In a previous chapter it was noticed that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, there was great internal disorder in Ladakh and the ruling authorities there were unable to check foreign inroads. Taking advantage of this and being tempted by the lucrative shawl wool of Ladakh, Raja Gulab Singh decided to conquer the Himalayan principality. For launching such an adventure, his occupation of Kishtwar, which commanded two of the roads into Ladakh, the Dogra Raja was already in an advantageous position. But the invasion of Ladakh, Gulab Singh did not lead in person. His Wazir responsible for the conquest of Ladakh and the adjoining areas was Zorawar Singh Kahluria, about whom, a word may not out of place here.

Zorawar Singh was born in a Rajput family of Kahlur (Bilaspur) in 1786, hence Zorawar Singh Kahluria. When sixteen, he killed his cousin over a property feud and immediately left Kahlur for Hari Dwar. Here, he came in contact with Rana Jaswant Singh, a Jagirdar of

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1 See supra pp. 103-06.
3 Carmichael Smyth (A History of the Reigning family of Lahore [Calcutta, 1847], p. 198), wrongly says that Zorawar was a native of Kussal near Riasi.
5 A shrine of the Hindus on the river Ganges.
Marmat Galihan, who took him in his service and brought him back. Even as a child Zorawar had possessed remarkable physical prowess, and now under Jaswant Singh's patronage, he became dexterous in handling the weapons of offence and defence.

After some time Zorawar Singh entered the service of the Dogra chief Gulab Singh. In 1815, the latter put him in charge of the defence of Riasi fort, a job which he did admirably when it was attacked by Mian Dewan Singh, another contender for the possession of Riasi jagir. Soon after, Gulab Singh accepted Zorawar's proposal for the better utilisation of supplies to the troops and appointed him Inspector of Commissariat Supplies in all the forts north of Jammu under Dogra control. Herein he effected a considerable saving; the practical results achieved impressed Gulab Singh with his innate ability and earned Zorawar Singh quick promotions. When Gulab Singh became Raja and administrator of the Jammu hills, he appointed Zorawar Singh

1 It was then a small jagir in Jammu hills. At present it is known as Doda, and is situated in Jammu District.


4 Smyth, op. cit., p. 198.

5 Ibid. According to Lahore Darbar Records, "Note by Sita Ram Kohli", Vol. III, An 41, p. 1 (Ph. S.A.), in 1819, Zorawar was taken in Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s regular army as an Adjutant on rupees eighty per month; he was promoted to the rank of a Commandant in 1820 and gradually rose to be a Colonel on Rs. 360/- a month. Later on, a platoon was also named 'Zorawar Singh Platoon'. This reference about the early career of Zorawar Singh, however, appears to be incorrect.
as Governor of Kishtwar and Kussal in 1823 and soon after gave him the title of Wazir.  

Wazir Zorawar, great organising genius that he was devoted the next decade in consolidating and extending the territories of Gulab Singh in the interior of Jammu hills. He carried many reforms in the administration and perfected the military machine of the Jammu Raja. Sky-high mountains of Kishtwar were used for the training of soldiers and its fertile plateau was to serve a convenient spring-board for the conquest of Ladakh and Baltistan.

In July, 1834, with hand-picked infantrymen numbering about 5,000, Zorawar Singh started on an adventurous career of conquests. Moving from Kishtwar over the Maryum La or Bhot Khohl pass, the Dogra army descended on the province of Purig. There was little resistance at first because the Ladakhis were taken by surprise, but on August 16, 1834, at Sanku, a Ladakhi force of nearly 5,000 under the command of the minister of Stog, a young and dashing lieutenant, gave a battle to the Dogras. The Ladakhis had entrenched themselves on a hill and defended it tenaciously for a whole day, but their quaint matchlocks were no match for the firepower of the Dogras. Soon the Ladakhis were dislodged from their positions and after suffering defeat, across the Russi La, escaped to Shergil.

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1 Smyth, op. cit., p. 199.
2 For details about this pass, see supra p. 21.
3 Cunningham, Ladakh, p. 333; Francke, Western Tibet, pp. 139-40.
4 Francke, Antiquities, ii, p. 251.
The Dogra army then moved on to Suru, where it halted for sometime and constructed a small fort, Zorawar, realising the necessity of having adequate provisions during such a hazardous campaign as the one he was conducting in a rugged and barren land, had given strict orders to his soldiers not to destroy the crops, which at that time were ripe. This politic measure not only provided victuals to the army, but also led to the immediate submission of the farmers of Suru district who placed themselves under Dogra protection. Soon, the invaders, overwhelmed Langkartse and Kartse, and took steps to consolidate these conquests. Dogra pickets were stationed in the area and a tax of rupees four per head was realised from the peasantry of the surrounding villages. After taking these measures the Wazir moved towards Pashkym and Sod. ¹

By this time the whole of Ladakh was astir with commotion. Tse-pal Nam-gyal, the Ladakhi King had sent his ministers to mobilise all other districts which had not yet sent any warriors. The retreating Ladakhi army advanced with reinforcements and fought a pitched battle in the plain of Pashkym. Unfortunately for the Ladakhis, the minister of Stog, their brave and dashing captain was killed by a musket ball. His death was a signal for a general flight. The Ladakhis fled helter skelter, but most of them across the pashkym bridge towards Mulbe and Shergil. After crossing the river they destroyed the bridges, but the Dogras crossed the river

¹Foreign Department Political Consultations, 9 January 1837, No. 24, enclosure No. 2; see also, Francke, Western Tibet, p. 140.
on inflated skins and stormed Pashkym fort. This was easily taken possession of, for it was unoccupied and the petty chieftain of Pashkym had fled to Sod, another important place in Lower Ladakh. The assailants moved towards Sod and started cannonading the fort which was strongly fortified by the Ladakhis. Salam Khan, the Kiladar of Sod, fought bravely and nothing was effected in ten days although forty Dogra soldiers were killed and many rendered hors-de-combat. Ultimately one day Mehta Basti Ram, an enterprising and brave Colonel in Zorawar's Army, in the small hours of the morning accompanied by five hundred soldiers, under the covering fire of his battery, vigorously assaulted the fort. By day-break the Dogras gained possession of the fort and made many hundred Ladakhis their prisoners.

After these actions, Zorawar would have pushed ahead with his scheme of the conquest of Ladakh, but he received reports to the effect that a Dr. Henderson, said to be an agent of the East India Company, was staying with the King of Ladakh. He suspended his operations and reporting the matter to Raja Gulab Singh sought fresh instructions. Gulab Singh in turn wrote to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who immediately addressed the Political Agent of the Company at Ludhiana to ascertain the meaning of such proceedings. The Agent satisfied Ranjit Singh with an assurance that Dr. Henderson had crossed the Sutlej in direct violation of the orders of his Government and that the Company did not entertain

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1F.D.P.E., 9 January 1837, No. 24, enclosure No. 2; Francke, Western Tibet, p. 140.

2Cunningham, Ladak, pp. 334-35; Francke, Western Tibet, p. 141.
the slightest idea of interfering with the Maharaja's conquests northwards.\(^1\)

After this explanation Zorawar was desired to proceed further with his operations. But this took about three months and in the meantime winter had set in. Under these circumstances, after realising some war indemnity, the Wazir would have liked to retire to Kishtwar for some time and reinvoke Ladakh when the winter was over. An offer was made to the Ladakhi authorities that if they paid rupees 15,000 then the Dogras would get back to their own country.\(^2\) Leaders of the Ladakhi army at Shergil and Mulbe welcomed this proposal. They requested the king to make this payment. If the latter was not prepared to do it, then the former offered to raise the amount by realising 'six Jau'\(^3\) from every soldier.\(^4\) Though the king was ready to make the payment, the domineering queen, Zi Zi, forbade his doing so. On the contrary, the conduct of the leaders who had forwarded the proposal was condemned and Prime Minister, Ngorub Stanzin and the minister of Nubra were asked to go and bring Zorawar's head.\(^5\) All the necessary measures were taken to mobilize the war potential of the country and reinforcements rushed to the scene of battle. Meanwhile, the King, the Prime Minister and other

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\(^2\) Francke, Western Tibet, p. 142. Maulvi Hashmat Ali, (Tarikh-i-Jammu Wa gisat hai Mafthuha Maharaja Gulab Singh, in Urdu, [Lucknow, 1939], p. 348), says that in addition to Rs. 15,000 the Wazir also demanded an annual tribute of Rs. 9, 00. The chronicles of Ladakh, however, say that money demanded by Zorawar at this occasion was 1,000 'Silver rupees'. (Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 128).

\(^3\) A Ladakhi coin equal to about one-fourth of a rupee.

\(^4\) Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 128.

\(^5\) Idem.
important court officials collected an army of nearly 20,000 and reached Mulbhe.¹

When Zorawar, according to a previous understanding, sent some of his agents to collect rupees 15,000 the Ladakhis not only treacherously seized and put them to death but, by a circuitous route attacked the Dogras in their rear. Many Dogra soldiers were made prisoners and with their hands and feet bound thrown into the river. Realising his precarious position, Zorawar ordered a retreat to Langkartse, an operation that was beset with some difficulty.² Now was the proper time for the Ladakhis to pursue their adversaries but they foolishly left the Dogras unmolested for about four months.

Early in April, 1835, the Ladakhi army advanced towards Langkartse. Zorawar, after getting intelligence about their movements, despatched an advance-column of about one hundred soldiers to meet them. After reaching the environs of Langkartse, the Ladakhis entered into long deliberations about their future course of action. Further, after a long and tiring march through the snow they were exhausted and settled down to prepare their evening meals. Sensing the situation to be quite favourable, the Dogra advance-column delivered a surprise attack and soon their companions also joined them. A battle was fought, but as the Ladakhi force was disorganised and there was no cohesion and unity of action, they hurried away from their tea-pots and fled.

¹Cunningham, Ladak, p. 335; Francke, Western Tibet, p. 144.
²See Cunningham, Ladak, p. 336.
Truly, as General Cunningham has remarked, "the indolent votaries of an almost worn-out faith were no match for the more active and energetic worshippers of Mahadeo and Parbati." In their attempt to escape over the snow-bridge, about four hundred Ladakhis were drowned in the river while many more with their leader Ngorub Stanzin were made prisoners. The Dogras also suffered losses, three of their leaders, namely Uttam Wazir, Hazru Wazir of Una and Surtu Rana, along with twenty soldiers were killed and about sixty wounded.

The battle was a turning point in the Dogra-Ladakhi hostilities. It greatly demoralised the Ladakhis who appear to have given up the idea of fighting with the invaders. The latter, on the other hand were greatly encouraged and a large quantity of provisions and clothing also fell into their hands. The weather was becoming warm and snow had started to thaw. Zorawar, using the prisoners and other natives as the carriers of Dogra baggage, advanced to pursue the fleeing Ladakhis and again reached Pashkym, whence the Dogra army marched to Mulbe and then, via Kharbu, it reached Lama Yuru. There was no resistance as the Ladakhis were fleeing before the assailants. The peasantry and other inhabitants of the villages on the way were anxious to save themselves from the depredations of the invaders and hastened to offer nazars, in the form of horses, money and provisions to the Wazir. In return, they

1 Cunningham, Ladak, p. 381.
2 Ibid., p. 337.
received Dogra protection. At Lama Yuru, the Wazir received a letter from the Gyalpo in which he sought the cessation of hostilities and offered to discuss terms of peace provided his personal safety was guaranteed. The Wazir agreed and both parties met at Bazgo, and discussed the preliminaries of a peace settlement. Later, for finalising the terms, both parties moved to Leh. Zorawar, however left the main camp at Bazgo and took a small party of about one hundred soldiers with him. After the latter reached Leh, an untoward incident took place which might have led to an open conflagration but for the Gyalpo's solicitations which saved the situation. Zorawar held a gathering in which, after the usual custom in the Lahore Darbar, he offered a sadka or sarwarna, of rupees one hundred to the Gyalpo's son, but the latter mistaking the action either for an insult or for treachery drew his sword. His followers did the same, whereupon the Dogras also drew their swords. But the Gyalpo fell upon his knees and clasped Zorawar's hand while the prince and his followers retired to another place. The news of this incident soon reached the main Dogra camp at Bazgo and next morning about 5,000 soldiers reached Leh.

