

**British Intervention in Central Asia. A Case  
Study of Malleson and Bailey Mission  
1918 — 20.**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled  
"BRITISH INTERVENTION IN CENTRAL ASIA : A CASE STUDY  
OF MALLESON AND BAILEY MISSION (1918-20)" submitted  
by Ms. Agnima Dube in fulfilment of six credits out  
of the total requirement of 24 credits for the Degree  
of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of the University, has been  
carried out under my supervision. The work is of  
original nature and has not been submitted for a degree  
at any other University. It is recommended that it may  
be placed before the examiner for evaluation.

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## P R E F A C E

Soon after the October revolution in Russia, the new Soviet government made significant announcements regarding the decree on peace, withdrawal from war and repudiation of secret treaties, thus declaring the partition of Persia as null and void. All such foreign policy moves and also their launching of a propaganda crusade against the British colonialism in the east posed a serious challenge to the British colonial interests particularly in Persia, Afghanistan and India, where nationalist movements were gaining momentum. The Soviet appeal to "All Toiling Muslims of Russia and the East" urging them to rise and struggle against the foreign colonies was regarded by Britain as the soviet ideological challenge to the British power in Asia.

The Soviets unsuccessfully tried to convince the governments of Allied countries to end the war without annexation and indemnities. Russia concluded separate peace treaties with the Central powers on 15 December, 1917, followed by Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of March 3, 1918. With this the eastern front held by the Russian troops collapsed, thereby placing the allies at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the

Central powers. So the British feared that a Turko-German army would move forward against Afghanistan and India. The release of more than a lakh of Austrian and Hungarian prisoners of war by the Soviet Government, who were held in camps in Central Asia, added to the British anxieties.

In view of this situation, the Supreme War Council decided in December 1917 to provide effective military support to every element of Russian people including Muslims, who were willing to fight the Germans and Turks. The British wanted to convert the Muslim area of Russia into a buffer zone with a view to prevent any contact between the Bolsheviki and Persia, Afghanistan and India. They also wanted to prevent the Central Asian cotton and other resources from being used by the Germans. The absence of any Soviet authority in Transcaucasia and the anarchic conditions in Central Asia facilitated the British task. Thus began the Allied intervention in Russia.

In pursuit of this policy Britain despatched a military expedition in January, 1918 under Dunsterville from Bagdah to Baku. Though he succeeded in occupying Baku for some time, he could not stop the advance of Red army. Thus the mission could achieve little in Transcaucasia. Simultaneously the British government entrusted the task of setting up a similar organisation in Turkestan to the British authorities in India. The

Viceroy of India planned two such centres one at Meshed and the other at Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan. Britain desired to prevent Turkestan, from falling under the Soviet control and also to establish a friendly government in Central Asia which could resist the revolutionary Bolsheviks. So, General Malleon was deputed by Chief of General Staff in India in early 1918. He started his operations in July 1918 from Meshed. Simultaneously a mission under Major F.M. Bailey was sent to Turkestan via Kashgar in pursuit of similar objectives.

Whereas some light has been thrown by some Western and Soviet scholars on the extent and pattern of British intervention in Russia, no such study has been made in India. This study has sought to analyse the factors responsible for the British intervention in Central Asia vis-a-vis the British imperial projections in Asia, following the October revolution. It has become clear that the British continued with their anti-Bolshevik operations through the medium of Malleon and Bailey missions in Transcaspia and Turkestan even after the surrender of Turkey in October 1918 and the subsequent end of War. It has also made an appraisal of the British concern with the ideological challenge posed by the new Soviet policies.

The work is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, a historical review of the British Policy towards

Central Asia during the nineteenth century, that is before the October revolution has been made to present a backdrop to the following events. The second chapter examines the motives for British intervention in Soviet Russia in the context of World War I and the ideological challenges posed by the October revolution to the British colonialism in the east. The Third and Fourth chapters deal with the operations of Malleson and Bailey missions in Transcaspia and Turkestan respectively. Main findings have been summed up in the last chapter.

I take this opportunity to express my deepest sense of gratitude to Dr. K. Warikoo, under whose able guidance this study was completed. I am also indebted to my parent and husband for their help and encouragement.

Last but not the least, I am thankful to Aditya for his co-operation.

Dated: 5th December, 1988.

(AGNIMA DUBE)

CHAPTER - I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Geographically speaking, Central Asia extends from the Caspian in the west to western extremity of China in the east, and from western Siberia in the north to Afghanistan in the south.

From distant times there were two main Khanates in Central Asia-Bukhara and Khiva. At the end of the 18th Century a third Khanate-Kokand, came into existence in the Fergana Valley. It included Tashkent, an important political and trade centre, which previously was an independent city-state. None of these Khanates had definite boundaries. These Khanates were backward feudal states in which slave ownership survived. Economic development was hindered by heavy taxation which was mainly in kind. The feudal lords often appropriated not only the surplus produce of the peasant but even his household requirements and this vicious circle of his exploitation was completed by the usurers. Industry was in the same deplorable condition. Other reasons for backwardness of the economy were the long and exhausting wars carried on by Bukhara against Khiva and Kokand, internal rivalries among the aristocracy, and anti-feudal popular risings which were a recurring feature. In the fifties of the last century Tsarist Russia felt the need to erect barriers against the expanding British power and influence right across Asia from the Black sea to the Pacific.

The Russian ruling circles believed that the British would try to exploit the region's instability and strife and

by developing diplomatic and commercial links with the Central Asia, Khanates make their own influence predominant in this region. Russian forward policy towards Central Asia got activated after facing reverses in the Crimean War. In August 1866 Tashkent was incorporated in the Russian empire. In 1867 the Governorate-General of Turkestan was established with General K. P. Kaufman as its first Governor-General. In 1868 Bukhara was humbled by the capture of Samarkand and the imposition of a treaty which reduced the Khanate to a vassal status. During 1864-68 Khanates of Kokand and Bukhara were completely defeated. In 1873 Khiva was overrun by Russian forces. The subjugation of Khiva marked a new era in the history of Russian advance in Central Asia. In 1884 Russia annexed Merv which was regarded as the key to Herat. A year after the annexation of Merv, Russia seized Panjdeh—an Afghan outpost between Merv and Herat. This acquisition caused warlike repercussions in Kabul, Calcutta and London since under the Gandamak treaty Britain had pledged to defend the frontier against any attacks. To prevent the recurrence of such conflicts, an Anglo-Russian Commission succeeded in delimiting a mutually recognised Russo-Afghan boundary. But fear and mistrust of Russian movements across the Pamirs continued to disturb the British official circles.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA  
DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

With the advent of nineteenth century, the two powers, Britain and Tsarist Russia began to lay their covetous eyes on Central Asia, which then reeled under the despotic misrule of feudal Khans. But the Central Asian Khanates, though economically backward and devoid of any rudiments of industrialisation, provided a vast market for consumption of manufactured goods and an easy source of raw materials. Hence the prime motivation for the European powers in prying into Central Asia was economic, which simultaneously developed into a political one. First signs of any direct British activity in Central Asia became evident as early as in 1812, when William Moorcroft, a senior official of the East India Company, sent his trusted agent, Mir Izzetullah to gather information about the routes and state of affairs in Central Asia. This was followed by the journey of Moorcroft and B. Trebeck (1818-25) to Bukhara, A. Burnes (1831-33) to Bukhara, Wood (1837) upto the Oxus and its surrounding territories to collect topographical and other relevant information about which the British were not aware so far. Simultaneously efforts were made to popularise British manufactured goods in the Central Asian Khanates through the medium of caravan traders in a bid to check the growth of Russian trade there. After the first Anglo-Afghan war, Herat was made a centre of British intelligence activities

in Central Asia under Major D. Todd. Now several British agents visited Khiva (Abbott and Shakespear), Kokand (Conolly) and Bukhara (Stoddart and Conolly), on reconnaissance missions. They even tried to establish contacts with the local Muslim chiefs. According to H. Rawlinson the well-known British Russophobe, James Abbott had proposed that Russians should be permanently excluded from these areas and a "defensive-offensive alliance was suggested with England as a reward for this breaking with the common enemy". Rawlinson, however, states that Abbott in doing so exceeded his instructions, which only referred to the liberation of Russian slaves in Khiva.<sup>1</sup> Vambery attributes to the British the plan of forming "an offensive-defensive alliance against Russia" with the three Central Asian Khanates of Khiva, Kokand and Bukhara.<sup>2</sup>

Even in the first half of the nineteenth century, when Russian thrust against Central Asian Khanates had not begun, the British were seeking to justify their forward moves as 'defence of India' against the Russian advance. During this period, the main object of British expansion was Afghanistan, from where they hoped to penetrate into Central Asia. This led to the first Afghan war and the subsequent annexation of Sindh and Punjab. As a result of defeat in the Afghan war, the British Indian government developed the strategic doctrine

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1. H. Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East, p.153-54.
  2. A. Vambery, History of Bokhara, p.384-88.

of 'masterly inactivity'. Its principal assumption was that the British could not add to their security by reaching out far new frontiers in Central Asia. The existing frontier was as secure as any frontier could be if it came to a Russian threat. Greater security against Russia could be won only by promoting conditions beyond the frontier unfavourable to a Russian advance. Ideal for this purpose would be an Afghanistan friendly to the British and hostile to the Russian.

Soon after the Crimean war, when Russia was convinced about its inability to expand further in Europe, she began her forward moves in Central Asia. This expansion was viewed with alarm in the British ruling circles. In March 1858 the British Parliament debated ways and means of capturing the Central Asian markets. A member of the House, Denby Seymour declared that to do this would strengthen the British position in Central Asia and provide a good chance of despatching armed forces "into that country". On 22 March 1858, a Parliamentary Committee was approved by the House of Commons to study ways and means to develop trade in Central Asia. In the early sixties, the British again intensified their intelligence and subversive activities in Central Asia under the direction of Col. Walker, Superintendent of the Grand Trigonometrical Survey. He was assisted in this task by a group of specially trained native agents.

The idea that Russia could become a major threat to the British empire in India dated back to the turn of the 18th

Century. As early as 1791 Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control in Pitt's government, had commented in a very general way on the possible danger to India should the Russians ever supplant the Turks in the levant, but there is no evidence that he or his colleagues took such a possibility very seriously. Apart from some journalistic speculation in Great Britain itself, the idea won early support among governing circles in India. Sir John Malcolm Wellesley's emissary to Persia in 1800-1, was impressed by the Shah's fear of Russian ambitions and communicated his own alarm at the long term consequences for India if Persia collapsed before a Russian attack. Although without wide acceptance the belief in an emerging Russian threat to India remained in circulation. Throughout the nineteenth century the theme of Russian threat had become familiar to British observers of international politics despite the scepticism with which all of them still greeted it. But Ellenborough as early as in Sept. 1828, underlined that 'now our policy in Europe and Asia ought to be the same-to bring down the Russian power'. With the passing of time, the Russian advance towards Central Asia came increasingly to dominate Anglo-Indian strategic thinking. In view of G.J.Adler, this advance was probably too rapid and too elemental to be really understood at the time. Public opinion assumed that since it brought Russia nearer to India it must have India as its object. The emergence of Russia as the most powerful nation in Europe and Britain's natural rival caused serious fears. Her rapid approach towards the vulnerable

land frontier of the British Indian empire—an empire won from and maintained from the sea, represented a decisive change in Britain's international position. No wonder, people in Britain were worried. Frightened as they were by Russian invasion schemes, fed with false information, deceived by geographical ignorance and forgetful of the vast distances of mountain, desert and plain in Central Asia, they greeted each Russian advance with almost inevitable bursts of alarm and Russophobia. At bottom, there was a Central Asian question because of the rapid approach of two rival imperial frontiers. The extent to which defense of India influenced and guided the course of British policy led one observe to conclude: "None can understand the foreign policy of Great Britain which has inspired military and diplomatic activities from the Napoleonic Wars to the present day, who does not interpret wars, diplomatic conflicts, treaties and alliance, with the fact of India constantly in mind."<sup>3</sup> The foreign relations of India according to Sir Alfred Lyall, were regulated by a "kind of Monroe Doctrine" whereby Britain sought predominant influence in the countries adjacent to India and allowed no other European nation to intervene in those states. This attitude led to incessant British conflict with its European rival Tsarist Russia.<sup>4</sup>

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3. D.Gillard, *The struggle for Asia*, p.49.

4. *Ibid*, p.50.

The mood of 1860s in British government circles consistently favoured coming to terms with the Russian government by a deal over Central Asia, rather than throwing down a challenge in the manner of Ellenborough and Palmerston. So, despite the transformation of Central Asian politics to Russia's favour the British did not respond in the belligerent style which had occasioned the Russian forward policy in the first place. Too much scepticism had grown up as to the efficacy of extending still farther the frontiers of India as advocated by Rawlinson and his associates. According to D.Gillard what seemed the more obvious response at this time was to try to persuade the Russian government to make some more formal commitment to limit its advance than had been provided by the assurances of 1864.<sup>5</sup> But ministers in London came up against two difficulties in attempting this. First, there was the natural difficulty of getting the Russians to make such a commitment when it had no pressing reasons for doing so. Secondly, the British had to make up their minds what limitation they were willing to put on their own activities in Central Asia as a quid pro quo. And it was the second difficulty that proved the harder to resolve. There was general agreement among British leaders that Russia could not be allowed to advance into Afghanistan, which it was deemed essential to remain as a buffer between the two empires. There was profound uncertainty as to what sort of barrier the British wanted Afghanistan to become.

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5. Ibid, p.99.



The problem emerged slowly as the British adjusted themselves to the scale of Russia's achievements. Lord John Russell, foreign secretary in Palmerston's government had made the first approach in August 1865. He suggested an exchange of notes recording the firm resolve of the British and Russian governments to maintain 'the present state of possession in Central Asia' and to respect the independence of Persia. A proposal more acceptable to both sides than the freezing of existing frontiers emanated from Lawrence himself in 1867 when he suggested an understanding with the Russian government on a line beyond which they would not advance. Since the British thought in terms of the northern frontier of Afghanistan as such a line and as the Russians were willing to regard Afghanistan as outside their sphere of influence, this seemed a good starting point in search of an agreement.

