CHAPTER III
CURZON, TIBET AND SIKKIM

Lord Elgin’s moderation in dealing with the Tibet problem was not the product of any Viceregal weakness as it may seem, but it was a policy dictated by events of great complexity in the North-West the difficult and expensive frontier wars of 1897 – 98.1 These had been over when Curzon arrived and it was possible for the new Viceroy to begin the process of disengagement, of what was called the policy of “withdrawal and concentration”. After establishing British dominance in the Persian Gulf region Curzon was relatively free to deal with Tibet. What in the beginning seemed no more than a local irritant was soon to be transformed and lead to events of far reaching consequences.

Few Governors-General and Viceroys had prepared themselves more than Curzon for the Indian appointment and fewer still came equipped with such vast knowledge of India and Central Asia.2 He did a stint as Under Secretary of State for India and when not tied to office in England travelled widely. During 1888 and 1894 he visited most of Central Asia, Persia, Afghanistan and the difficult Pamirs, the Far East, Japan, China, Korea, the Indo – China and Siam. He put this vast knowledge into print: Russia in Central Asia in 1889, published that same year; Persian and the Persian Question in 1892, and the Problems of the Far East a few years later.3 He was aware of his own qualification for the Indian Viceroyalty, describing them in 1897 to Lord Salisbury when he sought that high office:

1 See C. Collin Davies, Problem
3 In addition were his Tales of Travel, London 1923, and the two posthumously published Leaves from a Viceroy’s Note-Book, London 1926, a companion volume to the Tales and British Government in India, London 1925.
I have for the last 10 years made a careful and earnest study of Indian problems, have been in the country four times and am acquainted with and have the confidence of most of its leading men... the views or forecasts I have been bold enough to express have... turned out to be right... I have been fortunate too, in making the acquaintance of the rulers of the neighbouring states... At the India Office... I learnt something of the official working of the great machine... a very great work can be done by an English Viceroy who is young and active and intensely absorbed in his work... (and who has) a great love of the country and pride in the imperial aspect of its possession.4

Implementing White’s Proposal

Such a man could hardly be expected to accept Tibetan or Chinese obstructions with equanimity, even if his hands, like those of Elgin before him, were full of Imperial problems elsewhere. Almost immediately after he assumed office in January 1899 Curzon decided to act on White’s proposals. He was early convinced by the Political Officer’s views that Yatung “can never be expected to be a real market.” He showed a willingness to leave Giaogong, and its environs to the Tibetans, that desolate region they were “so desirous of retaining”, but on the condition that Phari be thrown open to traders from India. These Indian traders were not to be hindered from conducting their business directly with the Tibetans, and that there should be an option of sending a British official to visit Phari and reside there “if this should prove desirable.”5

What seemed most irksome to the Imperial Pro-Consul was the established mode of communicating with the Tibetans through the Chinese. This system he considered as

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4 Quoted in Mehra, The Younghusband Mission, P. 121
5 Ibid, P. 144. The Anglo - Indian press too had been pressing for decisive action in the matter of trade with Tibet. The Commercial Intelligence of London, in its issue of 18 February quoted a correspondent of The Englishman saying “In this year of the renewal and reversal of the Indo-Chinese-Tibetan Treaty... there will be more than interest felt in the land that lies between India and China, which, though the property of neither, may become the highway of both for intercourse and commerce... The key to the whole situation lies in the coming treaty with Tibet. Let the Indian Government make the treaty with Tibet first-hand. Let the treaty be made between India and Tibet guaranteeing freedom for travel and trade - a freedom as free to China as to anyone else - and let the Indian Government give the Tibetan authorities every encouragement to trust them in a move towards freedom and a longer acquaintance with outside things, and so prevent a relapse into the Chinese policy of a “closed preserve” for the good of China only.
“most ignominious”, and the use of the Amban as an intermediary “an admitted farce”.

“We seem to be moving in circles”, Curzon further noted, “if we apply to Tibet, we either receive no reply, or are referred to the Chinese Resident”; and if the latter was approached “he excuses his inability to put any pressure upon Tibet.” He wondered to the Secretary of State, now Lord George Hamilton, if this method of communication ought not to be ended:

I do not feel quite sure, however, whether in your opinion we have so far committed ourselves in this method of procedure in the case of Tibet as to render any experimental departure from it impossible.⁶

Nevertheless, two days after this written, on 25 March, Curzon addressed the Amban on the proposed changes in the location of the mart on the lines of Claude White’s 1898 proposals.

The letter was despatched through Captain E. LeMesurier who officiated for White during the latter’s furlough and was delivered to the addressee at Yatung on 15 April. In a long demi-official to H. S. Barnes, Government of India’s officiating Foreign Secretary LeMesurier described what transpired at Yatung.⁷ The Amban discussed Lord Curzon’s letter the moment he received it, and said that that the Tibetans had strongly opposed the removal of the trade mart to Rinchingong, as carrier hinted to them by White, and that it would be hopeless to try and persuade them to agree to a move to Phari. When asked if he intended to reply to the Viceroy as to whether he was prepared to recommended the move of the mart to Phari to his Government he declined an answer, repeating that his recommendations would be futile as the Tibetans would never agree to the move. After much persuasion he wrote a reply, which like his conversation was entirely evasive and beside the point. He did not answer the question as to his own readiness to recommend the move to Phari, which led LeMesurier to believe that “he has no intention of doing anything to further the matter.” In the course of the conversation

⁶Ibid.
⁷FSEP August 1899: Nos. 56 – 57; D.O. Captain E. LeMesurier to H., S. Barnes, officiating Foreign Secretary, India 29 April 1899.
the Amban had remarked that if the Government of India insisted on maintaining the
Convention boundary as against Tibetan claims, the Tibetans would fall back on the
support of the Russians who had for some time been in negotiations with them.

The day before the officiating Political Officer left Yatung four Tibetan Lamas
called on him, of whom the chief spokesman was a "Lhasa lama", whom LeMesurier
found to be an intelligent and most pleasant man to meet. They professed every desire
for friendly relations with the Indian Government and said that other people, who
LeMesurier interpreted to be the Russians, constantly offered them help and support, but
that they always declined such overtures. They pressed their claims to the Giaogong and
Lonakh valley territories which they said had been cede by the Chinese without their
consent. The Political Officer replied that commercial relations and trading facilities to
merchants from India must form the preliminary to any consideration of such claims.
The Tibetans assured him that they would represent this to the Dalai Lama on their return
to Lhasa. 8

LeMesurier found that in their conversation these Tibetan officials were less
obstructive than the Chinese Amban, and he felt convinced that the Phari mart would be
more likely to be obtained from them than through any negotiations with the Chinese.
The latter thought, in his opinion, that the development of trade from India would injure
their monopoly for supplying Tibet from China. They also felt that their power in Tibet
was declining and that closer relations between Tibet and India would tend to destroy
further their waning influence. "This, such as it is," said LeMesurier, "is now based on
clever diplomacy and the liberal subsidizing of Tibetan monasteries." 9 He then went on
to show evidence that proved Chinese power in Tibet was indeed declining:

(i) Only a few months ago an order was passed by the Grand Council at
Lhasa that all "parwanas" issued to Chinese and other foreigners for free

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
supplies and transport must be signed by a Tibetan as well as by a Chinese official, and that otherwise they would be disregarded.

(ii) Everywhere it was reported that Wen, the Chinese Amban, lately drew up a scheme for levying duties on all trade passing the post at Yatung — to have come into force on 1 May 1899 (i.e. after the expiration of the five years mentioned in the Trade Regulation of 1893). The Tomos, i.e. Tibetan tribe inhabiting the Chumbi valley who hold the monopoly for the carrying of a trade between Tibet proper and India, vigorously protested against the scheme and Wen was compelled to drop it.

(iii) At Yatung, the Amban put one of the Tibetan officials (a depon) under arrest, ostensibly for failing to collect transport for him and his followers by a certain date, but general report had it, that it was because the depon had invited LeMesurier without the Amban’s permission. The Tomos rose in a body, and demanded, not only his release but a condition that all supplies and transport provided for the Ambans in future should be paid for. They obtained the depon’s release and (LeMesurier heard) the second demand was also ceded.¹⁰

At the end of his letter LeMesurier suggested to Barnes what he thought would settle the boundary problem. The territory around Giaogong was open for grazing for some three months of the year, about 15 May to 15 August, and the Political Officer should reside during the greater part of that period in and around that place, and whilst there, should arrange for the levying of a small grazing tax on all Tibetan flocks driven to the British side of the Convention border. A small escort of about twenty or thirty sepoys under a havildar from the detachment from Gangtok was all that would be necessary to enable him to do this peaceably and quietly. This would assert British possession of the disputed tract and would give the Political Officer excellent opportunities for getting into closer relations with the Tibetans chiefs along the border, unhampered by Chinese influence, and of learning the Tibetan language. Such action if carefully carried out may induce the

¹⁰Ibid.
Tibetans to enter upon future negotiations with a feeling that a substantial *quid pro quo* is to be gained they yielded to the British. This so far had not been the case.\(^{11}\)

LeMesurier letter was carefully examined in the Foreign Department where there was a general agreement about his Giaogong proposal. Curzon accepted it, and noted:

> If we wait for a reply of the shadowy Tibetan officials who interviewed Captain LeMesurier we shall sit still till the crack of doom.

