serious trouble.” The tribes should not be left to the control of the neighbouring deputy commissioners who were always liable to frequent transfers and may not be familiar with the kind of work expected of them. Bell suggested that the tribes should be grouped, perhaps two groups would suffice, each being placed under a political officer directly under the Government of India’s Foreign Department. They could, just as he did in the case of Sikkim and Bhutan, be in direct contact with the deputy commissioners on matters of local importance. Bell would have liked the two political officers be placed under the control of the Political Officer in Sikkim. But the “Chief point is to remove these tribes from the control of the Local Government in the interests of the tribes and of ourselves.” The Government of India was aware of how great an improvement there has been not only in British relations with Sikkim and Bhutan, but also on the power of control over the latter country, since they had been brought under the Foreign Department. If, however, this was considered too great a change, the political officers could remain under the Local Government, but “now that China has stepped in” matters of Imperial policy should be referred to the Government of India as soon as they arose with the least possible delay.
Bell concluded with the observation that: “Experience has shown in recent years that Local Governments have not the knowledge and the grasp of political conditions requisite for dealing with the political problems that have now arisen in connection with these border tribes.”

**Loose Political Control**

Meanwhile, reports of Chinese activities in the Mishmi hills kept pouring into Calcutta. In July another Mishmi Chief told the Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya, Noel Williamson, that a party of Chinese from Rima had recently come down the Lohit river to just below Walong and planted boundary markers at the Yepak river, a tributary of the Lohit. In October Mishmis visiting Sadiya said the Chinese had forbidden all trade between the Mishmis and the Tibetans. To the Local Government there appeared, as Alistair Lamb points out, three alternatives: the first was to leave the Mishmis as they were, “Savage and independent tribes between British territory and Tibet”, the second was to take the Mishmis under British protection. This latter had its problems, the Tibetan border was one hundred and fifty miles further from Sadiya, and so, the Eastern Bengal and Assam Government pointed out on 20 September:

> It is clear that if we extend our territory upto the Tibetan frontier we must advance our posts many miles beyond our present situation and locate them in a sparsely inhabited and mountainous country. Further, though we know something of the route to Rima, it is difficult to see how we could define our boundary to the north or south of Rima, or protect our marches when defined. On the other hand, Rima must be far from the Chinese base, and it is doubtful whether the Chinese would venture to disregard a definite pronouncement that we would not tolerate any advance beyond the western boundary of Tibet.

The third alternative was that the British could decide that “the Chinese should be allowed to absorb the Mishmis if they wish to do so”. But this would, the Local Government said, “allow the Chinese to extend their influence right down to the foot of

---

20 Ibid.

173
the hills bordering on the valley of the Brahmaputra, (which) might be productive of serious administrative inconvenience”. The Lieutenant Governor, Sir Lancelot Hare, therefore, had little doubt that the British should assume sovereignty over the Lohit valley even if this involved an addition to the burden of British administration.23

When the Viceroy, Lord Minto, decided to take up the matter so forcefully argued by Hare, with the India Office Bell’s memorandum of 20 August was already in his hands. Two months earlier the Army authorities, whose advice had been sought, had suggested much the same course. In June the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Douglas Haig pointed out how from every point of view a mountain chain was most suited for defence. “If masters of the defiles, the defenders can menace the communications of the assailant and by an obstinate struggle can sometimes compromise his position;” 24 but these advantages passed on to the enemy if he in turn controlled the mountain ranges and the passes. And this advantage the Chinese would obtain if the British remained on its existing frontier about Sadiya. General Haig further noted:

If (as Mr Bell assumes) the tribal territories contain large areas of cultivable land, our policy should further be such as to prevent the Chinese from obtaining possession of these territories and forming an advanced base from which to advance to the invasion of Burma or Assam. Without some such base invasion becomes impossible because before commencing active operations, supplies for an army must be collected in its immediate rear. But even without actually preparing the tribal territories to serve as an advanced base, the mere presence of Chinese officials with their guards in those districts, seems likely to cause unrest amongst the inhabitants of north eastern India. For these reasons Chinese influence ought to be altogether precluded from the “tribal territories”. 25

With the Army’s views on the importance of obtaining a strategic frontier in the North-East and Bell’s arguments for turning them into a buffer before him, Minto sent a telegraph to the Secretary of State on 23 October “we are inclined to think that the best