In the beginning of 1869 the Liberal Government of Britain headed by Gladstone proposed to the Tsarist Government the creation of a neutral zone in Central Asia between the territorial possessions of Britain and Russia. This zone was to be respected by both powers and was designed to prevent their territories from having a common border. The Russian Government agreed to the creation of such an intermediate zone and suggested the inclusion of Afghanistan in it with the view of preventing her from being annexed by Britain. The British Government proposed a considerable extension of this zone towards the north. This led to a lengthy series of communication

between two governments which resulted in what is known as the Clarendon-Gorchakov Agreement. The British government was of the view that Afghanistan would not fulfil the condition of a neutral territory as its frontiers were ill-defined. The agreement of 1873 had the merit of having established the northern frontiers of Afghanistan. An advantage which Britain unilaterally procured from Russia by the agreement was a repeated and positive assurance to treat Afghanistan outside her influence. But so far as the question of establishing a "neutral" or "intermediate" zone between the possession of the two powers was concerned, the idea was definitely given up in 1873. The British, who had their covetous eyes on Afghanistan, were never really enthusiastic about such a proposal. Lord Mayo's government was reticent to endorse it from the beginning. Lord Mayo had written to London:

"The best thing to secure would be a pledge by both Russia and England of mutual non-interference with each other's interests, unratified by any definite treaty".<sup>6</sup>

The Conservative government of Disraeli which replaced the Liberal government of Gladstone in 1874 came into power under the banner of expanding the colonial empire of Britain. In the seventies there was a marked increase in the British interest for expansion. This attention to colonies grew with

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6. Quoted by D.K.Ghosh, England and Afghanistan, p.165.

the intensification of competition for world markets, particularly from Germany. The Disraeli Cabinet took the path of expansion and colonial annexation in the most varied regions of the world - South Africa, Egypt, Turkey and the Middle East. The British Government intensified the activities of its agents in Persia and Turkemenia affecting military and political intelligence there. It strove to create a unified front of Muslim rulers of this region against Russia. The government of Disraeli was also making preparations to subdue Afghanistan. In Turkemenia British agents instigated local chieftains against Russia. Tsarist Russia was conscious of the British menace to Turkemenia from Iran and Afghanistan, where British influence was increasing. During the seventies and eighties of the 19th century Khorasan became a base for British activity in Central Asia. In 1875 Col. MacGregor set out for Merv from Meshed. He could not accomplish his journey to Merv as the British government forbade him to continue his travel, fearing protest from the Russian government. In 1877 Capt. Butler surveyed the basin of the Atrek river. He was personally directed by Lord Lytton to organise the Turkmens against the Russians. But the Russian authorities learnt about his mission and he had to be recalled on their protest. Beginning with 1873 and upto 1881, hardly a year passed without a British agent being sent one or the other mission to Khiva.

However, in May 1875 relations between Russia and Britain appeared to be improving. Lord Derby declared before

the Russian Ambassador in London that nothing could prevent Russia and England from coming to an agreement in Asia as there was room enough for both of them. But the British government rejected the idea of a buffer state as the basis of negotiations with Russia. It did not agree to the Russian proposal for joint confirmation of the independence of Afghanistan. In October 1875 the British Cabinet declared that it reserved full liberty of action with regard to Afghanistan. To this Russia sent a reply in February 1876 reaffirming the old Russian position which regarded Afghanistan outside her sphere of influence. Both powers, while fully preserving their freedom of action with respect to countries of this region were, however, to give due regard to each other's interests and refrain from direct contact between their territories. Russia immediately made use of this "freedom of action" first proclaimed by Britain. In February 1876 the Tsarist government issued an order incorporating the Khanate of Kokand into the Russian empire. Viceroy of India, Lord Mayo and his successor Northbrook were opponents of an immediate conquest of Afghanistan. They advocated a policy of "patience" and "waiting". This policy came under attack from the proponents of "forward policy". A British forward policy had likewise been revived in Central Asia. Salisbury had given qualified support to such a policy as Secretary of State for India and after 1878 as Foreign Secretary. The case for it had received recent publicity with the publication of Henry Rawlinson's book, "England, Russia and the East". The arguments advanced

by John Jacob for controlling the Bolan pass had at last been accepted. The appointment of Lord Lytton as Viceroy in 1876 signalized the triumph of the forward school. He went to India with instructions to get at least a temporary British mission received at Kabul, as a first step towards supervising the Amir's relations with the outside world and ensuring the exclusion of Russian influence. Diplomacy failed in 1877 to bring quick results and Lytton opted for a military action. He was determined that the Hindukush should become for all practical purposes the frontier of British India. When a British mission was turned back at the Khyber pass in September 1878, Lytton sent his forces to attack Afghanistan. In May 1879 he concluded the treaty of Gandamak with the Afghans. By virtue of this agreement a permanent British representative was to be stationed at Kabul, Afghan foreign policy was to conform to British wishes and the British were to retain control of the Khyber pass and other Key frontier areas. Thus the story of the thirties once more repeated in the second Afghan war and again in the name of the security of the Indian empire against the aggressive designs of Russia. The British government raised the question of the demarcation of the Afghan frontier with Russia on the basis of 1880 treaty. A joint commission was formed to delimit the boundary. The Pamir question was the last complicated problem of Anglo-Russian relations in the 19th century. The centre of Anglo-Russian rivalry now shifted to "the roof of the world" towards the end of the eighties and

the beginning of the nineties.

The Pamirs agreement of 1895 was a "link in an important chain of events". Another amicable agreement had been reached with Russia during that decade notwithstanding the prevailing scepticism. Events in Central Asia were paving the way for the eventual entente with Russia which transpired in 1907.

The years following the Pamir agreement witnessed a gradual relaxation of Anglo-Russian tensions. There was little room for further disputes concerning the Afghan boundaries after the settlements reached in 1885 and 1895. At the turn of the century, relations between the two powers again deteriorated. Lord Curzon revived the forward policy again. Rivalry with Russia spread from Manchuria to Persia and even included the Tibetan plateau. The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war opened a further period of stress and strain in the Anglo-Russian relations. Old animosities were roused by the Russian navy's seizure of the British Ship Malacca in the Red Sea and the Dogger bank clash involving fishing trawlers.

But the Russo-Japanese war proved to be a turning point in the Anglo-Russian relations. It revealed to Britain the hollowness of the Russian empire. The attention of Britain was now focussed on a new and greater danger from a more powerful and virile Imperial Germany gradually emerging as a potent rival of Britain with her flottenpolitik, Weltpolitik and Drang nach Osten. Her menacing attitude had grown during

the Boer War and her plans for a Berlin-Baghdad Railway endangered British supremacy in the east. Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, believed that an understanding with Russia therefore was absolutely necessary. The Moroccan crisis resulting in the Algiers conference helped to promote it. Russia was an ally of France with whom Britain had resolved all her colonial feuds. In February 1907, British diplomat Nicolson handed over to the Russian Foreign Minister, Izvolsky an outline of the view of the British government. After an exchange of several drafts a convention was signed between the two powers on August 31, 1907 at St. Petersburg. It was known as the 'Convention relating to Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet'. The pact of 1907 reduced to a great extent the causes of antagonism between the two historic rivals. The first of the three agreements constituting the Convention of 1907 concerned Persia. The preamble talked about the agreement between the two powers in respect to the integrity and independence of Persia, "preservation of order" and "equal opportunities for trade of all other nations". In spite of these high-sounding principles, Britain and Russia agreed upon a division of Persia into three zones, the northern and southern to be reserved respectively for exclusive Russian and British spheres of influence and the middle zone to remain neutral. The second agreement related to Afghanistan. The Russian government declared Afghanistan outside the sphere of Russian influence and agreed to conduct all political relations with that country through the intermediary of the British government.

The British government in its turn, declared that it had no intention of changing the political status of Afghanistan or interfering in its internal government. The British and Russian governments affirmed their adherence to the principle of equality of commercial opportunity in Afghanistan. The Third agreement concerned Tibet. Both Britain and Russia recognised the suzerain rights of China in Tibet and agreed to respect its territorial integrity. They also agreed to abstain from all interference in its internal administration as well as not to enter into negotiations with Tibet except through the intermediary of the Chinese government. In view of N.A.Khalfin, the Convention of 1907 only blunted the Anglo-Russian rivalry for the time being. The struggle between the two imperialist powers to establish their influence in the East did not cease, Britain being particularly active.<sup>7</sup> Although the 1907 Convention inaugurated an era of good relations between the two imperialist powers, it was deeply resented by the Persians and Afghans whose national sovereignty was curbed and limited by these arrangements.

According to D.Gillard, "there was little about the Convention of August 1907 to suggest that it might mark the end of Great Game. "A deal with the Russian government as to spheres of influence in parts of Asia represented no dramatic

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7. Footnote by N.A.Khalfin in Devendra Kaushik's book : Central Asia in Modern Times, p.62.



shift in British policy and need have heralded no more than a return to the long term competition for trade and influence".<sup>8</sup> As it turned out events in Europe were such as to convince most Russian and British political leaders that the German threat was the greatest they both faced and feared. War with Germany finally became for them an obvious if undesired outcome of the Austro-Serb confrontation in the summer of 1914. With Russian and British armies fighting as allies to prevent German ascendancy in Europe, their own contest for ascendancy in Central Asia was relegated to the background. The "Great Game" cardinal to British foreign policy since the 1830s and to that of Russia since the 1850s, was manifestly at an end.

Divergent views have been expressed on the nature of the British policy towards Central Asia during the nineteenth Century. According to D.Kaushik, this policy was always aggressive. Its basic direction was determined in the first place by the international position of Britain. In the second half of the 19th century the focal point of British colonial policy was concentrated on the "Eastern Question" i.e. the struggle for inheriting the decaying Turkish Empire. This fact determined the development of British expansion on the frontiers of India, mainly in the northern and north-western

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8. D.Gillard, *The Struggle for Asia*, p.99.

directions towards Afghanistan, Kashgar and the southern part of Turkmenia. The British colonialists regarded these territories as a springboard for struggle against Tsarist Russia in Central Asia. He emphasizes that the aggressiveness of Britain's frontier policy varied with fluctuations of the situation in India.<sup>9</sup> According to him there arose two schools of thought. The 'forward policy' school harped on the vulnerability of the north-western frontiers in the defense system and it called for the strengthening of India's defences in territories beyond her natural frontiers. The advocates of this policy argued that the conquest of Central Asia by Russia was a great threat to British India. The other school denied the existence of such a danger and it defended a "close border policy" rejecting the idea of an active advance beyond the frontiers of India. It aimed at a consolidation of the internal position within India. Kaushik believes that due to the historical circumstances of the period the "close border policy" predominated from 1857 upto 1875. "The serious internal complications following the popular uprising of 1857 made an active advance difficult. This temporary abandonment of the "forward policy", however, did not mean an outright rejection of penetration in the bordering territories. By a skillful use of diplomacy, the British continued to widen their sphere

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9. D.Kaushik, Central Asia in Modern Times, p.97.

of influence. They were preparing conditions suitable for renewal of active aggression. The British policy in Kashghar and Afghanistan provides clear evidence of this".<sup>10</sup>

According to G.J. Adler, the British policy in Eastern Turkistan was always from the sixties of the nineteenth century onwards, a blend of commercial and political ends. Trade was only a weapon. All the Viceroys of the period viewed trade as "the great lever of political influence". But Lawrence and Ripon anxious to confine political responsibilities within the Indian border did nothing to encourage the Kashgar trade. All others, who wished to extend British influence, did encourage it.<sup>11</sup> Whereas Kaushik agrees with this observation of the British writer, he argues that the explanation of Adler that the wish of the British to extend their influence to Kashghar was due to its "special importance for Indian security" is far from the truth. In his view the bogey of a Russian menace to India was raised by the British as a smoke-screen for their prospective aggression across the northern and north-western frontiers of India".<sup>12</sup>

The Soviet historian N.A. Khalfin does not agree with the British version of the defensive character of British policy in Asia. He writes : "The chief facts of this matter

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10. Ibid, p.98.

11. G.J. Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, 1865-95, p.98.

12. Devendra Kaushik; op.cit., p.98.



of the threat to India have been more or less thoroughly exposed. It has been established that authoritative British quarters invented this figment to justify or else cover up their own policy of expansion in the countries of the East. An analysis of the economic, political and military situation in Russia throughout the entire century convincingly shows that such an operation was never dreamed of. Those who ruled in Britain knew this perfectly well. What Britain feared was not so much the snatching of her colonies from her by Russia, as that the proximity to the Indian frontier of a power rivalling her might galvanize an anti-British liberation movement among the peoples of the Orient of which Engels wrote in his day. The British, while reportedly indulging in vigorous protests against Russia's forward move in Asia and organizing demagogic campaigns on the subject of the threat to India actually paid little attention to precautionary measures against the Russian invasion. Along the northern frontier, which was patently the most vulnerable, hardly any fortifications were built".<sup>13</sup> Khalfin quotes an American author, W.B. Walsh, as recording that confidential reports of the Russian General Staff disclosed no plans whatever for the taking of India.<sup>14</sup>

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Prof. A.E.Sneserev, a well-known Russian scholar, once commented in the course of his talk with Louis Fisher

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13. N.A.Khalfin, Russia's Policy in Central Asia, p.5-6.  
 14. Ibid, p. 5-6.

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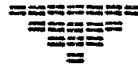
that the Russians never looked upon an invasion of India as a serious matter and only permitted the military Governors in Turkestan to toy with the idea.<sup>15</sup> In a similar vein, British historians Edward Thompson and G.T. Garrat consider it "more than doubtful whether any responsible Russian statesmen ever intended an invasion of British India, or even of Afghanistan".<sup>16</sup> A chief consideration which motivated Russia to extend its dominion towards the Hindukush was to use that strategic area for purposes of putting pressure on the British Indian empire with a view to further their interests in the Black sea and the Balkans. But London did not allow Russia to take over the strategic straits or gain access to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf. The only room that Britain would concede to Russia was in Central Asia or on the northern fringe of the Middle East. The security of the Indian empire required a check to the Russian advance toward the borders not only of Afghanistan but also of Iran and Turkey. Therefore the pattern of Anglo-Russian rivalry before the October revolution clearly shows that it was not as though Russia simply advanced and Britain was merely on the defensive. In reality, both Russia and Britain were expanding from two opposite directions and their movements converged in Central Asia, which led to this conflict. The defence of India was

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15. Louis Fisher, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, p.400.

16. E.Thompson and G.T.Garrat *Rise; and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p.509.

used as a pretext by the British to justify their forward moves during this phase of the 'great game'. As it turned out to be, the British used the same slogan of securing the Indian empire from the Bolshevik threat to justify their penetration into Central Asia from 1917 to 1920.



CHAPTER - II

WAR, REVOLUTION AND INTERVENTION IN RUSSIA

The nineteenth century witnessed the steady expansion of British and Russian Empires in Asia, so much so their movements converged in Central Asia from two opposite directions. Each power was trying to out-manoeuvre the other and this process of two-power rivalry came to be known as the "great game". While Tsarist Russia sought to profit in Europe by exercising pressure on Britain through India and the adjoining areas, Britain on her part developed a tradition of Russophobia in the conduct of her policy. The image of the Russian bear walking into the plains of India was a nightmare for the makers of British policy till the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. This Convention established a buffer zone between the two empires stretching from Persia in the west to Tibet in the east. The Convention, though a stand-off in terms of European diplomacy, marked the creation of an uneasy condominium in Persia.<sup>1</sup> Despite persitent doubts in London about the wisdom and effectiveness of the Convention, when war began in August 1914 the arrangement proved its value. British and Russian troops were able to safeguard Persia's neutrality without serious complication or recrimination.