The invaders stayed in Leh for about four months. Under the peace settlement, the kingdom was restored to

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2 A small town situated on the right bank of Indus, about twenty miles to the west of Leh.
3 See Cunningham, Ladak, p. 338.
4 It was a sort of votive offering; money offered was woven over the head of the person concerned.
the Gyalpo, but he now became a vassal of Raja Gulab Singh and through him of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Ladakhi King in addition to paying a yearly tribute of Rs. 20,000, was also asked to pay Rs. 50,000 as war indemnity. Out of this indemnity a sum of Rs. 37,000 was at once realised, partly in cash and partly in jewels. The balance, the Gyalpo undertook to pay in two installments within four months. The Dogras also stationed one Munshi Daya Ram as their representative in Leh.

Thus before the commencement of winter, Zorawar Singh, in October, 1835, with his entire army retraced his steps. As a result of this expedition Dogra influence extended further eastward and Ladakh came within the effective control of Raja Gulab Singh.

When the Wazir reached Lama Yuru, he heard that the people of Purig and Suru had revolted and had put

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1 Cunningham, Ladakh, p. 339. The chronicles of Ladakh however do not mention the war indemnity at all and give the amount of yearly tribute as Rs. 5,000 (Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 129)

2 Panikkar, Founding of Kashmir State, p. 78; see also, Hashmat Ali, Tarikh-i-Jammu, p. 354.

3 It may be noticed that Suru and Purig had always been a strong bulwark of Ladakhi defence. It was here that some three hundred years ago, when Mirza Haider invaded Ladakh, he met a strong resistance. The Dogras had also to fight many actions in this area, the inhabitants of which resisted the foreign invasion with much determination. Not only that, there was frequent recurrence of revolts also. Thus it is wrong as Arthur Neve (Thirty years in Kashmir, p. 246) has said that because the people of Suru were Mohammedans, they cared little for the allegiance to the Buddhist King of Ladakh.
to death the entire Dogra garrison including Mian Nidhan Singh, the Dogra Kardar of Dras and Kargil.\(^1\) By forced marches, Zorawar soon reached the troubled area and quelled the rebellion. Here, he came to know that Mihan Singh, the Sikh Governor of Kashmir, not only incited the Ladakhis against the Dogras but had also given them active support by sending one of his officers namely Fateh Singh Jogi\(^2\) with many soldiers. The opposition of Mihan Singh was due to his apprehension that Dogra proceedings in Ladakh were likely to ruin the shawl industry of Kashmir and he had already complained to the Maharaja about the import of shawl wool from Ladakh into Jammu hills.\(^3\) At Suru, the Dogras hanged many Ladakhis. This had the desired effect: all the Zamindars of the district without much opposition, hastened to tender their submission and promised to behave in future.

Zorawar had hardly reached Jammu when news came in that an insurrection had broken out in Ladakh. The Gyalpo, on the instigation of some of his chief counsellors and Mihan Singh had closed the roads to the merchants, and had confiscated the property of the officials having pro-Dogra leanings. The Ladakhi King had also tortured and imprisoned Munshi Daya Ram, the Dogra representative at Leh. Winter was now in full swing and snow had closed all the passes, besides, there was a likelihood of strong Ladakhi resistance.

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\(^1\) Cf. Gulab Nama, p. 349.

\(^2\) Idem, Cunningham (Ladak, p. 340), wrongly gives the name of Mihan Singh's officer as Jala Singh Gopi.

\(^3\) See supra pp.134-35.
on the Kishtwar-Suru-Leh route. Yet delay in quelling the rebellion was likely to offset the Dogra plan of a complete subjugation of Ladakh. Zorawar Singh, therefore, with characteristic energy and celerity of movement again marched to Leh, this time following a direct though difficult route via Zanskar. Miphi Sata, a Ladakhi guided the Dogras through this route and was richly rewarded for his services. Through forced marches, within few days, the Wazir reached Chimre, a village above Leh and the Ladakhis were completely surprised to hear about his arrival. The Gyalpo hastened to wait upon the Wazir at Chushod and expressed contrition over what had happened. The heir-apparent of Ladakh, Prince Chog Sprul, who was implicated in the uprising, with his mother and some followers ran towards Spiti, whence he escaped into the British-protected territory of Bashahr. Details about his movement and attempts made by him to secure help from the British against the Dogras will be discussed in the next Chapter.

The Wazir accompanied by the Gyalpo, then moved to Leh and realised the balance of war indemnity amounting

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1 See Francke, Western Tibet, p. 148.
2 From Kishtwar via Paddar and over the Umasi La, this route passed through Zanskar and then descended into the Indus Valley. There are about six passes on this route and it remains open for four or five months of the year. For details, see Drew, J & K Territories, pp. 535-36; see also, Le Marquis De Bourbel, Routes in Jammu and Kashmir (Calcutta, 1897), pp. 63-67.
4 Foreign Department Political Consultations, 9 January 1837, No. 34.
to Rs. 13,000 besides some additional expenses of the army. To make up this amount, the property of the royal family and Leh officialdom was accepted. Zorawar now refused to take anything on trust. The old King was deposed and given a small jagir in the village of Stog near Leh; the kingship being offered to Dragchos of Khalatse, who was generally deputed by the Gyalpo on a trade-bearing mission to the Governor of Kashmir. But he had always been a faithful servant of the Gyalpo, so looking at this offer as an attempt at making him a traitor to the ruling dynasty, he refused to accept it. The offer was now made to Ngorub Stazin, who had married the King's sister and was his Prime Minister for a number of years. He was reportedly not on good terms with the ruler and during the first Dogra expedition, after the battle of Langkartse when he was made a prisoner, he had helped Wazir Zorawar Singh. He accepted the Dogra offer and became the new ruler of Ladakh. A fort was also constructed in Leh where, under Dalal Singh three hundred Dogra soldiers were to be stationed. After making these arrangements Zorawar returned to Jammu in March, 1836, taking with him Dragchos, the new ruler's son and some other well-placed Ladakhis, as hostages for the better behaviour of the new King. Soon after Raja Dhian Singh presented to Ranjit Singh

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1 This included tea, wool, jewels, gold and silver utensils etc.


3 Francke, Western Tibet, p. 150; Hashmat Ali, Tarikh-i-Jammu, p. 358.

4 Cunningham, Ladak, pp. 341-42; Francke, Antiquities II, p. 52.
a document containing the agreement of the new Raja of Ladakh with the Maharaja. A tribute of Rs. 30,000 and a variety of presents were also offered to the Sikh ruler. Ranjit Singh, in addition received a deputation in Lahore sent in the name of Ngorub Stanzin and in this way accorded recognition to Gulab Singh’s conquest.

Before leaving Leh, Zorawar had ordered Colonel Basti Ram and Wazir Lakhpat Rai to pacify and annex Zanskar, which had still held out. The Dogra dignitaries marched thither with 1,500 soldiers and after restoring peace in Zanskar moved down to Jammu through Padder. But to keep communications with their garrison in Zanskar open, the Dogras left about thirty men at Chatargah in Padder.

However, the people of Padder, who were under the control of the Chamba Raja, were not well-disposed.

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1 Jadat-ul-Tawarikh, Daftar III, p. 431.
2 Foreign Department Political Consultations, 8 August 1838, Nos. 28-29.
3 Ibid.
4 Hew as originally the Prime Minister of Raja Tegh Singh of Kishtwar. At the time of subversion of Kishtwar by the Dogras, Lakhpat had helped Raja Gulab Singh. The latter soon took him into his service. Thereafter, Lakhpat served his new master most faithfully and was many times despatched on important military expeditions. He was killed in 1846, when he was quelling the resistance of Sheikh Imam-ud-Din of Kashmir. (Panikkar, The Founding of Kashmir State, pp. 168-69).

5 Cunningham’s this part of the narrative is not clear. He mixes up Padam (Spa-dam) with Padder, (Ladak, pp. 342-43). Padam at that time was the headquarters of Zanskar district of Ladakh, whereas Padder, the Chandrabhaga (Chenab) valley, between Pangi and Kishtwar, was a Pargannah of Chamba State.

Especially, Ratanu, the Palsara or Chief official of the Chamba Raja was opposed even to a temporary sojourn of the Dogra soldiery in Paddar, lest it should turn into a permanent occupation. Meantime, there was a rebellion in Zanskar and the entire Dogra garrison there was put to the sword. Ratanu, on hearing this, attacked the Dogras at Chatargarh and expelled them from his territory. This was too much for Raja Gulab Singh, who in the spring of 1836, sent a strong force under Zorawar Singh to avenge the insult. Besides, by annexing Paddar, the Dogras would be removing that bottleneck on the direct and short route from Kishtwar to Leh, where their movements had often been impeded by the jealous deputies of the Chamba Raja. The bridge over the Chandrabhaga had been dismantled by Ratanu, and the river was in spate, so for three months the Dogras could achieve nothing. Ultimately, they overwhelmed the fort of Chatargarh, razed it to the ground, constructed a new one there and named it Gulab Garh. Some of the people of Paddar were put to death and the territory was then annexed to the Jammu dominion.

After settling the affairs in Paddar, the Wazir marched towards Padam. But the cold was so intense that twenty-five soldiers were lost on the glaciers near the Umsi La and many more lost their hands and feet from frost-bite. Peace however had now been restored in Zanskar, whence the Dogras marched

2Cunningham, Ladak, p. 344.
towards Leh. Here Ngorub Stanzin, the new Gyalpo, was accused of having complicity with the rebels of Zanskar besides which he was suspected of fomenting trouble in other parts of Ladakh. When Stanzin heard about the approach of Dogras in Zanskar, he fled precipitately towards Spiti. He was, however, chased by the energetic Rajputs of Jammu and after a skirmish with his followers captured at the village of Tabo in Spiti and brought to Leh. Here he was imprisoned. Like the Ladakhi prince Chog Sprul, it appears, his intention was to escape to the British-protected territory of Bashahr. The Gyalpo, however, was deposed, and the aged Tse-pal Nam-gyal reinstated in his former position. He agreed to pay an yearly tribute, with the additional stipulation that the expenses of the Dogra troops stationed in Ladakh were to be defrayed by him.

Zorawar had to return to Ladakh again early in 1839, this time to subdue the rebellion which was being incited by a Ladakhi leader named Sukamir of Hembabs in Purig. The latter had issued a call to arms to the whole country against the Dogras. Several other influential men of Purig such as Rahim Khan of Chigtan

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1 According to Cunningham's narrative, deposal of Stanzin appears to have taken place in 1837. (Ladak, pp. 343-44). But according to the chronicles of Ladakh, Stanzin remained King for about six years. (Francke, Antiquities, II, pp. 131, 252). G.T. Vigne, an English traveller who visited Ladakh in 1838-39 calls the Raja as Marut Tunzin and says that he was a puppet in the hands of the Dogra Raja Gulab Singh (Travels, II, pp. 352-53). Thus, version of the Ladakhi chronicles appears to be more correct, and the deposal of Ngorub Stanzin may have taken place in 1839 i.e. one year before the Dogra conquest of Baltistan.

and Hussain of Pashkym had also joined with Sukamir and an army was being collected in the environs of Leh. Before the gathering storm could burst, Zorawar Singh through a direct route via Zanskar entered Leh at the head of a large army. The rebels were completely surprised. Although some of them, including Rahim Khan and Hussain escaped towards Baltistan, others trying to deceive the Dogra general rapidly changed colours: "we have all come here to say salam to you. We want to make a petition." But Zorawar was a discerning and seasoned leader, he knew what was being cooked. Sukamir, the arch-rebel was caught and publicly executed. Some of his prominent associates were also given exemplary punishments, a fact that created a great awe in the minds of the Ladakhis.