> We shall do nothing with Tibet, until we elbow out the Amban and deal with Lhasa direct. It will be a good thing to frighten them a little to start with in order to show that we mean to stand as per our rights.

> The frontier concession will then be all the more gracious and valuable.\(^{12}\)

The Bengal Government, to whom the proposal was referred since it came from an officer directly under them, was less enthusiastic, if only because the “forcible occupation of Giaogong” would probably lead to the stoppage of trade by the Kalimpong-Phari route, and eventually perhaps even to hostilities. Bengal’s views halted the Government of India’s hands.\(^{13}\) and the idea of sending the Political Officer of Sikkim to Giaogong was ultimately shelved.

By then a news item in the *Simla News* of 11 May, headed “Russians in Lhasa,” had appeared which at once caught Curzon’s attention. The Foreign Department had no information on it. All they could tell the Viceroy was what LeMesurier learnt from the

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11 *Ibid.* LeMesurier added in conclusion that “I am doing all I can to push on the construction of the recently sanctioned Lachen road in the north of Sikkim” and this “road materially assert an effectual occupation of the Giaogong territory, should the above proposals be approved during the present season, and its construction will itself have an excellent political effect on the Tibetans.”

12 *Ibid.* Note by Curzon, 13 May

13 *Ibid.* See Notes, p. 4–6; One of them queried, “Whether it would be expedient to risk another war with Tibet for the sake of enforcing commercial concessions the advantage of which have yet to be proved, is part of a larger question involving our relations with another great Power: perhaps this is not fitting moment for risking such a contingency; and a step which would be regarded as an act of disrespect to China might injuriously affect the attitude of the Chinese Government towards concessions in another quarter.”
Amban and the Tibetan officials at Yatung. The news remained unconfirmed, but Curzon was constrained to record:

I have very little doubt that the Russians have been in communication with Lhasa, and that our policy up to date has been a mistake and must be reversed.

For years we have been treating China as the de facto sovereign, and have ignored Tibet.

Now for the first time for many years we have a Dalai Lama who is of age, who is civil as well as a sacerdotal ruler, and who means to make what he can out of his independence.

We shall only get along if we enter into communication with him direct and give the go-by to that preposterous Amban.\textsuperscript{14}

Access to Lhasa: Search for Agents

To the Viceroy there appeared only two persons on the horizon who could be used as channels to Lhasa — the “unpopular Chandra Das” and the “garrulous Bhutan vakil.” They did not impress. Curzon directed the officiating Foreign Secretary, H. S. Barma, to get in touch with one Paul Mowis of Darjeeling, said to be the author of the recent article in the \textit{Simla News}. Barnes met him on 23 May and recorded the interview in a long Memorandum. Mowis, when asked for more information, was rather vague about the party of Russians.\textsuperscript{15} But he was certain that some Europeans had visited the Dalai Lama’s capital recently. He too spoke of the need “to get into direct

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.} Note by Curzon, 17 May.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.} No. 60. See Memorandum by Barnes, 27 May. Mowis, however, confirmed some of LeMesurier’s observations, on Chinese commercial interests in Tibet: “it is to the interest of the Chinese to keep this trade entirely in their own hands, and that consequently they will place every possible obstacle in the way of trade between India and Tibet... that it is the Chinese who are really at the bottom of all the difficulties experienced in opening trade with Tibet, and that they encourage the Tibetans in their exclusiveness... Chinese influence in Tibet is owing mainly to their practice of subsiding the Lamas who number-one-sixth of the population, and that they have even encouraged the importation of shoddy articles from Darjeeling in order to demonstrate to the Tibetans the worthlessness of English goods... That a way to the proximity of Lhasa, manufactured articles could be supplied from India much more cheaply than through China and of a better quality. Tea, for example, which is largely consumed in Tibet, could be supplied from Darjeeling at a fourth of the price of, and much better quality than, the brick tea which the Chinese get from China...”
communication with the Lamas and to ignore the Chinese Amban.” A subject they discussed, the acquisition of the Chumbi valley, provides an interesting side light on the desperation of the Foreign Department. Mowis told Barnes that,

With an expenditure of a very small sum (Rs 300 or 400) he could place the Government in communication with the Penlop of Geongtse Jong, the principal town between Chumbi and Lhasa, and that, with judicious management, he believes it would not be difficult to arrange with the Tibetans for the purchase or lease of the whole Chumbi valley upto Phari and the establishment of a mart at the latter place. Mr. Mowis is convinced that, with Phari in our possession, capital would at once be forthcoming in Calcutta to supply the mart with the best English goods, which can then easily find their way into Tibet inspite of the Chinese.¹⁶

Instead of using force in Giaogong, Mowis said a good deal was to be got out of the Tibetans by “sweet-hearting” them as the Chinese did. Barnes sent the memorandum to Bengal reminding them that “it has been more than once suggested that to effect any permanent improvement in our trading facilities with Tibet, it is of importance to open direct negotiations with Lhasa.”¹⁷ That Mowis could be the agent for this went without saying.¹⁸

What is remarkable about his interview is the importance given to a man who the Foreign Department hardly knew and who had no locus standi with the Government. Barnes seems to have taken him rather too seriously and for a while, even the Viceroy Until Bengal’s Chief Secretary C. R. Bolton informed them that Mowis was a former hairdresser in Darjeeling and a failed dealer in Tibetan curios, heavily in debt and whose “statements regards himself and his knowledge of Tibet are generally discredited”. Such a man would be “altogether unsuitable for any negotiations with Tibet or Bhutan.”¹⁹

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¹⁶ Ibid, Mowis even suggested to Barnes how the Government of India should go about acquiring the Chumbi valley. Mowis to Barnes, 20 June, in Ibid.
¹⁷ Ibid. H. S. Barnes to Chief Secretary, Bengal, 3 June
¹⁸ Ibid. Mowis had told Barnes that he was visiting Lhasa next September on a religious mission accompanied by some influential “fellow Buddhists” from Ceylon and Bhutan. He had stated that he already had permission from Lhasa and Bhutan allowed the mission through that country and that the mission was being financed by the Rothschilds, the New York Herald and the Calcutta Englishman.
¹⁹ Ibid. Bolton to Officiating Foreign Secretary, India, 8 July
Bengal’s preference was Ugyen Kazi. The Foreign Department, still relying on Hamilton Bower’s opinion of the man, which was shared by Elgin, was hesitant, and noted as such, but in the absence any other likely agent agreed to go along with the Local Government. Barnes noted on what the Kazi was to do in Tibet:

If he is sent, he should be instructed to let it be known that the Government would be glad to receive a Tibetan of rank, if the Dalai Lama is willing to send one. He might also be told to say that the Government are willing to make concessions in the matter of the boundary if additional facilities are given in the way of trade, and I think he might also be told to hint, if he finds an opportunity, that the Government of India would be willing to pay something for the acquisition of rights in the Chumbi valley upto Phari.  

Curzon’s resolve was strengthened by a communication from London. The Viceroy had, on 20 March when the subject was first before him, sought the opinion of the Secretary of State on the twin issues, opening of direct communications between the Indian and Tibetan Governments and the modifications of the trade arrangements and whether diplomatic pressure could be exerted upon the Chinese to achieve these objectives. Lord George Hamilton discussed these with the Foreign Office. Lord Salisbury was skeptical about the efficacy of diplomacy in Peking and said that under existing circumstances the preferred course would be to open direct negotiations with the Tibetans, and should this be found possible, to endeavour to obtain free access to Phari for Indian traders in exchange for rectification of the frontier. This suggestion, Hamilton now informed the Viceroy may be acted upon. He was, however, doubtful of the policy of insisting upon the right of sending a British official to visit or reside at Phari since that might complicate and delay the settlement of the essential part of the

20 Ibid. See Notes, P. 13. Captain Daly, for example, wrote, “I don’t think Ugyen Kazi can be authorised to make offers to the Tibetans or to enter into anything like negotiations with them. His role, I understand, is to try and break down Tibetan suspicions, and induce their leading men to come forward and discuss matters directly with our officers. He might be given a letter from the Viceroy or the Lieutenant Governor to the Dalai Lama, and he should at the discretion of the Bengal, be provided with presents in cash and kind for distribution.” Barnes would have preferred to use the resources of the Political Officer, Sikkim.

21 Ibid. Note by Barnes, 18 July

22 Ibid. Francis Bertie to A. Godfrey, May; Godfrey to Bertie, 4 May
negotiations. Curzon accordingly approved Barnes note of 18 July. He hoped that the Kazi or whoever the agent was, would be a reliable person and would have a reasonable chance of coming into direct contact with the Dalai Lama, "to convey a letter from me to the latter." The Dalai Lama would very likely be afraid to send a Tibetan of rank to negotiate with the British and Curzon thought "he may be amenable to a compliment of a letter, and may even unbend to a correspondence."24

In September Ugyen Kazi proceeded to Tibet, armed with instructions from Bengal that from Phari he should write to the Dalai Lama, using his own words, and inform him of the British willingness to receive a Tibetan official. If only this succeeded would he be entrusted with Curzon’s letter to the Dalai Lama. In November Ugyen Kazi reported that he had written to the Dalai Lama as instructed but the Tibetan Pontiff was cautious and in no way indicated that he wished to such a correspondence which might invite Chinese retribution. At this Bengal observed that it was “useless to make any further endeavour at present to open direct communications through an agent, with the Tibetan authorities.”25 Curzon’s own conclusion was: “Ugyen Kazi had proved a failure and we can now settle what we like. I am not impressed with the efficacy or success of the present system.”26 The Foreign Department was directed to submitted proposals.