At the beginning of the war, France and Britain had counted heavily upon Russia. Certainly the Russian effort had been enormous. Nothing had been stinted; everything had

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1. F. Stanwood, War, Revolution and British Imperialism in Central Asia, p.2.



been risked. Notwithstanding the disasters and slaughters suffered on an unimaginable scale, Russia had remained a faithful and mighty ally of Britain and France. For nearly three years she had held on her fronts considerably more than half of the total number of enemy divisions, and she had lost in this struggle nearly as many men killed as all the other allies put together. W.Churchill counts the endurance of Russia as a prime factor, until the United States had entered the war, ranked second only to the defeat of the German submarines as a final turning-point of the struggle.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly, the whole scenario changed as a result of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.

COLLAPSE OF ANGLO-RUSSIAN CO-OPERATION:

Burdened with the Tsarist legacy of a dispirited, disorganized army, a population weary of war and suffering, and an internal order on the brink of breakdown, the Bolsheviks considered that their initial task was to take Russia out of the war. The promise of peace represented a major political commitment. The undoubted popularity of such a move was another attraction to the Bolsheviks for employing it as a means of gaining popular support. Viewing the struggle as an "imperialist" war, they were predisposed to regard the traditional methods of international law and diplomacy as alien to a proletarian State. On November 8, 1917, the day after the Bolsheviks seized power, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers',

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2. Winston Churchill, The World Crisis, p.61.

'Soldiers', and 'Peasants' Deputies unanimously approved a "Decree of Peace", proposing "to all warring peoples and their Governments to begin immediately negotiations for a just and democratic peace". The Congress defined such a peace as "an immediate peace without annexations and without indemnities". It soon became obvious that the Bolsheviki were serious about their decision to remove Russia from the war. The issue for them was survival. The "Decree of Peace" had also announced the Bolshevik intention to publish the secret treaties entered into by the Tsarist government. Supported by Lenin's subsequent "Proclamation to the Oppressed People of the East", the Bolsheviki wanted to prove to the peoples of Asia that the war was being fought for imperial objectives. It was inevitable that these revelations would greatly inflame nationalist opinion in the East. Whereas the publication of secret treaties exposed the British imperialist aims in Asia, Lenin's proclamation sought to channelise national aspirations by offering a nationalist solution to the peoples reeling under the colonial rule.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF BOLSHEVISM:

With the assumption of power by the Bolsheviki in November 1917, the Anglo-Russian relations underwent a radical change. Heretofore, Tsarist Russia, whose expansionist ambitions often came into conflict with those of Britain, had been viewed as a potential military threat to the security of the

British Empire. Hereafter, Soviet Russia, whose Communist principles and practices clashed with Britain's imperialist designs and interests became primarily an ideological threat. Before the Bolshevik revolution, peace or war between Russia and Britain rested mainly upon their ability or inability to settle respective imperialist claims. After the revolution, co-operation or conflict between the two States was to depend chiefly on their capacity or incapacity to compromise on respective ideologies. Tsarist Russia craved for the control of Constantinople and the Straits, while Soviet Russia aspired for establishment of a Communist commonwealth embracing the entire globe.<sup>3</sup>

The swift liquidation of the Romanov regime convinced Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks that capitalist governments like that of the Tsarist one, were rotten at their foundations: and when given a revolutionary tremor, such governments would crumble. The long cherished world revolution no longer appeared distant. Time seemed ripe to call upon the oppressed peoples to rise against their exploiters and oppressors. On December 3, 1917 the Soviet government addressed an appeal "To All the Toiling Moslems of Russia and the East". The appeal read in part:

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3. Chattar Singh Samra: India and Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1947, p.20.

"Great events are happening in Russia. The end of war waged to divide other countries is close at hand. The rule of predators who have enslaved the peoples of the world is being overthrown. The old edifice of oppression and slavery is succumbing to the blows of the Russian Revolution. The world of despotism and oppression is living its last days. A new world is born - the world of working people undergoing liberation".<sup>4</sup>

The appeal went on to assure the working Moslems of Russia : "All you, whose mosques and shrines have been destroyed, whose faith and customs have been violated by Tsars. From now on your faiths and customs, your national and cultural institutions are declared free and inviolable. Arrange your national life freely and without hindrance. You have the right to this. Know that your rights, like those of all the other peoples of Russia, are protected by the might of the revolution and its organs - the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies".<sup>5</sup>

It also spoke of the annulment and liquidation of the secret treaties concluded by Tsarist Russia with other imperialist powers, in particular on the division of Turkey and Iran. It promised : "Troops will be withdrawn from Persia

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4. Soviet Foreign Policy Documents, Vol. I, p.34.

5. Ibid, p.35.

as soon as military operations stop and the Persians will be ensured the right freely to decide their destiny..... Enslavement awaits you not at the hands of Russia and its revolutionary government, but at the hands of predators of European imperialism, of those who have turned your homeland into a 'colony' which they are looting and robbing".<sup>6</sup>

On November 19, 1917 Pravda wrote : "The army of the Russian Revolution derives its strength from countless reserves. The oppressed nations of Asia, (China, India and Persia) are just as eager for the fall of the regime of capitalistic oppression as are the oppressed proletarian masses of Europe. To fuse these forces in a world revolution against the imperialistic bourgeoisie is the historical mission of the Workers and Peasants of Russia".<sup>7</sup>

Whether or not this insurrectionary appeal ever reached the intended audience may be debatable, but it did not pass unnoticed by the British ambassador in Petrograd George Buchanan. Agitated by the Bolshevik actions, Buchanan reported on December 5, 1917 that "in his appeal to Moslems, Lenin is openly inciting our Indian subjects to revolt. He and Trotsky has singled us out for his attacks.....Anxious as I am to avoid (a) capture it will be difficult for us to stave

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6. As quoted by Alfred, L.P.Dennis, The Foreign Policies of Soviet Russia, p.1.

7. Ibid, p.35

it off indefinitely if they go on attacking us and I must therefore warn His Majesty's government to be prepared for such an eventuality".<sup>8</sup>

Buchanan's warning was not concerned with the material danger posed by Russian Bolshevism but with the ideological impact it could be expected to have. Russia's proximity to British strategic interests in Central Asia made the Bolshevik Revolution relevant to British control in Asia as a whole. But, though the British were perturbed by the ideological implications of Bolshevism, their immediate fear was that the Revolution would complete the collapse of Russian military power in Northern Persia and leave Persia, Afghanistan and India a prey to enemy agitation and revolutionary disorder. As far as Britain was concerned, Bolshevism was always a more serious and immediate challenge than American idealism. There was a growth of anti-communism in British imperial thought, which reflected traditional imperial thinking and which abhorred socialism, nationalism, self-determination and Russians. Commenting on the threat which the emergence of Bolshevism posed to the British empire, Lord D'Abernon, London's envoy to Berlin from 1920 - 1926, wrote in the introduction to his diplomatic memoirs : "England's stupendous and vital interests in Asia were menaced by a danger graver

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8. As cited in F. Stanwood, War, Revolution and Imperialism, p.42.

than any which existed in the time of the old Imperialistic regime in Russia". He explained that the Bolsheviks possessed two weapons which Tsarist Russia lacked : "Class-Revolt propaganda, appealing to the proletariat of the world and the quasi-religious fanaticism of Lenin, which infused a vigour and zeal unknown to the officials and emissaries of Czar".<sup>9</sup>

A typical foreign office memorandum saw Lenin's proclamation as "another indication of the ultimate Bolshevik policy, which is neither 'self-determination' nor the 'status quo' nor 'peace', but which exploits those formulae to overthrow the existing order all over the world as it has already been overthrown in Russia".<sup>10</sup>

India Office at London felt that the Bolsheviks had "torn up the 1907 Convention and had made a flaming appeal to (the) Persians and all other Eastern Moslems to throw off the yoke of their oppressors, offered autonomy to Russian Moslems. Maximalist agents are at work in Persia and Turkish Pan-Turanian agents in Russian Central Asia. There are here the makings of a very awkward situation for us throughout a large portion of the Islamic world as well as in Persia itself. Russians, Germans and Turks—a trio otherwise sufficiently

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9. Viscount D'Abernon, *The Diary of an Ambassador, I*, p.24.

10. As cited in F. S. Rowland, *op.cit.*, p.45.

discordant - act harmoniously as the friends of Moslem, Persia and Great Britain is left as her only enemy. Is it not that capable of being made to react on India and Afghanistan....?<sup>11</sup>

The British Foreign Secretary, Balfour expressed his disagreement with certain of his colleagues who had concluded that after their recent proclamations, the Bolsheviks could only be regarded avowed enemies. He felt that the Bolsheviks viewed the British Empire as the great obstacle to immediate peace, which was why they poured venom against the British empire. Balfour was nearer the truth when he noted that the Bolshevik "appeal is to every revolutionary force, economic, social, racial, or religious, which can be used to upset the existing political organizations of mankind. If they summon the Mohamedans of India to revolt, they are still more desirous of engineering a revolution in Germany. They are dangerous dreamers, whose power, be it great or small, transitory or permanent depends partly on German gold, partly on the determination of the Russian army to fight no more, but who would genuinely like to put into practice the wild theories which have so long been germinating in the shadow of Russian Autocracy".<sup>1</sup>

So he expressed himself in favour of avoiding as long as possible an open breach with the new Soviet Government.

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11. As cited by F. Sanwood, op.cit., p.59.

12. As cited by F. Sanwood, op.cit., p.46.



This view was shared by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, who concerned himself with the task of preventing Germany "from revictualling herself afresh from the corn lands and oil fields which would be laid upon to her if she succeeded in penetrating to the Don and the rich provinces of the Caucasus".<sup>13</sup>

BOLSHEVISM AND PROBLEM OF NATIONALISM  
AND SELF-DETERMINATION:

After the Bolshevik revolution, the whole question of applying the principle of self-determination to the colonies and semi-colonies assumed new importance. So far, in advocating the principle of self-determination, Lenin and his supporters had made no distinction between the Tsarist part of Asia and the non-Tsarist part. Because of their belief that both colonialism and national oppression stemmed from imperialism, the common policy of advocating the principle of self-determination for all nations, suffering under colonialism and national oppression, was considered necessary to oppose imperialism. As soon as the Bolsheviks captured power, they proceeded to implement the principle of self-determination by readily recognizing the independence of Poland, Finland and other Baltic States, and annulling unequal treaties concerning Persia, Turkey and China. The two policy declarations, namely, "To All Muslim Toilers of

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13. John Silt Wright; The Victor's Dilemma, p.7.

Russia and the East", and the "Declaration of the Rights of Toiling and Exploited Peoples" promised the championing of the belief and usages of Russian Moslems", upheld "free self-determination" of all nations and condemned the enslavement of hundreds of millions of toiling masses in Asia and in the colonies".<sup>14</sup>

For Britain, these two declarations were a serious breach of European solidarity in Asia which was further aggravated by the attention paid to India. It was felt that Bolshevik support for Asiatic self-determination was as dangerous as Russian imperialism had been, and the Foreign Office tended to regard them as a direct challenge to British power in India. Lenin had offered the East freedom from foreign domination. Now both the traditional and democratic nationalists including the Muslims began to fear Britain's actual presence more than the little understood ideology of Bolshevism.<sup>15</sup>

At the core of Britain's difficulty with Bolshevism lay nationalism. The Bolshevik Revolution not only meant failure of Tsarist Russian power in Central Asia, but also implied Russian support for Muslim and Turkey nationalists throughout the region. British imperialists were as disturbed by Lenin's support for nationalists as they were by his anti-

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14. Soviet Foreign Policy Documents, Vol.I, pp.34-35.

15. F.Stanwood, op.cit., p.42.

capitalism. The question of Britain's attitude to self-determination was discussed at length during December 1917 and January 1918. When the War Cabinet discussed in June 1917 Chamberlain's proposal for self-government in India. Balfour didn't favour grant of the right of self-government to orientals.<sup>16</sup>

But the Prime Minister Lloyd George, was inclined to accept the ideal of self-determination without sacrificing any British imperial interests that is, without making any real concession to the Asian nationalists.

In the end, it was concluded that self-determination should only apply to the new Europe. This decision was incorporated into the statement on war aims which the Prime Minister made to the Trades Union Congress on 5 January 1918. He recognized the right to self-determination of people in Turkish and German territory and declared "that the general principle of national self-determination is therefore as applicable in the present case as in those of occupied European territories".<sup>17</sup> But in practice, acceptance of the broad principle did not mean that Britain was prepared to grant independence to its own territories or to those in which it had a direct interest. Thus, Lloyd George announced his

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16. As cited by F. Stanwood, op.cit., p.47.

17. As cited in F. Stanwood, op.cit., p.48.

government's willingness to self-determination in principle but not in practice.

The immediate consequences of the Bolshevik revolution were thus only political. The Bolsheviks had set an example for nationalists throughout Asia. Championing the cause of the people of colonies and semi-colonies came to be a powerful weapon in the hands of Soviet Russia against the capitalist powers. In the 8th Party Congress, Bukharin candidly explained the *raison d'être* of Soviet support to the national aspirations of the colonial people. "If we propound the solutions of the right of self-determination for the colonies, the Hottentats, the Negroes, the Indians, etc; we lose nothing by it. On the contrary we gain; for the national gain as a whole will damage foreign imperialism".<sup>18</sup> For Britain, in the final analysis, the success of the Bolsheviks meant the end of Anglo-Russian co-operation in Central Asia and the Bolshevik victory heralded the end of Russian resistance to enemy advances in the region of the Black Sea - an area which Britain had begun to regard as essential to the security of the Empire.

#### THE ALLIED INTERVENTION:

Soviet Russia concluded separate peace with the Central Powers by signing an armistice on 15th Dec. 1917, followed later by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3rd March 1918. After

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18. The Communist International, 1919-1943. Documents selected and edited by Jane Degras, Vol. I, 1919-22, p.38.

the Russian exit from the war, the entire country comprising the Tsarist Empire was in turmoil and the Russian army was rapidly disintegrating. The Entente Powers were suddenly deprived of Russia's power and resources, which were in danger of falling into the German hands. For the British government, the blow was particularly severe in the eastern sector, where the Russians were their only allies. The collapse of Eastern front placed the Allies at a grave disadvantage vis-a-vis the Central Powers in Europe and Asia. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, wrote Lt.Col. P.T. Etherton of the British Indian Army, "threatened to extend the war to the heart of Asia..... It was also not considered not improbable that a Turko-German army might materialise for a campaign against India through Afghanistan."<sup>19</sup> Brigadier General W.E.R. Dickson observed : "Everything pointed to a probable Turko-German sweep across northern Persia towards the power barrels in Afghanistan".<sup>20</sup> Thus, for Britain, the withdrawal of Russia had made it possible for the enemy to take over all the land approaches to India and finally to make a bid to attack India as well. A few months later, Henry Wilson, the C.I.G.S, described the situation : "Germany's original plan was to obtain control of the Balkans and establish herself in Egypt and at the head of the Persian Gulf as the shortest route to India. This has failed, but the collapse of Russia has spread a new route to

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19. P.T. Etherton, In the Heart of Asia, p.2-3.