This was the Dogra general's fourth and last campaign into Ladakh. His frequent incursions had broken the back of Ladakhi resistance, and the people of the little Himalayan Kingdom, appear to have given up the hopeless task of raising the banner of rebellion against their new energetic masters. Except in 1842, when they revolted at the instigation of the Tibetans, the Ladakhis continued to show a peaceful demeanour throughout the period of Dogra rule which lasted till 1947. Soon after its conquest, Ladakh did, however, become a convenient base for invading Baltistan and Western Tibet. But before discussing the Dogra invasion of Baltistan, it may be worthwhile pausing for a moment and ponder over the various causes of Ladakhi defeat.

Firstly, Ladakhi militiamen who fought with the Dogras were undisciplined and ill-armed. There was no cohesion or unity of action among them. On the other hand, the Dogra army was very well organised and much better equipped. The Dogras, who formed a part of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s army, had learned more up-to-date techniques of fighting, whereas the Ladakhis had been living in isolation and were quite unaware of these tactics. Secondly, as the chronicles of Ladakh bear out, Ladakhi militiamen had to carry their provisions, weapons and accoutrements with them. All these articles formed a heavy load and impeded the mobility of their soldiers. The Dogras on the other hand had a separate commissariat arrangement. Furthermore, while in Ladakh, in accordance with the Napoleonic maxim, they used the natives as carriers of their baggage and providers of their provisions. Thirdly, the Dogras possessed superior weapons. They had a good park of artillery, whereas the Ladakhis had none. The Dogras had jingals and muskets which were far better than the out-dated Ladakhi matchlocks. The Ladakhis, even did not have these matchlocks in sufficient number. Finally, the Dogras were fortunate in having an experienced and skilled general as their leader. Zorawar could not be easily overawed by the overwhelming number of the enemy nor did unfavourable circumstances spur him to quick action. He became beau-ideal of the Dogra soldiers and was a source of constant inspiration to them. On the other hand, unfortunately for the Ladakhis, their daring and promising leader, the minister of Stog, was

1 See supra pp. 43-45 (a).
killed in one of the early actions, after his death
all other Ladakhi leaders proved to be good-for-nothing.

CONQUEST OF BALTISAN

After Ladakh it was the turn of Baltisan or
Little Tibet. This was an ancient kingdom, with an
area of about 12,000 square miles, and situated in the
Indus Valley to the west of Ladakh. The state was
divided into eight subdivisions or districts, i.e.
Iskardo, Khartaksho or Kharmang, Khapalu, Tolti,
Parkuta, Snigar, Rondu and Astor. These districts were
under the control of different hereditary chieftains
but they owed fealty to Ahmad Shah, the powerful ruler
of Skardu and were mostly his kith and kin. In the
first four decades of the nineteenth century there was
constant unrest in Baltistan, for these chieftains
either kept quarrelling among themselves or remained
at war with the Gyalpo of Ladakh.

The propinquity of the Sikhs had raised apprehensions in the mind of Ahmad Shah and he thought that after the Sikh conquest of Kashmir, Baltistan would be

1The proper name was Tibet-i-Khurd (Little Tibet), by which prefix it was distinguished from Tibet-i-Kalan, the name applied to Ladakh. The country was also frequently called Iskardu from the name of its well-known fort and capital.

2Cf. Drew, Northern Barrier, p. 200.

3See Vigne, Travels, II, p. 249.

4Foreign Department Political Consultations, 5 October 1835, No. 53-A.

5JASB., I (1832), p. 125.
the next target of Ranjit Singh's policy of aggrandizement. In order to save himself from any such eventuality, the Balti ruler, therefore tried to cultivate friendship with the British and sought protection from the Company's Government. When William Moorcroft was in Ladakh (1820-22) Ahmad Shah, by sending presents of gold-dust and some trifles tried to make friends with him. He even further proffered his aid to Moorcroft by furnishing porters, provisions and letters of introduction to the Mohammedan chieftains on the road to Badakhshan and Kokand. Moorcroft did not very much encourage the offers and friendly gestures of Ahmad Shah, as these might have given umbrage to the Ladakhi authorities, whose hospitality he was then enjoying and who at that time were at daggers drawn with the Balti chief. But he wrote an ambiguous letter to Ahmad Shah, holding out promises of British support. Therefore, hereafter the Balti ruler continued to expect British help.

In 1827, when Lord Amherst, the then Governor-General, deputed C.M. Wade on his first mission to the Punjab, Ahmad Shah wrote to Wade. His letter was, however, intercepted on the way by the Sikhs. In 1829, the Gyalpo of Baltistan again despatched some letters to Wade, the Political Agent of the Company at Ludhiana, and hereafter

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2Moorcroft to Metcalfe, 4 May 1821: F.D.P.C., 20 September 1822, No. 60.
4F.D.P.C., 5 October 1835, No. 53-A.
till the Dogra conquest of Baltistan in 1840, kept a clandestine correspondence with the British. The British attitude to his overtures for placing himself under their protection will be discussed in the next chapter.

In 1831, when Victor Jacquemont, a Franchman, visited Kashmir, Ahmad Shah took him for a British agent and immediately despatched his Wazir, Chiragh Ali Shah with many presents and a letter "filled with roses, narcissuses and basil, in perpetual bloom in the garden of his friendship" for Jacquemont. Chiragh Ali came under the guise of supplying specimens of plants and animals for Jacquemont's collections and told him that Ahmad Shah was the most obedient servant of the British and Baltistan was their (British) country. Chiragh Ali finally disclosed that he was on a secret political errand, but the Frenchman soon dismissed him. In the late eighteen-thirties when G.T. Vigne, an English traveller visited Baltistan, Ahmad Shah took him for an officer of the Company and thought that Vigne was despatched by the British Government to ascertain his (Ahmad Shah's) pretensions of friendship and solicitude for seeking British protection against the Sikhs. The Balti ruler gave an "exceedingly kind, flattering and hospitable reception" to Vigne and sought political alliance with the Company. But Vigne told Ahmad Shah that he was not an employee of the Company and that he was visiting Baltistan for the sake of his personal pleasure and the advancement of scientific knowledge.


2Vigne, Travels, II, pp. 236 ff.
Ahmad Shah's fears about the Sikh invasion of Baltistan were not unfounded. Kirpa Ram, the Sikh Governor of Kashmir, about 1825 invaded a small territory known as 'Kathai' situated between Kashmir and Baltistan; though the first Sikh attack was repulsed, yet in one of the later expeditions they took possession of this territory. Later on, prince Sher Singh during his Governorship of Kashmir (1831-33) invaded Baltistan, but as the Baltis were vigilant, the Sikh invasion failed. In order to defend his country from such an incursion, the Gyalpo of Baltistan had taken some defensive measures. Vigne, when he visited Baltistan, found that between Gurais and the Bursil pass, the Balti ruler had destroyed every house, so that a Sikh invading force could find no shelter or provisions. Further on the direct road leading from Kashmir to Skardu over the Deosai plateau, at many strategic places he had constructed gates or 'Darwazas' which were designed as some sort of booby-traps. But it is an irony of fate that the Dogra attack which sealed the destinies of Baltistan as an independent state in 1840, came from another direction altogether i.e. from the Indus Valley above Skardu.

The Dogra ruler Gulab Singh may have conquered Baltistan earlier, but he was apprehensive of active hostility from Mihan Singh, the Sikh Nazim of Kashmir, who, as noted earlier was quite jealous of Dogra

1 F.D.P.C., 5 October 1835, No. 53-A.
3 Ibid., p. 213.
4 Ibid., pp. 243-44.
incursions in Ladakh. But after Ranjit Singh's demise when there was commotion at Lahore, Mihan Singh was alarmed into concessions by the powerful and ambitious Rajas of Jammu, and he left Iskardu, and the whole valley of the Upper Indus, a free field for the aggression of their lieutenants.¹ Occasional intercession offered by C.M. Wade, British Political Agent at Ludhiana in Ahmad Shah's favour and visits of some Englishmen such as Dr. Henderson, G.T. Vigne and Dr. Falconer to Baltistan in the thirty of the nineteenth century, also to some extent helped Ahmad Shah to postpone the evil day.²

In 1839, Zorawar Singh turned to Baltistan, for which a casus belli was not difficult to find. Ahmad Shah had declared that after his death not Mohammad Shah, his eldest living son, but Mohammad Ali Khan, a son by another wife would succeed him.³ This arrangement naturally offended Mohammad Shah, who with some followers escaped to Kashmir, and solicited assistance from the Sikh Governor.⁴ He reached Srinagar on 7th September,

¹Cf. J.D. Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, p.217.
²Mackeson (Assistant Pol. Agent, Peshawar) to Clerk (Pol. Agent, Ludhiana), 18 July 1840: F.D.S.C., I March 1841, No. 126. See also, Vigne, Travels, II, p.375.
³G.T. Vigne (Travels, II, pp. 255-56) says that the cause of estrangement between Ahmad Shah and his son was that the prince when entrusted with the government of Husora by way of trial, had abused his authority and thus proved incompetent as a ruler. Thereupon Ahmad Shah determined to give the throne to his other son, Hashmat Ali (Tarikh-i-Jamu, pp. 576-77), however says that the root cause of this trouble was the new Gyalmo, step-mother of Mohammad Shah, Mohammad's mother had died, the new Gyalmo wanted to make her own son as the next King of Baltistan. To achieve this object she prevailed upon Ahmad Shah to declare her son as the heir-apparent.
1836 and soon after offered nazar to the Governor. The latter in return sent a seafat of one hundred rupees to the fugitive prince, and granted three rupees per diem for his subsistence besides holding out assurances of protection and help. After staying for sometime in Kashmir, Mohammad Shah met Zorawar at Suru in Lower Ladakh. The Wazir treated the fugitive prince kindly and promised every help. Mohammad Shah stayed in Purig for a couple of years and then shifted to Leh. But sometimes in 1839, when the Ladakhis were trying to throw away the Dogra yoke, with the connivance of the Ladakhi authorities, a party of Skardu troops marched into Leh and whisked away Mohammad Shah. Zorawar Singh, hearing of this, at once wrote to Ahmad Shah that by forcibly seizing the refugee, the Baltis had committed aggression on the Dogra territory for which the Balti Gyalpo was responsible. He also demanded immediate release of Mohammad Shah. But to this letter Ahmad Shah vouchsafed no reply. Naturally Zorawar Singh now decided to invade Baltistan.