23 FSEP January 1911: Nos 211-240; B.C.Allen to Foreign Secretary, 20 September.
25 Ibid
policy to pursue would be to gain a buffer by extending the outer line so far as may be necessary and by arranging that the tribes within or beyond it have no intercourse or relations with any foreign Power than ourselves. This was of course Bell’s recommendation. The alignment roughly proposed was what the General Staff had suggested:

Our influence should run approximately from the east of the wedged-shaped portion of Tibetan territory, known as the Tawang district, which runs down to the British Frontier north of Odiaguri in a north easterly direction to latitude $29^\circ$ longitude $95^\circ$, then along latitude $29^\circ$ to longitude $96^\circ$, thence in a south easterly direction to the Zayul Chu, as far east and as near as possible to Rima, thence across the Zayul Chu to the Zayul-chu-Irrawaddy divide; and thence along that divide until it joins the Irrawaddy-Salween divide. In this area the tribes for the most part are believed to be independent and some of them are already under our influence.

The India Office, where Morley was being replaced by the Marques of Crewe, was uneasy about this policy. Minto himself was to hand over the Viceroyalty to Lord Hardinge and the new Secretary of State for India preferred to wait till then before committing himself to any definite reply. Harding, as Sir Charles Harding, had long served the Foreign Office and was one of the architects of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. He was expected to be less enthusiastic about a forward policy in the North East frontier as Minto had become.

Before Hardinge arrived in India in November 1910 Sir Lacelot Hare was pressing upon the Government of India his views expressed in B. C. Allen’s 20 September letter. Before addressing the Secretary of State the Government of India on 23 October, sought from Hare as suggested by Bell in his memorandum, information relating to:

(i) The extent and nature of the country of each tribe.

---

26 It was imagined that the so-called “Outer line” ran parallel to the “Inner line” and lying beyond the latter, constituted India’s external frontier. For a correct appraisal see Gondkar Narayana Rao, the India-China Border, Delhi 1968, pp.73-78.

27 Ibid, (No 217), Telegram, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 23rd October.

28 Ibid
(ii) How far, if at all, the tribes at present recognized the suzerainty of Tibet or China and
(iii) The possibility of executing new agreements with the tribes and their probable cost.

On 26 October the Eastern Bengal and Assam Government answered these queries. The tribes within the territorial limits indicated by the Government of India to the Secretary of State were “ready to attorn to the British Government”, Hare wrote, and he was prepared to inform these tribes that they “need not consider themselves in any way subject either to Tibet or China”. British relations with each of the tribes in the past and furtherest places visited by British officers was referred to by the Lieutenant Governor, but the point he made was that as yet very little was known of the vast majority of them. This, he emphasized, was the result of the policy to avoid entering tribal territory owing to the fear of complications and consequently, “there is no one at present serving in the province, who has much personal influence over the tribes inhabiting the hills to the north of Brahmaputra”. There were difficulties, both from the attitude of the tribes and from the problem of organizing escorts and transport for exploring these hills. The advantages that would be gained, however, by entering into closer relations with the more distant tribes outweighed the risks involved. “Tact and discretion will much mitigate the risk”, Hare went on to say, and the “time has come for withdrawing the absolute veto, that has hitherto been placed upon all attempts at explorations in this part of the frontier”. Specially qualified officers should endeavour to penetrate the hills: “such explorations will be attended with some risk, but on the whole the probabilities are more in favour of the explorer being compelled to return than of his being treated in such fashion as to necessitate the dispatch of a punitive expedition”. None of the tribes owed any allegiance to the Tibetans or the Chinese.

It would be unnecessary, the Lieutenant Governor was of the view, to promise regular subsidies to the tribes. Such payments that were made to the Akas, Daflas and

29 Ibid. (No 224) BC Allen to Foreign Secretary, 26 October 1910.
30 Ibid.
Miris were nominally made in commutation for rights which they professed to have in the submontane tracts. It might perhaps be necessary to make presents, which be trifling, to selected headmen. Finally it was only the Mishmi hills where some emergency had arisen; all along the northern frontier there was as yet no immediate need for action, but that it was desirable to strengthen British position in these parts at a very early date.31

On 22 November 1910 Hare had an interview with the new Lord Hardinge who in the meanwhile had assumed office in Calcutta, but failed to convince him. A month later Hardinge, who had in the mean while gone over all the papers, let it be known to the Secretary of State that:

any forward move of the administrative frontier was strongly to be deprecated. Chinese aggressions would, in Lord Hardinge’s view, be met, not in the tribal territory bordering Assam, but by an attack on the coast of China. He was therefore, opposed to running risks or spending money on endeavours to create a strategic frontier in advance of the administrative border, and he was unable to agree to any promise of support being held out to the Mishmis or other tribes beyond our frontier who might appeal for help against Chinese aggression.32

And again:

We recognize that the action of the Chinese may ultimately compel us to fix a line beyond which no further advance can be permitted, but we see no necessity at present for incurring the risks and responsibilities entailed by a forward movement into the tribal territory now beyond our control.