20. W.E.R. Dickson, East Persia, A Backwater of the Great War, p.56.

the East by the Black Sea, Caucasus and Caspian. German action has however, been greatly facilitated by the spread of Bolshevism to the Caucasus".<sup>21</sup>

The question of the security of British empire became a primary consideration of British policy, and an added responsibility for operations in Central Asia was to be shouldered by the Government of India. In a telegram to the Viceroy of India on April 2, 1918, Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, sounded a note of warning: ".....the area of War is spreading steadily eastwards. It may be necessary, therefore for India to deal with emergencies which arise in that theatre without our being able to reinforce it from the West.... I think, therefore, that you should take this opportunity to do everything in your power to increase the Indian establishment for war....."<sup>22</sup> In a telegram to the War Office on April 13, 1918 Charles Munroe, the Commander-in-Chief of India, gave a review of the military situation as it affected India and expressed considerable apprehensions. "The apparently increasing hostility displayed against us by the Russian Communists now in power has altered profoundly the strategical outlook. The fact must be faced unless a change of Russian sentiment occurs, it is not beyond the power

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21. As cited by Zafar Imam, Colonialism in East-West Relations p.90.

22. Ibid, p. . . .

of German organisation using the Russian railways to place at the rail heads bordering the Afghanistan frontier a force of considerable strength".<sup>23</sup> The Indian Government was very apprehensive of a tribal attack on India from Afghanistan and it also feared a direct Turko-German attack on India.<sup>24</sup> On April 23, 1918 the Government of India in an aide-memoire to the Prime Minister, urged upon him the necessity of strengthening the defence of India in view of imminent enemy attack on the North-Western frontiers of India.<sup>25</sup>

The Soviet withdrawal from the War was attended by an intensification of insurrectionary drive by the agents of the Central powers, who were operating throughout the country lying between the Black Sea and the Indian frontier of Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup> Noted among these agents were Wassmuss, "the German Lawrence", and Oskar Von Niedermayer, who directed Turko-German intrigues in Persia and Afghanistan respectively.<sup>27</sup> They capitalised on the epistle which the Sultan of Turkey had issued in his capacity as Khalifa to the followers of Islam joining them to wage Jihad against the Allies. However, what particularly aggravated the situation for Britain was the release by Soviet authorities of the German and Austro-Hungarian

23. Ibid, p.91.

24. Ibid, p. 91-92

25. Ibid, p. 92.

26. P.T.Etherton, op.cit., p.3.

27. Christopher Sykes, Wasmus, "The German Lawrence" for the activities of Wasmus and Niedermayer.

prisoners of war, who numbered over a hundred thousand and were held in camps and around Tashkent in Central Asia. A well-projected organization of these prisoners could have proved catastrophic to the British hegemony in Asia. Lt.Col. F.M.Bailey who headed the British Mission to Turkestan in 1918, later remarked: 'What would have happened if the agents of the Central Powers had been able to organize and arm them (the prisoners) and to produce a formed body in Afghanistan in alarming to contemplate.'<sup>28</sup>

The War Office was also worried about the possibility a Turco-German advance in the Eastern Sector towards the Indian frontiers. In March 1918, when Soviet Russia finally signed the Treaty of Brest Litovsk with the Germans, Sir Henry Wilson, the C.I.G.S., suggested that German ambition in the East could be thwarted only by an immediate Japanese intervention in Siberia and by the complete re-creation of the Eastern front.<sup>29</sup> Early in May, the Supreme War Council, in a memorandum "German cause in the East", proposed the following measures to be adopted in the Eastern Sector; first, the control of the whole of Western Persia; second, seizure of the Transcaspian railway and occupation of Krasnovodsk on the Russian side of the Caspian; and third, 'to encourage the Amir of Afghanistan to attack on Russia in the north, which would occupy the minds of his turbulent tribesmen and turn their thoughts from the

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28. F.M.Bailey, Mission to Tashkent, p.8.

29. As cited by Far Imam, op.cit., p.94.



plains of India.<sup>30</sup> Major Alfred Knox, the former military attache in Petrograd, and a firm advocate of intervention, in memorandum to the War Office, pleaded the case of Allied intervention in the North, Caucasus and Turkestan, and in the Far East for averting the supposed military threat to the Indian Empire. He warned that unless this was not done "German militarism will be triumphant and a farther disastrous war in the near future will result in the inevitable loss of our Indian Empire".<sup>31</sup>

The British Government was alarmed over the possibility of German penetration in the Eastern Sector and the transfer of German troops to the Western Sector. In December 1917, when the Russo-German talks began at Brest-Litvsk, the German menace appeared formidable to the Allied powers. The British government reacted strongly to Soviet Russia's "Decree of Peace" and rejected Trotsky's moves for recognition of the new government in Russia and turned down his invitation to participate in the peace negotiations with Germany. The Soviet Government, by its very first act of making peace with the Germans earned the extreme hostility of Britain. From the very beginning, the British public opinion was geared to the view that the Soviet regime was working in close-co-operation with the Germans, and any relation with them was as immoral as it was undesirable. One of the most active advocates of

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30. Ibid, p.94.

31. Ibid, p.94.

intervention was George Buchanan, who returned from Petrograd as British ambassador in January, 1918. He advocated a policy of armed intervention. He contended that the "Russian problem was the dominating factor in the international situation, and so long it was left unresolved there could be no permanent peace in Europe. Moreover, to leave Russia to her fate might result in Germany one day securing the control of Russia's vast manpower and untold mineral wealth; while to allow the Bolsheviks to consolidate their position would mean the dissemination by their agents of subversive Communist doctrine through the greater part of Asia and Europe.....<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, the War Office, with its decisive voice in the military policy and strategy of the war, was all the more convinced of the close German-Soviet co-operation. It was consistently stressing the need to make a move against the Bolsheviks. The War Office in a memorandum, "Delay in the East", circulated to Cabinet with Wilson's appreciative remarks, blurted out: "The policy of flirtation with the Bolsheviks is both wrong and immoral..... If we wish to win the war and to safeguard our position in the East, we must support the non-Bolshevik elements who form the majority in Russia".<sup>33</sup> Soviet propaganda efforts against the British Empire did not pass unnoticed by the watchful eyes of the British Government.

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32. G. Buchanan, My Mission to Russia, pp. 233-34.

33. As cited by Jafar Imam, op.cit., p.97.

Balfour in his memorandum of December 9, 1917, expressed his concern with the anti-British propaganda launched by the Bolsheviks, particularly their call to the Muslims of India to revolt.<sup>34</sup> The whole situation arising out of Soviet withdrawal from war, the possibility of a Turko-German advance towards Afghanistan and India and the anti-British propaganda launched by the Bolsheviks came in for detailed discussion at several meetings of the British War Cabinet and the Foreign Office. On December 21, 1917 the British War Cabinet approved a memorandum drawn up by the Foreign office, seeking close cooperation with France for negotiating with anti-Bolshevik groups in Russia and to arm them for military actions against Germany. This plan aimed at consolidating the position of Allied powers in South Russia. This plan of action was approved by France soon after. And on December 23, 1917, the Allied representatives met in Paris and divided Russia into zones of influence - Transcaucasia, North Caucasus, Central Asia and Northern Russia was to be Britain's sphere of influence and Ukraine, Crimea and Besarbia belonged to France. Thus Britain and France began to support financially and militarily these anti-Bolshevik governments in Russia which represented a military and political force. On March 15, 1918 a conference of Premiers and foreign ministers of the Entente countries was held in London, which decided not to recognise

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34. Ibid, p.96.

the treaty of Brest-Litovsk and to immediately begin the intervention in Russia. In May 1918 the supreme war council proposed several measures to be taken in the eastern sector which included the control of the whole of western Persia, the seizure of the Transcaspian railway and the occupation of Krasnovodsk on the Russian side of the Caspian. Accordingly the British Govt., took four steps ostensibly to counter the Turko-German threat to the Indian empire, but actually these measures constituted an act of intervention in Soviet Russia. First, in January 1918 a military expedition was dispatched under Maj. Gen. L.C. Dunsterville from Baghdad to Baku. Second, the East Persian Cordon, which had been set up in 1915 to prevent enemy infiltration from Persia into Afghanistan, was further strengthened. Third, a military mission under Maj. Gen. Wilfred Malleon was dispatched to Transcaspia in the summer of 1918. Fourthly, another military mission led by Lt. Col. M. Bailey was sent to Tashkent.

The British intervention in Soviet Russia was greatly facilitated by the civil war condition prevailing there soon after the October revolution. The Soviets were struggling hard to establish their power in Central Asia. The formation of an anti-Soviet coalition government of Transcaucasia by the nationalist groups of Georgian Mensheviks, Armenian Dashnaks and Azerbaijan Musavatists at Tiflis on November 28, 1917 provided a ready basis for future British activity in this area. Both the British and the said Trans-Caucasian

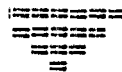
government worked towards achieving the same objective, viz., separation of Transcaucasia from Soviet Russia. So when the British sent special military-cum-intelligence mission led by General Dunsterville in January 1918 to Caucasus, he lost no time in establishing contact with these counter-revolutionary groups at Tiflis. They now joined hands to overthrow the Soviet power in Baku. It was in August 1918 that the British forces landed in Baku, where they were commanding the Soviet Dashnaks and Mensheviks. The British plan had three main objectives - to gain control of Caspian shipping, the occupation of Baku and Krasnodar.<sup>35</sup> But the British forces led by Dunsterville could not sustain their hold over Baku for long. They began withdrawing in September, 1918. On September 15, Baku was occupied by the Turkish troops. But soon afterwards on October 30, 1918 the Turkish command signed an armistice under which it had to withdraw its troops from all areas including Transcaucasia and Daghestan, and transfer Baku and Azerbaijan to the British. Turkey's defeat and withdrawal of its forces from Transcaucasia, the Allied navy occupied Turkish ports and the British resumed contacts with the counter-revolutionary forces in Transcaucasia. Even after the defeat of Germany in the war, the British assigned a significant role to Transcaucasia in their anti-Soviet plans. The British Secretary for war, Milner stated the British objective as to keep Bolsheviks away from the areas lying to the east of the Black Sea, i.e., Transcaucasia, the Don area and Turkestan.

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35. Mitrokhin, L., Failure of Three Missions, p.47.

In pursuit of this policy, the British forces occupied Baku in November 1918.<sup>36</sup> They had despatched another military mission under Malleon to operate in Turkestan.

In March 1919, owing to the unsettled political conditions and deteriorating economic situation at home, Lloyd George insisted on the withdrawal of British troops from Russia. Accordingly the War Cabinet decided to withdraw British troops from all parts of Russia and the British and Indian troops started pulling from Caucasia and Transcaspia in April 1919. But it decided to continue British intervention in an indirect form by providing arms and ammunition and financial support for all anti-Bolshevik elements. The purpose of this policy was to enforce a blockade of Soviet Russia and to create a cordon sanitaire from the Baltic to the Black Sea and to Turkestan for safeguarding the empire against the menace of Bolshevism.<sup>37</sup>




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36. Mitrokhin, L., op.cit., p.50-51.

37. Jafar Iman, op.cit. p.112.

CHAPTER - III

MALLESON / SSION IN CENTRAL ASIA

Whereas the formation of anti-Soviet coalition government of Transcaucasia at Tiflis in November 1917 provided a fertile ground for the British interventionist forces led by Dunster-ville, conditions obtaining in Central Asia at the time were not different. Here the Soviets were involved in a tense and complicated struggle against the White Russians, pan-Islamic Turks and nationalist groups. Notwithstanding the establishment of Soviet power in some parts of Central Asia like Tashkent, Samarkand, Khojent, Merv etc., this region was virtually cut off from Soviet Russia as a result of the capture of Orenberg by Dutov. The Amirs of Bukhara and Khiva were also making preparations to launch attacks on the pockets of Soviet control in Turkestan. The pan-Turkic Muslim leaders of Kokand also declared the formation of an autonomous government there. They received support from the Khans of Bukhara and Khiva. In July 1918 the counter-revolutionary government of Transcaspia was formed in Ashkhabad. Thus the Soviets were locked in an intense struggle against the secessionist forces represented by Dutov, Kokand autonomists and the Ashkhabad Committee. This internal strife and the severing of communication link between Soviet Russia and Central Asia, further encouraged Britain to intervene in this area by organising and supporting these anti-Bolshevik groups with a view to subvert the process of establishment of the Soviet power in Central Asia. It was under such circumstances that the British sent a military-



cum-intelligence mission under the leadership of Malleson to Central Asia.

The first indication about this mission was given by E. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, in his letter dated January 4, 1918 to the Viceroy of India, in which he had asked if it was possible "to set-up a British organisation in the Turkistan like Dunsterville's in the Caucasus in order to support anti-Minimalist movement".<sup>1</sup> In another telegram dated January 5, 1918 the Secretary of State for India expressed his belief that it was justified and safe to send a 'mission' to Turkestan because "all effective control over native population in Turkestan has been removed owing to the collapse of Central government in Russia and complete breakdown of discipline in the Russian army".<sup>2</sup> The telegram also stated that intervention was necessary because there "had been strong anti-British sentiments among the Muslims and the Bolsheviks were whipping up these sentiments". The British ambassador to Russia became concerned with the way the Bolsheviks were carrying out revolutionary reforms in this region, which he feared, could affect the situation in Iran and Afghanistan. So he justified Britain's urgent intervention in Central Asia.

The Secretary of State for India again wired the Viceroy in Delhi on January 25, 1918 asking him to make

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1. Foreign and Political Department, Frontier, Confidential-A., 1919, Nos 167-362, NAI.
  2. Ibid.

necessary preparations for the dispatch of a suitable Mission to Turkestan without any delay.<sup>3</sup> It was in reply to this telegram that the Viceroy formulated detailed proposals for setting up two centres to direct anti-Soviet operations in Turkestan: one in Kashgar (with its sphere of action in Ferghana and Samarkand), another in Meshed (with its sphere of action in the entire territory west of the Oxus river and also Bokhara). General Malleon was proposed as the commander in Meshed. Both the India office and Foreign office in London agreed to his proposal of the Viceroy. The Viceroy was informed in a letter dated March 25, 1918, that there was no objection to the sending of a "British Mission to Russian Turkestan" or selecting required officers for service with the "Turkestan Mission" and despatching them to Meshed and Kashgar.<sup>4</sup> By September 1918 members of the Meshed intelligence mission were selected. Major-General W. Malleon was appointed as head of the mission with Major W.H. Bingham, Captains R. Teague Jones, Abdul Samad Shah, H. Nash, T.S. Jarvis and others as its members. Later Captain Foul who was an agent in Baghdad, and Major Mir were assigned to the mission. Initially the whole mission was placed under the Commander-in-chief, Eastern Command of the British forces.<sup>5</sup> Major General Malleon who had served in the intelligence division of the

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3. Ibid.