In November 1839, Zorawar assembled all the Ladakhi militiamen, including their leader Banka (Ban-kha-pa) Kahlon and the aged Gyalpo and asked them to

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1Wade to Government, 30 December 1836: F.D.P.C., 31 January 1837, No. 28.
2Foreign Department Secret Consultations, 1 March 1841, No. 127.
3Cunningham, Ladak, p. 346; see also, Hashmat Ali, Tarikh-i-Jammu, p. 362.
4Idem.
march with the Dogra army for the conquest of Baltistan. This was a wise step, it would suppress the insurrectionary spirit of the Ladakhis, at the same time making them useful for the invaders. Zorawar divided his army into two columns. The first, mainly consisting of the Ladakhis and led by Mohi-ud-Din Shah, a Dogra officer was to enter Baltistan over the Chorbat La. Later, marching along the right and then on the left side of the river Shyok and passing through Khapalu, it was to descend into the Skardu district. With the second, the Wazir himself marched from Kargil towards Garkon, whence via Marol and Kharmang they proposed to reach Skardu. The Dogras crossed the Indus near Garkon to its right side, but in order to follow the then usual road to Skardu, they were again to cross the Indus to its left bank. From Garkon the invaders descended into Chathathang and marched towards Marol, but the Balti and Ladakhi rebels after crossing the river had destroyed the bridge near Marol. Moreover a strong Balti army under the command of Gulam Hussain, the Minister of Ahmad Shah had gathered on the left side of the Indus near Marol. Under these conditions the invaders were obliged

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2 From available sources, it is not known as to what was the designation of this officer.
4 It is an important station on the Srinagar-Leh road; here the road which comes over the Zoji La divides into two, one going to Skardo and the other to Leh.
6 Ibid.
7 Cunningham, Ladak, p. 347.
to march along the right side of the river, but there was no way out and they had to cross stupendous cliffs and deep ravines quite often and at many places the valley was nearly impassable.

After marching for a few days, although the Dogras received the submission of the chief of Khartaksho, their condition was becoming critical. To cross the river no way was in sight while provisions were running short in the Dogra camp. The Wazir appointed Mian Nidhan Singh with 5,000 soldiers to collect supplies. But the Baltis lured this column into an ambush about fifteen miles away from the main Dogra Army and fell upon it in large numbers. Nidhan Singh with his whole column except four hundred men was put to the sword. The remainder returned with great difficulty to the main column and told their woeful tale to the Wazir.

The Dogras were now in a very precarious situation. The winter was in full swing and their provisions had exhausted. Their difficulties were further accentuated by the heavy fall of snow which had closed all the passes from behind. It was not easy to construct a bridge over the Indus because the Baltis in their thousands were keeping a round-the-clock vigil on the opposite bank. The pitiable condition of the Dogras has been aptly described by Alexander Cunningham in

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1It is said that Raja Ali Sher Khan of Kharmang or Khartaksho, was having political differences with Ahmad Shah. In 1834, when Zorawar had invaded Ladakh for the first time, Ali Sher Khan had entered into a secret alliance with the Wazir and had requested him to invade Baltistan. (Hashmat Ali, Tarikh-i-Jammu, pp. 352-53, 591-92 ff; A. Neve, Thirty years in Kashmir, p. 275).

2Cunningham, Ladak, p. 347; Francke, Western Tibet, p. 156.
the following words:

With an impassable river in their front, and certain starvation both from cold and hunger, whether they retreated or remained in their present position, the majority of the troops paid no attention to orders, and of the few who still obeyed, none did so with alacrity. The Dogra army had halted in this position for fifteen days, exposed to frost by night and to hunger by day. Many had sought shelter from the snow amongst the overhanging rocks and there they sat listless and vacant, and utterly indifferent whether they should be cut off by the sword of the enemy or be frozen to death by the cold.

But the ingenuity, courage and skill of Colonel Basti Ram, the hero of Sod, saved the Dogras. His was a last bid to extricate his companions from this difficult situation. Accompanied by about forty daring soldiers, at the dead of night, Basti Ram moved along the river to reconnoitre if it could be easily bridged at some place, while another party kept up a small fire upon the Baltis on the opposite side to distract their attention. At last, at one place near the Wanko pass they discovered that except about thirty feet in the middle, the river was so thickly frozen that a man could easily pass over it. Soon with the help of Ali Sher Khan, the chieftain of Kharmang and some local tribesmen, who probably acted as their guides, the Dogras, before the day-break made an ice-bridge over the river. The main Dogra army thereupon marched to the place after receiving Basti Ram's message. At first a small party led by Basti Ram crossed the river and fell upon the Baltis.

2 Francke (Western Tibet, p. 157), tells us that the Dards of Deh, a local tribe often made bridges across the river in winter. Their method is that they fasten several beams to the banks in such a way that these project into the river. After sometime, flocks accumulate and beams are frozen in the encrustation of ice, over which it is possible to walk. Then more beams are fastened to the first and process repeated until the other bank is reached.
A bloody battle started, but in a hand to hand combat, the Baltis were no match for the energetic Dogras. The former were defeated and ran towards Skardu. The invaders pursued their fleeing adversaries for nine miles as far as Marwan and slaughtered them mercilessly. In this battle about three hundred Baltis were killed; losses on the Dogra side were comparatively few, although about five hundred of them had been rendered unfit to fight by the intense cold and frost-bite during the last few days. \(^1\) To replenish his resources the Wazir halted for a few days at Marwan. Here, he handsomely rewarded Colonel Basti Ram and about thirty soldiers for making the ice-bridge and for their outstanding services during the last action. \(^2\) Then, via Hamzigund and Kharmang the invaders moved down the Indus; near Gol, the other column which had been sent over the Chorbat pass, without doing much fighting joined the main army, which then moved towards Skardu. \(^3\)

Ahmad Shah had prepared for such an eventuality. The fort of Skardo was situated on the edge of a high plateau. From three sides it was surrounded by the deep waters of the Indus and on the fourth, the passage leading to the main citadel was steep and extremely difficult. The Balti Gyalpo had fortified this stronghold and was also stated to have laid in a stock of provisions which could last for three years. \(^4\) Thus because of difficulty of access and sufficient provisions, it was

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\(^1\) Cf. Cunningham, *Ladak*, p. 349.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Duncan, *Summer Ride through Western Tibet*, p. 286.
believed by the Baltis that the fort was impregnable. The invaders soon beleagured the fort and probably cut off its water supply. After a few days’ siege, the Dogras, hardy mountaineers as they were, one dark night stole round from their position in front of the chief fort, and taking the guards by surprise, climbed the hill. After a minor action they took possession of the small fort near the summit and in the morning started firing at the main citadel. After a time the garrison was forced to surrender, an action in which many Baltis were killed and others, including Ahmad Shah, made prisoners. The fort was razed to the ground and Ahmad Shah’s palace within it dismantled. From this fort, rich treasures, a large quantity of provisions, many matchlocks, swords and other implements of war fell into the hands of the invaders. With the fall of Skardu, other chieftains of Baltistan also soon submitted to the Dogras. Ahmad Shah was deposed and in his place, Zorawar Singh installed Mohammad Shah as the new King of Baltistan.

Mohammad Shah became a vassal of Raja Gulab Singh and was to pay him an annual tribute of Rs. 7,000. In order to overawe the Baltis, Zorawar Singh, on the pain of death asked Ahmad Shah to arrange for the arrest of Rahim Khan of Chigtan and Hussain of Pashkym.

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1 Cunningham, Ladak, p. 349; Gazetteer Kashmir and Ladakh, 1890, p. 196.
2 Drew, Northern Barrier, pp. 208-09.
3 Ibid., p. 207.
4 Akhbar-i-Ludhiana (Ludhiana), 2 May 1840; Delhi Urdu Akhbar (Delhi), 17 May 1840; Aina-i-Sikandar (Delhi), 25 May 1840 (N.A.I.)
prominent associates of Sukamir, who after fomenting rebellion in Ladakh had escaped into Baltistan. Soon the two rebels were produced. Their limbs were hacked in a lucerne field before a large crowd which had been assembled to witness the scene. Zorawar, as a further safeguard against any future rebellion, constructed a fort at Skardu and under Bhagwan Singh Kishtwaria garrisoned it with a strong Dogra contingent. After making these arrangements, the Dogra general ordered Ahmad Shah and his prominent chieftains to assemble their armies and march with the Dogras to Ladakh. The return journey to Ladakh via Khapalu and Chorbat La commenced in the middle of 1840. But near Khapalu, smallpox broke into the army camp and took a heavy toll. Tse-pal Nam-gyal, the aged Ladakhi King, who was worn-out with the exertions of the Balti campaign also fell a victim to the epidemic and died. Banka Kahlon, the leader of Ladakhi forces, also soon followed the King to his grave. Their bodies were brought to Ladakh and buried at Stog near Leh, with all customary rites. Wazir Zorawar Singh, on reaching Leh installed the grandson of Tse-pal Nam-gyal, then a boy of about eight years as the new nominal ruler of Ladakh.

The conquest of Baltistan further extended the dominion of Raja Gulab Singh to the north-west of Ladakh. Again, henceforth, Balti inroads on the Ladakhi territory

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4 Francke, Antiquities, pp. 131, 254; Cunningham, Ladak, p. 350.
which had so much worried the rulers of Ladakh during the past few centuries, stopped altogether. It also brought relief to the people of Baltistan who were unhappy on account of their chiefs having continual quarrels with each other or with the kings of Ladakh.

**INVASION OF WESTERN TIBET**

By 1840, the Dogras had firmly established their authority throughout Ladakh and Baltistan and were ready for fresh conquests. Wazir Zorawar Singh, now thought of establishing an empire in Central Asia, His only path for expansion in the circumstances lay north and northeast — towards Yarkand and Western Tibet. He asked the Chinese Governor of Yarkand to depute an agent to attend on the Lahore Durbar and acknowledge the suzerainty of the Sikh Government.¹ There was an ostensible reason behind this move: the British were fighting the Opium War (1839–1942); the Chinese Emperor, when apprised of the friendship subsisting between the English and the Sikhs, is said to have ordered his Governor in Yarkand to confiscate and destroy the entire stock of opium of the Punjab traders valued at about eight lakhs of rupees.² "Raja Gulab Singh is now" wrote George Russel Clerk,³ to the Supreme Government, "intent

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¹Zorawar Singh wrote: "remit an annual tribute according to an engagement, without giving rise to any disturbance and bloodshed in your country. The neglect of this advice will at last entail shame and ruin on your country, and your comforts, and you will then repent." (From Wazir Zorawar Singh to the Ruler of Yarkand, no date: F.D.S.C., 1 March 1841, No. 126).

²F.D. Sec. Progs., 25 January 1841, No. 91.

³The British Agent for the affairs of the Punjab and North-West Frontier.
on a new scheme of ambition... he now hoped to find in the seizure and destruction at Yarkand of opium belonging to traders and subjects of the Sikh Government, the means of inciting the Durbar to authorise his attempting the conquest of Yarkand, an enterprise, which his Vazeer there, Zorawar Singh has long considered to be easy of accomplishment." Clerk further believed that the Dogra troops in Ladakh were inured to mountain warfare and cold, and if not opposed by the independent Mohammedan chieftains to the north of the Tarim basin, were quite capable of wresting Yarkand or "any tributary in that position" from China.

The Anglo-Chinese negotiations were taking an amicable turn, so any Dogra invasion of Yarkand at that time was likely to be productive of embarrassment and inconvenience to the British Government. The British Agent at the Lahore Durbar recommended to the Sikh Maharaja "to require Raja Gulab Singh to desist from his designs on Yarkand." Did the Dogras abandon the invasion of Yarkand of their own accord, or were they dissuaded from so doing by the Lahore Durbar on a recommendation from Clerk? From the scanty sources

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2 Mackeson, the British Agent at Peshawar, however was of the opinion that the Dogra troops, though capable of conquering Gilgit and adjacent areas down the Indus, were incapable of conquering Yarkand. (Mackeson to Macnaghten (Envoy and Minister at the Court of Shah Shujah, Jallahbad), 14 January 1841: F.D.S.C., 22 February 1841, No. 56).
3 F.D.S.C., 25 January 1841, No. 90.
4 Ibid.
available, we do not get a clear answer to this query. But it appears, that Zorawar Singh, great military general that he was, realising the manifold difficulties involved in such a risky and somewhat useless adventures, abandoned it, and turned his attention towards Western Tibet, which was comparatively easy of access.