Frontier officers would, for the time being, confine themselves to “cultivating friendly relations” with the tribes beyond the administrative border and to carrying out the established policy of punishing outrages committed on British territory or against British subjects. Hardinge, however, was prepared.

should it be possible to obtain further information about the country beyond the “outer line” without risk of complications, we should be prepared to authorize explorations for the purpose, but we should not permit any general increase in activity in this direction, nor can we

31 Ibid.
32 Quoted in Lamb, Mc Mahon Line, Opecit pp. 337 – 338.
recommend that any sort of promise should be given to the tribes that may rely on our support in the event of Tibetan or Chinese aggression.\(^{33}\)

This is a classic expression of the non-intervention policy followed in the 1860's in the North-West Frontier, associated with the name of Sir John Laurence—the 'masterly inactivity' as it was called. Just as Laurence had his critics at home and in India,\(^ {34}\) so did Hardinge. There had been a change at the Indian Office both in the personages and in its ideas following the departure of Morley. Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Secretary to the Political and Secret Department of the Secretary of State’s India Council, was one such strong critic. His letter of 11 January 1911 written privately to Sir Richmond Ritchie, Permanent Under Secretary of State for India, deserves to be quoted at length as showing what the stakes were for the British:

> The levity with which Hardinge talks about attacking the coast of China amazes me. But quite apart from that, it is a bad matter, for no attempt is made to argue the case or explain the grounds for these conclusions, and though of course the onus probandi lies on the other side, still the Secretary of State is surely entitled to know why the other side is overruled.

> If anything goes wrong in Assam, there will be very voiceful public opinion against us. There are no European industries along the North West frontier, and one fat Hindu banya more or less doesn’t matter—yet! But in Lakhimpur District there are over 70,000 acres of tea gardens turning out 30,000,000 pounds of tea annually, and employing over 200 Europeans and 100,000 Indians. The European capital risk in tea must be enormous, and there are other industries as well (eg. coal, over \(\frac{1}{4}\) million tons a year). These gardens lie at the foot of the hills inhabited by savages; their defence rests with one battalion of native infantry and one battalion of military police (850 men). Think of the howl the planters would let out, and the rise in the price of tea!\(^ {35}\)

On this debate, initiated by Bell in August 1910, the death of Noel Williamson, Assistant Political officer at Sadiya, at the hands of the Abors of Komsing village in

---

\(^{33}\)Ibid

\(^{34}\)See Arthur Swinson, *North West Frontier, People and Events 1839 – 1947*, London 1967, Chapter 5, pp 116-163, for a convincing argument against this policy, that made by Professor H.H. Dodwell, see his “Foreign Policy” in H.H. Dodwell (ed) *Cambridge History of India*, Vol VI.

\(^{35}\)Quoted in Lamb, *McMahon Line*, *op cit*, p 339-40
March 1911, made as Parshotam Mehra rightly notes, a powerful impact.\textsuperscript{36} Williamson and Gregorson, the tea garden doctor referred to earlier, made an unauthorized tour of the Abor hills when they were set upon by the Abors and killed.\textsuperscript{37} On 25 April Hare reopened the subject, urging the Government of India to dispatch a punitive expedition against the Abors.\textsuperscript{38} Hardinge finally relented indeed the death of Williamson produced a radical change in the policy of the Viceroy. He now telegraphed the Secretary of State about how necessary the expedition was; the “exaction of reparation” and the “establishment of (British) superiority” in the estimation of the Abors.\textsuperscript{39} Advantage was to be taken of the expedition to survey and explore the tribal areas as far as it was practicable in order to obtain full knowledge of the mountains to decide upon an Indo-Tibetan boundary. There were now reports of Chinese activities in Upper Burma and an understanding with the Chinese Government had shown the urgent necessity “about our mutual frontier”. The Viceroy’s telegram followed by a dispatch on 21 September, also suggested that simultaneously with the Abor expedition a friendly mission should be sent to the Mishmi country to ensure that they did not combine with the Abors. “We do not prepose” the Secretary of State was assured, “that the Mishmis should be given a guarantee of protection. But we should leave them, as well as the Abors, in no manner of doubt as to their being under us or as to their having to look to us for future regard as punishment according to their conduct.” After the sanction of the Secretary of State to the proposed expedition was received Lord Hardinge’s policy became more fully settled. By September he was talking of the “unusual political activity” lately displayed by the Chinese. As he told the Secretary of State, that there appeared no alternative to the proposal earlier submitted by Minto and every endeavour should be made to obtain a