With the failure of the mission under Ugyen Kazi the Viceroy directed the efforts of the Government towards the two important and interwoven issues: to render Sikkim and the Political Agency more responsive to the needs of the Tibetan policy. The second was the more immediate: in view of the obstacles and suspicious attitude of both Chinese and Tibetans it would be advisable to desist from attempts to open up communications with the Dalai Lama and other high officials through Sikkim, and therefore it was necessary to try some other route. There were three possible alternatives.

(i) send up someone from and through Nepal

23 Ibid. George Hamilton to Curzon
24 Ibid. Note, Curzon, 19 July.
25 For details Lamb, op cit, pp. 243 - 244
26 FSEP September 1900: Nos. 78 – 108, Note, Curzon, 28 December 106
(ii) send someone from and through Ladakh, and
(iii) to send someone round through China from the east.

The first was not without its advantages. The Nepal Darbar maintained a Mission at Lhasa and a good many traders went up into Tibet through Nepal. It seemed possible therefore, that a carefully selected Gorkha officer travelling as a trader might go through Nepal without attracting attention or suspicion, and might, especially if he were able to gain the assistance of the Nepalese Mission at Lhasa, succeed in gaining access to the Dalai Lama. The Resident at Kathmandu, with whom Deputy Secretary Daly discussed the possibility, was not very enthusiastic. At least not before taking the Prime Minister Sir Bir Shamsher into confidence as it would be impossible to get a man through Nepal without the knowledge of the Darbar. The Resident of course felt that no harm would be done if Bir Shamsher was cautiously sounded on the subject. 27

Daly was not keen on any attempts through Almora as recent events that had occurred on the borders would make the Tibetans as suspicious as on the Sikkim side. Ladakh might prove a better alternative towards western Tibet. The “Lapchak” or triennial mission from Ladakh to Tibet always had a representative of the Maharaja of Kashmir, taken from a Tibetan or Ladakhi family of eminence. No other person, not even a Dogra of high rank from the Maharaja’s own Court would be welcome, probably would not even be received at the Dalai Lama’s capital. Whether it would be possible for a Ladakhi of high rank who could be safely entrusted with negotiations, such as the Viceroy had in mind, the views of the Resident would have to be sought. 28 The third alternative was admittedly “a startling one”. The reason why Daly brought it up was that there was in Burma one Taw Sein Ko a man who in many respects would be “a most admirable Agent”. Daly did not know him personally, but only by reputation. The man was Adviser on Chinese Affairs in Burma and author of a pamphlet, Suggested Reforms For China. If Taw Sein Ko were to be deputed to try and reach Lhasa, the best route for

27 FSEP, September 1900: Nos 78 – 108, Department Notes, Daly’s Note of 11 January
28 Ibid.
him to take would probably be through Yunnan and the west of Szechuan by Batang and Chiamdo. The journey would be a formidable one and would take several months. But Daly was confident that whether the Agent succeeded in his mission or not he would be able to bring back much information of value and interest. The Foreign Secretary, Sir William Cunningham too had been toying with the Yunnan route being assured by a former Consul at Momein that this would be feasible.

Both the Ladakh and the Yunnan routes were to be tried out, but Nepal not to be pursued immediately in view of the Resident’s advice against attempting anything independently of the Darbar. Meanwhile, all pressures from the Sikkim side was to be dropped and the Political Officer directed to be “as friendly as possible with all Tibetans, but to ask them for nothing.” The Bengal Government was to be told that in the opinion of the Governor General in Council Sikkim affairs would be better managed by eliminating the Commissioner of Rajshahi from the chain of official correspondence and by letting the Political Officer write direct to the Local Government. A change in the Commissioners was going to be made in a couple of months and that would provide the opportunity of changing the system.

In the event Taw Sein Ko was found to be unsuitable. He was “very fat” and would be unable to undertake, as Curzon had anticipated, the difficult journey involving complete command of Chinese, great physical endurance and sufficient familiarity with Buddhist rites and customs. Word now got around that the Government of India were looking for agents to proceed to Tibet on an important political mission. One Annie Taylor of the Tibetan Pioneer Mission at Yatung speaking of the “friendly relationship that exists between me and the Tibetan Government,” offered her services to the cause of trade and Empire. No use was made of them as the Bishop of Calcutta, said, she

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid, Note, W.J. Cunningham, 12 January
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid, Annie Taylor to Private Secretary to the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, 27 June; and Bishop to W.R. Lawrence, 4 July. “It has been my great aim and prayer that Tibet should be opened without the horrors
“excitable and rather apt to exaggerate her political importance.” Captain W. F. O’Connor submitted a “Proposed Scheme for a Mission to Lhasa,”\(^{33}\) only to gain Curzon’s rebuff: “Captain O’Connor is not required to make any attempt at present. He would merely spoil our plans. I have told him that I have at present no call upon his services.”\(^{34}\) Discussions on the Ladakh route had by then had sufficiently progressed.

Sir Adelbert Talbot, the Resident in Kashmir, had recommended his assistant Captain R.L. Kennion to the Government of India.\(^{35}\) Kennion had been showing great interest in western Tibet, in Gangtok, in particular, which until Sikkim was opened after 1861, and again after 1898, was considered as the obvious gateway to Lhasa. A year ago he had visited Rudok, across Ladakh in Tibet and the success of this journey had convinced him that he might succeed with establishing contacts with the two Garpons, or local heads of the districts. His interests were re-ignited when he learnt from Talbot that the Government of India were looking for agents to carry a letter from the Viceroy to the Dalai Lama. Kennion at once proposed that he might be authorised to visit Gartok and carry the letter to the Garpon for onward transmission through them to Lhasa. The number of things Kennion proposed to do on the way and at Gartok was so confusingly varied that it prompted Curzon to remind the Foreign Department that, “What we want is to get in touch with the Dalai Lama. That is the object of the endeavour.”\(^{36}\)

Kennion proceeded to Gartok in September 1900, brushing aside, it is said, some twenty five mounted Tibetan border guards who tried to prevent his entry into Tibetan territory. It was not easy going, but to put it briefly, Kennion was able to hand over the letter to the Garpons which they agreed to take to Lhasa. In March, 1901 the Garpons returned the Viceroy’s letter. They said they had sent it to Lhasa but had been returned

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\(^{33}\) Ibid.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., Note, Curzon, 20 July

\(^{35}\) Ibid, Sir A.C. Talbot to Captain H. Daly, 1214a

\(^{36}\) Ibid. Note, Curzon, July, Also Lamb, \textit{op cit.} pp 246 – 250, for details.
unopened as the Tibetan Government saw no need for any communication with the British. It was back to Ugyen Kazi, the Bhutan vakil.

It so happened that the Dalai Lama had taken a fancy to elephants and asked Ugyen Kazi, so he told White in December 1900, to get him two young ones. Thinking that this could be “one of the best ways to get into communication with the Dalai Lama”, White mentioned it to the Foreign Secretary Sir William Cunningham, saying that a present of these should be made by Government.37 White was on his way to Rangoon with Sikkim’s Sidkeong Namgyal on what was the young Prince’s educational tour, and a month later Barnes, who had taken over from Cunningham, got in touch with Bengal enquiring after the elephants. More importantly, “Could Ugyen Kazi be entrusted with them and with a letter from his Excellency to the Dalai Lama?”38 Bengal said he could be – Ugyen Kazi had been to Lhasa and had seen the Pontiff at the Potala.39 White confirmed them when he met Barnes in Calcutta on his way back to Gangtok.40 The Government of India accordingly decided that Ugyen Kazi shall carry a revised version of the Viceroy’s letter that had been lying with Bengal since 1899.

In June 1901, the vakil proceeded to Lhasa with the two elephants (one died on the way) two peacocks and a leopard, which the Dalai Lama paid for, and the Viceroy’s letter.41 He was to hand over the letter to no one but the Dalai Lama and in utmost secrecy, request the Lama to give a reply and bring it back to India. In October Ugyen Kazi returned from Lhasa with the Viceroy’s letter unopened and its seals intact. He said that he had landed the letter to the Dalai Lama, who declined to accept it on the ground that he had been forbidden to have any dealings with foreigners except in consultation with the Amban. And the Amban would not permit. There was doubt in many quarters whether the Kazi had ever hand the letter to the Dalai Lama at all. Curzon was one of

37 FSEP August 1901: Nos 18 – 28, White to Cunningham, 23 December 1900.
38 FSEP, August 1901: Nos. 18 – 28, DO, Barnes to C E Buckland, 17 January
39 Ibid, Buckland to Barnes, 24 January.
40 Ibid, Note A, by White, 15 March
41 Lamb, op cit, pp 250 -251
them: “I do not believe that the man ever saw the Dalai Lama or handed the letter to him. On the contrary, I believe him to be a liar, and in all probability, a paid Tibetan spy.”