The scheme to conquer Tibet appears to have been in Zorawar's mind as far back as 1836. Thus the chronicler of Lahore Durbar tells us that after the conquest of Ladakh, while presenting his nazar to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Zorawar Singh had sought the Maharaja's blessings for the conquest of Tibet, a country, which "extended over a distance of five hundred Koss" and was conterminous with China. He further told the Maharaja that he was ready to kindle the fires of fighting and "by the grace of ever triumphant glory of the Maharaja, he would take possession of it." But the prudent Maharaja, foreseeing hostile reactions to such an adventure from bigger powers such as China and the British had counselled caution and forbidden the impatient Dogra general from going much beyond Ladakh.

By 1840, however, circumstances had changed. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had died in 1839 and after his death Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, de facto ruler of the Punjab with the help of the Dogra brothers had organised a strong party and was in foreign affairs, a protagonist of the 'forward' policy. He was anxious too to offset the British policy of encirclement by entering into an anti-British alliance with Nepal - the only independent

1Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Daftar III, p. 282.
2Ibid.
Hindu state on the Indian sub-continent. There had earlier been a brisk exchange of delegations between the Sikhs and the Gurkhas, but as British territory lay between the Punjab and Nepal, all attempts in this connection had been foiled by the ever-vigilant British Agents. When Gulab Singh had first annexed Ladakh, it had been rumoured that his one object was, to establish a direct territorial link between the Punjab and Nepal. Now it was believed that by annexing Western Tibet Zorawar Singh wanted to build a chain of forts from Ladakh to the borders of Nepal on the other side of the Himalayas, and thereby effect the much-desired alliance with Nepal. Again, Western Tibet was reputed to possess some gold-mines. It was also reported that various monasteries situated in this part of Tibet were quite rich. So Zorawar's other objective was to acquire the

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1 Claude Wade, the Governor-General's Agent at Ludhiana, had observed in 1837: "the information gained by me in my late visit to Lahore was that among other objects of ambition Raja Gulab Singh had in taking Ladakh, one was to extend the conquest down the course of the Spith (Sic) until they approached the north-eastern confines of the Nepalese possessions in order that he might connect himself with that Government ostensibly with a view to promote the trade between Lassa and Ladakh, which the commotions in Tibet have tended to interrupt, but in reality to establish a direct intercourse with a power which he thinks will not only tend greatly to augment his present influence but lead to an alliance which may at some future period be of reciprocal importance" (F.D. Pol. Progs., 12 June 1837, No. 41).

2 Lushington (Commissioner of Kumaon) to Thomason (Secretary, North-West Province), 25 August 1841: F.D.S.C., 13 September 1841, No. 20.

monastic riches and gold-producing lands. The third and the most important object of the Dogra invasion was to ensure the normal flow of shawl wool from Western Tibet to Kashmir via Ladakh. Mr. Thomason, then Secretary to the Government of North-West Province, wrote to the Supreme Government:

the more immediate object of this extension of Sikh operations to the eastward is to monopolise the Pus ham trade and by preventing a particle of the shawl wool entering Bashahar from Chinese Tartary to force the article to the Cashmere market alone.

Raja Gulab Singh's anxiety about the welfare of Kashmir was now due to his fond expectation of soon possessing it for himself. With that aim in view, by conquering Ladakh and Baltistan, he had already surrounded the valley from the north-eastern side and commanded all the roads leading from Kashmir either to Tibet or Ladakh, or towards the plains. After 1834, because of political unrest in Ladakh and Baltistan, shawl wool from West Tibet had started to flow into Bashahar and other territories under British protection. The Dogras, by conquering the West Tibet wool-producing areas wanted to monopolise the lucrative shawl wool trade. So, early in 1841 Zorawar revived old claims of Ladakh over Tibetan territory to the west of Mayum.

1 Cunningham, Ladak, p. 351.
2 Thomason to Maddock, 31 July 1841: F.D.S.C., 16 August 1841, No. 36.
4 Private and Confidential Letters From the Governor-General of India to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company. (Printed solely for the use of the cabinet, no date and place): G-G. to Secret Committee, 29 September 1839, pp. 10-11.
pass, which in the past had remained under the control of Ladakhi Kings. The Wazir wrote to the Garpon of Gartok not to supply 'Pashmeena' (Shawl wool) to any other area except Ladakh and also demanded a tribute from the latter. But the Garpon sent only five horses and five mules; the Wazir felt insulted at this and soon invaded Western Tibet.

The strength of Zorawar's army was about 6,000; out of this number nearly 3,000 were the Dogra soldiers of Kishhtwar and Jammu and the rest were the Ladakhis and the Baltis. The former, mostly armed with matchlocks formed the nucleus of the army and was the fighting force, whereas the Baltis and the Ladakhis constituted auxiliary troops or camp-followers of Zorawar's army. In addition, the local population was also conscripted for carrying provisions, tents and accoutrements. Each villager was made responsible for carrying about 150 pounds, which load he had to convey on horses, yaks, donkeys, or on his own back. Zorawar also had about six small guns, probably jingals, which could be carried by men or mules. The Wazir also took with him some

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1This territory known in Tibetan as Na-ris skor-gsum, with important districts of Rudok, Gartok, and Taklakot was ceded by Ladakh to Tibet during the reign of De-ge Nam-gyal (ca. 1675-1700 A.D.) For details, see supra p. 96.
2The Tibetan local Governor.
3F.D. Sec. Progs., 21 June 1841, No. 15.
4Ibid.
5The strength of this army i.e. 12,000, given by the chronicles of Ladakh (Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 254), appears to be incorrect.
6F.D.S.C., 1 November 1841, Nos. 36-38.
8Cunningham to Clerk, 21 October 1841: F.D.S.C., 22 November 1841, No. 23.
important dignitaries both from Baltistan and Ladakh; these were Ahmad Shah, the dispossessed ruler of Baltistan, Chang Nabdan, the Kahlon of Bazgo, Nono Sunnum, the brother of Chang Nabdan, Gulam Khan the son-in-law of Rahim Khan, the Kiladar in-charge of Spiti district and Gonpo (Mgon-po), steward of the powerful Hemis monastery. All this was in accord with Zorawar's scheme of employing the newly conquered against fresh adversaries. It was a most politic measure, otherwise these chieftains might have revolted during his absence.

Zorawar's attack on Western Tibet was three-pronged and well planned. Mobilising his army in the spring of 1841, he placed a first contingent of about 500 soldiers under the command of Gulam Khan. Early in April 1841, this column entered Bupshu; passing through Hanle, it over-ran the Tibetan posts of Churit, Chumurty, Tsaparang and Tholing. Gulam Khan met some resistance at Tsaparang and Tholing, but the Tibetans were easily defeated and their leaders slain. In the Tsaparang fort, he found a large quantity of grain, two jingals, some ammunition and other property. Gulam Khan plundered the Buddhist monasteries at all these places and is said to have broken all the idols with iconoclastic zeal.

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1 F.D.S.C., 22 November 1841, No. 23. See also, Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 133.
2 Francke (Western Tibet, pp. 161-62), wrongly says that Zorawar started this expedition at the approach of winter; see the writer's article "Zorawar Singh's invasion of Western Tibet," JIH., XLI, Pt. II (August 1866), p. 531.
3 Headquarters of Rupshu district in Ladakh.
4 Cunningham to Clerk, 8 November 1841: F.D.S.C., 20 December, 1841, No. 40; J.H. Batten (Senior Assistant Commissioner, Kumaon) to G.T. Lushington (Commissioner of Kumaon), 18 August 1841: F.D.S.C., 13 September 1841, No. 17.
5 Cunningham, Ladak, pp. 351-52; Francke, Western Tibet, pp. 162-63.
The second column was placed under the control of Nono Surmum. This contingent moved upstream along the Indus; taking the middle route, it conquered and plundered Tashigong and then proceeded in an easterly direction to join with the main army.

Zorawar himself led the third column. With nearly 3,000 soldiers, following the route to the south of the Pangong lake, he invaded Rudok and conquered it on June 5, 1841. There was little resistance, the fort was completely sacked and the governor of Rudok made a prisoner. Here some ammunition also fell into Zorawar's hand. From Rudok the Dogra army advanced by detachments towards Gartok, the district headquarters of West Tibet. Since the place had been evacuated by the Governors, it was conquered without much difficulty.

Now the first two columns also joined with the Wazir, and the entire army moved in a south-easterly direction along the old caravan route between Ladakh and central Tibet. At Dogpacha, a place near Missar, the governors of Gartok had collected about 1,200 men, mainly inhabitants of the country. They had also requisitioned

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1 Lushington to Thomason, 9 August 1841: F.D.S.C., 30 August 1841, No. 27; F.D.S.C., 20 December 1841, No. 40.


3 Missar at that time was a regular dak post on the Gartok-Lhasa route. It is about one day's march from the famous Lakes Manasarowar and Rakastal. (F.D.S.C., 13 September 1841, No. 18).

4 Batten to Lushington, 21 August 1841: F.D.S.C., 13 September 1841, No. 18.
the services of about 250 Jukpas tribesmen with a view, it appears either to attack the invaders or to receive their attack unitedly. On August 7, an action was fought, in which some persons belonging to both sides were killed. But the Tibetans could not bear the Dogra onslaught and fled towards Taklakot, a place about fifteen miles from the border of Nepal. The Wazir, in order to conquer the entire territory to the west of Mayum pass, then marched towards Taklakot.

The first alarm sent by the governor of Rudok had been heard in Lhasa and Tibetan authorities had hastily despatched general Pishi (Pi-hsi), with a small force to check the sudden and quick thrust of the invaders. Pishi had hurried to Taklakot, but when the Dogras reached that place, the former, seeing the hopeless task of facing a strong army pulled behind the Mayum pass and sent for immediate and heavy reinforcements from Lhasa. After some feeble resistance, on September 6, 1841, the Dogras took possession of Taklakot and soon constructed a fort there which was supplied with provisions. A garrison of nearly 300 soldiers was then stationed here and placed under the control of Colonel Basti Ram. Zorawar's conquest of Western Tibet was now complete.

1. Jukpas or Chukpas was a tribe of robbers, which infested Western Tibet at that time. Their mobile bands usually plundered the caravan traders and soon disappeared on horses which were kept ready for the purpose. As this tribe was partially organised and well-armed, it was taken into service by the local Tibetan authorities and pressed against the Dogras. P.D.S.C., 13 September 1841, No. 18; see also JASB, XIII, Pt. 1 (1844), pp. 182-83.

Before his invasion of Western Tibet, the Wazir was reported to have announced\(^1\) that he wanted to perform the customary offers and usual Pradaksina at the holy places of Manasarowar and Kailash Parbat.\(^2\) Now he proceeded to take a holy bath in the Lake Manasarowar and offer a golden idol at the Kailash temple.\(^3\) But the religious observances did not make him forget the political aspects of his task. Simultaneously with his movement into Western Tibet, he had taken steps to consolidate the newly acquired territories. He had stationed his own soldiers at every post and constructed fortresses at such strategic places as Rudok, Gartok, Churit, Chunumri, Kardam, Tirtha Puri and Taklakot. All these forts were also garrisoned with the Dogra soldiers. Roads were repaired,\(^4\) and arrangements made to collect revenue according to the old practices. Tibetan local authorities were taken into service and asked to contact and pacify the populace.\(^5\) The Wazir also adopted measures to ensure the supply of Shawl wool from Western Tibet to Ladakh. General orders were issued to sell shawl wool, as per old practice, to the Ladakhis only. Those who defied this order were hauled

\(^1\) Fisher et al, Himalayan Battleground, Appen, p.157.

\(^2\) Lake Manasarowar and Mount Kailash are considered most sacred places by Hindus and Muslims alike. For centuries pilgrims have thronged there from the plains to walk round the sacred mountain and bathe in the holy waters of the lake; a visit to these places ensures both sanctity and renown. C.G. Rawling, The Great Plateau (London, 1905), p. 263.