\textsuperscript{36} Parshotam Mehra, \textit{Mc Mahon Line, op cit}, p 95
\textsuperscript{37} For details, Sir Robert Reid, \textit{History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941}, Shillong 1942.
\textsuperscript{38} FSEP August 1911: Nos. 436-51, From Secretary Eastern Bengal and Assam to Foreign Secretary, 25 April.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid.}, Viceroy to Secretary of State Telegram, 29 June, also Barpujari, \textit{Problem of the Hill Tribes op. cit.}, p 169-70.
\textsuperscript{40} FSEP December 1911: Nos 450 – 523.
sound strategical boundary between China-Tibet and the tribal areas east of Bhutan upto and including the Mishmi hills.  

We have (Hardinge said) on the administrative border of Asam some of the wealthiest districts of British India where large sums of private European capital have been invested and where the European population outnumbered that of any other district of India.

As to the alignment of the new frontier Hardinge followed generally the recommendations of his predecessor. The “outer line” should be advanced to that new line. As regards the policy to be followed in the tribal areas within this new limit, Hardinge was categorical:

We considered that our future policy should be one of the loose political control, having as its object the minimum interference compatible with the necessity of protecting the tribesmen from unprovoked aggression, the responsibility for which we cannot avoid, and of preventing them from violating either our own or Chinese territory, and while endeavouring to leave the tribes as much as possible to themselves, to abstain from any line of action, or inaction as the case may be, which may tend to inculcate in their minds any undue sense of independence likely to produce results of the nature obtaining under somewhat analogous conditions on the North West frontier of India.

Loose political control, in other words, was to conform largely to Bell’s ideas of turning the tribal area into a buffer.

Simla Convention

The Secretary of State’s sanction to the Abor Expedition, as the punitive measures against that tribe came to be called, was received in July 1911. Its objects, as laid down

---

41 FSEP October 1911: No 52-123; Hardinge to Crewe 21 September.
42 Ibid. The Viceroy had thus explained: “We do not propose to have third or intermediate line between the existing “Inner Line” and the new external boundary, neither do we think it necessary for the latter to be regularly demarcated at present, but it will probably be necessary, to erect cairns at suitable points... to indicate the limits of our control and to explain to the tribesmen the object of such marks”.
43 Ibid, also Choudhury, North East Frontier, op cit, pp 63-64.
44 Edwin Montague later explained, as Bell understood buffers. “Loose political control implies objection to any sort or kind of interference by foreign powers and I believe that this could best be achieved as a general rule of patrol or expeditions from a well maintained base in our own territory, and need not involve posts to tribal territory at all” Choudhury, op cit, pp 73
in September for Hamilton Bower, now a Major – General, who was placed in military and chief political command, were several:

(i) To exact severe punishment and reparation for the murder of Williamson, Gregorson and their party, and by establishing military superiority in the estimation of the tribe to endeavour to compel the Minyong Abors to surrender the chief instigators and perpetrators of the massacre.

(ii) To visit as many of the Minyong villages as possible, and to make the tribe clearly understand that in future, they would be under British control, which subject to their good behavior, would for the present be of a loose political nature.

(iii) To visit the Bor Abors or Padam village of Damroh, which the expedition of 1893* failed to reach; provided that the Padam Abors behaved themselves, the visit to the country would not be of a punitive nature.

(iv) If in the course of the expedition, Chinese officials or troops are met, efforts should be made to maintain amicable relations; if, however, such officials or troops were met within the territory of the tribes on the British side of recognized Tibetan – Chinese limits they should be invited to withdraw into recognized Tibetan – Chinese limits and, if necessary, should be compelled to do so.