The Sikkim Agency: Proposed Changes.

The failure to get a letter across to the Dalai Lama had now acquired a new significance, if not an ominous implication. From around October 1900 that there had been news of Russian intrigues, and Tibet’s complicity, in the roof of the world. A mission under one “Aharamoha Agvan Dorjiew” was reported to have made its way to the Tsar’s Court and was by all accounts given a great welcome. The absence of worthwhile information on these goings on was to prove worrying. The India Office had some information but wanted more details. White’s enquiries at Yatung drew a blank. Bengal turned to Sarat Chandra Dass but could elicit no information. All that the Indian expert on Tibet could say was that in all probability the mission went from Urga in Mongolia which had a large Buddhist population. Curzon could only tell the Secretary of State for India, on 18 November, that, “as far as I can ascertain no mission went from Lhasa and it is possible that the Tibetan delegates may have come from Urga in Mongolia, the seat of the Lamas known as Talei Lama.”

In these early months Curzon was not “much disturbed” by the reports on the alleged mission. It was not likely that the Tibetans would be able to overcome their “incurable suspicions” to send open missions to Europe. But soon there were other events that made the Viceroy sit-up. Bengal’s Chief Secretary J. A. Bourdillion’s casual reference to a statement made by Sarat Chandra Das of the visit of two high Lamas from Drepung monastery, situated two miles outside Lhasa, was quickly picked up in the Foreign Department. The two lamas from one of three great monasteries of the Gelukpa school headed by the Dalai Lama had spent two months at the Ghoom monastery near Darjeeling and, Bourdillon’s letter had stated, “Sarat Babu had frequent

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42 Ibid. P. 251.
43 FSEP January 1901: Nos 80 – 95 (86) Telegram, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 18 November
44 Mehra, op cit, see Chapters 8 – 10, pp 143 – 179, for further details
45 FSEP January, 1901: Nos 80 – 95; J.A. Bourdillion to Foreign Secretary, 15 November
long meetings with the both at Ghoom and his own house in Darjeeling.” It seemed strange to Deputy Secretary Captain Daly that Bengal did not know of or report on this earlier as this “visit (by the Lamas) may have offered just the opportunity we were looking for, for opening up communications with Lhasa.” Just as Daly had completed his note, a demi-official letter from Sarat Das arrived stating that one of the Lamas who had accompanied the mission to Russia and was received by the Tsar in Court, “came to see me here in June last.” The implications of this was clear enough that the mission could not have gone from Siberia, and it seemed certain that it went from Lhasa. Daly saw Bourdellion at the beginning of December but the Chief Secretary only said Das behaved badly in that he did not keep him informed of what was going on.

Calcutta’s Statesman of 19 and 20 January 1901 carried a news item that a “Grand Lama of Tibet”, who was on a visit to Ceylon was expected in Calcutta at the end of February and that Sarat Das was arranging a reception for him at the Town Hall. Daly was interested in the visitor, the “Lama might prove to be just the sort of emissary we want and might be entrusted with the presents to the Dalai Lama.” Bengal had no information on the man, but only said arrangements were being made to secure quicker and better information regarding travellers who passed through Darjeeling from, or to Tibet. Nor did it seem that proper use was being made of the Political Officer in Sikkim to obtain information. All this went to show, Daly noted:

(i) that intercourse with Lhasa is not so difficult to arrange as the Bengal Government have represented.

(ii) That travellers to and fro from Lhasa can come and go under the very noses of the Bengal Government without being detected; and

46 Ibid. note, Daly 21 November.
47 Ibid. DO, Sarat Chandra Das to L.S. Russel, Undersecretary, Foreign India, 18 November. Sarat Das also made reference to presents for the Dalai Lama, “the most appreciated one was a phonograph which, to the wonder of the entire Court, recited the Buddhist formula, “Om Mani Pemai hum” any number of times.”
48 FSEP, July 1901: Nos 81 – 86; Note, Daly, 4 February 1901

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(iii) that at the very time when special attention is being directed to
opening up communications with influential Tibetans the exact
stamp of men whom we want to get hold of can come down to
Darjeeling and live in the neighbourhood for weeks without the
Bengal Government hearing anything about it.¹⁹

Bengal of course again promised that arrangements will be made to obtain quicker and
better information regarding such travellers. But, Daly concluded

The recent revelations seems to me to raise in a somewhat acute form the
question whether the Sikkim appointment should not be brought directly
under the Government of India... If we did take over Sikkim, Bengal
would have to provide for Mr. White, and this would not be easy. But that
can hardly be allowed to affect the decision, if imperial interests are
involved.⁵⁰

The Sikkim Political Agency, established to carry on the administration of the
State in the absence of the Maharaja, was not equipped to handle frontier intelligence.
The Political Officer did not seem to be fully aware of the issues that agitated the Viceroy
and his officers in the Foreign Department, and was concerned with only the local
problem in the frontier. In the second of his two notes that White submitted on 15 March
1901 to Bengal at the insistence of the Chief Secretary, C. E. Buckland, this becomes
clear.⁵¹ In it White says that if Government wished to open up a mart at either Phari or
Gyantse and have the boundary question settled they must adopt a firm line of action.
Men who knew the Chinese well, and he named three successive European trade agents
at Yatung working for the Chinese, he said, were all of the opinion that nothing would be
got until the Indian Government took a firm attitude, and as soon as that was done they
would gain all that was required.

⁴⁹ Ibid.
⁵⁰ Ibid.
⁵¹ FSEP August 1901: Nos 18 – 28; Buckland to Barnes, 21 March; Encl Notes A & B from J. C. White, 15
March 1901.
This firm action accordingly to the Political Officer ought to take the form of the occupation of the Chumbi valley and would amount to “sending an intimation to the Tibetans that we intended to remain there and keep the valley as security for demands.” The occupation should be made without fuss, moving, sometime in May when the snows had melted, two companies of native infantry with mountain guns to Gangtok, and thence to the Chumbi valley. Once there “we are the masters of the situation and can dictate our own terms; can go to Phari or elsewhere as we chose.” That such a scheme should be proposed by White was largely because the position of the Political Agency in regard to British relations with Tibet and Chinese was still to be defined in the altered circumstances, and the Political Officer remained in the dark about what transpired between Bengal and the Government of India. Both Curzon and the Foreign Department was aware of this, and in fact noted on the subject when it was first raised by the officiating Political Officer for Sikkim, Captain E. LeMesurier, in September 1899.

That month LeMesurier had received, the only time since he stood in for White, copies of correspondence that had been going on for the past six months between the Government of India, the Government of Bengal and the Commissioner of Rajshahi Division on the subject of establishing direct communications with the Tibetans. From these he had learnt that as long as on 26 July Barnes had directed that the Political Officer “should be furnished with copies of both the despatches and other recent correspondence and encouraged to further the policy”, since then he had been twice to Giaogong, and not having the faintest idea of the policy of the Government, and being doubtful of how much he was entitled to say, could take little advantage of his meeting with a Tibetan Dzongpon. Indeed, his last instructions from the Commissioner in reply to his Giaogong proposals was that he was on no account to take any action without further orders. Had the orders of 26 July reached him in time giving him the cue, “I should have prolonged my stay in Giaogong, entertained the Tibetan emissary royally, and done all I could to pave the way to communications with Lhasa.”

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52 Ibid. 
53 FSEP, September 1900 : Nos 78 – 108; DO Captain E. LeMesurier to H. S. Barnes, 28 September 1899
As it was LeMesurier had only just then learnt that Ugyen had again been sent to Tibet. The point he emphasized in that connection was that "it is most unfair that the Political Agent should be ignored, and that such an agent should be employed without his being consulted or even informed of the mission until after the man's departure. I have not in my office even a copy of the record of Ugyen's last visit to Lhasa." It was at the end of this demi-official letter to the officiating Foreign Secretary that Captain LeMesurier brought up the subject to which Curzon was later to hold similar views:

I am convinced that Government will make no advances in Tibet until they put their Political Agent in direct communication with the Foreign Department, copies of correspondence being merely sent by courtesy to Bengal. The present complicated channel results in the Government of India getting information only at fourth hand, and is fruitful of delay and lost opportunities. A favourable occasion for making a change offers next month, when the present Commissioner of Rajshahi leaves the service. Every inch of the Tibetan border with which we have any dealings is contiguous to Sikkim, and not to Bengal. Neither the Commissioner of Rajshahi nor the Lieutenant Governor tours in Sikkim, and the former is ordinarily a man without frontier and political experience. They can know absolutely nothing about Tibet except through yams spun by Darjeeling merchants, such as Ugyen. Whereas the Political Agent is in daily intercourse with men of the same language, religion, and customs as the Tibetans, and whose Chiefs freely intermarry with them. He is the only man who has the means of learning the true state of things across the border.