\(^3\) Batten to Lushington, 21 August 1841: F.D.S.C., 13 September 1841, No. 18.

\(^4\) Cunningham to Clerk, 8 November 1841: F.D.S.C., 20 December 1841, No. 40.

\(^5\) Lushington to Secretary (N.W. Province), 10 November 1841: F.D.S.C., 6 December 1841, No. 57.
up and the traders of Bashahr and other British-protected hill territories, who tried to smuggle this commodity were severely dealt with. As de facto ruler of West Tibet, he issued a general hukam namah, directing all the people to pay him taxes which heretofore they had been paying to Tibetan authorities. The Bhotias 1 who traded with West Tibet were also cessed, as in the past. Necessary facilities were provided to them for carrying commercial transactions with the Humias, their counterparts on the other side of the Himalayan crest. The Dogra conquest of Western Tibet had alarmed the Bhotias, but to allay such fears, the Wazir despatched Colonel Basti Ram to meet Mr. Lushington, then Commissioner of

1F.D.S. Progs., 11 October 1841, No. 50.

2 The Bhotias were the residents of Kumaon and Garhwal, who traded with West Tibet or 'Undes'. As their homes were situated in British territory, for all intents and purposes they were British subjects. Yet for carrying trade, which was "the life and soul of a Bhotia" and without which "he would soon become an half-starved savage", they annually passed into West Tibet and resided there for some months. During that period they paid taxes to the ruling authorities there and in return got its protection and support. For the term of their residence in Tibet they were treated by the Tibetan authorities as their own subjects. F.D.S.C., 30 August 1841, No. 29; F.D.S.C., 13 September 1841, No. 20; J.H. Batten, Official Reports on the Province of Kumaon (Agra, 1851), p. 219; C.A. Sherring, "Notes on the Bhotias of Almora and British Garhwal" Memoir of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. I, No. 8 (Calcutta, 1906), p. 118.

3Lushington to Thomason, 20 September 1841: F.D.S.C., 11 October 1841, No. 46.

4 The 'Humias' or 'Hoonias' were the residents of 'Hundes', the portion of Tibet opposite the Almora and Garhwal districts of the then North-West Province. Cf. Sherring, loc. cit., p. 118.

5Lushington to Thomason, 11 November 1841, enclosing the translation of a report received from Chinta Muni Joshi, Patwari of Byans Bhot: F.D.S.C., 29 November 1841, No. 28.
Kumaon. Basti Ram and Lushington met at Kala Pani on October 8, 1841; the former told the latter that Zorawar Singh was anxious to do everything to secure and place the commercial traffic of the Bhotias on its former footing. From all this it would seem that Zorawar had no idea of vacating his new conquests, and like Ladakh and Baltistan, he wanted to make West Tibet a part of the Dogra dominions.

The Dogra conquest of Western Tibet caused a stir in the Gurkha and British circles. Their proximity to the western fringe of Nepal, enthused the Nepalese King. The latter now thought that the time had come to get back Kumaon from the British, which they had seized after the Anglo-Nepalese War 1814-16. Various Dogra-Nepalese attempts to form an anti-British alliance and the attitude of the Kathmandu Durbar towards the Dogra incursions into Tibet will be discussed in the next chapter.

The British Government was also greatly perturbed. The fear of a Dogra-Sikh Nepalese rapprochement, stoppage in the import of the lucrative shawl wool into territories under their protection, maltreatment of their subjects by the Dogra soldiery, and the fear that Dogra incursions in West Tibet may not jeopardise the peace parleys then going on with China, were reasons

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1 A small village in the Byans district of Kumaon; it is situated about ten miles from the Tibetan frontier.

2 Lushington to Edwards (Offg. Secretary, N.W. Province), 9 October 1841: F.D.S.C., 1 November 1841, No. 36.
enough for the British to be spurred into action. Their deputing a special Commissioner to West Tibet to see the evacuation of that territory by the Dogras, their pressurising the Lahore Durbar to recall Zorawar Singh back to Ladakh within a specified date, and their lurking fear that any such pressure may not antagonise the Dogras and the Sikhs, whose help they badly needed at that moment in their war with the Afghans, are interesting, albeit intricate threads of Western Himalayan politics, which belong to the next chapter.

However, the Dogras were not allowed to digest their new conquests. General Pishi's requests for reinforcements were promptly attended by the authorities at Lhasa. The latter collected a Tibetan Army\(^1\) of about 10,000 and immediately despatched it to expel the 'Shen-pas'.\(^2\) The leader of this army was Kalon Surkhang and it had a strong park of artillery. With the help of merchants and the Tashilhunpo monastery, \(^3\) provisions which

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\(^1\) It may be noticed that this was not a Chinese army as Alexander Cunningham (Ladak, pp. 352 et passim), and some other writers have said. It was rather purely a Tibetan army. Cf. Hsuan-tsung shih-lu (Imperial Records of the Ch’ing Dynasty), chap. 361, pp. 16-29; Chap. 366, pp. 106-116 etc. quoted in Tieh-Tseng Li, Tibet Today and Yesterday (New York, 1960), p. 60. See also, Richardson, Tibet and its History, p. 72; J.D. Cunningham, the British Commissioner, who was despatched to West Tibet to report the details of this war to the British Indian Government also observed: "from what I hear, I infer, that all the troops are provincial and that Vizeer Zoorkung [Surkhang] is himself a native of Lhasa". Cunningham to Clerk, 2 February 1842: F.D.S.C., 30 March 1842, No. 101.

\(^2\) 'Shen-pa' or 'sen-pa' literally meaning 'the Singh people' was a term used by the Ladakhis, Tibetans and Chinese to refer to both Sikhs and Dogras (Fisher et al., Himalayan Battleground, Appen. p. 155).

\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 158-60.
could last for about nine months were also transported to the front. When Zorawar heard about the arrival of this Tibetan force, he opened negotiations for the cessation of hostilities of course, but not without demanding his price. He desired the Tibetans to recognise him as the ruler of Western Tibet\(^1\) and to indemnify the cost of various actions fought by him.\(^2\) His other condition was that the Tibetans, as heretofore had been the practice, must send all the shawl wool to Ladakh otherwise he would invade Lhasa.\(^3\) These terms, however, were not acceptable to the Tibetans and they saw in it a hidden threat.

Meanwhile winter had set in and the heavy fall of snow had closed the Mayum pass. It was now hoped that the negotiations would linger on till next spring. But the Tibetans discovered a bypass, which enabled them to go on the other side of the Mayum La. They invested Taklakot early in November and sent detachments to surround the other Dogra military posts also. The small Dogra garrison of about 100 soldiers at Kardam under the command of Awtara Kishtwaria was put to the sword,\(^4\) and Basti Ram who was beleaguered in Taklakot was cut off from the main Dogra army. When this disaster took place, Zorawar was wintering at Tirtha Puri near Lake Manasarowar.

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1Lushington to Edwards, 9 October 1841: F.D.S.C., 1 November 1841, No. 36.

2Cunningham to Clerk, 3 May 1841: F.D.S.C., 6 July 1842, No. 42.

3F.D.S.C., 1 November 1841, No. 36.

4Lushington to Hamilton, 13 January 1842: F.D.S.C., 7 February 1842, No. 106; F.D.S.C., 27 December 1841, Nos. 16-17.
About November 7, he despatched 300 soldiers under Nono Sunnum to check the advance of the enemy, but this detachment was surrounded at Kardam, to the south of Lake Manasarowar and annihilated. Nono Sunnum escaped and returned to the main Dogra camp. On November 19, Zorawar despatched another column of 600 soldiers under the joint command of Gulam Khan and Nono Sunnum. But like the first advance-column, it was also cut to pieces and the two leaders were made prisoners.

The Dogra army was now in a critical position. Zorawar’s success had reached its high water-mark and the capture of Western Tibet was the pinnacle of his glory. What followed was somewhat in the nature of an anti-climax. There was no hope of his receiving any help either from Jammu or from Lahore. Nau Nihal Singh, a protagonist of the 'forward' policy had died on November 5, 1840. After his death the Lahore Durbar became a cockpit of conflicting ambitions and discordant interests. Sher Singh, the new Maharaja, unlike Nau Nihal Singh was weak and experiencing great difficulty in keeping his throne safe from the Sindhanwalias. Raja Dhian Singh being anxious to retain his position as Prime Minister was keeping all his hill-troops in readiness for any eventuality; Raja Gulab Singh was busily engaged at Hazara and Peshawar, quelling rebellion and

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1 Cunningham to Clerk, 12 February 1842; F.D.S.Ç., 30 March 1842, No. 102.

2 Same to same, 27 December 1841; F.D.S.C., 7 February 1842, No. 75.

3 Clerk to Maddock, 11 January 1842; F.D.S.C., 24 January 1842, No. 61.
helping the British in their war with the Afghans. The Wazir had sent for reinforcements from Leh and other Dogra military posts. Though Mian Magna, Commandant of the Dogra garrison at Leh, and other Dogra functionaries in charge of fortified posts moved towards Lake Manasarowar, where the fighting was going on, yet due to the closure of all the passes by snow, they were unable to reach the battlefield and returned to Leh.

Zorawar now realised the gravity of the situation: he was surrounded in the depth of winter, retreat was impossible and he was facing the enemy, nearly three times the strength of his own troops. The Tibetans, who were inured to the cold climate had closely beset the 'black devils'. Zorawar broke up his camp at Tirthapuri and advanced towards Taklakot with the intention of effecting a junction with Basti Ram, but all the by-paths had also been blocked by the Tibetans. The Wazir, a man of indomitable courage as he was, endeavoured by reckless bravery to instil some ardour in his men; acting on the Napoleonic maxim that attack was the best.

1 It was the first Anglo-Afghan War; Raja Gulab Singh was commanding the Sikh contingent which had been sent there to keep the Khaibar pass open for the English army.
3 Cunningham to Clerk, 6 January 1842: F.D.S.C., 21 March 1842, No. 84.
4 The Tibetans called the Dogras with the sobriquet of 'black devils'. *The Bengal Herald* (Calcutta), 8 January 1842.
5 Lushington to Hamilton, 13 December 1841: F.D.S.C., 10 January 1842, No. 96; Cunningham to Clerk, 20 December 1841: F.D.S.C., 7 February 1842, No. 75; F.D.S.C., 27 December 1841, No. 17.
form of defence, he fell upon the enemy. The first action was fought on December 10, 1841, and fighting continued for three days. On December 12, near Do-Yo, Zorawar was struck by a ball in the right shoulder and fell from his horse. But he was not a man who would give in easily; seizing the sword in his left hand, he put to death many Tibetans before he was speared to death by a Tibetan warrior.  

After Zorawar Singh's death, the Dogra army having fought one of the most gruesome battles in the history of warfare, lost heart and gave way. Many of the Ladakhis, Baltis and Hunias deserted the invaders and joined with the Tibetans. Bai Singh, Zorawar's second-in-command, with some other important dignitaries such as Ahmad Shah, Nono Sunnum, Bazgo Kahlon, Gulam Khan and about 800 Dogra soldiers were made prisoners. Ahmad Shah was treated honourably and later on used by the Tibetans for the furtherance of their own ends.  

1 Lushington to Hamilton, 13 January 1842: F.D.S.C., 7 February 1842, No. 106; Cunningham to Clerk, 12 February 1842: F.D.S.C., 30 March 1842, No. 102; Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 134; The Friend of India (Calcutta), 16 December 1841.  

2 H.H. Dodwell (Ed.), The Cambridge History of India (Delhi, 1955), V, p. 546.  

3 It may be noticed that at about this very time and under similar conditions the British force at Kabul was overpowered by the Afghans, and almost whole of it annihilated.  