(v) To explore and survey as much of the country as possible, visiting, if practicable the Pemakoi falls and incidentally settling the question of the identity of the Tsangpo and Brahmaputra rivers, and

(vi) To submit proposals for a suitable frontier line between India and Tibet in general conformity with the line indicated in the despatch to the Secretary of State based on the recommendations of the General

* An expedition was mounted that year against the Padams Abors. In the course of it, it was decided and a column to Damroh, further north, and while it was on its way, Abors from other villages attacked the staging post established at Bordak village, and killed several sepoys and followers. Consequently, the Damroh column returned precipately. For details, Barpujari, op cit, pp. 134 – 36; Reid, op cit. Pp. 194 – 204.
No boundary was, however, to be settled on the ground without the orders of the Government except in cases where the recognized limits of Tibetan-Chinese territory are found to conform approximately to the line indicated and which followed such prominent physical features as were essential for a satisfactory strategic and well defined boundary line.

On 28 October General Bower moved up from Pasighat with his troops, and on the 19th of the following month the first organized resistance was met with at a stockade in the Igor valley. It was captured in spite of the formidable Abor defences. The next day a further advance was made into the Abor country and on 9 December Kebang, the stronghold of the Minyongs, was occupied. “With the fall of Kebang”, in the words of the official report on the Expedition, “active opposition of the tribes came to an end.”

The geographical results of the Expedition were not as impressive as was expected, largely owing to the climate and the physical difficulties of the country. Nevertheless a good deal of information had been acquired which was of great value. As the Official Report summed up:

Practically the whole of the Country was surveyed accurately as far as Latitude 28°40' N. The whole of the valley of the Yamne was surveyed up to the snow ranges, the Shimang river was mapped throughout its entire length, the course of the Siyon was roughly traced; and the valley of the

---

45 FSEP January 1911: Nos. 211 – 240; (No 239) India to Crewe, 22 December 1910; and “Memorandum by the General Staff Regarding our Military Policy on the North-East Frontier of India from the Bhutan Border to the east of Burma”. D. Haig, 4 August 1910
46 Ibid, p. 229. The expedition was composed of 725 officers and men drawn from the Naga Hills, Lakhimpur and Dacca Military Police Battalions under the command of Major C. Bliss, Commandant of the Naga Hills Battalion; the 1/8 Gorkhas, the 32nd Sikh Pioneers, a company of the 1st King George’s Own Sappers and Miners, and a detachment of 1/2nd Gorkha Rifles, and two 7 pounder mountain guns. A.H.W. Bentink and W.C.M. Dundas were Assistant Political Officers to General Bower.
47 Ibid, p. 229. The expedition was composed of 725 officers and men drawn from the Naga Hills, Lakhimpur and Dacca Military Police Battalions under the command of Major C. Bliss, Commandant of the Naga Hills Battalion; the 1/8 Gorkhas, the 32nd Sikh Pioneers, a company of the 1st King George’s Own Sappers and Miners, and a detachment of 1/2nd Gorkha Rifles, and two 7 pounder mountain guns. A.H.W. Bentink and W.C.M. Dundas were Assistant Political Officers to General Bower.
48 Official Account of the Abor Expedition, also in Frontier and Overseas Expedition from India, Vol X. The Abor Expedition; “The expedition resulted in the punishment of all the hostile villages and the exaction of punishment for Mr. Williamson’s murder. All the men who had taken a leading part in this were tried and punished and practically all the looted property was restored. The Minyong tribe was crushed and its villages brought to submission, while the power of Kebang, which for years had terrorized its neighbours, was finally broken. This village lost a large number of its fighting men, and its reputation was so shattered that it will probably take years to recover”, in Reid, op cit, p. 230
Dihang was followed as far north as Singing, Latitude 28°52' (approximate), a point within 25 or 30 miles of the most northern Abor village. The identity of the Dihang with the Tsangpo, though not absolutely proved, was at any rate practically established.

This was only in the Abor country, and other surveys and explorations in the Mishmi hills and in the area from the Abor hills to Bhutan in the west supplemented the information already acquired for boundary making. Once the rough alignment of the new boundary had been decided, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge proposed “a formal intimation should be made to China of the limits of the country under control.” But meanwhile, a far reaching change had taken place in China that was to have an immediate impact on Tibet and India’s eastern borderlands in the years immediately following.

In October 1911 the Manchu dynasty was overthrown and a republic under Yuan Shih Kai was proclaimed. The collapse of the Manchu was followed in Mongolia by the setting up of the autonomous regime in Urga. The Chinese troops were expelled from Tibet and the Dalai lama who was in Darjeeling all these years returned to Lhasa and asserted his independence. On 11 January 1913 Mongolia and Tibet concluded a 9 Article treaty in Urga and recognized each other as independent countries. Yuan Shih Kai having failed to come to a settlement with Tibet, declared that Tibet, Mongolia and Turkistan (Singkiang), were integral parts of the Chinese Republic, and began to send in troops into the Tibetan country. “The Tibetan Government might well wish to follow the Mongolian lead”, said Charles Bell, “and would certainly prefer the suzerainty of Russia to the domination by China. This was what we had to fear, if we stood aloof. But if we helped Tibet now, she would prefer to deal with us, for we were, near and Russia far away.”