4. Foreign and Political Department, Frontier Confidential-B. 1919, No.3, NAI.

5. Foreign and Political Department, Establishment-B, August, 1918, No.186, p.3, NAI.

Anglo-Indian Army during the years 1904 to 1914, was quite familiar with the political situation in Afghanistan and Iran. In the first years of World War he had taken part in operations in East Africa. British official papers referred to the mission as Malmiss - a combination of two abbreviated words "Malleeson" and "Mission". According to Ellis, Malleeson was placed at the head of the new mission owing to his exceptional knowledge and abilities as an intelligence officer. Captain Tegue-Jones was already posted in Meshed as an intelligence agent. The formation of this mission was done in complete secrecy and the control over its operations was entrusted to the Government of India.

#### AIMS OF MALMISS:

If we go by the official British version, the Malleeson mission was intended to prevent the possible advance of German-Turkish troops from Transcaucasia to the Borders of India along the Transcaspien Railway. Later Malleeson, himself wrote about the danger of enemy penetration of Transcaspia: "The opinion of those in high places in Simla was that it needed the appearance of but a detachment of German or Turkish Troops on the Northern frontiers of Afghanistan to precipitate a jihad against us... The situation was fraught with danger that the Government of India, could hardly sleep at nights".<sup>6</sup>

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6. Malleeson, W. E. Frid, The British Military Mission to Turkestan, 1918-20, Journal of the Central Asian Society, Vol IX, Part II (1922), p.96.

The British India Government's annual report stated that "German machinations arising out of the collapse of Russia seemed to threaten the very gates of India".<sup>7</sup> But Soviet scholars disagree with this point of view. In their view, actually, Malleson's task was to overthrow Soviet government in Turkestan by directly bringing in British troops and supporting internal counter-revolutionary forces. They believe that initially the mission was to prevent the Bolsheviks from obtaining control over the western section of the railway line and the port of Krasnovodsk.<sup>8</sup> The Soviet scholar, L.M.Mitrokhin was stated that the true intentions of the Mission were carefully concealed and even Col. Redl, Chief of the intelligence network in Meled, was not aware of them when he wrote to the Chief of the General Staff in Simla on April 22, 1918, that additional information concerning lines along which the military mission would work would greatly assist his preparatory work.<sup>9</sup> According to Mitrokhin, the planned British armed intervention in the Transcaspian region of Soviet Turkestan transcended the limits of a local military operation. Malmiss was planned to eventually bring larger British military forces into North India, forces sufficient to conduct operations to seize not only Transcaspia, but also all Soviet Central

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7. Williams Rushbrook. L.F., India in the years 1917-1918, p.3.

8. Percy Sykes, History of Persia, p.496.

9. War Diary, Persia, Vol.41, April, 1918, cited in L.Mitrokhin, Failure of three missions, p.68.

Asia.<sup>10</sup> As in the case of Dunsterforce, the British agents being sent into Soviet territory were instructed to make special efforts to establish contacts with the anti-Soviet counter-revolutionary forces. Mitrokhin quotes a telegram received by the Director of Military Intelligence in London in June 1918, from the agent "Caumilage", to buttress his view. In this telegram dated May 20, 1918, the agent "Caumilage" reported that the counter-revolutionary forces commanded by Ataman Dutov at Orenburg and on the Bokhara-Tashkent line were an oppressive forces threatening the Soviet Government in Turkestan. The agent then described his talks with the leaders of Russian counter-revolution, who, in his words, proposed to declare a Governor-Generalship over Turkestan including Orenburg-Vyerney-Krasnovodsk.<sup>11</sup> After the overthrow of Soviet Government, this Governor-Generalship, "Caumilage" reported, would declare in favour of Allies and old Russia and denounce the present Russian Government. The declaration was to be made in June. Representatives of counter-revolutionary organisations, "Caumilage" concluded "are very anxious to obtain the open support of England or temporary protectorate of England". "Caumilage" advised the contemplated Governor-Generalship to be called the "Turkish Union" and favoured offering it

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10. Mitrokhin. Leonid, Failure of three Missions, p.68.

11. Foreign and Political Department. Secret-War, Persia Series, Part XX Sep.1919, Nos. 1-433, NAI.

moral and financial support.<sup>12</sup> He was of the view that it was necessary to seize the Caspian Fleet and Mercantile marine, make Krasnovodsk a British protectorate and send in troops there for maintaining law and order. The Agent believed that if the Caspian Naval and merchantships were seized and if the railway lines were safely under control, these would provide a foothold in Central Asia for planning further advance. The Agent had even worked out the estimate that it would cost the British government two million roubles to proceed with the adventure and proposed that special bank-notes be issued for making payments. He stated that it was worth it, because once translated into reality, the plan would soon pay back handsomely after the seizure of Turkestan's cotton fields and cotton export to Iran. "Caumilage" proposed that a British task force or Anglo-Indian task force with specially selected officers be sent to Turkestan just to provide moral support. Still insisting that his plan was well worth the costs, he wrote: "I can not urge too strongly that all support be given. 450,000 pounds sterling is the actual cost to us, which if successfully invested, will have great effect in India and Persia and may save us millions in future".<sup>13</sup>

The Mallison mission soon began to operate in Central Asia in accordance with Caumilage's plan. The Chief of the General Staff in India reported on June 16, 1918, to the

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12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

Director of Military Intelligence in London that General Malleon was expected to leave Simla for Quetta on June 28, 1918 and was then to proceed to Meshed, the place of his assignment. This marked the beginning of preparations for the British armed intervention in the affairs of Soviet Central Asia.

The Mission of officers were to provide liaison between the British headquarters and local counter-revolutionaries. White guard Col. Zaitsev recalled later that the British had come up with the money, weapons, ammunition and hardware for all the armed forces opposing the Soviet Government. They had also promised military support from the northern parts of Persia.<sup>14</sup> Capt. Jarvis was rushed to Ashkhabad when on July 12, 1918 the revolutionary authority was toppled there. At about the same time Cap. R. Teague-Jones arrived in Krasnovodsk. The rebels sent Col. Junkovsky to the Malleon Mission at Meshed to lead for financial support and the transfer of British troops to the border area. Gen. Malleon, who arrived at Meshed on July 18, 1918 reported to the British General Staff in India: "I had final interview with the representative of "Turkestan Union" this morning and paid over to him 1,800,000 roubles, which together with 200,000 roubles paid yesterday complete the two million roubles asked for". In exchange, Malleon demanded that the counter-

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14. Mitrokin. L. and Raikov, The Collapse of Operation "Malmis". Soviet Land, No.23, p.19.

revolutionaries step up the anti-soviet activities. He also reported : "Finally I broached the subject of large supplies of cotton now lying in Russian territory and said that whilst we have no particular need for it ourselves, it is virtually important in common interest of allies..... I suggested that the Union should keep this cotton under their control".<sup>15</sup> Junkovski promised Malleson that his "organisation" would act under the guidance of the British and do everything possible "in the joint interest".

General Malleson reported on August 1, 1918, to the Chief of the General Staff in Simla that he expected news from his agents whom he had sent to negotiate with the counter-revolutionaries in Central Asia. He believed that the Transcaspian leaders would seek "our moral, financial and military assistance". Malleson was not oblivious of the fact that assisting the Ashkabad Committee, he would be openly opposing the Bolsheviks and such a policy might or might not be in accord with the declared policy of His Majesty's Government. He acknowledged that the Bolsheviks in Turkestan were far from defeated and if the Bolsheviks should win, their rage against the British might induce them to offer every facility to a German-Turkish advance into Central Asia. Britain would also suffer a great loss of prestige, and her

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15. Persia Series. Part XX. No.364, pp.152-153, NAI, cited by Mitrokhin, op.cit., p.74.



"numerous enemies in these parts of the world might throw off their mask" and openly act against her".<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, Malleeson believed that the Bolsheviks would be eventually defeated. In his opinion the advantages of direct association with the leaders of the Transcaspian anti-Bolshevik movement would be great. He would be able to prevent the Turks from having access to Krasnovodsk, the only port of the eastern shore of the Caspian, and keep them from the lines of communication into the interior as well. The government would have to choose between these two courses of action, Malleeson said. The third possibility, doing nothing and sitting on the fence, would be disastrous; it would only alienate both sides.<sup>17</sup> He sought immediate instructions which would enable him to reply to the Ashkabad Committee's request for aid. The reply to Malleeson's alarming telegrams came not from War Office but from the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army General McMonro. He gave Malleeson a free hand, as he felt that such a complex situation could be only evaluated by the man on the spot. McMonro had full faith in Malleeson and he favoured quick action without reference to either India Office or War Office to achieve the desired

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16. Foreign and Political Department, Secret - War Proceedings, Oct., 1919, No.49 and 51, cited by Mitrokhin, op.cit. pp.76-77.

17. Ibid.

objectives.<sup>18</sup> Malleon was grateful to Monro for the freedom of action granted to him and he telegraphed his own opinion that the situation presented a unique opportunity to occupy Krasnovodsk and that he should openly espouse the cause of anti-Bolshevism and secure from the Ashkabad Committee the right to post a British garrison at that strategically important port.<sup>19</sup> Thus, British Government gave its agents a free hand in fighting out the Bolsheviks within Russian territory. Malleon was quite clear in his objectives, which meant an open conflict with the Bolsheviks. Accordingly, Malleon directed his efforts at making the anti-Soviet "Transcaspian Provisional Government", which was referred to in his reports as the "Ashkabad Committee" more active. On August 16, 1918, the General summoned the delegate from Transcaspia who was in Meshed and warned him that lack of resolution in the struggle against the Bolsheviks would lead to the suspension of British subsidies, arms deliveries and other "aid". Malleon dictated to the committee list of measures to be undertaken to unite all counter-revolutionary groups.<sup>20</sup>

#### MALLEON AND THE ASHKABAD GOVERNMENT:

On August 19, 1918 an agreement was drawn up between Malleon and the Ashkabad Committee's representative under which the British mission and the committee undertook "to act

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18. Ullman, R.H. *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921, Vol.I, Intervention and the War*, p.316.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Foreign and Political Department, *Secret Proceedings* p.44. Telegram No. M.D.00251. Cited in Mitrokhin, *op.cit.*, p.78.

together for the restoration of peace and order in Transcaspia and Turkestan" in view of the common danger from Bolshevism and Turko-German invasion. "On behalf of His Majesty's government, the agreement concluded is under:- Major General Malleson, representing His Majesty's Government guarantee the continuance of military and financial help so long as the Transcaspian Government remains in power and continuance to place at the head of its political programme the restoration of order and the suppression of Bolshevism and Turko-German intrigue and plans for invasion". As becomes clear from the published Russian version of the text of the agreement, the agreement got no further than the protocol stage.<sup>21</sup> In this regard Prof. Ullman remarks that it never received the formal sanction of the British Government although the Government felt morally obliged towards fulfilling the promises that Malleson had already been allowed to make. The document was in fact simply an agreement for co-operation between the Ashkhabad Committee and the British Mission in Meshed. In 1954, a Soviet historian Volkov claimed that the "English imperialists carried with them a plan for creation of a colonial government in the Republic of Turkestan."<sup>22</sup> He went on to quote a purported extract from the agreement: "This republic will find itself under the exclusive influence of England and will enjoy such

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21. The Revolt in Transcaspia 1918-1919. Central Asian Review, Vol.VI 1959. No.2, pp.122-125.

22. Ullaman, R.H., Intervention and the War, p.317.

independence as that of the English African colonies, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State".<sup>23</sup> The western scholars do not consider the protocol of 19 August as an agreement for the colonial government of Transcaspia and Turkestan. According to Ullman, in signing such an agreement Malleon was hoping to erect not a colonial regime but simply one more barrier against the Turks and Germans in their March toward India. So far as the British Government was concerned, the most important objectives of its policy in Transcaspia were to secure control of shipping on the Caspian Sea and to occupy and fortify Krasnovodsk. The protocol specifically enabled Malleon to achieve these objectives. Opposition to Tashkent Soviet was a strictly secondary objective for the British, but for the Ashkhabad Committee it was much more important than standing guard against Turks and Germans who were hundreds of miles away. Fighting the Bolsheviki at Merv was quid pro quo for which the British got the Transcaspian Government's co-operation on the Caspian. The British were convinced that it had become necessary to secure the suppression of Bolshevism in Turkestan for safeguarding their colonial interests in India.<sup>24</sup> Malleon himself regarded the agreement as a temporary military measure. On the day when he signed it, he telegraphed to his superiors: "If they (the Transcaspian Government) stand, it is worth millions

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23. Ibid, p.319

24. Ibid, p.319

to us. If they fall our liabilities are nil".<sup>25</sup> In any case, Malleson had become an instrument of active British intervention in Central Asia against the Bolsheviki.

MALLESON AND THE MURDER OF 26 COMMISSARS:

In mid-September 1918, when Baku fell to the Turks, an incident occurred in Transcaspia which has become a cause celebre in Anglo-Soviet relations. It is the execution of the twenty six Commissars aged between 42 and 22 years by the Ashkhabad Committee. Moscow did not learn about the incident for months, until after a journalist named Vadim Chaikin, published in a Baku newspaper an article stating that the British were responsible for bringing the Commissars to Krasnovodsk and that League-Jones and certain members of the Ashkhabad Committee, fulfilling the wishes of the British Military Mission, decided to have them secretly shot.<sup>26</sup> Chaikin's version of the affairs was summarised by Chicherin in a note of protest sent by wireless to the British government on 21 April 1919. Stalin in an article, published two days later, wrote that the affair "shouted of the lawlessness and savage debauchery with which the English agents settled accounts with the natives of Baku and Transcaspia, just they had with the black of Central Africa."<sup>27</sup>

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25. Ibid, p.320

26. Ibid, p.320

27. Stalin, J. Collected Works, Vol.IV, p.252.

Soviet historians and scholars upto the present day continue to hold the Malleson mission and by inference the British government, entirely responsible for the killings. The isoturiya grazh inskoy voyny, calls the incident "one of the blackest and most infamous page in the history of English intervention in Soviet Russia"<sup>28</sup>. In 1963, on the forty fifth anniversary of the shooting, Pravda carried the following item : " On Sept. 20, 1918, twenty-six commissars of the Baku commun , true sons of the communist party, passionate fighters for the happiness of the people, were shot by the English interventionists and their social revolutionary servants. It went on : "Malleson acted in full contact with the counter revolutionary authorities of Ashkhabad and Krasnovodsk".<sup>29</sup>

The man chiefly to blame for the execution, Malleson claimed in his article published in later years that the British Mission had attempted to save the Baku Commissars.<sup>30</sup> Another participant in the intervention in Transcaspia, C.H. Ellis, also assisted in his article and book, "The Transcaspian Episode" that the Baku Commissars were shot by the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries without the knowledge of the British mission.<sup>31</sup> Commenting on the episode, John Silverlight wrote : "All this is good stirring stuff, but

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28. Cited : Silverlight, John, The Victor's Dilemma, p.207.