Daly agreed; there was "no reason why the Political Officer for Sikkim should not be brought directly under the Government of India," but was not quite sure if the necessity for such a change was then apparent. The Government of India merely expressed a desire that copies of relevant correspondence may be communicated to LeMesurier and that he should be encouraged to "open up confidentially direct communications with the

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54 Ibid. "I would say", LeMesurier wrote, "that little good will come of using him as an agent. He is a petty Bhutamean peasant, of neither family or education, who has made some money in trade. He is not really a kazi, nor is he considered as one by the Sikkim chiefs."

55 Ibid.
Bengal preferred to await White’s return since LeMesurier was only in temporary charge.  

In the end the necessity for the change came soon enough. By the middle of 1901 a good deal of information was before the Viceroy on movements and sojourns of Buddhist monk parties in Indian territories. The mysterious Agvan Dorjieff, the Government of India was now sure of his name in the first instance was reported to have stayed in India before taking off to Russia through Indian ports. Clearly no watch had been kept in his movements in India and the first Curzon heard of him was through the Russian press in October 1900.

Early in July of the following year, a Reuters correspondent reported that a deputation, presumably under the same Dorjieff, from the Dalai Lama to the Tsar had reached Odessa and was expected at St. Petersburg by the end of the month. The party was discovered to have once again gone through Indian territory. The presence of such a group of monks was first mentioned by Captain Frederick O’Connor, who picked up the information in Darjeeling. The Bengal Government would not have known but for the accident that White chanced to be in Yatung where he too learnt of it. Nor did Bengal have any information of the arrival of another party at Sagauli. Barnes at once noted for the Viceroy that this “defective information” both at Darjeeling as well as at Sagauli should be pointed out to Bengal for “it must be admitted that we have been badly served when two missions from Lhasa to Russia can pass through India without ever knowing anything about them.”  

Curzon’s response was tersely worded: “why do we not at once take away the political business on the Tibetan frontier from Bengal? In that case can we not have our own agents in Darjeeling, Yatung and elsewhere? The present system is a discredited farce.” The next day Curzon poured out his anguish to Lord George Hamilton:

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56 Ibid, Notes, pp 4 – 5, Note by Daly, 11 November 1899.
57 Ibid, Note, Barnes, 8 July 1901
58 Ibid, Note, Curzon 9 July

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The next day Curzon poured out his anguish to Lord George Hamilton:

I am very much exercised over the question of Tibet. Bengal has charge of Sikkim and as a consequence, of the Political relations with Tibet and the whole Tibetan frontier... and they had let slip two Tibetan missions that visited the Tsar, at Livadia last year, and again in this, left Lhasa crossed the British border, passed in one case through Darjeeling and in the other through Segowlie, travelled India by rail and took ship from Indian ports... who would have believed possible the negotiations could have been passing between Lhasa and St. Petersburg, not through Siberia or Mongolia or China but through British India itself. 59

Curzon was anxious to assume in taking over the Sikkim Agency, the “political guardianship of the frontier.” And the sooner the Agency was taken over the better, for in that case there would be no need to insist upon Bengal to display greater vigilance in the frontier. 60 The Lieutenant Governor was reluctant even to eliminate the Commissioner of Rajshahi from the chain of official correspondence, on the ground that advice at that level was essential for the formulation of effective policy. The question remained in abeyance. When further evidence of Bengal’s poor gathering of intelligence were forthcoming Curzon could only lament, “one of the eloquent results of handing over political functions to Local Governments who have no aptitudes, no tastes, no experience and no men for the job.” 61

White and Giaogong:

Meanwhile the press continued to gossip about Russian intrigues. At the news of another Tibetan Mission to St. Petersburg the Overland Mail of 17 June 1901, which Calcutta received on 7 July, quoting several sources warned that the old rumours about Tibet seeking a Russian protectorate against British designs could be revived. And, it went on to say:

58 Ibid. Note, Curzon 9 July
59 Curzon to Hamilton, 10 July, Hamilton Papers, quoted in Mehra, op cit, P. 168.
60 FSEP March 1902: Nos 1 – 77, Note, Curzon, 12 July.
61 Curzon to Hamilton, 5 November 1901, quoted in Lamb, op cit, P. 258

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Himalaya to the Gulf of Tonquin, thereby encircling Burma and bring such pressure upon Siam that this kingdom would also fall entirely under their influence. People in Vienna who take an interest in the matter are curious to know whether England will allow Russia to get a footing in Tibet without an effort to thwart her designs before it is too late.62

Press reports, news of the Dorjieff Missions and the political danger created by British failure to establish direct relations with the Dalai Lama and to keep an eye on what was going on across the frontier led Curzon to develop a more active Tibetan policy. It was important to keep Russia out of Tibet which would only have an unsettling effect upon the Himalayan States. The India Office, at the receiving end of a large official and private communications from India, recognized the Government of India’s difficult position; in particular that “the publicity given to the Tibetan Mission which recently arrived in St. Petersburg cannot fail to engender some disquietitude in the mind of the Indian Government as to the object and result of any negotiations which may ensue.”63

India Office even saw:

Some resemblance between the attitude now taken up by the Government of the Dalai Lama and that adopted by Amir Shere Ali in 1876 when he refused to receive a Mission from the British Government while carrying on negotiations with Russian authorities in Central Asia.

By August the Secretary of State came round to the view that with reference to the attitude of the Dalai Lama, the continued occupation by the Tibetans of a corner of British territory, the destruction of frontier pillars and restrictions imposed on Indian traders together with the impossibility of communicating with him on these subjects, Curzon “would be justified in adopting strong measures”. But Hamilton put in a few words of caution: that this would be viewed with much quietitude and suspicion by the Nepal government; that it must be remembered Tibet was subordinate to China; that owing to its rugged character and its sparse population important military operations were not likely to be undertaken by the Russians; and finally, that it would in all likelihood

62 FSEP March 1902: Nos 1 – 77; Notes, “Russia and Tibet”, P. 2
63 Ibid. A. Godley to Undersecretary of State, Foreign Office, 25 July
This, it may be recalled, was the underlying cause of the Second Anglo-Afghan War under Lord Lytton (1879 – 80)
increase Tibetan distrust of British intentions and strengthen any disposition on their part to attempt the establishment of closer relations with Russia.  

Hard on the heels of Bengal’s final communication in October on Ugyen Kazi failed Lhasa Mission, Curzon and the Foreign Department reviewed the outstanding problems of Anglo-Tibetan relations with a view to the future course of action. In the last twelve months several suggestions had been put forward from several quarters. In March, it will be recalled, White in his second note had suggested the military occupation of the Chumbi valley. In July Graham Sandberg, the Chaplain at Darjeeling and the author of several accounts on Tibet affairs including *Bhotan: The Unknown India State* in 1897, had submitted a Memorandum arguing a case for the dispatch of “a peaceable little mission” with the least possible delay and with the minimum fuss or preparation, being kept secret until fairly on the move.” No attempt should be made, as was the case in the abortive Colman Macaulay Mission, to ask any consent from China. There should be a small detachment of British soldiers, who could best face the Tibetan climate as a purely defensive guard. Captain Daly thought well of this proposal, “the heroic remedy of sending forward a Mission to Lhasa.”  

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64 Ibid. Hamilton to Curzon, 16 August. See also Lamb, *op cit.* P. 259  
65 Ibid. (No 57) Telegram, Chief Secretary, Bengal to Foreign Secretary, India, 31 October. Opinions on Ugyen Kazi and whether he actually handed the Viceroy’s letter to the Dalai lama is sharply divided. Paul Mowis, who was himself considered unreliable, spoke of him as a spy in the pay of Lhasa. E.H.C. Walsh, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, the latest of Ugyen’s critics, drew his conclusions from Sarat Chandra Das who was said to be “notoriously jealous” of the Kazi. The Lieutenant Governor did not share these opinions and both Bourdillion and Buckland had no doubts that their emissary was telling the truth. Barnes, in the presence of the two Bengal officers, found him very impressive, and a “big hearty sort of person of very respectable appearance and with a frank manner.” Curzon, almost alone remained skeptical: “I still retain my doubts as to whether Ugyen Kazi ever presented the letter: and some day I expect we shall find that I was right. If risk was involved in presenting it – which is the Lieutenant Governor’s argument… - then clearly the simplest way to avoid the risk was not to present the letter, but to come and say that it had been refused. On the other hand, the Dalai Lama, being human, must have wondered and wanted to know what were the contents of the letter. I might have been offering him the tooth of Buddha or a stable-full of elephants or a dozen other things, and curiosity alone would have prompted him to read the letter before returning it. His independence and the isolation of Tibet would have been much better vindicated by returning the letter when read than by refusing to open it. Therefore I do not believe Ugyen Kazi. However, as my lack of belief rests upon suspicions only, I cannot oppose his being given the suggested reward; Rs. 1,500 will be ample.”  
66 Ibid. Graham Sandberg. “Memorandum Regarding Possibility of Political Diplomatic Mission to Tibet”, 6 July 1901  
67 Ibid, Note, Daly, 20 December 1901.
Barnes was not quite sure if the military occupation of the Chumbi valley as White recommended would be sanctioned by the Secretary of State in view of the caution enjoined by him in his 16 August dispatch. Nor did it seem that any economic blockade on the Sikkim frontier would answer. This would hurt Indian and Tibetan traders alike besides driving the trade towards Nepal. Barnes advised that the best if not the only thing to do would be to enforce the Treaty rights in the matter of the boundary, re-erecting the pillars, exclude Tibetan graziers from Giaogong or at any rate impose a grazing tax on them. Any attempt by the Tibetans to resist should be met by force. This was what in its essential features White had suggested in his first note in March last. The Foreign Secretary said that in taking this course the Government of India would be entirely within its rights, and “our patience and forbearance have, in fact, been phenomenal, and all our efforts to effect a friendly compromise having been flouted, I do not see how, if the treaty is to stand, we can do less.”