Tibetan autonomy was guaranteed under the Adhesion Agreement 1906, and Britain, worried of possible repercussions in the Indian borderlands, could not allow

49 For details see H. K. Barpujari, Problem of the Hill Tribes, Vol. III, op cit, pp 169 - 190
50 See Ram Rahul, Politics of Central Asia. Delhi 1973, pp 100 -101. On 17 October 1913, the day Russia recognized the Republic of China, Yuan’s regime announced recognition of Mongolia’s autonomy. By an agreement to this effect, which China signed with Russia in Peking on 5 November 1913, China accepted Mongol autonomy. By the same agreement, Russia acknowledged China’s suzerainty over Mongolia. Heavy pressure from both China and Russia thus reduced Mongolia’s independence to mere autonomy under the suzerainty of China.
51 Bell, Tibet, op cit, pp 148ff. See also Bell’s Potrait of the Dalai Lama, London 1946.
suzerainty to be turned into a military occupation and the taking over of its administration. China was informed that Britain would not recognize the new Republic until some agreement was arrived at over Tibet. After a good deal of diplomatic activity China agreed to a tripartite conference in India.

The Conference formally opened in Simla on 6 October 1913. Lonchen Shatra represented Tibet, while Chen I-fan, better known in the earlier books as Ivan Chen was the Chinese Plenipotentiary; Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India presided, and in the proceedings was assisted by Charles Bell. Of the latter it has been rightly said: “With his intimate knowledge of the affairs of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim, Bell not only played a significant role in the boundary agreement with Tibet but in moulding the Tibetan policy of the British Indian Government.”

At the Conference Lonchen Shatra sought an acknowledgement of Tibet’s independence, the abrogation of the Agreement of 1906 and the revision of the Trade Regulations. He wished to have a frontier with China that included all the Tibetan people. Ivan Chen on the other hand claimed Chinese sovereignty over Tibet on the basis of its conquest by the Mongols under Chengiz Khan and sought a declaration that Tibet was an integral part of China over whose foreign and military policies she had full control. After long discussions which spread over six months both Lonchen and Ivan Chen agreed to a formula proposed by McMahon: Tibet was to be divided into two zones, “Inner” and “Outer Tibet”. In the latter, in which Lhasa was located and which adjoined India (and partly Burma) was declared autonomous where China interference in the internal administration would not be permitted. In Inner Tibet which lay between Outer Tibet and China, Lhasa was to retain its existing rights, but where China could send troops and officers and plant colonies. The old Trade Regulations were to be replaced by afresh treaty governing the commercial relations between India and Outer Tibet. This

---

53 Barpujari, P. 193.
agreement was embodied in a Convention,\textsuperscript{54} and the boundaries, between Outer and Inner Tibet in Blue, and between Outer Tibet and China in red, was indicated on a map which was appended to the Convention, and initialed by all three Plenipotentiaries on 27 April.

Advantage had been taken of the Conference to settle the boundary with Tibet in the north-east: "It is desirable", McMahon had said, "to come to an early decision in general terms regarding the boundary line we require in order to enable us to come to an understanding on the subject with China – Tibet before the Tibetan Conference closes."\textsuperscript{55} The surveys and explorations amassed a wealth of information on the topographical features of the frontier and there were before McMahon and Bell at Simla. On the basis of these the military had now advised that the line:

Should follow some prominent geographical features, preferably the main watershed of the mountain system and, also that, to facilitate effective occupation... the communication up to the frontier should be such as to afford reasonable access to the line selected. A lateral communication running parallel to and at a short distance in rear of the frontier is also a considerable asset.\textsuperscript{56}

A few gaps in the details of the proposed line which remained had been filled in by further reports as negotiation began.