4 J.O. Cunningham to Clerk, 1 May 1842: F.D.S.C., 22 June 1842, No. 34; A. Cunningham, Ladak, p. 354.  

5 It is wrong as Cunningham (Ladak, p. 354) and some other writers have written that Ahmad Shah died within a few months after Zorawar's defeat. In fact he was again seized by the Dogras and brought to Kishtwar gaol where he died about 1845. See Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 138; Punjab Government Records, Vol. VI: Lahore Political Diaries, 1847-49 (Lahore, 1915), p. 38; E.V. Schonberg, Travels in India and Kashmir (London, 1853), II, pp. 123-23.
Gulam Khan, the desecrator of the monasteries was hacked to death. This was unlike other prisoners of war who were treated kindly and sent to Lhasa, where, after a few years, some of them joined Tibetan service and were provided with Tibetan wives. After 1846, when Gulab Singh became the Maharaja of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, he hoped to get these prisoners liberated through the instrumentality of the British Government. Ultimately, at the intercession of the latter and with the help of Jodh Bikram Singh Thapa, the Nepalese representative at Lhasa, in 1856, fifty-six of these prisoners returned to Jammu via Nepal, but most of them settled down permanently in Tibet and refused to leave that place. The descendants of the latter met Sir Charles Bell, when he visited Lhasa in the nineteen-twenties.

A word about the fate of the Dogra garrison at Taklakot. Colonel Basti Ram had also tried to join Zorawar Singh, but finding the way blocked by the enemy, had to return to the Taklakot fort. From there, he made a couple of sorties which enabled him to set things right.

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1 One of the Dogra officer, who was taken in the Tibetan army is said to have fought against the Nepalese in the eighteen-fifties. Major Ramsay (Resident in Nepal) to G.E. Simonton (Secretary, Foreign Deptt.) 8 December 1856: F.D.S.C., 30 January 1857, No. 16.

2 Ibid., Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 255.


4 Governor-General to Secret Committee, 22 January 1857, No. 6.

5 F.D.S.C., 30 January 1857, No. 16.

6 Cf. Bell, Tibet, Past And Present, p. 243.
right in the fort. The latter was well supplied with water, provisions and ammunition, which combined with the natural strength of the fort, enabled Basti Ram to hold out for about a month. But when he heard about the disaster which befell Zorawar Singh, Basti Ram thought that discretion was the better part of valour. Leaving the camp fires burning and horses tied, he along with nearly 250 soldiers escaped over the Lepu Lekh pass into British territory and reached Almorah, where they were treated kindly by Lushington, the Commissioner of Kumaon. Yet while crossing the snow-capped mountains they suffered much and for a handful of grain many of them sold their swords, helmets and armour. The deadly cold reduced them to half their numbers and the survivors were much worn out and emaciated. Some of them suffered from grievous wounds, and were maimed for life. The story of Napoleon's retreat and the sufferings of his army during the Moscow campaign was repeated.

1 Batten to Hamilton, 9 December 1841: F.D.S.C., 20 December 1841, No. 35; F.D.S.C., 27 December 1841, No. 17; F.D.S.C., 3 January 1842, No. 130.

2 It was situated at an elevated place and was like a huge mound; the dwellings were excavated in the centre and the sides were loopholed for defensive purposes. C.E.D. Black, A Memoir on the Indian Surveys 1875-1890, (London, 1891) p. 50.


4 Some of these implements of war, which had been collected by the Rajbar of Askot, were seen by Charles A. Sherring, when he visited this part of Western Tibet in the summer of 1905. The Rajbar of Askot, who is said to have given generous assistance to the fugitives, was given a commendatory certificate by the British Commissioner of Kumaon. (Idem.)

5 Lushington to Hamilton, 13 January 1842: F.D.S.C., 7 February 1842, No. 106.
Meanwhile, the victorious Tibetan army moved ahead and sent strong detachments to capture Gartok, Rudok, Tholing, Dapa, Tsaparang and other Dogra strongholds. By the end of March 1842, it had expelled the Dogras and reconquered all their posts. Zorawar's invasion of Western Tibet, for all practical purposes came to nought and the high hopes of the Dogras to annex Western Tibet with their dominions were shattered to smithereens.

Zorawar's was a bold bid to cross the traditional geographical frontiers of India, but due to a variety of reasons, he failed to annex Western Tibet. Firstly, he had advanced far too far in an inhospitable country which was least favourable to military movements. He could not get any succour from his base of operations, which was situated about a thousand miles behind the highest mountains of the world. Again, Zorawar's army was a motley assemblage of the Baltis, Ladakhis and others and had no common force either of interest or of discipline. With the exception of a small number of Dogras, the rest were not soldiers in the real sense of the term and had been forced to accompany the invaders. The Baltis and the Ladakhis, inherently sympathised with the Tibetans and at the first appearance of the latter, deserted the Dogras. Further, as Czar Alexander once remarked in another context, General Winter proved the greatest enemy of the Dogras. Unlike

1 F.D. Sec. Progs., 30 March 1842, No. 89.

2 It may be recalled that in this region and under similar circumstances, Tibetan expedition of Mirza Haider Dughlat, the great warrior and minister of the Khan of Kashgar had also failed in 1533. See supra pp. 79-80.
the Tibetans, they were not inured to frost and snow and were altogether ill-fitted to bear the fatigues of snowy and rugged trans-Himalayan regions. In this context Alexander Cunningham observed:

The Indian soldiers of Zorawar Singh fought under very great disadvantages. The battle field was upwards of 15,000 feet above the sea and the time mid-winter, when even the day temperature never rises above the freezing point, and the intense cold of night can only be borne by people well covered with sheep skins and surrounded by fires. For several nights the Indian troops had been exposed to all the bitterness of the climate. Many had lost the use of their fingers and toes, and all were more or less frost-bitten ... the more reckless soldiers had actually burned the stocks of their muskets to obtain a little temporary warmth. On the last fatal day not one-half of the men could handle arms.

Finally, Zorawar's commissariat arrangements failed in Western Tibet. The country was barren and could not afford to support even a small army such as that of the Dogras. When all the passes closed, the invaders could not get provisions either from Ladakh or from any other side. While facing starvation in the chilly climate of the Land of Snows, it was hardly possible to fight with a large army which was well-supplied with provisions and was better-equipped.

Zorawar was a great military strategist and a skilled and brave general. His greatest contribution

1 Cunningham, Ladak, p. 353.
2 Even the Tibetans recognised his valour. According to one tradition, when he was killed, his flesh was cut into small portions and every family in the neighbouring area took a piece and suspended it from the roof in the house, the idea being that the mere presence of the flesh of so great a man must of necessity confer a brave heart on the possessor. There is a very big chorten erected at Do-yo over his bones and the place is regarded with veneration. Cf. Sherring, op. cit., pp. 197-98.
was the conquest and consolidation of Ladakh and the surrounding area which now constitute the northern frontier of India. About him, K.M. Panikkar has aptly remarked:

Besides being an intrepid commander, as the Ladak and Baltistan campaigns had shown him to be, he was also gifted with considerable political ability. His settlement of the newly conquered provinces bears witness to this. To have marched an army not once or twice, but six times over the snow-clad ranges of Ladak and Baltistan, 15,000 feet above sea-level, where the air is so rarefied that people from the plains can hardly live with comfort, is a wonderful achievement. To have conquered that country after successive campaigns and reduced it to a peaceful province is an exploit for which there is no parallel in Indian history. His greatness will shine through the pages of Indian history as that of a great and noble warrior.

FINAL DOGRA EXPEDITION: SIGNING OF THE PEACE TREATY, 1842.

The disastrous end of the Dogras produced political reactions throughout Ladakh and Baltistan. The hope of the Ladakhis and the Baltis to throw away the Dogra yoke was revived. The Tartars of Tibet even talked of invading Kashmir, and chuckled with glee on the prospects of revenge and plunder. Gonpo, the steward of the powerful Hemis monastery in Ladakh and a great favourite of the old King (Tse-pal), who fell into the hands of the Tibetans about the time of Zorawar's death was sent to Leh in the hope that he would raise the country against the Dogras. Gonpo issued a secret letter to the Ladakhis that Zorawar was dead, that the remnants of the Dogra force were being pursued by the Tibetan

1 Panikkar, Founding of Kashmir State, p. 82.
2 F.D. Sec. Prog., 6 July 1842, Nos. 41-42.
army and the time had come for Ladakh to prepare for war. As a consequence, people revolted everywhere and all the Dogra garrisons in Ladakh, except the one at Leh were put to the sword. Thanadar Magna Ram and Commandant Pehlwan Singh, leaders of the Dogra garrison in Leh, on hearing about the death of Zorawar Singh had taken steps to fortify their strongholds. Pehlwan Singh strengthened a stable of the Ladakhi Kings as a defensive post and established a link with Magna Ram, who was occupying the fort which some years back had been constructed by Zorawar Singh. They also collected large quantities of provisions and ammunition. Some of the Dogra soldiers who fled from Hanle, Tholing and Churit also joined their comrades in Leh, and the strength of the garrison was about 1,000.

Gonpo after reaching Leh, with the help of Ladakhi and Balti soldiers invested the Dogra strongholds, and declared Jegs-med Nam-gyal as a sovereign ruler. He himself became his Minister and after gathering such descendants of the old functionaries of the Ladakhi court, who had survived, held a regular Durbar. The Ladakhis were keen to obliterate all

2. Pehlwan Singh's designation was 'Kumedan' which appears to be an equivalent of Commandant. Gulab Nam, pp. 261 ff.
4. The nominal ruler of Ladakh, whom Zorawar Singh had made king in 1840.
5. Cunningham to Clerk, 2 May 1842: F.D.S.C., 6 July 1842, No. 41.
6. F.D. Sec. Progs., 6 July 1842, No. 42.
traces of Dogra rule before any succour could reach Leh from Kashmir or Jammu and posted strong picquets at all strategic points on different roads leading to Leh.

Ahmad Shah, the dispossessed Balti King, who was held in a kind of honourable durance by the Tibetans, was also asked to foment trouble in Baltistan. He sent one of his confidants to Skardu with a message to the chieftains of Baltistan that the man whom they so much dreaded had since been killed and the time had come to avenge the wrongs perpetrated by the Dogras. The chiefs of Rondu, Khapalu and Shigar gathered a large army and imprisoned the Dogra garrison in Skardu. Mohammad Shah, the then Balti King and a vassal of the Dogras, who refused to align himself with the insurgents was also imprisoned. Gulam Hussain, the ex-minister of Ahmad Shah, with a Balti force marched towards Leh to help the Ladakhis in capturing the Dogra garrison there.¹

Attempts were made to capture the Dogras, but Magna Ram and Pehlwan Singh made a sally from the fort and put to death many of their adversaries.² This greatly demoralised the besiegers and helped the Dogras to set things in order in the fort. In April 1842, a strong Tibetan detachment under the command of General Pishi also arrived at Leh, and a concerted assault was made; though this battered an outer tower of the fort, but the garrison bravely held out.³

²Cunningham to Clerk, 19 May 1842: F.D.S.C., 14 September 1842, No. 50; F.D.Sec. Progs., 22 June 1842, No. 40.
³F.D. Sec. Progs., 6 July 1842, No. 42; Cunningham, to Clerk, 1 April 1842: F.D.S.C., 29 June 1842, No. 146; Hashmat Ali, Tarikh-i-Jammu, p. 396.
When Raja Gulab Singh heard about the death and defeat of his illustrious Wazir, as noted earlier, he was directing the Sikh force at Peshawar which had been sent there to help the British who were fighting with the Afghans. Raja Dhian Singh who had made common cause with his brother, raised a relief army of about 5,000 hill soldiers. It was well equipped to endure the cold and also armed with some pieces of artillery. Under the command of Dewan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratanu, in February 1842, this army marched to Ladakh via Kashmir. Mian Jawahar Singh, the son of Raja Dhian Singh was asked to advance from Jammu with a reserve force of 2,000 soldiers. Sheikh Gulam Mohi-ud-Din, the new Sikh Governor of Kashmir also detached a strong force of about 1,000 men to Ladakh. Dewan Arjan Mal Gondlia, an important dignitary of Raja Gulab Singh, who was actively associated with the relief expedition tells us that the Sheikh also arranged for many thousands of labourers to carry the Dogra equipment and provisions, and helped in clearing and repairing the road leading to Leh.