29. Ibid.

30. Malleson, W., The British Military Mission to Turkestan 1918-1922. Journal of the Central Asian Society, Vol.IX, 1922.

31. Ellis, C.H., The Transcaspian Episode, p.49.

it is the essence of legend, not fact. As the only man in Transcaspia with a disciplined force at his disposal, Malleon can theoretically be held accountable for everything that happened there at the time. In practice, he bore no responsibility for the affair".<sup>32</sup> Even, Ullman believes that though the Soviet charges "are flimsy indeed, they will never be completely refuted. He finds it difficult to exonerate the British government, and Malleon of the charge of murder. He writes : "It may be safely stated that the execution of the twenty-six commissars was not the policy of the British government. Nor was the shooting ordered by the Government of India or by Malleon. The puzzling element in the affair is Teague-Jones behaviour in Ashkhabad. He does not indicate that he made any effort to contradict Funtikov's statement that Malleon declined to take responsibility for the commissars. Yet he says that he knew at the time that the reverse was true. Moreover, he left the meeting of the Ashkhabad Committee before any decision had been reached..... We do not know how strongly worded Malleon's instructions to Teague-Jones were but if the latter had chosen to make an issue over the fate of the twenty-six commissars, Funtikov and his colleagues would surely have found it difficult to refuse the British request. Upon British goodwill depended British military support, upon British military support depended the future of anti-Bolshevism in Transcaspia".<sup>33</sup>

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32. Silverlight, *op.cit.*, p.207.

33. Ullman, R.H. *op.cit.*, p.323-24.

In a recently published book, the Soviet scholar, Leonid Mitrokhin has said that the categorical tone of these British Memoir writers and historians was based on the firm belief that documents in British archives concerning the Baku Commissars would never be made public. According to him, relevant documents are mentioned in the inventory in the National Archives of India, which obtained the archives of the Viceroy's government in 1947. He claims to have seen such materials of the Foreign and Political Department of British India's colonial government which run counter to the claims of Western scholars.<sup>34</sup> One such document is the telegram dated Sept. 18, 1918 addressed by General Malleon from Meshed, to the Chief of the General Staff in Simla. In this telegram, Malleon informed about the arrest of the Bolshevik leaders Petrov, Shaumian, Avakian, Japaridze and Koganov and that he was asking the Ashkhabad Government to handover the above mentioned leaders to him for despatch to India as their presence in Transcaspia was considered to be dangerous. This document removes all doubt about the complicity of the British agent like Col. Buttin, Chief of the British military mission or Malleon in the Commissars' affair. Malleon was not only aware about the arrest of the Commissars, but he wanted to decide their fate as he felt their presence in Transcaspia most dangerous. Mitrokhin argues that Malleon

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34. Mitrokhin, L. op.cit., p.80



never asked the Ashkhabad Government to handover the commissars since, subservient puppets as they are, Funticov and Co., would undoubtedly have responded positively. Moreover what was the use of asking if the commissars were in the hands of the British Interventionists as soon as they were arrested. Actually, having handedover the Bolshevik commissars to the Transcaspians counter-revolutionaries the British were well aware of their fate, and they did absolutely nothing to intervene, knowing that they were not at risk. Now were they mistaken : everything happened according to the scenario that had been prepared in advance".<sup>35</sup>

In his reply to telegram to Malleon dated Simla, September 20, 1918 the Chief of General Staff agreed to send the commissars to India as hostages and in particular suggested that Japaridze be detained in Meshed, while others should be dispatched to India". Another telegram dated September 23, 1918 from Malleon to the Chief of General Staff, Simla, which further removes any doubts about the role of British interventionists in this affair is worth quoting at length. Malleon wrote : "----- the alleged execution is politically advantageous as it means Ashkhabad Government have burnt their boats as regards Bolsheviks. The political fence sitters at Ashkhabad would have regarded Shaumian, Petrov and Company as counter

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35. Mitrokhin. L. p.cit., p.81.

36. General Staff correspondence, Vol.552, 1918, Diary No.75477, NAI

wherewith to save their own skins so long as the latter had remained alive.

"2. Ashkhabad Commitee are anxious that the execution should be kept secret and it was carried out quietly".<sup>37</sup>

Thus, General Malleon was convinced that the Baku commissars were a formidable force even under arrest and capable of thwarting British plans in Central Asia and Transcaspia and he did nothing to stop their murder. And when Malleon's telegram of Sept. 23 was received at the General Staff in Simla, the question arose as to who would eventually answer for the execution of the Soviet officials. And Malleon was directed to 'scold' the criminals for the murder of the Baku commissars. The Chief of the General Staff telegraphed General Malleon on Sept. 30, 1918:

"You are directed by Commander-in-Chief to consider representation to Trans-Caspian Government, at an opportune moment, of the fact that such actions as the execution of the Bolshevik leaders, in the view of the Government of India, make it difficult for us to support them effectively, and places their government outside the usages and laws of civilised communities".<sup>38</sup> That Malleon in his reply to the Chief of General Staff on October 2, 1918 noted that "This will be done

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37. Foreign and Political Department, External-B, Nov. 1922 Nos.33-94, p.2, NAI.

38. Cited in Strokhin, op.cit., p.83.

verbally",<sup>39</sup> throws sufficient light on the casual manner Malleon treated this case. He never bothered himself in taking up the matter with the "Shkhabad government" in written form. One cannot but agree with Mitrokhin that the enquiries by the General Staff and the Commander-in-Chief concerning the murders of the Baku commissars were a pure formality.<sup>40</sup>

#### THE COLLAPSE OF OPERATIONS IN MALMISS:

By August 1918 certain failures had compelled the British government to formulate a new plan. The Secretary of State for India wrote: "If the Emir of Afghanistan were now willing to assist the Emir of Bokhara, it has been suggested that the situation might be alleviated and the Bolshevik advance checked".<sup>41</sup> It was a secret message which stated the goal of British diplomacy in no uncertain terms to check the Bolshevik advance. However, by the autumn the leaders of counter-revolution had found themselves on the verge of collapse, with the British feeling that they were backing wrong horse. Malleon himself referred to the Trans-caspian Government as a bunch of petty adventure-seekers who were in an unsteady, partial and by far temporary control of an armed mob which they could contain only by force of bribery.<sup>42</sup>

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39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. General Staff Correspondence, Vol.534, NAI.

42. As quoted by Ullman, op.cit., p.324.

Malleson's prediction was accurate. A month later, the Ashkhabad Committee was replaced by "Committee of Public Safety"<sup>43</sup> organised by the Chief of Police, Drushkin. According to Ellis, the British Mission approached of the new government.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile in London, the Transcaspian situation was causing the Cabinet's Eastern Committee no little concern. The British Government had no warning that Malleson was going to conclude an agreement with Ashkhabad Committee. They were then faced with the fact that Malleson had apparently led the Transcaspian Government to believe that they might receive British financial assistance. When this was discussed in the Eastern Committee on October 17, there was feeling that since Malleson had made a promise, the government must keep it, despite the fact that Britain stood to gain nothing from a financing regime of such doubtful authority. The Treasury, however could not take so generous a view. Malleson had entered into his obligation without Treasury approval and against Treasury warnings to exercise great care.

No decision was reached at this meeting and Malleson was told to operate for the time being with the funds he already had.<sup>45</sup> The opinion of the Indian government was that the Ashkhabad Committee should continue to receive British support. The Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford telegraphed

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43. Ibid, p.325

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

on 23rd October, that the Ashkhabad government, although "thoroughly untrustworthy", represented at the moment the only body with whom the British could deal.<sup>46</sup> The Viceroy did not say why he felt that Malleon should continue to support the Transcaspian Government, but this question was raised in the Eastern Committee on 24 October.<sup>47</sup> The war was virtually over, it was pointed out, and there was no further likelihood of Turkish or German penetration into Central Asia. In these circumstances what was the justification for retaining the British troops in Transcaspia? Now the operation and maintenance of Malleon's force in Transcaspia was justified on the pretext of protecting the Persian frontier against Bolshevik invasion and to keep disturbing influences out of Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup> The Viceroy too had questioned the propriety of continuing the Malleon operation in his telegram dated October 23. The Viceroy had commented that Malleon's support of the Ashkhabad Committee had brought British and Indian troops into direct conflict with the Bolsheviks.<sup>49</sup> In his reply, dated November 15, the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, tried to explain the British position in this regard: "It is not the policy of his Majesty's Government to embark on anti-Bolshevik campaign in Russia, but considerations both of honour and of interest demand that we should keep Bolshevism

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46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Mitrokhin, *loc. cit.*, p.94.

from regions of the East or the Black Sea. Our subject is to help Russians to stand by themselves, and we should therefore do everything possible to support and strengthen the existing organisations which offer hope of maintaining law and order and are working in our interests. Our support must consist ordinarily of warlike materials and financial aid and our troops must not be committed to fresh enterprises which might place them in difficulty".<sup>50</sup>

This was not a very satisfactory answer. As some members of the Eastern Committee pointed out on 21 November when the matter was next discussed that it was one thing to support Denikin, Alekeseyev's successor in South Russia and quite another thing to try to buttress so rotten a structure as the Ashkhabad Government. In the end a compromise was reached: it was decided to allocate to Malleson one lump sum so that he could fulfil his promises to Ashkhabad Committees.<sup>51</sup>

A fortnight later on 18 Dec. the Eastern Committee was informed that the Government of India wanted to withdraw Malleson's troops across the Persian border. Now that the war was over, and since the British government was not formally at war with the Bolsheviks, the Government of India could find no justification for keeping British troops in Transcaspia.

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50. As quoted in Uman, op.cit., p.326

51. Ibid.

This view, however, was opposed by the War Office. The General Staff felt that withdrawing Malleson would mean abandoning the whole Merv-Ashkhabad-Krasnovodsk line and losing control of the Caspian. Malleson telegraphed that the Ashkhabad Government would certainly collapse unless British financial support were continued, which was, of course, impossible.<sup>52</sup>

The result of this conflict of views was that no decision was taken; the India Office was directed to prepare a brief on the problem for future discussion.<sup>53</sup> This was simply a delaying practice. It was clear to all that an evacuation would have to occur. For the War Office there was slight consolation that the withdrawal would only be into Persia and that the so-called eastern cordon could still be maintained with its axis at Meshed. The order to withdraw was finally sent to Malleson in Feb. 1919. In the words of Ullman, "when the last British and Indian troops had left on 15 April, the future anti-Bolshevism in Transcaspia was linked-albeit precariously with Denikin's fortunes in South Russia."<sup>54</sup>

Soviet and Western historians have taken different and opposite views regarding the real motive of Malmiss. Soviet writers, Mitrokhin and A. Raikov have described it as an attempt to convert Turkestan into a colony and a plan to

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52. Ibid.

53. Ullman, R.H., p.cit., p.327.

54. Ibid.

isolate Iran, Afghanistan and India where a rising tide of the national liberation movement had been building up on the basis of the ideas of the October revolution. In their view the operation Malmiss was launched at the time when the newly established Soviet government was proclaiming its first decrees for the nationalisation of land, irrigation systems and railways, confiscation of cotton from dealers for the benefit of the working people, providing peasants with grain seeds and introduction of an eight-hour working day, the British imperialists had been planning to sabotage the revolution and by so doing pave the way for unlimited plunder of Turkestan. Thus, instead of proceeding with its creative reforms, the Soviet Government had to mobilise troops to deal with counter-revolutionary riots and fight rebel bands of General Dutov and the so-called Kokand Autonomy, as well as the British interventionists.<sup>55</sup> As against this, Ullman feels that the British presence in Transcaspia had come as a means of stemming the threatened expansion of German-Turko arms and German-Turko influence into Russia and in case of Transcaspia through Russia into British India. And as in North Russia and Siberia the inevitable result of British intervention had been conflict between British and Soviet forces.<sup>56</sup>

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55. Mitrokhin. L, and A.Raikov, op.cit., p.19.

56. Ullman. R.H., op. cit., p.328.



There is no doubt that situation in Transcaspia and Trans-Caucasia was complicated by the presence thereof some 35,000 German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war. Like their comrades in Siberia, they had been put at liberty after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Their presence caused the British Indian government considerable concern. Their policy keeping Afghanistan strictly neutral and preventing the entry of any anti-British influence there, was bound to be affected with the advent of Bolshevism in the northern parts of the fence around Afghanistan. The General Staff greatly feared the consequences of the influx of German and Turkish agents and smuggled arms into Afghanistan and India.

From the very start of the Malleon mission operations in Transcaspia it became an openly anti-Bolshevik campaign. Right from the very beginning, in all his dispatches from Transcaspia, General Malleon advocated an open alliance with the anti-Bolshevik factions, in spite of the fact that he himself was not at all convinced of the integrity and capability of the groups and factions he had intended to support. The actions of Malleon put the British in an open confrontation with the Soviet government. The fall of Bolshevik government at Baku too had coincided with the Malleon's operations in Trans-caspia. The complicity of British agents in the murder of the 26 Commissars by the British supported "Ashkhabad Committee" deeply injured the Anglo-Soviet relations. Under such circumstances the Bolsheviks seemed genuinely concerned that Britain was taking active part in the dismemberment of Russia.

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C H A P T E R - I V

B A I L E Y    I S S I O N   I N   T U R K E S T A N

Major Frederick Mashem Bailey occupies an important place in the history of British intelligence being one of the prominent agents of the British Secret Service in the East. According to his biographer, Arthur Swinson, Bailey was born in Lahore on Feb. 3, 1870. After getting educated in Edinburgh he returned to India in 1890, to enter military service in the colonial army in Nilgiri. Bailey's subsequent fate was associated with Col. Younghusband's expedition, the latter being a well-known adventurer and military intelligence agent who undertook expeditions as well as punitive campaigns in Tibet and other areas in India. Bailey was in Tibet from 1912 to 1914, participating in fixing the frontier line between British India and Tibet and between Tibet and Sikkim. In 1914, after taking part in military operations on the fronts of World War I in Europe, he was recalled to India for service in the North-West Frontier province.<sup>1</sup> He also spoke several languages. Such was Bailey's service record when he was assigned the task of heading a mission to Turkestan in early 1918, as part of the British steps to prop up anti-Bolshevik forces in Central Asia.