Barnes summoned White to Calcutta and went over the details with him. The Political Officer assured him that there would be no difficulty in enforcing the Convention boundary and putting up the pillars, and that he would be “delighted to undertake the job.” All he asked for was a company of Gorkhas. Barnes anticipated from this, that if the Tibetans acquiesced, the treaty rights would be secured, and their exclusion from or taxation on the grazing lands would probably induce a desire in them to enter into some communication with the British. If on the other hand they knocked down the pillars the Tibetans could hardly complain if there was a collision with the troops. Damaging the boundary pillars would put in the wrong idea, and more so if they went for that occupation of the Chumbi valley which Mr. White recommends, or for insisting on separation from China, one of the conditions of which might be permission to dispatch an armed Mission to Tibet.”

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68 Ibid, Note, Barnes, 13 January 1902.  
69 Ibid.
Curzon agreed with Barnes' note, there is no other alternative policy, he declared. Its modest character and the legal basis on which it rested should lead the Secretary of State to approve. Hamilton however, remained cautious and considerably modified the scheme. No fresh boundary pillars were to be erected; this would only tempt Tibetan irresponsibility; there was to be no questions of the occupation of the Chumbi valley which the Foreign Office would disapprove as a violation of China's territorial integrity. Hamilton saw no objection to the expulsion of the Tibetans from Giaogong, the alternative of imposing a grazing tax having now been dropped. Curzon was authorized to go ahead with his plans, setting them into motion as soon as the Viceroy saw fit.

In May instructions to the Political Officer have been framed:

(i) to tour along the frontier, to re-erect the three pillars which were originally put up and to erect pillars at such other points as he may consider necessary, provided that there is no doubt that the points at which such additional pillars are erected are actually on the Treaty frontier.

(ii) Should he meet any Tibetans within the treaty limits, either at Giaogong or elsewhere, he should require them to withdraw, and, if necessary, compel them to do so, unless they were private individuals who were in Sikkim for innocent purposes, such as grazing.

(iii) The idea of imposing grazing dues should lie over, for the present season at any rate: but the Political Officer should pay special attention to the question during his tour and should in particular endeavour to ascertain to what extent Sikkim subjects grazed their herds in Tibet and subject to what dues, if any.

(iv) The Political Officer should bear constantly in mind the desirability of inducing the Tibetan authorities to enter into negotiations with the British

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70 *Ibid.* Note, Curzon, 14 January 1901; dispatch to Secretary of State, 13 February.
71 Lamb, *op cit*, P. 269.
and should be on the watch for opportunities of taking any steps which might conduce towards that end. 72

At the end of June 1902 Political Officer Claude White went up to Giaogong with 150 men from the detachment of the 44th Gorkhas at Gangtok under a British Major. There were about forty Tibetans in the disputed area and, in Lamb’s words, a few light blows from White’s and the Major’s canes set them moving towards Tibet. This done, they settled down to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII, and await the Tibetans and the Chinese.

The Younghusband Mission and After

The Tibetan reaction to the expulsion was surprisingly mild. There was no stoppage of trade on the Sikkim frontier that Bengal had so long feared would result from such an action. Rather, Tibetan officials rushed to the frontier to have talks with White. The Political Officer refused to engage in any such exercise except with a delegate duly accredited by the Dalai Lama, and that too not on the frontier, which would be “a mere waste of time” but at Lhasa. The Chinese too showed their willingness to open talks with the Indian Government, but on the frontier. Preliminary correspondence and discussion involving junior officials began in the summer of 1902 but actual negotiations did not begin for one reason or another. Curzon saw no reason to begin talks with the Amban who would shortly demit office, and much to the Viceroy’s annoyance his successor was not expected before another ten months. When he did finally arrive the Viceroy’s inclinations had cooled, and the man found no British representative with whom he could begin talks. In his letter 73 to the Viceroy the Amban suggested that a British representative should proceed for the purpose to Yatung or that he himself would come to “Sikkim or such other place” – not in Tibetan territory, as Curzon noted. 74

72 FSEP, July 1902, Nos 527–549, Note, H. Daly, 6 May; Buckland to foreign Secretary, India, 11 June; Buckland to Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, 9 June
73 FSEP July 1903: Nos 38–93, From Political Officer, Sikkim, 21 April, 2 Encl for a good account of the expedition see Peter Fleming, Bayonets to Lhasa, London 1961
74 Ibid, Note, Curzon, 24 April.
Unfortunately for the Amban, Curzon ideas about what to demand from the Tibetans had undergone a dramatic change. The fact was by 1902 trade and the frontier issue ceased to be of importance, and was overtaken by a need to convince the Dalai Lama and his monks of the dangers inherent in refusing to open relations with the British. As early as on 13 February 1902 Curzon had declared:

The most extraordinary anachronism of the 20th Century that there should exist within less than three hundred miles of the borders of British India a State and a Government with whom political relations do not so much as exist, and with whom it is impossible even to exchange a written communication.\footnote{Ibid, P. 275.}

By the year’s end Curzon, and indeed the India and Foreign Office in England, had become convinced that the rumours of an impending Russian protectorate over Tibet through some arrangements with the Chinese were not entirely without foundation. In November, Curzon told Hamilton that he was “a firm believer in the existence of a secret understanding, if not a treaty, between China and Russia over Tibet.”

On 8 January Curzon sent his now well known and well argued dispatch to the Secretary of State. The “constitutional fiction” of Chinese suzerainty and the policy of Tibetan isolation, had only been tolerable to the Government of India so long as there were “no political and military dangers.” The possibility of a Russian protectorate over Tibet demanded a completely new approach. The Government of India would talk to the Tibetans, not at Yatung or some place in Sikkim but at Lhasa, and these talks would deal not only “with the small question of the Sikkim frontier, but with the entire question of our future relations, commercial and otherwise, with Tibet, and “should result in the appointment of a Permanent Consular or Diplomatic representatives in Lhasa.” A Mission was therefore to be sent to Lhasa with an escort to defend itself in case of an attack by the Tibetans. The Mission was to be described to the Chinese and Tibetans as a
commercial one, and assurances would be given them that the British did not contemplate the establishment of a protectorate over, or annex any part of Tibet.\footnote{For details, Lamb, \textit{op cit}, pp 282ff}

By April 1903, the preparations for the Mission were set in motion.\footnote{FSEP, July 1903: Nos 38 – 95; See Department notes, pp 2ff.} After some exchange of letters with the Amban Curzon decided to opt for Khambajong, some twenty five miles north of Giaogong, as the venue of the talks. Khambajong had its advantages: it was in Tibetan soil, had reasonable communications with through Sikkim with British India, and lay on the main routes to Lhasa and Shigatse. The small town was in the territory of the Panchen Lama of Tashilhumpo monastery who was better disposed towards the British than the Pontiff at the Potala. The object of the negotiation would be to secure the removal of the trade mart from Yatung to Gyantse, but Lhasa was not altogether given up. As Curzon explained:

The first and most essential guarantee for the practical execution of the arrangements will be the facility of communication with the Tibetan authorities. Otherwise the new Treaty will be killed by passive obstruction just as was the old. We cannot any longer acquiesce in the position of being boycotted by the Tibetan Government, and having our letters returned unopened by the Dalai Lama. If we are not to insist upon a representative to Lhasa (as Hamilton had directed), then our representative at Gyantse, or wherever he will be, must have means of free communication, not merely with the Amban (who is a fraud and a blind), but with the Tibetan Government. If these means are refused or having been ostensibly granted are afterwards nullified then we must hold palpably and distinctly in reserve the threat to place a man in Lhasa itself.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, Note, Curzon, 3 May 1903}

Curzon appointed Major Francis Younghusband, the Resident at Baroda, to head the Mission with the local rank of Colonel. John Claude White was to be his assistant and Captain William Frederick O’Connor, the Secretary. Younghusband and White were briefed in Simla on the objectives of the Mission and the proposed negotiation. While still in Simla Younghusband worked out the details with Secretary of the Foreign
Department. In May the force assembled in Sikkim. The Secretary of State, was kept informed of all developments telegraphically.

On 6 July 1903, White on Younghusband’s direction crossed the Tibetan frontier into Khambajong in the face of stiff, though not violent opposition from the Tibetans. The first step has been accomplished,” wrote Younghusband to the new foreign Secretary, Sir Louis Dane in Simla, “we have now a Political Agent with a good strong escort in real Tibetan territory: and a communication with high Chinese and Tibetan officials. This is one great point gained, and is due to the energy which the Government has shown during the last few months. For neither the Tibetans nor the Chinese liked our going there at all.” Younghusband followed with the rest of the escort on 19 July only to find a few lowly officials. O’Connor’s dairy has this entry for 3 August:

Their (Tibetan) present policy is one of passive obstruction. They have made up their minds to have no negotiations with us inside Tibet, and they simply leave us here.