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1 Clerk to Maddock, 20 January 1842: F.D.S.C., 31 January 1842, No. 91; F.D.S.C., 21 March 1842, No.89.
2 It may be noticed that hitherto all the Dogra armies which invaded Ladakh moved from Kishtwar either via the Suru valley or Zanskar. This was due to the inimical attitude of Mihan Singh, the Sikh Governor of Kashmir, who would not let the Dogra army pass through Kashmir, though this route was comparatively easy. Mihan Singh was killed in 1841. Sheikh Gulam Mohi-ud-Din, his successor was a puppet of the Dogra brothers.
3 F.D.S.C., 31 January 1842, No. 91.
4 F.D. Sec. Prog., 30 March 1842, No. 98.
5 Autobiography of Dewan Arjan Mal Gondlia (Urdu MSS.), pp. 10-12. I am indebted to Dewan Narsingh Dass Nargis of Jammu, for enabling me to have a look over this MSS, which is now in his possession.
Fighting some actions with the Ladakhis who had blocked the road, and after a fatiguing march which had been rendered tedious and difficult first by the heavy snow fall and then by the breaking of bridges over the torrents, the Dogra army reached the environs of Leh in May, 1842. On hearing its approach, most of the Ladakhis and the Baltis dispersed to their homes, and the Tibetan army raising the siege pulled back along the Indus river and halted near Chimri, about forty miles from Leh. Jeks-med Nam-gyal, the young Ladakhi Gyalpo accompanied by Gonpo also fled away with the Tibetans. The latter started strengthening their new positions, with more troops arriving from Gartok and provisions floating down the Indus to sustain them. After resting for sometime at Leh and refurbishing their resources, Dewan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratanu started in the pursuit of the enemy and set up camp, a few miles away from the Tibetans. A pitched battle was fought in which both the contestants suffered, though losses on the Tibetan side were comparatively heavier. They also lost one of their leaders namely Pun Aghim. The Lhasa force was defeated and retreated towards the Pangong lake where it encamped near Chushul, presumably in the same area.

1 Clerk to Government, 6 May 1842: F.D.S.C., 22 June 1842, No. 20.

2 Governor-General to Secret Committee, 17 August 1842, No. 32.

3 Lahore Durbar to Rai Kishan Chand (The Sikh Vakil with Governor-General's Political Agent at Ludhiana), 15 August 1842: F.D.S.C., 25 October 1842, No. 95; Raja of Bashahr to Political Agent Subathu, 16 July 1842; F.D.S.C., 14 September 1842, No. 40; Clerk to Cunningham, 20 August 1842: F.D.S.C., 26 October 1842, No. 91.
which was the scene of heavy fighting between India and China in October, 1962.

Simultaneously with the sending of Dewan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratanu to Ladakh, measures were taken to suppress insurrections in Zanskar, Nubra, Spiti and Baltistan. A detachment of 300 soldiers moved from Kishtwar into Zanskar; a strong contingent was despatched towards Nubra; Baba Lachman Singh at the head of 2,000 soldiers marched from Kangra via Kulu to Spiti. Presently order was restored in all these far-flung districts of Ladakh. The task of pacifying Baltistan was entrusted to Wazir Lakhpat, another high ranking officer of Raja Gulab Singh. With a strong force of 3,000 soldiers, Lakhpat marched from Kishtwar to Baltistan via the Suru valley and Kargil. Like the relief force under Dewan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratanu, he also fought many an action on the way. Ali Sher Khan, chief of Khartaksho, the erstwhile ally of the Dogras, who had not joined hands with the rebels greatly helped Wazir Lakhpat. With forced marches, the latter reached Skardu, punished the rebels and got Mohammad Shah and the Dogra garrison relieved. Lakhpat Rai despatched strong columns to other parts of Baltistan also where peace was restored.

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1 Cunningham to Clerk, 28 August 1842: F.D.S.C., 12 October 1842, No. 84; F.D. Sec. Progs., 19 October 1842, No. 46.
2 Same to Same, 5 August, 1842: F.D.S.C., 7 September 1842, No. 29.
3 Ibid., Clerk to Maddock, 2 May 1842: F.D.S.C., 8 June 1842, No. 56; F.D.S.C., 26 October 1842, No. 90.
4 Cunningham to Clerk, 31 August 1842: F.D.S.C., 12 October 1842, No. 86.
5 F.D. Sec. Progs., 3 August 1842, No. 29; Hashmat Ali, Tarikh-i-Jammu, p. 410.
Many of the rebels were hanged and not a few made prisoners. Mohammad Shah was restored to his previous position on the old terms and for his help now a strong garrison of 300 Dogra soldiers was stationed in the Skardu fort. After making these arrangements and taking with him many arch-rebels of Baltistan and Purig, Lakhpat returned to Jammu.

Both the antagonists remained encamped in the Pangong lake area for sometime. The Dogras realised that in order to carry their point with the Lhasa troops, they must force the latter to fight a decisive action before the commencement of the cold season. But the Tibetan camp was situated in the lower part of a narrow valley, and the storming of it would have meant considerable loss of life on the side of the Dogras, so they were hesitant to take the offensive for some time. Soon however, fighting started and raged indecisively for about two weeks. The Dogras ultimately dammed up a channel and flooded the Tibetan camp. Seeing his position to be critical, Kalon Surkhang, the Tibetan Commander, sent a message from the camp that he was willing to come to terms. The Dogras now demanded the surrender of the Ladakhi Gyalpo, Gonpo, and Ahmad Shah. This having been done, the Tibetans came out; a pitched battle was fought in which most of them were killed while others fled. A large quantity of provisions, ammunition and military equipment which the Tibetans had seized from Wazir Zorawar Singh also fell into their hands.

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Surkhang, Pishi, two kasons and many other Tibetan officers and soldiers were made prisoners and brought to Leh.

After suffering this reverse, the Tibetans appear to have abandoned the cause of the Raja of Ladakh. They had already expelled the Dogras from Western Tibet, so they realised the uselessness of carrying on an unprofitable warfare. On the other hand, the Dogras also seem to have realised that for the sake of a barren country they were materially injuring Kashmir. If Ladakh could continue to enjoy the old reciprocal commercial concessions with Tibet, then they were willing to patch up the quarrel. Moreover, winter was approaching with all its rigours and the Dogras were having a lurking fear that the tragedy of the previous year may not be repeated. Thus both the parties were willing to come to terms. The peace treaty which took the form of an exchange of documents embodying the undertakings given by each side to the other was concluded at Leh on September 17, 1842.

1 It appears that some of these prisoners were later on taken to Jammu. Charles Hardinge and Captain Hardinge, who visited Jammu on April 14, 1846, tell us that Raja Gulab Singh showed them Tibetan furniture, dresses and many other such curiosities which were brought as booty from West Tibet and also told them that there were still some Tibetan Wazirs and soldiers as prisoners at Jammu. Charles Hardinge and Captain Hardinge, 'A Journey to Kashmir', English MSS, pp. 19-20. (No. M/480, Pb. S.A.)

2 Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 136; Choga Garpon (one of the Governors of Gartok) to Wazir of Bashahr, 17 September 1842; F.D.S.C., 11 January 1842, No. 42 (enclosure 1).

3 It may be noticed that terms of the peace treaty were negotiated by the ranking officers of both the sides i.e. Dewan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratanu from Dogra side and Kalon Surkhang and Bakshi Shajput from the side of the Tibetans, and it appears that before signing the agreement, no reference was made either to Lhasa or to Raja Gulab Singh.
To understand the treaty provisions, it is necessary to look at both the Persian and Tibetan documents, for the Dogra treaty lists only the restrictions placed on the Tibetans, and the converse is true of the Tibetan version. The Tibetans guaranteed that we shall neither at present nor in future have anything to do or interfere at all with the boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings as fixed from ancient times and will allow the annual export of wool, shawls and tea by way of Ladakh according to old established customs. ¹

They further undertook not to help any of Gulab Singh's opponents who may enter Tibet, and also offered not to place any hindrance in the way of Ladakhi traders who may visit Tibet.²

The Tibetan document containing the guarantees given by the Dogras, stated that in future, perpetual friendship shall prevail between the Dogras and Tibet. The Ladakhi King and his family were permitted to stay in Ladakh provided they did not "indulge in any intrigue" against the Dogras. ³ The Ladakhi King, if he so desired, was allowed to send the annual gifts, to the Dalai Lama and his ministers. For the promotion of trade between the two powers, the Tibetan document contained two provisions. The first postulated that "no restriction shall be laid on the mutual export and import of commodities—e.g., tea piece goods, etc., and trading shall be allowed according to the old, established custom." The second required the Ladakhis to provide transportation (begar or free college) and accommodation for Tibetan

¹C. U. Aitchison, Treaties and Engagements etc. (Calcutta, 1933), Vol. XIV, p. 15; Panikkar, Founding of Kashmir State, pp. 84-85.
²Ibid.
³Panikkar, Founding of Kashmir State, p. 86.
traders in Ladakh. This privilege was on the basis of reciprocity; the Tibetans were obligated to arrange for transportation and accommodation for Ladakhi traders whenever the latter visited Tibet. As this treaty did not bind the suzerains of both the sides, soon after, a supplementary treaty with similar provisions was concluded between the Governor of Kashmir (representing the Lahore Durbar), and the Lhasa officials on behalf of China.

The chronicles of Ladakh and British sources fully agree with the above versions of Persian and Tibetan documents. According to the former, "conquered Ladakh" with the frontiers it had during the time of the Ladakhi Kings, was annexed by the "high Government" (Maharaja Sher Singh's Sikh empire). Everything on the Tibetan side of the border remained under Tibet, in other words old Ladakhi claims to West Tibet were relinquished. Lapchak (Lo-Phyag) and Chaba (Gzum-tshon), periodical trade missions, based on reciprocal obligations, were to continue as in the past.

Though the British Indian Government did not receive the official text of the treaty, yet immediately

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1 Panikkar, Founding of Kashmir State, pp. 86-87.
2 For details, see supra pp. 97-98.
3 Francke, Antiquities, II, p. 137.
4 It was first in 1889, that Captain Ramsay, British Joint Commissioner at Leh procured a document dealing with the treaty. This has been given by A. Lamb (Britain And Chinese Central Asia, p. 76). Again, in 1921 when there was a minor dispute over the Tibet-Ladakh border, the Tibetan Government sent a copy of the Persian note to the Government of India. Cf. Report of the officials of the Government of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question, (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 1961), p. 53. The Persian text has been published in Sapru, The Building of Jammu and Kashmir State, Appendix I, pp. 1-11. Both these documents agree well with other versions.
after the cessation of the Tibeto-Dogra hostilities, when agents of the Raja of Bashahr visited the Garpon of Gartok for paying customary yearly present, they procured a version of the treaty which was signed on behalf of the Lahore Durbar and the Chinese Emperor. This is a simple document of six articles,¹ and as remarked earlier, fully agrees with the Persian and Tibetan versions.

¹For details, see pp. 291-92 Appendix E.