The talks on the Indo-Tibet boundary did not form part of the Tripartite Conference; the discussions were between Charles Bell and Lonchen Shatra in Delhi from 15 January to 17 March 1914. They began with Bell placing before his Tibetan counterpart a map delineating the proposed frontier line. One of the most difficult problems that needed to be sorted out related to the Tawang tract east of Bhutan, which the Army authorities wanted within India. "Tawang Monastery is clearly Tibetan" said Bell, but:

\textsuperscript{54} See Appendix for text
\textsuperscript{55} Note, McMahon 24 October in FSEP September 1915: Nos 76 – 101, in Barpujari, \textit{op cit}, P. 194
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid. The Military Frontier on the North-East: The N.E. Salient.}

185
We should... insist in getting the Tawang area south of the red line and the adjoining Bhutan though this seems undoubtedly Tibetan territory, as otherwise Tibet and Assam will adjoin each other and, if Tibet should again come under Chinese control, it will be a dangerous position for us.\(^{57}\)

The Lonchen pointed out several discrepancies in the proposal, it showed tribes and areas included within India that were paying taxes to the Tibetan Government. Bell’s stand was that the proposed line was based on reports of British officers who had carefully surveyed the areas, and it constituted “an equitable frontier” between India and Tibet. Nevertheless he was prepared to make adjustments in the apportionment of territory, a major concession being placing the Tibetan pilgrimage areas in what is new Migyutin in Tibet. Lonchen Shatra however, admitted that he had “no accurate knowledge of the Indo-Tibetan boundary nor did he receive any instructions from Lhasa to that effect”, and therefore referred the map to his Government. On 17 March he was able to inform Bell that his Government had agreed to the boundary and the surrender of all revenue from lands that fell on the British side. Their only request was that the income and estates of private individuals might be left to them.

The discussions were finalized through an exchange of letters between Shatra and Bell.\(^{58}\) The Indo-Tibetan boundary north of Assam, soon to be referred to as the McMahon Line, formed only a part of the red-line, the boundary separating Outer Tibet from China. The Convention, the initialed map and the Bell-Shatra notes were forwarded to the Secretary of State on 28 March 1914.

The Chinese, as it is now well known, repudiated the Convention and directed Ivan Chen to inform the Conference that “your action in initialing the draft is null void”. What the Chinese were objecting to was the division of Tibet into Outer and Inner units and the boundary between the two.\(^{59}\) McMahon informed Peking on 23 June that unless the Convention was signed before the expiry of the month, Britain would go it alone with


\(^{58}\) See Appendix...

\(^{59}\) Ram Gopal, *India-China-Tibet triangle*, Bombay 1964, P. 24. China did not object to the McMahon then, as she was to do later in the 1950s. See also Bell, *Tibet*, *op cit.*
Tibet, in which case China would lose “all advantages and privileges” of the Tripartite agreement, principally article two of the Convention. The Chinese Government remained adamant, and in their absence Tibet and India signed the Convention, with some slight modifications, on 3 July 1914. McMahon could only regret the failure to get the Chinese to be a part to it. But he reorganized the “most valuable asset” in the conclusion of the Indo-Tibetan frontier in the north-east:

So long as the frontier was unknown and undefined constant friction with China was inevitable... The frontier work of the past three years and the negotiation of Tibet Conference at Simla have served to make clear the mutual rights and the responsibilities of Great Britain, China and Tibet and it may be hoped that the North-East Frontier will now be removed from the anxiety which beset the Indian Government during the last few years. 60

* * *

The new North-East Frontier, its northern limits now settled by Treaty and under “loose political control”, conformed to what Bell had in mind when he wrote in September 1910 about extending the concept of the buffer to these tribal areas. So did the administrative arrangements that followed. The entire frontier tract was divided into Eastern, Central and Western Sections. In the Eastern Section, which had proved to be extremely sensitive owing to the Chinese encroachment during 1910-11, a bridged cart road from Sadiya to Menilkrai in the Mishmi hills towards Rima, was sanctioned. Here a post was to be established, with at least two intermediate posts on the road. In the Central or Abor Sector posts were established at Balek, Pasighat and Kobo, together with a trading post near Kebang.

The tract from the borders of Burma (Diphu pass) to the Subansiri river was placed under a Political Officer, W.C.M Dundas, with the Assistants, and the tract from Subansiri to Bhutan under another Political Officer, G.A. Neville. Both Political

60 Quoted in Barpujari, op cit, P. 206
Officers, who were to enjoy the powers of a provincial deputy commissioner, were placed directly under the Chief Commissioner and not under the Foreign Department, as Bell would have liked, but the fact that the Chief Commissioner communicated with that Department in matters relating to the frontier, it had the result he desired. A new military police battalion was raised to the duties of the North East Frontier. In 1919, Dundas’ charge came to be known as the Sadiya Frontier Tract and the other, Balipara frontier Tract. This remained virtually unchanged till the end of British rule.
APPENDIX J

Convention Concluded Between the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, China and Tibet in 1914

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, Emperor of India, His Excellency the President of the Republic of China, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, being sincerely desirous to settle by mutual agreement various questions concerning the interests of their several States on the Continent of Asia, and further to regulate the relations of their several Governments, have resolved to conclude a Convention on this subject and have nominated for this purpose their respective Plenipotentiaries, that is to say.