THE TURKESTAN MISSION IS FORMED:

Similarly to the military-intelligence missions headed by Generals Dunsterville and Malet, the Kashgar Mission

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1. Swinson, Arthur, Beyond the Frontiers : The Biography of Colonel. F.M.Bailey, Explorer and Special Agent with a Preface by Fitzroy Maclean, p. 137.

began to be formed in early 1918. Relevant documents preserved in the National Archives of India indicate that on Feb. 2, 1918, Secretary of the Foreign and Political Department, Denys B. Bailey proceeded with the task of setting up a top secret group with the help of General Staff of India. According to General Staff instructions, Major F.M. Bailey and Captain W.M. Marshall, officers in the political service in Mesopotamia, were sent hastily to Delhi for "complex" missions.<sup>2</sup> Arthur Swinson points out that some of the mission's organisers, in particular, the Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford, had certain doubts as to the need for Bailey and his party to be sent to Tashkent. However, the Secretary of State for India, E. Montagu, as well as intelligence chiefs in London, held a different opinion. They urgently needed reliable information on what was happening in Turkestan in order to implement their far reaching strategic plans.

On Feb. 26, 1918 the organisational division of the Foreign and Political Department prepared a preliminary list of members of the said "mission". Under Bailey's command were placed the "specialists on Russian matters" such as Captain P.T. Etherton, Captain V.S. Blacker, Major W.H. Birgham and George Macartney who were concerned themselves with Russia as professional agents and had visited the country on many occasions. They were accompanied by a special group of agents

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2. Foreign and Political Department - Establishment - B.Nos.277-284. 1918, Notes, p.1, NAI.

who knew the situation in Turkestan well, like Captain Abdul Samad Shah and Captain Teague-Jones. They were summoned on Feb. 27 by General Staff in India to receive instructions and discuss the ensuing operation.<sup>3</sup> Some of these persons had already been proposed to be attached with the Malleson mission when it was planned to form one "Turkestan Mission" but subsequently it was shelved. Instead, it was decided to send two missions to carry out subversive activities in Turkestan, one via Kashgar and another via Meshed. Hamilton Grant wrote that he had discussed the question with the Chief of the General Staff, and they had agreed that the Kashgar mission would be political for the time being. Its main task was to establish contacts in Turkestan with the anti-Bolshevik elements who were ready to cooperate with the British. The Kashgar mission was directly placed under the Foreign and Political Department of the British Indian government. The Mission includes Major Bailey, Captain Etherton, Captain Blacker and some Indian Officers. Grant suggested that while travelling, the Kashgar Mission would be under Bailey's authority and upon its arrival, the Consul-General in Kashgar Sir George Macartney, would take charge. The mission's preparations for the trip to Tashkent were generously financed. All the preliminary expenses to buy arms and equipment were recorded under the heading "Special Mission in Kashgar". In

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3. Ibid, Notes. p. .

1918 alone a considerable sum of one lakh rupees was allocated for this purpose.<sup>4</sup> Before setting out for Central Asia, Bailey carefully studied the situation in Soviet Turkestan. While in Kashgar, he was provided with all the papers including the secret intelligence reports regarding the political situation in Turkestan and Central Asia.

#### ACTIVITIES OF THE MISSION:

Bailey's group crossed the frontier of Soviet Turkestan on July 31, 1918, in the Turkestan area and on August 9 reached Andizhan where it for the first time met Bolshevik leaders. Then Blacker accompanied by Agent Khan Saheb Iftexhar Ahmed arrived by train in Tashkent on August 14, 1918. On August 23, Macartney also joined them at Tashkent.

Bailey and Macartney pretended to be members of a diplomatic mission before the Soviet authorities.<sup>5</sup> They met Domogatsky, the commissar for foreign affairs of Turkestan Republic to discuss the issues of prisoners of war, cotton and the property of British citizens in Turkestan. The British agents also raised the issue of putting a stop to the alleged "Anglophobe propaganda" by the Soviet side, "especially in Afghanistan and Persia".<sup>6</sup> Soon after its arrival in Tashkent, the British mission established contacts

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4. Establishment-B, January 1919, Nos. 285-294, p.42, NAI.

5. Mitrokhin, L. Failure of the Three Mission, p.119.

6. Bailey's Report on the Kashgar Mission, p.1, NAI.

with the US Consulate in Tashkent. Bailey contacted the US consul, Roger Tredwell, who was in Tashkent since May 1, 1918 and from then on the mission worked in close collaboration and friendship with Tredwell.<sup>7</sup> Roger Tredwell had already expressed his desire to coordinate relations directly with the intelligence service and to have contacts with the nearest allied representatives even before the British Mission was sent to Central Asia. This was one of the factors responsible for the speedy dispatch of Bailey and his assistants to Tashkent.<sup>8</sup>

Taking advantage of his diplomatic immunity, Tredwell was touring Turkestan actively conducting anti-soviet work together with local Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and members of other anti-Bolshevik parties and organizations. It was he who had directed and funded the main counter-revolutionary organization called Turkestan Military Organisation (TMO), prior to Bailey's arrival in Tashkent. Bailey utilised Tredwell's cooperation in establishing contact with the leaders of counter-revolutionary organisations in Turkestan with the aim of preparing an anti-Soviet mutiny in Tashkent. Bailey writes in his report : "soon after my arrival I got into touch with what I judged to be the Chief of several anti-Bolshevik organisations..... The most business-like

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7. Ibid.

8. Brun, A.H., *The London Times*. Experiences in Bolshevik Russia and Turkestan, p.120.

anti-Bolshevik organisation was headed by General Kondratovich, but the real organiser was M. Nazarov. They told me that their strength was about 3,000 Russians and that Irgash was in their organisation with 15,000 natives".<sup>9</sup> Entertaining serious doubts as to the assurances given by the leader of the anti-Soviet underground organisation, Bailey, was unable to ascertain the precise number of counter-revolutionaries headed by General Kondratovich. He was told that the whole organisation was split into 'fives'. As to the basmachi leader, Irgash, it proved to be extremely difficult to contact him from Tashkent. Bailey knew that the British command had established contact with Irgash before his arrival in Tashkent, financing Irgash and supplying him with weapons and ammunitions. But Bailey had no specific instructions to work with him. At the time Bailey had specific instructions to collaborate with the TMO. In his report on the work with the TMO, Bailey wrote : "This organisation pressed me to supply them with money..... If it was true that this organisation was being financed from Caucasus with difficulty, it was obviously necessary for me to pay them in Tashkent .... but at the same time it appeared to me dangerous to support an organisation that relied so much on Muhammadan help and I refused to help them until I had received definite orders on the subject from India".<sup>10</sup>

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9. Bailey's Report on the Khashgar Mission, p.3, NAI.

10. Ibid, p.3.



Judging by subsequent actions, the necessary orders were later received and his collaboration with the TMO expanded.

The fact that Bailey leaned towards the anti-Soviet organisation TMO was only natural. He was aware about the financial support received by this organisation from Malleson and also that behind "Ashkhabad Committee" stood the very same TMO, a branch of "Turkestan Union" whose leadership attempted to coordinate its activities with the Tashkent counter-revolutionary underground. Moreover Bailey was badly in need of the means of communication, particularly wireless and telegraph. Together with Tredwell he searched for a way to gain access to official liaison channels between Tashkent and Moscow. Headed by Bailey, counter-revolutionary subversive activities in Tashkent rapidly gained momentum.<sup>11</sup> Bailey reported: "I could, I believed, give a good deal of useful information to the force in Transcaspia which I believed to be advancing on Tashkent."<sup>12</sup> It seems that the British hoped to prepare a counter-revolutionary uprising in Tashkent which would begin after the British interventionist forces would be advancing towards Turkestan's revolutionary centre. This was what the British "Mission" was working on for several months.

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11. Foreign and Political Department, Frontier, Establishment-B February 1919, Nos.57-58, pp.8-9, NAI.
  12. Bailey's Report on the Kashgar Mission, pp. 2-3, NAI.

However, Bailey was mistaken in thinking that he would be able to conduct his anti-Soviet activities without a hitch. It did not take long for the Cheka (Extraordinary Commission for Combatting Counter-revolution) to notice that his interest extended beyond prisoners of war and cotton. It learnt about his contacts with the anti-Soviet organisation. If Domagatsky had earlier allowed him to communicate with Kashgar by radio, now the situation had sharply changed, especially after the murder of 26 Baku Commissars. On top of all that, the British troops had launched a disguised attack on the Bolshaviks in the Transcaspien region.

The Bailey Mission found itself in a predicament. While the British troops in the Trans-caspian region had started hostilities against Red Army units, the mission still enjoyed legal status in Tashkent. The British authorities in India were worried over it. They soon realised that the arrival of the military-diplomatic mission in Tashkent almost simultaneously with the dispatch of the forces headed by Malleon to the Transcaspien front was both a risky and worthless enterprise. There was also radioed a message from Macartney to Delhi that the Soviet authorities were suspicious of the aims of the mission. It followed from Macartney's radiogram that on instructions from Moscow government the Tashkent Soviet regarded the British Mission as unofficial. Macartney pointed out that the Commissar for Foreign affairs

demanding that the British authorities in India confirm the aims of the Mission. Macartney noted that the arrival of British troops in Ashkhabad caused natural anxiety in Tashkent, and it was necessary therefore, to urgently telegraph confirmation of the British "mission's peaceful aims". On Sep. 24, 1918, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, Hamilton Grant sent a cable to the Council of People's Commissars in Tashkent, asking it to regard Bailey, Macartney and Blacker as officials of the Indian Government, sent to Russia with friendly intentions and without any political or military aims.<sup>13</sup> The cable said that the Government of India did not doubt that they would be accorded due respect, and that all measures for their personal safety would be taken.<sup>14</sup> The council asked in turn why the British troops in Persia rendered support to the anti-Soviet rebels in Ashkhabad.<sup>15</sup> The Viceroy of India even requested London to assure the authorities in Tashkent that Bailey's mission was a mission of goodwill.<sup>16</sup> The Soviet authorities were not satisfied with the British replies, and sent the following cable to India on 27 September: "Macarthey and Blacker have gone to Kashgar. Bailey is still in Tashkent. We do not understand what powers are vested in him. Please give a clear explanation."

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13. Foreign and Political Department. External-B. Secret Proceedings No. 1922. Nos. 33-94, NAI.

14. Mitrokhin. L, and Raikov. A, Soviet Land, No. 20, 1987, p. 57.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

We are surprised that Indian Government did not answer our question about the reasons for the hostile action of British troops in Persia, notably, their support to the rebels in Askhabad".<sup>17</sup> On Sept.30, Hamilton Grant reported to Tashkent that events in Ashkhabad had nothing to do with Bailey's Mission which did not bear responsibility for them.<sup>18</sup> The British authorities in India seemed to feel that the Bailey Mission was on the verge of failure. Hamilton sent a message to Tashkent recommending that Bailey should withdraw.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile Bailey realised that strict surveillance was established over his Mission and his further stay in Tashkent was dangerous. He wrote in his report that he had discussed this situation with Tredwell and decided to disappear. He explained that the appearance of British troops in the Transcaspien region had set the Bolsheviks against the mission, and that if they were not shot at the Government's order, the soldiers would do it of their own free will.<sup>20</sup> On Oct.24, Bailey went underground. Having gone underground, Bailey attempted to get in touch with Irgash, although he doubted that reports about the size and quality of the bands of this basmachi leader were reliable. He charged Kondratovich with organising a small group to join Irgash. After learning that

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17. Ibid.

18. Foreign and Political Department, 1922 - Nos.33-94, NAI.

19. Ibid.

20. Bailey, Report on the Kas'gar Mission, p.24, NAI.

Kondratovich was buying horses, the Tashkent, Cheka personnel exposed the counter-revolutionary organisation. P.S.Nazaroff was arrested while Kondratovich managed to escape.<sup>21</sup> A wireless message from the Turkistan Central Executive Committee of Oct. 27, 1918 concerning the discovery of a counter-revolutionary conspiracy to the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars reads : "A counter-revolutionary organisation has been disclosed in Turkestan which operated under the leadership of Junkovski, received British money. There are many arrests, but the investigation is being continued. In view of this disclosure, Colonel of the Indian Service Bailey and his Secretary have fled".<sup>22</sup> On Nov.5 Bailey put on the uniform of an Austrian soldier, destroyed the papers and left Tashkent. He told General Kondratovich that he wanted to go to Ferghana to meet Irgash. However, Bailey was unable to reach either Irgash in Ferghana or Tredwell in Tashkent. He now started his clandestine struggle against the Soviet Government. He often changed his clothes and secret hideouts, coding letters and sending agents. While underground, Bailey, nevertheless, attempted to contact Kashgar and together with Kondratovich, awaited instructions from the British command in Transcaspia. It was their intention to unite the counter-revolutionary forces, enter Turkestan with troops expected from Transcaspia, "if no

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21. Foreign and Political Department, No.887, March 1923, NAI.

22. Mitrokin. L, Op.cit., p.123.

advance was intended, to move in conjunction with Irgash in Ferghana and the Cossacks under Dutoff who were on railway line between Orenburg and Tashkent".<sup>23</sup> The plan, however proved to be abortive. Bailey turned out to be virtually helpless in Turkestan. Such usually effective methods as blackmail, bribes, organisation of bandit groups and hiring of assassins failed to work as the Bolsheviki and Red Army succeeded in suppressing all form of resistance in Central Asia. The rebelling staged by Osipov in Tashkent was suppressed in January 1919, and in March 1919 the British interventionists had to retreat from the Transcaspian region under pressure from the Red Army. They never reached Tashkent. Bailey was surrounded on all sides and thus he proved ineffective for carrying out his mission.

In Dec. 1919 Austrian prisoner-of-war Mandich helped him to flee from Soviet Turkestan to Bukhara. Finally, Bailey decided to cross the frontier secretly. On Dec.18, 1919 Bailey and his fellow travellers left Bokhara<sup>24</sup> and crossed the Persian border in early January 1920, In early 1920 Bailey appeared in Delhi. He was instructed to draw up a detailed account of the situation in Soviet Turkestan. He presented the documents he had obtained during his mission and started to write a report. His work was greatly appreciated. On Feb.23,

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23. Bailey, Report on the Kashgar Mission, p.12, NAI.

24. Foreign and Political Department, External (Secret) Proceedings, Dec., 1922, Nos. 1-216, p.123, NAI.

1920 the Governor of Punjab wrote to the Indian Department of Home Affairs that Major Bailey had shown papers which threw light on relations between the Bolsheviki, Afghans and Indian revolutionaries. The Governor suggested that some of the papers be used in the Home Department of India for anti-Soviet propoganda.

Such was the end of Bailey's "Big game" to use Kipling's expression. Although it won him in Britain the fame of "super spy". But in real fact, the mission was a miserable failure and an utter fiasco. Its results were insignificant.