It was now clear that an advance up to Gyantse was inevitable, and as Curzon said, “I even think that the new settlement may have to be signed in Lhasa.” It seemed, by September, that the Lhasa Government were “determined to resist.” In November Curzon obtained the approval of the Secretary of State for the British occupation of the Chumbi valley and the advance to Gyantse. The Mission was reconstituted, Colonel Younghusband being given the sole political charge, White returning to Sikkim to take care of the transport and other arrangements, Brigadier General J.R.L. Macdonald was given the command of the escort which swelled to 8,000 guns with artillery.

79 Captain O’Connor thus describes the Tibetan opposition: “They... pressed forward on foot, and catching hold of Mr. White’s bridle importuned him to dismount and to repair to their tents. At the same time their their servants pressed round our horses, and seizing our reins endeavoured to lead us away... The Kambajongpen afterwards followed us, and made repeated efforts to induce me to halt... He was in a very excited and agitated state... He said ‘you may flick a dog once or twice without his biting, but if you tread on his tail, even if he has no teeth he will turn and try to bite you...’ quoted in Parshotam Mehra, The Younghusband Expedition. op cit, p. 211.

80 FSEP August 1903: Nos 416 - 467; Colonel F. E. Younghusband to Sir Louis Dane, 8 July

81 Quoted in Mehra, op cit, P. 214.

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In December the slow advance upon Gyantse began and on 11 April it was under British occupation. After some unfortunate engagements, that at Guru became no less than a massacre of an ill-equipped Tibetans, Younghusband reached Lhasa. There on 7 September 1904 British terms for a settlement was dictated to the Tibetans in the absence of the Dalai Lama who fled his capital. The nine-article Lhasa Convention\(^\text{82}\) recognized the Sikkim–Tibet frontier as laid down in the Convention of 1890; it opened two new trade marts, Gyantse and Gartok, which were to operate under the conditions established for Yatung, a British trade agent was to reside at the marts; questions relating to tea and tariff was reserved for subsequent discussions; it provided for free trade for articles not subject to the tariffs to be mutually agreed to later; it obliged the Tibetans to keep open the roads to the new marts and to transmit letters from the British Trade Agent to the Chinese and Tibetan authorities. Article VI imposed an indemnity of Rs. 75,00,000, payable in seventy-five annual instalments, and till that was paid the Chumbi valley was to be under British occupation. All fortifications between the British frontier and Gyantse were to be demolished and, finally, Tibet was to have no dealings with any Foreign Power without British consent. By a Separate Article, appended to the Convention, the British Trade Agent at Gyantse was permitted to visit Lhasa whenever he saw fit.

The Convention thus secured for the British all the objectives that Lord Curzon had set out. Yet the Convention was soon whittled down. London objected to the period of occupation of the Chumbi valley as tantamount to annexation, and that advantage could be taken of the Separate Article by Russia to demand a commercial agent for themselves at Lhasa. Curzon was on leave in England, and there was none in India to counter opposition to these articles. As it was, Lord Ampthill, who stood in for Curzon as Viceroy, on his own authority reduced the indemnity to Rs. 25,00,000 and the period of occupation to three years.\(^\text{83}\) To obtain Chinese acceptance of the Convention an

\(^{82}\) For full text, See Appendix F
\(^{83}\) Lamb, op cit, P. 303.
Adhesion Agreement was signed in Peking in April 1906 after tortuous negotiations. By it the gains of the Convention were further thrown away: China alone was recognized to have special status in Tibet and the articles in the Convention which excluded "Foreign Powers" from exercising influence in Tibet was to be applied not to China but to Britain. All that the British retained in Tibet were the trade marts and the right to link those marts to India by Telegraph. The Anglo-Russian Convention, 1907, further strengthened China’s position. The effect of all this on Bhutan and on India’s North-East Frontier was soon to be seen.

John Claude White’s crucial role in the formulation and execution of Curzon’s Tibetan policy – the importance of direct access to Lhasa and the occupation of the Chumbi valley – was quickly forgotten. He was side lined even before the negotiations began, and Younghusband’s fulsome praise for the man was replaced by criticism at Khambajong itself. This seems to have had its impact on Curzon’s opinion of him. The Sikkim Political Agency, however, underwent the long awaited change. Curzon’s unhappiness over its control by Bengal had continued throughout the Tibetan difficulty, and in March 1902 he had feared, “Should the Russians get into Tibet or should their influence become predominant there, it may be very desirable that we should place Sikkim under Foreign department.” Bengal’s Lieutenant Governor Sir Andrew Fraser had by now agreed that the political questions connected with Sikkim were of no more than provincial important. In seeking the approval of the Secretary of State to the change the Government laid emphasis on the following reasons:

84 Appendix G
85 Appendix H for full text
86 See Mehra, op cit, P 211. Younghusband wrote to Curzon on 19 July: “Politically things are bad. Old White had made a terribly hash of it. He will treat these Chinese and Tibetans as he would the Sikkimese and will not remember that when he crossed the boundary, he crossed out of his own district... and though we may pull through without a row here because the Tibetans are a mild people it will not be any thanks to White. He has never been out of Sikkim: he is a little God there but he is absolutely useless and worse than useless in dealing with high officials of an independent nation... and bitterly I regret I ever let him come aboard alone. I have a deal to make up and you know how difficult it is to make a bad start... I had no idea that he was appalling unfit as he had proved himself to be.”
87 FSEP March 1902: No 35; also in S R RAo, India and Sikkim, op cit, pp 143 - 144
The main for British trade with Tibet, at present, passes through the Sikkim State, and both that State and Bhutan are as closely connected with Tibet that we deem it of highest importance that their political relations should be under the direct control of the Government of India, until such a time, at least, as our relations with the Tibetans are placed upon a much more definite and satisfactory footing than at present, and until trade within the prescribed limits is safely established.\(^{88}\)

With the approval of the India Office\(^{89}\) the separation was effected on 1 April 1906 and with it the Political Officer became the adviser to the Government of India for Tibet affairs.

In October 1906, however, the Secretary of State, now John Morley, suggested, in order to reduce the work of the Government of India’s Foreign Department, that both Sikkim and Bhutan should revert to the control of the Local Government, Eastern Bengal and Assam. The Government of India demurred, and said that the reasons for placing these two states under the Foreign Department still hold good and besides, even if the wishes of the Secretary of State were carried out, no significant reduction of work would result. Most importantly:

> We should be deprived of the constant advice and help of an experienced and senior officer, which we hope to enjoy under the exciting system with regard to Tibetan affairs. Any particular question concerning Tibet could of course, even under the old system, be referred to the Political Officer in Sikkim, but in the absence of a stereotyped procedure, this would cause delay, and the officer himself would not be so competent to advice as at present, Since he would not have a full and continuous knowledge of the facts.\(^{90}\)

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\(^{88}\) FSEP July 1906: Nos 210 – 45; Secret Despatch to Secretary of State, 15 June 1905

\(^{89}\) FEAP June 1906: Nos 1 - 6, Political Despatch from Secretary of State, 4 August 1905

\(^{90}\) FSEP March 1907: Nos 6 -7; Government of India to Secretary of State, 21 February 1907

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APPENDIX F

CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND TIBET, 1904

Signed at Lhasa on the 17th September 1904.
Ratified at Simla on the 11th November 1904

Whereas doubts and difficulties have arisen as to the meaning and validity of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, and the Trade Regulations of 1893, and as to the liabilities of the Tibetan Government under these agreements; and whereas recent occurrences have tended towards a disturbance of the relations of friendship and good understanding which have existed between the British Government and the Government of Tibet; and whereas it is desirable to restore peace and amicable relations, and to resolve and determine the doubts and difficulties as aforesaid, the said Governments have resolved to conclude a Convention with these objects, and the following articles have been agreed upon by Colonel F.E. Younghusband, C.I.E., in virtue of full powers vested in him by his Britannic Majesty's Government and on behalf of that said Government, and Lo-Sang Gyal-Tsen, the Ga-Den Ti-Rinpoche, and the representatives of the Council, of the three monasteries Se-ra, Dre-pung and Ga-den, and of the ecclesiastical and lay officials of the National Assembly on behalf of the Government of Tibet:

I. The Government of Tibet engages to respect the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and to recognize the frontier between Sikkim and Tibet, as defined in Article 1 of the said Convention, and to erect boundary pillars accordingly.

II. The Tibetan Government undertakes to open forthwith trade marts to which all British and Tibetan subjects shall have free right of access at Gyantse and Gartok, as well as at Yatung. The regulations applicable to the trade mart at Yatung, under the Anglo-Chinese Agreement of 1893, shall, subject to such amendments as may hereafter be agreed upon by common consent between the British and Tibetan Governments apply to the marts above mentioned.

III. The question of the amendment of the Regulations of 1893 is reserved for separate consideration, and the Tibetan Government undertakes to appoint fully authorized delegates to negotiate with representatives of the British Government as to the details of the amendments required.