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the seas, Emperor of India, Sir Arthur Henry MacMahon, Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order of the Indian Empire, companion of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department.

His Excellency the President of the Republic of China – Monsieur Ivan Chen, Officer of the Order of the Chia H.O.;

His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet – Lonchen Gaden Shatra Pal-jor Dorje; who having communicated to each other their respective full powers and finding them to be in good and due form have agreed upon and concluded the following Convention in eleven Articles:-

Article 1

The Conventions specified in the Schedule to the Present Convention shall, except in so far as they may have been modified by, or may be inconsistent with or repugnant to, any of the provisions of the present Convention, continue to be binding upon the High Contracting Parties.

Article 2

The Governments of Great Britain and China recognizing that Tibet is under the suzerainty of China, and recognizing also the autonomy of Outer Tibet, engage to respect the territorial integrity of the country, and to abstain from interference in the administration of Outer Tibet (including the selection and installation of the dalai Lama) which shall remain in the hands of the Tibetan Government at Lhasa.

The Government of China engages not to convert Tibet into a Chinese province. The Government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibet or any portion of it.

*It was signed by the Chinese Plenipotentiary, but not ratified by the Chinese Government.
Article 3

Recognising the special interest of Great Britain, in virtue of the geographical position of Tibet, in the existence of an effective Tibetan Government, and in the maintenance of peace and order in the neighbourhood of the frontiers of India and adjoining States, the Government of China engages, except as provided in Article 4 of this Convention, not to send troops into Outer Tibet nor to station civil or military officers, nor to establish Chinese colonies in the country. Should any such troops or officials remain in Outer Tibet at the date of the signature of this Convention, they shall be withdrawn within a period of not exceeding three months.

The Government of Great Britain engages not to station military or civil officers in Tibet (except as provided in the Convention of September 7, 1904, between great Britain and Tibet) nor troops (except the Agents' escort), nor to establish colonies in that country.

Article 4

The foregoing Article shall not be held to preclude the continuance of the arrangement by which, in the past, a Chinese high official with suitable escort has been maintained at Lhasa, but it is hereby provided that the said escort shall in no circumstances exceed 300 men.

Article 5

The Governments of China and Tibet engage that they will not enter into any negotiations of agreements regarding Tibet with one another, or with any other Power, excepting such negotiations and agreements between Great Britain and Tibet as are provided for by the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet and the Convention of April 27, 1906, between Great Britain and China.

Article 6

Article 3 of the Convention of April 27, 1906, between Great Britain and China is hereby cancelled, and it is understood that in Article 9 (d) of the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet the term "Foreign Powers" does not include China.

Article 7

(a) The Tibet Trade regulations of 1893 and 1903 are hereby cancelled.
(b) The Tibetan Government engages to negotiate with the British Governments new Trade regulations for Outer Tibet to give effect to Articles 2, 4 and 5 of the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet without delay; provided always that such regulations shall in no way modify the present Convention except with the consent of the Chinese Government.

Article 8

The British Agent who resides at Gyantse may visit Lhasa with his escort whenever it is necessary to consult with the Tibetan Government regarding matters
arising out of the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet, which it has been found impossible to settle at Gyantse by correspondence or otherwise.

Article 9

For the purpose of the present Convention the borders of Tibet, and the boundary between Outer and Inner Tibet, shall be as shown in red and blue respectively on the map attached hereto.

Nothing in the present Convention shall be held to prejudice the existing rights of the Tibetan Government in Inner Tibet, which include the power to select and appoint the high priests of monasteries and to retain full control in all matters affecting religious institutions.

Article 10

The English, Chinese and Tibetan texts of the present Convention have been carefully examined and found to correspond, but in the event of there being any difference of meaning between them the English text shall be authoritative.

Article 11

The Present Convention will take effect from the date of signature.

In token whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed and sealed this Convention, three copies in English, three in Chinese and three in Tibetan.

Done at Simla this third day of July A.D., one thousand nine hundred and fourteen, corresponding with the Chinese date, the third day of the seventh month of the third year of the Republic, and the Tibetan date, the tenth day of the fifth month of the Wood-Tiger year.