#### OBJECTIVES AND MOTIVE OF BAILEY MISSION:

Like all "missions" in Central Asia, Bailey mission has also generated controversy among historians and scholars. They have taken different stand and held opposite views regarding real objectives and motive of Bailey Mission. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine critically and objectively these variant views before drawing any conclusion in regard to the Bailey Mission.

As most of the works on Bailey Mission were based on archival materials, articles in the press and reminiscences by mission members, in particular books by P.T. Etherton, L.V.S. Blacker, C.H. Ellis and Bailey himself, we must first take into account testimonies offered by them.

According to Bailey's own account, the purpose of the mission was somewhat vaguely defined : "It seemed that it would be useful to go and see them (the Bolsheviks), find out what sort of people they were and to try to persuade them to continue the war against Germany, or atleast not to help the Central Powers in the war against us".<sup>25</sup> In the interview with the Soviet official Damagatsky at Tashkent on August 26, 1918 the Bailey Commission outlined its purpose in a more diplomatic language, as follows:

"1. To procure information on the advance of the Germans in the Ukraine and of the Turks towards Baku, seeing that the invasion of the Russian territory in those directions by our enemies was a matter of grave concern to us, and could well have a bearing on the tranquility of the Afghan and Indian borders.

"2. To report on the behaviour of the German and Austrain war prisoners, and on the steps the Soviets were taking to keep them interned, and to prevent them from escaping into Persian and Afghan territories.

"3. To report on the disposal of the raw cotton in Turkestan, of which some fifteen million poods were said to be lying in Ferghana and Samarkand. As was well known to

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25. Bailey, F.M., Mission to Tashkent, p.7.



the Soviets, the Germans were after this cotton, and we should like to know what the Soviets propose doing with important war material.

"4. To watch over the interests of British subjects in Turkestan, the Mission using its influence informally with the Soviets to prevent British subjects from suffering a repetition of those hardships and losses to which they were subjected when Kokand was attacked only a few months ago".<sup>26</sup> Stating the purpose of the Mission, Etherton later wrote, "We were to penetrate to Tashkent, the centre of Soviet fanaticism..... We were to investigate the situation on the spot, and examine questions affecting the safety and welfare of the British Empire..... We were also, to initiate and put into effective operation a system of propaganda".<sup>27</sup> Thus Etherton provides a glimpse of the real motives behind the Bailey mission.

According to Soviet scholars L.V. Mitrokhin and A.V. Raikov : "..... Bailey could not conceal his ~~true~~ goals being a representative of the imperialist bourgeoisie, he is full of hatred for the Revolution. He openly expressed regret that the four groups fighting against the Soviet government in Turkestan were not united and said otherwise Bolshevism would have certainly been destroyed in the region. He also

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26. Etherton, In the Heart of Asia, p. 6-7.

27. Ibid.

regretted that the advance of the British troops to Tashkent was too slow for achieving success".<sup>28</sup>

In their view "Bailey was a seasoned spy who had come to Turkestan for engineering the overthrow of the infant Soviet power. His mission constitutes an episode in the imperialist policy of Britain..... In his book Bailey gives hints about his real mission, some of which are quite meaningful. An interpretation of these hints would have remained a guess work but for the collapse of British Colonial domination in India".<sup>29</sup>

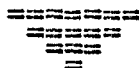
The Report on Kashgar Mission, 1918-1920 and other documents from the secret papers of the Special Bureau of Information which were discovered in the National Archives of India makes it possible to reconstruct more fully the real preparations, organisation and subversive activities of the Kashgar Mission. These documents reveal the details of the espionage activities carried out by the British Mission, enabling us to clarify a great deal of facts related to the strategy, tactics, policies and plans of the British government during the first difficult years of the establishment and consolidation of Soviet power in Central Asia.

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28. Mitrokhin. L, and Raikov. A, op.cit., p.57.

29. Ibid.

An integrated study of the British policy towards the new Soviet regime in Russia with particular reference to the hostile British reaction to establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia, and also the activities of the secret British mission led by Dunsterville, Malleson and Bailey shows beyond doubt that Bailey mission constituted an important step in the British intervention in Central Asia, though it did not succeed in the face of stubborn resistance of the Red Army.



**CHAPTER - V**

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**CONCLUSION**

British intervention in Central Asia has been the theme of several studies by several Western and Soviet scholars, both holding divergent views. But an objective analysis of their views and the actual happenings when read with the official opinions of the British authorities in London and India enables us to present a version which can fairly be described to be near-accurate.

As happened to be the case in the hey-day of 'great game' between Tsarist Russia and Britain during the nineteenth century, India continued to guide the British policy towards Central Asia. The new Anglo-Soviet relations too came to be influenced by the British strategic interests in her imperial possessions in the East, particularly Persia, Afghanistan and India. If the British expansions in India was surrounded by a rhetoric of 'defense' against the Tsarist Russian threat during the nineteenth century, now the British policy-makers argued that Britain's "defensive" expansion was a response to Bolshevism. It was first argued that British intervention in Russia had been necessitated by the need to re-establish the Eastern front. But the collapse of Germany and the end of war removed any such justification. Now the British linked it to their anti-Bolshevik crusade.

It was Britain which was most deeply involved in the allied intervention in Russia. The French were vociferous in

principle but parsimonious in practice. The United States was a reluctant participant. The British sought to prevent German domination of the Baltic provinces of Russia and oil fields of Caucasus. They also feared the spread of German influence and Turkish pan-Islamic agitation across the Caspian Sea into Persia and even to Afghanistan and India, the heart of the British empire. These motives impelled the British to take the lead in devising schemes for intervening in order to create an Eastern front against Germany. Once intervention had begun, their global concerns led them to exercise the dominant foreign influence upon the various anti-Bolshevik forces and to contribute the largest share of material assistance to them.

Thus an important goal of British imperialist policy was that the intervening troops should serve as a nucleus around which 'loyal' Russians could gather to fight the Germans. On April 20, 1918 the General Staff prepared a memorandum for the Eastern Committee on British Missions to Turkestan in which it argued that Bokhara was of crucial importance to the success of the military action.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, once the search for reasons to expand strategic concerns in Central Asia began, there was virtually no limit to the possibilities, or the dangers. The War Office, having convinced itself that a military mission to Meshed would solve the

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1. Cited by Stanwood, F. in War, Revolution and Imperialism, p.117.

political problems Britain faced in Turkestan and, having drawn the Government of India reluctantly along with it, pressed for expanding the scope of the mission by giving it military objectives. The Viceroy had initially agreed to the mission only on condition that it gather information about Turkestan without engaging in active propaganda or actually entering Turkestan itself. Now the military experts urged that British mission enter Turkestan in order to contact potentially helpful friends who might assist in blocking the Trans-Caspian railway in the event that Germany attempted to use it.<sup>2</sup>

In Turkestan, the Malleson mission began to extend itself northward from Meshed by providing what appeared to be more than moral support in Transcaspia. At the end of July 1918 it became clear that Malleson was actively engaged in creating a pro-British government in Turkestan where none had previously existed. The instructions given to Malleson and Dunsterville were sufficiently vague to allow them to engage in actions which suited their own inclinations. Neither man distinguished between his political and military functions, and as both were vehemently anti-Bolshevik, they made no attempt to remain aloof from local politics.

Thus all these missions in Central Asia suffered from having military personnel fulfilling political roles - an

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2. Cited by Stanwood. F. op.cit., p.122.

uneasy compromise which could not impress the local populations or restrain the British officers. By the end of 1919 however it was apparent that the anti-Bolshevik forces in Central Asia could neither defeat the Red Army by force nor match Bolshevism's emotional appeal.

For analytical purposes one can distinguish three stages or degrees of intervention by a great power in a foreign civil war. The British passed through all three stages in South Russia. The first stage is characterised principally by the provision of material and financial help. But it may also include the extension of military, economic, and political advice, and perhaps even the training of military forces. The British Government's relationship with the anti-Bolshevik forces in Central Asia was pre-dominantly of the first type. The second stage of intervention is characterised by the limited participation of the supporting power in military operations. Such a stage was exemplified by the British relationship with General Denikin in South Russia. The British reached the third stage when they occupied Baku and supported the Ashkhabad Committee in Transcaspia.

Thus the British intervention in Russia grew gradually and in the end became an effort whose purpose was to overthrow the Bolshevik regime at Moscow. Once the policy of intervention was adopted and put into practice, it gradually became indistinguishable against whom the Germans or the Bolsheviks, it



was directed. The period of British intervention in Central Asia may be divided into two phases - one before Armistice and second after Armistice. The first phase was characterised largely by Soviet Union's advocacy of world revolution, its publication of secret treaties, repudiation of foreign debts, confiscation of alien property, withdrawal from the 'imperialist war' and the subsequent release of Austrian and German prisoners of war who had been detained in Central Asia. While all these measures were viewed with alarm by London, its chief anxiety during this period was over the immediate consequences of Russia's withdrawal from the war which had greatly imperilled Allied forces both in the East and the West. In the East the British interests in the Middle East and India were confronted with a possible Turko-German assault in conjunction with the freed Austro-German prisoners in the Tashkent area. To cope with this threat, Britain dispatched military missions to Caucasia, Transcaspia and Tashkent. This constituted an act of intervention in Central Asia, which was carried out under the guise of 'defence' of imperial interests.

However, such a guise faded away in the second phase, particularly after the defeat of the Central Powers, when Britain and her allies undertook a crusade to overthrow the Soviets by active intervention and by supporting the anti-Bolshevik Russians. Britain's decision to lead the war of intervention against Soviet Russia was dictated by the hatred of Communism as an ideology, and the fear that Bolshevism, if

unchecked, might spread out not only to the war-battered west, but to the East in ferment, particularly to India. After the armistice, the intervention which had been conceived as a part of war against Germany had lost its *raison d'etre*. All old arguments by which intervention had been justified were thus invalidated, and it could be continued only as an operation admittedly aimed at the destruction of the Bolshevik regime.

The Secretary, for War, Viscount Milner openly said that the 'honour' and 'interests' of Great Britain required Bolshevism to be kept further away from the areas lying to the East or Black Sea, i.e., Transcaucasia, the Don area and Turkestan.<sup>3</sup> On October 13, 1918, the day after armistice had been concluded with Turkey, the War Cabinet instructed the British command in Mesopotamia to occupy Baku and adjacent oil fields.<sup>4</sup> Having occupied Azerbaizan, the commander of the British forces, Major-General, W.M. Thomson, declared himself military Governor of Baku on November 17, 1918, and introduced a curfew in the city. Judging from Major General Thomson's report on December 6, 1918, British troops not only occupied Transcaspia and Daghestan securing strict control over all the towns and principal communications, but also sought to subordinate the entire economic and political life of the area. From the first day of Thomson's arrival in Baku, he established contacts with counter-revolutionary

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3. Mitrokhin, L. op.cit., p.51.

4. Ibid.

forces.<sup>5</sup> The Eastern Committee chaired by Lord Curzon drafted a plan of action in Transcaucasia in December, 1918. In a statement to the Committee meeting on December 2, 1918, Curzon pointed out that Transcaspia was of vital importance to the British Empire and India and in particular, that Britain should undertake measures to establish control over Transcaspia. "Any sort of anarchy, disorder or Bolshevism", Curzon went on, would "inevitably react" upon British policy there.<sup>6</sup> In early December, 1918 the British established control over the Batum-Baku railway and used it to transport ammunition to fight the Bolsheviks on the Caspian. It was felt that the occupation of Transcaspia would keep the Bolsheviks and Bolshevism away from Persia. But that was not the only motivation behind the British intervention in Transcaspia. As stated by Lord Robert Cecil at a meeting of the Eastern Committee on December 16, 1918, the British found a chance in the existing situation to eliminate Russia from the Caucasus forever.<sup>7</sup>

British intervention did not stop, even after the war ended. Instead it was rapidly developing into an organised movement against the Soviet system. The Soviet Government on their part was now firmly convinced that the capitalist powers

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5. Ullman, R.H., *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, Vol.II. *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, p. 50, 82-84.

6. *Ibid*, pp.66-67.

7. *Ibid*, p.82.

had formed a united front against Soviet Russia and under the leadership of Britain they were determined to weaken the Soviet State. The Soviet government, having barely nothing in hand to force Britain to change her policy, could find no other effective means of doing so than to resort to hostile propaganda and agitation against British interests everywhere. With Chicherin as the head of the Narkomindel (the Soviet Foreign Ministry) it was not difficult for the Bolsheviks to realise how much importance Britain attached to the safety and security of her empire against hostile powers. Hence it was only a matter of time before the flow of propaganda was mainly directed against the British empire and its Achilles' heel, India. This was the time when there was an upsurge of nationalism in India, Persia, Afghanistan and Turkey - all the countries where British interests were involved. They saw in the upsurge of nationalism in these countries a potential ally against Britain and readily proclaimed their support to it. Towards the end of the year 1919 this policy appeared helpful both for immediate objective i.e., the defence of the Soviet State and for the long-term objective for the downfall of world capitalism. To exploit the unrest in the East, the Soviets held the First Congress of the Nations of the Orient in the oil city of Baku in September, 1920. The Congress was represented by twenty Asian nationalities including those of Turkey, China, India, Persia and Afghanistan.

The Congress was presided over by the Comintern President Gregory Zinoviev. "Real revolution on a world scale will not begin, declared Zinoviev", until Asia's eight hundred millions of population will join our movement".<sup>8</sup> He said that the Soviets were prepared to support any revolutionary fight against the British government. As a result, Zinoviev explained, "we give patient aid to groups of persons who do not believe in our ideas, who are even opposed to us on some points".<sup>9</sup> To quote F.Stanwood, "British policy makers were ill-equipped to deal with ideological challenge in which they could find no evidence of aggrandisement. In 1918, no one could argue that Russian expansion was continuing in a new guise; rather the opposite, it was Britain which was expanding. The British difficulty was compounded because Lenin's thesis on imperialism in Asia stopped short of revolution, calling only for self-determination".<sup>10</sup>

In any event, British intervention in Central Asia, like other parts in Russia, completely failed to achieve its basic purpose of restoring the Eastern front. Nor did the threat of intervention cause the Germans to keep in the east any extra men above the amount they needed for the occupation of the conquered territories. If intervention can be said to

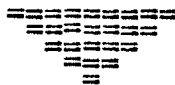
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8. As quoted by Chatter Singh Samra, *India and Anglo-Soviet Relations*, p.48.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Stanwood. F., *op.cit.*, p.150.

have had any results at all, it was that it drove many Russians in Central Asia who were hostile to Bolshevism to support the Soviet government as a means of defending Russia against foreign invasion and preventing the restoration of a reactionary regime. The anti-Soviet regimes which had grown up under the shelter of the Allied forces, all fell apart, defeated as much by their own shortcomings as by the Red Army. And the Bolsheviks, who everyone in the West hoped would be swept away by the intervention and the civil war, emerged from it with their hold on power consolidated by victory.



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