IV. The Tibetan Government undertakes to levy no dues of any kind other than those provided for in the tariff to be mutually agreed upon.

V. The Tibetan Government undertakes to keep the roads to Gyantse and Gartok from the frontier clear of all obstruction and in a state of repair suited to the needs of the trade, and to establish at Yatung, Gyantse, and Gartok, and at each of the other trademarts that may hereafter be established, a Tibetan Agent who shall receive from the British Agent appointed to watch over British trade at the marts in question any letter which the latter may desire to send to the Tibetan
or to the Chinese authorities. The Tibetan Agent shall also be responsible for the due delivery of such communications and for the transmission of replies.

VI.

As an indemnity to the British Government for the expense incurred in the dispatch of armed troops to Lhasa, to exact reparation for breaches of treaty obligations, and for the insults offered to and attacks upon the British Commissioner and his following and escort, the Tibetan Government engages to pay a sum of pounds five hundred thousand — equivalent to rupees seventy-five lakhs — to the British Government.

The indemnity shall be payable at such place as the British Government may from time to time, after due notice, indicate whether in Tibet or in the British districts of Darjeeling or Jalpaiguri, in seventy-five annual instalments of rupees one lakh each on the 1st January each year, beginning from the 1st January 1906.

VII.

As security for the payment of the above-mentioned indemnity, and for the fulfillment of the provisions relative to trade marts specified in Articles II, III, IV, and V, the British Government shall continue to occupy the Chumbi Valley until the indemnity has been paid and until the trade marts have been effectively opened for three years, whichever date may be the later.

VIII.

The Tibetan Government agrees to raze all forts and fortifications and remove all armaments which might impede the course of free communications between the British frontier and the towns of Gyantse and Lhasa.

IX.

The Government of Tibet engages that, without the previous consent of the British Government, —

(a) no portion of Tibetan territory shall be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise given for occupation, to any Foreign Power;
(b) no such Power shall be permitted to intervene in Tibetan affairs;
(c) no Representatives or Agent of any Foreign Power shall be admitted to Tibet;
(d) no concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights, shall be granted to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power. In the event of consent to such concessions being granted, similar or equivalent concessions shall be granted to the British Government;
(e) no Tibetan revenues, whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power.

X.

In witness whereof the negotiators have signed the same, and affixed hereunto the seals of their arms.

Done in quintuplicate at Lhasa, this 7th day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and four, corresponding with the Tibetan date, the 27th day of the seventh month of the Wood Dragon year.

LHASA CONVENTION, 1904
His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, having ratified the Convention which was concluded at Lhasa on 7th September 1904 by Colonel Younghusband, C.I.E., British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Matters, on behalf of his Britannic Majesty’s Government; and by Losang Gyal-Tsen, the Ga-den Ti Rimpoché, and the representatives of the Council, of the three monasteries Sera, Dre-pung, and Ga-den, and of the ecclesiastical and lay officials of the National Assembly, on behalf of the Government of Tibet, is pleased to direct as an act of grace that the sum of money which the Tibetan Government have bound themselves under the terms of Article VI of the said Convention to pay to His Majesty’s Government as an indemnity for the expenses incurred by the latter in connection with the dispatch of armed forces to Lhasa, be reduced from Rs. 75,00,000 to Rs. 25,00,000; and to declare that the British occupation of the Chumbi Valley shall cease after the due payment of three annual instalments of the said indemnity as fixed by the said Article, provided, however, that the trade marts as stipulated in Article II of the Convention shall have been effectively opened for three years as provided in Article VI of the Convention; and that, in the meantime, the Tibetans shall have faithfully complied with the terms of the said Convention in all other respects.
APPENDIX G

CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND CHINA. 1906

Signed at Pek;ng on the 27th April 1906.
Ratified at London on the 23rd July 1906

Whereas His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of China are sincerely desirous to maintain and perpetuate the relations of friendship and good understanding which now exist between their respective Empires;

And whereas the refusal of Tibet to recognize the validity of or to carry into full effect the provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 17th March 1890, and Regulations of the 5th December 1893, placed the British Government under the necessity of taking steps to secure their rights and interests under the said Convention and Regulations;

And whereas a Convention of ten articles was signed at Lhasa on 7th September, 1904, on behalf of Great Britain and Tibet, and was ratified by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India on behalf of Great Britain on 11th November, 1904, a declaration on behalf of Great Britain modifying its terms under certain conditions being appended thereto;

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF GREAT BRITAIN AN IRELAND:

Sir Ernest Mason Satow, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, His said Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to his Majesty the emperor of China;

AND HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF CHINA:

His Excellency Tong Shoa-yi, His said Majesty's High Commissioner Plenipotentiary and a Vice-President of the Board of Foreign Affairs, who having communicate 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 six Articles:-

Article I.

The Convention concluded on 7th September, 1904, by Great Britain and Tibet, the texts of which in English and Chinese are attached to the present Convention as an annex, is hereby confirmed, subject to the modification stated in the declaration appended thereto, and both of the High Contracting Parties engage to take at all times such steps as may be necessary to secure the due fulfillment of the terms specified therein.

Article II.

The Government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibetan territory or to interfere in the administration of Tibet. The Government of China also undertakes not to permit any other foreign state to interfere with the territory or internal administration of Tibet.
Article III.

The concessions which are mentioned in Article 9 (d) of the Convention concluded on 7th September, 1904, by Great Britain and Tibet are denied to any state or to the subject of any state other than China, but it has been arranged with China that at the trade marts specified in Article 2 of the aforesaid Convention Great Britain shall be entitled to lay down telegraph lines connecting with India.

Article IV.

The provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and Regulations of 1893 shall, subject to the terms of this present Convention and annexe thereto, remain in full force.

Article V.

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

Article VI.

This Convention shall be ratified by the Sovereigns of both countries and ratifications shall be exchanged at London within three months after the date of signature by the Plenipotentiaries of both Powers.

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

Done at Peking this twenty-seventh day of April, one thousand nine hundred and six, being the fourth day of the fourth month of the thirty-second year of the reign of Kuang Hsü.
APPENDIX II

CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND RUSSIA, 1907
Signed at St. Petersburg on the 18th (31st) August 1907.

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians, animated by the sincere desire to settle by mutual agreement different questions concerning the interest of their States on the Continent of Asia, have determined to conclude Agreements destined to prevent all cause of misunderstanding between Great Britain and Russia in regard to the questions referred to, and have nominated for this purpose their respective Plenipotentiaries, to wit:

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, the Right Honourable Sir Arthur Nicolson, His Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians;

His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians, the Master of his Court Alexander Iswolski, Minister for Foreign Affairs;

Who, having communicated to each other their full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed to the following:

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Arrangement concerning Thibet

The governments of Great Britain and Russia recognizing the suzerain rights of China in Thibet, and considering the fact that Great Britain, by reason of her geographical position, has a special interest in the maintenance of the status quo in the external relations of Thibet, have made the following arrangement:

Article I.

The two High Contracting Parties engage to respect the territorial integrity of Thibet and to abstain from all interference in the internal administration.

Article II.

In conformity with the admitted principle of the suzerainty of China over Thibet, Great Britain and Russia engage not to enter into negotiations with Thibet except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government. This engagement does not exclude the direct relations between British Commercial Agents and the Thibetan authorities provided for in Article V of the Convention between Great Britain and Thibet of the 7th September 1904, and confirmed by the Convention between Great Britain and China of the 27th April, 1906; nor does it modify the engagements entered into by Great Britain and China in Article I of the said Convention of 1906.

It is clearly understood that Buddhists, subjects of Great Britain or of Russia, may enter into direct relations on strictly religious matters with the Dalai Lama and the other representatives of Buddhism in Thibet; the Governments of Great Britain and Russia engage, as far as they are concerned, not to allow those relations to infringe the stipulations of the present arrangement.

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Article III.

The British and Russian Governments respectively engage not to send Representatives to Lhasa.

Article IV.

The two High Contracting Parties engage neither to seek nor to obtain, whether for themselves or their subjects, any Concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, and mines, or other rights in Thibet.

Article V.

The two Governments agree that no part of the revenues of Thibet, Whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to Great Britain or Russia or to any of their subjects.

Annex to the arrangement between Great Britain and Russia concerning Thibet.

Great Britain reaffirms the declaration, signed by His Excellency the Viceroy and governor-General of India and appended to the ratification of the Convention of the 7th September 1904, to the effect that the occupation of the Chumbi valley by British forces shall cease after the payment of three annual instalments of the indemnity of 25,00,000 rupees, provided that the trade marts mentioned in Article II of that Convention have been effectively opened for three years, and that in the meantime the Thibetan authorities have faithfully complied in all respects with the terms of the said Convention of 1904. It is clearly understood that if the occupation of the Chumbi Valley by the British forces has, for any reason, not been terminated at the time anticipated in the above Declaration, the British and Russian Governments will enter upon a friendly exchange of views on this subject.

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the ratifications exchanged at St. Petersburgh as soon as possible.

In witness whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Convention and affixed thereto their seals.

Done in duplicate at St. Petersburgh, the 18th (31st) August 1907.